

**SAW TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION**  
**FIRST ANNUAL OLYMPICS-BASED SAW TRAINING / CERTIFICATION EVENT**  
**1/10/25 (instructor pre-meeting) and 1/31-2/1/25 (classroom and field training / evals)**

**Instructors:**

Rebecca Wanagel  
Martin Knowles  
Paul Kamps  
Randy Kraxberger  
Michael Bonomo  
Bernt Ericson  
Joe Hofbeck  
Tom Mix  
Jim Hollatz

**14 Students (12 seeking certification and 2 wanting to be better educated to help sawyers on their team)**

**Special Guests:**

Tony Karniss, BCHW Saw Program Manager  
Aaron Pedersen, Forest Service Region 6 Saw Program Manager

Estimated Volunteer Hours From Instructors: 192 (which does not include driving time)

Report written by Rebecca.

**Objectives:**

1. Give classroom portion of saw training to entire group. This involves using the PowerPoint presentation developed by the Forest Service, but modified by Rebecca to reflect the realities of sawing in the rugged terrain and weather of the Olympics. I included pictures showing projects we did – all the pictures were chosen to demonstrate a sawing technique or further the students' understanding of binds, hazards and other factors.
2. Train and evaluate students in the field – certify as appropriate for their current level of technique and knowledge.

Background: For several years, there have been large saw certification events happening on the other side of the water, most notably the one that takes place in Randall at the Cispus Environmental Center Forest Service Compound. Some of us C sawyers / Instructor-Evaluators have made the long trip and donated 3 or more days of our time to help with this. This year I re-thought the logic behind that. I noticed that we were putting so much time and travel into getting folks certified who may or may not actually continue working on trails, but who certainly do not work on trails in the Olympics.

I decided that we needed a saw training event in the Olympics for people who work on Olympics trails, and that I would restrict the class to that. I put it out to various agencies around the peninsula, and ended up getting students from the following agencies / groups:

BCHW packers  
North Olympic Salmon Coalition  
Jamestown Tribe  
Gray Wolf Trail Crew  
Peninsula Trails Coalition

Meanwhile, one of the students, Powell Jones, works for the Jamestown Tribe and we were generously offered the use of their gorgeous Red Cedar room in Blyn for the classroom session. We were also able to use a Fish and Wildlife property near the Jamestown Casino for our training and evaluations because Jamestown co-stewards the property.

Earlier I had asked all the C-level sawyers and evaluators with the Gray Wolf Trail Crew and BCHW-Peninsula, plus Joe Hofbeck from the Seattle side, to be co-instructors for the weekend. In that light, I invited them all to a meeting on January 10 to go over the plan and to talk about how to standardize our use of the evaluation sheet. To bribe them to this meeting, I made them a fresh and yummy apple pie.

The classroom session on January 31 went well. Folks really seemed to enjoy and appreciate the real-life pictures so they could learn from realistic scenarios that I presented. All the instructors jumped in at my urging to help explain the concepts.

The next day we went out to the field to do trainings and evaluations. Because we had so many top-notch trail sawyers – combined with the fact that we had a few cancellations – we had the gold standard 1-on-1 student to teacher ratio. We did split into two groups – my group went to the Fish and Wildlife property, while Tom and Jim took their two students to Miller Peninsula. Therefore, the pictures below are only from my group. I was able to walk around and listen to the instruction and learning that was happening, as well as take some pictures and scout for good practice logs. I was blown away by the quality of the instruction! They demonstrated, taught and supervised the practice of skills such as limbing, notch cuts, boring, basic cuts, reading binds, evaluating sites, making cut plans, compound angles, rootball analysis, and much more.

I didn't get pictures of everyone, apologies. I mostly got pictures where folks were grouped up around one project. And I had no pictures of the group that went to the other site at Miller Peninsula. But it gives a good sense for what the day looked like.

These pictures took place after all the 1:1 teams had done their 5-point safety check on the saws at the cars before heading up the hill.



Randy teaching Nate about proper chain tension before limbing.



Martin teaching Rachael how to line up the angle for a successful notch cut.



Paul teaching / watching Matthew for a cut planned after analysis.  
Also practicing bar tip recognition by not hitting it on the smaller tree below his cut.



Nate practicing safe and proper limbing techniques under Randy's eye.



Martin and Rachael analyzing a notch attempt. After this she did a third one that was perfect!



Prime learning opportunity!



We as instructors climbed around the project for a bit to be able to make a "trail" delineated by yellow cones (thank you, Powell, for this idea and the cones).

We put the "trail" where it would be just complicated enough for learning and practice, but without putting the students directly below the rootballs. They had lots of binds to practice with.



Randy and Nate looking over the project, discussing all the aspects of the situation in terms of OHBEC (that's Objective, Hazards, BINDS (usually "Leans" but that's for felling, which we were not doing), Escape Route and Cut Plan. Note the snag that is to the right of Randy's yellow hard hat. The students needed to recognize that as a hazard and ask Martin (who is certified for felling) to cut it down. That was done.



The learning opportunity as viewed from below. They had to analyze for binds, rootball movement, order of cuts, etc.



We had everyone analyze the whole project as if they were going to be opening up the “trail” with only their team. But then we split into separate cutting teams (we determined the cuts would not affect each other). They all correctly recognized these rootballs as “tip overs” rather than coming from somewhere else. Meaning they might settle but likely won’t roll or slide.



One sawyer practicing angles on one log and another analyzing a recently-finished cut.





This is after several cuts have been made.



The final cut to open up the "trail."



Lots of sawdust means lots of learning!

Everyone was well-decked out in their PPE and wore it properly all day. With time, practice and – most importantly - mentoring, these folks are all going to be safe and effective sawyers for trails. From our first attempt at an Olympics-based event, we learned adjustments we will make for the future. But overall, this was a highly-successful saw training event.