



PROJECT REPORT
Alaska Volunteer Trip
Juneau Ranger District, Tongass National Forest
and Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park
June 12-22, 2017



SUMMARY

Sixteen Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) volunteers, including three trip leaders, traveled from the lower United States to Alaska to work on trails at two separate locations with two different public land management agencies. On the Juneau Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest, we completed major brushing using hand tools on a very popular trail in front of Mendenhall Glacier. At the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park near Skagway, we helped complete new interpretive trails within the historic townsite of Dyea. Other individuals joining us included strong support from both Forest Service and Park Service employees at their respective locations. All tools, materials and supplies were provided by these agencies. ConservationVIP volunteers contributed over 336 hours at Mendenhall Glacier and 480 hours at Dyea.

SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area, Tongass National Forest (near Juneau)

Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center is a popular destination location for both local residents and visitors alike and an important highlight of Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Center. The visitor center receives over half a million visitors primarily between mid-May through September and these visitors generally arrive in Juneau via cruise ship. There is a beautiful one-mile trail that departs the visitor center and goes to the very large Nugget Falls at the rapidly receding terminus of Mendenhall Glacier. After a project and tool orientation, and comprehensive “Working in Bear Country” safety discussion, we walked to the trail. We commenced working under the direction of the very competent Forest Service trail crew boss. One to two Forest Service employees worked with us daily. We worked here three days.





Actual work activities included clearing the trail corridor of both Nugget Falls trail and a shorter (0.25 mile) connecting Dike Trail and included:

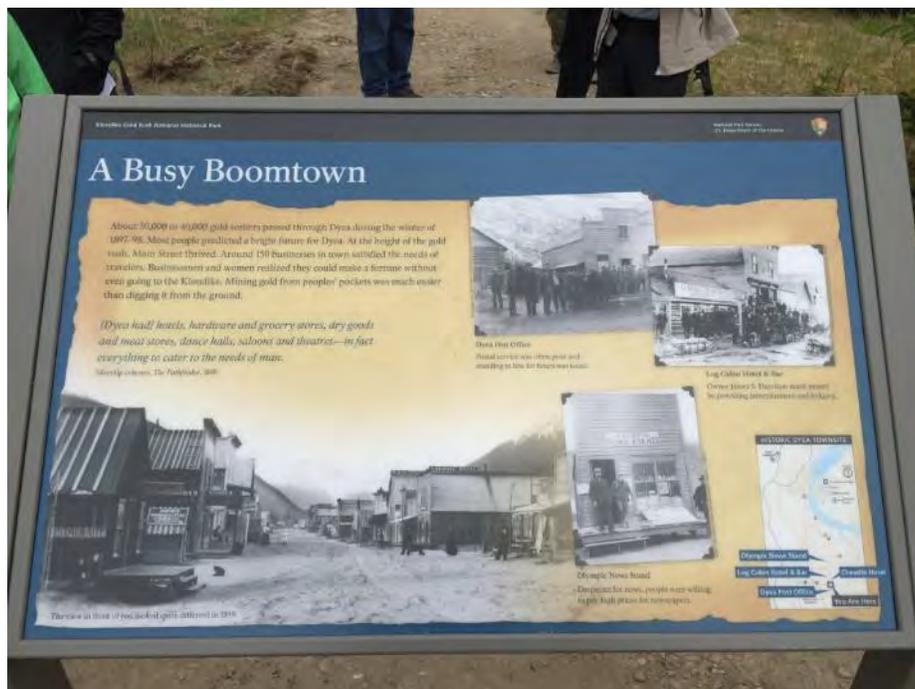
- Sawing any trees down and/or branches larger than 1-2" within two feet on either side of the trail edge or within ten feet overhead.
- Clipping and brushing vegetation within that same two feet on both sides of the trail edge or within ten feet overhead.
- Gathering and dragging the above material into the nearby brush and forested areas far enough so that it wasn't visible from the trail;
- Camouflaging any large cuts or stumps with dirt or moss.

The last work project we completed included shoveling, filling, and moving buckets of sand at the very end of Nugget Falls Trail. We estimate we moved at least 5000 pounds of sand to fill in tread at the trail's end that had been reduced by foot traffic and glacial outbursts.

Teamwork, good weather, and the smiling faces of visitors and teammates alike made this last task fun!



Dyea Townsite, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (near Skagway)



Dyea literally sprang up overnight in 1897 after gold was discovered in the Yukon Territory of British Columbia. It lies at the end of the beautiful, ninety-mile-long Lynn Canal, about 90 miles north of Juneau. Dyea began as a tent city but quickly became a well-laid out city of about 8,000 people. However, the gold rush ended quickly, and people moved on, leaving a deserted town. Now all that remains is one salvaged store front, pilings from a pier out into Lynn Canal, and a treasure trove of smaller remains.

