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InLandNEWS



**Celebrate Autumn
on a Trail Pg. 6**

Photo by Aaron Theisen

The Man in the Arena

By Catherine Henze, Volunteer

When you see Eric Erickson silently toiling at the Conservancy, filling two computer screens with complicated maps, his aging Golden Retriever curled up at his feet, you can easily imagine a retired college professor. Or a volunteer specialist in GIS (geographic information systems). And you're right. But oh so wrong. You're really looking at a champion prizefighter, trained and ready to again jump into the ring and fight for the land.

Eric moved to the Spokane area over a quarter of a century ago, with a Ph.D. in marine geophysics from MIT and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and careers in academia as well as gas and oil exploration. An avid kayaker and canoeist, he and his two Golden Retrievers, Gloria and Leo, live in a rustic house with a wall-length view of the Spokane River and Riverside State Park (RSP). Eric originally chose the Spokane area for access to the outdoors; his home is right across from RSP. "If I could live anywhere in the world, it would be right where I am, in no small part due to RSP and Trautman Ranch," he says. "One of the best things in my life was purchasing this house."

Almost every day for the last 25 years Eric has walked a 1.6-mile loop in the park, totaling 12,000 miles. For the first 6,000, he walked with his wife Carol, who died of cancer in 2007. He scattered her ashes in the park. Now, he strolls with his partner Nancy.

Eric has always loved the outdoors. From the minute a neighbor took him fishing at age seven he fell for the peace, quiet, and beauty of silent woods. As a child, nearly every day he rambled and fished in the forest, valley, and stream behind his house in Ridgefield, Connecticut. When he was away at summer camp, he admits, he sent letters home, asking for more worms!

As an adult, it took Eric a long time to find daily interaction with the woods again. Then, he moved to his house on the river.

The Birth of a Conservationist

To Eric, Riverside State Park "feels almost like home." He loves its different aspects, in different times of the year... particularly the spring, with all the wildflowers. He says, "I've seen that part of the park evolve. Trees get bigger. Trees die. Some huge trees have fallen and are now moldering into dust. Twenty-five years ago, almost all the trees were ponderosa pines. Then I noticed some firs starting up. One of them is now 30-35 feet tall."

To Eric's horror, shortly after he moved, he learned that the 308-acre parcel of the park directly across from his home was about to be sold to a developer in exchange for property on Mt. Spokane. In October 1994 the deal was all but complete. Eric's worst nightmare was about to come true: "It broke my heart to imagine this place logged, with streets and numerous houses."

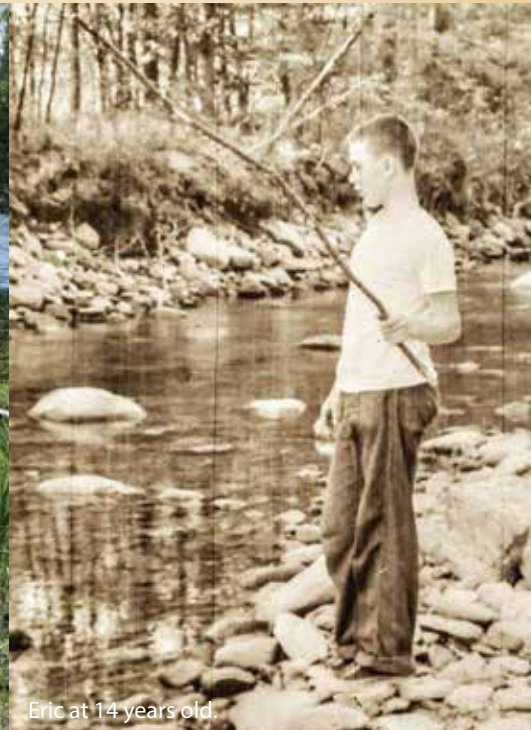
"If I could live anywhere in the world, it would be right where I am."

