

My name is Karen Matthews and I am here to request your support for \$8 million dollars to fund the Salmonberry Trail.

As the President of the Wheeler City Council, a 5th generation Oregonian, and an outdoor enthusiast I am an avid supporter for the development of the Salmonberry Trail.

This project offers benefits in health, wealth and well being through connection with nature.

As I awaited my turn to testify at the Astoria Ways and Means Public Listening session, I kept hearing a common thread; that of mentally challenged citizens, a need for support of mental health issues, and multiple stories of incarcerated people who are more mentally disturbed than criminally deviant. This got me to thinking of ways to preemptively address some of these problems.

Humans have an innate connection to nature. Spending time in nature has been linked to improved physical and mental health, with studies showing that nature can reduce stress, boost mood, and enhance creativity.

*What better way to address many of these challenges than a bit of
“preventative medicine” with a dose of nature?*

The Salmonberry Trail will enhance health and overall well-being of people and build economic vitality of communities from Washington County to the Oregon Coast, benefiting all Oregonians.

The requested funding will support trails in 5 cities across Washington and Tillamook counties. Statistics show that 80% of Oregonians use trails. The Salmonberry Trail will be an avenue to recreate and explore 82 contiguous miles of repurposed infrastructure.

This past spring and summer I was fortunate to have witnessed support of the Salmonberry Trail first hand. Dozens of hosted informational hikes were filled to capacity and the Salmonberry Trail Foundation scheduled double the original amount of hiking events to satisfy the demand. The enthusiastic support we received is testimony to the value this trail will have in the future.

Additionally, the Salmonberry Trail will improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, offering a dedicated pathway for school children, families, and residents who currently must navigate hazardous roadways. This investment directly supports Oregon’s goals of increasing transportation safety, promoting active lifestyles, and ensuring equitable access to outdoor spaces.

As the Oregon Legislature considers funding priorities, we urge you to support state investment in the Salmonberry Trail. This is an opportunity to champion sustainable infrastructure, economic development, and public health for future generations.

For the past several years, State and Regional agencies have worked collaboratively as an Intergovernmental Agency to define the structure of the Salmonberry Trail System. The structure is defined; We Are Ready To Build!

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Oregon’s future.