



Annual Report 2020

Prepared by Steve Boyle
President, Ouray Trail Group



Overview

The Ouray Trail Group (OTG) is an all-volunteer nonprofit group founded in 1986 to promote the restoration, maintenance, and safe use of hiking trails in the Ouray area. This report describes OTG’s work in 2020 to restore and maintain trails, provide public information and outreach, administer trail registers and special projects, and partner with government and other groups to meet our mission.



Trail Work

Because Hiking Trails Matter to Our Community

OTG works to maintain 84 trails in Ouray and western Gunnison and Hinsdale counties. Most of the trails are on federal public lands within the Uncompahgre National Forest, and OTG works under a Volunteer Service Agreement and Annual Operating Plan with the U.S. Forest Service (FS) to maintain trails and signage following Forest Service standards and guidance. OTG also works on trails on land owned by the City of Ouray, Ouray County, and a few private land parcels with public rights of way.

2020 Trail Work: By the Numbers

Number of trails worked:	32
Miles of trail maintained:	73
Down trees removed:	659
Drainage structures constructed:	>35
Trail Registers maintained:	41

We worked hard to overcome challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic with social distancing, face masks, reduced carpooling, and other measures, and we curtailed social gatherings and regular maintenance of trail registers.

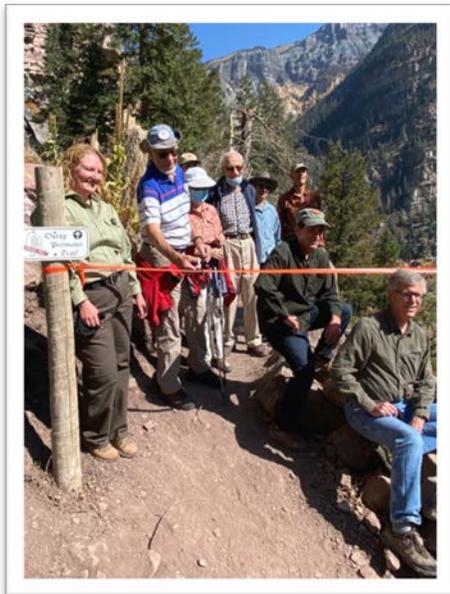
Maintenance work was done on all of the “Front Country” trails, that is, readily accessed from the City of Ouray and nearby roads (see Appendix 2 for a complete list). We removed down trees, cut back encroaching brush, removed rocks and debris from tread, and repaired drainage problems. Strong windstorms in June posed special challenges, dropping more trees than usual across trails including some trail sections where trees had already been cleared. Where necessary OTG returned and cleared down trees again, sometimes more than twice. Special thanks to Hale Houts for organizing and leading this important work and to Jill Parisi for

organizing trail reconnaissance and data reporting that helps OTG prioritize and direct our maintenance work.

OTG also continued our effort to increase work on trails in wilderness and remote areas. OTG led 1 to 3-day work trips on the Stealey Mountain South, Middle Fork, Storm Gulch, Shortcut, Left Fork Cutler Creek, and Corbett Canyon trails with pack horse support on most of the multi-day trips. Big thanks go to John Hulburd for organizing and leading trips and to Roy Jackson of Cow Creek Outfitters, Justin Mitchell of Action Adventures, and the FS recreation staff and stock managers for their generous and capable pack horse support. FS trail crews worked with OTG on two work trips totaling 5 days, strengthening our partnership and helping OTG volunteers sharpen trail skills. A summer highlight was the 3-day trip into the Middle Fork Cimarron River drainage where we cleared dozens of down trees on 3 trails and made major tread and drainage repairs on one of the most popular wilderness trails in the region.

