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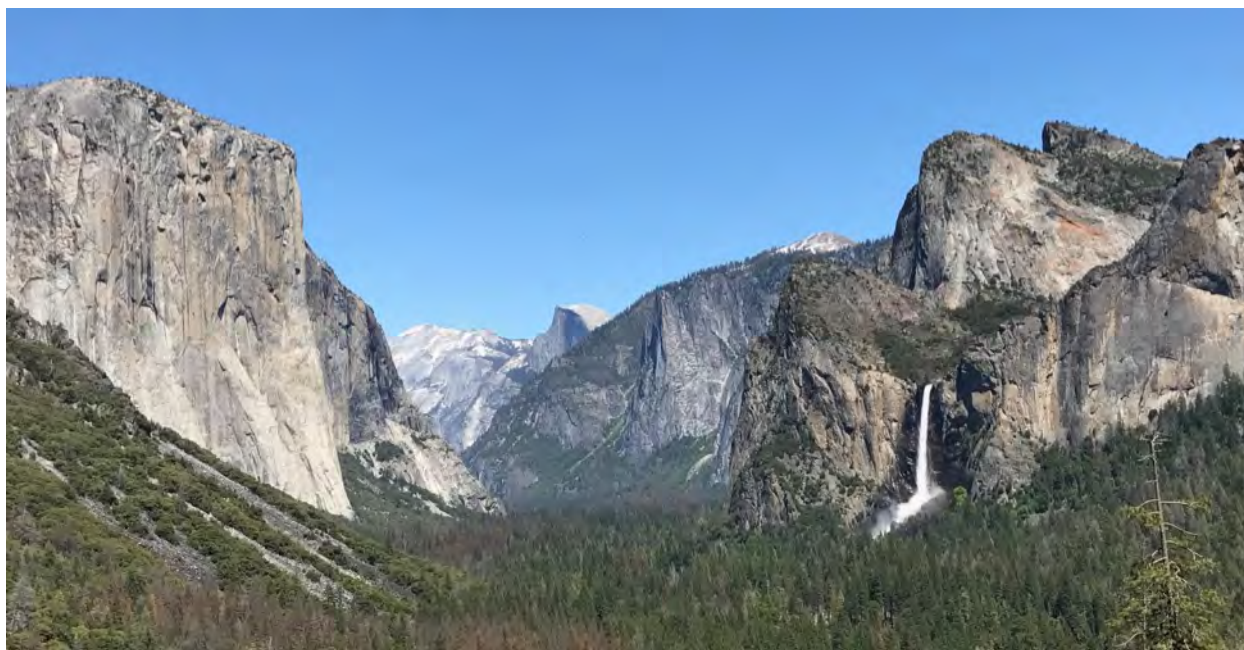
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Volunteer Project Report for May 14-20, 2017 Yosemite National Park Volunteer Trip

Executive Summary

Ten volunteers and two trip leaders contributed 390 hours of volunteer labor from May 15 through May 18, 2017, 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 repairing three major drainage sections on Mirror Lake Trail along with general maintenance of the Mirror Lake Trail that loops around Tenaya Creek in the shadow of Half Dome for ~3.9 miles (2.7 miles on the south and 1.2 on the north) from the handicap accessible parking to the footbridge and back.

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 attentive and careful skill with which the volunteers conducted their tasks.



Detailed Report:

Day One – May 14, 2017 (Orientation)

Volunteers began arriving mid-morning, Sunday, May 15, 2017. All volunteers were welcomed and assistance provided to hike into the section designated for our group and get their tents set up in Backpackers Campground. An orientation to Conservation Volunteers International Program and the work to be conducted was provided to the volunteers. Dinner and an evening campfire on our first night together provided a further opportunity for everyone to get acquainted and enjoy the majestic setting along Tenaya Creek.

Workday 1 - May 15, 2016

Volunteer project trip leaders Ed Eads and Paul Adams (who were assisted by Dale Walker) met with NPS Trail Crew Supervisor Joe Meno and his trail crew the morning of May 15 to discuss volunteer projects assigned to the volunteers and NPS expectations of the volunteers. All necessary tools required to perform the various volunteer projects were identified and provided by the NPS Trail Crew.



A safety briefing was conducted and a shared value of doing the job safely was discussed. The volunteers, leaders, and NPS Trail Crew joined a larger California Conservation Corps (CCC) Trail Crew. 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. 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 reflective vests, along with additional safety gear, all of which were required to be worn at all times while on the work site.

The volunteers learned appropriate work-detail procedures through working with the CCC crew, how to clean out 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 the Valley Floor throughout the day. 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 miles of trail maintenance creating or maintaining 35 drains to shed water from the Valley Floor Loop Trail due to a record-setting heavy rain and snowfall season.





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 compliment the volunteers for their work. This interaction between the volunteers and the visiting public became a theme throughout the week.

Workday 2 – May 16, 2017

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Backpackers Campground to discuss continuation of the work along the Valley Floor Loop Trail. After the briefing, the group was split into two groups; each team was assigned a section of the trail to work. We joined the California Conservation Corps on site to receive additional instructions from their expertise with the volunteers. All volunteers were checked to ensure they had the necessary tools, safety gear, water, and nourishment for the day ahead.

Work continued with two teams working the northern and southern portions of the Valley Floor Loop Trail to the Pohono Bridge and back to El Capitan Meadow. Each team continued trail maintenance focusing on water drainages; tread maintenance and brushing vegetation that encroached the trail. The two teams created or cleaned out approximately 42 drains along the trail and cleaned the tread by removing golf-ball or larger sized debris. The volunteers were treated to stunning views and occasional wildlife while enjoying sounds from the rushing Merced River. Hikers and tourists stopped to ask questions and many stopped to compliment and show gratitude for the volunteers and their work.



