

By SCOTT SANDSBERRY

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The dozens of local volunteers working toward this Saturday's official opening of William O. Douglas Heritage Trail had no idea they were part of a fortuitous coincidence.

As it turned out, the efforts of those volunteers have inadvertently dovetailed with those of a documentary filmmaker working on a film to raise public awareness of the conservation achievements of the Yakima native and Supreme Court justice.

And when six portions of the William O. Douglas Heritage Trail get their public unveiling on Saturday, Oregon-based filmmaker John Concillo will be there to do filming for "Liberty and Wilderness," the Douglas film project Concillo is creating under the auspices of the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission.

"The object is to reach the next generation with this film, in terms of William O. Douglas' work," said Concillo, adding that it sounds like "kind of a lofty mission statement."

Concillo had been receiving Google alerts on any news regarding William O. Douglas, and several weeks ago he received one regarding the June 9 opening of the William O. Douglas Heritage Trail from downtown Yakima to Mount Rainier National Park.

He immediately began contacting volunteers on the trail's task force, and now he plans to be filming on the trail on Saturday, in hopes of capturing footage that will be appropriate for his film.

His film work, Concillo said, "obviously dovetails with the event and the mission of the task force. I'll have the opportunity to interview a lot of people out on the trail — it's an opportunity to get some relevant material for the film, and it may help the trail effort."

Concillo will also show a 12-minute portion of the still-in-progress film during a Saturday invitation-only event at a local winery for supporters of the project.

"I like to call (the 12-minute piece) a prologue," Concillo said. "I use it as a presentation piece to talk about the project, which is documentary style, basically an educational asset."

Concillo, who spent 27 years working in broadcast television, said the film will be "broadcast-quality and made for television" but will probably have most of its primary usage in schools as a special event or as an asset to history curricula.

For more information the film, go williamodouglas.org.

Saturday's official trail kickoff will begin with an opening ceremony at 11 a.m. at Davis High School, where brochures will be available with detailed descriptions of six selected sections of the trail.

Until the trail receives federal designation — a process that could take years — the brochure put together by the trail task force says the hikes "have no special designation; they are at this point just historic areas accessible to the public which have special meaning."

Saturday will not feature any guided hikes, said task force spokesman Ted Gamlem, but there will be volunteers at each of the six trailheads to explain the routes and the historical or geographical significance of each segment.

"Everything won't be as complete as we'd like it to be," Gamlem said. "This whole thing is just the start of what we're trying to do.

"These six hikes are places people can go and hike, and a lot of folks will have already been there, of course. The significance to this (official opening) day is that we want people to go there with an understanding of a new significance of that piece of trail — or, if they haven't been there before, to go there and experience something new."