



Frankly Speaking

Inside This Issue:

- Outfitters Corner: WRO
- America the Beautiful Quarters® Program Coin Ceremony
- USFS Project Highlights
- Partnership Spotlight: Montana Conservation Corps
- Accomplishments By the Numbers

The Newsletter for the Frank Church — River of No Return Wilderness

Winter 2020

Partners provide pack operations, trail maintenance

On June 26, 2019, a Wilderness Ranger from the Salmon-Challis's Middle Fork Ranger District, two Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation employees, nine volunteers from Idaho and western Montana, and a devoted member of the Treasure Valley Back Country Horsemen joined forces on a 6-day trail maintenance hitch covering 11 miles of the Middle Fork Trail #001. About two weeks prior, the Salmon-Challis Ramshorn Fire Module crew spent 360 labor-hours clearing trees along 25 miles of this trail, which gave our partners more time to focus on brushing and tread repair.

The Middle Fork Trail requires significant annual maintenance and accesses one of America's most wild rivers. Maintenance work included removing vegetation from the trail corridor, addressing drainage issues to prevent erosion, maintaining existing structures, resurfacing tread on delicate side hill sections, shoveling rockslides, and moving large boulders and trees out of the trail



US Forest Service Photo by Khalil Taylor

Volunteers from the Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation observe as a Treasure Valley Back Country Horseman prepares loads for packing.

corridor. It was a group effort to maintain this trail and many different user groups will continue to use and enjoy them throughout the year. The Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation's efforts on this hitch resulted in about 530 labor-hours of work.

The Treasure Valley Back Country Horseman, who provided pack support, was the unsung hero of this project. He and his stock clocked roughly

See Partners on Page 6

Crew blasts along the Middle Fork Trail

In May 2019, a Middle Fork Ranger District trail crew set off from Meyers Cove en route to the Middle Fork Trail with a pack string of three horses and six mules where they completed heavy trail maintenance with the use of explosives.

The blasting work, which occurred approximately 2 1/2 miles upstream of Grouse Creek, was done to remove rock in order to re-establish a trail tread surface that is passable by stock. In the wilderness, the Forest Service relies on stock, like horses and mules, for travel in rugged and remote country. The Middle Fork Trail provides vital access to the heart of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

Blasting is a non-motorized tool that the Forest Service relies on to remove obstructions and maintain trail within wilderness. The use of

traditional, non-motorized and non-mechanized tools are a basic principal of wilderness stewardship mandated in the Wilderness Act.

The crew, headed up by Forest Service Lead Blaster Robert Long and Blaster-In-Training Raina Phillips, reached the area of the trail where blasting would occur after two days of travel. The crew commenced blasting operations to re-establish the trail, using 8 shots. Following each shot, the trail crew used hand tools to clear debris and improve the trail. The blasting was successful in widening and improving the trail tread, especially for stock travel.

Trail crews also stabilized the trail near the blasting site and cleared encroaching vegetation downstream from the blasting site to the mouth of Camas Creek.



US Forest Service photo by Ellie Fitzpatrick

Robert Long and Raina Phillips prepare for the first series of blasts.



US Forest Service photo by Ellie Fitzpatrick

The blasting site during operations.



US Forest Service photo by Ellie Fitzpatrick

The trail after blasting operations were completed.

Outfitter Corner



Seth Tonsmeire Wilderness River Outfitters

How long has your company been operating?

In 1972, my parents, Joe and Fran Tonsmeire, founded Wilderness River Outfitters in Salmon, Idaho. We now operate on eight different rivers in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Alaska, and Canada. Our most popular trips are the rivers we run in the Frank Church--the Middle Fork of the Salmon and the Main Salmon. That's where we take the majority of our guests.

Why did you become an outfitter?

I was lucky to grow up in an outfitting family. I got an early start as a 1-year-old when my parents took me on my first trip down the Main Salmon on a non-commercial trip. I started rowing gear boats on the Main when I was 12, so by the time I turned 18 and became a licensed guide, I already had almost 100 trips down the Main Salmon. Over the years, due to my parents' battles with cancer, my role with Wilderness River Outfitters changed. I became the designated agent and outfitter in 2012. My parents have both passed away, but I hope to continue to carry on the family tradition. At this point, river guiding and outfitting has defined my life, and I'm not sure what else I would do!

