



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

Smokey Bottom (Old West Lake Mills)

3/6 - 3/7/26

Report by Rebecca Wanagel



Crew members

Rebecca Wanagel (3/6 + 3/7) Kellie Creamer (3/7)
Martin Knowles (3/6 + 3/7) Cricket Pomeroy (3/7)
Randy Kraxberger (3/7) Deni Lojko (3/7)
Jon Behar (3/7)

Quick Stats

On-trail volunteer hours: 61
Hours including travel time: 79
Miles worked: 2.0
Trail rating: hiker / stock
Newts saved from trail tools: 2

Objectives:

1. Clear entire 2-mile trail of logs with logout team of two on 3/6 (approximately 10 projects).
2. Work northern 1.25 miles with the whole crew on 3/7: tread rebenching, drainage and brushing. I hoped to tie back in to where we stopped working from the south end last year - and that is exactly what happened.

Achieved:

1. 2 miles completely cleared of logs.
2. 1.25 miles of tread checked and addressed where necessary (about 900 feet of rebenched tread in all).
3. All drainage checked and cleaned / addressed as necessary (about 20 drainages cleared or improved).
4. Brushing, about a ½ mile brushed, both sides of the trail.

Future work:

1. Thanks to us, this trail is in lovely shape right now. No future crews planned for 2026.



Smokey Bottom is the former West Lake Mills trail. It makes a wonderful loop with the trail that now runs along the bottom of the former lakebed. If you catch it at the right time in late spring (likely earlier this year after the warm winter) you will be treated to an amazing show of thousands of lupines blooming along the river.

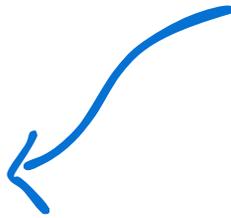
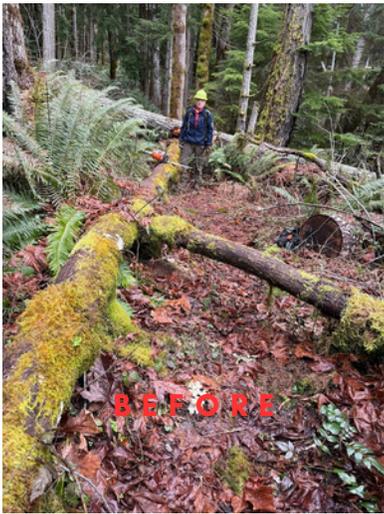
This map has it labeled as "Old West Lake Mills" and the lakebed trail listed as Smokey Bottom. I thought the whole thing was Smokey Bottom. I dunno. It's all pretty.

The trailhead is **3.5 miles** from Madison Falls, which is where we have to park. This is quite an undertaking to get to and from the trail and still do enough hours of work to make a huge difference.

This crew exceeded expectations!

Friday, March 6

Martin and Rebecca logged out the entire trail the day before. We did this so that we could keep the crew together as a group on Saturday, enabling us to teach and mentor folks who are new to GWTC.



Last year we removed a short, rotten puncheon and cleared out the area so that the water could drain. This year, while we were there with a saw, we cut out a blocking tree and opened up drainage even more so the water flows freely and quickly.



This tree rose up quite a bit as it was being cut! That shows that the rootball, which we couldn't see, was cantilevered - likely in a hole. No problem, we just adjust the cut as necessary but it was up pretty high so Martin had to take that one.



Saturday, March 7



Jon and Randy were the formidable brushing crew. Amazing job brushing both sides of the trail for a 1/2 mile!



Martin mentoring Deni, Cricket and Kellie on how to recognize where the trail needs attention and how to get it rebenched properly. All three of them picked it up fast and proceeded to do remarkable work!!



Deni working a section of the tread, getting it comfortable to walk again and back in its original line. She really picked up the concept quickly and never walked past a problem area!



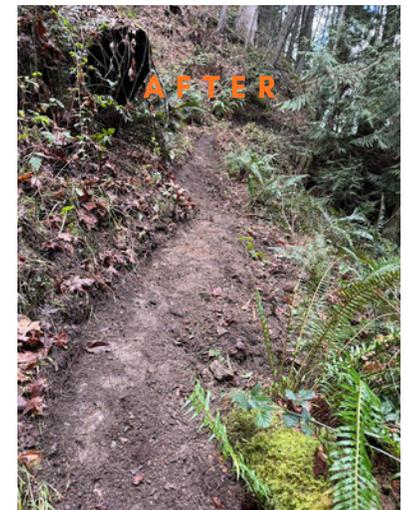
This drop to a creek crossing got a lot of attention from us last year. So this year it just needed a touch up. That's one of the advantages to repeatedly returning to tend to a trail year after year.



By the end of the day, Cricket had become a perfectionist. Spotting the problems and fixing them in a way that I would have done myself. He even thought to make the "soft shoulder" more obvious so that people won't step there by accident and take a bad fall.



Kellie was the one who first encouraged Cricket to come join her on a trail crew. This is their second time with us and we hope they become regulars. Kellie leaves behind a beautiful trail wherever she goes.



This is wet area overgrown with brush that had forced the trail way off line and off balance as a result. Since I forgot the "before" picture, I drew in the brush and where the trail was for you. ;-)