

## APRIL OVERVIEW

### STANISLAUS BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL CREW

#### PETE BLAU

We set up our first home in the Stanislaus National Forest beneath the towering branches of Ponderosa Pines. The crew, with folks from the East Coast, West Coast and in between, have come together with the unified goal to better themselves and of course the wilderness and trails. Already we've learned to conquer rain and hail with warm layers and lots of laughter. And while we're still in the beginning of the season, our crew shows tremendous potential and great spirit, sure to help build strong trails and a strong community.

**WORK:** We finally got our hands dirty along the Indian Creek Trail, a steep 2.25 mile hike which led down to the roaring Tuolumne River. Finishing the trail in just two days, we built 21 swales, helping move the water off the path to prevent further erosion. We chopped, sawed, and lopped our way up the trail creating a wide enough corridor for humans and horses to enjoy the hike and the views, just as we get to do. As so many of us kept asking: "We get paid for this!?" What awesome work.

**CURRICULAM:** For four days our crew met up with all the other backcountry crews in Sacramento for orientation. Our classes ranged from basic safety, to building a healthy community, to learning to keep a journal. We were even given a map and compass and were taught how to use both – an especially useful tool for our upcoming weekend excursions. Since orientation, our crew has held a few of our classes at camp around the fire. Now we all have a better understanding of how to take care of our precious feet and the importance of caring for blisters and hot spots immediately. We also put on skits for each other pertaining to the 7 rules of Leave No Trace – backcountry ethics that we will all work hard to follow. Of course we've also learned about tools and how to use them properly and all about basic trail maintenance.

**EVENING ACTIVITIES/WEEKEND FUN:** Our crew is a musical one. With three guitars and lots of willing singers, we manage to have a small backcountry concert every night by the fire. If we have trouble remembering the words to a song we'll make some up. When there's not music there's a joke, and when there's no joke and no more conversation, we relax in the quiet of the woods. Our first weekend excursion took us to Yosemite. We ate lunch beneath towering vertical rock faces with the powerful waterfalls tumbling over them. "I feel small," one of the crew members said. – Being in the presence of nature can be quite humbling. We hiked around for a while, enjoying the beauty of the fresh valley air, before coming back to camp for some famous backcountry gourmet cookin'.

**ODDS AND ENDS:** Big props to our sponsor John Goodwin, who has worked on trails in the Stanislaus National Forest for 21 years. He taught us how to set up a functional campsite that truly feels like a home – from kitchen to fire to the dishwashing area. And his trail expertise and his calm and kind manner has and will continue to be a much appreciated gift this summer. And a huge thanks to our cooks Eric and Frank who've fed us amazing meals day after day.