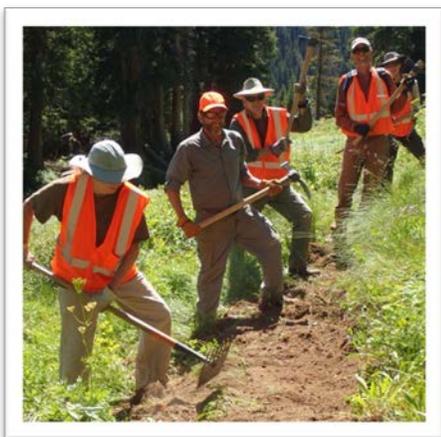


In 2020 OTG completed important construction work on the Perimeter Trail, the most heavily used hiking trail in the Ouray area. The 6-mile trail circles the City of Ouray with several access points and was envisioned and constructed by OTG and FS over the past several years. In early 2020 OTG constructed a new wood stairway and handrails on a 200-foot section of the trail known as the Ramp, at the north end of the Box Cañon Tunnel. OTG funded the \$7,000 project, worked with the City of Ouray to ensure safety of visitors in the nearby Box Cañon Park, and provided materials and volunteer labor to remove deteriorated steps and build the new engineered stairway.



But that wasn't all. In September OTG worked with FS to complete a final segment of the Perimeter Trail between the Old Twin Peaks Trail and Oak Street in Ouray. The project required construction of new trail across about ¼ mile of National Forest and a similar distance on land owned by OTG. After several years of negotiations and legal proceedings OTG completed a boundary adjustment with a private landowner that provided legal access for the project. In late summer FS engineering and recreation staff worked with OTG to design and approve the final route, and in September OTG volunteers constructed the trail segment, helped on one day by 15 Ouray High School students and school staff. On October 6 we held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the new trail section with FS and City of Ouray leaders. The completion of the Perimeter Trail is a milestone for the trail originally begun by OTG in 2006. Many thanks go to OTG Vice-President Bob Risch, who first envisioned the trail and has shepherded the project since inception, Hale Houts who led the trail design and construction effort, and Jenny

Hart of Ouray Schools for organizing the student volunteers and doing so much to promote trail stewardship to local youth.



Volunteers

Getting the Projects Done

OTG volunteers recorded 2,516 hours working on trail projects, up from 1,522 hours in 2019, and at least 1,000 additional hours on OTG administration, meetings, fundraising, product development and sales, trail reconnaissance, and other tasks that support OTG's mission. The 78 volunteers who worked on trails in 2020 included men and women of all ages from high school students to retirees, and experienced hands to first-timers. OTG's work would not be possible without the commitment, effort, and good cheer of our wonderful volunteers. Thank you all!

Training

Improving Skills, Promoting Safety

In June we planned to participate in a trail maintenance skills training day organized and funded by FS and taught by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC), but the class was cancelled due to the pandemic. OTG currently has 3 volunteers trained as Trail Crew Leaders and 9 volunteers trained and certified by FS to cut down trees by chainsaw and crosscut saws used in wilderness where motors are prohibited.



Trail Registers

Tracking Trail Use



OTG volunteers maintain 41 trail registers in cooperation with FS. In 2020 register maintenance was reduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the agreement of FS, OTG placed stickers on most register boxes asking the public not to use registers due to the pandemic. We did not collect or replace sign-in sheets during the season as we normally do; we collected all sheets in October and replaced fresh sheets. OTG tallied the sign-in data and prepared for FS a summary of monthly totals (see Appendix 1). Sheets from register boxes at the Blue Lakes trailhead in Yankee Boy Basin (commonly called the Mt. Sneffels trailhead), the Wrights Lake trailhead, and the Hayden trailhead on County Road 361 were collected but misplaced at the Ouray Visitor Center during a transfer of operations there. As a result, there are no data in Appendix 1 for those registers this year. Thanks to Lisa Hickman for managing a volunteer crew to maintain registers.

Trail use in summer 2020 was probably more than in previous years, especially from June through September. However, because of the reduced maintenance of register boxes due to COVID the sign-in total of 30,806 was 56% of the 2019 total.

