

# More parking, toilet may come to Idler's Rest

Volunteers made improvements to make trail network more accessible

- By Garrett Cabeza, Daily News staff writer

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Courtesy of Palouse Land TrustThe Moscow Central Lions Club poses for a group photo June 14 after an evening of adding additional railings and building stairs at Idler's Rest.

- Courtesy of Palouse Land Trust

With the installation of steps, railings and several other improvements this spring and summer, Idler's Rest Nature Preserve is designed to be more accessible than ever and more improvements to the popular recreation area north of Moscow could get underway this fall.

Palouse Land Trust Executive Director Lovina Englund said doubling or potentially tripling Idler's Rest's parking lot capacity and installing a vault toilet at the nature preserve is on tap this fall, pending funding and contractors' schedules.

PLT Community Outreach Coordinator Jaime Jovanovich-Walker said 10 to 12 cars can currently fit in the gravel parking lot and the goal is to designate 20 to 30 parking spaces, including a handicapped space.

While more vehicles will be able to park, the size of the lot is only expected to increase slightly, Englund said.

Englund said the lot will continue to support one-way traffic but parallel parking spaces will be designated as opposed to the current layout where no spaces are designated.

"It's a free-for-all," Jovanovich-Walker said of the current parking situation.

Englund said sometimes vehicles exceed the lot's capacity, which leads to some drivers parking in ways that block access for other drivers - potentially emergency vehicles. People also park on the side of the road, which creates safety issues, Englund said.

Jovanovich-Walker said the parking lot will continue to have a gravel surface.

"We want to keep it as natural as we can," she said. Jovanovich-Walker said the plan is also to install an informational kiosk at the parking lot for trail users to utilize.

If the parking lot is redesigned this fall, the two PLT officials said a vault toilet, or a toilet in which waste is held in an underground tank, will be installed as well. There is currently no bathroom at Idler's Rest.

Englund said the trust applied for a \$40,000 Idaho Parks and Recreation grant to help purchase and install the toilet and is waiting to hear back from the department on whether the trust will receive grant funding.

Englund said the trust also has long-range plans to expand the trail system to Moscow



Mountain.

"That's a long-term goal for us and for the community," Jovanovich-Walker said.

As for the accessibility improvements, Jovanovich-Walker said Boy Scouts of America, the Moscow Central Lions Club, Washington State University students with the Center for Civic Engagement and other community volunteers helped install wooden railings, steps and a wildlife-friendly fence.

"We're just tremendously excited about the fact that we can make this property so much more accessible to other user groups and so that's been the main focus of our improvement efforts," Englund said.

Jovanovich-Walker said volunteers worked on a universal access trail, or a trail designed for those who have a mobility-assisting device such as a walker or a wheelchair, through the Cedar Grove this summer and work on the trail will continue in the near future.

She said volunteers widened sections of the trail to 3 feet and will replace a footbridge as well. Trails will be widened to 3 feet wherever possible, Jovanovich-Walker said.

Local Eagle scouts are also expected to install handicap-accessible benches along the Cedar Grove Trail.

"We're really trying to just listen to our community and make sure that those needs they are expressing are being able to be put into our project process," Englund said.

Jovanovich-Walker said volunteers also removed old rusty barbed-wire fencing and replaced it with about 780 feet of wildlife-friendly fencing along the northern border of the nature preserve. She said animals should either be able to hop over the fence or sneak under it.

Englund reminds visitors to enjoy the area and respect the nature preserve's neighbors by staying on the designated trails.

To view or learn more about the projects, the trust is hosting a guided hike to celebrate the Autumn Equinox from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Sept. 22 at Idler's Rest.

To get involved with the trust, call (208) 596-4496.

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