



CASCADE CHRONICLES

Issue 6, 2025

The mission of Cascade Volunteers is to connect individuals and communities to the Willamette National Forest and adjacent public lands through programs, stewardship, and education.

Every Visitor is a Steward

Williamette National Forest

Please Tread Lightly & Keep the Wilderness Wild

- Pack It In, Pack It Out – Take all trash, food scraps, and toilet paper with you.
- Stay on Durable Surfaces – Use existing trails and campsites. Don't create new ones.
- Respect Wildlife & Solitude – Give animals space and keep noise low for others
- Be Self-Sufficient – No services may be available. Carry maps, first aid, and extra supplies.
- Minimize Fire Impacts – Use a stove instead of a campfire. Never leave coals or flames unattended.
- Leave It as You Found It – Don't build structures, cut vegetation, or move natural features.

CV Welcomes New Volunteer Coordinator – Stacy Rudisill, CV Program Manager

Cascade Volunteers is excited to announce some staffing changes.

We have a new staff member on our team. Please join us in welcoming Wenmi Klobah, Cascade Volunteer's new Volunteer Coordinator. You can reach her at the Volunteer Coordinator [email](#). Don't forget to update your email contact information for the Volunteer Coordinator email address. Her office phone will be set up soon 541-225-6370.

A bit more about Wenmi (the "n" is silent):



Wenmi's love for nature started from a very young age when she and her mother would go out on "adventures" every weekend in her home country Puerto Rico. Her passion about cultivating curiosity, hands-on learning, and ecological stewardship has been deeply influential on her work as an artist and professional. During graduate studies, her interest in museum studies and cultural management led her to pursue a job as a Bilingual Educator at the California Academy of Sciences, leading and designing educational programming for youth K-6th. Since then, she has held positions as an educator or education coordinator at museums and non-profit organizations like the Lawrence Hall of Science, Eugene Science Center, and Ophelia's Place. Throughout her career, she has enjoyed designing and leading fun, inquiry-based environmental and astronomical educational programs that encourage youth to participate in the stewardship of their world. Wenmi still loves going on "adventures," camping, and making art in her spare time.

I'm shifting into my new role as Program Manager overseeing the planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation of CV's four core programs Volunteer, Recreation, Education and Natural Resources while assisting with administrative and organizational responsibilities. I can be reached at my [email](#). My office and cell phone numbers remain the same, 541-225-6348 and 458-544-1501.

We appreciate your patience as we navigate the transition between email addresses and volunteer coordination responsibilities.

Oregon Outdoor Recreational Summit 2025 – Becky Hope, CV Board Member



Hosted by Oregon Trails Coalition and Travel Oregon at the Pendleton, OR conference center. Cascade Volunteers members who attended were Stacy Rudisill, CV Program and Educational Program Manager, Becky Hope, CV board member and Mike Neese, CV Grant person. Also attended by 6 BCHO members (Becky Hope, Kim Zemek, Sonya Margerum, Becky Wolf, George Johnson, Jean Clancey), OET Kim McCarrel. There were 80 Presenters, 230 Attendees, 40 Scholarships given, 20 summit exhibitors including Back Country Horsemen of Oregon and Cascade Volunteers.

- Federal Stewardship Partners Mini-Summit on Friday was attended by over 15 different Volunteer Organizations.
- Opening keynote speaker: Chuck Sams, former 19th National Park director, set an amazing tone for the event as he shared perspectives passed down from his grandfather growing up on the lands of Cayuse and Walla Walla Tribes of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, as well as what he gleaned from his professional, academic, military and public service career.

Breakout sessions were held throughout Thursday and Friday. Here are a few of the offerings...

- Want to boost your chances of securing outdoor recreation technical assistance and funding and help shape how those programs work? This interactive session is designed as a two-way conversation—where applicants, funders, and program managers come together to learn from one another.
- Collaborative Management of Overcrowded Areas: Embracing the Power of Choice

This workshop will cover collaborative management of an overcrowded outdoor recreation area by offering alternative solutions to experiencing the activity. In this study, we'll look at the popular "Barton to Carver" float along the Clackamas River, which over the years has steadily increased.

