

# Frankly Speaking

## Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness

### Annual Newsletter

#### Accomplishments of the Payette National Forest

Over 412 miles of trails in the wilderness were maintained by Forest Service personnel.

Page 1

#### West Fork Trails in the Frank

"I visited the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness in mid-October of 2012." This is the story of my visit.

Page 2

#### New Indian Creek Boat Ramp

From September 1 through 8, the SBFC led the effort to reconstruct the iconic Indian Creek Boat Ramp.

Page 3

#### A Lasting Ode to Tuff the Mule

Page 4



## Accomplishments of the Payette National Forest

Over 412 miles of wilderness trails were maintained by Forest Service personnel in conjunction with Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns, Northwest Youth Corps (NYC) crews and the SB-FCRONR Wilderness Foundation in 2012. In conjunction with the trail maintenance work and other field activities, field staff conducted solitude monitoring and campsite inventories. Grant funds from the Chief's Wilderness Stewardship Challenge were key to completing these efforts.

### Airstrips

Contract work including raking and surface smoothing was completed at Chamberlain and Cold Meadows



**A lookout on the Payette National Forest**

airstrips, financed by a Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) award.

### Noxious Weed Management

Noxious Weed Management: Several factors emerged that hampered the noxious weed management work last season, "expiration" of consultation with the regulatory agencies delayed treatment work in the Wilderness until mid-August and staffing and hiring difficulties for temporary employees resulted in two

STEP (Student Temporary Employment Program) hires, and while they were quality employees, they came with a short work season.

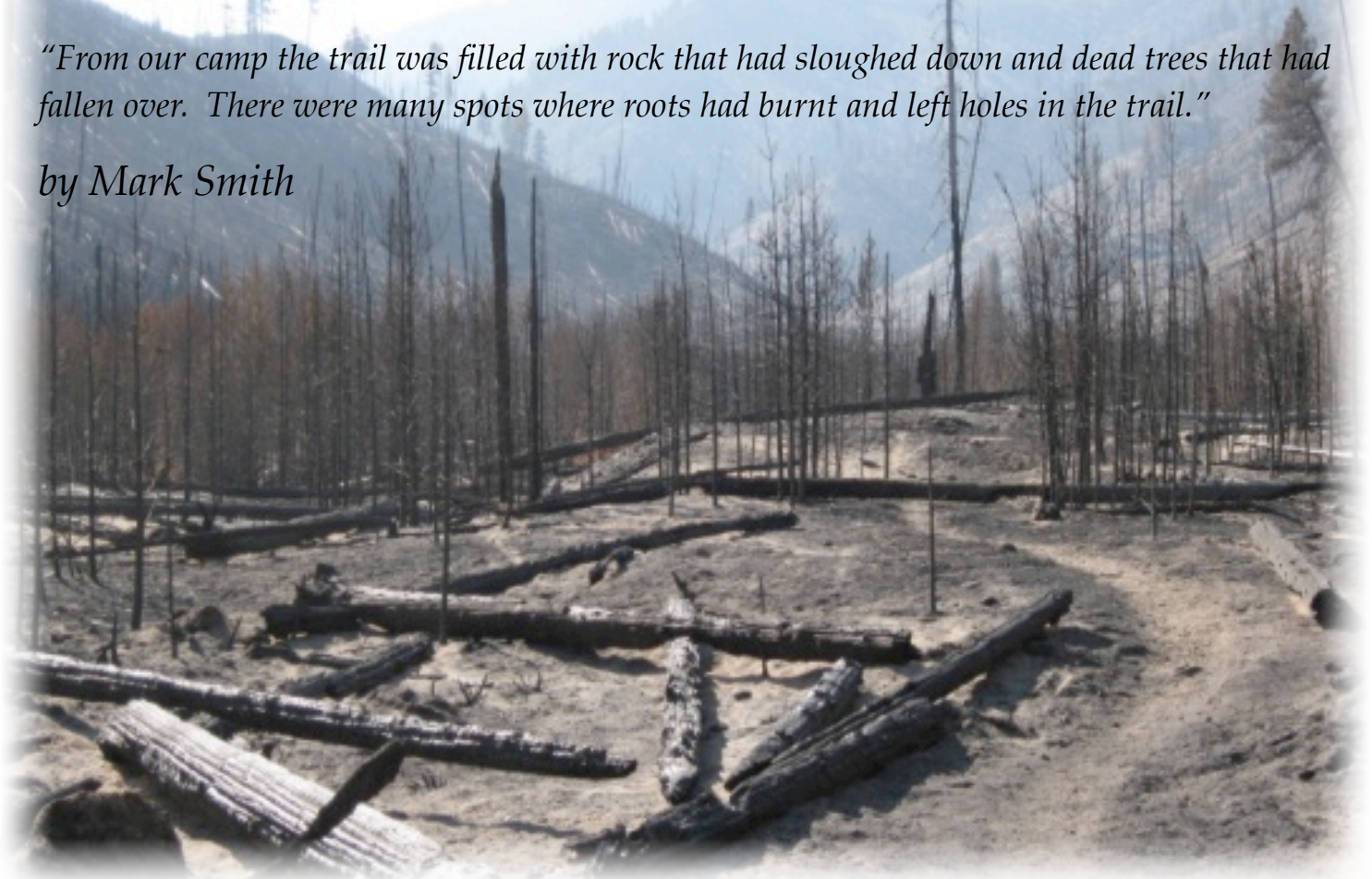
Treatment for rush skeletonweed, spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, scotch thistle and yellow toadflax occurred with 64 acres being chemically treated and 51 acres were hand-pulled. A small treatment contract for weed treatment and monitoring was issued and completed for approximately 10 acres.



