



# Conservation Volunteers International Program

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## **Project Report** **Yosemite National Park Volunteer Expedition** **May 15 – 19, 2013**

### **Executive Summary**

Twenty volunteers and two trip leaders contributed 396 hours of volunteer labor from May 16 through May 18, assisting the National Park Service in redefining existing heavily trafficked horse and hiking trails and eliminating social trails. Volunteers also swept a large area of the road commencing at the Mirror Lake bus stop leading to Mirror Lake to improve access for persons with physical disabilities. Debris and loose gravel were also removed from the lower <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> mile of the Mist Trail to improve access to visitors in that section of the park.

The National Park Service (NPS) Trail Crew, working under the supervision of Greg Torres, provided guidance and oversight overall of the projects assigned to CVIP volunteers. All projects assigned to CVIP by the National Park Service Trail Crew Volunteers were successfully completed.

Project Leaders Celia Dunlap and Paul Adams met with NPS Trail Crew Supervisor Greg Torres the day prior to the arrival of the volunteers to discuss the projects assigned to the CVIP volunteers and NPS expectations of the volunteers. Necessary tools required to perform the various projects were identified.

### **Introduction**

Volunteers began arriving the afternoon of Wednesday, May 15, 2013. All volunteers were welcomed with an orientation briefing prior to the first evening meal. A safety discussion was conducted, which included a demonstration on the safe use of the tools that were to be used. Volunteers were also briefed on the type of projects they would work on and the location of those projects. An evening campfire on Day 1 provided an opportunity for everyone to get acquainted.

### **Detailed Report**

#### *Day 1*

On the morning of the first full work day, May 16, 2013, after arriving and parking at the Yosemite Valley Stables parking lot, volunteers were briefed again about the various work sites and the work to be accomplished at each site. All volunteers were checked to ensure that they had leather work gloves, boots, safety goggles, and water. The NPS provided hard hats, which were required to be worn at all times while on the work site.

Volunteers closed down social trails between the Merced River corridor and the Yosemite Valley Stable parking lot. This resulted in significant improvements of trail delineation for horseback tourists and foot traffic navigation to/from stables. Heavy, fallen tree trunks were used to outline approximately 100 feet of trail from unpaved path to paved roadway leading to stables. Barren areas (approximately 3,000 sq. ft) were covered with materials delivered via wheel barrels (branches, fallen tree trunks, pine needles etc.) creating visual and physical barriers for potential social trails.



Under the supervision of the NPS Trail Crew, volunteers redefined the walking trail opposite the stables up towards the Mirror Lake Bus stop. Approximately 300 feet of trail was redefined, with primary emphasis given to the lower edge of the trail to prevent visitors from crossing from the path to the road that parallels the trail. Logs used were approximately 10 feet long and were manually lifted and rolled into place. Later in the day volunteers worked redefining the walking trail above Mirror Lake bus stop



and creating an effective barrier in a large area to protect it from visitors. Area blocked off was approximately 50 feet wide on both sides. Larger branches and brush material were moved into the inner area between the two blocked off entrances to discourage accessing the area. A smaller group of volunteers assisted the NPS Trail Crew redefine an area of the horse path used by the stables to access the John Muir Trail by moving one large rock (approximately 4 feet in diameter and 4 feet tall) with the use of winches. Tall loppers used to cut off lower hanging branches on the horse trail

Trail delineation improvements were made along the alternate unpaved path on road toward Mirror Lake.

#### *Day 2*

Volunteers continued delineation improvements along the alternate unpaved walking path paralleling the paved road used by buses toward Mirror Lake. This effort involved heavy labor winching of large, fallen tree trunks weighing more than 250 lbs. and spanning lengths of more than 20 feet. Trunks were laid into small troughs cut out by shovel along the unpaved path to outline the trail. Approximately 300 feet of trail was outlined on unpaved, hiking path ending at Mirror Lake Trail shuttle stop #17.

Along the Mirror Lake Trail at .5 miles from shuttle stop #17, approximately 20 social trails were closed between alternate unpaved hiking path and paved road to Mirror Lake. Volunteers brought in heavy debris (branches, fallen tree trunks, pine needles etc.) to create visual and physical barriers of trail openings along unpaved hiking path and paved road. This effort resulted in significant enhancements to trail delineation effectively routing hikers and tourists to remain on designated pathways (paved and unpaved).

From Mirror Lake Trailhead (shuttle stop #17) volunteers swept the paved path approximately 1 mile toward Mirror Lake to ensure wheelchair and stroller accessibility was improved for tourists and hikers. The shuttle stop was significantly cleaned of debris and pine needles that compromised tourists' safety as they approached the seating and map information. Many positive comments of gratitude were made by tourists along the way.



Volunteers continued redefining the trail where it had stopped the previous day, moving with the use of winches and rock bars larger logs into place on the lower side of the trail. Troughs were created with shovels and pick mattocks to roll large tree trunks and provide stabilization. Three tree trunks measuring 12 foot long and 12-16 inches in diameter were moved. One large trunk 12 feet long and 18 inches in diameter brought down by winch from hilltop, moved 200 feet to complete project.

Four volunteers assisted the NPS Trail Crew with repair work to the bridge at Mirror Lake. Volunteers carried 40 pound sacks of concrete 2 ½ miles to the site to perform mason work. Eight (8) large stones that had loosened and fallen from the bridge were reattached to the sides of the bridge.

### *Day 3*

Beginning at Happy Isles (shuttle stop #16), volunteers cleared the steep, paved path up to Vernal Fall footbridge. Approximately 0.75 miles (1.3 km) of pavement was swept clean of debris and loose gravel to ensure safety for heavy tourist traffic. Due to the elevation gain of approximately 400 feet, this paved pathway was significantly improved for hikers and tourists who pushed strollers or carried packs with small children or elderly who required sure footing. Many positive comments of gratitude were made by tourists along the way.

Two very large logs (25 feet long and 12 inches in diameter) were moved onto the section of the horse trail above the paved road leading to Mirror Lake, used by horses accessing the John Muir Trail. Winches were used to move these large logs approximately 50 feet out of an area where they fell and transported 200 feet down an embankment before being placed on each side of the horse trail.

### **Logistics**

All needed tools were delivered by the NPS Trail Crew to the various work sites. The volunteers were divided into two groups and dispersed to their respective work sites under the supervision of the NPS Trail Crew.

Volunteers and Project Leaders camped at the Volunteer Camp in Yosemite Valley (Yellow Pine). All personnel brought their own camping gear and tents.

All meals were provided by the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew, a non-profit entity that provides meals to wilderness trail crews. CVIP contracted with the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew to provide cooked breakfasts and dinners, and to provide food for volunteers to prepare their own lunches to take to the work site. A cook tent and cook truck were set up adjacent to the campsite. Sufficient water and drinks were provided at all times.

### **Summary**

Many positive comments of gratitude were made by tourists to the volunteers at their various work sites. Conservation Volunteers International Program and volunteers give special thanks to the Yosemite National Park Valley Trail Crew under the leadership of Greg Torres, Yosemite National Park Trails Manager Dave Kari, and Yosemite National Park Volunteer Coordinator Heather Boothe for their commitment to our volunteer projects. Volunteers also thank the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew for their assistance with food preparation and service.

