Intermountain Trails

USDA Forest Service—Intermountain Region December 2012 Volume 1, Issue 3

Forest In Focus: Boise National Forest

Forest Supervisor- Cecilia Seesholtz

I am very proud of the accomplishments and projects completed each year by the Boise National Forest workforce and committed partners, a portion of which are highlighted in this publication. Developing and nurturing partnerships, finding collaborative funding opportunities, and balancing the Forest priorities with tight budgets is what we are about on the Boise National Forest.

Boise Forest Supervisor, Cecilia Seesholtz

I have the unique opportunity to meet field personnel scattered throughout the five ranger districts across this 2.6-million-acre landscape who are clearly dedicated to serving the public and caring for the land. I see in them the resiliency to get through obstacles, complete work projects, and provide important benefits for the citizens of Idaho and the nation.

You might ask where this dedication comes from…I find that many have had a past experience on a national forest or in their life that has prompted their desire to "give back"; for others it is the knowledge that their efforts are providing experiences for individuals who might not otherwise get the opportunity; and for some it is the sheer experience of accomplishment and knowing they have made a difference. Whatever the reason, I am truly honored to work with each and every one of them.

The work to restore our public forests, provide clean water and involve citizens is a mission that is met with excellence. I hope you enjoy the snapshots of our projects. Visit the Boise National Forest and enjoy all that it offers.

Visit the Boise National Forest website:

www.fs.usda.gov/boise

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TRAIL STORIES

Volunteers Vacation to Build New Recreation Trail (See Page 2)

TRAIL STORIES

Vacation Volunteers Build New Recreation Trail

Volunteers with the Idaho Trails Association work on new trailhead

This summer, volunteers spent a week building a new trail for mountain bikers and hikers on the Wewukiye Trail east of Warm Lake and Stolle Meadows on the Cascade Ranger District. Wewukiye (pronounced "Wawookia") means "elk" in the Nez Perce tribal language. The crew included a Forest Service trail crew, Joe Pickett with the Idaho Trails Association/Student Conservation Association, and volunteers from across the nation.

"We heard from users that they wanted more non-motorized trails," said Jen Hensiek, Recreation Specialist on the Cascade District. "This is one of the products."

Volunteers, including Cascade District Ranger Bill Rice, build new trailhead

This effort was part of a "volunteer vacation." Some workers paid their own ways to come to the project from as far away as Florida. They are only asked to work according to their skills, endurance, and number of days they can participate.

John McCarthy with the Wilderness Society said, "After volunteering for two days on this project, I have to say you have a great set of folks working recreation and trails. I was totally impressed with the efficiency, skill, organization, attitude, and great example for trails and work ethics. I worked trails for two years in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and I found your folks as committed and as competent as my memory of us old hands -- back in the day."

Forest Repairs Roads and Trails to Enhance Watersheds

The Boise National Forest spent $335,000 to improve critical watersheds and protect fish habitat.

Johnson Creek Watershed Improvement Project

The Johnson Creek Watershed project decommissioned roads, re-routed trails, and rehabilitated dispersed camping sites within this drainage which is a major tributary to the South Fork Salmon River. Roads in the South Fork Salmon River watershed were identified as the largest contributors of sediment into the river. Improvements included six miles of fish habitat enhancement, 16 miles of road decommissioning, eight miles of trail maintenance, and five reconstructed trail bridges.

Legacy Roads and Trails Decommissioned road in upper Johnson Creek

Middle Fork Payette River Watershed Improvement Project

The Middle Fork Payette River Watershed Improvement project on the Emmett Ranger District was completed in partnership with Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. It reduced sedimentation from a motorcycle and non-motorized dual-use trail. This partnership resulted in improvements to two State regulated public water supply systems, as well as the installation of six arch culverts to enhance bull trout habitat and 19 small culverts to drain water in wet or muddy areas.

Legacy Roads and Trails One of the new six arched culverts to enhance Bull Trout

Two Popular Motorized Trails to Reopen

Two popular motorized trails about 45 miles north of Boise, within the Emmett Ranger District Middle Fork Payette River area, are seasonally open, after being closed to motorized use for over two years.

After extensive trail work was completed, the 22-mile Bull Creek and Silver Creek Trails will reopen to motorcycle and non-motorized use. ATV or UTV use will be prohibited.

Before Trail Work

After Trail Work

The trail system will be seasonally designated for use from July 1 through November 14.

