

## GRAY WOLF / BCHW-PENINSULA TRAIL CREW NOTES

5/2-5/4/2025

Location: S. Fork Skokomish, Lower and Upper and spurs, ONF

### **Crew members:**

Rebecca Wanagel (Fri / Sat)  
Martin Knowles (Fri / Sat)  
David Graves (Fri / Sat)  
Patrick Sullivan (Fri / Sat)  
Perry Sproed (Fri / Sat)  
Elizabeth Storm (Fri / Sat)  
Rick King (Sat)  
Jim Hollatz (Sat)  
Kris Lenke (Sat)  
Bernt Ericson (Fri / Sat / Sun)  
Randy Kraxberger (Fri / Sat / Sun)

### **Packer:** Harold Wiese

Starring in order of appearance:

Sugar  
Katy  
Belle  
Archie

Total on-trail volunteer hours including packer: 164

Report written by Rebecca.

Objectives achieved (follow up plans, if necessary, are highlighted yellow):

### **Upper S. Fork Skokomish (trail 873.1):**

Maintained 1.5 miles

1. Cleared 2 large downed trees, one of which was very time consuming.
2. Completed 2 long-overdue projects
  - a. Old large fir embedded in the ground has been an aggravation for hikers for years to step over. This team completely notched the log down flat to the ground, making it now a smooth part of the trail rather than a scramble to get over it.
  - b. The huge cedar log that serves as a nature-donated footlog across the Skokomish River has been very difficult and a little dangerous to get up onto it for as long as it's been in "service," but made worse this past winter. This team spent hours making the entry / exit to the log not only passable, but easy for hikers and trail workers.
3. Discovered a recent (post-scout) huge tree blow down that was deemed to be completely obscuring the trail. Did a couple hours of brushing to make it possible and safe for hikers to get through and to analyze the project.
  - a. *A plan was made and a follow-up crew is now on the schedule, when we will also take care of a few more projects we know to be further up the trail.*

### **Lower S. Fork Skokomish on the south side of Church Creek ford, plus Church Creek Shelter trail (873 and 870):**

Maintained 3.1 miles

1. Cleared 22 trees
2. General trail cleaning (branch tossing, overhanging brush cutback)

### **Lower S. Fork Skok, north side of the river from LeBar horse camp to the ford:**

Maintained nearly 7 miles

1. Cleared 24 trees, two of which were quite large and time-consuming.
2. Brushed 1.3 miles, both sides of the trail, with power brushers and small chainsaw (start at Camp Comfort and working upstream)
3. Brushed first 0.4 miles out of LeBar.
4. Some drainage and tread was addressed in various places along the trail.
5. Created a bypass around a major tree / rootball issue on the hillside just above the Church Creek ford. A tree on the upside of the trail had fallen and the very large rootball was completely obscuring the trail. The project was deemed to be unsafe to cut for many reasons, not the least of which is that cutting the tree wouldn't necessarily have made it possible to move the rootball. A trail was created between the rootball and the rock wall.
  - a. *Need to go back in to address moving a boulder and an old stump to give it more clearance. This can be done in the fall when it's easy to come in from the other side and ford the river, rather than 8 roundtrip miles of hiking with heavy tools.*

### 100 spur trail (873.6)

1. Cleared one tree.

a. *Needs brushing because of all the saplings that are growing, but a WTA crew will do in July.*

### 120 spur trail (873.3)

1. Maintained 0.2 miles – brushing

### 2394 and 2355 roads (from LeBar to the 100 spur trailhead)

1. Cleared approximately 10 small impeding trees.

#### Notes:

Another annual event in the books and it was great! The weather was kinda Archie-like. Usually perfect and amazing but sometimes it just couldn't hold it together. 😊

Breakfast on Saturday morning was a welcome change, thank you to Bob and the Chimacum Chickens. Not only did it fill our trail-working bellies, but it gave us a chance to all come together in the same space so we could review the accomplishments from Friday and go over the plans for the day. We had 4 different teams to coordinate and send to different places.

Dinner on Saturday night was the usual level of awesomeness, thank you to Kim and Crew!

#### The Story



Interesting how this tree chunk ended up where it did, given where it came from (look to the left)



... but skillful sawing made short work of it.



This is the only way across the first crossing of the Skok on the Upper S. Fork Skok trail. The tree donated itself many years ago after the bridge washed out and was never replaced. It's always been very difficult to get across the rootball and onto the tree. This year was made worse by the high waters of winter.



Bernt and Randy came up with a plan and executed it perfectly.





Now it will be easy to get on the log! Even when carrying tools or a heavy backpack. YAY! 😊  
(zoom in and you'll see even the new step has friction strips in it done by chainsaw)



This is the view from the other end showing the full scope of why this log is so important to the crossing. We are lucky nature tossed it down here, but we have done improvements to it over the years for safety.



This tree looks easy ...



Except it's larger than it looks ...



And due to the trail being narrow and rutted, it took 15 HEAVY rounds to get that thing cleared.



This is a step over log that we've been annoyed by for at least a decade. The notch is way too high for less-tall people, especially those with heavy tools or backpack. It's a big step to get down off this thing. It needed to go, finally.



So the work began to make multiple cuts and knock them out with a Pulaski.





Except it turns out this old doug fir was extremely full of hardened pitch.  
Everything had to be cut thinner and it was hard work.



Perseverance pays off. It's now something hikers will never again notice.  
What a relief!



