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Rod and Kelly Tyler using one of the trail systems the North Kitsap Trails Association is trying to expand and improve.

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NK trail advocates seeking input

By [LEILA ARCIERO](#)
North Kitsap Herald Poulsbo Writer
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PORT GAMBLE — [North Kitsap Trails Association](#) volunteers are digging their fingers into the dirt and

looking for community input on what to grow. They want to deepen local access through a series of multi-use neighborhood and regional trails.

“We’re looking at links. What we have in all of our communities in North Kitsap is there are a fair amount of smaller trails,” said Linda Berry-Maraist, a member of the North Kitsap Trails Association.

One of the association’s main goals is to connect the communities through walking, biking, horse-back riding and even water paths.

“Where you can kayak from Poulsbo to Suquamish to Kingston to Port Gamble but in small incremental steps,” Berry-Maraist said. “Kitsap County has 228 miles of shoreline. That’s huge. I mean, who else has that?”

Trail development will depend on what the communities already have and what is most important to residents, said Berry-Maraist, who also sits on the Poulsbo City Council. The community’s desire for more biking, walking or handicap accessibility will play key roles in what gets improved or added. The goal is still to connect the trails.

Safety is one important issue that concerns all the North Kitsap communities.

“I was surprised by how many people don’t feel safe walking, or don’t want their kids to walk to school. So there’s a lot of things that we as a community can try and address both in town and out of town to make people feel safe,” Berry-Maraist said. She points out that in communities sometimes there are sidewalks, and sometimes there aren’t.

There’s also the issues of crossing the highway, the absence of continuous shoulders on the roads and no consistent bike paths all make for hazardous commuting.

Association member Lynn Schorn told Poulsbo City Council at a recent meeting that the association is trying to make commuting safer in North Kitsap.

“Neighborhoods that have trails have less crime. Also (it) provides opportunities for alternative transportation, so less pollution, so that helps all of us,” Schorn said.

Another goal for this group is to promote ecotourism and low-impact commuting to bring active tourists to North Kitsap’s small businesses.

“The whole goal is to create something that not only keeps what we have here that we think is so special, but also has a sustainable economic development. So people can come here and do a whole variety of things,” Berry-Maraist said.

Schorn believes connected trail system would draw visitors.

“If I was living in Seattle and I knew there was a trail system and it was close to mass transit, I could take the ferry and I could come over and ride my bike in a more natural pristine environment, you know, boy I’d jump on,” Schorn said. “And then I’d have to eat somewhere, I’d have to use the facilities that we have to offer in our community.”

There are other focuses for the organization, besides uniting north Kitsap communities and stimulating the economy. Namely to join the [Mountains to Sound Greenway](#). It’s a trail stretching 100 miles, along interstate 90, from Central Washington over Snoqualmie pass to the shores of Puget Sound in Seattle. Still under construction, the [Olympic Discovery Trail](#), which will stretch approximately 100 miles from Port Townsend to the Pacific Ocean, currently has 30 completed miles. Another 30 miles of the trail have funding and are headed for construction.

The association considers Kitsap is the missing link in these trail systems.

“We feel like that is a huge local benefit to us,” Berry-Maraist said. The North Kitsap Trails Association hopes to build its Sound to Olympics trail to bridge the cross-state trail gap.

Even with their ample desires, this group’s core will always be focused on the community.

“What we’re trying to do is come up with a system that serves the needs of all interest and all ages. The trails are a combination of exercise (for) health issues, recreation, giving people something fun to do, and transportation, and we’re trying to incrementally develop a plan which will get us in that direction with one step at a time. It’s nice to see such a huge community effort and so many people agree that it’s a really good thing to do. It’s a partnership born of opportunities and necessity,” Berry-Maraist said.

Working with Kitsap County, local Kitsap County communities and governments, Pope Resources, the National Park Service, Kitsap County Health District, and Suquamish & Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribes, The North Kitsap Trails Association have done their homework and set up a series of meetings and workshops to get support and involvement from the local communities. None of their aspiring aspirations could be supported without volunteers. Volunteers build the trails and help keep the costs down for the organization, Berry-Maraist said.

The North Kitsap Trails Association is made up of people from all different local communities, governments and backgrounds to offer an extensive understanding of everything that makes the great outdoors of Kitsap County, great.

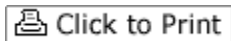
“This is not a plan to take away from what the communities have already done, it’s a plan to support what they’ve done and then create connections,” Schorn said.

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