Reconstruction included:

- Installing 42 arched culverts throughout the 22-mile trail system which provides for water removal and reduced trail erosion.
- Rerouting 10 sections of trail.
- Building a 35-foot-long bridge and a 40-foot-long retaining wall.
- Connecting the upper Bull Creek Trail with the Rice Peak Trail for a longer ride opportunity into the Cascade Ranger District.
- Completing extensive brushing and clearing of the trail width and tread.

To complete the trail work, many people and groups worked together, including the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Boise National Forest, Trails Unlimited, Treasure Valley Trail Machine Association, Squaw Butte Backcountry Horseman, and Emmett Rough Riders ATV Club.

Safety Tips: Scenic Driving

What is the best way to enjoy a scenic drive? Pull over to view scenery or take photographs. Make sure when you are driving, focus on the road. If something grabs your attention, pull over to take a better look.

NORTH ZONE TRAIL CREW LIFE

It seems that when working on a trail crew, new challenges are put in front of you every day.

This year was true to form on the Boise National Forest. It was a year inundated with fire, area closures, fire restrictions, micro-bursts, and other day-to-day challenges with lots of work. The trail crew on the North Zone of the Forest was able to accomplish many projects and miles of trail clearing while making time to help with fire support, fire prevention patrol, volunteer projects, a micro-burst wind event clean-up at French Creek Campground, prescribed burning, tree planting, and other duties.

Trail crew worker crossing a river

With the generous help of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and volunteer groups such as Trails Unlimited and the Idaho Trails Association, the North Zone trail crew maintained over 400 miles of trails. One of the highlights this year was the completion of the Silver Creek Summit/ Bull Creek Trail reconstruction that was headed up by Trails Unlimited working closely with Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, many volunteers, and the USFS. All of these groups worked on the upper end of the Bull Creek trail. The North Zone trail crew was dispatched to focus on the lower end of the trail that needed attention. They replaced two bridges and fixed numerous seeps and boggy areas.

Trail crew workers replacing a bridge

Over the last ten years, the Boise National Forest has seen an abundance of severe fire activity that led to large areas of old burns. It is not an exaggeration that every one of the eight North Zone trail crew members cut and removed hundreds of trees from both motorized and non-motorized trails this season. The task of keeping trails free from obstacles is never ending, as each summer storm contributes newly downed trees that must be removed from the trails.

One significant accomplishment this season was opening the Middle Fork Payette River Trail. The trail is beautiful with many hot springs and it leads into the heart of the Boise National Forest. It was extremely overgrown and took many ten-hour days of using chainsaws to clear it. Part of accomplishing the task included over twenty different river crossings daily as they worked up and down the trail. Though soggy, they completed the project!

When the snow begins to melt in the summer, the trail crew begins to chase it up the hills, removing all of the woody debris left from the winter. As the summer moves on, the crews are over run with construction projects, fire support, and other assignments. When school starts in the fall, it is a mad dash to see how much work they can accomplish before they are locked out once again by the snow. Trail work on the Boise National Forest is an ongoing task and thousands of visitors greatly appreciate the trail crew's work.

Zachary Poff, Trail Crew Foreman, Lowman Ranger District

History Column

Unless you've been around a while, you may not know that the Boise National Forest used to be a lot smaller. It now encompasses the Payette National Forest., the "Old Payette," that is.

Let's back up to 1905. President Theodore Roosevelt issued proclamations creating the Payette, Sawtooth, and Weiser forest reserves. They were called "forest reserves" until March 4, 1907 when Congress decreed, "The Forests Reserves shall hereafter be known as National Forests." This action sought to correct the public misperception that the forests were reserved from public use when, in fact, they were open to grazing, logging, and other activities.

1923, Sawyer Felling Yellow Pine, B.P. Lumber

As Chief Gifford Pinchot and his staff nurtured the newly created Forest Service, they adjusted its administrative structure and tweaked forest boundaries. In 1908, many of the early forest reserves were consolidated into larger national forests. A significant reconfiguration of the southern Idaho forests occurred on June 26, 1908 when several executive orders shifted land between the existing Payette, Sawtooth, Weiser, Lemhi, and Salmon River forests and established the Idaho, Challis, and Salmon forests. That same day, Executive Order 857 created the Boise National Forest from parts of the original Payette, Sawtooth, and Weiser forests.

The 1940s saw a shortfall of Forest Service funds and manpower (an appropriate term since most Forest Service employees were men) as World War II siphoned Congressional appropriations and caused personnel to join the armed services. Region 4 responded with several district and forest consolidations. In early 1944, the Secretary of Agriculture wrote, "that it is most desirable, from the standpoint of better administration and public interest, to consolidate four of the national forests in the State of Idaho into two national forests." This would, he stated, "provide a better administrative division between the northern and southern portions" of the involved areas. As a result, on April 5, 1944, the Boise National Forest grew significantly in geographic area with the addition of the Payette National Forest. Concurrently, the Weiser and Idaho national forests were consolidated and, to the confusion of many in years to come, were designated as the Payette National Forest. Thus, the "Old Payette" refers to the original Payette National Forest that is now part of the Boise.

