

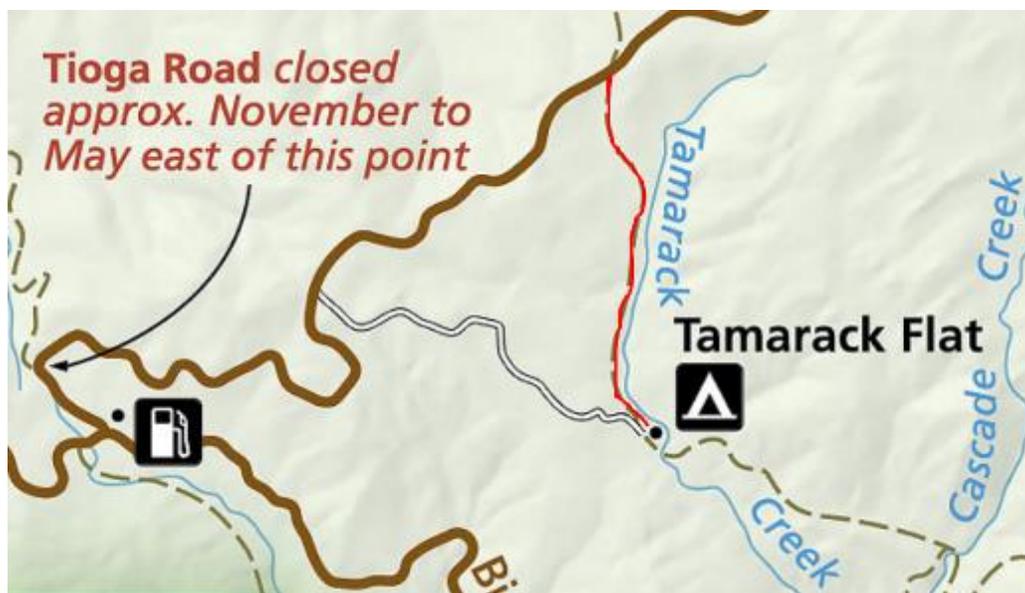


## Project Report Yosemite National Park Volunteer Trip September 10-16, 2017

### Executive Summary

Thirteen volunteers and two volunteer trip leaders contributed 420 hours of volunteer labor from September 10 through September 16, 2017, assisting the National Park Service in maintaining approximately 2.5 miles of trail between Tioga Road and Tamarack Flats Campground.

The National Park Service (NPS) Trail Crew, working under the supervision of Joe Meno, provided guidance and oversight of the trail maintenance. The trail maintenance completed by the NPS Trail Crew and Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) volunteers was successfully completed. Shown below (in red) is the trail on which ConservationVIP® volunteers revitalized paths that hadn't seen maintenance in 10 to 15 years. Volunteers and the NPS Trail Crew pruned and brushed back hundreds of buckthorn, shrubs and saplings, repaired or built approximately 15 water drainages and placed 7 sawed logs on the trail to prevent rutting.



## **Detailed Report**

### **Day One – September 10, 2017 (Orientation)**

Volunteers arrived Sunday, September 17, 2017 in the early afternoon. All volunteers were welcomed by the trip leaders and provided assistance to get their tents set up at Yellow Pine Special Use Site for Volunteer Groups. Once all volunteers arrived, an orientation to Conservation Volunteers International Program and the work that was going to be conducted was provided to the volunteers. At mid-afternoon, the volunteers and trip leaders enjoyed the Valley Floor Tour via bus, which provided an introduction to the layout and history of the Park. The Ranger narrating the tour focused on the geology of Yosemite and the formation of the valley. The tour provided a great way for volunteers to become oriented with the valley and a personal sense of “Awe.” During the tour, the volunteers were looking hard to see climbers on El Capitan. Dinner and an evening campfire on the first night provided a further opportunity for everyone to get to know each other.



Looking for rock climbers on El Capitan while on the valley tram tour.

