



## PROJECT REPORT

### Special Project: New Construction on Base Torres Trail Torres del Paine National Park, Patagonia, Chile November 2023 – March 2024

The trail to the Towers in Torres del Paine National Park is the heavily traveled trail leading to the Torres (Towers) for which the Park is named. This historic trail is steep and heavily eroded. Water and wind remove soil and leave behind loose rocks and slippery surfaces.

For many years ConservationVIP® had an interest in working in partnership with all those who would need to be involved to construct a new Base Torres trail. In early 2022, Conservation Volunteers International Program began a multi-year partnership effort to construct a new Base Torres trail. Coordinating this effort is complex because the land at the lower end of the trail is managed by Las Torres Reserve, a reserve dedicated to the conservation of Patagonian nature and culture and sustainable tourism development. The public land at the upper end of the trail is managed by Corporación Nacional Forestal (CONAF). In addition to these key stakeholders, during the preparation for the project, discussions were also held with locals in Puerto Natales and Punta Arenas. ConservationVIP® agreed to recruit Trail Experts from the USA to the region, who would work with volunteers recruited by local organizations and trained by the trail experts. Previous work building the new Base Torres trail is documented in the [February-March 2022 special project report](#) and the [February-March 2023 Trip Report](#).

In November 2023 as the snow levels began to move up slope, the project work on the new Base Torres trail for the 2023 – 2024 season began. Three volunteers from Conservation Volunteers International Program, including project leader Garry Oye, traveled from the United States to Torres del Paine National Park, Chile to work on trail construction and bridges. Grady Anderson had previously volunteered as project leader on the [construction of Rio Frances bridge](#) and was there to evaluate bridge locations needed on the new Base Torres Trail and bridge maintenance. Nick Kloos, the third member of the team, helped train our new AMA trail crew.

The team worked with AMA trail crews, CONAF rangers, Torres del Paine Legacy Fund staff and Trail Planner Jacob Sutra Brett. AMA Torres del Paine (“AMA”) is a nonprofit Chilean public charity. Torres del Paine Legacy Fund is a nonprofit program with operations in Patagonia which operates under the fiscal sponsorship of the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) - a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Washington D.C.



First day with AMA trail crew – Grady Anderson & Nick Kloos



Garry Oye and Nick Kloos with local AMA trail crew



Grady Anderson and Nick Kloos teaching AMA Trail Crew about Trail Construction



Garry Oye with AMA crew – lunch break



Grady, Garry and Nick with the AMA crew

In December 2023 three more US trail experts arrived in Torres del Paine. Marc Williams operated a newly acquired Bobcat Mini-Excavator trail machine and trained three of the AMA trail workers.



Trail expert Marc Williams and Las Torres' new Bobcat Mini-excavator Trail Machine



Dinner time - Marc with the AMA crew

Later in December Fischer Gangemi returned, along with Brooks Christian, to work on the Cuernos cut across trail, gabions needed to stabilize sections of the trail on steep slopes, and the trail section leading down to the river. Fischer is the volunteer who has spent the most time on Base Torres Trail Construction and our success would not have been possible without his involvement.



Fischer and AMA crew working around Rocky Point



Fischer and AMA crew moving one of many rocks

February and March brought more trail construction assistance from the U.S. The California Conservation Corps sent 9 trail builders for four weeks. They worked with another US trail expert, Victoria Winch.



CCC crew arrives in Punta Arenas Chile with ConservationVIP Director Chris Braunlich



CCC crew working tread on new Base Torres Trail



CCC crew discusses trail construction specifications.



CCC crew building new trail into Lenga Forest next to Asencio River



CCC crew along with ConservationVIP Director Garry Oye



Left to Right: Jacob Sutra Brett – Trail Planner; Fiorella Repetto Giavelli – TdP Legacy Fund; Grady Anderson – US Trail Expert; Barbara Riffo Nunez – TdP Legacy Fund

By the end of March 2024, we built most of the new trail to the proposed bridge sites where the new Base Torres trail will cross Rio Ascencio. Thanks to the work of the many volunteers, our new trail is a gentle grade with outslope drainage and it is wide enough for two-way traffic. Our plan for the future is to complete the new trail to Refugio Chileno, build new bridges and then restore areas in the historic trail corridor.

### **SUMMARY:**

Our US Trail Experts and the CCC trail builders performed brushing, root removal, tread work, drainage and new trail construction. They worked hard during these long Patagonia summer days. It was a team effort that could not go unnoticed. Hikers on the trail, hiking guides, the hotel and refugio staff all cheered and thanked us for the work we were doing.

### **Accomplishments**

7 US Trail Experts: 1780 volunteer hours

9 California Conservation Corps Trail builders: 1440 hours

2.2 kilometers of newly constructed hiker trail (brushing & tread)

11 meters of gabion constructed.