



Blue Mountains Trail Newsletter - Fall 2024



Trail Coordinator Pip Redding looks out on the trail over Hawkins Pass during the Juniper Jam to Pinefest hike

Trail Maintenance and Improvements Across the Blue Mountains

It's been a busy season on the Blue Mountains Trail! Coordinator Pip Redding has been coming and going across our mission area for various maintenance and improvement projects that are sure to be appreciated by trail users.

Collaborative Efforts and Completed Projects



Marilyn Cripe enjoys newly constructed turnpikes through a muddy area.

Earlier this year GHCC and the [Blue Mountain Land Trust](#) wrapped up their collaborative effort to restore damaged and neglected sections of trail in the North Fork Umatilla Wilderness in the Umatilla National Forest (BMT Section 3). This project entailed logouts, brushing, turnpike construction, and even building a single-stringer log bridge over Coyote Creek. GHCC is tremendously grateful for the support of the Oregon Trails Coalition and their Signature Trails Inventory project for making this work possible.

In September, guidebook author and long-time BMT volunteer Barbara Bond and friends joined Pip for a bit of volunteer work on the beautiful Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail (BMT section 5). They rolled rocks, trimmed brush, and repaired eroded tread. The mountain goats were out, as they often are in this rugged area!





BMT and WMHCTA volunteers Marc and Peggy show off the tools of the trade for Wilderness trail maintenance

Volunteer Contributions and Ongoing Efforts

Our collaborators at the [Wallowa Mountain Hells Canyon Trails Association](#) continue to be a powerhouse in chipping away at the deferred maintenance backlog in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. BMT Coordinator Pip Redding and some mutual volunteers, including our GHCC's Board Directors President, Mike Beaty, visited the Sugarloaf Trail (BMT section 1) multiple times this season to log out nearly 100 blow downs and install signage. This section is crisscrossed by many cow paths and decommissioned trails. A real navigation challenge for BMT hikers since the beginning - now it is in great shape!

Volunteer superstar Brian Cripe from Bend joined Pip in the Malheur National Forest at the beginning of this month to revisit a section of the Skyline Trail on the East side of the Strawberry Wilderness (BMT Section 7). The forest recreation staff was grateful to have the help in keeping the Ceanothus brush at bay. During the same trip they cut some 20-30 logs on the nearby Starvation Rock Trail. Also on the docket was scouting and improving a 16-mile alternate south of Austin Junction which will move hikers to a much less traveled forest road with reliable water sources. This improved route will officially become the BMT in 2025!



BMT coordinator, Blues Crew Volunteers, and Northwest Youth Corps members ready to hit the trail for some hard work in the North Fork Umatilla Wilderness

Volunteer Opportunities for Next Season

We are already planning next year's trail maintenance season and would love for you to join us! Whether it's for a day or longer, we have opportunities to suit all availability and skill levels. Look out for updates via email and Instagram. If you can't make it to a planned event, but are going out on your own, please let us know! We can help you plan your trip and have ways you can contribute to the overall effort - like sending in trip reports or high quality photos of the trails, towns, and people that make the BMT uniquely wonderful. Monitoring trail conditions and critical species is such a helpful way to contribute to our work.

However you choose to get involved, we owe our volunteers and supporters a debt of gratitude for all the great things happening on the Blue Mountains Trail.



The lupine put on a show near Squirrel Prairie, Section 2 of the BMT

2024 BMT Thru-hikers

Each year we like to congratulate those who complete the entire 530 mile route. We know of 5 people who joined the ranks of Blue Mountains Trail thru-hikers in 2024. This brings the total number of known thru-hikers to 16. If you or someone you know deserves and would like to receive recognition for their perseverance on the BMT, let us know so we can send them a free BMT logo patch!

Thru-hikers and other trail users generously contribute photos, condition reports, maps, or suggestions on how to improve the experience. These folks are some of the kindest and most interesting people you could hope to meet in town or along the trail. Hats off to them for their accomplishment, for representing the BMT, and for giving back.



Writer and longtime GHCC advocate Marina, crosses a newly installed log bridge on the BMT

North Fork Umatilla Wilderness: Saved by a Trout?

GHCC's very own Marina Richie just wrote a compelling piece recounting the history of the North Fork Umatilla Wilderness for [Oregon Wild's blog](#). This Wilderness was designated in the 1984 Oregon Wilderness Act, alongside the North Fork John Day and Monument Rock Wilderness Areas. 40 years ago, some of the advocates for protecting these special

roadless areas were the same people who envisioned the Blue Mountains Trail, which very intentionally connects seven such designated Wilderness Areas.

Trail infrastructure in the North Fork Umatilla Wilderness received some much needed attention this year thanks to individual donors and a trail stewardship grant awarded to GHCC. We are honored to continue a legacy of protecting wild places and enabling meaningful experiences that can be found nowhere else. You can read Marina's piece [here](#).

A BIG Thank You to BMT Sponsors!



GHCC works to protect, connect, and restore the lands, waters, native species, and climate resiliency of the ecologically magnificent Greater Hells Canyon Region.

[Join us](#) in protecting the Greater Hells Canyon Region and making the Blue Mountains Trail a path to resilience for Northeast Oregon.

Pip Redding, Blue Mountains Trail Coordinator

By joining GHCC's River Runner program for \$10/month or more, we'll throw in a special gift.

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