- The Little Trail That Could – Joseph Branch Trail-with-Rail Concept to Construction. The Joseph Branch Trail Consortium (JBTC) has been working for over a decade to construct a 63-mile trail-with-rail from Elgin to Joseph, Oregon. The workshop will begin with a brief presentation summarizing project history. The discussion will center around successful and unsuccessful strategies.
- Plenary Session: What's Next for Trails and Outdoor Recreation in Oregon: A Community Strategy Session Building on our morning keynote from Chuck Sams on Uncharted Ground to examine the current policy and funding landscape and chart a shared vision for how we move forward together.

Thursday PM

- Networking Dinner and Party Hosted by Travel Oregon
- Join us for a fun evening full of local Pendleton flavor just a short stroll away from the Convention Center on the grounds of the Pendleton Roundup!

Friday AM

- Plenary Session - Outdoor Recreation Community Updates: Stories from Around the State. A fun and inspiring storytelling session **emceed by Will Cortez** about exciting trails and outdoor recreation projects from around the state: meet the local leaders making the magic happen.
- Engaging Communities Through the Power of Storytelling
- Building Trails, Building Community: New Mountain Biking Opportunities in a City's Freshest Park
- Two Part Session: Calling All Nature Nerds & Equine Back Country Enthusiasts.



- Big Ideas in Outdoor Recreation 10-minute “TED talk” style presentations sharing brief overviews of recent research, emerging projects, or big ideas in outdoor recreation. Time for one or two follow-up questions during transitions between speakers.
- Recreative Recovery: Rebuilding after Wildfire
- The Grants Pass to Rogue River Multimodal Plan is a longstanding community vision to connect the cities of Grants Pass and Rogue River by an extension of the Rogue River Greenway.
- Open Session: Critical Community Conversations. This session is an open space for community conversations. There will be opportunities to elevate topics for discussion in this space at conference general sessions.



We also broke bread together, danced, and cheered while some among us tested their rodeo chops on a mechanical bucking pig on the storied grounds of the Pendleton Round-Up. We all came away with new thoughts on how we might work together.

Nextgen Botany – Mike Smith

The seeds were floating everywhere at Little Bunchgrass trailhead, nearby fireweed the source, loaded with thousands more cotton-like floaters. Our first time working at this end of Bunchgrass, we were going to continue to restore the trail which burned over badly in 2022. Today, two of our crew would log the trail out; 3 more would do power brushing, and four would do tread recovery work. I started a power brusher, strapped it to my hip, and starting at the trail entrance, began to walk slowly forward, swinging the brusher back and forth.



I passed a 5-foot-tall fireweed plant with husks of open seed pods, a clear closed seed pod zone, and finally the last pink flowers at the top. I love fireweed (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*). Four petals, perennial, tall, it is the calendar of summer in burned over areas, common in the high country. The first blooms are difficult to notice in early to mid-summer with so many other flowers blooming, but late summer fireweed is a major show. The flowers begin at the bottom of the inflorescence, above the spiral leaves that define the stem, gradually continuing to move upward over several weeks up to the top. They become a darker pink before turning into long, narrow seed pods. As summer progresses, the seed pods open in a four-sided arc away from a common center to release the seeds, but not all at once. The inflorescence becomes loaded with gray seeds, thousands to tens of thousands of seeds per plant float in the air maybe a half hour, scattered to the four winds. “When you see cotton, summer will soon be forgotten.”

After brushing a couple hundred yards in an incomplete burn with a few live trees, I entered a meadow where others worked on the tread. I shut the motor off and hiked through until reaching a mostly burned over woods where more brush awaited me. I restarted the brusher and continued work until I ran out of gas. I traded jobs with another, who ran the brusher while I swamped. Here, bear grass (*Xerophyllum tenax*) had long since bloomed, large, beautiful white flowers covering the landscape, each with a definite pungent odor. Brown, brittle stalks remained, easily removed, but the tough perennial grass itself would not be removed easily, due to a thick rhizome. Only the last few inches of the thin, perennial portion was easy to cut. I felt sorry for the tread workers who had to remove in-trail bear grass. Their job was unusually difficult. Three of us brushing reached a rocky stretch after a mile, which was as far as we needed to go.



