

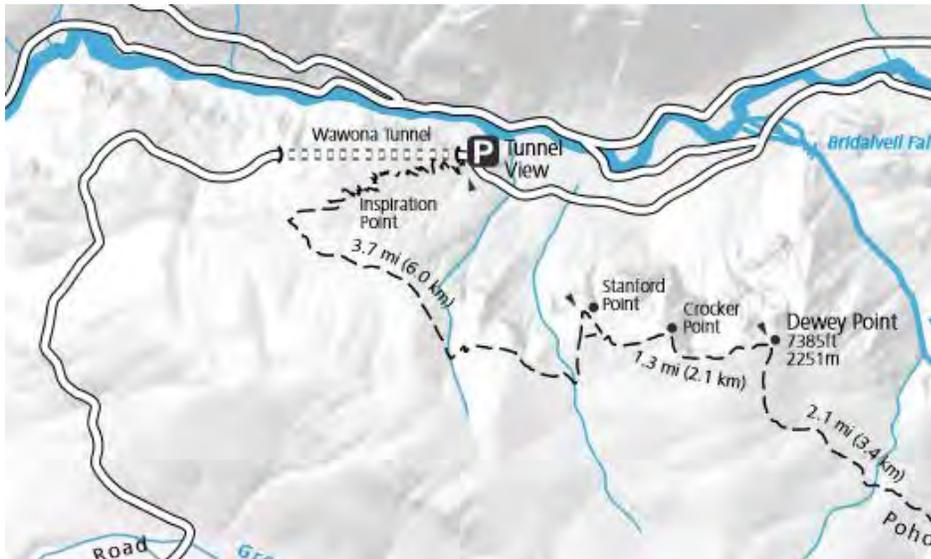


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Project Report for September 16-20, 2015 **Yosemite National Park Volunteer Expedition**

Executive Summary

Nineteen volunteers and two trip leaders contributed 456 hours of volunteer labor from September 16 through September 20, 2015, assisting the National Park Service in maintaining a section of the Pohono Trail from the Tunnel View (Wawona Rd.) Trailhead to a ridgeline just below Stanford Point (approximately 3 miles from the trailhead). The Pohono Trail had not received maintenance in 5-years and was in need of pruning and tread/drainage improvements.



The National Park Service (NPS) Trail Crew, working under the supervision of Joe Meno, provided guidance and oversight of the work assigned to volunteers. The NPS Trail Crew was quite pleased with the quantity and quality of work completed by the Conservation Volunteers International Program

volunteers, especially given the terrain (very steep ascents on day one and three) and the condition in which the trail was found to be in. It was considered a very successfully volunteer work trip.

Detailed Report

Project trip leaders Michael Toth-Purcell and Barbara Kennedy met with NPS Trail Crew Supervisor Joe Meno and his trail crew (including Sergio, Curtis, Nick, and Aimen) the morning of the volunteers' arrival, September 16th, 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, September 16th, 2015. Shortly after all participants had arrived, 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 appreciates and thanks Delaware North Corporation for providing our group with a discounted tour. Upon return to the camp, all volunteers were welcomed with an orientation briefing which included an

overview of the type of projects they would be working on and the location of the projects. Dinner and an evening campfire on our first night together provided a further opportunity for everyone to get acquainted.

Workday 1 – September 17, 2015

On the morning of the first workday, September 17, 2015, the volunteers and leaders met with our assigned NPS Trail Crew at Yellow Pine campground to discuss the project to be completed, along with a safety demonstration, using examples of the tools that were to be used. The volunteers, leaders, and NPS Trail Crew then carpooled to the parking area at the Tunnel View overlook (Wawona Road). Tools were distributed amongst the volunteers (pruning shears, **rakes**, and shovels) and the volunteers were loosely grouped/assigned (3-4) per NPS Trail Crew member. The volunteers were briefed again on safety (especially concerning the terrain, and the traffic from other hikers on this very popular trail). All volunteers were checked to ensure they had work gloves, boots, safety goggles, water, lunch and snacks. Additional water was also transported by the trip leaders due to the expected daytime temperatures and working at elevation. The NPS provided hard hats and additional safety gear, which were required to be worn at all times while on the work site.



Day One found the Volunteers and NPS Trail Crew working a very steep (4,400 feet above sea level at the Trailhead, 5,400 feet at Inspiration Point in 1.3 miles). Each Volunteers /NPS Crew group would stop to work on a section of the trail, after some initial training or guidance was provided by the NPS crew member. Once a team would complete all the work needed in their section, they would “leap-frog” beyond the upper-most team to start a new work section. The group continued this approach throughout the

day. Although the volunteers experienced a very intense mid-day sun (with limited shade) in this section of the trail, all were aided by a cool breeze, with temperatures only reaching the upper 70’s.