# The Trails in the Frank

*“From our camp the trail was filled with rock that had sloughed down and dead trees that had fallen over. There were many spots where roots had burnt and left holes in the trail.”*

*by Mark Smith*



My name is Mark Smith, the new trails specialist on the West Fork Ranger District, Bitterroot National Forest. I visited the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness in mid-October of 2012 with wilderness ranger Charlie Mabbott. There was still smoke in the air. This was our opportunity to see how the Mustang Complex Fire had affected the wilderness and trails. We cleared the Selway River trail #4 from Magruder Ranger Station to Thompson Flat. The first four miles were unaffected by fire. The bridge that crosses the Selway River still had fire protection wrap on it, soon to be undone by our fire crew. We camped for 2 nights at Grass Gulch Creek

with our three mules. From our camp the trail was filled with rock that had sloughed down and dead trees that had fallen over. There were many spots where roots had burnt

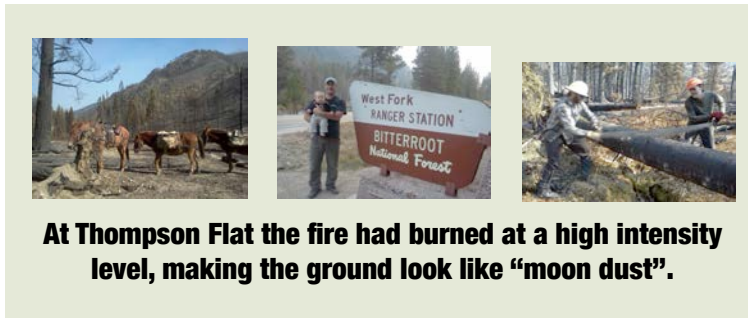
River, I could see evidence that the fire burned hot too.

Charlie and I spent one day clearing the first mile of the Shoup-Elk City trail #19 with

continued on to clear more trail and report any damage done by the fire.

The Mustang Complex fire burned more than 300,000 acres in the Frank Church in 2012; 82,000 acres were on the West Fork RD. The map below shows the burn severity for the trails on the Bitterroot NF. For the 2013 season, a 4 person Forest Service crew will remove trees and install waterbars on portions of the trail system that had high intensity fire: the Selway River trail #4, Stripe Creek Divide trail #69, Waugh Mountain – West Horse trail #11,