Jean Harris, doing clearing

I carried the now quiet brusher back to the vehicles, returning through the woods, full of fireweed in some spots where earlier cutting it made it appear like it was snowing. Eventually, I reached the meadow where we started, the trailhead a few minutes later. I had time before the others returned, and after changing footwear found some yellow Scouler's Woollyweed. Something else caught my eye as I looked over at a group of surviving conifers.



There were several large cones at the top, easy to see, even from a distance, light brown, almost fluffy in appearance. They were Noble fir (*Abies procera*), and I had never seen the cones before. This was perfect habitat for them: decent moisture, good elevation, plenty of sunlight. Fireweed and fir; seeds and cones; the first will die off above ground and return the next year from the rhizome; both will drop to the ground and start from there after a period of cold with moisture, cold stratification, that is required for germination.

A Sharp Saw – Ryan B, Camas Trail Crew

Three years ago, if you had told me I would be working on sharpening crosscut saws I might have laughed at you. I had never pulled a saw before nor was I involved with any form of trail work. In the spring of '23, on the Pioneer Gulch Trail, I was given my first taste of crosscut saw work. To say I was hooked would be an understatement.

In mid-November of this year, I made my third trek to a small town in Northern California to further my education in the art of filing a crosscut saw. Nestled at the edge of the Tahoe National Forest in Sierra County is the town of Calpine. It is home to an amazing lady named Dolly Chapman, who over the past 45 years has been working on the art of filing saws.

On day one of the class students and instructors arrive and begin to set up in the community hall of this small town. As we all begin to introduce ourselves and share where we worked, I was surprised to learn all students in this class were volunteers. Some under the PCTA and others under groups such as Cascade Volunteers. In past classes there have been a mix of USFS staff as well as volunteers.

As the day progresses, we alternate between instructions on the next step for sharpening and working on the saws which we all brought. Seeing old saws being cleaned and straightened is a wonderful sight, especially knowing they are going back into service helping volunteers keep our trails open.

For those not familiar with the sharpening process I will do my best to take four days of instruction and condense it to a few paragraphs. Each saw undergoes a multipoint evaluation process as well as being cleaned by hand. Once clean and evaluated, any bends or kinks are straightened out. It kind of goes without saying but a straight saw will pull thru the kerf (the opening the saw makes as the wood is cut) of the cut much easier.

Next, we moved to cleaning the raker gullets and faces before jointing the arc of the saw. The raker gullets collect the chips (or hopefully noodles) of wood and transport them out of the kerf. Jointing is the process of maintaining or restoring the natural arc of the saw teeth. It also provides a reference point on each tooth for the next steps.

After jointing, we focused on the rakers filing them to the proper shape and depth before hammering the correct swedge to their face. The swedge is the little angled part at the end of the raker tip that acts as a chisel. To say that hitting a saw tooth with a hammer is a little unnerving is an understatement.



Just when you think you're done hitting your saw with a hammer you realize it's only just begun. Now it is time to set all your saw's teeth. Out comes a different hammer and a handheld anvil. Each tooth is moved to a precise amount based off the body of the saw. When I say precise, I do mean precise. Within a thousandth of an inch to each other kind of precision. This consistency allows for easy work as the teeth cut through the fibers of the wood.

After all the hammering is done now you begin the careful process of shaping your cutter teeth to a sharp point. Each tooth you strive to have the correct shape and angles on to make the saw run smoothly and cut effectively.

The final filing steps are to finish file the raker tips to the last thousandth of an inch and then test the saw to see how it cuts. This final evaluation step is a little nerve racking but under the watchful eye of the instructors they provide feedback on small changes that could be made to your saw. Seeing a saw go from a rusty worthless piece of metal destined for the scrap pile to brightly shining again while pulling noodles of wood chips out makes all the worry and stress worth it.