Education and Outreach

Informing Trail Users, Building Support

We operate the OTG website at www.ouraytrails.org and a “Ouray Trail Group” Facebook page and Instagram account. In 2020 we distributed press releases about the successful construction projects on the Perimeter Trail. We periodically send an email newsletter to the nearly 280 members who support OTG’s work. Due to COVID, our annual Community Workday and end-of-season Volunteer Picnic were not possible. This year we began a partnership with the Colorado Mountain Club to access data from the *Recreation Impact Monitoring System* (RIMS) they developed, which enables any trail user to use a mobile device to record trail maintenance issues. We are working with CMC and FS to develop a shared data interface that will allow OTG to view and utilize trail data to help direct and guide our trail maintenance work.



In 2020 OTG monitored and commented on some land management projects that could affect the region’s trails. We participated as an invited stakeholder in a state-funded effort by the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association to create a Ouray County Regional Trails Plan, aimed at building up to 50 miles of new trails for bikes, hikers, and equestrians. We also reviewed and commented to FS on the Baldy Mountain Landscape Resiliency Project, which proposes vegetation treatments including prescribed burning on landscapes between Ridgway and Ouray near some National Forest hiking trails. Big thanks to OTG board member Jennifer Cram for taking the lead in identifying and researching land management issues of interest to OTG and our members.

Assets and Fundraising

Resources to Meet the Mission

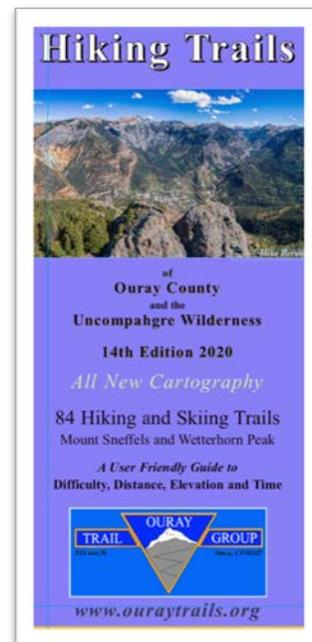
OTG raises funds through cash donations, small grants, and sales of OTG-produced trail maps, a guidebook, t-shirts, and stickers. In 2020 OTG member Karen Risch, with technical help from Ouray-based cartographer Mike Boruta, produced the 14th edition



of the map *Hiking Guide to Ouray County and the Uncompahgre Wilderness*, which went on sale in stores and online in September. In 2020 Karen also produced a revised Fourth Edition of *Hiking Ouray With Kids—And Everyone Else!* a guidebook to 13 accessible trails in the Ouray area with proceeds that benefit OTG. The book and map are available in local retail stores and online at

www.ouraytrails.org. A digital version of the OTG map and a Ouray Perimeter Trail map are also available through the Avenza Maps app. We extend our thanks and admiration to Karen for

shepherding the map and book revisions in 2020, which included enormous effort and attention to detail. Well done!

