

Monthly Trail Report for the Board and Membership
Report written by Rebecca Wanagel
March 2025

Jim and Donna Hollatz, DNR and State

One trail work day was done at Miller Peninsula State Park on February 28, 2025. Jim and Donna Hollatz rode with Judy Dupree to remove trees that had fallen across trails. A pack horse carried the chainsaw and extra fuel. The ride covered 8 miles and 13 trees were removed. We rode north from the parking lot on E. Diamond Point Trail and then across the E-W Connector. Four trees had been reported down on that section of trail. From there we rode west on Cable Trail to Two Cedars and north to Manzanita. We removed several trees from Manzanita, then met some bicycle riders who reported a large tree on the west end of Fireweed. We continued west to that area and removed a large hemlock that was blocking Fireweed. There were many huge branches to pick up as well as removing the log pieces. We then returned to the trailhead parking. We were on the trails for 5 hours.

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

The trail crew worked for three Thursdays in February attempting to rebuild the OAT through a recent logging clear-cut operation around MP17.5 of the OAT. This type of trail construction is about the toughest to do using hand tools. The ground surface is buried under wood slash and mud. Water drainages are blocked by piles of slash, so rainwater simply makes mud everywhere. Drainages must be rebuilt, woody debris removed from the trail tread and from the trail sides. New tread is then laid down to mineral soil where possible with fabric and gravel where not possible and allowed to "harden" with use for a few years with tweaks added as needed. The work here is not over yet but is on its way. More work parties in March are likely.

Some info on the effort follows.

02/13/25: 8 volunteers plus leader Jeff put in 36 hours of basic trail tread work and 18 hours of skilled sawyer work.

02/20/25: 12 volunteers plus Jeff put in 48 hours of basic trail tread work and 24 hours of skilled sawyer work.

02/27/25: 15 volunteers plus Jeff put in 84 hours of basic trail tread work and 6 hours of skilled equipment operator work.

Work for the month then lists as 168 donated basic hours and 48 donated skilled hours, 216 hours in total. The crew keeps going!

On a separate note, on that last Thursday, a small recognition party took place over lunch break to express thanks from the crew to Jeff Ralston for leading the crew for the past two years. Jeff retired at the end of February as leader but insists he will still be part of the crew as a volunteer. We will miss his great work as crew leader but are looking forward to still having him as a co-worker. Fortunately, he will be on the crew and can assist in training the new crew leader when the county hires one.

Rebecca Wanagel, Gray Wolf Trail Crew, ONF, ONP, Saw Program and Safety

OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST

No crews yet (one got rescheduled to March 22 due to February snow), but David has been busy laying the groundwork for the upcoming annual 4-day Quinault Nature trails crew. This requires organizing housing and / or camping as well as meals ... all on top of figuring out where the crew will be working. Much communication with the Forest Service for this.

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

March 1: re-scout the entire West Elwha trail to see if more trees came down in recent winds.

March 2: Martin Knowles and Rebecca Wanagel went 2 miles in on the West Elwha trail to get rid of two blocking trees, one of them was 33" diameter. This tree was very near the Hughes Creek. We also took a look at other available options for a new footlog that will hopefully get done by the ONP across Hughes Creek (the current footlog is a safety hazard and has badly needed replacement for many years). I am hopeful ONP will be able to get that done this spring, assuming they have any or enough seasonal workers. We know of 3 trees near the site that will be suitable, all doug fir and uprooted by wind (as opposed to broken off, which usually indicates rot).

March 7: We scouted the entire Smokey Bottom trail to see what the year and the recent winds have done to that trail. We gathered information (there is plenty of work) and have set a crew for Saturday, May 10 to deal with the mess on this trail. You can find that crew on the Gray Wolf website sign up link. Smokey Bottom is a trail that starts 3.5 miles from where one has to park their car at Madison Falls.

Did some planning and scheduling of our long, backcountry ONP trips for the year. The dates for those can be seen on the signup link on the GWTC website. Scouting for those and some high-elevation day crews will happen as soon as possible (pending snow melt and schedules).

SAW PROGRAM

BCHW, led by Tony Karniss and Dana Chambers, held a zoom meeting for instructor evaluators to go over some new forms and guidelines. The Forest Service is, thankfully, changing how we are to train and evaluate folks who are seeking certification. The guidelines are much more structured now, which was badly needed. I was not able to attend the meeting, but will watch the zoom recording. These changes are a stepping stone to even bigger changes that will be greatly beneficial and might solve some issues that we currently have with newly-certified people not getting enough practice. Let's hope the Forest Service is able to keep personnel so that this project may continue.

SAFETY

For the third year in a row, we offered a Wilderness First Aid class given by Holly Chambers (Wilderness EdVentures). Represented were several people from either the Gray Wolf Trail Crew, Thursday Trail Crew, BCHW or some combination of the above. As always, this is a rigorous, information-packed 16-hour course and we had CPR / AED training on top of that. The Clallam County Fire District in Carlsborg again allowed us to use their classroom free of charge. This is an extremely well-done course, Holly is amazing. Safety is of utmost importance for those of us out there taking care of trails, and this gives us a broad and deep amount of knowledge that we hope we'll never need to use if we focus on safety, but we're ready in case we need it. Now for the annual pulling apart and redoing our first aid kits.

Please remember the Gray Wolf Trail Crew and BCHW-Peninsula have a solid partnership. Anyone can sign up for a work crew.

Gray Wolf Trail Crew website:
www.graywolftrailcrew.org