



CASCADE CHRONICLES

Issue 7, 2026

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

Willamette 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.

About Cascade Volunteers - Wenmi Klobah

The Cascade Volunteers team has received some inquiries lately asking what Cascade Volunteers' role is, and the first 2026 issue of Cascade Chronicles seems like the perfect opportunity to reintroduce who we are, what we do, and how we serve this lively community!

Cascade Volunteers (CV) is the nonprofit friends partner organization of the Willamette National Forest (WNF.) We work together with Forest Service staff to pursue a vision of public lands stewardship and appreciation that offers forest-wide support. CV adds capacity to FS staff by administering and coordinating the volunteer-base that offers their time, energy, and passion to our public lands. Our mission is to connect individuals and communities to the Willamette National Forest and adjacent public lands through programs, stewardship, and education. We believe that everyone, from all walks of life, is welcome in our National Forest and we aim to create opportunities for people to foster and practice a Stewardship Ethic. Rather than acting as an umbrella group, CV is a hub that provides resources for all volunteer individuals and groups in our community.

What We Do:

- Manage the volunteer program (recruitment, sign-ups, database, reporting, communication, and project development).
- Create diverse volunteer opportunities for a wide range of skills and interests.
- Provide training, including Skills College and certifications (Sawyer, First Aid/CPR, etc.).
- Support volunteer-led projects through grants, funding, partnerships, and tools/equipment.
- Build community through leadership summits and annual events like the Ornament Hunt and Volunteer Appreciation.

Our Team:

- Program Manager – Stacy Rudisill: Oversees program development, agreements, and partnership implementation.
- Volunteer Coordinator – Wenmimareba Klobah: Manages the volunteer database, service agreements, reporting, and event coordination.

As a two-person staff, we collaborate closely with each other, Forest Service partners, and our dedicated Board of Directors—whose significant contributions make this work possible. We're grateful to serve this community and look forward to an exciting year ahead.

Many Hands, One Forest: Supporting the Willamette National Forest – Karol Schrems

Volunteers support the Willamette National Forest in countless ways. They build and maintain trails, serve as trailhead hosts, use horses and mules to pack supplies, monitor solitude and recreation sites, clean lakes, track wildlife, maintain and stock winter shelters, remove invasive weeds, monitor plant life cycles—and so much more.

In 2025 alone, more than 730 volunteers contributed over 39,000 hours of service. That effort is valued at more than \$1.3 million - the equivalent of 18 full-time employees! Volunteers work hard to support the Willamette National Forest, and it truly shows.

Behind the scenes, Cascade Volunteers (CV) supports the people who support the forest. Our new Volunteer Coordinator, Wenmi, helps volunteers record their hours and connects them with opportunities that match their interests. Stacy, our Program Coordinator, manages all our programs - volunteer, recreation, education, and natural resources. Another important part of our work is ensuring volunteers receive the Northwest Forest, America the Beautiful, and Wilderness passes they have earned.

And behind Cascade Volunteers are the donors who make all this possible. When federal funding was halted last spring, our donors stepped up to our Challenge Campaign with \$51,000 to keep one CV staff member working. When funding was restored, we were able to hire a part-time Volunteer Coordinator to help manage the growing workload. We continue working to diversify our funding so we can provide consistent, reliable support to volunteers on the Willamette National Forest.

Thanks to your generosity, we received almost \$8,000 in donations this year, including nearly \$5,000 from our Giving Tuesday campaign. Donor support is essential to sustaining the volunteers who give so much to our beloved Willamette National Forest.

From all of us at Cascade Volunteers - Thank You for everything you do!

Envelope Stuffing Team

On December 30th, 8 of us (6 CV Board Members, Eileen from the FS, Stacy, our Program Manager and myself) gathered to do the annual stuffing of envelopes which included “Thank You” passes. There was a total of 727 volunteers involved in making the Willamette National Forest a better place. Of these, 472 individuals



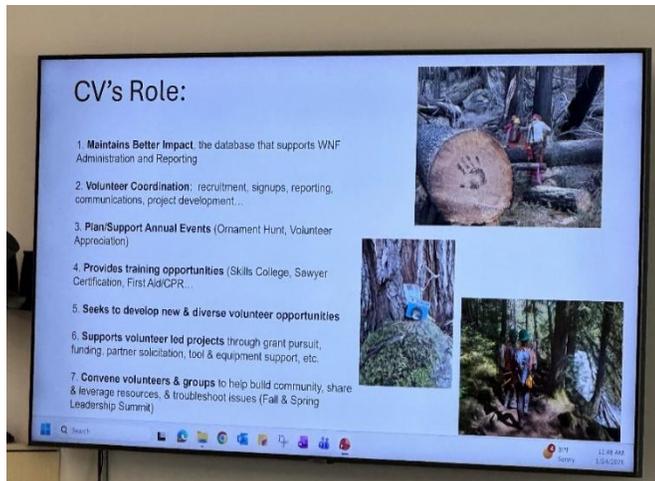
helped in a variety of ways with enough hours to qualify for the passes.