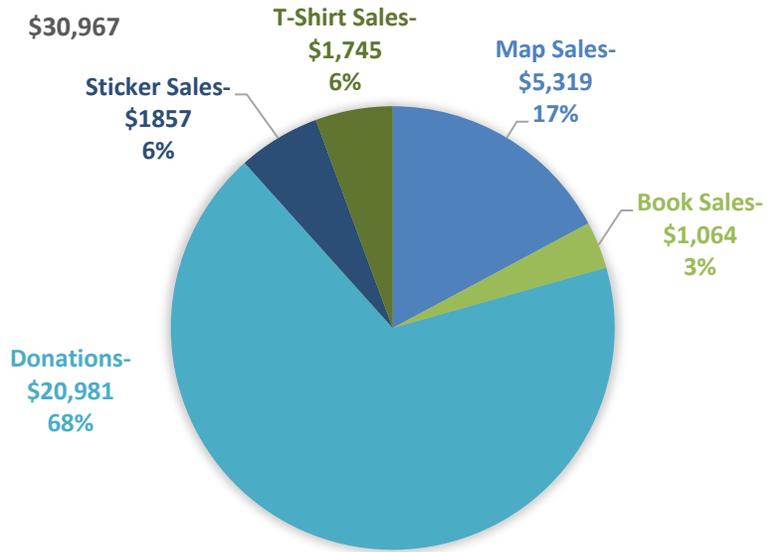


OTG received cash donations from members, supporters, local foundation small grants, the donation box in Ouray’s Cascade Park, and from donations made through Facebook and our website. We received donations of equipment and supplies from supporters and the FS and significant in-kind help on projects from area professionals in engineering, metal fabrication, government relations, natural resources management, and other fields. OTG once again expresses our sincere gratitude to everyone who supported our work in 2020 in each and every way.



