



120 Village Square #9, Orinda, California 94563  
www.conservationvip.org  
info@conservationvip.org  
Tel: (925) 228-5946  
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**Volunteer Project Report For May 8-14, 2016**  
**Yosemite National Park Volunteer Trip**

**Executive Summary**

Fourteen volunteers and two volunteer trip leaders contributed 512 hours of volunteer labor from May 8 through May 14, 2016, assisting the National Park Service in maintaining approximately 8 miles of the Valley Floor Loop Trail, approximately 1.25 miles of the Mirror Lake Trail, including a portion of the Tenaya Zig Zags Trail and approximately 900 feet at the crossing of a rock slide south of Tenaya Creek on the Mirror Lake Trail.

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



## Detailed Report:

### **Day One – May 8, 2016 (Orientation)**

Volunteers began arriving the afternoon of Sunday, May 8, 2016. All volunteers were welcomed and assistance provided to get their tents set up at Yellow Pine Special Use Site for Volunteer Groups. The volunteers and trip leaders enjoyed the Valley Floor Tour via bus, 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”. Following the tour, 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 the start of long lasting friendships.

### **Workday 1 - May 9, 2016**

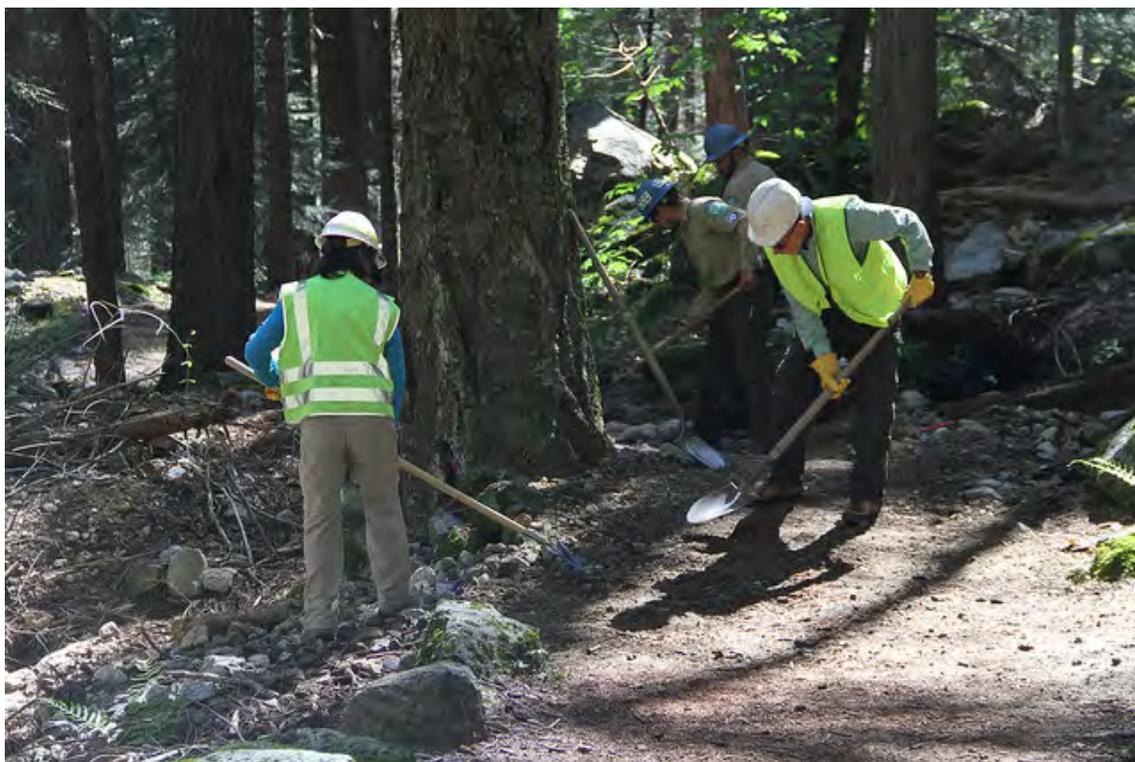
Volunteer project trip leaders Michael Toth-Purcell and David Summer (who were assisted by Dale Walker and photographer Peter Murphy) met with NPS Trail Crew Supervisor Joe Meno and his trail crew the morning of May 9th, to discuss the volunteer projects assigned to the volunteers and NPS expectations of the volunteers. All necessary tools required to perform the various volunteer projects were identified and provided by the NPS Trail Crew. We mainly worked with shovels, rakes and pruning shears.



