

Monthly Trail Report for the Board and Membership

February 2024

Jim and Donna Hollatz, DNR and State and Jamestown Tribe

Miller Peninsula, Feb. 5, 2024: Jim Hollatz, Judy Dupree, and Sandy Isly rode from the trailhead to the Bluff Trail and removed 12 large blocking trees. Jim took an extra horse with the chainsaw and provided some chainsaw instruction and practice for Sandy Isly as they worked. It was a full day, but much was accomplished.

Bill Mueller, OAT Trail (Thursday Trail Crew) and NOLT

Only two work parties in January. One was canceled when Jeff was unavailable and the other canceled due to weather (snow).

On January 4, 15 workers addressed maintenance issues around MP 3.2 on the OAT. Donated work hours: 92. Tread was re-widened to a minimum of 36" and erosion controls (aka drainage systems) were refurbished. New ones were added where deemed appropriate. One new culvert pipe was installed to provide water control on a very muddy section of trail. (Recent reporting on that section shows that the water issue has essentially dried up.) Long stretches of the trail were also topped with gravel to minimize the effect of the rocky tread substrate. All in all, a very productive day.

On January 25, work continued around MP 3.5 of the OAT. The work party consisted of 11 individuals. Donated work hours: 68. The overall work was as before, reestablish tread width to 36" minimum and address erosion control. More gravel was spread on this section. On both of the January days, ensuring maintenance of an appropriate stock corridor was also addressed. Again, a productive day.

Rebecca Wanagel, ONF and ONP

ONF:

1/19: Rebecca Wanagel and David Graves attended the annual Olympic National Forest meeting of all volunteer crews. In attendance were 5 members of ONF staff and representatives from the following crews:

- Gray Wolf Trail Crew (GWTC)
- BCH-Grays Harbor
- BCH-Peninsula (and Rebecca represented Bob Hoyle for Buckhorn since he had a scheduling conflict)
- BCH-Mt. Olympus
- Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (EMBA)
- Pacific NW Trail Association (PNTA)
- Mountaineers
- WTA
- Mt. Rose Crew

Things discussed that day:

- Volunteer agreements. BCH has a regional one filed with the FS, but we needed to take care of it for the GWTC. Also, the FS is now asking that we collect signatures (one time per person, per year) for the individual volunteers who come out on our crews. Personally, I think this is great because I've always wondered why the FS wasn't more proactive about knowing exactly who is out there putting in all this hard work. Also, for liability reasons, I'm more comfortable with having folks have their name with the FS when they volunteer.
- We reviewed the active document on Smartsheet to figure out what metrics make the most sense. The FS is interested in seeing if they can find ways to make it less of an administrative burden for volunteers to log accomplishments. And yet, logging accomplishments is necessary for keeping track of progress, work done on trails, and documenting how much work these trails need.
- Everyone again voiced the challenge slow NEPA has had on vital trail projects to FS leadership, and explored solutions.
- The volunteer groups expressed how problematic it is that the FS not only has an extremely high turnover, but also that information never gets passed on to the new person. There is no overlap from one person to another (they aren't allowed to fill a position until it's been empty for X amount of time). We discussed the need for the ONF to have a logbook to track projects around the forest and other inter-group information. They would like to find something accessible that we can collaborate on.
- We discussed as a group what some high priority projects are for this upcoming season, identifying which ones will need inter-group cooperation.
- Safety: we were supposed to have some meeting time dedicated to safety (WFA, radios, dispatch, etc) but ran out of time. So this was addressed in several follow up emails.

After the meeting, Rebecca sent many emails to the appropriate people to start collaboration on the following trails:

- Duckabush: there are issues that block stock. This will become exceptionally problematic next year (2025) when the ONP heads in to do some major restoration work on this trail. Rebecca is working with ONF and WTA to make sure the ONP mules can safely get by so their crews can address these long-standing problems. Emails were sent to WTA, ONF and ONP. WTA volunteer crew leader, Al Mashburn, has responded that he can take care of all but a few of the problems outlined in the scouting report done by Heidi Brill (ONP lead packer). A couple of the problems require blasting or some other way of removing rock – Brent with ONF is trying to get approval for that.
- Lower Dungeness: there are many hundreds of feet of rotting, dangerous puncheon on this trail. A lot of this can be replaced by turnpike, which is much more sustainable. The ones that have to remain puncheon will need to be replaced. Emails were sent to ONF and EMBA. We have a scout planned for March 8 on this trail with representatives from ONF, GWTC / BCH, and EMBA.
- Graywolf River bridge at the bottom of Slab Camp trail: this has been a problem since the bridge was put in. It is a stock-worthy bridge but with steep steps on both sides that only people can do. I have mentioned this to the ONF before but with their high turnover in personnel, I am starting over. We have a scout scheduled for this one on March 1. There will be ONF, GWTC / BCH as well as a bridge engineer from ONF. We will attempt to brainstorm a solution to make this huge bridge accessible for stock.
- Lower S. Fork Skok: there are still several areas that are in danger of falling into the river. A scout wasn't scheduled, but a collaboration email was sent to ONF, EMBA, and WTA. Coordination with WTA is happening since they will have backcountry crews on that trail this season (two that I know of) plus work from us.

2/6

Mike Bonomo met with Brent Freeman, ONF, to look at a problematic area 1/3 mile from the trailhead of Lower Big Quil. The concern is a large failing culvert that will present danger to everyone, but mostly stock, when it fails.

ONP:

1/26

Pyramid Peak Trail, 2 crew members

Logout.

See summary report attached to this email.

1/27

Pyramid Peak, 12 crew members

Rootball removal with tread restoration, brushing (one mile), raking and trail cleanup.

See summary report attached to this email.

2/6

Rebecca met with Nathan Forrest, Interim Trails Supervisor, to discuss plans for backcountry work for the season. Lots of ideas were tossed around and we have a pretty full schedule at this point (between ONF and ONP). If you haven't seen it yet, please go to the website listed below to take a look.

Nathan and I also discussed May 11, when the ONP will have a volunteer day out at Lake Crescent. Nathan and Heather Stephens have both expressed a concern and a solution in one sentence: the concern is volunteers asking to help on ONP trails but they have no experience or supervision (and likely no radio nor knowledge of emergency management). The solution is to have those folks funneled towards crews I lead. They trust our leadership and experience out on those trails, and it would be a win-win if new volunteers would come out with us. We would increase the "labor force" and train folks as necessary – plus we have emergency management training, tools and knowledge. I will be at the May 11 event to hand out information to inquiring people about volunteering with the crews I lead.

Saw

2/2

Larry Baysinger, Martin Knowles and Rebecca Wanagel all needed to be recertified as C sawyers and Instructor / Evaluators. We met with Tony Karniss and Tom Mix out at Littleton Horse Camp to achieve this important task. Tom, Rebecca and Martin will all be instructing and evaluating at the 4-day Cispus Center saw event happening April 4-7. This is a multi-agency effort to get new and newish sawyers more practice and instruction so they can take their skills to the trails.

Outside of Cispus, Rebecca and Martin will do saw trainings and certifications as necessary and appropriate on the trails we're working during the season.

Please remember that we have a website and anyone can sign up for Gray Wolf Trail Crew work crews through the link on this site. All members of BCH and GWTC are welcome on these crews – and new folks are always encouraged so please spread the word. The backcountry crews are posted way in advance and the day crews are posted more sporadically, as necessary, throughout the year.

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