Historian Thomas G. Alexander noted that, by mid-1946, the Forest Service had identified several advantages and disadvantages of these new Boise and Payette "superforests." One advantage was the division of labor since, "larger and more specialized staffs could concentrate on particular areas of expertise." Another was the reduction in salary costs resulting from the elimination of redundant positions. Among the disadvantages were the difficulty a single office experienced in collecting reports from more units, indirect contact between the forest users and the Supervisor's Offices, and "the tendency for supervisor's office staffs to undercut the authority and assume the responsibilities of line officers, particularly rangers."

While the 1944 expansion of the Boise National Forest resulted in Region 4's first "superforest," it certainly wasn't the last. Most of our forests, and even some ranger districts, now encompass several early forest reserves. If history is any indicator, the Forest Service will continue to experience consolidations, particularly in light of declining budgets, improved transportation, and advanced communications capabilities. Although change is difficult, we may find it easier to accept if we acknowledge reorganization as a century-old Forest Service trend. As President Harry S. Truman said, "There is nothing new in the world except the history you do not know."

Richa Wilson, Regional Architectural Historian

Regional Forester's Message

For the first time, in the five years that I have been your Regional Forester, I convened all of the Region's line officers in one place to enhance skills in collaboration. This represents a significant investment of leadership time and expense – and I'd like to share why I think it was worth it! I'd like to do that by posing a series of six questions for your contemplation.

What motivated you to pursue a career in natural resource management? Of all the things you could have done with your life, why did you choose this?

There are surely a number of reasons, but I suspect for most of us a significant source of motivation was our passion for conservation and/or our desire to contribute to the social and economic well-being of this country. Those were certainly the drivers for me.

If those are drivers for you, then I have a follow-up question.

Is it enough to simply aspire to those outcomes or do you actually want to deliver on those aspirations – do you actually want to deliver on those aspirations at scales that are ecologically, socially, and economically relevant?

If I could hear your responses to that question, I imagine few if any of you would be content with just having an aspiration. If that is right, you have the foundation for appreciating the value of enhancing our collaboration skills. Each of you has seen that, despite the considerable "authority" we have to manage National Forest System land, the exercise of that authority is bounded by the social license or permission we have to act.

> **"I'd like to share why I think it was worth it!... It is, in a word, all about effective collaboration!"**
>
> *-Harv Forsgren*

Where does our "permission to act" come from?

Gifford Pinchot talked about our purpose as "*Providing for the greatest good, for the greatest number, over the long run.*" I believe our permission to act is anchored in engaging affected interests in defining just what is the greatest good for the greatest number while ensuring that answer is sustainable over the long run.

It is all about being open, accessible, transparent…and humble.

It is all about being fair, respectful, curious…and honest.

It is, in a word, all about effective collaboration!

Regional Forester's Message Continued...

Beyond the issue of permission to act, if we hope to foster conservation and public service at ecologically, socially, and economically relevant scales, why else might effective collaboration be crucial to our success?

From a practical matter, today's most significant conservation needs and opportunities play out at, or must be addressed at, scales that eclipse the authority, knowledge, or resources of any particular entity. Effective collaboration is the means by which we coalesce the capacity to address the need or capture the opportunity.

What are the implications of successful collaborative efforts on the quality of our work life?

I am convinced that we share a desire to get important work done, to contribute. I believe that, to the extent collaboration breaks down management gridlock, we will improve workplace satisfaction and increase retention. The energy and innovation associated with effective collaborations is infectious and contributes to the kind of workplace people want to be part of.

"The Forest Service is in good hands – your hands! "

-Harv Forsgren

Finally, what does collaboration have to do with our relevance and resilience as an organization?

From my perspective, it has "everything" to do with our relevance and resilience, because:

- it is key to identification of the relevant issues to work on;
- it is key to "adding value" to the resolution of those issues; and
- as such it will determine the level of support for our agency and mission in an increasingly resource-constrained federal government.

So there you have my case for why we need to invest in building our skills in collaboration.

As I head down my own trail into retirement, I want to close by expressing my admiration for the work you do, and how you do that work. The Forest Service is in good hands – your hands!

Thank you for *caring for the land, one another, and those we serve!*

Harv