Utilizing shovels, rakes, shears (loppers), and a pruning saw; the team removed all overgrowth, repaired the tread (removed loose rocks/boulders and various trip hazards), and rebuilt a number of rock steps in the lower 1-mile of the trail. In the same stretch of the trail, the team rebuilt/rehabilitated 67 drainage structures and eliminated 10 social trails/shortcuts. Volunteers were encouraged to take frequent breaks, drink and snack frequently, and to work at their own pace. Several hikers and tourists from around the world, on their way to and from Inspiration Point, stopped to ask questions and complement the volunteers for their work.

At the end of the work day (approx. 1/3rd of a mile below Inspiration Point), the NPS crew and volunteers “hid” the tools in a nearby rock outcropping (to eliminate the need to carrying them along the steep section of the trail) and all returned to the parking area and to camp. Volunteers used the time remaining in the day to either do some sightseeing, shopping, shower (at Housekeeping Camp) or relax around the camp. After a great dinner, and time around the campfire, all retreated to their tents for a sound night’s sleep.

Workday 2 – September 18, 2015

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to begin the carpool journey to the Pohono Trailhead. After a brief reminder on safety and working at one’s own pace (it was predicted to be much warmer on Day Two), the teams started the hike up to where the tools had been stored. Along the way, the NPS Crew took the opportunity to review with the Volunteers the work that had been done on the previous day. A few times the NPS crew adjusted an area, explaining how and why the improvements were needed. All Volunteers (and Trip Leaders) received some very valuable insights into trail maintenance techniques during the hike to the Day Two’s work area. The teams followed the same process of breaking into groups, working on a section, and leap-frogging to the next area.

After an early lunch (returning back to Inspiration Point and the views of the Yosemite Valley) the teams continued working the trail above Inspiration Point. This area is more heavily wooded, offering more canopy and thus shade to the crews, which was appreciated, as the daytime temperatures reached a high of 85-degree F. The teams required more frequent breaks due to the weather, and

the size and scope of the work increased under the canopy of the trees (each work area took considerable more time than on Day One.)

The crews started the day at 5,250 feet above sea level (just below Inspiration Point) and finished the day at approx. 6,000 feet above sea level, covering 1.25 miles. The work included the pruning of overgrowth (substantial in some areas) and the improvements to the trail tread. 37 drains were



rehabilitated, two social trails were eliminated, as well as two unauthorized campsite/fire pits.

Once the crews passed Inspiration Point, the number and frequency of hikers decreased dramatically. Those that did pass by the teams were very interested in the work being done and also very appreciative.

As with Day One, the tools were hidden from view under a tree fall area for use on Day Three, and the crews proceeded to hike

the 2.25-miles back down the trail to the parking area. Another evening of showers, relaxation, dinner, and campfire (accompanied by some lively music played from one volunteer) rounded out another productive day.

Workday 3 – September 19, 2015

Once again, the NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to review the work to be accomplished during the day. After a brief commute and assembly at the trailhead (Tunnel View) the teams started the 2.25-mile hike up (1,600-feet) to Day Three's starting point. Like the previous day, the NPS crew reviewed the work performed by the Volunteers. To everyone's satisfaction, all work areas were given high marks, with no re-work required. The NPC Crew expressed considerable satisfaction that the lessons learned from the previous day had been applied to all tasks completed on Day Two.

The same operating methods were applied for the last day of work, with teams working sections of the trail and then moving to the next available area. Day Three's work area was also under a heavy tree canopy, and was populated by a number of very steep trail sections, each equipped with several drainage structures that were in very poor condition. On this day, the teams found themselves a bit more spread-out over a longer distance of the trail than on previous days due to the time needed to repair some of the sections of trail.

The teams convened at the "top" of the work area (around 7,000 feet above sea level) for a late lunch. By this time, temperatures were in the low 90's, and it was the request of the NPS crew that after lunch the teams quickly clean up the last of the work areas (such that they did not impact hikers) and gather all tools and equipment for the 3-mile hike back to the trailhead. Along the return journey, the NPS crew critiqued Day Three's work; including the 47 drainage structures the Volunteers had

rehabilitated, along with the 0.75-miles of trail repair and removal of overgrowth; giving all the work high-marks.

After returning to the trailhead, and packing away all the tools and safety gear, the NPS Crew and Volunteers said their good byes and headed back home or camp. The evening followed a similar course as the days before, with various gatherings (a birthday celebration), dinner, and conversations around the camp fire.

The next morning (September 20, 2015) brought one last hearty breakfast, and then the clamor of the volunteers breaking camp, and heading on their way. The last of the trip participants left the site at 11:00 am. Another successful volunteer trip completed.

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 456 hours of volunteer labor, maintained approximately 3-miles of steep terrain trails, and enjoyed 190 tasty meals served by High Sierra Trail Crew, and most importantly, made 27 new friends and lasting memories.

