

In 2015, members of San Juan Back Country Horsemen (SJBCH) and personnel from the Pagosa Ranger District began discussing the need for an extensive trail rebuild through a bog about three miles into the Weminuche Wilderness Area on the Williams Creek Trail. On Friday, August 19th, 2016, SJBCH and the Pagosa Ranger District completed a week long project that solved the problem. The initial concept discussed by the SJBCH Board envisioned the chapter purchasing the aggregate material required and utilizing volunteer packers to haul the material to the worksite. The board also discussed applying for a grant to help offset the costs. Pagosa District Trail Foreman Tyler Albers and Wilderness Program Manager Ros Wu had discussed with John Nelson, SJBCH Trails and Projects Committee Chair (and FS liaison) the construction by the FS Trail Crew of a raised causeway through the problem area.

As soon as John presented the idea to the board, there was agreement to proceed. At the same time, a grant opportunity presented itself. The National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA) had just announced a matching grant opportunity, and Lisa Nelson volunteered to apply for the money. Even though the final plans had not been completed, the Trails and Projects Committee outlined a budget they felt was reasonable, the board gave the nod to complete the grant application. During the time between the initial grant submission and the chapter's successful award, the project itself and the budget were refined and augmented.

The final design from Tyler contained an estimated 15 tons of aggregate material, and the original volunteer packer idea became untenable. That amount of tonnage required the services of Glenn Ryan, Lead Packer for the USFS Rocky Mountain Regional Specialty Pack String. Glenn and his 10-plus pack mules spend their summer work season fulfilling just the sort of mission we had in mind. Ros contacted Glenn and reserved the week of August 15th-19th for his participation. The SJBCH Trails and Projects Committee felt that with a significant contribution from the San Juan National Forest, the Rocky Mountain Region of the USFS, and the Pagosa Ranger District, the chapter would be able to supply additional funds required for the pack string to participate. That is exactly how things played out.

The USFS provided the bulk of the financial burden for the pack string. SJBCH received a \$1500 matching grant from the NWSA and matched it with chapter funds. The Columbine Ranger District provided all the weed-free hay required by all the livestock. The Pagosa Ranger District Trail Crew prepared the worksite during the week prior to the gravel packing. BCH volunteers from SJBCH, Four Corners Back Country Horsemen, and Front Range Back Country Horsemen provided the meals for crews and volunteers, helped manage all the livestock, pulled weeds from around the trailhead and within the Palisades Horse Camp, provided material and tools to construct a large temporary pasture for the pack string, built shelters over the kitchen and dining areas of the camp, designed and built the gravel weighing stations, provided all the buckets required for weighing the aggregate, helped groom and saddle the mules, and loaded them for each pack trip up the

mountain. Throughout each day, volunteers hauled water to fill troughs and buckets for the animals.

At the end of the day on Friday, August 19th, our collaborative effort had resulted in over 11 tons of gravel packed to the site and the trail problem solved. Everyone involved would like to see the final few tons of gravel and finishing material packed to the causeway, but it will have to wait until next season. Projects of this magnitude may begin with a conversation, but they only reach fruition through the hard work and extensive planning and collaboration of many individuals and entities.

In addition to the participants already mentioned, the following individuals contributed in one form or another: Kristie Hefling, Laurel Penwell, Bob Parsons, Larry Fields, Randy and Joanne Senzig, Todd Rodas and Judi Hurley, Ken and Denise Bachman, and Bob and Laura Volger camped at the Palisades Horse Camp and volunteered every day. Tara McElhinney, Bev Warburton, Cheryl McCelvey, Pat Moffitt, Rodney Pepper, Dan Licarrdi, Larry Hefling, Nancy Seay, and Ted Wortman helped at times throughout the week. Vern and Kathy Jahnke loaned the chapter a cook stove and sent desserts. Camp hosts Bo and Olinda Reneau helped every day and in every possible manner. Glenn's assistant packer Trepper Osburn was invaluable as a pack string leader and able instructor for the volunteers. Ann Bond, Public Relations Officer for the San Juan National Forest spent part of Tuesday at the TH and the worksite to document the project and write articles for the Pagosa Sun and Durango Herald. Paul Blackman, Pagosa District Recreation Supervisor was instrumental in helping us utilize the trail crew an extra day on Friday. And the trail crew was outstanding. Thank you, Stephani Kopfman, Kristina Schenk, Zach Staley, Sky Martin, Eric Freudenberger, Ian Birdsell, and Cody Milihran. We look forward to working with you again.

Submitted by Bob Volger