



Take A Hike!

The Newsletter Of The Idaho Trails Association

The Idaho Trails Association promotes the continued enjoyment of Idaho's hiking trails.

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Exciting Trail Projects For Excited Volunteers

From the Idaho Panhandle to the Owyhee Canyonlands, we are offering several extraordinary volunteer trail project opportunities this summer. To take care of these trails, we need willing and excited volunteers!

June 4th is National Trails Day. We'll kick off our slate of volunteer trail projects by helping the Bureau of Land Management cleanup and establish the new Parker Trailhead, which provides access to the Big Jacks Creek Wilderness in Owyhee County. Volunteers will finish converting an old road into a hiking trail and will assist the BLM with other trail improvements.

July 9th and 10th we'll head to the Payette National Forest, outside of McCall and clear trees and brush on approximately five miles of Kennally Creek Trail #101. Additionally, volunteers will help repair trail tread and erosion and fix water drains.

Our crescendo is the week of **July 22nd – 30th** as we work on the Boise National Forest to help complete the final 10-mile section of the new Wewukiye (Wawoo-kia) Trail near Warm Lake. The new 17-mile trail will connect Warm Lake, Tule Lake, Stolle Meadows, a Chinook salmon viewing platform, a historic cabin, and Vulcan Hot Springs. Volunteers are welcome to stay for the whole week or part of the project. The project is cosponsored by REI. The American Hiking Society will provide volunteer support through their **Volunteer Vacations Program**.

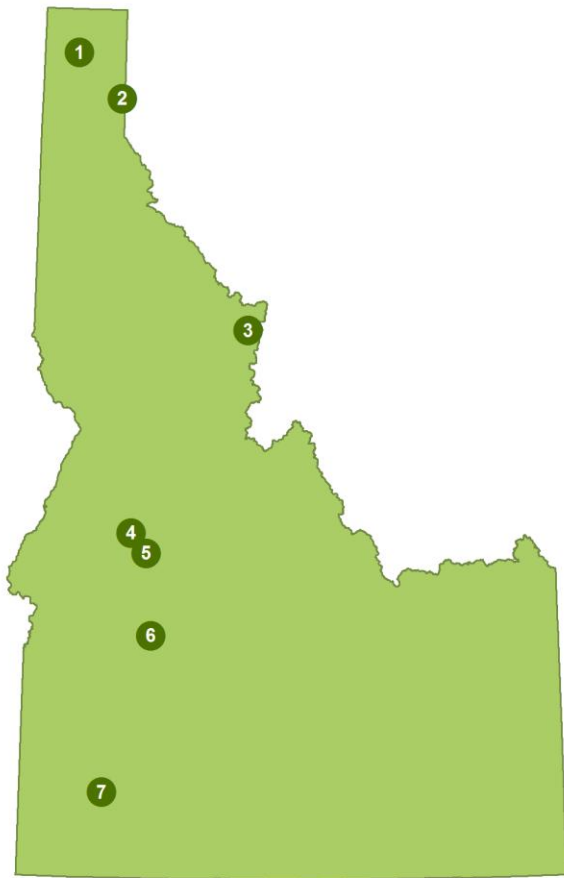


A family of hikers passes ITA Volunteer, David Hayes on the trail. Photo by John McCarthy.

August 14th – 20th the Idaho Trails Association will join forces with the Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation to reopen Dead Elk Trail #672, which has been closed for years due to lack of maintenance. The trail is a critical part of a great

loop in the Elk Summit/East Moose Creek area of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The majority of the project work will include cutting trees out of the trail, brushing the trail and repairing drainage structures. The project will be pack supported.

August 27th & 28th we'll be in North Idaho's Selkirk Mountains. We need volunteers to help clear brush and downed logs on approximately 2.5 miles of Beehive Lakes Trail #279—a popular hiking destination near Sandpoint.



Our 2011 Trail Stewardship Projects. From north to south - (1) Beehive Lakes, (2) Rattle Ridge, (3) Dead Elk, (4) Kennally Creek, (5) Wewukiye (Wa-woo-kia), (6) Crooked River, and (7) Parker Trails.

September 24th is National Public Lands Day. On the Boise National Forest, we'll help clear and reconstruct a section of Crooked River Trail #158, damaged by a small landslide. Volunteers will help

stabilize and relocate the trail to a more sustainable location.

Finally, if grant funding comes through, we'll schedule another project on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, working on the Rattle Ridge Trail System in the West Cabinet Mountains, outside of Clark Fork. When reconstruction is completed, this trail system will total 24 miles in length with 3 trailheads and will open up a trail system that was locked in behind many miles of closed roads. Roads converted to trails will add 12 miles of new opportunities for horseback riders, hikers, mountain bike riders, and cross-country skiers. Stay tuned.

If you would like volunteer for one of our trail projects, please visit our website, where we will post project information sign up details.