This huge blowdown of two trees happened after we did our scout.  
Bernt and Randy were taken by surprise.



They did some brushing and made a plan so the GWTC can go back to  
make this area better. That crew has been scheduled for late June.



Perry and Elizabeth worked the 3.1 miles of Lower Skok that is on the  
south side of the river.



They were teamed because they are both B sawyers looking to sharpen  
their skills. Being a team on a trail with 20-25 small to medium trees  
gave them a chance to practice and improve their saw handling.





You may be wondering .... but this picture makes me very happy. This is a team that was thinking hard about using tricks and techniques so the chain doesn't ever hit the dirt. When the chain hits dirt, it is instantly dull and needs sharpening, so you waste time changing chains.



You can see they carefully sawed down to where they started to cut into the bark (they were watching the color of the sawdust plus they had made a notch in the log so they could see better). While feathering the trigger, once the sawdust turns dark, they stopped the saw instantly and rolled the log out. Bark was left behind and the chain never touched dirt. Way to go team.



Harold and his 4-hooved crew worked with Martin and Rebecca on Friday due to the fact that we knew we had two very large trees, so had brought the heavy 462 saw and extra gas and oil.



We worked on sawing out old projects that have been too far into the trail for too long, focusing on stock standards for the trail width.



This cedar was a solid 5.5' in diameter. That's Martin's hand sticking up from the backside and his hat barely showing. I couldn't see over it (yeah yeah yeah, I know that's a low bar). So we were thinking this project was going to be a loooooong one.



However, to our delight, the cedar had fallen because it was rotten on the inside, not all that common for cedar. So it came apart in easy-to-move pieces.





We kept opening it up, saving the thin solid piece on the top for last. We could tell from the binds that the rootball wanted to stand up.



When I finished the final release cut, we were hoping it would go. Sadly, it did not.



Here is what it looked like when we finished. Harold had moved his animals away in case the rootball fell back into place. When the tree didn't stand up after all, he moved the animals back, but still out of reach of the rootball, fortunately.



About 20 minutes after the final cut (we were at the next tree just 200 feet uptrail), the tree split and the rootball fell back down into its hole. No animals were close to being hurt, of course, but Harold says two lead lines were broken! They were startled!



We have another notch in our knowledge cap about the behavior of cedar even after a cut is finished.



Belle, Katy and Sugar are all like, are you DONE doing scary things now?



This was a boring project. 56" fir(?) hemlock(?) snag that had fallen recently. It was solid, but punky enough that the saw kept lugging down as the chain filled with soft wood. We ended up continuously pulling the saw in and out, sort of like we were running a crosscut saw. That kept the chain cleared of the punk so it wasn't so hard on the saw and our patience. The rounds were heavy so we had to cut thin.





David and Patrick were the team working from Camp Comfort uptrail to Church Creek ford. They sawed their way through about 17 projects until they came to the main project ...



A very large cedar on the uphill side of the trail came down. Its rootball covered the trail. These two pictures show the problem area from both the upstream and downstream. David and Patrick analyzed this on Friday to determine our game plan for Saturday. They were contemplating sawing and moving the rootball, or doing a bypass. A bypass, though, would be challenging here because the tree peeled off a perpetually wet rock hillside. There wasn't much room behind the rootball and this is supposed to be a stock trail.



What is happening is that the tree is huge, which is not usually problematic, but there was no place to safely cut. Standing down on the hill, besides the fact that there is no good escape route, puts the sawyer directly under the rootball that is loaded with rocks and debris. Even if they could find a good place to stand, reaching the top of the log even with a tall person was doubtful. And there is that 24" fir on top of it, way up high in the air. They contemplated cutting it from way down below, where the top of the tree lay, and just cutting their way up the tree, but unfortunately the top of the tree is in a swamp. And there is no guarantee at all that cutting the tree would move the rootball.

The right picture shows that the rootball, among other problems, is wrapped around a really tall snag. All in all, a bad situation.





Saturday the project had 5 people to the rescue. This crew was David, Perry, Elizabeth, Rick and Martin. They decided a bypass was the only safe or even reasonable option.



They dug around the rootball and cleaned it off. Moved rocks. Dug some more. Dealt with drainage of the water pouring off the hillside.



Sooner than expected they got a decent path around the backside and the rootball is amazingly shaved off!

In the left picture you can see a boulder that is giving a pinch point. We will go back in to the site to move it in the fall, when we can access it from the Church Creek side and not have to hike 8 miles round trip with heavy tools.

Rick said yes, even a horse or mule could get through there. Though it's doubtful that a loaded pack animal could without difficulty.





A leaner near the site needed to be cut down. Then the team was ready for a tool pickup by Harold and company.

While this group and Bernt / Randy on the Upper S. Fork Skok were busy, Patrick, Rebecca and Jim were doing a good brushing on the trail. We started from Camp Comfort and worked upstream. Patrick and Rebecca were running brushers and Jim was using a small chainsaw to trim out dozens of overhanging and encroaching vine maples and other small trees. Sorry, no pictures of this crew at work. But Harold stopped on the way back to pick up our tools as well. It's always nice to hike out with a light pack or no pack.



Belle is awfully pretty.



And they're off, headed back to camp. An amazing dinner awaits.



The mock orange is thick and blooming on the beautiful Skok!



PS) The crew working with Bob on the campground did an amazing job too. The camp looks fantastic!