

GRAY WOLF TRAIL CREW NOTES

9/23/23

Location: Little River Trail, ONP

Crew members:

Rebecca Wanagel
Martin Knowles
David Graves
Joanne Graves
Jim Johannes
Paul Kamps
Bernt Ericson
Randy Kraxberger
Eric Nagle
Jim Hollatz

Estimated Volunteer Hours: 96

(Hours do not include driving, admin, organization and prep time. Only active working time. The exception this time being that it was necessary to get the entire crew from the bottom trailhead to the upper trailhead at Hurricane Ridge).

Report written by Rebecca.

Objectives as we worked from the top trailhead to the bottom:

1. Clear the logs.
2. Repair a broken handrail.
3. Brush as necessary for as long as we had time and energy.
4. Tread and drainage as necessary for as long as we had time and energy.

The plan was that we would work from the top down, entering up on Hurricane Ridge and exiting via the lower DNR trailhead. Jim Hollatz and Eric Nagle drove us to Hurricane Ridge and dropped us off. Eric worked with us until such a time that he needed to go, and went back up to his car. The rest of us would keep working down.

We agreed up top that we would clear all the logs, but the brushing and tread would be on a good-enough-for-now plan so that we could make some headway. We knew that the logs stopped about halfway down the trail and planned on just hiking from there. The exception to that being the, we thought, broken handrail on the 4th-from-bottom footlog (more on that below).

There are plans and there is reality. A friend did scout this for me and did a very accurate and detailed job. However, I now realize that I misinterpreted the Gaia waypoints for a couple of reasons (that's on me). The end result is there were more trees than I thought. Maybe twice as many. And one log jumble project ended up taking most of us a couple / three hours to clear. It needed to be cleared and if that was the last thing we did for the day (it nearly was) then so be it.

Meanwhile, it started raining. While this was a great relief in thinking about the local fires being dampened, it led to us being wet, cold and muddy – something we haven't experienced in a while.

Paul and Martin were running brushers and at some point they decided to move more quickly downstream so they could repair that handrail. From the picture we saw ahead of time, it reasonably looked like a handrail that needed repair. Martin had all the supplies / tools necessary to do a good repair. However, when they got there, they both instantly realized it wasn't a broken handrail, but rather a cool trail feature. It is an intentional gap where there is a large rock that's easy to step out onto so one can better enjoy the river. Martin had gotten extra exercise from carrying the weight they didn't need, and they moved on.





Bert and I were taking turns with the saw. He got to have fun with this one. The top of the tree was bound up in branches of the supporting tree. But it was seven quick skilled cuts, roll off the billets, swamp out some salmonberry and we were outta there.



Joanne performing her usual amazing trail-saving tread work, wearing a poncho because the rain had started by then.

Some important things we do not have pictures of (sorry) are:

1. Tons of brushing with kombi brushers by Martin and Paul, who carried the awkward things for the entire trail. These brushers made their way through extremely dense salmonberry and did wonders to delineate the trail through the meadow again, along with general cutting back of overhanging huckleberry bushes, salal and saplings.
2. Major tread work in creek and meadow areas to re-establish the tread, deal with drainage and help hikers stay on the path.

Meanwhile ...



These are "before" shots of the project that ended up taking 2 or 3 hours. It's looking at it from two different directions.

Left: you can see Jim and (if you look carefully) Randy farther up in a blue jacket. They are both on the trail.

Right: looking from the uptrail side except this was taken after lots of limbs had already been cleared.

There were 6 or 7 trees in this mess.



Left: Bernt continuing work on the first log, which had laid itself directly in the trail the long way. We tag teamed to keep warm and fed. He ate lunch while I worked on the tree with Randy. Then I ate lunch while he worked on it with Jim and David. That way the project keeps moving along without anyone having their warmth and food needs go unmet. However, in this picture it's after lunch. That's me in the background making a cut plan for the tree I am near. Joanne in the back doing drainage work.

Right: making progress! The back trees are cut, we have just a little left to do.



Left: Never underestimate the power of using nearby non-rotten branches as lever bars.

Right: All done! Jim doing some tread clean up.

After this we moved down the trail clearing out a few more things. But the reality was that all the work had taken longer than anticipated and I had seriously undercounted the number of trees (or we would have brought two saws). In a way I'm sorta kinda glad I undercounted, resulting in one saw, because the brushing that was done was also super important to the sustainability and enjoyability of the trail. We wouldn't have done that had we brought two saws.

But, yeah, there are trees left. We had a longer-than-anticipated hike out still, compounded by the fact that the top half of this trail is VERY STEEP and now – due to the rain – slippery. Meaning the hiking was quite slow until we reached the 5th-from-bottom footlog, at which point the steepness relents. Anyway, we really had to do a tools-down call. We carefully cached the saw so that we can go back in to finish on Oct 6, and headed out. By the time everyone was back at the trailhead it was likely around 5:15ish. Wet, cold and hungry, there were still smiles. It's an exceptionally lovely, very special trail that has a lot of maintenance needs. We will finish the logs on Oct 6 and make it a point to keep at the rest of the maintenance as we can.