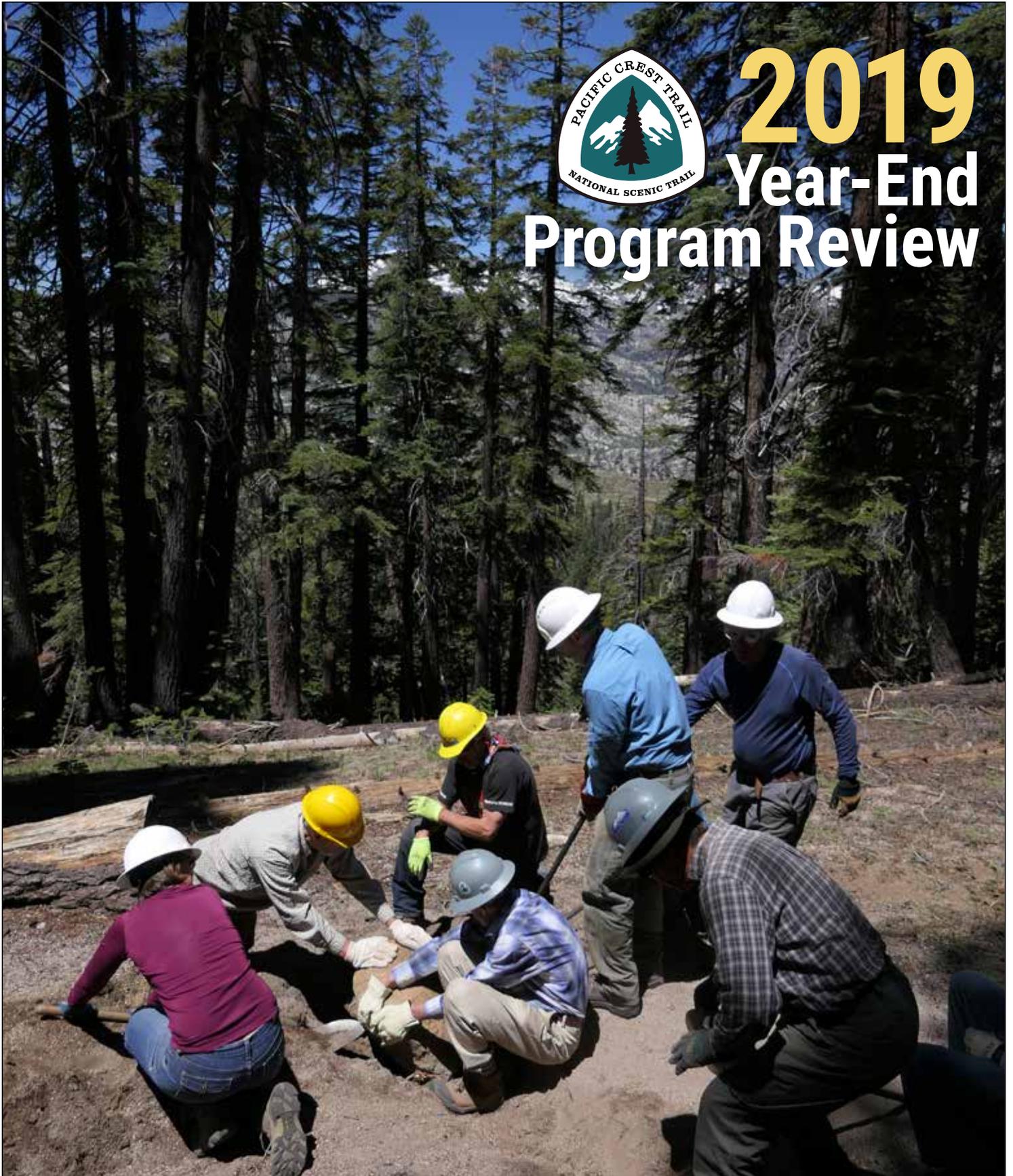




# 2019 Year-End Program Review







## Pacific Crest Trail Association

*Along the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, 2019 was another great year of accomplishments for the Pacific Crest Trail Association and its partners.*

### **Accomplishments focused on:**

- 1. Uplifting and empowering employees and volunteers through a respectful, safe working environment;**
- 2. Being good neighbors and providing excellent customer service;**
- 3. Promoting shared stewardship by increasing partnerships and volunteerism;**
- 4. Improving the condition of forests and grasslands;**
- 5. Enhancing recreation opportunities, improving access, and sustaining infrastructure;**
- 6. Contributing to the economic health of rural communities through use and access opportunities.**

# 1 Uplifting and Empowering Employees and Volunteers Through a Respectful, Safe Working Environment

The Pacific Crest Trail Association and its agency partners—U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service), Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and California State Parks—understand that taking care of a 2,650-mile trail requires an engaged, diverse and resilient network of agency partners and volunteers.

The PCTA's professional Trail Operations staff—including a Director of Trail Operations, Associate Director of Trail Operations, six Regional Representatives, and two Volunteer Programs staff—not only oversees protection, management, and maintenance of the PCT but spends significant time maintaining and building strong partnerships and a skilled volunteer base for the trail.

While the PCTA works with multiple agency partners in the management of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, the PCTA works most closely with the Forest Service, the lead administering agency for the PCT. Our partnership flourishes at all levels, whether the PCTA is supporting the PCT Administrator at the Pacific Southwest Regional Office or working alongside District Recreation staff at the project level, efficient management, mutual respect and collaboration are evident in work accomplished.

