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Once completed, the Olympic Discovery Trail will end in Port Townsend where hikers and bikers can catch a ferry and hook up with the Snoqualmie Valley Trail. Determined trail enthusiasts can then go as far as central Montana on trails and low volume county roads.

Head: Olympic Discovery Trail treks east
Sub: Trail will connect cities, tribes in county wilderness

By Evan McLean
Staff writer

Rich James is so close to finishing the Olympic Discovery Trail section between Sequim and Blyn he can feel it – or hike it or bike it.

James, the county transportation program manager, wants the trail done because it's part of his job and because he wants to use it. The Clallam County commissioners gave preliminary approval last week to acquiring 4.72 acres of surplus Department of Transportation land adjacent to Sequim's city limits for the trail.

"This is the last piece of property we needed to acquire for the eastern leg from Sequim to Blyn," James said. "We plan to have the complete route finished to Blyn by the end of the year."

James said that trail work would not begin on the newly acquired land until late summer because of an eagle nest in the proximity that the county does not wish to disturb. He added that other sections currently are being worked on.

"This is a huge milestone for us to get down to the Blyn area," he said. "When the tribe finishes its own section, the trail will lead all the way to Old Blyn Highway, a low-traffic county road alternative to the 101."

Annette Nesse, with the Jamestown tribe, said the tribe is responsible for three sections of the trail, one of which is finished along the Dungeness Bridge Park.

"We've started on one of the remaining two sections off West Sequim Bay Road and we will begin construction on the third piece through the tribal campus within the month," She said.

Heading east from Sequim, bikers and hikers follow decommissioned railroad grades through scenic prairie and forestlands over a wooden trestle to Blyn. James said the county already has plans to restore the bridge to a safe and working condition.

"The existing trestle is not very safe so we're retrofitting it and putting in a 10-foot wide concrete walkway with handrails," James said.

Eventually the trail will connect Hood Canal to the Pacific Ocean, covering more than 145 miles. The biggest unplanned sections lie west of Lake Crescent and east of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, according to the county.

While the east end of Clallam's ODT obligation is being wrapped up this year, the trail also is trekking westward.

The east end of Clallam's ODT obligation will be fulfilled this year while plans go into effect to expand westward.

"The city of P.A. (Port Angeles) has a section they need to do from the marina out the Lower Elwha Road," James said. "It will go along the Old Milwaukee Railroad grade."

The county is still trying to acquire right of way from the Lower Elwha Road to the Elwha River. James said once that happens it will serve as an access road to reconstruct the one-lane bridge over the river into a two-lane bridge with a pedestrian suspension bridge running underneath its length.

One mile west of the bridge project is where the Adventure Route of the ODT begins. It is an interim leg of the trail until additional funding can be found to construct a trail to Lake Crescent that will run north of State Route 112 between Port Angeles and Joyce.

"When people get out on this adventure route they are really going to love it," James said. "It crosses creeks on little log bridges and has some visually stunning scenery."

This 24-mile leg of the trail is a bit thinner than the rest of the ODT and runs up some steeper grades. James advised that it would be for riders with some stamina.