- The basic Forest Pass requires 16 hours of volunteer time during the year.
- The Wilderness Pass requires a total of 40 hours spent working in the Willamette or Deschutes National Forest Wilderness.
- The America the Beautiful Pass requires one spend 250 cumulative hours volunteering.

If you are interested in knowing more about the work we do and earning a free pass, please contact Wenmi at volunteer@cascadevols.org.

Willamette National Forest Volunteer Leadership Summit – Rhonda Levine

In late January, Cascade Volunteers and the Willamette National Forest co-hosted the Leadership Summit.



Approximately 40 individuals were in attendance including crew leaders of volunteer groups, CV staff, Board members and Forest service staff. The 4-hour event was designed to help these folks be more efficient, safe and communicative. Topics like Code of Conduct, Work Lists, Future Projects and Agency Priorities were discussed. The Forest Service, which works hand in hand with CV, was well represented and spoke about what the forest region is doing and planning. After the season has ended, this event will take place again to review how and what projects were accomplished and what improvements can be made for 2027.

The Newsletter staff will be reaching out to connect with many of the volunteer groups to get information, stories, and opportunities so we can keep our newsletter readers up to date about the many ways there are to help. Among the groups present were those involved with trail building, clearing and maintenance on foot and by horseback, weed abatement, removal of old automobiles, care of local lakes, saw certification and more. There are so many amazing folks doing work in the Forest!

As CV moves into its 21st year there will be more ways to help and become involved. The [website](#) and the Newsletter want to keep bringing you chances to be a part of it. Please sign up for anything that might interest you through the Newsletter. And thanks for supporting Cascade Volunteers!

Winter Trails/Shelter – Lyndell Wilken



The cross country and snowshoe season has gotten off to a slow start given very little snow has fallen during the month of January.

The picture of Fuji shelter illustrates how sparse the snow is at the shelters and on the winter trail system at Willamette Pass.

Westview Shelter near the Gold Lake Sno Park has very little if any wood left; Maiden Peak, Waldo, Fuji, Gold Lake and Bechtel shelters all have a wood supply for your use.

Camas Crew

There's a local group which is doing a lot of great trail work called Camas Crew. They began in 2020 when several folks who were regularly helping Ron Robinson and The Scorpions decided to form their own entity. Judy Mitchell was their mentor, and the name Camas came from Judy's llama, who spent years in the wilderness helping crews haul tools and remove trash.

The Crew, which is about 14-16 folks, works mostly in the Middlefork and McKenzie wilderness areas. They work on projects year-round depending on the weather and their main goal is trail clearing. Often you can find them working to assist other crew members. They use a combination of chain saws, at beginnings of trails, and crosscut saws as they get into the wilderness areas. They like mentoring new people who are interested.

If you'd like to know more about them, check out Facebook where they have information about what they're doing. They'd like to share their knowledge and passion for trails with you!

SWARM – Michael Smith

The trailhead was several miles closer than I thought and the dirt road was in better shape than I expected. Good start to the day.

Then I opened the car door.

Immediately, mosquitoes were all over me. Alone, I had their undivided attention. I have spent time above the Arctic Circle and hundreds of days in the Boundary Waters. I know mosquitoes. Just two weeks earlier at the southern terminus of the Middle Fork trail by Timpanogos I was the only crew member who did not wear bug netting or using bug repellent; generally, that is typical. I heard, "There's a swarm all around you." No problem. Today was different. I was at another southern terminus, this time Diamond Peak Trail, planning to scout north 2 miles to Rockpile Trail and then head east. Summit Lake was nearby, and there were many ponds near the trail. Figure lots of standing water, one mammal, swatting several mosquitoes at a time on a hand, inhaling some, glad for once I wore hearing aids, since at least the bugs wouldn't go in my ear.