**Story continued on page 4**

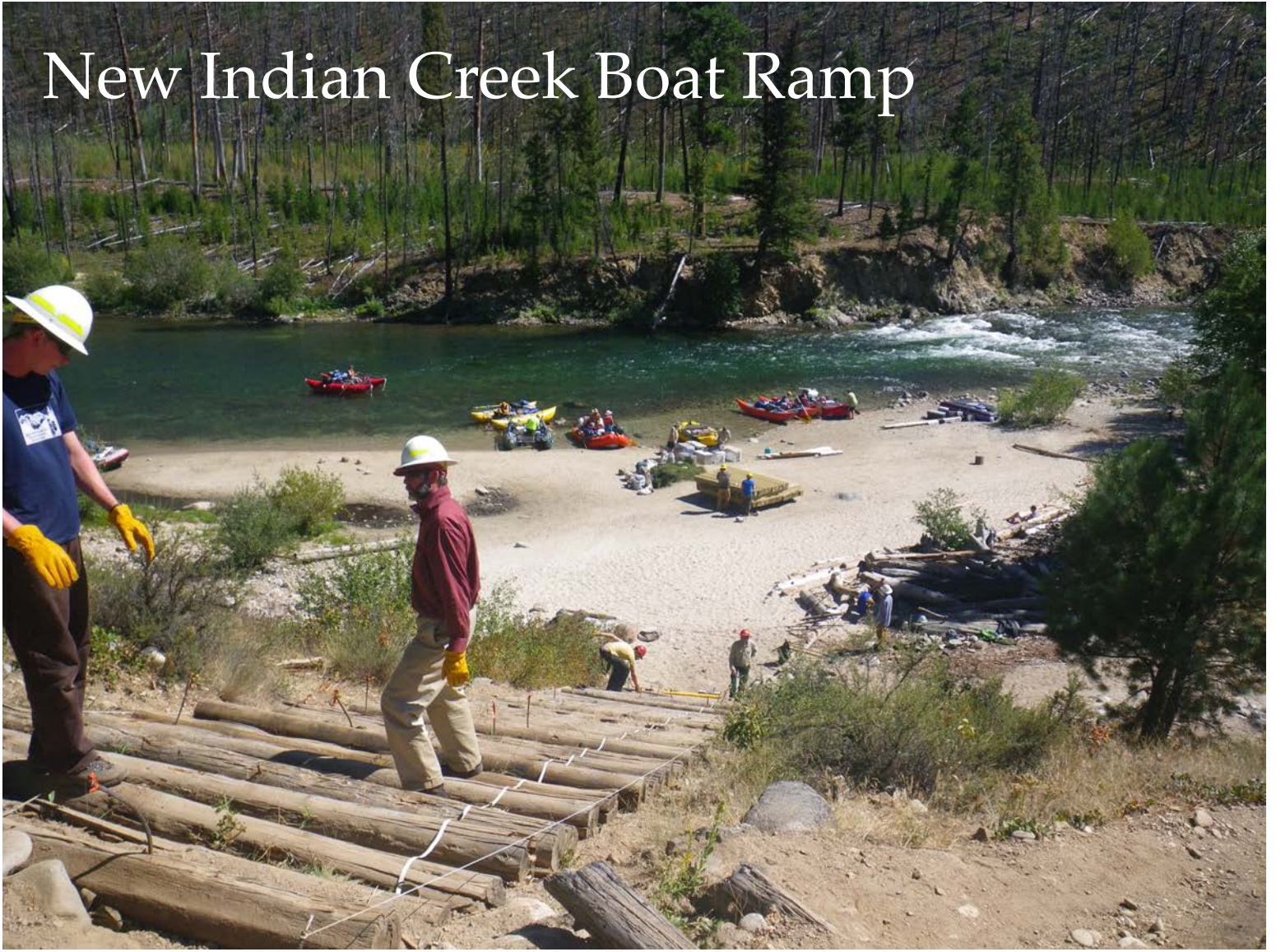


**At Thompson Flat the fire had burned at a high intensity level, making the ground look like “moon dust”.**

and left holes in the trail. At Thompson Flat the fire had burned at a high intensity level, making the ground look like “moon dust”. Looking further south, up the Selway

the Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation (SBFC). The trailhead and surrounding area had burned very hot, but the trail looked to be in good condition. The Foundation

# New Indian Creek Boat Ramp



The Selway Bitterroot - Frank Church Foundation (SBFC) led the effort to reconstruct the iconic Indian Creek Boat Ramp on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River last September. The previous ramp constructed in 2006 fell victim to exposure and wood rot after supporting countless rafts on the seventy-five foot descent from the public air strip to the river. Re-bar and broken sill logs signaled the time for a new ramp and the Forest Service asked the SBFC to lead the project.