Workday 3 – May 17, 2017

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Backpackers Campground to discuss the various work sites and the work to be accomplished at each site. After the briefing, the group was split into two teams. Volunteers joined the California Conservation Corps on site to receive additional instructions and learn from their expertise. Volunteers were split into two teams along the Mirror Lake Trail constructing major drainage sections along the trail to shed water. All volunteers were checked to ensure they had necessary tools, safety gear, water and nourishment for the day.



Each site was confined to an area where the trail had been significantly compromised due to heavy snowfall and each team had a demanding day of work ahead. A great deal of hands-on work was required to relocate fallen trees to outline the trail, gather and transport rock in wheelbarrows, and build a base for redirecting the trail due to drainage. 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, Grip Box winches, and wheelbarrows to complete projects under the supervision of the NPS Trail Crew. One repair involved repositioning a large fallen tree from the trail corridor and staging it to hold the trail in place and accommodate significant drainage from snow melt. The teams celebrated their work, commenting on how good they felt to repair the trail and perform some “heavy lifting” and maintenance.



Throughout the day, NPS Trail Crew members instructed the volunteers on safety concerns and appropriate methods for moving and adjusting large rocks and trees. Volunteers were encouraged to take frequent breaks, drink and snack frequently, and to work at their own pace. The volunteers were greeted with pleasant temperatures, and abundant sunshine

throughout the day. Hikers and tourists stopped to ask questions and many complimented the volunteers for their work.

A request for feedback from volunteers was made by the Trip Leaders at day's end in Backpackers Campground to look for opportunities to improve. Trip Leaders encouraged the volunteers to share their thoughts and speak frankly. Only a few comments for improvement were made, which were appreciated by all and the Trip Leaders acknowledged and valued them. Everyone present agreed the trip was enjoyable, rewarding, and met or exceeded expectations. Trip Leaders were especially thanked and shown appreciation for their efforts to ensure a safe, fun, and rewarding experience was had by all.



Workday 4 – May 18, 2017

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Backpackers Campground to discuss continuation of the work to be accomplished on the Mirror Lake Trail. The volunteers worked in separate teams. One team was assigned the south side of Mirror Lake (~2.7 miles) for additional trail maintenance while the other team continued reconstructing the major drainage section of the previous day. We were treated to another beautiful day in the Valley with mild and comfortable temperatures. Previous water runoff was significant, so improving water drainages was important and it was easy to identify the need.

Trail tread improvement continued along the south side of Mirror Lake (~2.7 miles) past the rock slide to the foot bridge with sweeping tread, brushing vegetation off the trail, and creating drainage as needed. The work assignment was familiar to volunteers and so significant progress was made along this section. Encouragement continued from hikers and tourists who thanked the volunteers for their service.



Before



After



Before



After

After the last day's work, the volunteers shared dinner with Yosemite's Acting Volunteer Program Manager, Sally Kintner. She shared stories of her experience and her substantial National Park Service knowledge with the group. Sally also presented the volunteers with

patches and bandanas to commemorate their service and personally handed each volunteer their gift with a special gesture of gratitude. The volunteers and leaders enjoyed Sally's enthusiasm and knowledge of the park. She stayed for some time and graciously answered numerous questions.



Rest Day – May 19, 2017

Friday, the last full day of the trip was set aside as a day of rest. Volunteers were asked to keep the leaders informed of their intentions and trip(s) planned for the day. Each volunteer chose their activities and places to visit to round out their experience at Yosemite. Many of the volunteers made plans with other volunteers as friendships continued and the recognition of traveling/hiking with a partner(s) being important.

The volunteers and one Trip Leader enjoyed the Valley Floor Tour via tram, which provided an introduction to the layout and history of the Park. This is a great way of creating a sense of place and on a personal level the sense of "Awe".

It was very enjoyable to hear at the end of the day all of the experiences and places visited to add to the volunteers' memories of Yosemite. That evening after a delicious dinner, the enthusiasm and kindness shared amongst the volunteers was wonderful and there was a sincere and warm feeling of accomplishment and togetherness.



Travel Day – May 20, 2017

Each volunteer started the morning with a light breakfast, then breaking down their camp, packing their gear out and to their vehicles to start their travel home. By mid-morning all had left Backpackers Campground and it was set back to its original condition.

Logistics

The NPS Trail Crew provided all tools for all work sites. Trip Leaders drove the volunteers to the different trailheads. The volunteers hiked to their respective work sites under the supervision of the NPS Trail Crew.

All personnel brought their own camping gear and tents and camped at Backpackers Campground for the duration of the trip. The group was in the Backpackers' Campground because the usual volunteer camping site at Yellow Pine was closed due to flooding.

Willow Creek Catering provided all meals in a timely and tasty fashion. ConservationVIP originally contracted with the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew to provide all meals but due to staffing availability, they were unable to fulfill the agreement. ConservationVIP Trip Leaders shared the transport responsibility of all meals to/from Backpackers Campground, including setup and cleanup.

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. ConservationVIP 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 Acting Yosemite National Park Volunteer Coordinator Sally Kintner for their commitment to the Park and our volunteer projects. Volunteers also thanked the Willow Creek Catering company for their outstanding assistance with food preparation, delivery, and timely service.

In four workdays volunteers completed 390 hours of labor totaling 9.75 weeks of labor, enjoyed tasty meals prepared by Willow Creek Catering, and most importantly, made many new friends and countless lasting memories!