Instead of merely lamenting his loss or moving away, Eric leaped into the ring and started swinging. With two other neighbors, he formed the Riverside State Park Preservation Association. Hundreds of supporters flooded the Parks Commissioners' review meetings. Nine months later, at the end of July 1995, the swap was in abeyance. However, the battle had just begun. Eric and others found multiple reasons to protect the property, including the

"Once I saw how fragile and precious this portion of Riverside State Park was, and how easily it could be destroyed, I became interested in conserving what we have, and acquiring more."



Eric in 2020, on the land he loves.



Eric at 14 years old.

presence of historic Native American dwellings. It took a full ten years for a declaration, in 2005, that the parcel was to permanently remain a part of the park. The years were filled with innumerable meetings, first, to convince the Parks Department to re-open the issue of preserving these acres, and then to come up with a plan to make that happen. Red tape is slow. But Eric is patient. His partner Nancy shares, "Eric is really persistent. He rarely gives up," traits that paid off in spades for the park.

In the process, Eric became a conservationist. "Once I saw how fragile and precious this portion of Riverside State Park was, and how easily it could be destroyed, I became interested in conserving what we have, and acquiring more."

In this fight, he met Chris DeForest, then the fledgling executive director of the Conservancy.

Saving the Missing Link: A Fighter Who Prizes Tranquility

No sooner had that 308 acres been rescued than Eric, who by now was volunteering for INLC, began another project: saving Trautman Ranch. Just a half mile from Eric's beloved home, a beautiful 280-acre private property was at risk of being developed. This "missing link" connected northern and southern portions of the park. "It's so beautiful!" Eric noted. "I just couldn't let development happen."

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Animal trails crisscross Trautman Ranch, amongst scattered wildflowers. The numerous springs and seeps that emerge from the base of a 600-foot-high basalt bench have produced enchanting woods, a small pond and wetland, and an unusual near-jungle of deciduous trees, plants, and grassland, as well as beautiful meadows sculpted by Ice Age floods and bordered by pine forests. This ecosystem provides food, water, and homes for animals ranging in size from moose and bear, to tiny snakes and rodents. But the main attraction for Eric is the near silence. As one of the Trautman sons remarked, "The ranch is near-silence, you can hear pine needles rubbing against each other in the breeze."

The Trautman family worked and lived on the property for more than 80 years. John Trautman, who grew up on the ranch and returned to enjoy his final decades there, dreamed of having the land protected. However, it wasn't until after his death in 2015 that his dream, and the dream for Spokane, came true. Although Eric and INLC staff members Asha Rehnberg and Roger McRoberts walked the land with him in 2005 and 2010 and listened to his wishes, John just wasn't ready to act to protect his property. Eric worked with John for more than ten years to convince him that it was time for the land to be permanently protected.

When John died, the deal had still not been sealed. Eric, fearing impropriety yet desperately wanting the land saved, went to John's memorial service at Chris DeForest's request. He repeated to John's sons how very much their father wanted to preserve the property and proposed a deal. The

Conservancy and Eric would champion an emergency land purchase by Spokane County. To this, son John said, "Oh, that would be wonderful."

Between the memorial service and the closing, intense negotiations were ongoing. Eric, who had written a Conservation Futures nomination for the land in 2005, kick-started an updated nomination with the backing of INLC. He led tours of the land, made maps, gathered letters of support, and recruited 42 organizations to support the proposition. During this time the Trautman sons held competing offers at bay. Eric and the Conservancy persuaded the county and state park departments to move quickly before the property was sold for development. Among other problems, 75 years of garbage, derelict vehicles, abandoned appliances, and other junk had to be removed. Eric himself hauled truckloads to the dump. He also made a significant financial contribution to the ranch's maintenance fund.

On June 5, 2015, the monumental deal closed. A joyous dedication ceremony, with a tour led by Gary Trautman, was held on October 10, 2015. And now, Trautman Ranch is open to the public!

