

FOREST FEATURE

Pacific Northwest Region - Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Volunteers Invaluable to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Volunteers are essential to many programs on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (WWNF). They assist in clearing trails, removing trash from the national forest, search and rescue operations, keeping the campgrounds open, providing information to the public, and many other important projects. Without volunteers, many of the resources and recreation opportunities we all enjoy on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest would not be available.

On July 30, a group of dedicated volunteers from the Wallowa Valley Trail Riders Association (WVTRA) spent a day with the Forest Service at the Sled Springs OHV area north of Enterprise, Oregon. The volunteers and Forest Service personnel cleared brush, inventoried part of the trail system, removed user-created trails, and installed trail signs. These current and future efforts will all help to develop a sustainable Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) area that also improves water quality and wildlife habitat.

Future cooperative projects with volunteers and other partners will include road decommissioning and closures, road gate placements, construction of new OHV trails, trail monitoring, and OHV staging area development. After working alongside other WVTRA members and Forest Service Staff



From left to right counterclockwise: John Hollenbeak, Earl Haines, Dustin James, John Laurence, and Tom Montoya

throughout the summer, Dustin James, WVTRA President said “I felt that the work parties have went very well. We have made good headway this season and the club is looking forward to continuing to move forward in the future working with the Forest Service to maintain OHV opportunities on the forest”.



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“With tighter budgets and fewer hands on deck, volunteers are stepping up and helping to complete much needed tasks on the Forest,” said John Laurence, Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor. “Earlier this summer, I had the opportunity to assist a local off-road



enthusiast group, Locked and Loaded out of Baker City, with a trash clean-up day on the Whitman Ranger District. The group removed over 1,200 pounds of trash from the Forest. Help like that is priceless,” continued Laurence.

Members of Locked and Loaded group, John Laurence and Jodi Kramer

Outside of Joseph and Enterprise, volunteer groups (Back Country Riders, Red’s Horse Ranch volunteers, Columbia Plateau Heritage Alliance, Wilderness Volunteers, and many more) assist with the maintenance of trails throughout the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Near La Grande, volunteers lead bird watching tours, provide interpretive presentations at the Blue Mountain Crossing Oregon Trail interpretive site, and staff events such as Free Fishing Day and support our firefighters during wildfires. Each year, OHV enthusiasts gather outside of Unity to spend a week assisting Forest Service staff with projects. Volunteers remain a vital part of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.



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This spring on the WWNF, Robin Steadman who is a Forest Service volunteer at Kirkwood Ranch in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) assisted with a

medical evacuation of a visitor suffering from severe dehydration. Robin assisted a forest visitor who was suffering from severe dehydration, while she called local authorities with the use of a satellite phone. The visitor was then rushed to the Emergency Room (ER) in Lewiston, Idaho via jetboat. After some much needed recuperation, the visitor shared the following with the HCNRA District Ranger and Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor, “Once

again, I am deeply grateful for the aid Robin rendered me. The trip to the ER was a true blessing and it would not have happened had she not been at the ranch. From my perspective, your volunteers are indispensable. I encourage you to continue the program and recognize Robin for a job well done. “



Senator Crapo (middle) and Steve and Kathy Ponder, Volunteers at Kirkwood Ranch

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Volunteers are stationed throughout the HCNRA and their work at Cache Creek, Pittsburg Landing, and Kirkwood Ranch helps keep visitors safe and also maintains the daily boating and hiking activities on this famous stretch of the Snake River. The stories featured in this article are only a few of the activities and opportunities available on the WWNF. Please contact the Ranger Districts for more information on volunteering on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Contact information is available at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/about-forest/offices>.

Most of all, **THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS**, for the amazing work you do and all you give to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and the American public! We couldn't do it without you.



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