

Monthly Trail Report for the Board and Membership
Peninsula Chapter and Gray Wolf Trail Crew
Report written by Rebecca Wanagel
December 2025

Jim and Donna Hollatz, DNR and State

Nothing to report this month – things have been quiet.

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

Info on Thursday trail crew activities for November.

11/06/25: 11 volunteers, 66 work hours. Repairing erosion damage to trail around OAT MP8. Rehabilitate all drainage structures and reestablish tread width to spec.

11/13/25: 11 volunteers, 66 work hours. Rehabilitate drainage structures and reestablish tread width to spec around MP19.

11/20/25 12 volunteers, 72 work hours. Reestablish stock corridor width on both sides of the ODT around MP41. Additional...hot dog lunch and some chanterelle searching.

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

OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST

11/8 - Lower Big Quilcene

Please see trail report in this document.

11/18 - Lower Big Quilcene

Please see trail report in this document.

12/5 - Lower Big Quilcene

Please see trail report in this document.

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

11/14 and 11/16 - Heather Park

Please see trail report in this document.

12/6 - West Elwha

Please see trail report in this document.

SAW PROGRAM

11/30

Martin Knowles and Rebecca Wanagel worked with Judy Sarles for training and certification. Judy has been practicing diligently on many dozens of downed trees on her land, and as a result has resoundingly earned her B chainsaw certification! Among many benefits, this will give Bob Hoyle, Buckhorn Range, another certified sawyer to work with when they are working on their trail projects.

Please remember the Gray Wolf Trail Crew is a program within BCHW-Peninsula. Anyone can sign up for a work crew.

Gray Wolf Trail Crew website: www.graywolftailcrew.org



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

Lower Big Quilcene Trail, Olympic National Forest
08 November, 2025
Report by Rebecca Wanagel



Crew members

Rebecca Wanagel
Bernt Ericson
Bill Mueller
LaVonne Mueller
Brian Berg

Martin Knowles
Eric Nagle
Jon Behar
Miguel Reabold

Quick Stats

On-trail volunteer hours: 41
Hours including travel time: 73
Miles worked: 1.5
Trail is rated multiuse:
stock, bikes and hiking

Objectives:

Fall clean up and winter prep on top half of the trail, from upper trailhead to where we left off when we worked on the trail last month.

- Brush where needed
- Rake off deciduous leaves and organic material
- Clean drainages, check all culverts for flow and clean if necessary, create more drainage where needed

Achieved:

All of the objectives were achieved EXCEPT for the length of trail we hoped to cover. We discovered that Jolley Creek, mile 1.5, which has a broken footlog, was not looking fun nor pleasant to ford. It was quite high and moving quickly. The broken footlog was way too steep, broken, and slippery to consider. We decided to do a good job on 1.5 miles and call it quits, an earlier day than expected. (side note: the GWTC will be replacing that footlog, but we're waiting for Forest Service approval to begin).

Future work:

Due to the unforeseen Jolley Creek obstacle, we now have just over a mile of trail that has not been tended this year. At this point, it's more likely we'll get to that late next spring.

THIS DAY WAS DEDICATED TO MR. DON STONEMAN
FEBRUARY 11, 1931-NOVEMBER 1, 2025



Don was the original founder of the Graywolf Trail Crew in 2007. He was also a dear friend. His legacy lives on in every log we buck, footlog we replace, handrail we repair, drain we clean, tread we maintain ... every trail we keep open in the wilderness that brought him so much joy.

Fun fact about Don (one of many!): Prior to 1958, in his 20s, Don accessed Hurricane Ridge in a VW Beetle up the old road that is now the trail called Wolf Creek, taking off from the original Elwha Trailhead at the top of Whiskey Bend Road.

Don was a craftsman and a wilderness man, dedicated to trails and their preservation now and forever. Cat Creek trail, a loop off of Lower Graywolf, was his creation. He loved the Graywolf trail in its entirety: from National Forest to as far as Cedar Lake in the National Park - one of his favorite backcountry fishing places. I asked his wife, Bobbie, to tell him before he died that we, the Graywolf Crew, will continue to take care of his beloved trails.

He taught his skills to the next couple of generations of trail stewards. May we do the same.



We had to do some clearing on the road to get to the trailhead.



This 1-1/2 miles of trail is ready for winter!

Ridding the trail of deciduous leaves, brush debris and organic matter prevents mush and squish. Brushing keeps people from hugging the downhill edge, causing tread breakdown. Drainage of all sorts keeps the water from flowing unchecked down the trail. Water, while the stuff that makes our peninsula so lush and exquisite, is also the worst enemy of trails. Water does more trail damage than anything else short of fire. So we found, checked and cleaned culverts, widened or made drain dips, cleaned ditches, and got streams back into their channels.



