

GRAY WOLF TRAIL CREW NOTES

11/17/23

Location: West Elwha, ONP

Crew members:

Rebecca Wanagel
Martin Knowles
David Graves
Bill Mueller
LaVonne Mueller
Eric Nagle
Randy Kraxberger
Bernt Ericson
Julie Metzger
Josie Dean
Mel Melmed
Brian Berg
Neil Turnberg
Lisa Turnberg

Estimated Volunteer Hours: 98

Report written by Rebecca.

Objectives:

1. Clear all downed logs.
2. Rake entire trail from trailhead to Altair Campground.
3. Address drainage and tread as necessary.
4. Brush back vine maple as necessary.
5. Take a look at the crooked footlog (that is missing one sill) and the surrounding environment to make a plan to present to the ONP for either mitigation or replacement.

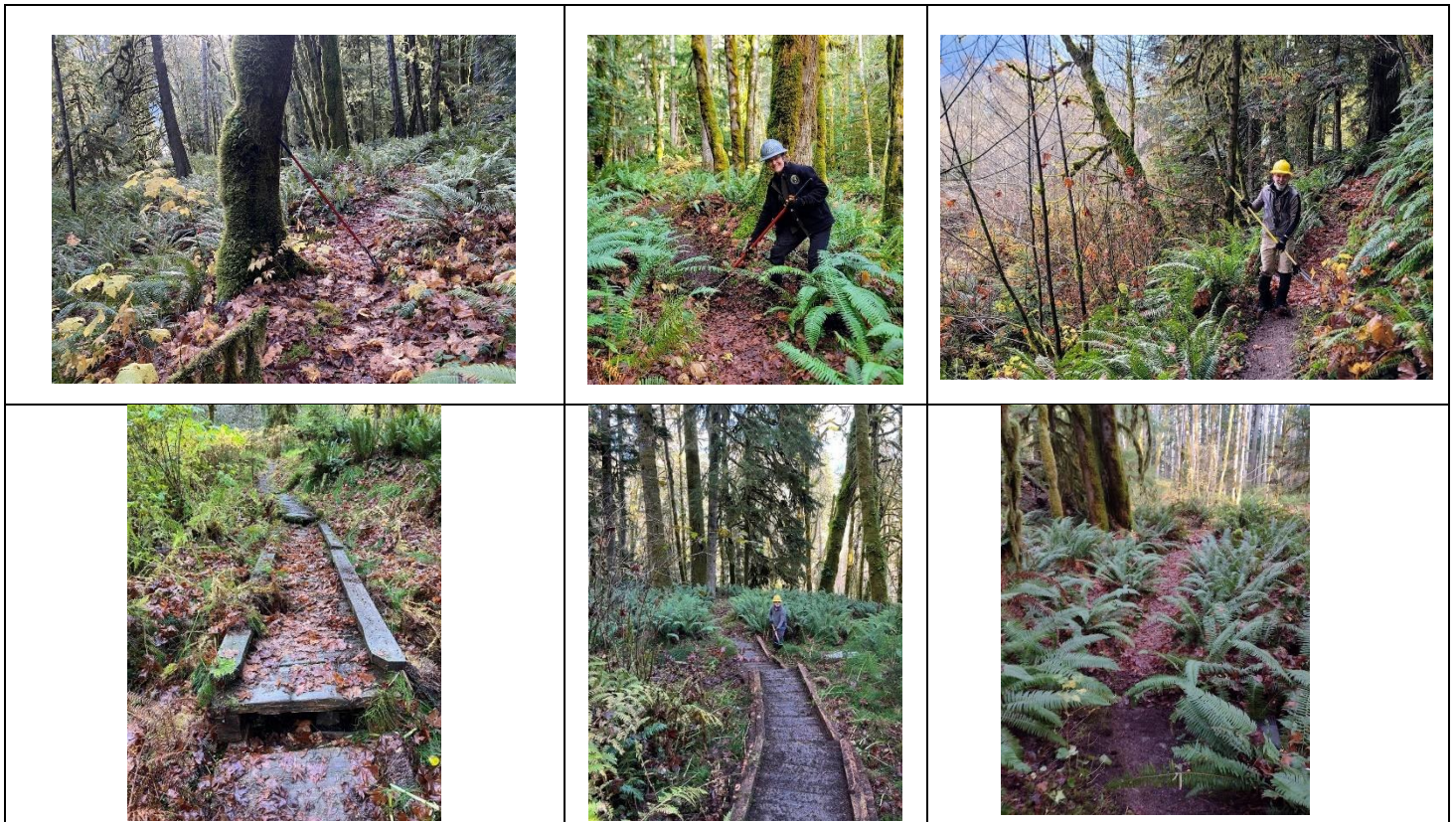
November 17 ... isn't that supposed to be cold, wet, miserable weather? Huh, I guess we missed that memo.

So – a little education here for people who don't know – you might wonder why we are out there literally raking a trail. Seems odd, huh? But actually, clearing the organic debris off the trail serves several purposes:

1. Makes hiking more pleasant and drier.
2. Makes hiking safer – not as slippery.
3. The top reason, however, is that it increases the longevity and sustainability of the trail. Organics on the trail cause things to stay wet and mucky, causing the trail to erode under footsteps as well as causes people to slip or try to get around the wet areas, causing trail breakdown. The puncheons (especially!) are dangerous when covered with those wet, slimy leaves and the rot happens a lot faster if they can't ever dry out.

Ok, great, it's important to remove the organics and leaves, and mid-late November is the prime time to do that. But why didn't we use powerful backpack leaf blowers instead of rakes? The reason for that is that although the ONP allows chainsaws and gas-powered brushers, they do not allow leaf blowers. Fortunately, raking is great exercise!

We had such an enjoyable day, start to finish. Here is our story.



Some before and during shots of the organics on the trail and puncheons.



Some logging pictures. We used crosscut because David wanted to make sure he got some more saw time, and he is crosscut certified. In the process, he gave Josie some saw training.



Randy, Martin and Rebecca spent a good amount of time looking at the problem footlog on Hughes Creek. It is tilted and completely missing its sill on one side. We found a standing doug fir that would do for a new footlog, pending ONP approval, of course. We also think the footlog could be moved upstream 120 feet as the crossing would be more narrow and stable there. Though this tree we found is long enough – and likely large enough – that the footlog could stay in its current location if need be.

Once we were done looking at this situation, Randy and Martin stayed behind to do some more shoring up of the very temporary broken handrail, plus threw some gravel on the footlog to increase traction.



One thing that happened that day is someone lost their car key that fell out of a pocket. That was stressful for a number of hours. But then Bill, the finder of all things lost saved the day! Well actually, maybe LaVonne, the boss of all, saved the day. LaVonne informed Bill that he needed to cut a salmonberry back away from the trail. Bill obliged.

When doing so, guess what he found? Wow, what a huge relief!



Here are some after-raking shots of the puncheon and trail. We were successful in raking the entire trail all the way to Altaire Campground.



On the way out, we found Don Stoneman (founder of the Gray Wolf Trail Crew) working away on the trail. Truth be told, he had made the first – ¼(?) mile just lovely days before we even got there. We had parked at their house that morning and while we worked on the trail, Bobbie made us a huge pan of her world-famous cinnamon rolls as an after-work treat. Don made a fire, warm coffee and tea was served. And – best bonus of all – KITTEN!



Don and Bobbie Stoneman