How is your work in the Frank unique?

At Wilderness River Outfitters, we aim to provide a little more of a wilderness experience than some other companies. We encourage people to actively participate in the trip if they want--for example, picking their own campsites or setting up their own tents. We also encourage lots of side activities and excursions along the way. It's always a great whitewater experience, but there are so many spectacular places to explore and pieces of history to share with people in the Frank.

What do you see as the greatest benefit of wilderness for the American public?

Our trips take most people out of their day-to-day lives driven by schedules, appointments, e-mails, and phone calls, giving them a chance to disconnect, enjoy the outdoors, and reconnect with family and friends. Multi-day wilderness trips give people a break from an increasingly technology-driven world. We hope they can take a bit of that peace and solitude back to their everyday lives.

What do you like most about the Frank?

I really enjoy the spectacular waterfalls of the Impassable Canyon area: Waterfall Creek, Veil Falls, Golden, Mist and Parrots Grotto. On an afternoon when you sit below Veil Falls and watch what seems like each individual water droplet carried by the wind as it drifts towards the ground, you're really reminded of how special this place is!

I also love spring boating and high water on the Middle Fork. It's pretty remarkable to be out there before the peak season crowds, wildflowers in bloom and hillsides still green from spring rain, with high flows and 100 miles of quality wilderness whitewater ahead of you. It's kind of like a roller coaster ride through the largest wilderness in the lower-48.

Technicians tackle weeds in two wilderness areas

A grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation provided Forest Service personnel an opportunity to tackle weeds in the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness and the Gospel Hump Wilderness on October 10 and 11, 2019.

The crew, transported upriver by Heinz Sippell of Whitewater Expeditions in a jet boat, sprayed for spotted knapweed, rush skeletonweed, leafy spurge, and perennial peavine.

Rangeland Management Specialists Alyssa Badertscher and Crystal Dannar Planar, Rangeland Technician Scott Wasem, and Biological Science Technician Jacob Doyle, with some assistance from Sippell, sprayed on the north and south sides of the Salmon River in the Nez Perce—Clearwater and Payette National Forests.



US Forest Service Photo

Alyssa Badertscher, Scott Wasem, and Heinz Sippell on the hunt for weeds.

More Wilderness Weeds News

In 2019, Salmon-Challis National Forest staff treated more than 90 river camps on the Middle Fork and Main Salmon River stretches. Work on the Middle Fork is continuing to turn up more hoary alyssum and sulfur cinquefoil at the river camps, where it seems to be spread by boaters.

On the Main Salmon, staff focused on areas farther downriver than usual with a Cooperative Weed Management Area partner crew. Even with four days of pouring rain, staff inventoried and treated 60 river camps. They also talked with five private landowners about weed treatment. Information gathered will inform future strategy and treatment for work along the Main Salmon River.

US Mint Launches 50th America the Beautiful Quarters® Program Coin



US Forest Service Photo

SCNF Forest Supervisor Charles Mark and US Mint Director David Ryder during the coin ceremony.

The United States Mint (Mint) has officially launched the America the Beautiful Quarters® Program coin honoring the Frank Church- River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho. This is the fifth and final quarter of 2019, and the 50th coin overall in the program. During the ceremony, Mint Director David J. Ryder expressed his sentiments about the new quarter, saying it “serves as a reminder of the essence of the Wilderness—more than two million acres of prehistoric mountains, fertile conifers and commanding rivers but flourishing with stories of heritage and wonder.”

Partnership Spotlight



Montana Conservation Corps

What is your organization's mission?

"Inspiring young people through hands-on conservation service to be leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens who improve their communities," is our mission.

Each year we enroll hundreds of young adults and school-aged youth in our AmeriCorps and Youth Service Expedition programs. The first three months are spent teaching leaders wilderness, leadership, and interpersonal skills. Our leaders then pass those skills along to their crew members, as they live, learn, and serve together in some of our country's wildest places.

How long has your organization been working in the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness?

