



Conservation Volunteers International Program

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PROJECT REPORT MACHU PICCHU SANCTUARY VOLUNTEER EXPEDITION June 11 – 20, 2012

Executive Summary

Conservation Volunteers International Program (Conservation VIP) organized and led a volunteer expedition to Machu Picchu Sanctuary, June 11-20, 2012, in collaboration with Peru's Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area management, SERNANP). The project was authorized by Biologist Ada Castillo, Director of the Santuario de Machupicchu for SERNANP and by Anthropologist Fernando Astete, Director of the Historical Sanctuary of Machupicchu.

Fourteen volunteers, including the three trip leaders, completed restoration of a variety of projects:

1. Maintained approximately two kilometers of trail (Putucusi Trail and trails inside the orchid preserve) within the sanctuary, including the repair/installation of 13 water drains;
2. Removed plants and moss from trail retaining walls, seating/resting areas, and steps/tread;
3. Removed undesired vegetation from the edges of the trails that encroached within the two kilometer trail prism;
4. Cleaned 167 stone steps of plants and soil debris;
5. Replaced/repared 12 stone steps on the Inca Trail (Putucusi section).
6. Planted approximately 100 trees on a slide-damaged area within the Sanctuary and adjacent to Machu Picchu Pueblo.
7. Repaired a 30-foot section of the Putucusi Trail damaged by subsurface water flow by establishing proper drainage to move water away from the trail.
8. Maintained 10 concrete boundary markers (*hitos*).



In total, volunteers donated 560 hours of time. In addition, volunteers donated approximately 660 soles (\$250 USD) in tools and equipment.

At the end of the volunteer expedition, the trip leaders provided briefings to Biologist Ada Castillo for SERNANP, Oswaldo Huacac for Machu Picchu Pueblo, and the Administrator for the Ministry of Culture in Machu Picchu Pueblo. In addition, briefings were provided to local community business leaders. All spoke favorably of the expedition and the positive effect of the project upon the cultural and natural resources, visitor safety, economic development in the community, and international bilateral relations. The Ministry of Culture and SERNANP representatives invited Conservation VIP volunteers to return to the Machu Picchu Sanctuary. As part of briefing to the Mayor's representative of Machu Picchu Pueblo, trip leaders discussed Conservation VIP's assistance with the community's efforts to establish an all-volunteer search and rescue team for the community and Sanctuary. One of the volunteers, Erny Kuncl, provided three evening sessions of first aid training to the rangers and staff of the Sanctuary; the training was universally appreciated.

Detailed Trip Report

On Monday, June 11, 2012 the trip leaders Rich Tobin, Dave Hunsaker and Santiago Carrasco met with representatives from SERNANP and the Ministry of Culture to discuss work plans for the expedition.

The eleven additional members of the volunteer expedition joined the trip leaders in Cusco on Monday afternoon June 11, 2012. A Cusco city walking tour provided orientation to the history and culture of the region. On Tuesday June 12th, volunteers participated in an orientation tour of Sacsayhuaman and the Awanakancha textile cooperative. Construction on the mountain road to Tipon prevented a planned visit; instead, volunteers toured Pikillacta, a nearby pre-Inca Huarai archeological site and museum. Volunteers also received a personal welcome and orientation briefing from the Director of Machu Picchu Sanctuary for SERNANP. These orientation tours provided context for the upcoming week of work within the Machu Picchu Sanctuary. Additional tools and food for box lunches were also purchased.



On Wednesday June 13th, volunteers traveled from Cusco by bus to Ollantaytambo, then by train to Machu Picchu Pueblo (Aguas Calientes). After checking into the hotel, volunteers received a briefing by SERNANP Park Ranger Yolanda Hildalgo, then began working in the rare orchid section of the sanctuary. Volunteers removed unwanted vegetation, constructed and cleaned water bars on the access trail, and cleaned the seating and resting areas of vegetation and moss. On June 14th, volunteers completed a variety of tasks working alongside local Machu Picchu Sanctuary staff within the rare orchid section. Volunteers also planted trees along the edge of the sanctuary in an area damaged by a rockslide and threatening the community below. On June 15th, volunteers and trip leaders visited the Sacred City of Machu Picchu, including a guided tour by our professional Peruvian guide. On June 16th and 17th the volunteers met with SERNANP rangers and staff to perform trail maintenance and repair on the Putucusi Trail. On June 18th, most of the volunteers and two trip leaders met with SERNANP rangers and staff to hike an 11-kilometer section of the Inca Trail from Kilometer 104 up to the Sacred City. Volunteers saw recent fire damage to the trail, and received historical and natural history information from SERNANP staff. Trip leaders evaluated trail and bridge conditions along the trail, and reported findings to the SERNANP rangers. The other volunteers and one trip leader hiked a shorter section of trail after being bussed to the Sacred City. Upon completion of our volunteer work, participants returned to Cusco by train and bus on June 19th, with stops in Ollantaytambo and Pisac. Our final dinner on June 19th included a presentation of traditional cultural music and dance. Most volunteers departed on June 20th; several volunteers stayed for one or two days in Peru or traveled on to Bolivia and Ecuador.



Trail Maintenance

Orchid Garden. Volunteers maintained this popular trail within the rare orchid area of the sanctuary, a distance of approximately one km. Three water drains were maintained or installed to ensure water properly drained away from the trail. This maintenance corrected drainage problems that were causing soil erosion along much of the trail. In addition, rock



steps and three resting/seating areas were cleaned of loose soil debris, vegetation, and moss to improve safety. Vegetation within the trail prism was cut back along the entire length of this trail segment to improve safety for hikers as they walk along the trail.

Putucusi Trail. Volunteers maintained the lower half of the Putucusi Trail. A major landslide had obliterated several wooden ladders that provided the only access to the summit of Putucusi. SERNANP and the Ministry of Culture had closed the entire trail to effect repairs and reconstruction of several hundred feet of vertical ladders. Volunteers removed trailside vegetation and moss growing on stones for a distance of approximately one km. One hundred sixty-seven wide steps were cleared of loose soil debris and plant materials. Twelve individual stone steps that had fallen out of position were properly re-installed into their original location. In addition, debris created by soil erosion of the trail tread and adjacent mountainside was removed. Because sections of this trail are located along a cliff face, repair and replacement of steps and removal of the loose debris covering stone steps greatly improved visitor safety. Ten water drainage dips were installed or maintained to reduce future erosion of the trail. A 30-foot section of the trail was receiving widespread runoff from a trailside spring, making the section unsafe for use. Volunteers re-routed the active water flow and cleaned the tread and steps, making the section safe for use when the trail is re-opened.



Restoration

SERNANP staff identified an area for reforestation and boundary marking adjacent to the rare orchid area. A rockslide had removed much of the stabilizing vegetation along an area immediately adjacent to a residential part of the city. Approximately 100 trees were planted to stabilize the slope, and 10 large concrete Sanctuary boundary markers were cleaned and painted bright yellow.

Other activities

Volunteers Erny Kuncl and professional guide Santiago Carrasco provided three successive evening sessions of first aid training to ten SERNANP staff and Municipal Police, continuing Conservation VIP's commitment to improving professional skills of rangers and community police. First aid supplies were purchased and donated for the training and subsequent use during medical emergencies.

Closing comments

Conservation Volunteers International Program acknowledges and thanks the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment (National Service for Protected Area Management), and the community of Machu Picchu Pueblo for the privilege of volunteering in Peru. We also thank CONSETTUR Machupicchu SAC and PeruRail for their generous logistical support.

