

Klamath CCC Backcountry Trails crew  
July Monthly Overview  
Supervisor- Steven Addison  
By Peter Prokesch

Amidst sweltering heat and swarming flies, July brought with it a month of adversity. After a wet camp move our socks dried, spirits lifted, and the clouds cleared out of Marble Valley. Alternating groups spiked to Big Elk and Wooly Creek on log-outs, while the rest of us stared down the Canyon Creek Trail, as seemingly infinite staircase of deteriorating checks and waterbars. We had our work cut out for us. We spent the first couple of weeks treading and brushing, but with a plunging sense of doubt and uncertainty. We were on the cusp of change, but didn't know when or where it would come from or if we had the courage and strength to put the necessary pieces in place.

The first change came kitchen-side with the departure of our lovely cook Christina (Klamath '12). Luckily, she went out in style, creating an onslaught of delicious desserts in her final week. Our new cook, Christine, made the transition quite seamless, as we merely had to drop the "a" when thanking the cook for an incredible meal. She quickly won us over with her kitchen prowess, creative cuisine, and her impressive camp management. We answered the call and stepped it up a notch at camp, greeting any sloppiness in the community area with an AM wake-up call. The question was would our new-found diligence extend to the worksite?

With the looming mid-season slump, what we learn from the bruised butts, bleeding foreheads and sprained feet? We learned that our existence here is fragile. Permanence is not a promise, a success is never guaranteed. It is based on the foundation we choose to build, and no one, not our supervisor, nor past crews, can do it for us. And maybe, just maybe, we didn't lay the necessary frame work in the beginning of the season.

When working in the mountains, the most formidable foe is the mid-season plateau. Although they may be comfortable, plateaus are the barrier between a group of individuals and a backcountry crew. Some groups reach that plateau, stop to rest, and forget to start climbing again. Well, we reached that point, underwent some injuries, incidents, personal changes, and ultimately stared down the barrel of our own mortality. Would we coast the rest of the season as a group of individuals, woven together by a fraying fabric, or would we stand up, tighten our boots, and continue the club to the peak of our potential?

Well, the personnel changes and incidents proved to be a catalyst for change. We saw Steven take on more roles than we thought possible, designing trail work amidst a revolving door of sponsors, as he continued to keep us safe and spirited at camp. We saw some old faces, in the form of Dana and Lee Bundy, who reminded us why we came out here in the first place. Then we met our new sponsor, a backcountry alumnus Shawn McGrath (Shasta-Trinity 2010). He came in with a genuine purpose and dedication that inspired us all. He spoke of some regrets he had after his season. What kind of regrets would we have? And what can we do about it now? You only get one backcountry season.

After some honest discussion and reflection, we hit the Canyon Creek Trail with a new-found purpose. And certain crew-members began to distinguish themselves. David Martinez emerged as a promising rock-mason, leading and managing his own projects. Jules, Rachael, and Pete engineered, "Hydration Station," putting in 18 checks and a waterbar, while drinking plenty of fluids. Jules seemingly willed rocks into place, with a cool and calm demeanor, and unrivaled precision and mastery. From Pat and Sterling you came to expect dirt-infused faces and check-steps enough to hold a healthy-sized dinosaur, let alone a string of mules. Although Nate's conservation efforts didn't extend to his exorbitant use of toilet paper, there's no limit to how many rocks he can roll, slide, and push down a steep mountainside. Gavin's exhaust fumes cleared due to a dairy-free diet, and his spikes revealed a few certainties from this exuberant man: fast hiking, hardworking, and a bigger appetite that all of Ellen's mules combined.

Along with a change in endurance, skills, and precision, July also unveiled a change in the crew's physique, mostly due to the lifting of the shirtless ban at camp. The skinnier folks added some bulk, and the once heavier folk down-sized pants/and shirts at a borderline inconvenient rate. Rudy left upwards of 40 pounds on trial through grueling and sweaty labor. His new physique and steady rock work are a testament to his work.

The end of July brought the final camp move for the Klamath crew. After a ten-hour work day putting the final cap-stones on our projects, we spent the weekend hiking to and setting up our new camp at Bear Lake. But before we left, Aileen led an affirmation circle that taught us a valuable truth, "Whether we know it or not, we all have a positive bearing on each other." Perhaps knowing and embracing this weaves the fabric we need to get off our plateau and continue to ascend as a crew whether it's Davith teaching a rhythmically challenged crew some East Pay- inspired dance moves, or Nat and Sam performing a beautiful song, our success as a crew depends on the effort we invest in each other. This can be difficult amidst the swirling whirl-winds of uncertainty and self-doubt, but our emergence as a crew depends upon it. In the closing weeks of July, we accepted and the end of the season creeps jarringly near, our time and work at Bear Lake will determine whether we're content to exist as a bossily woven group of individuals, or whether we'll make a name for ourselves as a Klamath National Forest Backcountry Trail Crew.

Written by Klamath Supervisor- Steven Addison:

**[(weather\ 'we-th ar\)]noun**: the state of the atmosphere with respect to heat and cold, wetness or dryness, calm or storm, clearness or cloudiness.

