

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of County Commissioners
Monte Reinders, Acting County Administrator

FROM: Heidi Eisenhour, Commissioner

DATE: October 20, 2022

SUBJECT: Comments on PNW Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan scoping process

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

At our October 17, 2022 meeting I offered to take the lead on reviewing and compiling comments on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan Public Scoping Document we all received last week. Included are my draft comments for your review. I consulted and received feedback from Monte, John Fleming and Jeff Chapman in compiling these comments for submittal before the deadline.

ANALYSIS:

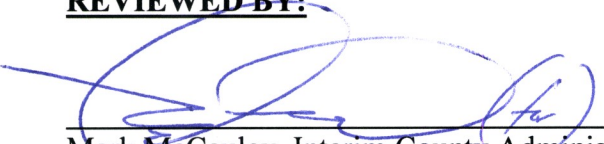
Significant sections of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST) that crosses the entirety of Jefferson County from the Port Townsend ferry dock in the east to the mouth of the Hoh River in the west run across non-federal lands including a shared corridor with the Larry Scott Memorial Trail (LSMT) and the Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT), both being County managed trails. The eastern portal of the ODT begins at the boatyard in Port Townsend, our county seat, and extends approximately 27 miles from Puget Sound connecting to the Miller Peninsula community of Blyn along Sequim Bay. In a recent estimate this section of the ODT sees about 500 users a day and over 135,000 annually.

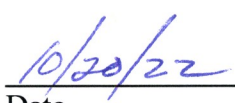
Jefferson County is actively working with the Peninsula Trails Coalition to expand the developed trail in East Jefferson County. We collaborate with other public entities and private landowners/neighbors to design the trail route and acquire easements for trail development. This includes working with Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, City of Port Townsend, Clallam County, Jefferson Public Utility District, Jefferson Land Trust, North Olympic Salmon Coalition, Rayonier Pacific Resource Unit, WA State Parks, WA Department of Natural Resources, WA Department of Transportation, and WA Department of Fish & Wildlife on trail development, management, and uses, including addressing the permitting of new technologies such as electric assisted vehicles and their motorized status under state law. Our comments reflect the experience of decades of collaborative work with these entities in trail development.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

RECOMMENDATION: Finalize and send comments by deadline.

REVIEWED BY:


Mark McCauley, Interim County Administrator


Date

We are writing to comment as part of the scoping for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST) Draft Comprehensive Plan. Significant sections of the PNNST that crosses the entirety of Jefferson County from the Port Townsend ferry dock in the east to the mouth of the Hoh River in the west run across non-federal lands including a shared corridor with the Larry Scott Memorial Trail (LSMT) and the Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT), both being County managed trails. The eastern portal of the ODT begins at the boatyard in Port Townsend, our county seat, and extends approximately 27 miles from Puget Sound connecting to the Miller Peninsula community of Blyn along Sequim Bay. In a recent estimate this section of the ODT sees about 500 users a day and over 135,000 annually.

The LSMT shares 7.3 miles of the ODT southwesterly towards Four Corners from its start in the boatyard to its end at the Milo Curry Trailhead. The LSMT is beautifully constructed and is available for non-motorized transportation and recreational purposes including walking, bicycling, running, wheeling, and horseback riding.

Jefferson County is actively working with the Peninsula Trails Coalition to expand the developed trail in East Jefferson County. We collaborate with other public entities and private landowners/neighbors to design the trail route and acquire easements for trail development. This includes working with Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, City of Port Townsend, Clallam County, Jefferson Public Utility District, Jefferson Land Trust, North Olympic Salmon Coalition, Rayonier Pacific Resource Unit, WA State Parks, WA Department of Natural Resources, WA Department of Transportation, and WA Department of Fish & Wildlife on trail development, management, and uses, including addressing the permitting of new technologies such as electric assisted vehicles and their motorized status under state law.

We appreciated reviewing the objectives of the trail from the federal perspective via the proposed Comprehensive Plan and its acknowledgement of scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources. Your emphasis on carrying capacity and visitor use management acknowledges potential impact to these resources. We encourage you to reach out to tribes along the trail, specifically here on the Olympic Peninsula, where this plan might impact their rights or use of land along the trail.

We understand that the plan is not binding on non-federal governments or private landowners but we feel it's important to call out the inclusion of this reference: *The land acquisition and protection strategy will provide criteria to prioritize opportunities to acquire and protect lands along the trail. The National Trails System Act specifies that "the United States shall not acquire for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail lands outside the exterior boundary of any federally managed area without the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(30)).*

Because the trail traverses populated areas, working forests, agricultural lands, and roads in our county, we expect to be included in discussions regarding any federal land management regulations that might be applied to the trail easement and adjacent view corridors, particularly regarding private, city, county, and state holdings. We want to be clear in our strong support for the plan upholding this clause in the National Trails System Act and not impacting the rights of private landowners. We've already been receiving questions about the recommended national trail right-of-way of a minimum of one mile (.5 miles on either side of the trail). This level of trail width is just not possible for most of the trail route in East Jefferson County as well as part of West Jefferson County.

In addition, we encourage the PNNST managing agencies to cooperate with us regarding trail development across non-federal lands on the Olympic Peninsula. In reviewing the draft plan section about relocating trail right of way, we feel it is important to recognize that there isn't likely public support for more than a single trail corridor between Port Townsend and Discovery Bay. Jefferson County is the lead agency for the on-going route finding, acquisition, development, and management for the Olympic Discover Trail through this section, and we expect that PNNST policies will be harmonized with our own, including our own Comprehensive Plan and other land use documents, where necessary.