



PROJECT REPORT
Alaska Volunteer Trip
Juneau Ranger District, Tongass National Forest
and Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park
May 28 - June 8, 2018



Executive Summary

Eleven Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) volunteers, including two trip leaders, traveled from all over the United States to work on trails with two different public land management agencies in Southeast Alaska. On the Tongass National Forest, Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area (Juneau Ranger District) we completed major brushing using hand tools on a cross country and summer use trail and removed large piles of beaver dam debris and restored habitat. We also restored and revegetated a social trail with native plants in the Auke Village Recreation Area. At the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park near Skagway, we helped complete an elevated trail network in flooded parts of the historic Chilkoot Trail; finished vegetative edges on a small portion of an interpretive trail; and moved log piles and split and stacked firewood for the NPS campground both at the historic town site of Dyea. We worked closely and received excellent support and supervision from both Forest Service and Park Service crew leaders at their respective locations. All tools, materials and supplies were provided by these agencies. ConservationVIP® volunteers contributed approximately 240 hours in three days to the Forest Service and 352 hours in four days to the National Park Service.

Detailed Trip Report

Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area, Tongass National Forest, Juneau, Alaska:

Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area, which includes the Dredge Lakes unit directly adjacent to the Mendenhall Glacier, Lake, and River, is a popular destination for local residents and visitors alike. The trail system receives heavy use year-round. Overhanging alder, spruce and other vegetation hampers hiker and biker trail use in the summer and cross-country skiing in winter.

Work Day 1: After a comprehensive "Working in Bear Country" safety discussion and an opportunity to visit the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center in the morning, we hiked 1.5 miles to the River Trail within the Dredge Lakes unit. We commenced working under the direction of the very competent and engaging Forest Service crew leader.

We proceeded to work on clearing significant brush over the trail to clear the corridor 8 feet wide and 10 feet high to open it for hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing using loppers, saws, and clippers.



Specific work included:

- Sawing down any trees and branches larger than 1-2" within 2-4 feet on either side of the trail edge or within ten feet overhead.
- Clipping and brushing vegetation within that same 2-4 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 away so that it wasn't visible from the trail;
- Camouflaging any large cuts or stumps with dirt or moss

Work Day 2: We headed out to the Auke Village Recreation Area, an important historic village site of the Auke Tribe and an extremely popular recreation site. Because of heavy use, shortcuts and "social trails" have been cut through natural areas. After deliberation between the USFS and Auke Tribe representatives, a plan was developed to restore and revegetate a portion of a disturbed natural area. We were fortunate to meet with a representative of the Auk Tribe and the tribal liaison for the Alaska Region of the Forest Service before we began the work. We heard some of the history of Tlingit tribes, the tribal structures in SE Alaska (Raven and Eagle moieties), and the importance of this ancient village site. We then proceeded to transplant native vegetation (salmonberries and devils club) from Lena Point Picnic Area to Auke Village Recreation Area to eliminate a social trail, while also building some terraces to stabilize the slope. Tools used were shovels, Pulaskis, saws, loppers, and clippers.



Work Day 3: We returned to the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area, Dredge Lake unit, where we met with some other dedicated volunteers from the local Beaver Patrol. For many years they have been deconstructing beaver dams to prevent flooding of trails and allow for fish passage to various ponds and lakes. Their removal of the beaver dams resulted in piles and piles of sticks - some over their heads! We took these piles apart and hauled and loaded them in a flatbed truck to be moved and later burned by the district fire crew. Five full dump loads were moved for a total of approximately 46 cubic yards of sticks, branches, and small logs. For this work we used saws, loppers, wheelbarrows and strong backs.





June 1- Off to Skagway on the Alaska Marine Highway Ferry

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (Skagway and Dyea, Alaska):

The Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park commemorates the history of the 1890's Gold Rush to the gold fields in the Yukon Territory. Dyea was then a bustling city but is now only a deserted town site after the railroad was constructed out of the competing town of Skagway in 1899. Dyea still piques the curiosity and imagination of visitors who seek out this remote location. Additionally, hundreds each year challenge themselves by hiking the historic Chilkoot Trail. Tens of thousands of optimistic gold seekers in the 1890's climbed that route to get to the upper lakes and Yukon River that would hopefully lead them to Klondike gold.