The Montana Conservation Corps has been working in the Frank for 20 years. This year, crews completed 7,353 hours of work. That included 23 weeks of trail crew time on the Salmon-Challis National Forest and 8 weeks of weed spraying on the Payette National Forest.

What did you accomplish in the Frank in 2019?

We maintained 104 drainage structures, built one turnpike, completed 1 mile of retread, maintained 26.3 miles of trail, cleared 1,317 trees, built 292 linear feet of rock retaining walls, and treated 302 acres for noxious weeds.

What do members of your organization like most about working in the Frank?

The Frank is a special place in that it allows our members an authentic experience in one of the largest wilderness areas in the lower-48. It's an honor for our crews to help make improvements to trail infrastructure and habitat in such an iconic place. The terrain is unique — incredible river canyons to the jagged summits of the Craggs. The diversity found within the landscape of the Frank is incredible.

Crews working in the Frank get an appreciation of the remoteness of a place and the importance of creating solid operating systems in the backcountry. Help is not readily available, so safety, the maintaining of tools and gear, and understanding the importance of well-planned project logistics are critically important when working so far from roads and population centers.

Working in the Frank offers a sense of solitude for Montana Conservation Corps crews that few places in the Wilderness Preservation System can match. This helps our crews connect to and appreciate the significance of federally-protected wildlands.

Working alongside Forest Service personnel has also been a great experience for our crew members operating in the Frank. The Forest Service employees are passionate about wilderness, have great skills to teach crews, and provide a glimpse of future wilderness pathways to employment for Montana Conservation Corps leaders and members.

Shared Stewardship



US Forest Service Photo courtesy Jon Haupt

The Nez Perce Bio-control Center teamed up with the Forest Service to present the 2019 Spotted Knapweed Bio-Control Workshop and Field Day July 26, 2019 at White Water Ranch. Paul Bruvsen, of the Nez Perce Tribe Bio-control Center, led the informal workshop, which covered principles of biological controls, release and monitoring techniques, and field identification. Attendees, pictured left to right, were: Crystal Dannar Planar, Rangeland Management Specialist on the Nez Perce-Clearwater's Salmon River Ranger District; Heinz Sippell of Whitewater Expeditions; Bill Phillips of Phillips Forestry; Greg Metz of Yellow Pine Bar; Bruvsen; and Doug Tims of Campbell's Ferry.

Partners continued from Page 1

60 hours of work. The horseman and his mules made numerous trips between the trailhead and campsites, carrying food and gear for the large group.

"Despite working himself and his stock quite hard, he always had a very positive attitude and smile on his face, which was appreciated by everyone on the project greatly," said Wilderness Ranger Khalil Taylor. "These partners and volunteers all shared a common passion and appreciation for wild places."

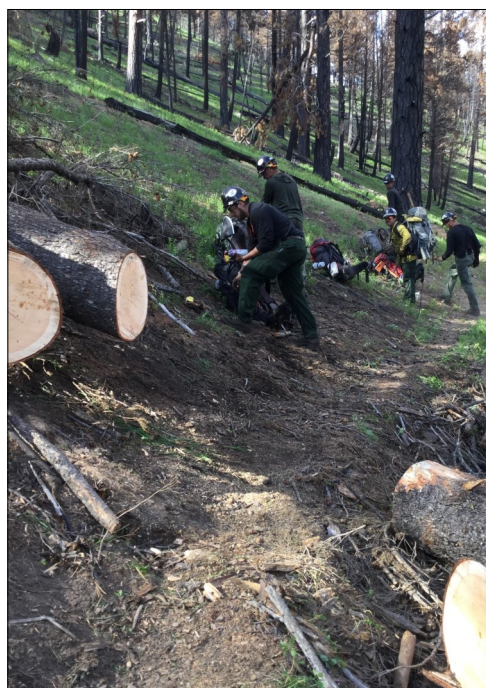


Photo courtesy of Ramshorn Fire Module

The SCNF Ramshorn Fire Module cut up trees along Middle Fork Trail #001. In total, they cleared trees along 25 miles of trail.

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Inside This Issue:

- Outfitters Corner:
- Planned Projects
- Partnership Spotlight:
- Seasonal Goals
- And More ...