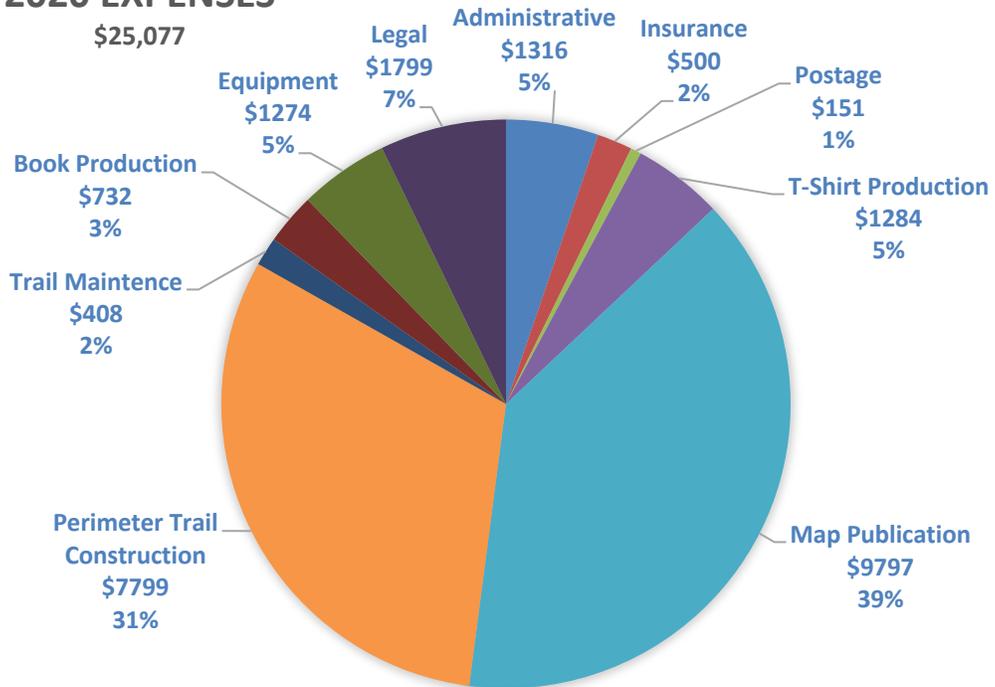
2020 INCOME

\$30,967



2020 EXPENSES

\$25,077



Ouray Trail Group Board of Directors

Steve Boyle, President, U.S. Forest Service Liaison

Bob Risch, Vice President and Special Projects

Lisa Hickman, Secretary and Communications

Hale Houts, Treasurer and Trail Work Coordinator

Karen Risch, Publications and Sales

John Hulburd, Backcountry Trails Coordinator

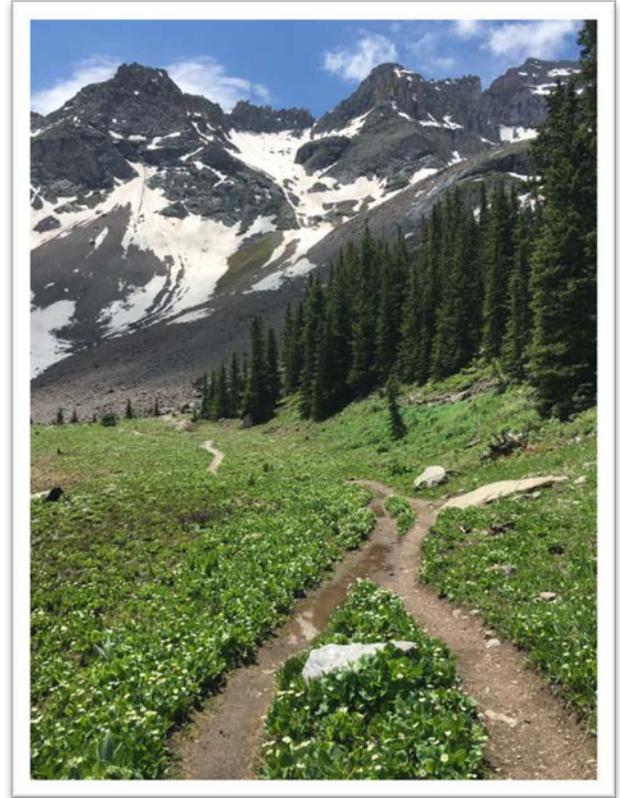
Ben Tisdell, Nordic Council Chair

Chris Haaland, Technical Advisor

J. Gary Dunn, At- Large

Jill Parisi, At -Large

Jennifer Cram, At-Large



Contact Us

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Lisa Hickman, Secretary
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Appendix 1. Trail Register Sign-In Monthly Totals, FY 2020

Trail Register	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
BlueLakes	463	41	0	0	0	2	11	330	1,434	798	869	536	4,484
Perimeter (Visitor Center)	616	180	59	43	68	149	114	623	1,067	621	246	144	3,930
Baby Bath Tubs	429	104	50	49	45	80	98	486	505	170	88	61	2,165
Lower Cascade (8th Av.)	253	82	33	33	22	46	54	237	438	103	117	74	1,492
Middle Fork (Cimmaron)	76	0	2	0	0	0	0	10	274	430	364	230	1,386
Old Twin Peaks	163	53	18	14	16	32	60	189	297	225	65	87	1,219
East Fork (Cimarron)	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	255	337	274	83	1,041
Central Amphitheater*	27	13	9	7	14	6	15	52	234	234	260	151	1,022
Up. Cascade (Amph. Rd)**	177	45	9	22	25	21	18	80	251	254	91	23	1,016
Wetterhorn Basin	32	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	176	299	309	110	929
Weehawken	98	13	2	5	2	9	12	120	133	211	195	114	914
Sutton-Neosho	104	12	5	0	0	0	18	213	193	200	14	77	836
Perimeter (Pincrest Dr.)	171	52	37	12	40	58	35	143	137	68	38	34	825
Bear Creek NRT	159	32	5	10	10	34	52	192	97	101	93	36	821
Courthouse (West Fork Rd)	81	2	0	0	0	0	0	17	145	242	157	142	786
Up. Cascade (5th Av.)	71	24	20	7	24	46	16	49	115	125	186	66	749
Oak Creek	98	51	7	23	6	14	12	53	113	115	114	129	735
Blaine Basin/Dallas	71	7	0	2	0	0	0	59	110	188	175	111	723
Ice Park (CR 361)	68	23	10	8	0	30	19	29	119	165	132	10	613
Horsethief	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	53	114	150	135	120	584
Colorado Boy	88	4	9	9	11	3	2	31	57	124	113	128	579
Dexter Creek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	54	64	118	126	95	457
Hayden (US 550)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	120	145	62	95	448
Old Horsethief	24	21	1	0	0	16	42	58	61	27	41	32	323
Dallas (CR 17)	65	14	5	2	2	12	39	96	36	12	27	12	322
Stealey Mt. N., Owl Ck. Pass	28	15	0	0	0	0	0	67	64	36	37	58	305
Cutler Creek	42	11	0	0	0	0	1	58	11	93	31	46	293
Baldy	9	24	0	0	1	1	11	90	39	55	30	30	290
Silvershield	27	8	0	2	2	2	42	76	57	26	27	14	283
Portland	23	9	2	15	4	3	6	83	48	18	11	32	254
Richmond	54	5	0	0	0	0	0	16	37	32	35	42	221
Beaver/Belfast	21	2	0	0	0	0	0	14	35	53	25	33	183
Gray Copper Gulch	17	7	2	5	2	0	0	8	35	34	24	34	168
Courthouse (Cow Creek Rd)	22	8	0	0	0	0	2	14	0	8	2	52	108
Cow Creek	12	4	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	5	6	51	96
Mt. Sneffels	73												73
Stealey Mt. South	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	6	19	29	67
Nordic Council Ski Trails	0	0	6	1	31	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	66
Full Moon	8	1	0	1	0	1	0	7	5	8	11	14	56
Wright's Lake													0
Hayden (CR 361)													0
TOTAL	3,729	869	291	269	325	592	679	3,690	6,875	5,828	4,538	3,121	30,806

