

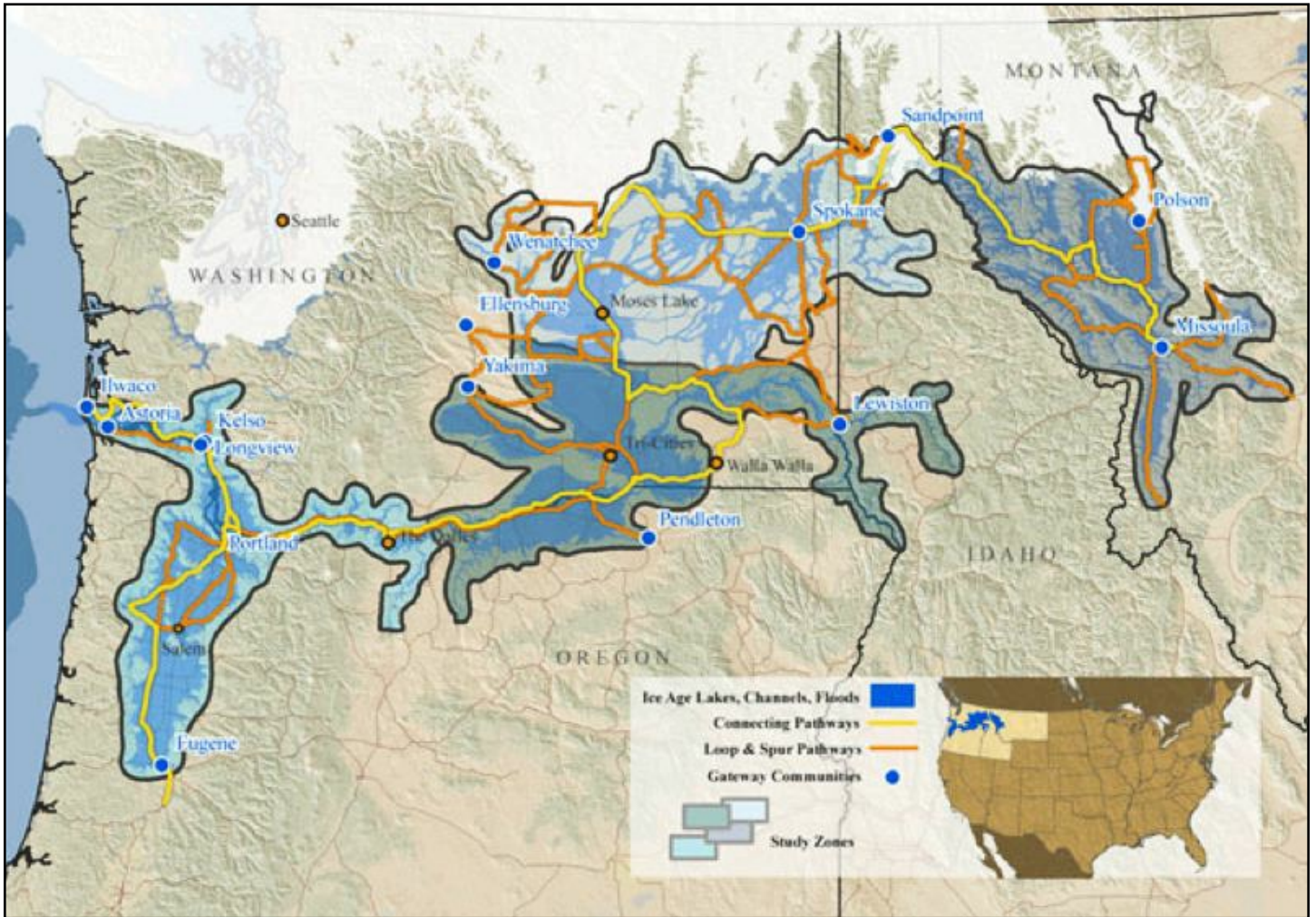


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## Tualatin could be 'portal' to national Ice Age Floods Trail

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IAFI chapter president gives talk at library



COURTESY OF THE ICE AGE FLOODS INSTITUTE - This map shows the proposed route of the Ice Age Floods Trail, a national geologic trail that could have a 'gateway' in Tualatin.

Tualatin is a city that wears its Ice Age heritage with pride. Now the city has an opportunity to become a “portal” along a new national geologic trail.

The Ice Age Floods Trail was created by an act of Congress in 2011, but it has been largely left up to local and organizational partners of the National Park Service to pay for its implementation.

Dan Foster, superintendent of the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area in eastern Washington, said an interpretive plan is currently being drafted, with plans to complete the first draft sometime next spring. The plan is expected to lay out the scope of the trail, what sites are included along it and how the story of the Ice Age floods should be presented along the way.

A logo is also being developed, Foster added, in the hopes of putting up signage along the trail stretching from Missoula, Mont., to the mouth of the Columbia River.

“We will be putting that up when we get the funding to do so,” he said.



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE - Nearly the entire Willamette Valley was submerged by a series of glacial outburst floods during the last Ice Age, more than 10,000 years ago.

Lake Roosevelt is one of many geological areas shaped by massive floods that outburst from Lake Missoula, a huge glacial lake in present-day western Montana during the last Ice Age.

“Not everyone knows the whole story of the Lake Missoula flood,” remarked Rick Thompson, local chapter president of the Ice Age Floods Institute, at a talk in the Tualatin Public Library’s community room last Thursday.

As Thompson described it, more than 10,000 years ago, water in the glacial lake built up until it forced an ice dam aside. The contents of the lake rushed out, spilling across northern and central Idaho and into eastern Washington, forming more temporary lakes. Floodwaters drained into the Columbia River Gorge, and as the water rushed toward the Pacific Ocean, the Willamette Valley was also flooded.

“We would have had 280 feet of water above us right here,” Thompson said.

The purpose of the Ice Age Floods Trail is to commemorate the region’s Ice Age history and educate people about the floods.

“To go to some of these locations and to see how big it was and the scope of it, it’s just mind-boggling to see how much water came through this area,” said Foster.

Lake Roosevelt is likely to be one of potentially hundreds of interpretive sites spread across four states, Thompson said. The main stem of the driving trail may be as long as 1,300 miles, with an additional 2,500 miles of spur and loop trails along the way.

Planners are also looking at designating portal communities, where people can get information about and access the trail.

“The city of Tualatin is doing a great job of using the Ice Age floods as a theme for many of the city’s developmental opportunities. For example, the public library has a mastodon skeleton there,” said Foster.

“Tualatin is ahead of the game on all of this,” said Thompson, citing Tualatin’s numerous Ice Age interpretive displays, public artwork, and artifacts like prehistoric animal bones and “erratic” rocks deposited in the area by the floodwaters as examples of how the city is already identifying itself as a destination for learning about the Ice Age floods.

While Tualatin has embraced the Ice Age to perhaps the greatest extent of any community in the Portland area, it is not alone in having points of interest with Ice Age significance. Fields Bridge Park in West Linn also has Ice Age interpretive signage, and the Camassia Nature Preserve in West Linn and Coffee Lake Wetlands in Wilsonville have unique landscapes directly owing to the floods.

Because of the trail’s funding situation, Thompson said local support and involvement will be key, along with support from the Ice Age Floods Institute and other organizations and businesses.

“The National Park (Service) does not have the money to do it, but a lot of towns, cities, counties, agencies can get involved and make this a reality,” he said.

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