

YOSEMITE II BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL CREW  
MAY 2013 MONTHLY REPORT  
Anna Asp, Backcountry Trails Supervisor

OVERVIEW:

At 7,200', she watched the sunset drape El Capitan and Yosemite Valley in shadow while alpen glow still lingered high where she sat with legs dangling over a ledge at Dewey Point. Seeing her there, I was struck by how comfortable she seemed, and I looked around at her crewmates and how at home they, too, had all become in the awe-inspiring wilderness of Yosemite. It's their backyard now, made official each time they jot down the words Yosemite National Park as the return address for the letters they write.

Trailwork toughens anyone, but the work is only as hard as we make it, so feeling exhausted at the end of *every* day is our goal because it's a testament to our dedication to push our personal limits and grow stronger, physically and mentally, as individuals and also collectively as a crew. Our first full month in the Backcountry Trails Program has been a good one. We've started laying the foundation for our job knowledge as we've been taught the basics of trail maintenance, and we've learned that from our past challenging experiences, new tasks become easier to handle comparatively. Yeah, these switchbacks are steep and long, but they're nothing compared to that trail we hiked coming straight out of Poopenaut Valley with chainsaw gear to carry. Yes, our daypacks full of a gallon and a half of water, a big lunch, first aid, ace wrap, rain gear, lighter, pocketknife, safety whistle, headlamp, hand sanitizer, sunscreen, change of socks, warm dry layer, and personal ID is heavy as we hike up the trail, but it's nowhere near as bad as when we had all that plus our sleeping bags, sleeping pads, tarps, p-cord, extra clothes, journals, cooking pots and stoves and fuel, and bear canisters full of enough food to feed hungry trail workers for 4 days while we were on spike – plus a full set of maintenance tools over our shoulders. We're off to a good start with many more lessons ahead to learn.

We're easing out of the honeymoon phase of this journey building a crew and a community, and we're better acquainted with what we're made of and what we have to offer. Each workday we sweat, hike, dig and lop to preserve the trails that protect Yosemite's natural beauty, and on our weekends we're beginning to explore as much of that as we can reach. We've enjoyed our time stationed out of Hetch Hetchy and spiking near Kibbie and Eleanor Lakes, but we're already chomping at the bit, ready to take on the challenge of our beckoning backcountry camp in Tiltill Valley. We're primed and ready for the challenges ahead.

CREW UPDATE:

Nearing the end of the month, we were pleased to welcome two new members to our crew: Ryan Garcia of Chico, California and Andre Scott of Raleigh, North Carolina. Having arrived at the end of a work week, they enjoyed a tough but rewarding introduction to Yosemite

with a backpacking trip to Lake Vernon and a cross-country hike up to Branigan Lake, Andrew Lake and a stunning view from Andrews Peak, elevation 8,537'. For May's last week of work, they joined us maintaining trails near Miguel Meadow.

#### WORK PRODUCTION:

May meant maintenance and plenty of it for Yosemite II as we worked near Wapama Falls, knocked out the switchbacks down to Poopenaut Valley and up from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir toward Miguel Meadow, cleared the way to Carlon Falls, and completed 2 weeks of productive spikes to finish the maintenance of the Kibbie Ridge and Kibbie Lake loop and onward to Frog Creek where it spills into lovely Lake Eleanor for a total of 23 miles maintained. A few corpsmembers participated in special projects to put in retaining checks near Carlon Falls, to clear the trail of down trees on a log run spike on the Kibbie Ridge and Lake loop, to set up the cables on Half Dome with Steve Lynds' NPS crew and the Little Yosemite Valley rangers, to use the grip hoist to remove a large down oak near Lake Eleanor, and to install trail junction signs near Kibbie Lake and Frog Creek.

#### CURRICULUM and ACTIVITIES:

Classes started with our monthly back strength and flexibility assessment which included Physical Training bests for highest # of consecutive push-ups (Herbert with 50) and the longest duration of holding various positions: plank (Brandt holding for 2 mins 15 secs) superman (Kelli Schmidt holding 2 mins and 44 secs) and seatless chair pose (Brandt 5mins 2 secs). Among other things, our curriculum included clarifying CCC policies while sitting beside a lazily flowing section of the Merced River in Yosemite Valley's meadow; reading topographical maps and going on a cross-country route first as a crew and then as group that explored routes of their own design; learning what pertinent information to gather from an injured/ill patient and then practicing reporting that to dispatch during emergency radio traffic scenarios using Park radios; fire-building techniques taught by Brandt and Herbert; trail maintenance finishing tips and tool sharpening techniques for loppers, handsaws, and pocketknives; rehabilitation and strengthening stretches for back, knees, and shoulders; writing the crew's sobriety pledge; and reviewing the month's curriculum and training with a game of jeopardy.

Activities included writing Mother's Day cards, celebrating Brandt's birthday with apple cobbler and a gooseberry crown fit for a king, having a Memorial Day Dance-off, and meeting up with Yosemite I for a fun game of baseball in the Big Meadow near their frontcountry camp in Foresta.

## YOSEMITE II MISSION STATEMENT:

To challenge ourselves to connect to a community and nature in order to develop a direction in life. Each day will be a stepping stone towards mental, physical and spiritual growth in order to find our niche in society.

I seek challenge. I want to step forward towards my goal as I blaze trails, WE blaze as a crew, as YOS DOS.

**AFFIRMATIONS:** Thank you to Fortuna for hosting our alternates during their Orientation before joining us in Yosemite, and thank you to Agnes for safely bringing them to us, visiting our crew, and boosting morale with your support and advice. Thank you Steve Lynds for organizing a safe and successful Half Dome cables spike. Thank you to Yosemite I for hosting our fun-filled baseball game. Thank you, Alf, for your unexpected visit on the trail. Please send our regards to your close friend Mr. Matheson.