

Nature Conservancy works to limit illegal motorized use on land

Group seeing damage in places

By STAFF REPORTS

The Nature Conservancy is working with the Kittitas County Sheriff's Office to stop illegal motorized use from damaging its property.

Gates have been torn down, roads damaged and forest habitat threatened by motorcycles, Jeeps and ATV use on the trails, said James Schroeder, director of forest conservation and partnerships for the Washington chapter of the

Nature Conservancy. Access by motorized vehicle has always been illegal, even before the Conservancy bought the land.

"We want people to come out and enjoy our lands," Schroeder said. "However, our primary mission is conservation."

Hikers, walkers and horseback riders are welcome across all Conservancy property in the Central Cascades. There's also an extensive network

of mountain bike trails at the south end of Cle Elum Ridge, including the Rat Pac Trail. Snowmobile access is permitted on most roads and trails when there's enough snow.

There are other portions of Conservancy land in the Central Cascades where motorized use is legal and welcome, Schroeder said. The Sasse Mountain Trail, which touches a small portion of the Cle Elum Ridge lands, offers legal access. South of Interstate 90, motorized access is welcome in an extensive system of For-

est Service trails including the Manastash Ridge Trail, Taneum Ridge Trail, and the historic Naches Pass Jeep Trail.

Detailed maps of authorized trails are available at <http://www.washington-nature.org/centralcascades/maps>.

Anyone who spots what they think is illegal use of Conservancy land is asked to call either the Kittitas County Sheriff's Office at 509-962-7525 or the Conservancy's Cle Elum office at 509-852-2508.