



Gray Wolf Trail Crew -in partnership with- BCHW, Peninsula Chapter

Elwha-Hurricane Hill Trail, Olympic National Park

22 August, 2025



Crew members

Rebecca Wanagel

David Graves

Tim Branham

Greg King

Martin Knowles

Jack Bochsler

Paul Kamps

Jon Behar

Chauffeurs

Eric Nagle

Fred Inman

Quick Stats

On-trail volunteer hours: 80

Hours including travel time: 116

Miles worked: 5

Logs cut: approx. 16

Miles brushed and tread repair where
necessary: 4.3

Miles hiked: approx. 10

Objectives:

1. Clear logs from the entire 6.3 mile trail.
2. Brush the uphill side of the trail wherever brush was encroaching badly enough to be causing "tread creep"*

**the slow movement of the tread down from its original line caused by hikers walking on the downhill edge to avoid the thick brush.*

3. Repair tread creep and other tread problems wherever necessary.
4. Achieve steps 2 and 3 in the upper reaches of the trail that we hadn't yet tended in recent years.

Achieved:

1. All logs were removed from the trail. A few of them were old cut logs that were cut too narrow - passage was widened.
2. Brushed (with two power brushers) and repaired tread wherever necessary from the top of the trail down to a point that is 1.9 miles from the bottom trailhead. This included raking the brushed areas, addressing spots where the tread was causing hikers to feel off-balance, and getting rid of major tripping hazards in the tread.
3. 40 yards of badly-needed drainage work at a spot about 4 miles from the upper trailhead. This was pure muck (even in August!) that needed some work to redirect the unavoidable seep.

Future work (likely this fall):

1. Return with 2 power brushers, walk back up to the 1.9 mile where we left off and continue with brush and tread efforts. There is a distance of 2300 feet below that spot that has not been done in recent years and has thick brush and deteriorating tread.



Left to right:

Jon Behar, Greg King, Tim Branham, Rebecca Wanagel, Martin Knowles, David Graves, Paul Kamps, Jack Bochsler



Fred and Eric drove us from Madison Falls trailhead, where we left our cars, to Hurricane Ridge. Elwha-Hurricane Hill trail is long and extremely steep, so the plan was to work from top down, exiting via Madison Falls at the end of the day. We hiked from Hurricane Hill parking lot to the Elwha-Hurricane trail (1.5 miles) carrying our tools. The first 2 miles of this trail provide tremendous views in every direction, and an immense meadow with the Bailey Range as the backdrop and the Elwha river winding below us.

We did some work up in the higher elevations. There were several areas where we had to stop and brush the uphill side and repair the tread. Some places had such eroded tread that it was hard to keep from falling off the trail to the steep hillside below.

In the lower reaches of the meadow, just before it enters the forest, we cleared about 200 yards of thick Sitka mountain ash shrubs that had overtaken. Though these are one of my favorite plants, they were choking the trail to where hikers couldn't tell which way was the right direction. We've opened that back up.



Once we entered the forest, we did a lot of walking where the brush wasn't too bad, and stopped to brush, clean and repair tread wherever necessary. The main plant on this trail, oddly, seems to be wild rose. If you haven't experienced trying to handle this plant without 3 days of resulting pain from microscopic thorns that go right through your gloves into your nerve endings, you haven't yet lived.





After a while, we finally came to the top of the one-mile section that I knew from experience to be the worst part of the trail. There, we started brushing continuously, with tread restoration still on an as-needed basis.

4.4 miles from the top, we came to a 100 yard section that's been on my radar for a long time. In the top left picture, you are actually looking at a trail. It had tread crept down about 3-4 feet. The thimbleberries, ferns, maples, wild rose, small firs and oceanspray had overtaken and obliterated the trail. Hikers were slipping, tripping and likely ruing their decision to hike this steep trail. ⚠️Slippery when wet!⚠️

We ran a brusher through here twice, making a corridor wide enough to be able to restore the tread to its original position, at least 3 feet up the hill. When we were done, it was restored to a (still steep) easily walkable trail.

Compare the top left to the bottom right. 😊

Meanwhile, there were also logs across the trail. The ones near the top had been there for years because it was daunting to think about carrying heavy saw equipment up this steep trail for so many miles. Thus the reason I chose to have us work top down this time. Some of the logs that needed cutting were old ones that had been cut (or slid down) too narrowly, so we widened those.

A couple of logs had fallen just since we scouted, a few months ago, showing us that nature provides job security for us volunteer trail workers.



Before



After



Before



After



These trees had been there for many years, finally cleared!

This is the lower meadow referenced earlier in the report. The saw team cleared that double-stemmed tree and the Sitka mountain ash shrubs were brushed back. (sorry, we didn't get an after picture 🙁).



By the time we got that 100 yard section done and the last tree was cleared, it was late and hot. We still had 2 miles of trail and 2.2 miles of Olympic Hotsprings Road to walk back to the cars. We were glad to have a chance to rest our feet.