Work Day 4, 5, and 7: After rafting across the Taiya River, we hiked about 2 miles on the historic Chilkoot Trail to level and elevate sections of the trail around the beaver ponds that continually flood. New decked boardwalks elevate the trail in many places, but discarded wooden sections of the trail needed to be removed out of the water. Several of us got to play and work in the water in chest waders. The rest of us dug, leveled, and moved rock and dirt in the trail bed and ditches along the trail, and revegetated the trail edges.

Accomplishments included over 400 linear feet of trail by 10 foot wide-worked tread and ditches - 4000 square feet of moving rock, dirt, vegetation, and moss. The crew used

Pulaskis, McCleods, rock and vegetation rakes, loppers, pry bars, wheelbarrows, and muscles!





Specific work consisted of the following:

- Using Pulaskis, McCleods, shovels, rock rakes and pry bars, leveling the trail and the trenching on either side of the trail.
- Finding, cutting, hauling, and placing dirt, moss, leaves and other vegetation on all disturbed areas adjacent to the trail to smoothly finish the edging to prevent that “newly-constructed/raw look.”

Work Day 6- The morning was spent edging and revegetating areas of the interpretive trails in the Dyea historic town site that has been the focus of ConservationVIP® work here for the previous two years. The afternoon was spent in the NPS headquarters area of Dyea near the campground moving two large piles of log lengths and rounds of wood, splitting the rounds both with hand tools and a hydraulic log splitter, and stacking said wood. Everyone had the opportunity to move around to use all the tools and work different muscles and seemed to really be pleased with their hard work. The crew used hand tools, Pulaskis, and a hydraulic log splitter to accomplish these tasks. An estimated 1.5 cords of wood were hauled, split, and stacked.





General Information

This unique group of volunteers bonded quickly and formed a fun, supportive, and hard-working team. Working at the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area always included looking for wildlife, and during this time volunteers observed bears (after hours), beavers, porcupine, deer and eagles. On the ferry trip to Skagway, humpback whales and porpoises were seen. In Dyea, we continued to look for wildlife, and on the return trip to Juneau our vessel stopped to observe a sea lion rookery and numerous whales and eagles. ConservationVIP® volunteers especially enjoyed working with the outstanding (and often hilarious) Forest Service and Park Service employees. Everyone was proud of what we accomplished – together.

In Juneau, we stayed in a University of Alaska Southeast dormitory, which provided 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. An hour break was incorporated into one day, so the volunteers could enjoy the informative displays and movie in the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center (and to continue the search for wildlife).

We traveled from Juneau to Skagway via the Alaska State Ferry System, a very early morning ferry (a very Alaskan experience) and had breakfast onboard during the 6-hour cruise. 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 closely with us and wants to assure everyone is very satisfied. This year we transported fresh fruit from Juneau for her to have whole fruit in our lunches each day (a challenge for purchasing in Skagway).

After two days of work in Dyea, volunteers rested during 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, British Columbia is spectacular and climbs nearly 3,000 feet in 20 miles. That night we stayed in Skagway and the trail leader of the NPS trail crew and his wife invited us to their home for pizza, beverages, and games - an Alaska evening. The next two days we worked hard and appreciated the diversity of projects and our accomplishments. The trail crew leaders with their spouses joined us for the final, special dinner (surf and turf) at the Outpost. Many laughs and songs were shared at the gatherings. The volunteers with one ConservationVIP® leader 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

The Trip Leaders and other volunteers consider this trip exceptionally successful. The volunteers were extraordinary in their bonding – working, playing, and laughing together and they worked and traveled safely together with no accidents or other incidents. They had fun, and the work the agency people hoped would get done was accomplished. Work done in Juneau also met priorities of the Auke Tribe and the Juneau Beaver Patrol volunteers and helped strengthen the relationship between those entities and the U.S. Forest Service. We continue to build these important relationships with public lands managers of both the National Park Service and the National Forest Service, and both expressed hope we can continue to work together in the future.

Happy Trails!