



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



Wynoochee Pass Trail
Graves Creek Trail (Success Creek to Sundown Lake)

July 18-24, 2026

Report by Rebecca Wanagel

Crew members

Bernt Ericson
Matt Houghton
Paul Kamps
Martin Knowles
Sonya Langford
Barbara Maxwell
Julie Metzger
Ted Spoon
Rebecca Wanagel

Pack-out crew

David Graves
Kristie Kocurek
James Miller
Eric Nagle

Quick Stats

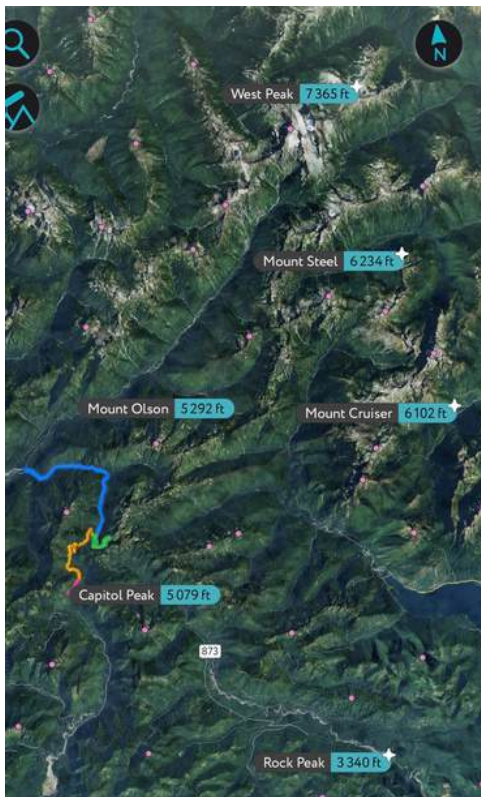
On-trail volunteer hours: 513
Hours including travel time: 569
Miles worked: 8.7
Miles hiked to achieve the work: 40
Trail rating: Hiker
Logs cleared: about 120
Brushed miles: about 6.6

Objectives:

1. Clear 8.7 miles of downed trees – some have been down longer than memory serves.
2. Brush – either with a power brusher or by hand – 6.6 miles.
3. Tread and drainage work as necessary.

Achieved: All above objectives achieved.

Welcome to Wynoochee Pass and Graves Creek Trails: where every mile counts for two.



Left: Pulled out view showing our work location compared to the upper corner of Lake Cushman (which is lower right).



Right: Closer view showing the different parts of our work zone.

Wynoochee Pass Trail,
Forest Service
Wynoochee Pass Trail,
Olympic National Park
Graves Creek Trail, ONP
Sundown Lake Trail, ONP



Rugged. Quintessential Olympics. Sublime. Neglected.

The Gray Wolf Trail Crew specializes in giving TLC to trails in the Olympic National Park that are long overdue for maintenance . These trails passed that qualifier in spades.

- > Trees that have been down so long that no-one can remember when they weren't.
- > Brush so thick and intrusive that placing your feet became an effort in hope:
 - >> hope you don't slip on the wet rocks that you can't see.
 - >> hope the trail doesn't take a steep dropoff that you can't see.
 - >> hope you don't roll your ankle on a badly outsloped trail with slippery roots that you can't see.
- > Tread pushed downhill by years of hikers avoiding the brush.
- > Drainage in some areas untended for so long that long stretches of trail became marsh.

Our view for much of the trip was a salmonberry or huckleberry bush or two or million. We couldn't see over the brush. This was us. Staying upright required a shuffling of the feet to find your next footstep.



And that was when we weren't crawling over, under or around downed trees. Admittedly, much of the time was pushing through mountain blueberry bushes. Those were yummy to graze upon as you shove your body through. The red salmonberries were good too but this author thinks nothing beats a large, ripe mountain blueberry or huckleberry.



The only place where the brush relents is in the meadow basin just before Sundown Lake or the pretty frog ponds at Wynoochee Pass.

So what to do with this mess??

Give it the Gray Wolf touch ... as always ...



This very old, down-forever yellow cedar was completely twisted. We carefully pieced it apart and kept pulling off curly slabs to toss off the trail until we got it to a low step-over. We didn't cut all the way through because the upper part would have slid down.



These trails are rated hiker only, and they are more primitive in nature than some others. So we were able to leave a few things as step-overs, and not nearly as wide as we cut corridors for stock clearance.



Handbrushing
makes a surprisingly
big difference!

Our crew
handbrushed about
1.7 miles of trail.



Power brushing gets
the job done more
thoroughly and faster,
but there are some
things that just have
to be done by hand
(thicker stems, high
off the trail, etc).

Our crew power
brushed about 4.9
miles of trail. This
requires a full time
person cleaning up
behind the brusher.



Meanwhile, the saw teams sometimes had to stop to cool off from the heat and mugginess.
Look what we found!



Carrying the heavy weight of the saw equipment is no walk in the park. Sometimes even scrambling down into or up out of rocky creeks, never mind fighting our way through the aforementioned heavy brush. We have the saw, extra bar, fuel and bar oil, axe, a saw kit with filing equipment, extra chains, etc., plus a large first aid kit, radio and extra radio batteries. That's per saw team. And we're wearing chaps or saw pants.



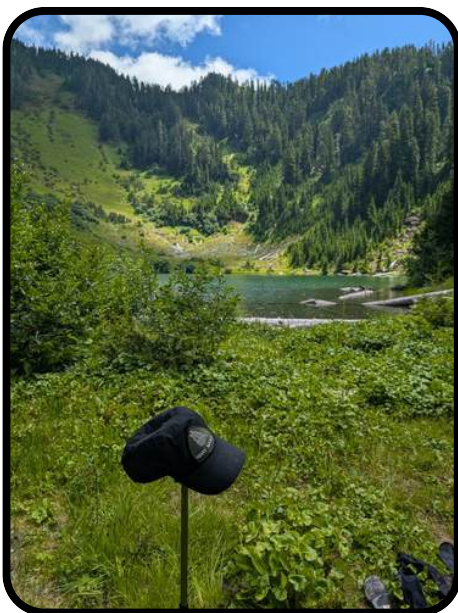
Martin keeps our chains sharp in the field, though we use all kinds of techniques and finesse to not dull them in the first place. Sometimes you just get unlucky, but Martin can usually field sharpen them unless someone hit a rock with the chain. He uses a stump vise to hold the bar in place.



Eventually we worked the tools in such a pattern that we finished by setting them down back at Wynoochee Pass. This is still 3 hard miles from the trailhead, and getting stock support on this trail is NOT an option. Yay for the pack out crew! We appreciate you!



We say goodbye to the gorgeous Sundown Lake for this year, but I have a feeling we will be back. The trail is so incredibly much better to hike there, we'll want to keep it that way!



(this picture was taken last year, there was no snow when we were there for this trip)