The day didn't improve. I had hiked past ponds, streams, and snow, swatting frequently as I tabulated downed trees and possibly needed tread work because of the 208MF fire a year earlier. There were so many downed trees I listed them by number every hundred yards. Trail scouting in a fire zone is like route finding in winter. With no ground cover landmarks, many spots appear to have a trail. Finally reaching Rockpile Trail and turning east, I quickly lost the trail. I hunted on the north and south sides and got lucky. I then placed my pack on the ground to scout ahead more quickly, finally making a 25-inch diameter log across the trail my turn around point. I needed my GPS to find my way back. Note to self: keep your pack on you when having directional trouble or at least be extremely certain you can find it again. The phrase "think I can" is inadequate. I returned to the 4-way junction, headed south and after 3/8 of a mile lost the trail again.

Now returning the same way, at least mosquito-free, because I was higher, I was off trail. I wasn't lost, because I knew where the trail was behind me and could always leave the woods that way if I had to. I was annoyed at myself, however, because I had come through the other direction and had no difficulty finding the trail. I usually need to see a trail on two separate occasions to develop a decent memory of it.



Then I saw a balloon. On the ground. In the Diamond Peak Wilderness.

At first, I thought it might be a weather balloon, because balloon soundings are sent up twice daily from Medford and Salem, and the balloons must come down somewhere. But the gray ribbon bow was clearly not from the NWS. It was a balloon from a gathering somewhere. It still had some gas, probably helium, although I didn't do a voice test. Someone likely to the west of me, given population centers and prevailing mid to high level winds, released it. Out of sight, out of mind. Sort of like tossing an apple core. You don't see it again, but it still exists.

I felt like I was a little less in the wild. A balloon can do that. Once, in a remote area of Alaska, I encountered an Epi-Pen cartridge. It lessened the wildness of the area. I know that where I was in the Diamond Peak Wilderness has not always been designated wilderness, but it has been officially wild in one form or another for 70 years and a balloon is as out of place here as I would be in Times Square. East of nearby Summit Lake people used to drive in to what is now near the PCT. You'd never know how it looks now. I picked up the balloon, released the gas so it would fit in my pack, finally figured out where I needed to go, found the trail, placed illegal but temporary ribbons for those who were going to log it out so they could find their way, and

hiked downhill out of the burn area into the woods, where the mosquitoes were waiting. I later learned that the 25-inch log I encountered was off trail. There was a right-angle bend there.

See you on the hopefully visible trail.

Creating a Trail for Mountain Bikers – Interview w/Gabe Tiller



Gabe is a man who has plans to create a trail for mountain bikers that will take them the length of the entire west coast and then connect with the Baja route. This is in progress and has been for a few years. In Oregon, the Oregon Timber Trail is well established. His group, **Orogenesis**, which essentially means “creating mountains from earth”, was created a few years ago to make this happen.... which requires time and energy from lots of volunteers. Growing up in Northern Michigan at about the time mountain bikes were becoming popular, he became hooked. After college in Duluth, MN, he came west to explore Oregon. And stayed.

His group works to build and repair trail sections for riders. In 2025 they worked on a new trail at Daly Lake in the Sweet Home/Idanha area with volunteers of all ages and abilities. They are part of the Old Cascade Trail System to create a shorter, easier loop. In June or July, they will be working in the Mt. Hood National Forest along the south end of Rhododendron Ridge near Olallie Lake. While working they are also teaching trail building and trail maintenance skills. Anyone is welcome to come and volunteer with this group. No experience is necessary.

His group often works in conjunction with Resilient Headwaters (RH) which is a community coalition created in 2022 after the 2020 Santiam Canyon fires. They wanted to map out a strategy for long-term recovery of the parks, trails and boat launches in the area. Orogenesis also works with the Sisters Trail Alliance and the Central Oregon Trail Alliance.

Below are links to websites if you are interested in learning more and volunteering.

- [Oregon Timber Trail](#) (includes maps)
- [Orogenesis Collective](#)
- [Resilient Headwaters](#)

Seeking Answers – Cheryl Fiesen

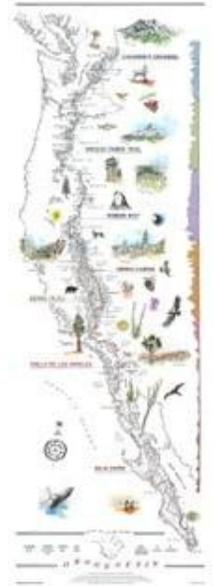
The Willamette National Forest’s rich landscape has provided opportunities for hundreds of researchers over the past century. Ecosystems are complex, and the depth of our ignorance is profound. But intrepid souls, armed with calipers and cameras and a variety of other recording devices have scrambled through the Forest seeking answers to often simple questions that, in aggregate, can lead to profound insights. This article will be a regular feature to highlight the often-surprising findings from these endeavors. For more information on the rich Science-Management partnership on Willamette, check out the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest [Webpage](#)