Through professional staff and a dedicated volunteer base, the PCTA has built long-term relationships with agency staff who are committed to protecting, preserving, and promoting the PCT. Public land managers have wide responsibilities, made challenging by a limited workforce. Organizations such as the PCTA stand ready and willing to support the unique work of managing a national scenic trail. One way the PCTA does this is by effectively engaging volunteers to do safe and quality work.



*Safety is the highest priority for PCTA staff, volunteers, and partners. Before activity on the trail, volunteers submit trailhead communication plans to local agency units and conduct tailgate safety sessions to review job hazard analyses and an emergency action plan. They carry first aid kits with injury instructions and the required injury report forms.*



In 2019, 2,083 volunteers and corps crew members contributed to the protection, preservation, and promotion of the PCT. Much work is accomplished on remote, rugged trail. Accordingly, safety is the highest priority for the PCTA staff, volunteers and partners.

## Trail Skills College

The PCTA's training program, Trail Skills College, ensures that volunteers build skills to be safe, successful and efficient trail stewards. The Trail Skills College began with a grant from REI in collaboration with nonprofit and agency partners. It uses a modular course curriculum taught at multiple events along the PCT.

PCTA staff, nonprofit partners, agency staff and volunteers serve as instructors to new and returning volunteers eager to increase their trail maintenance knowledge and skills. The PCT serves as the classroom, with topics ranging from brushing and scouting to tread reconstruction and leading crews. Trail Skills College also offers saw training and certification conducted by volunteer instructors. This unique program is one of the first in the country authorized by the Forest Service and has served as a model for other organizations nationwide.



*The PCTA's training program, Trail Skills College, ensures volunteers build the skills necessary to be safe, successful, and efficient trail stewards. In 2019, 938 participants attended a PCTA training.*

In partnership with the Forest Service, the PCTA has developed protocols to ensure volunteers are operating to the safest extent possible. Before any on-trail activity, volunteers submit trailhead communication plans to local agency units, ensuring partners can communicate with crews in the field and are prepared for incidents.

Volunteer trail maintainers also conduct tailgate safety sessions to review job hazard analyses and an emergency action plan. Additionally, they carry first aid kits with injury instructions and the required injury report forms.

The PCTA collects feedback from volunteers, and in 2019 continued to find that volunteers found the work environment safe and enjoyable.

### 2019 PCTA Sponsored Trail Skills College Trainings

Number of chain and crosscut saw training events hosted	14
Number of volunteers attending chain or crosscut saw training	157
Number of other trail skills training hosted	19
Number of volunteers attending other trail skills training	650

## 2 Being a Good Neighbor and Providing Excellent Customer Service

As the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail travels 2,650 miles from the Mexico-California border to the Washington-Canada border, it offers access to America's outdoors as it connects some of the most scenic and remote lands in the Western United States. The PCT links diverse landscapes from the Mojave Desert to the rugged peaks of California's Sierra Nevada range to the volcanic peaks of the Cascade Range.

Recreationists from around the world find a unique connection with nature and diverse ecosystems along the PCT as it passes through 48 Congressionally-designated wilderness areas, 25 National Forest units, seven Bureau of Land Management field offices, six National Parks, five California State Park units, five National Monuments and more than 1,500 private properties.

### Providing PCT Information to the Public

In addition to its restoration and protection efforts, the PCTA serves as the primary resource and customer service representative for PCT information, connecting people from around the world with one of America's iconic recreation opportunities. The PCTA employs a full-time Trail Information Manager and a part-time Trail Information Assistant who work with volunteers to act as public resources for PCT information.

The PCTA's extremely active customer service program provides timely direct assistance to tens of thousands of people a year via phone, email, social media and in person. The PCTA assists our land management partners by working across boundaries and providing a single contact for trail-wide customer service inquiries. To do this requires collaborating on messaging, priorities and best practices with agency partners along the PCT.

The PCTA also assists the Forest Service and other agencies in issuing interagency permits for trips of 500 miles or more and provides information about permits for all recreation users. Each summer, the PCTA rapidly shares



The PCTA communicates with a wide audience through print and digital media: the Communicator magazine, Trail Dirt e-newsletter, Facebook pages and groups, and the PCTA website.



## 2019 Communication Services to the Public and Trail Users

Number of emails responded to	4,696
Number of phone calls responded to	2,751
Number of social media requests responded to	251
Number of PCT brochures distributed	20,145
Number of issues of the <i>PCT Communicator</i> magazine distributed	56,000
Number of wilderness permits issued for PCT travel in excess of 500 miles	7,888
Number of visits to PCTA's website	1,842,111

crucial land use regulations and emergency information, from fire closures to landslides. The PCTA's touch is also seen in numerous newspaper and magazine articles every year.

The PCTA leads the collaborations with agency partners in the review and updating of PCT smartphone applications, map sets and guidebooks. In 2019, the PCTA worked with National Geographic Maps to launch an 11-map series covering the PCT. These mainstream publications will reach countless people around the world, and the PCTA's efforts to make them better will significantly improve access, safety and sustainable recreation.

The PCTA oversees many sources of PCT information, including a comprehensive website, a blog, electronic newsletters and a quarterly magazine. These publications provide up-to-date and historical information, encouraging the safe use, enjoyment, protection and preservation of the PCT. Timely trail information is also available through the PCTA's active social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other online forums.

