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## KEEN reenergized after successful summer events

By MATT CARSTENS staff writer  
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One of the fishing spots at Helen McCabe park along Canyon Road in Ellensburg.

Brian Myrick / Daily Record

Even before volunteers with the Kittitas Environmental Education Network could finish hauling the last wheelbarrow of gravel, outdoors enthusiasts were already enjoying improved fishing access at Helen McCabe Park at the mouth of the Yakima Canyon.

A few years ago when KEEN installed the first fishing platforms at the park, an elderly man — fishing pole in hand — thanked them for their hard work and the opportunities it afforded him.

The banks of the pond had become deteriorated and steep from overuse so KEEN and the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club teamed up to help restore the popular fishing spot.

"I wasn't able to come fishing with my son and my grandson," the man said from his walker to KEEN Chair Jill Scheffer that day. "And you guys built these and now I can sit here for the afternoon and be comfortable."

## **LOTS OF WORK AT THE PARK**

Scheffer said the Field and Stream club finished off the last platform a few weeks ago, in what turned out to be one of several successful projects aiming to improve the Helen McCabe State Park and the overall Yakima River Canyon experience.

For that particular project, KEEN secured funding through grants while the Field and Stream Club provided the engineering and labor.

Other efforts at the park have included planting nearly 10,000 trees, shrubs and grass plugs over the last 12 years, Scheffer said, most of them in the last three or four years. KEEN worked with the Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group to plant seven acres of native grasses, and worked with Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue to perform a practice burn on a dilapidated house that needed to be removed from state park land.

Scheffer transitioned to a new job as Kittitas Valley Event Center director this spring. Scheffer said KEEN is re-energized in its efforts to work on finding funding for the proposed Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center.

"We had to move KEEN's office into my house," Scheffer said. "We had a loss of continuity there which took a little bit of a hit, but we ran a really successful summer camp this year. We had couple hundred kids out there over the summer at Helen McCabe Park, learning and engaging and having fun."

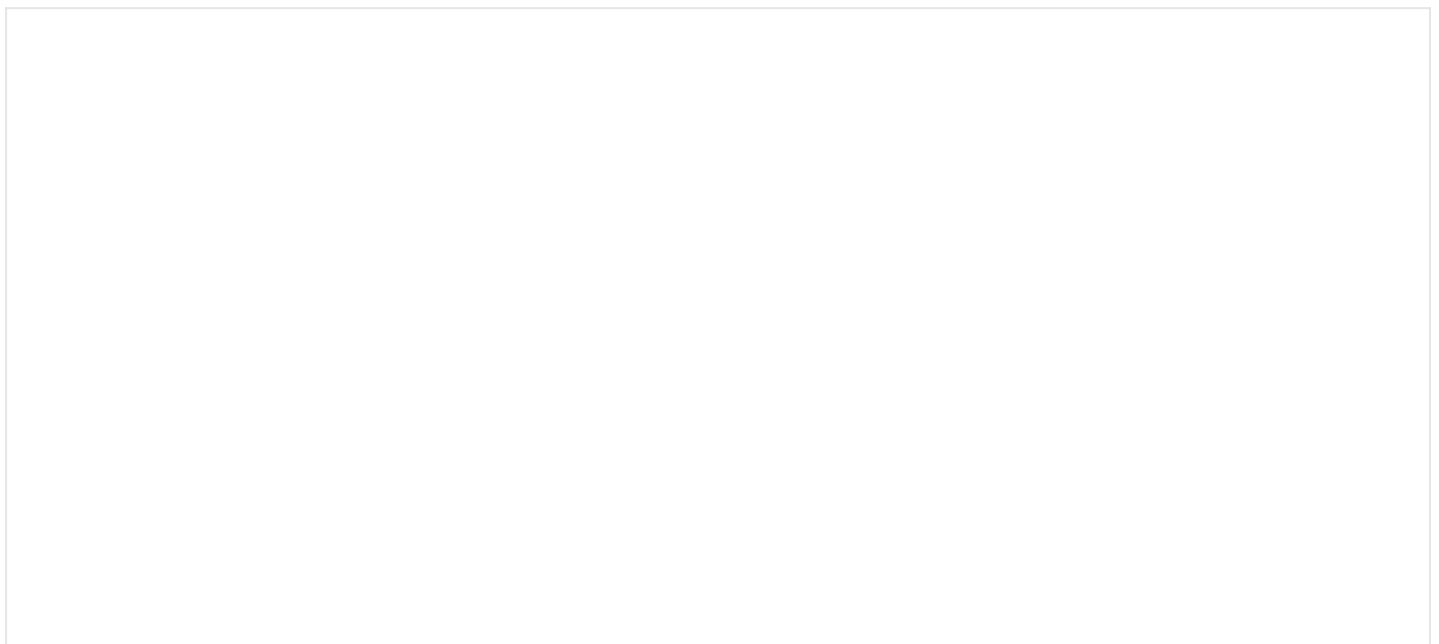
## **EVENT ON OCT. 7**

KEEN is testing out the fundraising waters on Oct. 7 with a hard cider festival at the Kittitas Valley Event Center. The new event will feature cider tastings, food and live music. Tickets are \$30 before Oct. 1, \$35 after and \$15 for designated driver tickets. Onsite camping is available for \$35 for a hookup or \$20 for dry camping.

"It's sort of a kick off for the refundraising effort," Scheffer said. "A kick off to the redrafted vision for the interpretive center and support for our ongoing educational programs like our summer camp and school camps that we're designing for all of Ellensburg School District this year."

When it comes to finding funding for the proposed interpretive center, Scheffer acknowledges it hasn't been easy, but the group is always looking at grants and getting people more familiar with KEEN and its goals.

"We need somebody to write us a check for \$2.5 million," she said jokingly.





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Matt Carstens