Never say one person can't make a difference! Eric Erickson certainly has, both for rescuing a 308-acre piece of Riverside State Park and saving Trautman Ranch, and for all the things he has done for INLC over 23 years in his thousands of donated hours. Among other things, this man who Chris DeForest calls a "mapmaking genius" has created maps for the 300+ properties that the Conservancy has protected or has underway. And he has sifted through conservation data layers to direct the Conservancy to identify, protect and safeguard the most important wildlife habitat, river corridors, and land for people in this region. He is an inspiration to us all. Thank you, Eric! ■

And what are you inspired to do? Will you join us in the arena to protect lands and waters for our future?

Join the Conservancy at InlandNWLand.org/give-today



Find out more about this story, including trail maps and videos about the land, at InlandNWLand.org/news

Parks, the Pandemic and Phase Two of Olmsted 2.0

2020 has ushered in a new era for outdoor recreation. While businesses around the world struggle to maintain market share during massive economic and social shutdowns, outdoor gear—namely bikes, kayaks, and camping gear—is flying off the shelves in record amounts! People are turning to the outdoors for entertainment, physical and mental health, and togetherness, in droves! Trailheads, waterways, and campgrounds have seen unprecedented use—many suffering from overcrowding and a dearth of land management resources with which to care for them. In March through July of 2020, Spokane County trail use alone increased 173% from 2019.

In response to ongoing pressure from development and increased need for access, the Conservancy

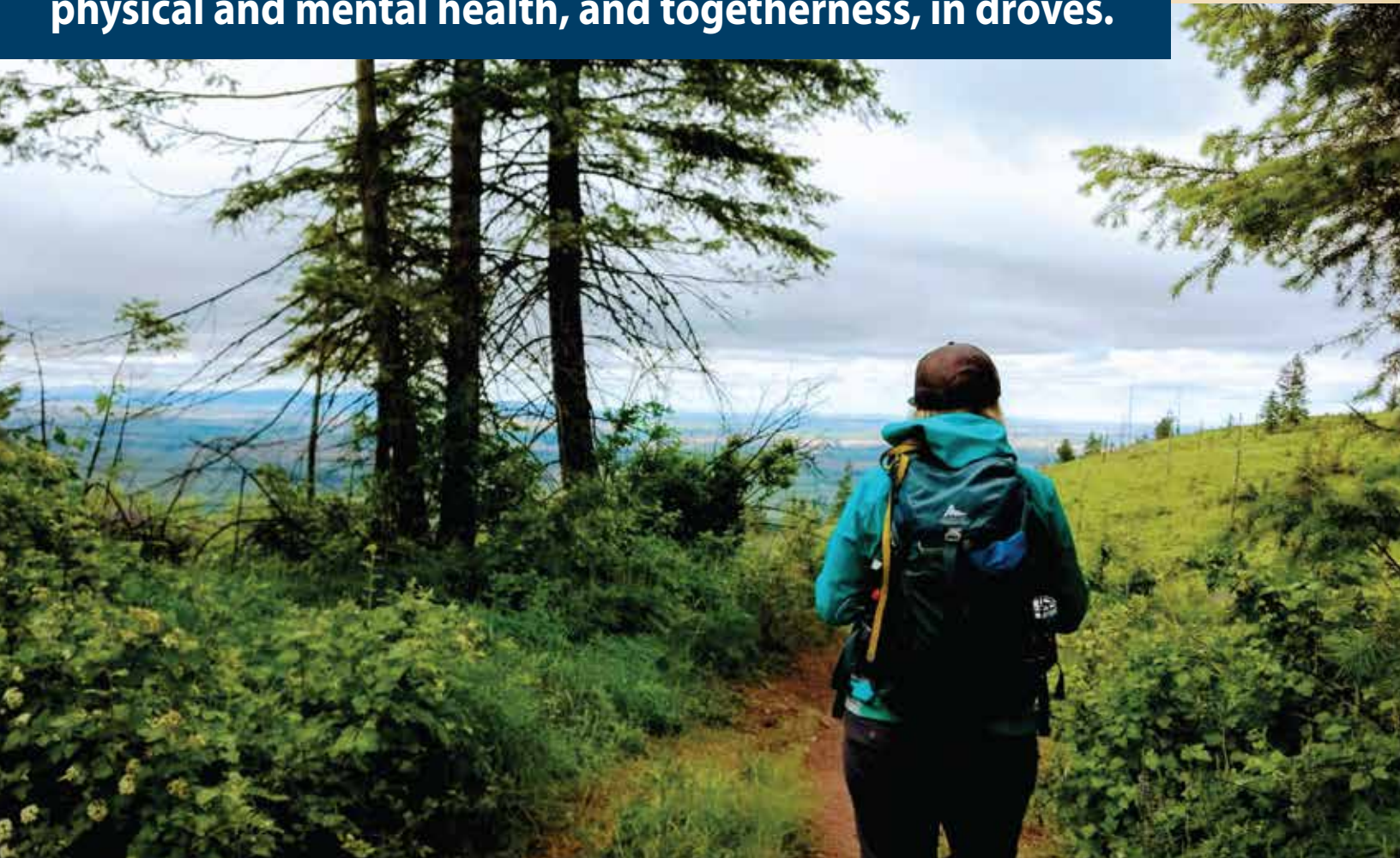
continues to develop Olmsted 2.0, a parks and conservation vision for the next 100 years. The next phase of this project will focus on social justice and equitable access to the outdoors for all. Cast in sharp relief over the last few months has been the disparity in access among communities of color, lower socio-economic status, and age. This phase will include the input of experts in fields like public health, economic development, and local government. Your support enables us to continue our mission of connecting people, all people, to nature through the conservation of lands and waters essential to life in the Inland Northwest. ■

