

# Trail Report Summary for the Board

## September 2023

### Jim and Donna Hollatz, DNR and State and Jamestown Tribe

The month of August, our trail work was on DNR lands near Layton Hill/Sage Horse Camp. Much of it was done by Theresa Percy, Rick and Suzanne King, and Mike Bonomo. Jim and I worked one day, and I think Sandy Ihly also worked one day. We were able to complete the connections that Theresa wanted ready for the Prize Ride which was September 9th. These new trails will help riders make a nice loop from Sage Horse Camp with less travel on gravel DNR roads. Anna Neal also installed a hitching rail at the top of the lookout so riders can tie up and have a snack.

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

As usual, the Thursday trail crew was up to the task of maintenance and construction of area trails that are heavily used. For August, the crew carried out the following missions.

August 3: 11 workers carried out tread widening, drainage repair, and work to ensure that the horse corridor was clear for equestrians. This work involving about one mile of trail was around MP 2 of the OAT.

August 24: with Tom Mix covering for BCHW-PC, 10 workers relocated a trail along Herrick Road connecting to the Lower Elwha Trail. About one quarter mile of new trail was constructed.

August 31: 10 workers undertook maintenance of the OAT around MP 13. Tread widening and drainage repair were the primary tasks. Again, about one mile of trail was brought back to standards.

Some anecdotal information about this crew: the approximate average age of crew members on any Thursday ranges from just under 70 to about 75. As a message seen on some t-shirts illustrates "Old Guys (and Girls) Rule" "Respect the Rust". Come on out and join the fun.

NOLT: no work carried out

### Rebecca Wanagel, ONF and ONP

#### ONP:

Duckabush 8/12-8/19 (8-day trip with 4 crew members and one packer). Trail cleared from ONP boundary at 6.5 miles to Lacrosse Pass junction at 15.5 miles. Also cleared the lower ½ mile of Lacrosse Pass trail. Tons of effort from everyone involved combined with extreme heat. Please see attached summary report for the story.

**ONF:**

1. Duckabush (again) 9/7. Rebecca took Brent Freeman, Rec Shed Manager ONF, on a hike. We went to look at two spots that are a danger to stock. Both of these areas need blasting. Even though I had been over Big Hump 11 times already this season – all for trail work – it was time to do it again. If ONF is willing to deal with these long-standing problems, it is worth it. The ONF section of the Duckabush is a critical access trail to the ONP. If mules cannot get in there, the trail cannot ever be resurrected back to great condition. I have also connected Larry Lack, ONP, and Brent so that Brent can get the documentation he needs to support getting approval for this project.
  - a. The first one is at 3 miles, just above Snack Rock. This is a smooth bedrock that is outsloped and causes horses and mules with shoes to slip dangerously. Two riders and their mounts have fallen here that I know of personally. Many others have slipped and had close calls. There are horseshoe scratch marks all over that rock from when Harold packed us in for the August trip.
  - b. The second is a sharp turn at a point within eyesight of the spot known as Claire's Rock (this is at 5.5 miles). This is a place where – if you're headed west – the trail takes a sharp right-hand turn and then has a large downstep. The problem is the rock jutting into the trail from the right. A loaded animal's box would hit the rock and the animal would get pushed off to the left – down to the river about 20 feet below.

Brent has been in communication with Bridget, the certified blaster from ONF, to talk dates. He is going to work to get approval from the acting Forest Supervisor. I have put him in communication with the ONP because they are going to get some money for the Duckabush in the next year or two and will need mule access to fix the trail back up. This information will help Brent with his appeal for approval for blasting.

2. Lower South Fork Skokomish 9/8. Rebecca, Martin Knowles, David Graves, Joanne Graves, Mike Forsyth, and Bob Hoyle went to finish a realignment that was put in by WTA last June. This was a critical realignment that Al Mashburn's crew with WTA did after communicating a lot with Bob and me. This was an area where the river was carving away the trail, and what was left was severely undercut. We could tell it was going to collapse soon and it's a long fall to the river below. The trail was moved back maybe 30 feet – not a permanent solution but safe for now. I will be writing up a picture story of this short work crew, but for now, here is a brief summary:
  - a. We decided we had to do it now because it is much shorter to access this spot by crossing south to north over the Church Creek ford, which can only be done when the river is low. Also, the wildlife gate will be closing on October 1, which will shut off this access. The time was now. Also, David Graves was available to help and he was also on Al's original crew, which was helpful.
  - b. Al's WTA crew did a great job – he had told us there were a few things more to do that required chainsaws. We needed to fell a snag, cut its stump out of the way and cut out a few other rotten logs.
  - c. Once those were gone, we were able to quickly finish up some tread work that couldn't be done until those were out of the way.
  - d. Meanwhile, a 50" snag had fallen right at the start of the reroute on the downriver end. Imagine that, and us with our chainsaw right there ... so of course we cut that out.
  - e. Two other log projects had fallen in the meanwhile on the way to the reroute, so we cleared those out and cut back one more log that was cut too close to where a rider's head would be if on a horse.

- f. After the rest of us left, Bob Hoyle stayed behind and managed to find and flag a permanent reroute for ONF to approve. It will pull it much farther back from the river's edge. Once approved, we will all team up to make it happen.

This project is another example of the constant inter-agency communication, cooperation and collaboration that is going on. Al (WTA) scheduled his crew there on purpose because Bob (Buckhorn) and Rebecca (Peninsula and Gray Wolf) knew about and discussed this danger spot. I knew that Al was looking for a different place for a backcountry crew than what he had originally scheduled, so we all emailed about this. Al tends to be a fantastic leader for many things, but not the least of which is putting in realignments and doing tread work (recall the amazing tread work they did where we cut out the large trees on the Duckabush). Then David (Gray Wolf and WTA) was on the original crew plus the finish crew and Mike Forsyth (Mountaineers) joined us because he's worked with us on the Lower Skok many times and we really enjoy working together. Mike brings coffee and donuts too. 😊

Side note: between the time Al's crew put in the realignment and the time we finished it, the trail did indeed collapse to the river below. PHEW!