Gray Wolf Trail Crew
- in partnership with -
BCHW, Peninsula Chapter
Heather Park Trail, Olympic National Park
14 and 16 November, 2025
Report by Rebecca Wanagel



Crew members

Martin Knowles (11/14 and 11/16)
Rebecca Wanagel (11/14 and 11/16)
Bill Mueller (11/14)
LaVonne Mueller (11/14)
Brian Berg (11/14)

Quick Stats

On-trail volunteer hours: 31
Hours including travel time: 40
Miles worked: 3-1/4
Trail is rated for
hikers and stock
Very Steep Trail

Objectives:

1. Clear a downed tree we knew about at 3.25 miles. This was down in such a way that the tread was getting destroyed and it was difficult to climb over to get past it.
2. Clear one other log we knew to be down, as well as cut back several logs that were sticking out too far in the trail.
3. Clear existing drainage features and create new ones for the first 3.25 mile. At that point, we knew the switchbacks cease and the tread past there wasn't getting damaged by running water.

Achieved: All objectives were achieved.

Heather Park trail is beautiful! If you haven't hiked it, think about adding it to your list. Beware, it is relentlessly steep. At the backcountry camp located at about 5,300 feet (the trailhead is at 1,800), there is an old cabin site that is a really interesting relic. The rock wall bases are still there for the entire perimeter. The fireplace is absolutely huge and was built to vent like a chimney. Amazing rock work!

Besides the human interest factor, nature has even more to throw into your field of view. Once you enter the sub-alpine zone, which isn't a lot of miles due to the steepness, the views become jaw-dropping. If you can make it to the saddle at nearly 5,700 feet, suddenly you can now see the snow capped peaks to the south and west and the view gets immense.

However, that steepness, besides taking your breath away, has another downside: erosion due to water running down the trail. There are many drainage features put in earlier by trail workers, but they all needed to be cleared out because they currently were not working and the erosion was obvious. In addition, there were long stretches where the water was flowing unchecked, so we needed to add more drainages along the side of the trail, hopefully catching those problematic areas at the top of the flow.



Left: this switchback was getting damaged by water seeping off the hillside. The water needed to be corralled and directed.

Right: You can see the erosion that is happening as a result of the water flowing unchecked down the trail. Heather Park has really nice tread - we are trying to preserve that!





This tree was difficult to get over from the downhill side. It had been down long enough that the tread was destroyed. Martin is quite tall and yet you can see that the tree is at about shoulder height for him as he worked from the downhill side. That was because of the erosion of the tread in that spot.

What is he doing, you might ask? This rootball was still rooted in position enough that it wasn't going to roll, however, nothing was to stop it from tipping right into the trail corridor. We decided to use another nearby downed tree as a prop to hold it up. We jammed several pieces in there to make it impossible for the rootball to tip.



Left: the rootball is sufficiently blocked up, ready for the tree to be cut.

Right: After we cut the tree, we used a log from it, and others as blocks, to create a curb wall so we could repair the tread. This is the finished product.



Gray Wolf Trail Crew
in partnership with
BCHW, Peninsula Chapter

Lower Big Quilcene Trail (#833), Olympic National Forest

18 November 2025



Crew members

David Graves	Rodney LeMay
Paul Kamps	Mark Subbotin
Joanne Graves	Randy Kraxberger

Quick Stats

On-trail volunteer hours: 30
Hours including travel time: 43
Miles worked: 4.2 miles
Total miles hiked: 8.4 miles
Trail standards: Stock use

Objectives:

- Clear three fallen trees at the 4.2 mile point on this trail (blue dots).
- Address serious brush issues plus tread creep on a steep side slope section.
- Check performance of October's drainage work and address any newly discovered drainage issues.

We've been fortunate to have time to work on this trail three times in the past month. This work party was spurred by a hiking report from our own Eric Nagle plus a WTA report that reminded us of a worsening tread creep issue.



Achieved:

With six folks, we could split into teams with a two-person team tackling tread issues as they hiked and the other four members hiking directly to the fallen trees.

The trees were all tangled together with the end of one suspended far out and thus holding a lot of tension. The first order of business was to remove all the soil on the logs from hikers clambering over and then to cut the cantilevered end off to remove the bound-up energy. That done, the crew could often saw (crosscut) on multiple trees simultaneously.





After the first cuts, we made room for the final cuts by rolling the cut logs out of the way and levering one of the trees up to a 45 degree lean.

Fortunately, after these cuts, there was room on the side of the trail to drag all the cut logs.



