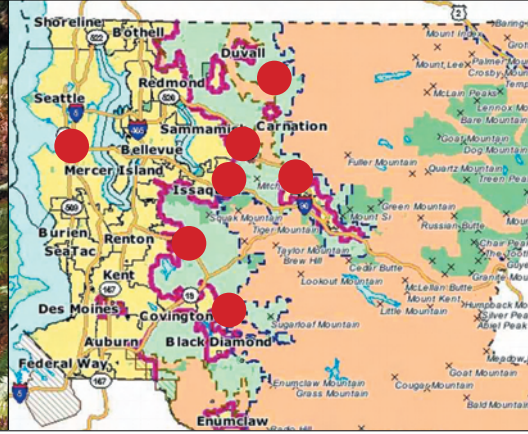


URBAN RURAL CONNECTIONS – A WHOLE KING COUNTY



The Rush Through the Woods

John Zilly, Beacon Hill

John Zilly loves living in Seattle's Beacon Hill neighborhood. He bikes to work, and he likes being able to walk to the grocery store and the nearby library. When the Sound Transit station opens in 2009, he'll be able to walk to it as well. But John's connection to the Puget Sound region really hinges on the nearby recreational opportunities.

John grew up hiking and skiing in the foothills and peaks of Washington's Cascades and Olympics. His early forays into the woods stuck. Over the past 20 years he's written 11 guidebooks, documenting hiking and mountain bike trails all over the west. He's researched, written about, and mapped over 500 trails, most in Washington State. Two of his books, *Beyond Mount Si* and *Kissing the Trail*, have been local best-sellers. In the first edition of *Kissing the Trail*, published in 1993, John mapped out a 39-mile mountain bike route that stretched from Woodinville to Issaquah. He called it *The Last Dirt Trail* because many segments of the trail were at risk.

In the third edition of *Kissing the Trail* (2003) John wrote: *May The Last Dirt Trail rest in peace—new housing developments and suburban shopping centers had obliterated the trail. Many other trails were lost during that decade, and recreating in the woods now requires a longer drive. Despite the loss of trails, John remains committed to getting out, whether alone or with friends, running, hiking, skiing, and mountain biking. And he hopes his two young kids will also feel as though they, too, grew up hiking, skiing and mountain biking in the foothills and peaks of Washington's Cascades and Olympics.*

Mt. Bike Trails, King County

Rural King County is a mountain biker's dream. Literally hundreds of miles of trails are open to Mountain Bikers of all skill and age levels. Organizations like Backcountry Bicycle Trails Club (BBTC) help to keep these trails open to bikers and help with maintenance. King County Parks in partnership with BBTC will soon be opening a mountain biking skills course at Duthie Hill Park on the Sammamish Plateau.

In the Snoqualmie Valley, John MacDonald Tolt River Park has an awesome scenic river setting and great ride on the high bluff to the west, where it is possible to connect with trails originating at Ames Lake, about a mile away. Soaring Eagle Regional Park to the west is one of the best places to learn how to mountain bike. The Seattle Water Department built the Tolt Pipeline in 1963 and left an excellent 100-foot-wide, 12-mile-long trail for foot, horse, and bicycle use. This trail has steep hills, dirt and gravel surfaces, and runs from Bothell to the Snoqualmie River Valley with the only drawback of crossing several major roads. Of course there is also the gravel Snoqualmie Valley Trail which takes you from Duvall through Carnation and Snoqualmie to end at the Cedar Falls trailhead where you can connect to the Iron Horse Trail to North Bend and all the way to the Columbia River near Vantage.

A former railroad line, the Cedar River Trail is paved from Renton to Maple Valley then continues to Landsburg as gravel. The ride can sometimes be loud and busy but May Valley is still a treat to ride through. A side trip to Lake Wilderness is possible for some waterside picnicking.

Southeast King County is somewhat less encumbered by development and offers some of the best back roads riding still available in the area. Try a ride through the Green River Gorge east of Black Diamond. Located on the edge of the historical town of Black Diamond, the Coal Mine trails weave and bob around the south end of Lake Sawyer, Frog Lake, and Ravensdale Creek. Mountain bikers enjoy miles of trails rambling through clearcuts, forest and bramble.

