



For Immediate Release:

June 7, 2023

Contact:

Patricia Brooks, patricia@matchmapmedia.com, 202.351.1757

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Names Washington Governor Jay Inslee 2023 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion

Gov. Jay Inslee honored in Sequim along the Olympic Discovery Trail for his commitment to connecting the state's trail system as a driver of climate, economic and quality-of-life benefits for Washingtonians

WASHINGTON—Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) has named Washington Gov. Jay Inslee the 2023 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion for decades of leadership in accelerating trail development across the state, including his commitment to connecting the state's trail system as a driver of economic and quality-of-life benefits for Washingtonians.

“For decades, Gov. Inslee has championed the role of trails in addressing significant challenges facing our communities—building climate resilience, generating economic development and delivering quality of life,” said RTC President Ryan Chao. “He has leveraged his position to raise the financial and political capital needed to unlock incredibly difficult projects that are transformative for the people they serve, the regions they connect and the entire nation. He is raising the bar for the country's elected officials, while showcasing how integral trail and active transportation networks are in addressing the intertwined issues of climate change and our country's economic future.”

Gov. Inslee's dedication to the state's trail system, and the impact that trail connectivity can deliver for the well-being of people, places and the planet, began when he was a state legislator, and has continued in his role as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and now as governor. Most recently, Gov. Inslee championed a \$1.3 billion investment for active transportation and trail projects under the [Move Ahead Washington program](#), the largest investment in trails, walking and biking in the state's history, as part of plans to accelerate the development and connectivity of transportation infrastructure across the state.

“When you believe yourself connected to a larger enterprise or a larger dream, it inspires you to take more local action,” said Gov. Inslee in a recent interview with *Rails to Trails* magazine. “We have to beat climate change, and these trails are one mechanism for beating climate change ... allowing for bicycle commuting ... it's part of our climate, economic and health-based approaches. I'm glad we've been able to put real dollars in to make this happen.”

An example of the impact of Gov. Inslee's leadership was seen in efforts to complete the iconic Beverly Bridge to allow nonmotorized passage over the Columbia River on the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail—uniting Eastern and Western Washington, and creating the potential for new economic benefits that outdoor recreation

can deliver to the region. He helped to secure the funding and cross-agency collaboration needed to complete this longstanding project, which has been a priority for advocates in the region for decades and is a major connection in the developing 3,700-mile cross-country Great American Rail-Trail®.

In Washington, completion of the [Great American Rail-Trail](#), which is bolstered by the governor's commitment to developing the state's trail system, has the potential to deliver significant returns as the route becomes more connected. As it's completed, the trail has the potential to generate \$229.4 million in visitor spending, \$104 million in labor income and \$22.8 million in new tax revenue annually. There are 540 miles of the Great American Rail-Trail located in Washington, which travel across the center of the state and through the Seattle-area to the western terminus in La Push, on the Pacific Ocean. The route in Washington is 73% complete.

An analysis of the benefits of trails facilitated by the [Washington Recreation and Conservation Office](#) clearly demonstrates that trails are strong economic and health improvement drivers for every corner of Washington. The findings show that trails contribute over \$8.2 billion to Washington's economy and support over 81,000 jobs each year. Trail use results in over \$390 million in health savings each year, and trail-based activities can improve physical and mental health—especially for children and communities at a higher risk of illness and chronic stress. Ninety percent of Washington residents participate in nonmotorized recreation annually, with each legislative district benefiting from between 2.1 and 27.2 million visits to their trails each year.

Since 2011, the Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions Award has honored individuals from across the country who have made significant contributions to the rail-trail movement through their hard work, volunteerism and support—in short, those who have gone above and beyond in the name of trails. The award is named in honor of the late rail-trail philanthropist Jeffrey L. Doppelt. Learn more about the nation's Rail-Trail Champions: rtc.li/trail-champions.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and [@railstotrails](#) on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.