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 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 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 Bridalveil Falls, Ribbon Falls, and El Capitan. 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.



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 10, 2016**

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to discuss the two work sites and the work to be accomplished at each site. After the briefing, the group was split into two groups; one team was assigned to maintain the trail to Mirror Lake while the other team worked on the Tenaya Zig Zags, a set of switchbacks as one hikes towards Tioga Road. We tied in with the California Conservation Corps on site to receive additional instructions and included their expertise with the volunteers. All volunteers were checked to ensure they had the necessary tools, safety gear and nourishment for the day ahead.

The team assigned to the trail to Mirror Lake was tasked with trail maintenance focusing on water drainages; tread maintenance and manipulating the vegetation that encroached the trail. Approximately 1.25 miles of maintenance was completed by this team. The volunteers on the Mirror Lake trail were treated to stunning views and watchable wildlife. Hikers and tourists stopped to ask questions and compliment the volunteers for their work.



The other team was assigned the Tenaya Zig Zags. The team had a physically demanding assignment including the hike and working with rock placement to retain a solid tread. Additional safety briefing was provided dealing with rolling rocks and working above each other. Often in this kind of environment, heavy maintenance is needed on switchbacks. The volunteers were treated to spectacular views of the valley floor and the satisfaction of a hard day of work. Hikers stopped to ask questions and also complimented the volunteers on their efforts.



### **Workday 3 – May 11, 2016**

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 into two teams. We tied in with the California Conservation Corps on site to receive additional instructions and included their expertise with the volunteers. One team returned to the Mirror Lake trail to continue on the south side of the trail to work on a rock slide and the other team returned to the Tenaya Zig Zags switchbacks. All volunteers were checked to ensure they had necessary tools, safety gear and nourishment for the day ahead.

The team assigned to complete the trail across the rock slide had a demanding day of work as the work site was confined to an area where the trail had been destroyed during a major rock slide and it was important to reestablish the trail tread. A great deal of hands on work was needed to remove and or adjust fallen rock. The trail was reestablished across the whole rockslide by the end of the day and the team celebrated their work, commenting on how good it felt to repair the trail.



The team assigned to the switchbacks returned to a familiar work site and assignment and by the end of the day had completed the heavy maintenance the NPS wanted on this section of the trail.



Throughout the day, NPS Trail Crew members instructed the volunteers on safety concerns and appropriate methods for moving and adjusting large rocks. Volunteers utilized shovels, rakes and rock bars to complete the day's volunteer 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, and abundant sunshine throughout the day. Hikers and tourists stopped to ask questions and compliment the volunteers for their work.

#### **Workday 4 – May 12, 2016**

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to discuss the work site and the work to be accomplished. The volunteers worked together as one team and were assigned 4 additional miles of trail maintenance of the Valley Floor trail. We were treated to another beautiful day in the Valley with temperatures in the low 80's. Previous water runoff was significant, so improving water drainages was important and it was easy to identify the need. We continued to work on tread improvement and cut vegetation that encroached upon the trail.



The work assignment today was familiar to the volunteers and so were the tools so we had a good, productive day completing all 4 miles of maintenance. Encouragement continued from hikers and tourists who visited with the volunteers and thanked them for their service.

A critique was held at Yellow Pine Campground to get immediate feedback from the volunteers and look for opportunities to improve the trip. We were seeking honest feedback and really encouraged the volunteers to share their thoughts.

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.

### **Self-Discovery/Free Day – May 13, 2016**

Friday, the last full day of the trip was set aside for self-discovery. The 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.

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 14, 2016**

Each volunteer started the morning breaking down their camp and loading their gear into their vehicles to start their travel home. By late morning all had left Yellow Pine Campground and it was ready for the next volunteer group to experience Yosemite Park.

### **Logistics**

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

Volunteers and Volunteer 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. 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 512 hours of volunteer labor, maintained approximately 9.25 miles of trails, and enjoyed tasty meals served by High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew, and most importantly, made many new friends and countless lasting memories!