The four-day class passes quickly with fun conversations, helping other students, building friendships and looking at all the various tools, saws and handles on display and for use. There is an impressive collection of various saw handles as well as a for sale table for all things saw related.

Each time I go to work with Dolly and her cadre of other instructors I walk away feeling more confident in my skills and knowledge. I think my biggest take aways have been learning not only how to make a saw run effectively but how to maintain these saws for future generations of trail workers. New production saws do not come close to the same quality or precision as the saw of old.



One of the greatest compliments I have received as a saw filer was from a fellow sawyer who entrusted me to sharpen their saw. Hers was the first non-personal saw I had ever done. After it was used on the trail and hearing how well it cut and that sawyers enjoyed pulling it was a boost to my confidence as a filer.

My personal favorite saw is a 66" Adkins #52 felling saw. I restored this saw at class number two with Dolly. This past season working on the Camas Crew I cut hundreds of logs with this saw in our work on Shale Ridge trail, Rebel Rock trail, Rebel Creek trail and along others. Each time I use this saw I think back to bringing it home from the Portland area where it has sat rusting in an old barn. Now it lives again in the hands of volunteers who are committed to our forests, our trails and all users.

I'm always happy to talk about saws and help others who are looking at purchasing a saw. I can be reached by sending email to: RBurks

Salamander Trail Crew Chainsaw Training – *Beth Dayton*

The Cascade Volunteers saw program scored a perfect Fall Day to hold a chainsaw recertification for nine members of the Mt Jefferson snowmobile club. The training was held in Santiam Canyon, and given by Brad Engelbert, the CV Associate Saw Program Coordinator. CV evaluators and instructors who participated in the class were: Beth Dayton, Gary Westphal, and Justin Turlak. Day one is mostly didactic, classroom teaching and day two is cutting in the field, in this case near Big Lake Youth Camp. These are the hardy folks who head out on their groomers well before dawn in all kinds of weather to prep trails. Many of them work with Search and Rescue as well.



Training Description:

- The chainsaw class is 2 days, the first is classroom and the second is out in the field.
- Evaluators and instructors are Beth, Brad, Gary and Justin.
- Sign up will be in the Spring, dates to be announced early 2026.
- Prerequisites are the current First Aid card and CPR card. You must be 16 years of age for crosscut and 18 years of age for chainsaw.
- For more info go to [Cascade Volunteers Saw Partner Program](#)

First Aid/CPR Certification Classes – *Becky Hope, Cascade Volunteers Board Member*

Cascade Volunteers are partnering on First Aid/CPR certification classes which are needed for saw certifications. A class was recently completed in which 15 individuals were certified. A big thank you to Laurie Monico, Brian Roddy, and Steve Eller, who donated their time and energy to do the training.



The next (2026) classes will be held February 28 and March 28 at the Forest Service supervisor’s office from 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM each day. Other training to be held by Lane and Clackamas Community Colleges will be announced later. More information about the training can be found on the Oregon Trails Coalition Website [here](#). Send email to [Becky](#) if you are interested in learning more.

Hiking Oregon’s History...the Erma Bell Lakes – *Rhonda Levine, Cascade Chronicles Editor*



I recently saw this piece from author William Sullivan... and decided to use it as a jumping off piece to tell you about Judy Mitchell who started Cascade Volunteers 20 years ago...

The Oregon Erma Bell Lakes loop [hike](#) starts at Skookum campground which can be accessed through Westfir. The word is Chinook jargon for “strong/powerful unpleasant deity”. When used in connection with a place it meant that the place was inhabited by a powerful spirit and that place may have been used as a burial ground.

Chinook natives generally avoided skookum places. However, once you pass Skookum Creek and the campground, you will be heading to the Erma Bell Lakes. The Upper, Middle and Lower Lakes were named for none other than Erma Bell, who was employed by the Portland USFS office. She died in a car accident in 1918. The lakes were named in her honor after her death.