In 2019, the PCTA's website received 1,842,111 visits from people all over the world looking to gain information about the PCT. While much of this information focuses on trip planning, current trail conditions and trail information, the PCTA provides a tremendous amount of Leave No Trace education for trail users. The goal is to encourage people to travel responsibly and lightly on the land, thereby reducing human influences on the trail and protecting it for future travelers. The PCTA also provides trail condition updates, which include trail closures and other relevant user information via a toll-free phone line and website.

### Crest Runners and Trailhead Hosts

In partnership with the Cleveland National Forest, the PCTA continued the Southern Terminus Trailhead Host Program, and the forest again hired two Crest Runners to cover the first 100 miles of the PCT near the Southern Terminus in 2019.

These programs are focused on making visitor contacts, sharing Leave No Trace and trail information, improving trail user behavior and reducing physical and social impacts within the PCT corridor. The Crest Runners and Southern Terminus Trailhead Host significantly increase our ability to contact trail users. They help the PCTA and the Forest Service better understand how the long-distance permit system is reducing human impacts – informing decisions about protecting the PCT and surrounding landscapes within the first 100 miles of the trail.

Similar to wilderness rangers, the Crest Runners roved the PCT between the U.S.-Mexico border and Warner Springs during the peak season, March to May. They spoke with 758 hikers: 556 long-distance hikers (people intending to hike 500 miles or more); 47 section hikers; and 155 day hikers. During these discussions, the Crest Runners focused on riparian area sensitivity, fire safety and campfires, safety



while hiking the PCT, Leave No Trace practices, sustainable campsite selection and water availability.

A couple shared this year's volunteer Trailhead Host position. By having two Trailhead Hosts, connecting with PCT hikers and horseback riders was more effective, which is evident by an increase of 718 contacts made. They provided quality trail and Leave No Trace information. The Hosts contacted 2,512 long-distance hikers and counted 2,229 long-distance permits.

Information collected by the Hosts shows that 87% of long-distance hikers obtained a long-distance permit and 85% of long-distance permit holders complied with their assigned start date.

The Crest Runner and Trailhead Host programs continue to have an impact, spreading important information, influencing user behavior for the better, collecting valuable data and decreasing human influences.

### 3 Promoting Shared Stewardship by Increasing Partnerships and Volunteerism

The PCTA and its agency partners understand that taking care of a 2,650-mile trail requires engaged, diverse and resilient partnerships. Strengthening and expanding these partnerships is crucial for a sustainable future. Every year the PCTA brings together partners and volunteers with shared values and serves as a liaison between people and our public lands.

Volunteers provide dedication, energy, and assistance, allowing organizations to thrive in a way that would not be possible without them. Each year the Corporation for National and Community Service sets a dollar value on volunteer time. This number is based on the average hourly earnings of non-supervisory, production workers in the United States. According to this value, in 2019 the PCT volunteer community, including non-trail maintenance

## CREST RUNNERS

### Reducing Visitor Impacts Near the Southern Terminus of the PCT

Two Crest Runners roved the southern 109 miles of the PCT during peak season.



U.S.-Mexico Border



Warner Springs

The Crest Runners made contact with **758** hikers. **556** were long-distance hikers; **47** were section hikers, and **155** were day hikers.



In discussions with hikers, the Crest Runners focused on the topics of riparian area sensitivity, fire safety, safety while hiking the PCT, practicing LNT, campsite selection, and water availability.

They performed campsite inventory assessments at five campsite locations to monitor visitor use impacts throughout the high use season.



**47 Pounds**



Trash removed by Crest Runners, down from 200lbs in 2018.

activities, contributed 106,444 service hours, an in-kind value of \$2.7 million.

## 2019 Trail Accomplishments

Hours of volunteer trail maintenance/reconstruction	100,785
Miles of trail maintained	1,605
Miles of trail reconstructed/constructed	31
Square feet of log & stone cribbing constructed	10,710
Feet of turnpike/puncheon constructed	170

Citizen stewards and corps crew members performed the hard, physical labor of annual maintenance on 1,605 miles of the PCT, giving others the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the wilderness while traveling on a safe, passable trail. Stewards cut back overgrown vegetation, cleared fallen logs, constructed rock retaining walls, reconstructed trail tread and built new trail tread.

The bedrock of the PCTA's volunteer program includes 12 community-based volunteer groups dispersed along the trail. Major metropolitan areas source these groups with a solid foundation of committed volunteers as well as trail maintenance novices. PCTA volunteers come from all walks of life, all age groups and a diverse collection of backgrounds. As a result, they contribute to the cultural transformation of these communities by bridging the gap between the great outdoors and those who are disconnected.

The PCTA also works with numerous conservation and volunteer-minded nonprofits and community groups along the trail to ensure the PCT is maintained, protected, and enjoyed. Many of the nonprofit and community organizations the PCTA works with provide local volunteer trail maintenance opportunities, group hikes and youth education.

