

# Pilchuck Recreation Association Newsletter

June, 2013

[www.pilchuckra.org](http://www.pilchuckra.org)

PO Box 334; Stanwood, WA; 98292

## Cascade Horse Club Work Party

On a drizzly day in April, members of the Cascade Horse Club and TrailDusters (both chapters of Back Country Horsemen of Washington), GeoCachers of the Northwest, Pilchuck Mountain Bikers Club, Lakewood/Arlington School Mountain Bike Team, volunteer Tree Farm visitors, and neighbors and adjacent land owners of the Pilchuck Tree Farm gathered together to reroute a section of trail, clear multiple sections of trail, and install culverts and gravel the trails on the Victoria Tract of Pilchuck Tree Farm.

Forty plus hard workers: rerouted, cleared, and flagged about 1 mile of trail, installed 3 culverts and at least 19 yards worth of gravel, re-established 1 mile of trail after logging operations, cleared another 1-2 miles of post-winter and windstorm damage, and revamped the parking area. The materials for the trail day were all purchased using donations to the PRA iron rangers or mailed in.

These volunteers came from all around Washington, as far away as Friday Harbor, all people wanting to maintain trails for recreation on private lands. The distance you traveled to help is an indication of the commitment you have made to ensure we have trails for all to appreciate and utilize and we hope to see you again!

***Note that the Bridges Trail must remain closed until construction is completed.***

Additional trail work parties have been conducted by the Trail Dusters to re-establish the Inspiration Point trail on the Victoria Tract after harvesting, Cherry Valley Riders on the Armstrong Tract, and Snohomish 4H Club on the Pilchuck Tract.

*To ensure that everyone enjoys their time at the tree farm, please observe the following rules:*

### **PTF Hold Harmless Agreement:**

All persons on Tree Farm property are required by Pacific Denkman, the private land owner, to sign and turn in (via iron ranger or mail) an annual release form. Anyone on the property without a Hold Harmless Agreement on file is trespassing.

### **Absolutely NO SMOKING**

### **Parking Lots:**

Manure, hay, and horsehair – take it home with you  
Leave no trace

### **Dogs in parking area:**

Keep all dogs on a leash  
NO loose running dogs

### **Do not run horses on trails**

### **Mountain bikers must always ride in control**

## Fire Warning

Although early summer rain makes fire season seem a long way off, dry weather will be here before you know it. If Washington's forests experience excessively dry weather, the Department of Natural Resources issues a Forestland Closure order which prohibits both logging operations and recreational use. A DNR Forestland Closure also applies to the tree farm – **please respect it**. If the Tree Farm is forced to close due to fire hazard, updates will be posted at [www.pilchuckra.org](http://www.pilchuckra.org). Smoking and fires are *always* prohibited on the Tree Farm.

Last year, your donations contributed to:

Sani Cans	\$3296
Trail Maintenance Materials	\$2460
• Rock/Gravel	
• Culverts	
• Lumber for Bridges	

## **Biofuel Planting in the Victoria Tract Meadow**

This spring, hybrid poplar trees were planted at the Pilchuck Tree Farm to demonstrate the potential of locally produced poplar as a feedstock for biofuels. The demonstration site supports the efforts of the Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest (AHB) initiative, which is part of a national biofuel effort to replace 30% of the fossil fuels in use in the United States with local and sustainably produced renewable fuels by 2030. AHB is working to prepare the framework for the development of a Northwest biofuel industry and is a USDA funded consortium of university and industry partners led by the University of Washington.

The fast growing nature of hybrid poplars makes them an excellent energy crop for biofuel production. The poplars being developed for AHB are bred through traditional time-tested methods of controlled pollination, grown on very short (2-3 year) rotations, and harvested using a coppicing method that promotes multiple shoots of regrowth at the rootstock for subsequent harvests. Researchers are anticipating the first poplar harvest at the Pilchuck Tree Farm to occur in the fall of 2014. The trees will be chipped as they are harvested and then trucked to the biorefinery to be converted into biofuels.

As the AHB project progresses, visitors of Pilchuck Tree Farm's Victoria Tract are likely to encounter researchers investigating poplar tree growth, changes to the site's soil and water quality, impacts to wildlife and biodiversity, and other sustainability elements. For more information, please visit us online at [hardwoodbiofuels.org](http://hardwoodbiofuels.org) or contact Washington State University Extension at 425-388-9162 or [ahb.nw@ad.wsu.edu](mailto:ahb.nw@ad.wsu.edu).

## **Pilchuck Mountain Bikers Club**

The Pilchuck Mountain Bikers Club (PMBc) was formed in August, 2012 to bring together riders of the Pilchuck Tree Farm and encourage trail maintenance and good stewardship of the land.

The first official club work party was held April 21 and focused on purging puddles from the upper Ridge Trail on the Victoria Tract. There are several "soup bowls" on the trail that are surrounded by higher ground which blocks the water from flowing out. The club built "french sumps" in order to speed drying of the mineral soil tread surface. First, the organic mat of decomposing fir needles was removed. A 3' wide trench was then excavated in the mineral soil of the trail tread to a typical depth of 8". The soil was replaced with 3" diameter crushed rock and covered with a 3" thick layer of 1"-minus crushed rock. The excavated mineral soil was then piled on top to a target depth of 3".

The final result should be a trail tread that appears identical to the rest of the trail, but that drains much more quickly. Any standing water on the trail surface will percolate down through the mineral soil and fine crushed rock into the space between the coarse crushed rock.

A series of smaller club work parties focused on eliminating the mud holes on the Arena Trail. In this case, the surrounding deciduous trees created a thicker mat of organic material that would have required too much excavation to reach the mineral soil. The mud holes were filled with 3" rocks and then topped with 1"-minus crushed rock. The result isn't as pretty as on the Ridge trail, but it beats slogging through the mud.

All the crushed rock was purchased and transported to the site using donations to the PRA.