References:

New York Times: The New Panic Buys: Kayaks, Pools, Tents and Trampolines, Aug. 4, 2020

Center for American Progress: The Nature Gap, July 21, 2020

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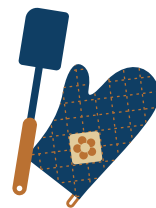
Founders...Cookies?

In February of 1991, 11 passionate conservationists sat around a table, drinking tea and eating cookies, and laid down \$20 each to start the Inland Northwest's first ever land trust. Almost 30 years later, INLC has protected nearly 22,000 acres of local land and more than 65 miles of waterways. Was there magic in those cookies? Try this recipe and see for yourself. ■

Founders Cookies Recipe

Makes about 3 dozen 2 ½-inch cookies

- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 8 tablespoon (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ¾ cup chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)



Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Whisk together flour and baking soda. In a separate bowl, beat butter and sugar with an electric mixer on medium speed until very fluffy and well blended. Add egg, salt and vanilla and beat until well combined. Stir in the flour mixture until well blended and smooth. Stir in chocolate chips and nuts. Drop dough by heaping teaspoonfuls onto greased baking sheets, spacing about two inches apart. Bake one sheet at the time, until the cookies are slightly browned on top and rimmed with brown edges, approximately 8-10 minutes. Rotate the sheet halfway through for even browning. Remove the sheet to a rack and let stand until the cookies are slightly firm—about two minutes. Transfer cookies to wire rack to cool. Enjoy (and change the face of local conservation)! For a gluten-free version, visit our Conservation News at InlandNWLand.org/news



from the kitchen of: Debra Schultz



Ride On, Mountain Bikers!