## 2019 Partner Hours Contributions

American Conservation Experience (ACE)	14,417
California Conservation Corps	530
Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship	800
Tahoe Rim Trail Association	7,269
Washington Conservation Corps	1,280
Washington Trails Association	5,549
William S Hart High School	678
<b>2019 TOTAL PARTNER HOURS</b>	<b>30,523</b>





*PCTA and TRTA volunteers and staff members working hard to install steps on the new reroute at Echo Summit near Lake Tahoe, California. The crew is excavating the granite rocks in order to create space for the steps.*

## California: Big Bear Trails Program

Partnerships are crucial for successful stewardship of the PCT, especially in Southern California. This year, the PCTA talked with the Southern California Mountains Foundation-Big Bear Trails Program about helping with maintenance on the PCT in the Big Bear Valley on the San Bernardino National Forest. We agreed that the Big Bear Trails Program's local volunteers would adopt a 56-mile section of the PCT. This stewardship includes scouting, reinstalling signs and doing annual maintenance. In the first year of this partnership, Big Bear Trails brought 33 volunteers onto the PCT and maintained and scouted more 26 miles of trail. What a great first year!

## California: Eldorado National Forest

After breaking ground and a successful 2018 season, the Eldorado National Forest, the PCTA, and the Tahoe Rim Trail Association (TRTA) continued construction in 2019 on the 1.4-mile PCT reroute at Echo Summit, near Lake Tahoe, California.

A 2015 Optimal Location Review (OLR) concluded that the PCT experience would be significantly enhanced by moving the trail. The OLR reroute addressed the Forest's and the PCTA's concerns about visual and noise impacts from nearby Highway 50, safety and access. The collaborative spirit of the project grew, incorporating crews from the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and the American Conservation Experience (ACE).

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit addressed safety concerns by removing hazard trees in the area and performed the specialized blasting work essential for the project's completion. The PCTA and the ACE committed 1,525 volunteer hours, completing 548 linear feet of new trail. Most of this work was funded by a private donation. Similarly, the Tahoe Rim Trail Association put in more than 5,500 volunteer hours, completing approximately 3,075 feet of new trail tread.



*Overlooking the Lucerne Valley, volunteers from the Southern California Mountains Foundation-Big Bear Trails Program work on the PCT in the San Bernardino National Forest-Mountaintop Ranger District near Big Bear City, California.*



*One of hundreds of miles of trails closed after the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire. The PCTA teamed with other local nonprofits to pull off the herculean task of re-opening these trails—earning recognition from the Pacific Northwest Regional Forester.*

## **Oregon/Washington: Regional Forester's Recognition**

The 2017 Eagle Creek Fire in the Columbia River Gorge closed 122 miles of popular trails buried under charred logs and rubble. The PCTA joined with Trailkeepers of Oregon, Friends of the Gorge, and Washington Trails Association to assist the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area in reopening trails. Two years and more than 300 volunteer work parties later, almost all these trails are repaired—and many are better than they were before the burn. The Pacific Northwest Regional Forester gave special recognition to the team for its work.

# **4** Improving the Condition of Public Lands

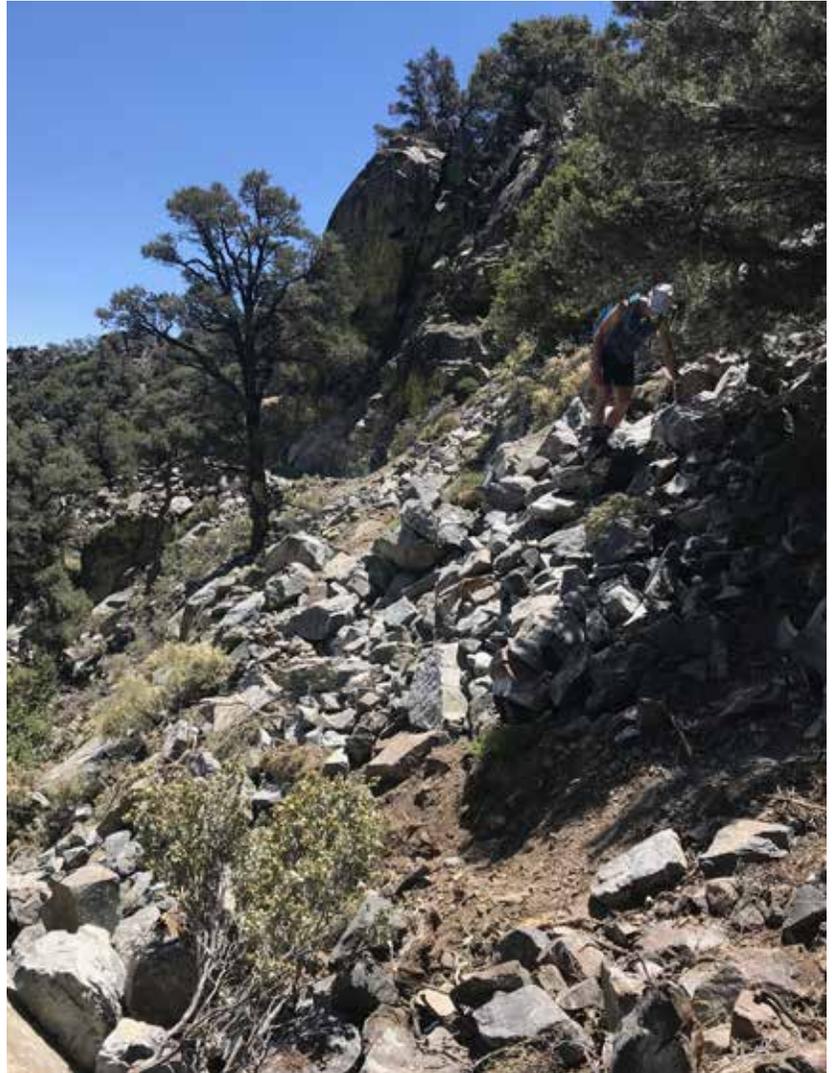
A prominent theme throughout the PCTA's work is ensuring a quality recreational experience for PCT users. It's estimated that more than a million people experience the PCT each year, from casual day users to weekend users to thru-hikers and horseback riders. In addition to impacts from hikers and equestrians, floods, fires, deep snowpack and erosion from torrential rains make the trail unsafe and impassable, and cause ecological damage. Every year, the PCTA coordinates thousands of volunteers dedicated to the maintenance and restoration of the PCT to meet national quality standards. The goal of these efforts is to create an excellent scenic and wild recreation experience that allows people to connect with the outdoors.