After removing the trees, the saw team had an arduous 50-yard hike to join the rebenching crew. That crew had already taken care of two areas and was hard at work on the primary site mentioned in the WTA trip report.

By this time, the rebenching crew had pulled, or dug out, the tree saplings and salmonberry crowding the uphill side of the trail. All that remained was to remove the organic matter covering the original tread (uphill of where trail users were going) and then to give

the tread the desired outslope angle. As a final touch, the crew walked back-and-forth to pack down the tread. While not as heavy a packing as from a 4-horse team,





this will help runoff to cross the tread and continue down-slope rather than washing away the tread or running down the trail.

On the return hike, the crew cleared and extended some additional drain dips plus re-addressing water crossings that had suffered from the recent heavy rains. October's drainage work has held up well and there was no water ponding on or running down the trail. The repair to the rut on the steep reroute section was also holding up though signs of traffic right down that line portend possible future issues there.

Task(s) remaining:

1. Continue pulling saplings and salmonberry springing up within tread corridor.
2. Upon ONF approval, install a re-alignment for the steep reroute section.
3. Upon ONF approval, replace failed Jolly Creek bridge.

David Graves
20 November 2025



Gray Wolf Trail Crew
in partnership with
BCHW, Peninsula Chapter

Lower Big Quilcene Trail (#833), Olympic National Forest

5 December 2025



Crew members

David Graves
Paul Kamps
Martin Knowles

Quick Stats

On-trail volunteer hours: 15
Hours including travel time: 24
Miles worked: 0.75 miles
Total miles hiked: 3.4 miles
Trail standards: Multi- use

Objectives:

- Clear multiple fallen trees from the 4.5-5.5 mile point on this trail (blue dots).
- Address any drainage issues found.

It seems that once we clear some trees reported down on this trail, another report comes in of more trees down elsewhere on the trail. This work party was spurred by a hiking report from the Klahhane hiking club.



Achieved:

We received a trail report of several trees down above where our November 18 logout crew had been and Jolly Creek (the lower terminus of our November 8 crew). The number and complexity of the trees was a serious obstacle to trail users so we chose to send in a crew right away. We had planned on two chainsaw crews but ended up with one due to a last-minute cancellation. Despite the smaller crew, all obstacles were removed.

There were four primary clusters of fallen trees. Two of the clusters were of smaller (under 12") diameter trees and two of larger (20-30") diameter trees. A total of ten trees were removed from the trail corridor. Also, the ends of three trees that had fallen and been cut through years ago, were cut further back to meet stock corridor requirements. Finally, two blocked drain dips were cleaned removing standing water from the trail.





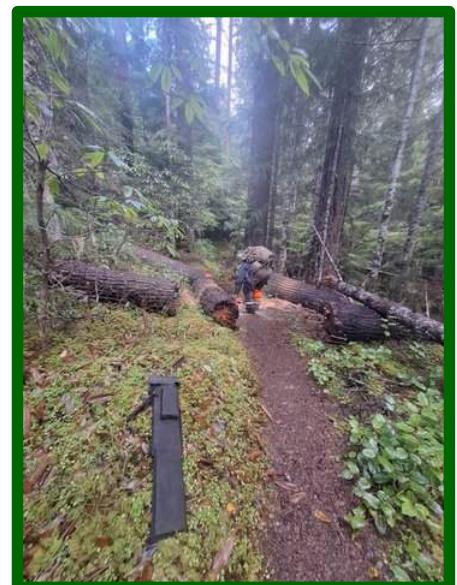
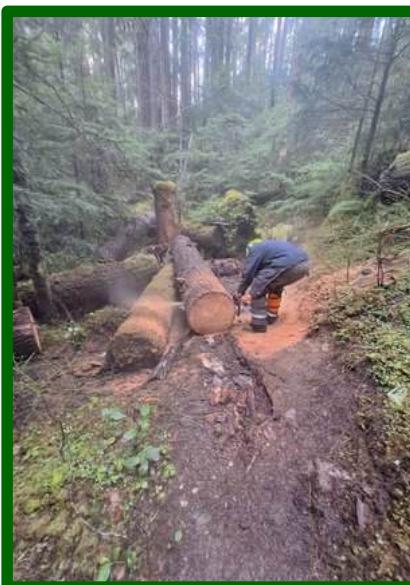
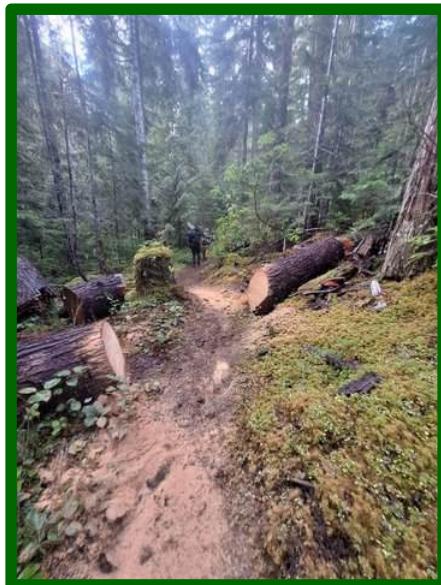
With the smaller diameter clusters, a chainsaw pair worked one end of the cluster while the third person swamped out the numerous tree branches with a handsaw.



