

WTA at Work

Trail Maintenance »



Volunteers on a WTA Backcountry Response Trip to Elliott Creek/Goat Lake in 2008. These trips are more challenging than our typical trail maintenance trips—but also take you deeper into the wilderness.

Backcountry Response

WTA's Backcountry Response Trips take trail work deeper into wilderness

"...to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."

—The Wilderness Act of 1964

Wilderness areas overseen by the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service are the pinnacles of our hiking and backpacking experiences. They are the last remaining outposts of what was once the dominant landscape of our nation. William O. Douglas once spoke of the emotional side of wilderness: *"...to be whole and harmonious, man must also know the music of the beaches and the woods. He must find the thing of which he is only an infinitesimal*

part and nurture it and love it, if he is to live."

Women and men of vision helped establish and protect these areas and it is now up to us to nurture and love them so that they will truly be an enduring resource for future generations.

Trails leading into and through these wilderness areas are often primitive, long and remote. Some may not see a trail maintenance crew for several years and the backlog of projects is always increasing. Without regular maintenance, these trails can deteriorate to a point where they can no longer serve as a safe and enjoyable way to access our wilderness areas. WTA is meeting this maintenance need in two ways. The majority of our Volunteer Vacations,



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both youth and adult, occur either partially or completely within designated wilderness. Our other program for addressing trail maintenance issues deep in wilderness is our Backcountry Response Teams (BCRT). In fact, of the 21 BCRTs we've scheduled this season, 19 are within wilderness areas.

BCRT trips consist of four- to eight-person crews led by a WTA crew leader. The groups spend between three and five days in the backcountry. These trips are aimed at backcountry hikers who enjoy trail work. The crews are self-supporting and volunteers carry their own gear including tent, sleeping bag, stove, food, work clothes and the tools necessary for the job. Some of the trips set up a base camp between 3 and 10 miles from the trailhead in order to work on projects that cannot be reached by our day trips. The projects on these trips include trail realignment, tread repair, log-out, brushing, rockwork, turnpike construction, puncheon repair and drainage maintenance. Other trips will move camp every day as the crew traverses long sections of trail. These trips will focus on log out and serious tread problems in order to open trails to hikers and backpackers.

BCRTs are scheduled to occur on 11 different wilderness areas in the state, ranging from the



WTA's Backcountry Response Teams take you to some spectacular wilderness destinations to do trail work farther in that our standard trail work trips. This year, we'll be visiting the Bald Eagle Trail (top left), Lake Creek in the Pasayten Wilderness (center left) and West Cady Ridge in the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness (bottom left).

Meet Our Members!



Audrey Lawrence

As a kid, Audrey enjoyed summer trips to the Sierra Nevada and the North Cascades. As an adult, excursions with Dad now include rock climbing in the Tetons and backpacking the Olympics.

Audrey Lawrence joined WTA during a "Get-A-Member" campaign in 2006. At 23, she was the youngest member WTA recruited. Later that year, Audrey was one of the first WTA members to take part in WTA's Backcountry Response Teams.

Audrey manages the retail shop for Theo Chocolate in Fremont. And this past winter, she arranged for a contribution of Theo's fair-trade, local, organic chocolates for WTA's annual Fireside Circle celebration.

Thanks, Audrey for being a member and sharing your chocolate with WTA!

—Lace Thornberg

expansive Pasayten in north central Washington to the pocket-sized Trapper Creek south of Mount St. Helens, from the Buckhorn Wilderness on the east slopes of the Olympics to the Salmo-Priest in the extreme northeast corner of the state. Each of these wilderness areas has its own special character and its own unique set of maintenance challenges that WTA will try to address.

Two of our BCRT trips this year are in the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, which is sandwiched between the Glacier Peak Wilderness to the north and Washington's newest wilderness, Wild Sky, to the southwest. This is an area of the Cascades known for its craggy peaks and deeply carved glacial valleys. The Pacific Crest Trail winds its way through the center of this wilderness. The two trails we will be working on, West Cady Ridge and Bald Eagle, are spectacular ridgeline trails and they also serve as feeder trails to the PCT.

On the West Cady Ridge trip, we'll be camped in a beautiful basin below 5,800-foot Benchmark Mountain. The work for this project will include tread repair and drainage improvement along the length of the ridge. As an added bonus, the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington have agreed to pack in the tools for this project—thus lightening the load for anyone who signs up for this trip. For the Bald Eagle project, we will be camped at Curry Gap, 4 miles from the trailhead. We will be working above Curry Gap on the Bald Eagle Trail on several small slide areas, repairing tread or putting in short trail realignments where necessary.

Another wilderness BCRT not to be missed is the Lake Creek Trail in the Pasayten Wilderness on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Pasayten is on the dryer east slopes of the Cascades and has a less rugged and more open, park-like terrain than that of the central and western Cascades. The immense size of the Pasayten—nearly 530,000 acres—gives it a true wilderness feel and it is home to lynx, wolverines, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, wolves and the occasional grizzly bear. In 2003, the Farewell fire burned through the Lake Creek drainage, and the dead snags from this fire continue to fall across the trail. Our job for this trip is to start logging out the trail at Black Lake and continue on towards Ashnola Pass and Fawn Lake. If time allows, we will continue down Spotted Creek to the Ashnola River as far as the intersection with the Boundary Trail.

This is just a small sampling of the many BCRT trips we have scheduled for this season. By joining one of these trips you'll have a great backcountry experience in some of this nation's most spectacular wilderness areas—and you will be doing your part to preserve and enhance access to these places for both our generation and those that will follow. For more information and to sign up, visit www.wta.org and click on Volunteer/Backcountry Response Teams. ♦



Join a WTA Trail Work Party

5/5	Tue	Elbo Creek, Olympics
5/8	Tue - Fri	Snoquera Falls, Mt. Rainier
5/12	Tue	Lower Big Quilcene, Olympics
5/12	Tue - Fri	Boulder River, Darrington
5/15	Friday	Grand Ridge, Puget Sound
5/15	Fri - Sun	North Bend
5/16	Sat - Sun	Iller Creek, Eastern WA
5/16	Sat - Sun	Iron Goat Trail, Skykomish
5/17	Sun	SF Skokomish, Olympics
5/19	Tue - Fri	Verlot Area Maintenance
5/23	Sat - Sun	Iron Goat Trail, Skykomish
5/23	Sat - Sun	Beacon Rock, Southwest WA
5/26	Tue	Elbo Creek, Olympics
5/30	Sat - Sun	Horseshoe Bend, Mt. Baker
5/29	Fri - Sun	Glacier Basin, Mt. Rainier
6/6	Saturday	National Trails Day!
6/7	Sunday	Glacier Basin, Mt. Rainier
6/7	Sunday	Spokane Area Trails
6/12	Fri - Sun	Glacier Basin, Mt. Rainier
6/12	Fri - Sun	Glacier Basin, Mt. Rainier
6/13	Sat - Sun	Excelsior Pass, Mt. Baker
6/14	Sun	SF Skokomish, Olympics
6/16	Tue - Fri	Mount Pugh, Darrington
6/19	Fri - Sun	Glacier Basin, Mt. Rainier
6/20	Sat - Sun	Church Mountain, Mt. Baker
6/20	Sat - Sun	Grassy Knoll, Mt. Adams



For a complete schedule visit www.wta.org

To sign up or find more info » This is a selection from our extensive list of volunteer opportunities. To find more trips, and to sign up, visit our website at www.wta.org and click on "Volunteer." No experience is necessary. Sign-ups close two days before a work party, and work parties often fill up quickly, so reserve early. Trip dates and locations are subject to change.