A Handful of Ancient History

Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Plink. The rock in his hand split open, revealing the perfect imprint of a leaf from long ago: a temperate-hardwood forest-dweller, to be exact. But here we are. Deep in the coniferous forests of the western cascade mountains. As he held the rock in his palm, could he hear echoes from 13 million years ago -- snorts of ancient rhinos and camels, foraging among the sweet gum and sycamore?

“You just have to know where to look,” he said, “and have a bit of luck.”



Alexander Lowe from the Smithsonian Institute came to Hidden Lake to re-locate a site documented in the 1960's. The quest was sandstone and siltstone laid down millions of years ago, when the high cascades were earthy-burps far in the future. His study is important: could this site provide an actual example of how regional plant communities in western Oregon responded to past global warming events, and maybe, just maybe, help us predict our future as we face unprecedented climate change?

Anyone can pick up a rock and hold the past in their hands. But scientists like Alex know which ones might hold treasures that provide deeper understanding of long-ago worlds.

Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Clink. Today, Hidden Lake's beautiful old-growth forest, with its massive conifer trunks four-feet across – is reflected in calm waters. The forest looks like it's been there forever. Nope. Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Snap. The rocks tell a different tale of a by-gone, hardwood-dominated ecosystem pounded by climate changes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Many transitory systems are lost in time, but some are reflected in small clues hidden in the rocks.

If you know where to look. Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Cool.

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Public Meeting, February 28 – Lower Breitenbush Hot Springs Restoration Project

Where: Detroit Ranger Station (44125 North Santiam Highway SE, Detroit, OR 97342)

When: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm in the large conference room.

Topics:

- History of the site and previous restoration efforts
- Presentation of preliminary site plans designed by University of Oregon Landscape Architecture students based on historical research and site visits
- Discussion of desired outcomes and potential design elements to incorporate into final design planning
- Information on the proposed project, planning process, and current timelines

If you are planning to bring a party of more than three people, please contact the Detroit Ranger Station at (503) 854-3366 or sm.fs.mf@usda.gov so they can get an estimated headcount. Please feel free to share this meeting invite with interested parties.

Volunteer Appreciation Night, March 14

Where: Springfield Interagency Office, Assembly Hall,

- Assembly Hall
- 3106 Pierce Pkwy, Springfield 97477

When: 4:00 pm– 7:30 pm

Please RSVP by March 6th by clicking this link: [FY2025 Volunteer Appreciation Night RSVP Form](#)

Earth Day, April 18 – Middle Fork District Clean-Up – Erin AbernEthy

Come celebrate Earth Day in the Willamette National Forest with Cascade Volunteers! This clean-up event is open to the public, participants will be collecting and removing non-hazardous litter materials from the forest.

Families are welcome and encouraged to attend. **Minors must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian or must be registered in advance.**



For more information or to pre-register use the QR-code or click [Here](#)



To scan the QR-Code:

iPhone: Select rear facing camera, point the camera at the QR-code, when highlighted (notification shown), tap the notification and the link associated with the QR-code

Android: Open the camera app and point it at the QR code to see the URL pop-up.

Cascade Volunteers Forest Skills College, May 14 – 17



Will be held at the HJ Andrews Experimental Forest Facilities in Blue River and will include outdoor and indoor classes. Apartments as well as camping spots are available and include evening meals on Friday and Saturday. Example topics could include: *“What Wildlife should we share with Wildlife Biologists?”*, *“You’re in the forest you smell fire, what should you do?”* or *“What makes the Willamette Forest Special?”*

We are working to have teachers/trainers for the **proposed classes**, [proposed classes](#). Registration through [myImpactPage](#) is planned for the end of February.

For questions, please send email to [Becky Hope](#), Committee Chair or [Stacy Rudisill](#), Program Coordinator.



Sunrise - Sparks Lake, Deschutes National Forest – Sanjana Sachdeva
Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.” – Frank Lloyd Wright

Closing Note – Rhonda Levine, CV Editor

Watch for the Newsletter the last week of alternate 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 April Newsletter is **Monday, 4/13/2026**.