In late July, Spokane County bought two parcels of land located on Beacon Hill, an area popular with those who enjoy outdoor recreation, particularly mountain bikers. These two parcels will ensure permanent public access to some of Beacon's most popular downhill trails. Local organizations like Evergreen East Mountain Bike Alliance have advocated for years to ensure its permanent protection. The Conservancy is also helping to "make Beacon public" by creating a conservation and public use agreement with Avista for its adjacent property, to protect it from development and officially grant recreational access to the community. We need your help to ensure the rest of Beacon Hill is open for everyone's enjoyment. ■



What Lies Beneath: Our Aquifer

The impact of the Conservancy's preservation work is as close as your kitchen sink. More than 500,000 people in this region rely every day on the clear, clean, and cold water from the Rathdrum Prairie-Spokane Valley Aquifer. Our high-quality drinking water source is fed by run-off from Mt. Spokane, Mica Peak, and the mountains in north Idaho. Every day, millions of gallons flow from the mountains through streams and rivers toward the lowlands, where it infiltrates the ground, "recharging" the regional aquifer.

The Conservancy protects forest lands and recharge areas throughout the region, keeping run-off water clear and the aquifer it feeds clean and healthy. While it's easy to take our aquifer for granted, it is there because INLC supporters have helped fund our work to preserve and protect lands and waterways for the long-term health of our community and planet. ■

Become a Citizen Scientist with iNaturalist

Keep track of your fascinating finds with the iNaturalist app! Snap photos of plants, animals, insects, birds and fish and the app will help identify them. It will also log the data so scientists can monitor species migration, habitat quality, and other critical information to make plans for a changing world. ■



Celebrate Autumn on a Trail

Fall hiking in the Inland Northwest is a highlight of local recreation. Check out a few trail recommendations from our Community Conservation Program Manager, Todd Dunfield, and plan some autumn hiking today!

Liberty Lake Cedar Grove: Liberty Lake Regional Park

This beautiful hike begins in the main parking area of the Liberty Lake Regional Park. Hikers are treated to a gradual uphill climb of two miles along Liberty Creek, to the Cedar Grove Conservation Area. In 1993, the Conservancy worked with a private landowner to secure the sale of this 86-acre parcel to Spokane County, protecting it from proposed logging and opening it to recreation. Out-and-back hikers can expect to walk just over four miles or do a modified out-and-back loop by taking the Split Creek Trail on their way to the Cedar Grove and hiking back along the main trail on the west side of Liberty Creek.

Yellow Loop Trail: Post Falls Community Forest

This 3.6-mile loop starts at the W. Riverview Drive Trailhead and traverses most of the community forest, including a section along the Spokane River. This 518-acre public space came together over three decades of acquisitions by the Post Falls Parks Department. The autumn colors along the river are a must-see!

California Creek Trail: Mica Peak Conservation Area

The most dynamic beauty in the local forest canopy comes when the Western Larches turn shades of golden yellow. To reach the elevation where larches grow requires an 8-10-mile hike, but the views don't disappoint! The Conservancy partnered with Inland Empire Paper Company and Spokane County in 2018 to secure this area, one of the Futures program's newest, for conservation and recreation. ■



\$5.00 River to Ridges trail map

Many of the trails are loops and include lands that were conserved with help by the Conservancy. Pick one up today. They make great gifts for friends and family.

Available at:

- REI
- Rambleraven Gear Trader
- Main Market Co-op
- Physical Therapy Associates (on 27th)

or email us at:

info@inlandnwland.org
to request yours today



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INLAND NORTHWEST LAND CONSERVANCY

Strengthening communities, honoring lands

Mission: Connecting people to nature by conserving lands and waters essential to life in the Inland Northwest

Vision: We envision a future of interconnected natural habitats throughout the Inland Northwest, supporting thriving populations of native plants and wildlife, enjoyed and respected by the people who also call this region home

MAKE A DIFFERENCE YOU CAN SEE

Your financial support makes a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the Inland Northwest every day!



Approximately

90%

of households in Spokane & Kootenai counties live within view of lands INLC has helped protect



65+

miles of protected waterways



MILLIONS

of gallons of clean water flow through protected lands and into the aquifer every day



22,000+

acres of land protected