<http://www.IdahoTrailsAssociation.org/Volunteer/>

Trail Budget Cuts Increase Need For Volunteers

By: Brad Smith

On a beautiful summer day in the late 1990s, my father and I took a hike to Harrison Lake in the Selkirk Mountains outside of Sandpoint. I had just started to get into hiking and understood very little about who manages and takes care of the great hiking trails in our state. The only thing that I did know at the time is that my father and I were hiking on Forest Service land—lands that belong to the American people. There are few countries in the world where you can find vast public ownership, accessible to everyone. In Idaho we have lots of it, and it's a great thing because in the words of Will Rogers, "They ain't making it no more."

As we hiked the trail we came upon a crew of seasonal Forest Service employees, yielding various tools. The crew was cutting brush and logs, clearing

out water drains, and repairing the trail tread. As we passed by we expressed our gratitude to the trail crew, but admittedly we took for granted that a hired crew was clearing out the trail at no cost to us.

If we owned the land around Harrison Lake, we would have had to pay the crew a substantial amount to do this work. I realize that as taxpayers, we pay for these crews indirectly, but I can only imagine how little you and I are actually paying out of our own pockets for this trail work.



Volunteers Scott Acker (left) and Zac Crist (right) use a crosscut saw to clear a downed tree from a trail on the Payette National Forest. Photo by John McCarthy.

Congress has slashed the Forest Service budget, just like many other programs. Now days there are fewer and fewer of those Forest Service crews clearing the trails. Colleagues at the Payette National Forest tell me (and this was before the latest budget cuts) that in recent years Congress appropriates enough money for the Forest to maintain only 15% of the roads and trails. Roads take priority, so the amount left over for trails is miniscule.

Enter the Idaho Trails Association. Until now, there has been no statewide organization in Idaho that was established to represent and promote the interests of hikers. The time has come for us to yield our own saws, shovels, pulaskis and do our part. We must help the Forest Service and other

land managers take care of our hiking trails so that we can have a system of trails that are safe, sustainable, and enjoyable.

To be sure, we'll make sure to set aside some time to lace up our boots, shoulder a pack, and travel the backcountry, because that's what we enjoy doing. In fact, we would like to lead group hikes at some point. But first things first. We hope you'll join us this summer as we embark on a mission to become the caretakers of Idaho's hiking trails.

Tales From The Crosscut

Tales From The Crosscut is a guest column, where we invite an intriguing member or guest columnist to tell a story about trails or provide a perspective unique to hikers. Like tree rings, our guests have years of collective stories and experience to share. We hope you enjoy them.

Crosscuts or Chainsaws?

By: Jeff Halligan

I had never touched a crosscut saw until 1989 after I accepted a job as a packer with the Payette National Forest. I was stationed at Chamberlain Basin deep in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. One of the first things I noticed after arriving at Chamberlain was a woman cutting firewood with a cross cut saw. I thought, wow, how inefficient to cut firewood this way, but the woman, named Hilary, asked me to come give her a hand because she was cutting firewood for me. I thought ok, I'll give it a try, and with my help production slowed down by 75%. My frustration at not being good at this was very apparent. I usually can pick things up fairly quickly. Hilary was great. She noticed this and said, "not as easy as you thought it would be is it?" With a 2-hour lesson and a ton of patience on Hilary's part it ended up changing my beliefs and experiences in the backcountry.

Over the next couple of years I spent time cutting trees out of the trails, most of the time it was with a gal named Jenni. She taught me the basics and advanced crosscut procedures and within a year she became my wife, going on 21 years now. So here is a lesson learned, working on trails can be better than Match.com.

Practice with the crosscut consisted of cutting cords of firewood every year and logging out trails as we moved around the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. It took me a long time to feel comfortable and efficient with the crosscut. For a couple of years I had in the back of my mind the thought that I could do the work faster with a chainsaw, but with more experience those thoughts were fading. I gained an appreciation for the crosscut and when I found one that fit my needs, I carried it with me everywhere. I had worked as a logger in my younger days in addition to cutting hundreds of cords of firewood with a chainsaw, and this traditional tool was really growing on me. The sound of the crosscut, along with the ability to listen to the wood pop and crack became very satisfying as the wood began to talk to me. I started noticing things I never heard or saw while using a chainsaw, the subtle “pops” in the log when increasing meant that the tree was starting to give. Picking up on these slight movements and changes made for safer and easier cutting. I found that when “sizing up” the log, looking at the hazards and bind, I was doing a better job. I spent more time making sure my work area was clean and safe, and spent a little more time planning where I was going to cut, and where the pieces were going to end up. I also found myself making sure the work site was neat looking when I was done. Clearing the trail tread of saw debris, limbs and other signs of my time spent there was the finish to the job. This made me wonder if I was getting the work done efficiently. Could I be faster if I attacked the project with a chainsaw? I could wrap the Husky out to 11,000 RPM and take out that log in half the time,

maybe. I wouldn't find out this answer until I moved to another Ranger District where we could use chainsaws to clear trails.



Jeff Halligan teaches trail maintenance techniques to an Idaho Trails Association volunteer crew. Photo by John McCarthy.