## California: Earthquake Repair

This summer, two massive earthquakes struck near Ridgecrest, California, about 35 miles from the PCT. The 6.4 and 7.1 magnitude quakes caused power failures in Los Angeles' Dodger Stadium and led to more than 16,000 aftershocks.

The PCT through the Southern Sierra needed repair even before the earthquakes. Unstable tread, numerous scree fields and ancient retaining walls had already been targeted for maintenance. The quakes and aftershocks caused a great deal of rockfall. Field visits concluded that 2 miles of the PCT were wiped out and several retaining walls were destroyed.

American Conservation Experience (ACE) crews and volunteers worked for more than three weeks to clear debris and reestablish the PCT between Morris and Owens peaks. The trail eventually reopened to stock. Although work remains, the PCTA is glad to have worked with the Bureau of Land Management and ACE and moved quickly to address these challenges and ensure the PCT remained open and safe.



*A typical section of trail after the initial Ridgecrest Earthquakes, as scouted by PCTA and BLM staff while preparing for field work. Numerous fields of rockfall, scree, fallen retaining walls, and crept tread awaited crews and volunteers.*

## Washington: Pasayten Partnership on Methow Valley Ranger District

The northern 25 miles of the PCT is located within the Pasayten Wilderness. The trail traverses high ridgelines above glacially cut valleys and reaches its highest point in Washington a mere eight miles from the Canadian border. The scale of the landscape is inspiring and daunting. The Pasayten Wilderness is more than 531,000 acres and contains more than 600 miles of trails.

In the last decade, a series of massive wildfires have burned large swaths of the landscape. It is challenging for Forest Service crews and nonprofit partners to catch up with the impacts of these repeated stand-replacing fires. High volumes of fallen timber clog trails across the wilderness. Because of the significant backlog of trail maintenance in this area, the Secretary of Agriculture selected the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest's Methow Valley Ranger District as a Trail Maintenance Priority Area.

In the summer of 2018, the PCT in the Pasayten Wilderness was significantly damaged by the Holman Fire, and important connecting trails were closed by the sprawling McLeod and Crescent Mountain Fires. During the winter, the PCTA hosted several meetings with nonprofit partners to create a unified strategy to reopen



*A volunteer with the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington rides towards camp after a long day of sawing logs. In July, 40 members contributed to four separate backcountry projects in the Pasayten Wilderness on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Their efforts helped restore stock access to many areas affected by recent fires.*

trails and leverage each group's abilities. The organizations decided to lead separate projects in 2019 but designed the work so that it built off one another's efforts.

PCTA volunteers logged out the Holman Fire burn area and repaired damaged tread along the PCT. The Methow Valley Ranger District crews opened connecting trails, and their pack stock supplied a Pacific Northwest Trail Association (PNTA) crew that restored the PCT north of Holman Pass. Working their way towards the Canadian border along the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, the PNTA crew cleared hundreds of down trees. With these routes open, the Washington Trails Association and Backcountry Horsemen of Washington (BCHW) were able to focus their efforts on areas east of the PCT in the central Pasayten. They cleared sections of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail that has been impassible for most of the last decade.

Working together across nonprofit organizations and in close partnership with the Forest Service, the organizations made meaningful strides in the maintenance of two national scenic trails. The response to the damage from the fires positioned the organizations to address remote tread maintenance challenges in 2020. More broadly, the combined work improves the public's ability to access the backcountry and have excellent experiences on public land.



*The PCTA volunteers in this picture were part of a week-long project that cleared the PCT in the area burned by the Pasayten Wilderness Holman Fire. The crew was self-supported and backpacked more than 20 miles over the course of the project. This crew cut 32 logs and performed much-needed tread maintenance.*



*Just outside of Palm Springs, California, ACE crew members quarry and place rock by hand on the stone staircase they are building so the public can access the PCT.*

## California: Whitewater Flood Reconstruction

Situated in picturesque Whitewater Canyon outside of Palm Springs, Whitewater Preserve is a popular access point to the PCT and is the gateway to the Sand to Snow National Monument and the San Geronio Wilderness. The preserve was closed following a Valentine's Day 2019 torrential rain that washed away the only entrance road. The preserve's trails were heavily damaged, including long sections of the PCT in Whitewater and Mission Creek drainages. All that remained was a series of cattle trails leading to a cliff face, with a long drop to the river below. This damage prevented access to the PCT from a popular trailhead.

Rebuilding the PCT and reestablishing public access was the culmination of much hard work from volunteers, PCTA staff, an American Conservation Experience (ACE) crew and Whitewater Preserve. Riverside County rebuilt the road into the preserve. PCTA and ACE built a 16-tier retaining wall with a step for every tier, totaling 2,058 cubic feet of stone. In addition to the retaining wall and steps, the structure included significant backslope retention and rip rap armoring.

