

August 2012 Overview

Klamath CCC Backcountry Crew

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With July behind us we soared into August hungry for more work to cap off our time in the Klamath Wilderness. After 6 plus weeks of labor on the Kelsey Creek Trail our projects were wrapped up with the completion of Castle Monique by Fritch, Christina, and Evan. With mules in tow we made the short but steep hike to Packer's Valley where we would spend our last month here in God's Country. The camp was gorgeous and a wonderful way to spend our last weeks in the Klam. From our tree-shaded plateau we had a commanding view of Scott Valley and the ranges below. Our first week was spent on the PCT brushing, lopping, and performing general maintenance on the West's most famous trail.

Our first weekends were spent climbing Buckhorn Mountain and lounging at Bear Lake. Our workdays were filled with steep hikes to and from work along the Tyler Meadows Trail. As fires cropped up all around the area and the state, a few of our very own spotted a small blaze below our trail and jumped into action to curtail the burn before it spun out of control. Robbie Thorne, our sponsor and recent wildland fire fighter, led Pat, Fritch, Ben, Rush, and Evan to turn scorched earth and digging fire lines to prevent the fire from reaching more fuel sources.

Along with all the excitement we had the pleasure of hosting a few friends and guests. Ben's Nebraska buddies, Donnie, Woody and Tim hung out for the weekend and camped along the ridge catching the Klamath's famous sunrises. The week following, Kenny's girlfriend Chelsea enchanted us with her presence bringing the Florida sunshine with her. Soon after, a couple of 2010 Backcountry Alumni came to camp to impart their wisdom and advice. Nick Bartesch and his girlfriend Amanda Foote spent a few days and gave us a great morning workout while Katie Shell distributed much needed back massages to the tired and weary.

In our last week, Lee Bundy, famous sawyer and the ultimate man's man, came and worked the remaining sections of the Tyler Trail with us.

On Friday the 17th we dressed to the nines for a very Backcountry Fashion Show, including a runway walk from the KP tent to the grey water sump. Tang Pong was played, cheesecake bites were devoured, and dance moves were busted 'til well after the sun went down.

A mellow weekend lead into an intense work week as we pushed ourselves to work harder, better, faster, and stronger on the Tyler Trail. In just 20 days we performed a complete overhaul on the trail – digging just over 2 miles of brand new tread, and battling brush for an additional 2 miles of mule-friendly trail.

We returned from our last day on the grade to break down our last camp in the Klamath. An early Tuesday community meeting included goodbye speeches from Christine and Robbie, many words of gratitude for Ellen Andrews and Lee Bundy and hugs and thanks between everyone on the crew.

With last, lingering glances at the Klamath Wilderness, we hiked down the PCT to the Paradise Trail, and then made our way to the van, where we loaded up and headed to town.

In Etna, long showers were taken, laundry was cleaned of 2 months' worth of dirt and grime, and obscene amounts of ice cream and candy were consumed.

After phone calls were made to family and friends and clean laundry was stuffed into backpacks, Ellen Andrews was kind enough to allow the crew to spend the night camped out in her backyard.

We then piled into the van and headed to Happy Camp for a whitewater rafting trip with River Ranger Dave Payne and Happy Camp Recreational Officer Laura Shaffer. Rafting was, in a word, epic. We captained an assortment of large and small rafts, kayaks, and boogie boards, and we spent a good

portion of the trip spraying each other with water guns and pulling each other out of rafts. Sunburned and hungry, we headed to Happy Camp to gorge on pizza.

Another night was spent at Ellen's and the next morning we said our last goodbyes to Ellen, Robbie, and Christine, packed the truck, and headed south.

Our road trip to Mt. San Jacinto involved a hectic stop at REI to return battered gear, much last-minute shopping for odds and ends, and plenty of napping in the van. We stopped at a Buddhist temple in the middle of the desert and spent some time wandering their statue gardens and meditating. Refreshed, we drove through San Bernardino and finally made our way up into the Mt. San Jacinto State Park.

We were greeted by Marla DeKlotz, our new cook, Gardner James, our sponsor, Lori Turner, the Statewide Trails Project Coordinator, and Chelsea Saeland, our Team Leader. After last showers and a great, great meal cooked by Marla, we repacked our backpacks one last time, discarded extra gear, and went to sleep.

Stephen Rush celebrated his 26th birthday as we made the 3-mile trek up Marion Mountain Trail to our new camp.

We now call home an extraordinary Backcountry camp equipped with a community tent, multiple showers (solar), a bigfoot-sized latrine, and more buckets, bells and whistles than can be aptly described. The day ended with a fabulous Chinese feast cooked by Marla and KP Rush with birthday cake, cards, and hugs for the KP himself.

Now we find ourselves in a whole new world, filled with distant city lights, all kinds of exciting, explosive new tools, and plenty of new sights to see and trail to build. If these next 4 weeks are anything like our last 4 months, it should be an amazing experience for us all.