Judy began her Forest Service career in 1986 when she decided to volunteer for what is now the Middlefork Ranger District in Westfir. Her first assignment was the Erma Bell Lakes where she helped with trail clearing and improvement, campsite cleanup, reforestation and teaching the public about all things wilderness. About 2 years later she was hired as a Wilderness Ranger and did much of that same work in several wilderness areas. She was joined a few years later by 2 helpers... her llamas Camas and Chief. They packed her gear in and packed trash out. And rode in the back of an old Forest Service van when traveling.

When Judy retired in 2005, she saw an opportunity to use volunteers to help the Forest Service with projects they didn't have staff or money to do. So, she organized Cascade Volunteers, which began as High Cascade Forest Volunteers. They offered training in everything pertaining to wilderness work. Eventually there were hundreds of folks out there doing all kinds of things needed to give the public access to trails. Two long-time groups who are still very active are The Scorpions and The Salamanders. Each year there is a Volunteer Appreciation event where folks from many groups come together to celebrate what they've done. The Forest Service is very appreciative. And the Judy Mitchell Volunteer of the Year award is presented to someone who has been outstanding at what they've done to help.

Cascade Volunteers now has staff who guide the organization along with a Board of Directors. It has grown so much and there's always more to do. Now you know about the organization.

Woodstoves Needed at the Willamette Pass Winter Shelters – *Lyndell Wilken*



The winter shelters at Willamette Pass have wood stoves for winter snowshoers/skiers to use during the winter months. When the stoves begin to crack or have other problems they must be replaced with donated stoves. The Cascade Winter Trail/Shelter program along with the Forest Service are looking for more wood stoves that someone would be willing to donate. If you have one, the forest service will transport the stove from your house to the Forest Service district where it will be stored until needed.

The photo shows a wood stove that had been donated in the past.



SPECIFICATIONS

- Solid, structurally sound base.
- No cracks: Shine a light inside. No light should show from the outside.
- A door that is in good shape.
- A flue exit on the TOP of the wood stove, not the back.
- Small to Medium in size.

If you wish to donate a stove, send email to Lyndell or call 541-343-3080.

Santiam Wagon Road – Interview w/Marcia Morse



Marcia Morse and the Santiam Wagon Road have been connected through her family for close to 150 years. To say that she has passion for the area and its history is somewhat of an understatement.

Her maternal Grandmother Day told stories about her great-great grandparents, whose families both came to the Willamette Valley via the Oregon Trail in 1852 and 1853. Sarah and Silas met here, married and had 3 children including Day's mother, Clara. Their lives took a tragic turn in 1877 when Sarah became very ill with tuberculosis. They decided to go to the dry eastern side of the mountains in the futile hope of a cure. They travelled the most direct route, the still very rugged Santiam Wagon Road, and this is where the connection begins. Grandma Day described the arduous journey her

mother remembered, and the joy Clara, 10 years old at the time, found in the beauty of the forest and the songs of the birds. The story always ended with Day reaching for her hankie to dry her tears over the grandmother she never met. But the joy Clara found in the forest stayed with her throughout her life, and continued through Day, her daughter Carol (Marcia's mother) and Marcia too.

So, when Marcia found herself standing on the Santiam Wagon Road she was hooked. That was in about 1987. She was volunteering with Tony Farque, the Sweet Home Ranger District (SWRD) archeologist, doing cultural resources surveys in preparation for a timber sale. When Tony told her they were on the actual Santiam Wagon Road, Marcia felt that connection. But it wasn't just that sad story that connected her family to the area. It was deepened in a much happier way in 1904, when Clara's cousin John Short moved with his family to Cascadia. Their homestead was one of those that offered food and shelter to travelers on the wagon road. John and his son Gordon worked for the Forest Service manning lookouts among other things, and for the Civilian Conservation Corps as Local Experienced Men, teaching skills to "the CCC boys". Clara brought her family every summer, and Cascadia and the South Santiam River have been their favorite destination for generations. Marcia considers it her home river and goes there as often as she can.