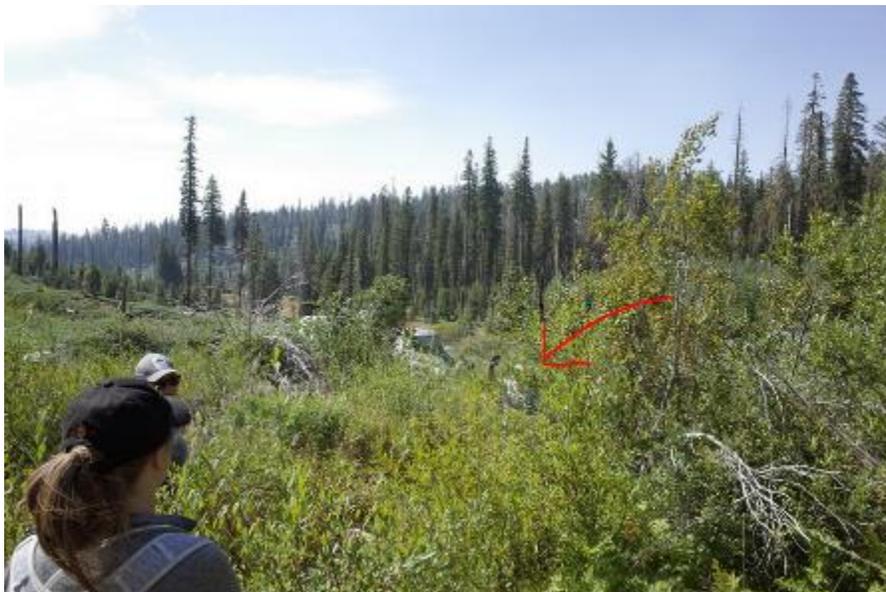
### **Workday 1 - September 11, 2017**

Volunteer project trip leaders Michael Toth-Purcell and Patrick Murphy (who were assisted by Dale Walker) met with NPS Trail Crew Supervisor Joe Meno and Aman Schneider the morning of September 11th. The ConservationVIP® volunteers ate breakfast with the NPS crew before driving to the trailhead to begin trail maintenance.

At the trailhead off Tioga Road, a safety briefing was conducted and a shared value of doing the job safely was discussed. Because of the extensive overgrowth on the trail, Joe and Aman of the NPS Trail Crew provided a demonstration on pruning and brushing back plants, including buckthorn and other shrubs and saplings, for the ConservationVIP® volunteers. Joe also provided context on the importance of pruning to the conservation and maintenance of the trail. The ConservationVIP® trip leaders emphasized the importance of safety that covered many items, including the preferred way to carry tools and the importance of hydration, rest and sunscreen.



The ConservationVIP® volunteers set out along the trail with tools provided by the NPS Trail Crew (mainly loppers). Throughout the day the NPS crew toggled between ConservationVIP® groups to aid and assist the volunteers, working side-by-side and ensuring the volunteers were satisfied with progress of the trail.



The first day on the overgrown trail.

Throughout the day, volunteers were encouraged to take frequent breaks, drink and snack frequently, and to work at their own pace. As the day progressed all volunteers were diligent about both the trail work they accomplished and the safety of themselves and those around them. Along with wearing eye protection, gloves and sunscreen, loppers were carried with caution. The first day of work began at a slow pace while Volunteers acclimated to the higher elevation and were becoming familiar with the nature of the work being completed on the trail. The trail was at approximately 6,000 feet elevation, considerably higher than what most volunteers were accustomed to. After the first day, the ConservationVIP® Volunteers had trimmed approximately 0.25 miles of trail and were impressed by the amount of shrubbery that was cleared from the trail.



The weather on this day was indicative of the week's weather, with temperatures between 65 - 75 degrees and sunny or partly sunny skies.

### **Workday 2 – September 12, 2017**

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to enjoy time with volunteers before leaving for the trailhead at 8am. Once at the trailhead the group discussed individual and group safety before equipping with loppers provided by the NPS Trail Crew. The NPS Trail Crew reminded the Volunteers about the importance of pruning on the trail and the natural aesthetic that is needed after a large amount of lopping is completed.

Trail pruning is needed because overgrowth on the trail pushes trail hikers and stock off the trail and onto the natural growth just off the trail. The natural growth could be conserved just feet off the trail by consolidating hikers onto an established trail. The natural aesthetic of the trail is maintained by attempting to make the trail pruning look as natural as possible. This is accomplished by pruning shrubs to the roots and placing cut branches out of sight of the trail.

Volunteers enjoyed a full day of labor which included pruning overgrowth on another approximately 0.25 miles of trail. After workday 2, approximately 0.5 miles of the 2.5-mile trail had been brushed back. Aman Schneider, of the NPS Trail Crew, led a portion of the volunteers to scout out the remaining section of the trail to see how overgrown the remaining 2 miles of trail were.



Volunteers pruned vegetation to help keep hikers from veering of the trail unnecessarily.

