

Project Report for May 13-17, 2015

Yosemite National Park Volunteer Expedition

Executive Summary

Twenty one volunteers and two trip leaders contributed 491.25 hours of volunteer labor from May 13 through May 17, 2015, assisting the National Park Service in maintaining the Valley Floor Loop Trail from El Capitan Meadow to Pohono Bridge on the northern and southern portions (~4.5 miles), and from the Four Mile Trailhead to El Capitan Meadow (~2.0 miles); maintaining paved park paths in Yosemite Village from the administration building to Degnan's Deli (~0.25 miles) and 8 paved shuttle bus stops; repairing a damaged rail fence on the trail from the stables to Mirror Lake; and repairing a drainage damaged by a large fallen Ponderosa Pine on the trail from the stables to Mirror Lake.

The National Park Service (NPS) Trail Crew, working under the supervision of Joe Meno, provided guidance and oversight of the projects assigned to volunteers. All projects assigned by the National Park Service Trail Crew to Conservation Volunteers International Program volunteers were successfully completed and the NPS crew noted the high efficiency and careful skill with which the volunteers conducted their tasks.



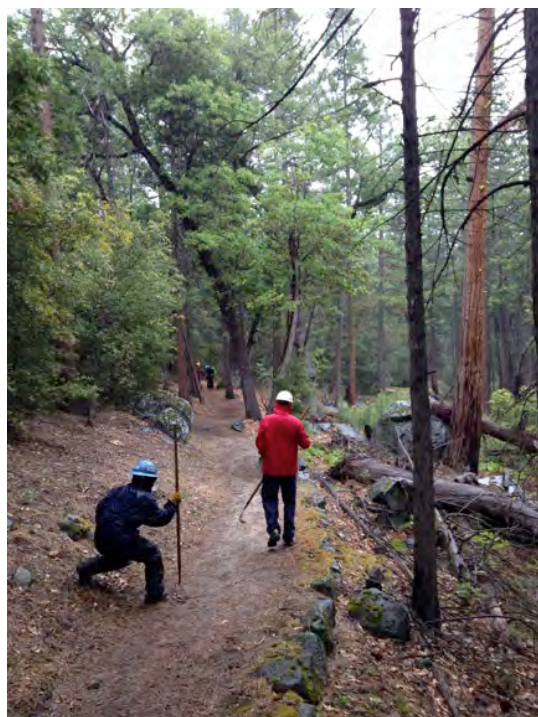
Detailed Report

Project trip leaders Ed Eads and Janice Ballak (who were assisted by Dale Walker) met with NPS Trail Crew Supervisor Joe Meno and his trail crew the morning of the volunteers' arrival, May 13th, to discuss the projects assigned to the volunteers and NPS expectations of the volunteers. All necessary tools required to perform the various projects were identified and provided by the NPS Trail Crew.

Volunteers began arriving the afternoon of Wednesday, May 13, 2015. All volunteers were welcomed with an orientation briefing. Volunteers were also briefed on the type of projects they would work on and the location of those projects. The volunteers and trip leaders enjoyed the Valley Floor Tour via open-air tram, which provided an introduction to the layout and history of the Park. Conservation Volunteers International Program warmly thanks Delaware North Corporation for providing our group with a discounted tour. Dinner and an evening campfire on our first night together provided a further opportunity for everyone to get acquainted.

Workday 1 – May 14, 2015

On the morning of the first workday, May 15, 2015, the volunteers and leaders met with our assigned NPS Trail Crew at Yellow Pine campground to discuss projects to be completed and safety, which included a demonstration on the safe use of the tools that were to be used. The volunteers, leaders, and NPS Trail Crew joined a second NPS Trail Crew assigned to train a larger California Conservation Corps (CCC) Trail Crew at El Capitan Meadow. The entire group was split in half. The volunteers were then paired with CCC crewmembers for the day. The CCC crew spent the day teaching the volunteers the basics of trail maintenance and working side-by-side with the volunteers. Half the group was assigned to maintain the southern portion of the Valley Floor Loop Trail and the other half was assigned to maintain the northern portion of the Valley Floor Loop Trail leading to Pohono Bridge. The volunteers were briefed again on safety and all volunteers were checked to ensure they had work gloves, boots, safety goggles, water, lunch and snacks. The NPS provided hard hats and additional safety gear, which were required to be worn at all times while on the work site.



The volunteers learned through working with the CCC crew appropriate work-detail procedures, how to cleanout and restore water drains, where and when to clear the vegetation from the trail corridor, and guidelines for maintaining the trail tread. The volunteers were treated to excellent views of Bridalveil Falls, Ribbon Falls, and El Capitan. Cool temperatures and light rain provided an additional challenge for the group, but did not dampen their spirits. Numerous volunteers commented that they enjoyed working with the CCC trail crew and learned a great deal as well. The combined NPS, CCC, and volunteer team completed approximately 4.5 miles of trail maintenance.

Throughout the day, NPS Trail Crew members instructed the volunteers on safety concerns, including identifying trailside poison oak. Volunteers utilized shovels, rakes, loppers, and pole saws to complete the day's projects. Volunteers were encouraged to take frequent breaks, drink and snack frequently, and to work at their own pace. Hikers and tourists from around the world

stopped to ask questions and complement the volunteers for their work.

Workday 2 – May 15, 2015

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to discuss the various work sites and the work to be accomplished at each site. After the briefing, the group was split in half; one team was assigned to maintaining the paved pathways in Yosemite Village and the paved portion of several shuttle bus stops, and the other focused on trail maintenance projects on the trail from Mirror Lake to the stables. All volunteers were checked to ensure they had necessary tools, safety gear and nourishment for the day ahead.