The Newsletter for the Frank Church — River of No Return Wilderness

Spring 2020

This newsletter is only as good as its content, and no one can provide better content than those who know, love, and spend time in the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness. Every issue will feature a new banner photo, and it could be yours! For consideration, submit entries to: heather.degeest@usda.gov with subject line: *Frankly Speaking Banner*

This month's banner photo was provided courtesy of Nez-Perce Clearwater's Range and Weeds Program Manager, Jon Haupt.

Team works to preserve wilderness cabin

Salmon-Challis National Forest staff and volunteers conducted a preservation project in July 2019 at the Lower Parrott Cabin, a small log cabin built around 1917 by Earl King Parrott — The Hermit of Impassable Canyon.

The project stabilized the cabin for the future enjoyment of Middle Fork visitors. The river cobble foundation was repaired and several deteriorating logs were replaced. In addition, purlins and roof shakes were reinstalled following the original design of the cabin.

Parrott's life symbolizes wilderness living, and his lower cabin is a popular stop for visitors wishing to embrace the wilderness experience. Parrott spent 30 years living a solitary existence in the Middle Fork country panning for gold, hunting, trapping, and growing fruits and vegetables.

He would make an annual trip to Shoup for supplies such as salt, matches, tea, and bullets for



US Forest Service Photo courtesy Tim Canaday

Members of the preservation team, pictured left to right: Lynn Richardson, Cammie Sayer, Don Jeffrey, Chris Freistadt and Joe Gallagher.

his .30-30 Winchester. Most of the time he lived in a cabin/dugout several thousand feet in elevation above the river where he had an extensive garden. A series of ladders and ropes provided access up the steep canyon walls to his main residence.

Parrott's upper cabin burned in a forest fire in the late 1980s leaving the lower cabin the only surviving architectural feature associated with him in the wilderness.

The Central Idaho Wilderness Act of 1980 specifically requires identification and management of cultural resources including historic cabins in wilderness. Lower Parrott Cabin was identified in the Historic Preservation Plan for the wilderness as a good candidate for preservation. Prior to implementation, a minimum requirements analysis was conducted and the Forest consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office. Non-motorized and non-mechanized methods were employed. Traditional tools such as handsaws, axes, hammers and chisels were used during the multi-day project. An interpretive brochure describing the history of the cabin and the preservation activities undertaken will be prepared for distribution to wilderness visitors in 2020.



US Forest Service Photo courtesy Tim Canaday

A Member of the Hatch-Swain-Frazier Expedition Stands in Front of Parrott's Lower Cabin on the Middle Fork Salmon River In 1936.

FS, UI intern launch research project

Idaho rivers are enjoyed by several different user groups from across the nation and worldwide. Motorized and non-motorized travel are allowed on the Wild and Scenic Main Salmon River within the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness. Understanding and respecting how both groups run the river is important to minimize conflict. The Salmon River Ranger District along with a University of Idaho Intern, Cody Frei are currently launching a project called ‘Sharing the Experience’ to

reduce negative encounters between jet boaters and float boaters through various public education outlets. We are currently compiling information from both user groups to ensure both sides have their voices heard. We plan to make this information easily accessible so that river users from both groups can better understand one another. The goal of this project is to kick start a culture of ‘Sharing the Experience’ throughout the Main Salmon River so that all users have the best experience possible.

Meet the researcher

Cody Frei was born and raised in Idaho and is currently a senior at the University of Idaho in Wildlife Resources.



Frei has been guiding on the Middle Fork of the Salmon for the last five years and is now working on ‘Sharing the Experience’ this winter with the Nez Perce-Clearwater’s Salmon River Ranger District.

By the Numbers

Miles of trail maintained in the Frank annually



1,034

**Jet boat
users in 2019
on the Wild
Salmon River**

7

**Backcountry
airstrips treated
for invasive weeds
in 2019**

1,977

**Wilderness acres inventoried
and treated for weeds in 2019**

8,635

**Floaters in 2019
on the Wild
Main Salmon River**

12,652

**Floaters in 2019
on the Middle Fork
of the Salmon River**