During dinner, volunteers were joined by Ranger Julia Oleksiak, who spoke about volunteering at Yosemite National Park while the volunteers had dinner. She also answered volunteers' questions about Yosemite and volunteering within the park. Ranger Julia spoke about Preventable Search and Rescue Rangers and Volunteers, and the importance of well-maintained trails to help prevent hikers from wondering off trail. The ConservationVIP® volunteers discussed how sections of the trail we were working on would have been easy to get lost on.

After dinner, the volunteers enjoyed a campfire while talking about the impact they were already making after two days.

### **Workday 3 – September 13, 2017**

The NPS Trail Crew met with the volunteers and leaders at Yellow Pine campground to discuss the two starting points where work would be accomplished. The majority of the volunteers would begin working on the trail from Tioga Road, while another group would begin working from the trailhead at the Tamarack Flat Campground. Again, the NPS Trail Crew mingled with the volunteers and had breakfast before departing for the trail at 8:00am.

To reach the trail that needed to be maintained, most volunteers and the NPS Trail Crew hiked approximately 0.5 miles from the trail head. The volunteers continued to brush back overgrowth on the trail. There was one section of trail that was particularly easy to navigate

off from. Volunteers put in extra effort to guide the trail in the proper direction with logs, pruning and trimming of brush.

On workday 3 the volunteers finished the final 2.0 miles of trail that were left to complete as the trail had much less overgrowth than the first 0.5 miles.



Volunteers using loppers on the trail.

Although pruning was complete, volunteers provided feedback that they had grown a special connection with the trail we worked on for three days. The NPS Trail Crew and Trip Leaders decided to return on workday four and continue work on the same trail by building and repairing the drainages and rutted sections of trail.

#### **Workday 4 – September 14, 2017**

Because the volunteers would be completing a different type of work on the trail, Joe, the NPS Trail Crew lead, provided a demonstration on building new and repairing existing water drainages for the ConservationVIP volunteers. Joe provided context on the importance of the water drainages to the conservation and maintenance of the trail. Joe and Aman cut logs into 5 foot sections early in the morning to be taken to the trailhead and inserted into the trail. All volunteers had the necessary tools, safety gear and nourishment for the day of digging water drainages and putting logs in the trail.

As the Volunteers hiked down to complete work on the trail, a bear paw print was noticed by everyone. It looked like the trail was already seeing use by some of the local inhabitants.

By this point in the week, volunteers felt comfortable with the trail maintenance work and were able to contribute more effectively and efficiently. There was a strong sense of camaraderie on the trail between the volunteers and the NPS Trail Crew. The volunteers continued to have a focus on group safety, with frequent water and snack breaks and safety with tools.



Inserting logs to prevent rutting of the trail.

The week of trail work was informative, tiring and inspiring for the volunteers.

### **Rest Day – September 15, 2017**

Friday, the last full day of the trip was set aside as a rest day. The volunteers were asked to keep the leaders informed of their intentions and any 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 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 – September 16, 2017**

Volunteers started the morning breaking down their camp, enjoying breakfasts, loading their gear into their vehicles and saying goodbye to new friends. By late morning Yellow Pine Campground was empty and all volunteers had left.

### **Logistics**

The NPS Trail Crew provided all tools for all work sites. The trip leaders drove the volunteers to the trailheads where work was completed. The volunteers hiked and worked under the supervision of the NPS Trail Crew.

Volunteers and Volunteer Project Leaders camped at the Volunteer Camp in Yosemite Valley (Yellow Pine). All volunteers brought their own camping gear, tents and protective wear.

Willow Creek Catering, provided all meals in a timely and tasty fashion. Conservation Volunteers International Program contracted with the Willow Creek Catering 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. Two chefs prepped, cooked and served a total of 255 meals for the volunteers throughout the week.

### **Summary**

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. All NPS Trail Crew that worked with the volunteers were inspired by the commitment from each individual and the organization. Conservation Volunteers International Program and volunteers give special thanks to the Yosemite National Park Valley Trail Crew under the leadership of Joe Meno and Yosemite National Park Volunteer Coordinator Heather Boothe for their commitment to the Park and our volunteer projects. Volunteers thank Ranger Julia Oleksiak for her commitment to educating visitors and for her presentation and kindness to our group. Volunteers also thank the Willow Creek Catering for their outstanding assistance with food preparation and service.

Volunteers completed 420 hours of volunteer labor, maintained approximately 2.5 miles of trails, repaired or built approximately 15 water drainages, carried and placed 7 logs in the trail, and most importantly, made many new friends and countless lasting memories!