The Yosemite Village and shuttle bus stop trail maintenance team used brooms to sweep debris off the paved trails that posed a slipping hazard to park visitors. On the edges of the paved pathways, the volunteers repaired areas where the pavement was no longer flush to the surrounding dirt by using shovels, rakes, brooms and wheelbarrows to redistribute dirt. These uneven areas posed a safety hazard and were aesthetically undesirable. This team repaired and maintained paths in Yosemite Village from the administration building to Degnan's Deli (~0.25 miles) and 8 paved shuttle bus stops.



The team assigned to the trail to Mirror Lake was tasked with two large projects – repairing a damaged rail fence and repairing a section of trail damaged by a large fallen Ponderosa Pine. The fence project involved removing the old posts and cross members. The volunteers then dug holes for new posts, set the posts, filled the holes with stone, and crushed the stone to form solid footings for the new fence. The new fence was a significant improvement.

The fallen Ponderosa Pine damaged a drainage causing water to flow down the trail. The repair involved removing most of the tree from the trail corridor and burying two logs to hold the trail in place. Several of the log pieces were moved out of the trail corridor using winches with block and tackle rigging due to their large size. The NPS Trail Crew used chainsaws to cut two 24-inch diameter



logs to bury perpendicular to the trail tread. Meanwhile, several volunteers took turns digging two trenches for the logs to be set into, measuring approximately 10 ft. long by 2 ft. wide by 2 ft. deep. The volunteers removed numerous buckets full of old asphalt from the trenches and carried them back to the NPS vehicles for removal. Asphalt is not natural and is removed whenever possible. By the end of the workday, the two logs were placed in the trenches and loosely filled with stone.

Throughout the day, NPS Trail Crew members instructed the volunteers on safety concerns and appropriate methods for moving large and heavy fallen trees. Volunteers utilized shovels, rakes, rock bars, Grip Box winches, and wheelbarrows to complete the day's projects. Volunteers were encouraged to take frequent breaks, drink and snack frequently, and to work at their own pace. At various times, the incomparable Yosemite Falls was visible directly from the Yosemite Village worksite. The volunteers on the Mirror Lake trail were treated to stunning mirror views on Mirror Lake as they brought supplies to and from the worksite. Hikers, tourists, and horseback riders stopped to ask questions and complement the volunteers for their work.

Workday 3 – May 16, 2015

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to discuss the various work sites and the work to be accomplished at each site. After the briefing, the group was split in half; one team was assigned to maintaining the Valley Floor Loop Trail from the Four-Mile Trail to El Capitan Meadow, and the other team focused on completing the drainage repair on the trail from Mirror Lake to the stables. All volunteers were checked to ensure they had necessary tools, safety gear and nourishment for the day ahead.



The team assigned to maintaining the Valley Floor Loop Trail was able to apply the lessons learned two days earlier while working with the CCC crew. The volunteers applied appropriate work-detail procedures, cleaned and restored water drains, cleared vegetation in the trail corridor, and maintained the trail tread. They also enjoyed stunning views of Yosemite Valley on a day of picture perfect weather in the Park. Their efforts resulted in the maintenance of approximately 2 additional miles of the Valley Floor Loop Trail.

The team assigned to complete the drainage repair had a tough day of work, but enjoyed spectacular views of Mirror Lake on a lovely Yosemite day. Their project entailed crushing stone and packing it around the two logs positioned as anchors to ensure water did not flow down the trail. After the logs were dry mortared in place, the entire section of trail was built back up to its height and form prior to the water damage. The rebuilt trail was camouflaged with leaves, pine needles, and other duff to make the worksite appear natural and untouched. In addition to the completion of the log anchors, the volunteers used Grip Box winches with block and tackle rigging to move several additional large logs away from the trail corridor.

Throughout the day, NPS Trail Crew members instructed the volunteers on safety concerns and appropriate methods for moving large and heavy fallen trees. Volunteers utilized shovels, rakes, rock bars, and Grip Box winches to complete the day's projects. They were encouraged to take frequent breaks, drink and snack frequently, and to work at their own pace. The volunteers were greeted with pleasant temperatures, abundant sunshine and worked in comfortably shaded areas throughout the

day. Hikers, tourists, and horseback riders stopped to ask questions and complement the volunteers for their work.

After the last day's work, the volunteers shared dinner with Yosemite's Volunteer Coordinator, Heather Boothe. She shared stories and her substantial National Park Service knowledge with the group. Heather also presented the volunteers with patches and bandanas to commemorate their service. The volunteers and leaders enjoyed Heather's enthusiasm and knowledge of the park. She graciously answered numerous questions.



Logistics

The NPS Trail Crew provided all tools for all work sites. The volunteers hiked 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.

The High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew, a non-profit entity that provides meals to wilderness trail crews, provided all meals in a timely and tasty fashion at all times. Conservation Volunteers International Program 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

Tourists both from the United States and abroad made many positive comments of gratitude to the volunteers at their various work sites. All volunteers, who quickly became good friends and shared the common bond of “sustaining some of the world’s greatest landscapes and cultural sites,” made a lasting impact on the Park and positively influenced the NPS Trail Crew. Conservation Volunteers International Program and volunteers give special thanks to the Yosemite National Park Valley Trail Crew under the leadership of Joe Meno, Yosemite National Park Trails Manager Dave Kari, and Yosemite National Park Volunteer Coordinator Heather Boothe for their commitment to the Park and our volunteer projects. Volunteers also thanked the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew for their outstanding assistance with food preparation and service.

Volunteers completed 491.25 hours of volunteer labor, maintained approximately 6.75 miles of trails, and enjoyed 253 tasty meals served by High Sierra Trail Crew, and most importantly, made 23 new friends and countless lasting memories!