"The crew did such an amazing job on rebuilding the trail and the construction of their epic staircase and retaining structure," said Lucas Wilgers, assistant preserve manager. "We get compliments every day and are quick to inform folks of who built it for us and the public." Thanks in part to ACE and PCTA's work, Whitewater Preserve reopened to the public in November 2019 after 260 days of being closed.





## California: Trinity Divide 10,300-Acre Land Acquisition

As part of the PCTA’s mission, the association works with landowners, public agencies, conservation organizations and local communities to protect land for the PCT through acquisitions of fee title lands and conservation easements. The PCTA’s land protection work focuses on identifying high-priority tracts for permanent protection through a PCT Lands Inventory. The land inventory enables the PCTA and agency partners to identify and prioritize properties that are at risk. Purchasing these parcels over time creates a cohesive and continuous PCT experience.

Photo by Rachid Dahmoun



*Hikers near Bull Lake in the Trinity Divide—one of the ten alpine lakes that will now be open to the public thanks to the 10,300-acre land acquisition and transfer to the Shasta-Trinity and Klamath national forests.*



Filling these gaps reduces the cost and improves the management of the PCT by eliminating miles of public/private boundaries.

While the PCTA works to identify and acquire (or assist in the acquisition of) properties along the PCT, we do not seek permanent ownership of these properties. Acquisitions typically involve partnerships with federal agencies, land trusts or other entities for whom long-term land ownership is more appropriate and in line with the agency or organization’s mission.

Through the combined work of the Forest Service, Michigan-California Timber Company, the PCTA and The Trust for Public Land, the Trinity Divide acquisition project was completed in 2019 in Siskiyou and Trinity Counties. The Trinity Divide project acquired and transferred to the Shasta-Trinity and Klamath national forests, 10,300 acres, 17 miles of the PCT and 10 alpine lakes.

## 5 Enhancing Recreation Opportunities, Improving Access, and Sustaining Infrastructure

The PCTA is focused on delivering a world-class recreation experience. We do this through long-term planning, collaboration with agency partners and data collection that drives our maintenance and protection efforts long-term. One of the overarching goals of the PCTA's maintenance program is to ensure that the experience is the best it can be year in and year out. That's not always possible as Mother Nature often has other ideas.

Floods, wildfires, erosion and wind often degrade or destroy the trail or infrastructure, such as bridges or retaining walls. These disasters often limit or prohibit public access. The PCTA's regional representatives and volunteer crew leaders are on the ground, collecting information that we bring to partners to help guide sound trail and land management decisions.

### Washington:

#### Bridge Creek Bridge

During summer 2019, PCTA volunteers finished constructing a span over Bridge Creek in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The project required multiple seasons of work. Volunteers removed the remains of the collapsed old bridge, strengthened both abutments, positioned new stringers and added decking and handrails. More than 2,490 hours of volunteer time went into this reconstruction effort. With this project complete, equestrian access to the PCT in North Cascades National Park is greatly enhanced.



*The new bridge over Bridge Creek in Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest enhances equestrian access to North Cascades National Park.*

### California: Inyo National Forest Plan

As directed by the 1976 National Forest Management Act, every National Forest must have a Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) to guide management actions and uses. In 2012, the Forest Service finalized a new planning rule that included the need to identify National Scenic Trails as "areas." The planning directives require National Forests "... to delineate a national scenic and historic trail corridor that protects the resource values for which the trail was designated ..." Forests were also directed to develop "plan components" to protect the "nature and purposes" for which a trail was designated.

In 2016, the Inyo National Forest released the Draft Revised Forest Plan, which it finalized in October 2019. The Inyo National Forest is the first forest plan that includes a PCT Management Area. The Management Area contains specific language and direction to protect the PCT's wild, scenic, remote and non-motorized character.

The Management Area extends one-half visible mile on each side of the PCT, based on the Forest Service Scenery Management System distance and definition of “foreground.” Any project or activity that occurs within the Management Area must comply with the specific PCT plan components and management direction.

PCTA staff worked closely with the Forest Service on plan language that would adequately provide for the nature and purposes of the PCT as directed by the 1968 National Trails System Act. This collaboration was instrumental in producing a strong and clear PCT management direction.

The Inyo National Forest’s PCT Management Area sets a positive precedent for subsequent Forests to follow to ensure the PCT receives consistent and proper management from Forest to Forest and meets the intent of the PCT’s designation as a National Scenic Trail.



*PCTA Southern Sierra Regional Representative Ben Barry (L) and Calder Reid, Inyo National Forest wilderness manager flank the new PCT trail register at Kennedy Meadows.*

### Travel Pattern Research

The PCTA, in conjunction with federal agency partners, has continued the multi-year effort to research use and travel patterns on the PCT. This research is helping the PCTA and agency partners to better understand when and where there are large numbers of people on the PCT and how their presence relates to impacts along the trail. With continued growth in the popularity of the PCT each year, understanding use levels and travel patterns is essential to informing future stewardship of the PCT to protect fragile landscapes and the trail experience for future generations.

