

# Silver Star Mountain

*A brief history of trail related projects compiled by Washington Trails Association 3-2-2021*

## **MAKING SILVER STAR NON-MOTORIZED**

The U.S. Forest Service closed the Silver Star area to motorized use in the 1989 Forest Travel Plan to protect the unique and fragile wildflower meadows from vehicle damage.

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest's 1990 land use plan designated about 9,400 acres around Silver Star as a Scenic Special Interest Area. The designation meant there would not be any logging or motor vehicle use within the boundary.

## **1993 RECREATION PLAN FOR ENHANCED TRAIL SYSTEM**

The Forest Service announced a recreation plan for Silver Star in 1993. The 1990 land use plan had proposed 13.7 miles of new trails for Silver Star; the 1993 plan sought to implement that proposal.

In 1993, Silver Star had four trails: Starway #175, Bluff Mountain #172, Star #174, and the closed section of Road 4109 over the summit of Silver Star, renamed Silver Star #180, for a total of 11.7 miles. The new plan would expand the trails to 18.7 miles.

### **The 1993 recreation plan proposed and implemented these projects:**

- \* construction of a trailhead at the end of Forest Road 4109.
  
- \* improvement of Forest Road 4109 to be suitable for passenger vehicles.
  
- \* 3-mile Chinook Trail #180B connector trail between the Tarbell Trail on Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land and Silver Star #180. The trail was built by a combination of volunteers, youth employment crews and contract work.
  
- \* 1-mile Ed's Trail #180A, which was built by the Chinook Trail Association volunteers following the route of an old pack stock trail used to reach the summit of Silver Star before roads were built in the 1930s.
  
- \* closed Road 4100502 to motor vehicles and converted to trail.
  
- \* closed Roads 4107 and 4100505 to motor vehicle use by installation of a gate near the junction of Roads 41 and 4107.

### **The 1993 plan also proposed projects that were never implemented:**

- \* 3-mile Silver Creek #172A, a route in and out of the east side of Silver Star. The Silver Creek Trail would begin near the saddle between Bluff Mountain and Little Baldy Mountain and head east to the national forest boundary. The DNR proposed continuing the Silver Creek trail for 6.5 miles on state land to a trailhead on the Washougal River. The Bluff Mountain,

Silver Creek and Three Corner Rock trails would be segments of the proposed Chinook Trail, a Columbia River Gorge rim loop trail from Vancouver-Portland to Maryhill-Biggs on both sides of the Columbia River. The Silver Creek Trail has never been built. The Forest Service said it would not build the Silver Creek Trail until the DNR was ready to build its segment. The DNR has never received funding for the project.

\* realignment and relocation of sections of Bluff Mountain #172 to solve maintenance problems and bypass a stretch dangerous for horse use.

### **PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP GARNERED 2004 FUNDING**

Some 10 years later, the Silver Star Scenic Special Interest Area was being damaged by illegal motorized vehicle use on old roadways and across fragile wildflower meadows. The temptation of old roads and the difficulty of enforcing the motorized closure had resulted in substantial unauthorized use. All Forest Service efforts to block access had been thwarted: signs were destroyed, barricades were winched away, steel cables were cut.

WTA partnered with the Chinook Trail Association (CTA), the Forest Service and the DNR to develop a plan to install 500 boulders to block vehicle access at 10 locations and to install 25 signs showing permitted uses of trails and reasons for restrictions. DNR would close and reinforce existing gates. WTA and CTA submitted a grant proposal for more than \$59,000 to implement the plan.

Impressed by the public-private partnership, the South Gifford Pinchot Resource Advisory Committee provided the funding in 2004. Once the boulders were in place, WTA and CTA held 5 work parties to do site restoration and trail maintenance, including planting trees to narrow road corridors to trail width. The value of volunteer labor brought the project value up to \$66,000.