Notes

* Central Amphitheater register is on the Amphitheater Campground-Upper Cascade Tie near the jct. with Upper Cascade Trail.

**Upper Cascade (Amphitheater) register is on the Lower Cascade Falls Trail where it touches the Amphitheater Road; the register name is retained here for consistency with prior years and the identifying name marked on sheets.

Appendix 2. Trails worked on by the Ouray Trail Group in 2020.

Trail Name	FS #	Trail Maintenance	# Trees Cleared	Trail Miles Worked
Alpine Mine	152	6/1, 6/25, clear trees, lop brush, repair tread on steep slopes (dig slough, restore outslope).	18	1.2
Baldy	216	8/15-8/16: Two-day trip with packhorse support from Action Adventures. Between Storm Gulch and Okeson Trails, cleared down trees, reestablished tread in meadow north of Okeson Trail jct.	58	2.0
Baldy Peak	216.1A			
Bear Creek	241.1A			
Bear Creek National Recreational Trail (NRT)	241	6/4, repair tread at blowout 2.5 miles up (remove slough and rock, restore tread).		0.1
Bear Creek S. Fork	242			
Blaine Basin	203	7/23, lop brush and remove encroaching saplings in upper basin, repair tread (fix and block erosion gullies).		1.1
Blue Lakes	201			
Cascade/Portland Tie	213.1B	5/25, clear trees, lop brush.	2	0.5
Cobbs Gulch	211			
Colorado Boy	143			
Corbett	209	4/28, 5/19, clear trees, lop brush. 10/1, replace sign at Jct. with Dallas-Corbett Shortcut Trail.	9	2.6
Corbett Canyon	256	9/12-9/13, two-day trip with Forest Service staff. Cleared down trees, cut back brush. Rebuilt tread on approaches to Corbett Creek crossing and the Corbett Creek north tributary, built cairns. 10/1, installed new sign and post at Jct. with Oak Creek Trail.	25	2.3
Courthouse	218			
Courthouse Mountain	144			
Cow Creek	220			
Coxcomb	132	7/10-7/12, with Forest Service packhorse support: lop brush, repair tread (clean drains, remove slough, restore outslope).		0.7
Cutler Creek	217			
Dallas	200	3/30, 4/28, 5/19, 6/6-6/7, 8/6, 9/24, clear trees, tread repair (remove slough, restore outslope) between CR 17 and Moonshine Park, and between CR 5 and CR 7. Rebuild collapsed section of trail at Beaver Creek crossing. Build 10 rolling grade dips east of Beaver Creek, build 5 rock hardened tread areas and drain knicks in wet areas.	61	8.5