The PCTA and the Forest Service have continued to partner with researchers Dr. Jeremy Whimpey with Applied Trails Research and Dr. Nathan Reigner from Recreation and Tourism Science to study use levels and travel patterns along the PCT. In 2019, the PCTA launched the third year of our PCT Long-distance Permit Holder Survey. We received a high response rate and are beginning to analyze data. The survey focused on how people used their permit (did they follow their original itinerary), attrition rates (and why people ended their trip early), and when and where people were on the PCT in 2019. The self-reported behavior from the Long-distance Permit Holder Survey is paired with field and on-trail register data. In 2019, multiple Forest Service and National Park Service units collected field data on campsites and trail conditions with both agency staff and volunteers.

In 2019, the PCTA expanded its trail register program, installing a second official trail register near Kennedy Meadows on the Inyo National Forest. The first register established on the Lassen National Forest in 2018 has already yielded valuable data. Like the Lassen register, the Kennedy Meadows location incorporates an infrared trail counter and physical visitor monitoring. Additionally, the PCTA is collecting visitor data at the Southern Terminus with the Trailhead Host program.

Through these efforts, the PCTA supports the land management agencies to make decisions that improve the stewardship of the PCT and protect its experience for future generations.

## 6 Contributing to the Economic Health of Rural Communities

Towns located near the PCT offer an extraordinary asset to people: gateway access to America's most exceptional trail experience—the world-renowned Pacific Crest Trail. Towns can leverage this asset for all the benefits associated with the \$887 billion U.S. outdoor recreation economy.



*Downtown Sierra City, with the General Store and Post Office on the right side of the photo. Sierra City is a popular attraction in the summer months, offering local lodging and restaurants, as well as great access to hiking, horseback riding, fishing and swimming. The trail-based recreation in the area is a large aspect of the community and its visitors. Sierra City sits above the North Fork of the Yuba River and at the base of the Sierra Buttes, which tower at a magnificent height of 8,857 feet.*

### California: Sierra City Campground

The small and historic town of Sierra City, located within the Tahoe National Forest, has been an essential resource to hikers and equestrians on the PCT for decades. Similarly, the PCT and its users are a vital resource to Sierra City and the success of its local economy. In years past, the local economy was thriving with the support from the mining and logging industries. But as those industries diminished or disappeared, communities dwindled and the economies along with them.

Today, many towns are reliant upon tourists and the PCT hiking community. The general store, local restaurants and the Post Office thrive because of the influx of additional visitors each season. For Sierra City, annual meetings gave business owners, the PCTA, city and county officials and staff from the Tahoe National Forest the opportunity to address issues faced by both the community and its visitors.

In 2019, reacting to local questions and concerns, the collaborative group established an additional campground facility for PCT hikers located downtown. With support from local stakeholders and property owners, a privately-owned parcel was renovated and restored to accommodate the increasing demand. The recently developed site will benefit the city, the county and local business owners by providing additional access to amenities and resources within Sierra City, while also providing more lodging options for those passing through.

## California: PCTA's Kernville Office

In January 2019, the PCTA opened its sixth regional office in the rural community of Kernville. Surrounded by the Sequoia National Forest, the Kern River Valley has long served as a resupply point for long-distance hikers who visit Onyx, Lake Isabella, or Kernville on the west side of Walker Pass; and Inyokern and Ridgecrest to the east.

Kernville is centrally located within PCTA's Southern Sierra Region, providing access to both sides of the High Sierra during winter, as well as proximity to the Tehachapi Mountains. With a thriving outdoor recreation economy, local brewery, restaurants and many small businesses, the town of 2,000 is a great place for PCT users to spend time off-trail. The PCTA hopes that as time goes on, the presence of a local Regional Representative based in the heart of Kern County will grow awareness of the PCT and the economic benefits it provides, leading to more significant support and protection for the trail.

## Oregon: Cascade Locks' PCT Days

While the PCT is primarily a backcountry trail, nearby towns enjoy benefits of hosting backpackers, horseback riders and day-hikers by the thousands. The PCT passes through Cascade Locks, population 1,200, at the iconic Bridge of the Gods over the mighty Columbia River. Each year, the PCTA partners with Outdoor Viewfinder to organize an enormous festival called PCT Days, drawing thousands of people in one weekend to see the newest outdoor gear and share stories of the trail. Cascade Locks loves the PCT so much it erected its own trail monument in the center of town.



*Hikers, outdoor gear manufacturers and the public converge each year in August in Cascade Locks, Oregon, for PCT Days, the single largest PCT-specific event anywhere along the trail. The event offers two days of education, gear shopping, raffles and contests, an outdoor film festival, food and beer and much more.*



# 2019 Accomplishments Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail

## Connect People to the Outdoors Through Volunteer Stewardship

### Provide volunteer support to organize and execute projects

PCTA staff hours spent on volunteer programs .....	13,373
New trainings posted online .....	19
New volunteer projects posted online.....	106
Volunteer project email announcements sent.....	81
New volunteers .....	807
Returning volunteers .....	1,231
Tool caches.....	46
Inventory of tools and equipment.....	<i>Separate report submitted</i>
Weeks JHA is posted online .....	52
High school programs contacted .....	1
University programs contacted.....	3

### Report on all volunteer and corps crew service hours and accomplishments

Volunteer hours for financial match.....	<i>Separate report submitted</i>
Volunteer hours for trail maintenance activities .....	100,785
Volunteer hours for land protection activities .....	184
Volunteer hours for administrative activities.....	1,254
Volunteer hours for governance and committee activities.....	1,557
Volunteer hours for communications and publications.....	325
Number of volunteer hours for trail protection.....	23
Number of volunteer hours for visitor use management.....	1,133