Back in 1987, Tony wanted the historic road preserved and worked to prevent logging operations across it. This began a process that preserved the Santiam Wagon Road as a Special Interest Area, which prompted the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council to include it in their inventory of historic trails. After years of effort by many advocates, the Santiam Wagon Road was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Sweet Home Ranger District has featured it on their newest map, showing trail segments and describing some of its history.

In the 40 years since first finding herself on the Santiam Wagon Road, Marcia has continued to volunteer with Tony and other archeologists doing cultural resources surveys, helping guide day hikes and multi-day Treks Thru Time often featuring the wagon road, and giving a few presentations about it. And now, "after only 40 years," she, Tony and Ann Rogers, also a former SWRD archeologist, are helping create trail-head interpretive panels describing its history and telling its stories. The Santiam Wagon Road has served to strengthen and deepen Marcia's connection to her family's history and their shared appreciation of the peace and beauty of the forest and the river. And as Tony says "Every day is a good day on the Santiam Wagon Road."



Scorpions on the Trail – Sig Johnsen

A crew of 7 Scorpions started post Bedrock Fire trail restoration on the Fall Creek trail #3455 on Thursday, 11/6. They started from the Dolly Varden TH on Road 18 and worked on widening the tread and brushing for roughly a mile upstream.

Big thanks to the crew for a great start. There is a lot more to be done and we plan on working on this trail through the winter months.

The photos are the leftovers of burnt punchon (small bridge low to the ground). There are about a dozen of these damaged structures on the trail.

Hope to see you on the trail soon!



🌲 The Ornament Hunt: A Willamette Tradition – Melinda Martin, The Oregon Challenge

The air in the Willamette National Forest was crisp and clean, smelling of damp earth, mixed evergreens, and an early-season suggestion of snow. For the last several years, the mission had been the same: to hike the quiet, winding trails and leave behind small tokens of the season. But this year, the tradition had taken on a new glow.

Along with me and my mom was Bennett, my two-year-old grandson. He was a small, bundled explorer, his favorite-color-orange jacket, a vibrant spot against the greens and browns of the forest floor.



We started down the trail. Bennett was completely absorbed by the micro-world at his feet. So many types of mushrooms, cones, and green plush moss. He didn't just walk the trail; he was in a constant state of discovery.

Then came the true task: placing the ornaments. We'd brought a small bag of this year's souvenir ornaments, depicting a whimsical scene of a Pacific tree frog in the forest with mushrooms. We showed Bennett the plan: tuck an ornament inside a log, or in a little hidey-hole at the base of a tree, hidden for other hikers to find.

My mom and I watched him and shared a glance at his enthusiasm. We both smiled, and I hoped that this new tradition would continue, marked by the sight and sound of a little one scampering down the trail.



This year, 200 ornaments were hidden across select trails in the Willamette National Forest by Cascade Volunteers "elves." The annual Ornament Hunt has become a beloved tradition by many and is sponsored by Willamette Valley Visitors Association.

Maintain the trail. Preserve the Experience.

In 2025, our incredible Cascade Volunteers logged a significant number of hours of service – hours nearly equivalent to the full-time staff who are dedicated solely to conservation!

Our volunteers cleared fallen trees, restored damaged switchbacks, and removed invasive species from critical habitats. But the need is greater than ever. Record-breaking weather events mean more trail damage and more critical restoration work required.

When you support Cascade Volunteers through your donations, you are doing more than just fixing a rut or clearing a branch. You are ensuring that families safely hike to breathtaking viewpoints, that students can learn about local ecology in pristine environments, and that the quiet solace of the wilderness is protected for everyone.

You are helping us maintain the trail so we can preserve the experience. [Consider a Donation](#)

Save the Date May 14 – 17



2025 Closing Note – Rhonda Levine, CV Editor



As we close this year, we wish you and yours, holidays filled with joy, laughter and new memories.

The newsletter is published every two months. We encourage you to volunteer, as we are doing, to make a difference. And if you'd like to write something and include photos for **YOUR** Newsletter... please do.

Please send email with your articles and (photos) to [Rhonda](#). We ask that photos be an attachment or shared link rather than embedded in the text of the article.

The deadline for the February Newsletter is **Monday, 2/15/2026**.