I continued my career with the Forest Service in trails, running a trail program that worked both in and outside of designated Wilderness. The first few years we had split the crews up into light and heavy maintenance. The light maintenance crews were paired up and set up with tools to maintain drainage, log out and brush the trails. The crews went out with backpacks for 5 days carrying everything they needed. Food, camping equipment, pulaski, shovel, chainsaw, chaps, saw gas, bar oil, maintenance kit, hardhat, and wedges they all crammed in their backpacks. It didn't take long for the crews to realize that saw gas leaking into the food and sleeping bag is not the most coveted incident. While inspecting the work of these crews I noticed the logs would be cut out nicely but the area was messy from the work. The “swamping out” was not completed to the standard I liked, there would be cut branches and brush lying around and the work looked like it was done quickly, not thoroughly.

The crews regrouped and decided to try the crosscut saw for a hitch. They immediately found out that the chainsaw with all of the “stuff” that goes with it adds up to about 65 pounds, where the

crosscut and its “stuff” add up to about 15 pounds. We spent a few days cutting and discussing how to safely use and protect the saw from damage and dulling the teeth. So off to the woods they went. At the end of the hitch the amount of work completed was equal to the work they did with the chainsaw. The other thing was the obvious pride in the work area. The “swamping out” was completed; branches and log rounds were out of sight, the work area was less impacted than when they were using the chainsaw. Plus they didn’t smell like saw gas and were not as physically tired from carrying the extra weight of the chainsaw. I really had to scramble to make sure that all of the crosscut saws on the district were sharp and field ready.

I hired a team of packers to assist the heavy maintenance crews and to open some trails when they had time. I sent this crew in to clear the Wilderness trails where the trees were big and distances great. The Ponderosas in the area are big and of course when falling they always manage to land across the trail. Working the crosscut, the packers were able to cut the trees out of the trail and finish the clearing in the allotted time. The comment they said was that they were glad they had the crosscut because trees were so big they would have to double cut with a chainsaw, with the crosscut they could cut them through with one cut.

Everybody, at least everybody who works on trails, has their favorite tool and the crosscut saw is mine. With a lot of patience, training, and practice I learned how to efficiently use the tool. By learning the proper stance, finding a good rhythm and letting the tool perform I gained a great appreciation for the crosscut saw. The other aspect of the crosscut saw I liked as a supervisor of crews was the lack of accidents. In 18 years of working with crews we only had one accident, a cut on the hand through a glove when the person was putting the cover on the saw and was distracted. The last I

heard was that the chainsaw was one of the leading causes of injury within the Forest Service.

Jeff Halligan’s Forest Service career spanned 18 years where he focused on learning about traditional skills and worked to keep traditional skills alive. Jeff and his wife Jenni own a home in McCall, Idaho and donated ITA’s first crosscut saw.

Events Calendar

While we plan to spend most of the summer hiking and taking care of our trails, we will also be out and about in the community.

On **June 1st** we’ll be at the Boise REI store, sharing our story with anyone who wants to learn about ITA and become involved. We’ll talk about our exciting trail projects, ways to become involved, and meet prospective members. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Come by at 7:00 PM. The Boise REI is located at 800 West Emerald Street, near the Boise Town Center Mall.

On **June 25th and 26th** we’ll also have a table at the Boise Rec Fest in Ann Morrison Park. Stop by our table, meet our intern, sign up for one of our projects, or become a new member!

Thanks To Our Volunteers

We owe a debt of gratitude to the volunteers who contributed their personal time to our organization and our members. Volunteers are entitled to a free, one-year volunteer membership with six or more hours of volunteer service.

*Brenda Bielke
Trisha Miller
Kevin Robertson*

We would also like to thank the Student Conservation Association for donating 40 hard hats to ITA for volunteer use!

About Our Supporters

We would like to thank **REI**, the **U.S. Forest Service**, the **National Forest Foundation**, **The Wilderness Society**, and our **members** for their generous financial support, which makes our work possible! We would also like to thank the **American Hiking Society** for contributing volunteer and financial support for the Wewukiye Trail Project through their Volunteer Vacations program!

REI is a national outdoor retailer co-op dedicated to inspiring, educating and outfitting its members and the community for a lifetime of outdoor adventure and stewardship. Founded in 1938 by a group of Pacific Northwest mountaineers seeking quality outdoor equipment, REI is committed to promoting environmental stewardship and increasing access to outdoor recreation through volunteerism, gear donations and financial contributions.

The Northern and Intermountain Regions of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, recreation and trails program mission, in part, is to support the Idaho Trails Association in the formulation of cooperative partnerships in the management, operation, and maintenance of trails on National Forest System Lands.

The National Forest Foundation, chartered by Congress, engages America in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 193-million acre National Forest System, and accepts and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the National Forests.

The Wilderness Society's mission is to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. Since its founding in 1935, The Wilderness Society has led the effort to permanently protect as designated Wilderness nearly 110 million acres in 44 states.

Founded in 1976, American Hiking Society is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and protecting America's foot trails, their surrounding natural areas and the hiking experience.

Become A Member

<http://www.IdahoTrailsAssociation.org/Membership/>

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The Idaho Trails Association, Inc. is a non-profit organization under Idaho law.

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