**Volunteers reflecting age, gender, and ethnicity:**

Age	
Under 18	65
18-54	543
55+	567
Unknown	835
Declined to Answer	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,038</b>

Ethnicity	
White (non-Hispanic)	950
Black (non-Hispanic)	9
Hispanic	70
Native American/ Alaskan Native	4
Asian/Pacific Islander	45
Unknown	854
Declined to Answer	106
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,038</b>

Gender	
Male	910
Female	483
Unknown	640
Declined to Answer	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,038</b>

PCTA-affiliated youth corps volunteer hours .....	17,675
PCTA-affiliated high school volunteer hours .....	4,011
Miles of trail maintained .....	1,605
Miles reconstructed/constructed .....	31
Trailhead kiosks constructed.....	0
Square feet of log cribbing constructed.....	328
Square feet of stone cribbing constructed .....	10,382
Bridges constructed (greater than 20' long, 5' off the deck) .....	3
Feet of turnpike/puncheon constructed .....	170



**Sponsor volunteer training opportunities**

PCTA staff hours spent on trainings .....	2,142
Volunteers attending Basic or Wilderness First Aid.....	131
Basic or Wilderness First Aid trainings hosted.....	14
Volunteers attending crosscut and/or chain saw training.....	157
Crosscut and/or chain saw trainings hosted.....	14
Number of volunteers attending other trail skills training .....	650
Other trail skills trainings hosted.....	19

**Coordinate with the PCT Program Manager and agency units**

Agency partner meetings to coordinate field program of work:

	Local	Unit	Regional/ Trailwide	Total
<b>U.S. Forest Service</b>	103	45	18	166
<b>Bureau of Land Management</b>	4	11	2	17
<b>National Park Service</b>	0	6	0	6
<b>Other</b>	3	1	2	6
<b>Total</b>	110	63	22	195

**Provide Trail and Land Management Support**

PCTA staff hours spent on trail planning and protection.....	2,462
PCTA staff hours spent providing technical assistance .....	1,055

**Increase Access to and Protection of the Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Qualities of the PCT by Conserving Open Space through Land Acquisition**

Number of PCTA staff hours spent on coordinating land acquisition projects .....	2,167
Number of acres acquired .....	10,336



## Benefits to the Public & Trail Communities

### Respond to inquiries from the public and trail users regarding the PCT

Emails responded to.....	4,696
Phone calls responded to .....	2,751
Social media requests responded to.....	251
Media requests responded to.....	26

### Publish a periodic magazine

Copies of the <i>PCT Communicator</i> magazine distributed.....	56,000
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### Maintain a website

Website sessions .....	1,842,111
Updates to the Trail Conditions pages.....	35

### Promote PCT at events

Conferences and outreach events attended.....	51
PCTA staff hours spent planning or participating in events.....	956
PCTA volunteer hours spent planning or participating in events .....	786

### Issue long distance permits

Wilderness permits issued for travel in excess of 500 miles .....	7,888
Mt. Whitney climbing permits issued.....	0

### Distribute PCT brochures

Map brochures distributed.....	20,145
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# 2019 Volunteer & Corps Crew Hours



## Maintenance Program Hours

### Southern California Region

American Conservation Experience .....	6,517
Environmental Charter School .....	857
PCTA Trail Gorillas .....	11,695
William S. Hart High School .....	678
Miscellaneous Region Projects .....	509

### Southern Sierra Region

American Conservation Experience .....	1,320
Can Do Crew .....	3,110
High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew .....	300
PCTA Trail Gorillas .....	1,295
Miscellaneous Region Projects .....	1,986

### Northern Sierra Region

American Conservation Experience .....	5,714
PCTA Carsonora Trail Crew .....	395
PCTA Pounder's Promise .....	2,600
PCTA Will Work for Krumms Trail Crew .....	596
Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship .....	800
Tahoe Rim Trail Association .....	7,269
Miscellaneous Region Projects .....	1,245

### Northern CA/Southern OR Region

American Conservation Experience .....	866
Ashland Woodland & Trails Association .....	54
Backcountry Horsemen of California: Top of State ...	197
Landmark Volunteers/CCC/YCC .....	530
PCTA Lyons Pride .....	900
PCTA NorCal Trail Crew .....	182
PCTA Southern Oregon Rockers .....	1,240
Miscellaneous Region Projects .....	2,031

### Columbia Cascades Region

PCTA Mid-Oregon Volunteers .....	9,109
PCTA Mt. Hood Chapter .....	16,995
PCTA Windigo/Skyline/Sasquatch Crews .....	3,081
Miscellaneous Region Projects .....	461

### North Cascades Region

PCTA North 350 Blades .....	8,554
PCTA White Pass Chapter .....	2,661
EarthCorps/Washington Conservation Corps .....	1,280
Washington Trails Association .....	5,549
Miscellaneous Region Projects .....	15

**Trailwide Miscellaneous .....** 194

**Total PCT Maintenance Hours .....** 100,785

## Non-Maintenance Programs Hours

Administrative .....	1,254
Advocacy .....	397
Governance .....	1,557
Land Protection .....	184
Outreach .....	786
Publications .....	325
Trail Protection .....	23
Visitor Use Management .....	1,133

**Total Non-Maintenance Hours .....** 5,659

**Total Service Hours .....** 106,444

