

## Monthly Trail Report for the Board and Membership July 2024

### **Jim and Donna Hollatz, DNR and State**

The majority of trail work time this month for us was spent at Robin Hill County Park. We flagged a new equestrian trail that makes about a one-mile extra loop east of the existing trail. When completed, it will give park users another option for exercise! After the initial route flagging, we took several people on a walk through the new terrain to get feedback (Judy Sarles, Tom Mix, Martha Ireland). We also met with County Park Administrator, Don Crawford, to discuss the new trail. He has given permission for us to go forward with building the trail and work will start soon. The first step will be using a chainsaw and limbing saw to open the corridor, then a mini excavator will be used to clear the pathway. There will be logs and roots to remove, but most of the terrain has good, dry mineral soil that will not need the addition of gravel. There is one wet area that will be improved with tumpike and another small gully that will need a culvert and gravel to get the trail above the mud during winter months. Our trail totes will be used to move gravel to the needed areas. Members will have several opportunities to volunteer once the excavator is done and we are ready to prepare the final tread.

Work at Miller Peninsula consisted of removing a 30" grand fir that had fallen and blocked both the Beach Trail and the beach route to the Bluff Trail. That was removed on June 11<sup>th</sup>. We also made two reconnaissance rides through the trails looking for Tansy Ragwort. We have organized a work party, with the assistance of County Noxious Weed Specialist, Christina St. John, for July 15<sup>th</sup>. Our "Spray Team" will be hiking the trails that have Tansy, wearing backpack sprayers so we can spot-spray the weeds. There is not a huge quantity of plants (which means our past efforts at eradication have been successful) but we must continue to eliminate what grows to keep it under control.

Jim and Tom Mix also worked July 2 and 3 hauling gravel with the chapter totes to help prepare the site where the new bridge will be placed on the OAT Trail at Whiskey Creek. About 2 yards of shot-rock was moved from the staging area to the bridge site, where it will be used to fill gabion baskets to build the end supports for the bridge. The totes made 5 round trips (total of 7.5 miles) filled with gravel each day, so the workers got a lot of exercise. The bridge construction is planned for August.

Plans for July include spraying Tansy at Miller, improving a bike trail near Sage Camp to make it suitable for horses (July 13 & 14) and building the new trail at Robin Hill. We will be sending out a notice when we are ready for some extra trail builders at Robin Hill.

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

The trusty (maybe even a bit crusty and/or rusty) Thursday Trail Crew has been active with two projects in June that have direct impacts on stock use of the OAT. For three weeks, (four weeks including the last week in May) the crew has been working on a trail reroute to replace the failed Whiskey Creek bridge. New switchbacks were constructed and access improved (i.e. less steep) to the new location of the replacement bridge. That means lots of dirt was moved shovelful by shovelful. On one side of the creek, dirt was placed and compacted over a gabion basket wall. Curb log sides for switchback corner approaches were constructed, and the overall grade made less steep. On the other side, a sharp 90-degree approach to the new site was rounded and lowered to make the bridge approach rider-friendly ... even for bicycles. The last step will be to install the new high tech fiberglass bridge (once it gets here) and reopen a dry trail to all users over the creek.

Project two was undertaken the last week in June. A portion of the OAT around MPs 4 to 5 was closed for tree thinning by a logging company and detoured along a forest road for maybe a year or more (my guess on the time frame). After the operation was complete, the logging company reconstructed that section, and the trail was reopened. However, the reconstructed trail needed a bit of TLC to bring it back to standards consistent with the rest of the OAT, including brushing / clearing to stock standards, carefully ensuring a gentle 2 percent out slope grade, digging back trail sides to a 45-degree back slope, and re-establishing proper drainage for water outflow. The section is now very user friendly and looks like the rest of the trail. (Note of appreciation from this author to this logging company since its reconstruction was much easier to work with in comparison to other earlier reconstructions by other companies doing clear cuts).

So ... from the Thursday Trail Crew, come on out and ride.

### **Rebecca Wanagel, ONF and ONP**

#### **OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST**

Lower Big Quilcene, 6/16 and 7/3, stock trail

David Graves led both of these crews to log out some trees and clear a rock slide. The trail is now back up to stock standards at least as of when they left the job site on July 3. 😊

## **Safety for crews working in ONF:**

I am pleased to report that there has been a major step forward for the safety of volunteer crews who work so hard to keep trails open in the ONF.

Background: Josh Parker, Partnership and Volunteer Coordinator, started working in the ONF sometime last winter. I have talked to him several times about the need for better attention to the safety of volunteer crews. I told him that I prefer working in the ONP more than ONF because I felt strongly that ONP has our backs when we're out there (there are many reasons for this feeling, too much for this report). Josh not only heard me, he acted on it.

On July 2, Josh hosted an amazing meeting. Representatives from all the volunteer groups were invited and the meeting was twofold – to teach volunteers how to use the ONF radios (of which he has collected and loaned out to the various groups), and to teach everyone how Puget Sound dispatch operates and the protocol that needs to be followed (this was very detailed and informative – again – too much for this report). The radio training was given by Jason Anderson, who is the radio guy for the Forest. PISCC information was given by Lorenzo and Hans, who are managers with Puget Sound Dispatch. To say this was an amazing meeting would be an understatement. I later emailed Josh to thank him for caring about the safety of volunteers and actively working to improve that.

## **OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK**

We did have an 8-day backcountry crew scheduled to work on the Upper Duckabush, but we had to postpone it. That trip will now happen in late August. Martin Knowles and Rebecca Wanagel did a 4-day scout of the work area, and discovered that a needed stock bypass trail around a washout on the North Fork Skokomish would not be done in time for this trip's original dates. I have since rescheduled and reassembled an amazing team with some incredible BCH volunteer packers for our next attempt.

Because this trip was on the calendar, when it got moved I took on a large home project. Therefore, I have no specific reports for on-trail work in the Park for June other than the scout I mentioned.

---

Please remember that we have a website and anyone can sign up for Gray Wolf Trail Crew work crews through the link on this site. All members of BCH and GWTC are welcome on these crews – and new folks are always encouraged so please spread the word. The backcountry crews are posted way in advance and the day crews are posted more sporadically, as necessary, throughout the year.

[www.graywolftrailcrew.org](http://www.graywolftrailcrew.org)  
[info@graywolftrailcrew.org](mailto:info@graywolftrailcrew.org)