Trail Name	FS #	Trail Maintenance	# Trees Cleared	Trail Miles Worked
Dallas-Corbett Shortcut	209.1A	8/6, clear down trees. 9/12, 9/13, two-day trip with Forest Service staff. Clear down trees, lop brush.	26	0.5
Dexter Creek	205	6/8, tread repair (remove slough, restore tread outslope).		1.5
Difficulty Creek	214			
East Fork (Cimarron)	228			
Full Moon	260	6/27, clear trees, lop brush.	10	2.8
Gray Copper Gulch	148			
Hayden	210			
Horsethief	215	5/28, clear trees, lop brush, repair tread (clear drains; build several rolling grade dips in first 1.5 miles above TH).	25	3.0
Ice Park	196			
Left Fork Cutler Creek	235	Oct. 7, clear down trees. Replace sign and post at Jct. with Baldy Trail.	21	1.8
Lower Cascade	239	3/26, 5/25, clear trees, erect fallen signpost at Upper Cascade-Lower Cascade Trail Jct.	9	1.0
Matterhorn	135			
Mears	153			
Middle Canyon	136			
Middle Fork (Cimarron)	227	7/10-7/12, with 3 Forest Service staff and packhorse support: clear trees, lop brush, repair tread (clean drains, build drains and rolling grade dips, repair gullies and block multiple trailing on 1 mile of tread above Coxcomb Trail Jct., remove slough, restore outslope).	40	5.5
Mt. Sneffels	204			
Na-Gach	120			
Oak Creek	207	5/21, 7/2, 7/9, clear trees, repair tread (dig slough, restore outslope).	110	6.0
Okeson	137			
Old Horsethief		4/16, 4/24, 5/11. 5/13, clear trees, tread repair (clean rock, remove slough and berms, restore outslope, rebuild switchbacks).	15	3.0
Old Twin Peaks	198	7/26, clear down trees.	2	1.0
Perimeter	156	4/8, 6/11, clear trees, repair sign, tread repair (remove slough and rocks, restore outslope, repair cribbing and steps). 9/1 through 10/6: worked with Forest Service engineer Doug Marah to design and stake new trail section between Old Twin Peaks Trail and Oak St. OTG volunteers built the new trail section working 15 days during this period.	6	5.8

Trail Name	FS #	Trail Maintenance	# Trees Cleared	Trail Miles Worked
Porphyry Basin	243	7/10-7/12, with 3 Forest Service staff and packhorse support: clear trees, lop brush, repair tread (clean drains, build drains, remove slough, restore outslope).	10	1.0
Portland	238	4/24, 5/25, clear trees, lop brush.	12	3.0
Portland Mine	238.1A	5/25, clear trees, lop brush.	1	
Richmond	250	6/27, clear trees, lop brush.	7	1.7
Ridge Stock Shortcut	259			
Shortcut (Storm Gulch-Baldy)	138	8/15, 8/16, two-day trip with packhorse support from Action Adventures. Clear down trees, build and repair cairns where trail was faint in meadows near the upper end.	60	1.5
Silvershield	199	5/14, 6/7, 6/18, 9/24, clear trees, lop brush.	40	3.0
Stealey Mountain North	219			
Stealey Mountain South	258	6/27-6/28 with packhorse support from Cow Creek Outfitters: clear trees, lop brush, rebuild tread where burned, repair tread (remove slough, restore outslope), build cairns and redig tread in meadows where tread was faint or absent.	30	3.0
Storm Gulch	212	8/15/8/16, two-day trip with horse pack support from Action Adventures; 8/20, follow-up day. Repair tread and build drain structures on 1 mile. Major work cutting back brush on lower 1.5 miles.	0	1.8
Sutton-Neosho	194	6/29, clear trees, repair tread at creek crossing.	4	2.0
Twin Peaks	208	5/14, clear trees, lop brush.	5	1.0
Upper Cascade Falls	213	4/5, 5/25, clear trees. Repair tread (dig drains, build 5 rolling grade dips, remove berms, restore outslope).	8	0.5
Upper East Fork (Cimarron)	142			
Waterfall	254			
Weehawken	206	6/1, 6/25, clear trees, lop brush repair tread (remove slough, restore outslope).	45	3.7
Wetterhorn Basin	226			
Wetterhorn Peak	256			
Wrights Lake	201.1A			
TOTALS			659	73.1