



## A TREASURE OF A TRAIL

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By LINDA VOGT

**F**OR OREGONIANS who appreciate a beautiful river, good fishing and a quiet, wooded campsite, the new Clackamas River Trail is a treasure.

Located just 16 miles southeast of Estacada, the 8-mile trail follows the Clackamas River from the Fish Creek bridge to Indian Henry Campground. It was opened last spring, and is maintained by personnel from the Estacada Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service.

"We didn't have any trails that were low-elevation that people could get into in the wintertime," said Bruce Reed, recreation technician for the Forest Service. He is one of the two men who proposed, planned and supervised construction of the trail. "That was a big plus in justifying its construction."

The highest point along the Clackamas River Trail is 1,280 feet, which is at Indian Henry Campground.

"You can count on it being open 95 percent of the year," Reed added.

In spring and summer, the trail's lure includes its possibilities for fishing. For miles, the trail permits good access to the "far side" of the Clackamas River. There, a hiker can sit along the shore, drop a line into a secluded pool and snugly watch the less-adventurous fishermen who drove their cars up Highway 224.

"The fishing opportunities are excellent," Reed

said. "There are some nice pools, and most of the fishermen are on the other side of the river."

Reed, who is responsible for maintenance of the 250 miles of trails in the Estacada Ranger District, is justifiably proud of the Clackamas River Trail; he and Howard Rondthaler of the Forest Service Supervisor's Office hiked the area repeatedly for three winters to map out the trail's route.

"I climbed up and down some of those hills 20 times before I'd find a way to get up there without a grade that was too steep," Reed said. "It sometimes takes several tries to get the trail where you want it at the proper grade."

For Reed, one of the joys in helping to create the Clackamas River Trail was in routing it along some of the sandy beaches, waterfalls, streams and moss-covered cliffs that the area has to offer. One of the most spectacular sights is Pup Creek Falls, located 3.5 miles from the Fish Creek trailhead. Viewing the falls requires a side trip up Pup Creek about 700 feet; there the water cascades 100 feet into a pool; and then nearly another 100 feet in two smaller waterfalls. Pup Creek Falls rivals many of the better-known scenic falls along the Columbia River Gorge.

"This is a recreational trail," Reed said. "I wanted it to pass by as many of these beautiful sights as possible."

"We tried to stay as close to the river as we could," he added.

When the trail is not adjacent to the river, it meanders through wooded areas, and through open

spaces that are part of a PGE power line right-of-way. The trail offers several views of the Clackamas River from high above it. It also takes hikers past an abundance of wildflowers and plants: calypso orchids, Clackamas iris, wild strawberries and huckleberries.

Though the trail has no developed campgrounds, plenty of wooded sites along the river are excellent for camping. Reed has prepared a trail log that provides a mile-by-mile description of its highlights, including five campsite locations.

Because the trail runs between two U.S. Forest Service campgrounds, it is ideally suited for a car shuttle. To reach the lower trail head, take Highway 24 out of Estacada and proceed 16 miles to the Fish Creek bridge. There you cross the Clackamas River onto road 554, which leads to Fish Creek Campground. Immediately after the bridge, you'll spot a parking space on the right; the marked trail head is across the road.

At Indian Henry Campground, 22 miles from Estacada up Highway 224 on Sandstone Road, the marked trail head is directly across the road from the campground entrance.

Reed said that so far, use of the Clackamas River Trail has been light.

"But if people want to know where to go or how to get there, I'd be glad to help," he said.

Reed refuses to focus his enthusiasm for the trail on one feature.

"The whole trail is a highlight," he said. "You'll see some beautiful sights. I'm proud of this trail."

LINDA VOGT is an Oregon City writer. Map illustrated by Pat McLelland, a staff artist of The Oregonian.