Weather, our eighteen crew members, when weather conducts herself with class, none of us noticed her. We may commit about "how nice she looks" or "how we really appreciate her contribution to a good work day," yet the times weather refuses to cooperate, she has our full attention. She's a trickster, a temptress. Some mornings, Weather has a bright, sunny smile then by noon, her whole attitude has changed. Her earlier bright, clear smile turns stormy gray. By evening her fickleness covers us with miserable moisture. She threatens us with heat, like you would not believe. I swear Weather

likes to be the center of attention. At times we are so hot, sweat drips down our walls. She watches as we curse her and our minds become unglued. Then she quiets down until the next time.

June found our heroes inserted into the Russian Wilderness, along the Sugar Lake Watershed. One too many lefts or not enough right turns, and we found ourselves a little lost. A quick U-turn and we arrived at the trailhead. Brian Feeny (Klamath '12), the CCC's Mule Skinner Intern, and our new sponsor Matt "Pineapple", were there to greet us.

Locked-and-loaded, we hiked to our new home among Engelmann and Brewer's Spruce, Sugar Ponderosa and Jeffery Pines, White and Shasta Firs, and the Pseudo Fir, Douglas. Occasionally, groves of Pacific Cedar, Pacific Yews, and Mountain Hemlock appeared near the trail. These large trees separated the blue skies from the forest floor. No charred ruins of stumps or nitrogen-fueled blue ceanothus here; just granite, trees and the sound of Sugar Creek.

With great enthusiasm, Peter P., Davith M., and David M., took to digging and designing our latrine. A design some of us questioned whenever we dared to squat down. Julian G. scaled fir and hemlocks trees to tie our guylines high enough to keep and our gear dry. Weather was beginning to act up. Federico A. and Aileen B. saved us from a lack of food-induced breakdown, by cooking dinner in a mass of tarps, tools, mules, swirls of action, and a cook whose whereabouts were unknown. Weather, by evening, turned her "emo" facades on and under the yellow tarps we hid.

*"I don't like work, no man does. But what I like is in the work, the chance to find yourself, your own reality. For yourself not others. What no other man knows, they can only see the mere show, but can't tell what it really means." – Marlo from Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad*

We commenced our work on the Sugar Lake Trail. For twenty years the USFS has not maintained or publicized this trail in an attempt to protect this floral wonderland. "The Miracle Mile," Sam Commarto, Scott/Salmon's Recreation Officer, started our assault off with x-cutting a four-and-a-half-foot diameter pine. Patrick P. and Gavin J. were the first pair to attack the beast. Soon they were joined by six more members of our crack-squadron of x-cutters. Armed with rock bars, single and double bits, shovels, Pulaski's and a little wisdom bestowed upon us by "Big Lee Bundy," they managed to subdue the massive giant. WOW!

There are a few things the Klamath is known for: the legacy of the Andrew's family, mules, horses, and dogs, the poetry of Bill Roberts, the lack of Sierra-type rock (granite of course), and rock-work projects. We found ourselves immersed in both rock-projects and granite (not Sierra granite, but who cares?) David and Rudy constructed one heck-of-a water bar while teaching Natalie the finer points of dry stone masonry. Tiffany C. and our Semitic brother, Gabriel R., started and ended this hitch as a team. They started with a water bar then ended with, "the ugliest functionalist," multi-tier wall that their C 1 has seen to date.

Samantha C. aligned with her spirit animal, "spider," by simultaneously digging a footing, moving rocks, crushing, packing a dip, and making strange hand gestures to her project partners. Sterling took the month of June by storm, coming out of her shell and stacking rock like Sponge Bob

stacks Crabby Patties. Rachael D., her comrade-in-arms, demonstrated resilience in the face of some unmoving objects; namely, her C 1 and some very large rocks.

Julian G. and Michael B. toiled together and with the help of Sterling, Rachael D. and David M. completed a fine rock staircase. Nathaniel K. began this hitch struggling to master the granite and by the end of our time, he had some sleep due to a prickly and sticky situation that he soldiered through. Thanks Nate.

Before our departure from the Russians, we had a fortuitous visit from Grace and Michael Bammer. They flew, drove (got a little lost) and hiked into visit their daughter, Ms. Knop aka Aileen Bammer. The Bammers brought an abundance of snacks, treats and the ability to make one fine chocolate cake. But the best thing they brought was their large and open hearts.

Our multi-day weekend camp move, the addition of weather's precipitous off-and-on nature, plus the loss of Betsy (our van) had us a little stuck. With a bit of serendipity, the Bammers were able to give one last gift—a lift. A rental car mix-up left the Bammers with a mini-van and a lucky break for us. We were able to have a family-style supper at Bob's Ranch House, showers and clean clothes. Thanks Grace and Michael.

Look out for further adventures of the Klamath like, "The KNF-13 crew on the Walk Across the Deathly Karst." Also the new single from Dirty Pete aka "The Dirty Stick" aka "The Bearded Baby," "It's Going Down."