

Abstract: Historic Route of the Yakama-Cowlitz Trail
aipaxkan ctcet-taytnapamikan ctcet (*Sahaptin*)

The Yakama-Cowlitz Trail is an ancient trail, perhaps 7000 years old, through Cowlitz Pass in Washington's South Cascades. The trail connected the people of the Cowlitz and Tieton river watersheds, the Taytnapam and the Yakama, who gathered in the mountain meadows every summer. Their frequent contact resulted in shared linguistic and cultural characteristics.

On the west side, the trail followed the Cowlitz River through the Big Bottom of the river valley and up to Cowlitz Pass following Summit Creek. On the east side, the trail followed Indian Creek to Cowlitz Pass. Jim Yoke, an elder in the Taytnapam tribe, identified many sites on and near the trail to anthropologist Melville Jacobs in the 1920s.

The last 5.7 miles of this trail from the west side of the Cascades, from Soda Springs campground along Summit Creek to Cowlitz Pass, have been identified with some certainty. Other remnants of the trail through the Cowlitz River valley and through La Wis Wis campground have been tentatively located but not mapped

On the east side, the ancient route from the vicinity of Indian Creek campground coursing northwest to Cowlitz Pass is disappearing. It is known to the Yakama people and was followed by Justice William O. Douglas on his Cascade Mountain journeys. The trail appears on the 1902 Mt. Aix USGS map but is now obscured by brush and difficult to follow.

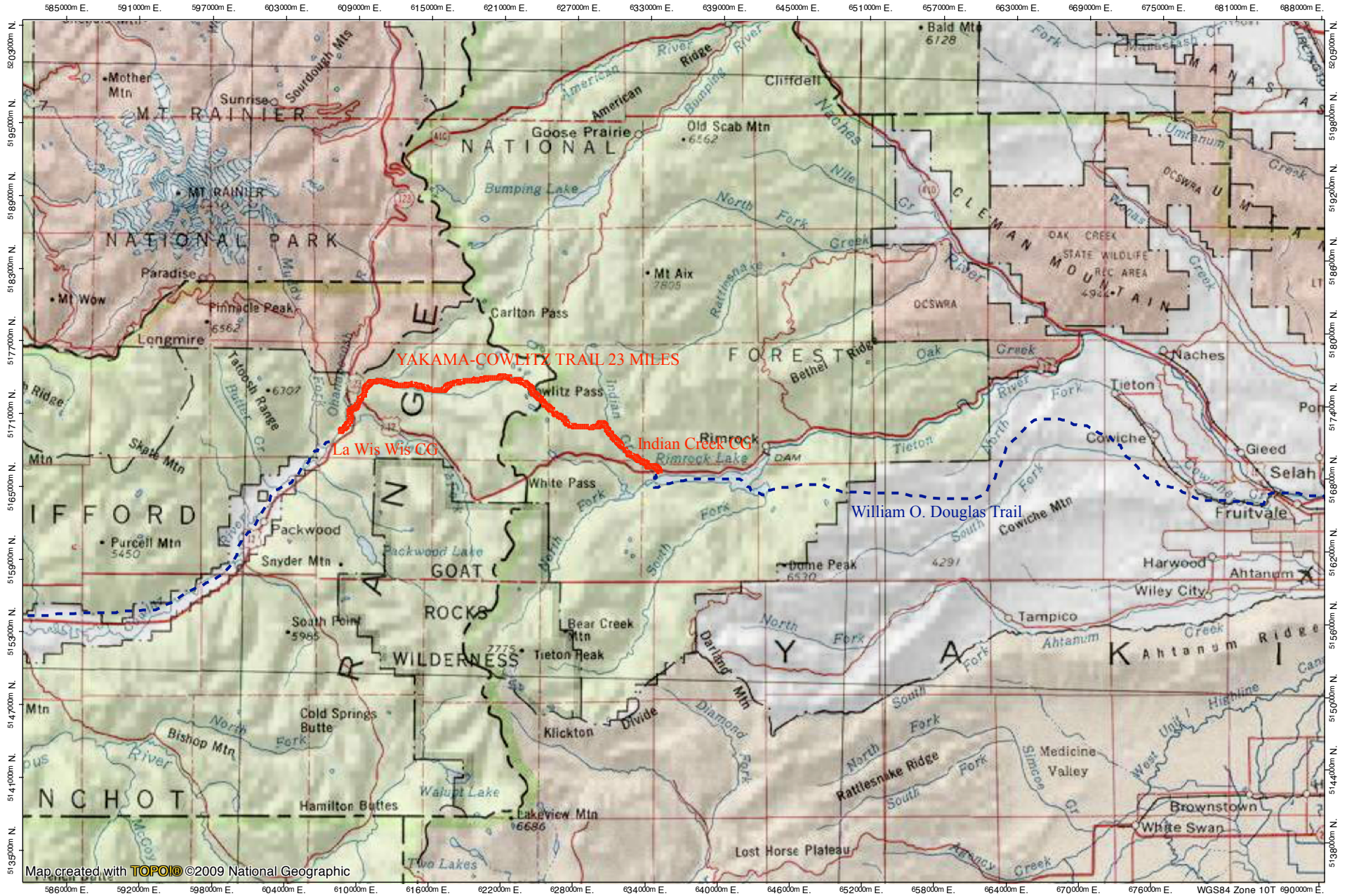
Phase 1 of this research project would document and mark approximately 23 miles of the ancient trail on both sides of Cowlitz Pass, using GIS/GPS technology, old maps, documents, oral tradition, and fieldwork (see attached map). Campgrounds on both ends (Indian Creek and La Wis Wis) are access points for the mostly undisturbed corridor across public land.

The Cowlitz and Yakama tribes have expressed interest in such a project. U.S. Forest Service archaeologists in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest would work with researchers to aggregate and map the data collected. The result would be a mapping of the ancient trail before most traces disappear.

Phase 2: Expand the mapping to the west of La Wis Wis Campground and to the east of Indian Creek Campground where the trail has been disturbed to a greater extent and may also cross privately owned land.

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