

Landowners Along Yelm Prairie Line Trail Receive \$2.7 Million Compensation For Trail Along Their Property

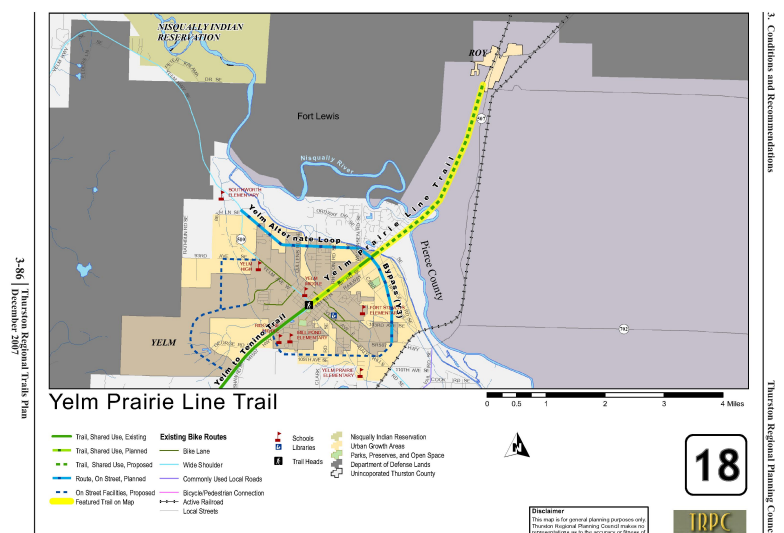
YELM, WA, UNITED STATES, April 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Stewart, Wald & Smith](#), a Missouri firm focusing on National Rails-to-Trails litigation, recovered over \$2.7 Million from the federal government on behalf of 27 landowners along 4.57-miles of abandoned railroad line in Thurston & Pierce Counties, Washington, from the City of Yelm to the City of Roy, known as the [Yelm Prairie Line Trail](#).

The landowners who owned land along the 4.57-mile stretch of the former CSX Transportation Inc. ("CSX") railway spanning from just northeast of Yelm Avenue to Roy received a settlement award from the federal government this month. The landowners have been litigating their cases in two lawsuits filed in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, Rachel Oberg, et. al. v. United States, Case No. 22-382, filed on April 4, 2022, and a follow up suit for additional landowners, Tyson Taylor & Jenna Taylor v. United States, Case No. 23-1359, filed on August 18, 2023.

Prior to litigation, the City of Yelm petitioned the United States Surface Transportation Board ("STB") to allow for railbanking of the CSX corridor. In May 2020 the City of Yelm filed a Trail

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Yelm Prairie Line Trail Map

Use Request with the STB, which ultimately resulted in the July 9, 2020, Notice of Interim Trail Use Decision (“NITU”) issued by the STB. [The Trails Act](#) permits the conversion of abandoned railroad corridors into nature and hiking trails, which simultaneously preserves the right of way for possible future railroad use, a federal process known as railbanking. The process prevents the land burdened by the railroad easement from reverting to the adjoining landowners, and gives the trail sponsors, in this case the City of Yelm, a new easement, thereby blocking the rights of the landowners to regain their property from within the corridor.

Stewart, Wald & Smith have represented over 400 landowners in the state of Washington and recovered over \$247 million from the federal government where the federal government’s authorization of a rails-to-trails conversion resulted in a taking of land under the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. The attorneys at Stewart, Wald & Smith have identified an additional 30 parcels of land that may be qualified for compensation along the Yelm Prairie Line Trail. These are landowners who owned land along the railroad corridor on July 9, 2020, the date the federal government authorized the trail. These landowners – whose properties lie north and south of the Nisqually River – still have the opportunity to bring their claims and obtain compensation for the trail conversion.

SWS and their clients are mostly neutral towards the trail. Attorney Michael J. Smith states: “This lawsuit seeks to obtain compensation for landowners for having their land taken, which is their right under the 5th Amendment of the Constitution. It has nothing to do with trying to stop the trail. Nearly everyone loves and uses these trails. However, certain citizens should not have to shoulder the burden of having to accommodate the trail. Many of these landowners’ have homes and businesses that are negatively impacted by the trail as a result of the loss of privacy and the potential for trespass due to their proximity to the trail.” said attorney Michael J. Smith.

Stewart, Wald & Smith is a law firm with locations in Saint Louis and Kansas City, Missouri. Their national practice focuses on representing landowners in rail-trail conversions across the nation.

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