One of the other larger trees.



A little extra cleanup.



Task(s) remaining:

1. Continue pulling saplings and salmonberry springing up within tread corridor.
2. Upon ONF approval, install a re-alignment for the steep reroute section.
3. Upon ONF approval, replace failed Jolly Creek bridge.

David Graves
7 December 2025



Gray Wolf Trail Crew
- in partnership with -
BCHW, Peninsula Chapter
West Elwha Trail, Olympic National Park
06 December, 2025
Report by Rebecca Wanagel



Crew members

Martin Knowles
Barbara Maxwell
Neil Turnberg
Lisa Turnberg
Tim Branham

Jack Bochsler
Mark Subbotin
James Miller
Bill Mueller
LaVonne Mueller

Quick Stats

On-trail volunteer hours: 60
Miles worked: 1.75

Trail is rated for
stock and hiking

West Elwha is a trail we have adopted and tends to be our winter go-to trail because of its low elevation. It's a gem. Sometimes you are right along and slightly above the river, and sometimes you are walking along in the forest which tends to be an ocean of sword ferns - quintessential Olympics. Those beautiful ferns, however, must love this environment! They grow taller than most. Thick, luscious, beautiful and ... crowding the trail like mad. This makes for very wet hiking as they tend to hold water in their fronds and soak you through all your clothes. That gets COLD in the winter months.

The ideal solution would be to dig out and replant all the ferns that are within a few feet of the trail. However, that is entirely unrealistic. So every few years we trim them back, knowing full well they will grow back with a vengeance. However, the trim gives hikers a break for a couple years since it takes a while to become that large again.

Another fact about this trail is that it has more deciduous trees (maple and alder) than most. Therefore, the trail gets extremely mushy with a thick layer of downed leaves. These need to be cleared out annually to keep the trail dry and prevent it from turning into a mush puddle throughout.

Objectives:

1. Brush ferns back a few feet on either side of the trail.
2. Clean up the thousands of fern fronds left laying on the trail.
3. Rake up and toss the thick layer of deciduous leaves all along the trail.
4. Clean out all drainages.

Achieved:

1. Brushing done to 1.75 miles.
2. Clean up of fronds and leaves done to 1.0 miles.
3. Drainages cleaned out for the first ¼ mile.

Future work:

1. Finish frond and leaf cleanup to the point where the brushers left off.
2. Cut back overhanging and encroaching branches (mostly vine maples).
3. Finish brushing, cleaning and tending drainage for the rest of the trail (about 1-1/4 mile left on the south end).
4. Fix one spot at about mile 1.5 that is extremely mushy with wet clay. It's been mitigated throughout the years but is in need now of a more permanent repair.
5. Logout the trees that are across the trail starting from near where the brushers left off. There are currently no trees across the trail until that point.

I have learned from experience – many times over – that it is sometimes really hard for the cleanup crew to keep up with the brushing crew. In fact, I have a memory of working waaaaay up the Duckabush trail on a very hot, multiday crew, where the two brushers got so far ahead of the 4 clean up crew members that I had to jog ahead to find them. They were easily a half-mile ahead of us!

Another memory ... on Mt. Mueller trail (many years ago) I actually found one cleanup crew member splayed out on his back resting in the shade, mumbling ... "I can't keep up ..." . 😭

All that to say it's a hard job getting rid of all that debris!

In this case, even harder than normal because not only did they have to get rid of the piles of fern fronds, but then the thick layer of wet deciduous leaves had to be raked up and tossed. Making this even more difficult is the fact that for much of this trail, there isn't a way to just flick the materials off with your rake. They have to be picked up with pitchfork or arms and tossed over the wall of ferns. Way to go, crew!

I was unfortunately at home, unable to attend due to having a sick kitty who needed care. I would have loved to join in on this adventure! Especially since once the crew got back to the trailhead, they were treated to world-class cinnamon rolls from Bobbie Stoneman. 🍞

This crew was working so hard that we don't have the usual collection of pictures to document their amazing work! I will leave you with just two ... one showing the beauty that can be found along the West Elwha and the other a quick glimpse of a section of fern fronds and mushy leaves waiting to be cleared.