The SBFC recruited ten volunteers from Idaho, Montana and Colorado to replace the ramp in its entirety, effectively installing a brand new boat ramp. The work consisted of manually deconstructing and hauling the old ramp

to an off-site location, then reinstalling each new step and slide log by hand. 12,000 lbs. of timber was moved by hand during the demolition and reinstallation.

No power tools or mechanical devices were used during this project. Instead, traditional tools such as auger drills, cross-cut saws, double jack hammers and volunteer elbow grease provided all the power required for a project of this magnitude.

This project was made possible by funding provided by the Southwest Idaho RAC. The SBFC would like to thank the Salmon-Challis National Forest for its support of the project and all our hearty volunteers for donating your time and energy to accomplish such a

challenging project. You can check out a photo gallery of the project on [the SBFC Facebook page](#).



**12,000 pounds of timber was moved by hand during the demolition and reinstallation.**



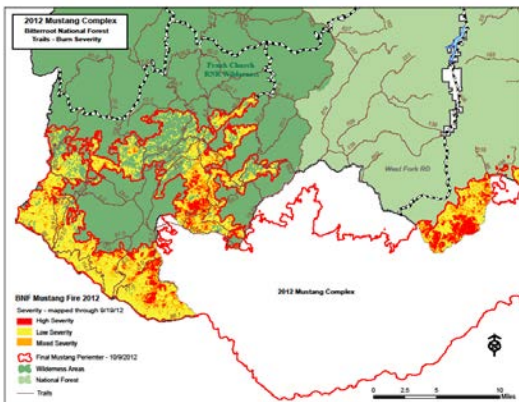
# Trail Maintenance

*Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns and Forest Service personnel clear trails on the Payette National Forest.*

## The Trails on the Frank - Continued from page 2

Fawn Ridge trail #17, Eakin Ridge trail #6, and Dwyer-Smith trail #114. A seven person Montana Conservation Corps crew will be dedicated to trail restoration and clearing projects within the Selway River basin. This crew will be restoring the upper portion of the Selway River trail #4 to Hidden Lake. The SBFC will conduct wilderness monitoring at Lost Packer Meadows and the Lake. In 2012, the Bitterroot NF maintained 144 miles of trails (of 290 miles total) in the Frank.

I am excited to see the trails in 2013. As I explore this country, I will think about a few sentences from the definition of wilderness in the Wilderness Act: "...generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature... has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..."



I hope to meet you all on the trail in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

## A Lasting Ode to Tuff the Mule

The Payette Employees Association has long printed and sold Payette National Forest themed t-shirts of many different designs out of the district offices over the years. What does this have to do with the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness you might ask? One particular T-shirt design is a perennial favorite, always selling out every year. It is the design featuring Tuff the mule framed by the wording "Frank

Church River of No Return Wilderness". Tuff, the mule depicted wearing his blinders, worked for the Forest Service for only four short years. He was foaled in 1989 and spent his younger years growing up in Oregon and competing in harness pulling contests; winning several contests for his weight category, around 850 lbs. Tuff was a small mule, but you couldn't tell him that. He dominated over mules twice his size and most people were afraid of him, hence his name. In 1998, at the prime mule age of nine, Tuff came to work for the Forest Service as a wilderness pack mule in "the Frank" on the Krassel District of the Payette National Forest.

One can imagine that Tuff's first year in the Frank was trying for him as he was not well received by the herd and did not get used on the trails much since he was inclined to kick when he did not like somebody. His second year Tuff came into his own working more days and covering more trails miles than any other animal in the herd. That year as he worked as a pack mule, riding mule and worked in harness pulling graders, slips, fresnos and plows for trail and airstrip maintenance the other animals began to show him some respect. In return Tuff stuck up for his team. If his buddies were mobbed by a loose string of marauding horses and mules he would go after them with so many high and hard kicks there was not a person, horse, or mule that would get within one hundred feet of him. In the winter of 2002 Tuff was diagnosed with cancer and had to be put down. Tuff was the stuff of wilderness lore and he is remembered as a hardworking mule with a ton of personality, leaving quite an impression for a short but fully-lived career. Fittingly he now adorns this venerable design, the association's longest running and best selling.