Today the town site still piques the curiosity and imagination of visitors whose curiosity brings them to this remote location. Tourists wander the site, and Park Service and private interpreters give tours via foot and bicycle.

In 2016 the Park Service began an ambitious new interpretive trail system to replace the existing trails. The new trails have been constructed on the exact location of some of the original streets of Dyea, which makes for a superb interpretive experience. These linear trails are six feet wide with a compacted gravel surface. (ConservationVIP® volunteers worked here four days in 2016 cutting trail, digging stumps, removing roots and leveling, and placing moss over disturbed areas.)



Prior to our arrival this year, the Park Service had laid rock and gravel and hardened the trail surface which totals 7000 linear feet. This year the project was to clear and finish the edging of the trail and prepare the trail surface for sealing. Specific work consisted of the following:

- Using Pulaskis, McClouds, and shovels, raking excess rock (generally 1-3" in size) along the trail edge and piling them in small piles. Later our "rock crew" came along and shoveled said rock into small trailers pulled by a Park Service employee on a small tractor.
- Breaking up the vegetative mat piles that had been pulled up, rolled and stashed along the trail the previous year and using that material to finish the edging so the trail and forest/meadow floor met seamlessly.
- Cutting excess roots with hand saws along the edges.
- Finding, cutting, hauling and placing moss or other vegetation on all disturbed areas adjacent to the trail, cutting and filling slopes and the staging areas, and planting plants and trees in areas.
- Restoring all disturbed areas adjacent to the trail and several access routes to the trail.
- Placing excess sand on the trail surface and sweeping it to fill in gaps in the surface before sealing.

ConservationVIP® volunteers, working with five amazing Park Service trail crew members, completed both sides of the 7000' of trail.





GENERAL INFORMATION

This unique group of volunteers bonded quickly and formed a fun, supportive, and hard-working team. Walking to the job site at Mendenhall Glacier each morning always included looking for wildlife, including porcupines, eagles and specifically the four sow bears with up to four cubs (each!) in the area. In Dyea, we continued to look for wildlife and in fact, a bear did make an appearance one day (although always on our minds). ConservationVIP® volunteers specifically enjoyed working with Forest Service and Park Service employees. Everyone was proud of their shared accomplishments.

In Juneau, we stayed in a University of Alaska Southeast dormitory, and they provided our initial Welcome dinner, and lunches and breakfasts for the week. Dinner on day 2 was an outdoor salmon bake, while days 3 and 4 were off-the-menu in restaurants in Juneau to experience the local flavor of southeast Alaska. Transportation was by rental vans, which were newer and quite adequate. A two-hour break was incorporated into one day so the volunteers could enjoy the informative displays and movie in the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor (and to continue the search for wildlife).

We traveled from Juneau to Skagway via the Alaska State Ferry System, a very early morning ferry (and so Alaskan)! This year we rented vans for the entire trip and took the vans to Skagway and back on the ferry, greatly simplifying transportation logistics. We stayed at the Chilkoot Trail Outpost, a bed and breakfast establishment with small 2-person cabins (hiker suites) and one larger dormitory-style Retreat Center. The Outpost provided all meals except one dinner. Dinners were tasty and offered as much as one could eat (with dessert) – and of

course there were always s'mores to be had around the campfire. The proprietor is working with us and wants to assure everyone is highly satisfied.

After two days of work in Dyea, volunteers enjoyed a half-day round trip ride on the historic White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad, a narrow-gauge railroad built in 1898 that now serves tourists, hikers, and visitors. The route over White Pass to Fraser (in British Columbia) is spectacular and climbs nearly 3,000 feet in 20 miles. We stayed in town for the "on your own" dinner that night. The next two days we worked hard, and celebrated our accomplishments. The trail crew hosted a lunchtime barbeque on the last day and we also celebrated the Solstice with the National Park Service trail crew at the Retreat Center after work on the last day. The Park Superintendent and family joined us for the final, special dinner (surf and turf). Many laughs and many original songs were shared at all the gatherings! The volunteers with two leaders caught an early catamaran tour the last day to return from Skagway to Juneau, concluding the volunteer trip at the Juneau Airport. One leader followed on the Alaska Marine Highway ferry that night with the two vans.



SUMMARY:

We and the volunteers consider this trip very successful. The volunteers worked and traveled safely with no accidents or other incidents. They had fun, and all the work the agency people hoped would get done was accomplished. We continue to build these important relationships with public lands managers, both National Park Service and the National Forest Service, and both expressed hope we can work together in the future.

Happy Trails!

