

## EAGLE POST 47

The newsletter of **ESWA - EAGLE SUMMIT WILDERNESS ALLIANCE** apprises you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

[EagleSummitWilderness.org](http://EagleSummitWilderness.org)

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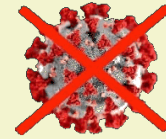


**BEFORE WE BEGIN...** We hope you and yours are all safe from the COVID 19 virus. With our ski areas and many workout facilities closed, our wilderness trails will likely get even more use than usual this Spring.

Please remember that Spring is also a tough time for wild animals, who



need to replenish their fat supplies, forage on slim pickings, and give birth to and nurse their young. So please take extra care to leash your dogs, pick up their poop, and maybe even carry out some do-do bags that others have left behind.



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!** We continue to plan our summer programs even though COVID 19 may require them to be rescheduled (but we hope not!). Please put the following on your calendars (maybe in pencil):

**June 6** -- Our Annual Volunteer Wilderness Ranger Training Day. This is a fun day and a great way to learn how to give back to Wilderness while you're doing your normal hikes anyway.

**July 11** -- Noxious Weed Pull Day at Hunter's Knob north of Silverthorne. Includes a fun social event afterwards.

**July 17-19** -- A three day/two-night trip with our llamas to Upper Cataract Lake in the Eagles Nest Wilderness to help do campsite maintenance and trail repair, and have some fun as well.

**July 31-Aug 2** -- A second chance to do a three day/two-night llama trip, this time to Lake Constantine in the Holy Cross Wilderness

**August 14-16:** Your third chance to do a three day/two-night llama trip, this time to Missouri Lakes in the HCW

**August 28-30** -- Your last chance to do a llama trip, this time to Slate Lakes in the ENW.



Have questions or need for information? Send us an [email](#)

April 2020

Dear \*|FNAME|\*

Greetings! Our topic this month:  
**SAWING IN THE  
WILDERNESS**  
By Frank Gutmann



## INTRODUCTION

Lightweight, flexible, beautifully crafted, eminently functional, the **crosscut saw** was the prime tool for U.S. foresters in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Then, in the 1930s, with the introduction of chain saws, use of the crosscut waned - until 1964, when the Wilderness Act passed Congress, and use of mechanized tools was no longer allowed in designated Wilderness. The crosscut saw began a comeback that continues today, regaining an appreciation that often borders on reverence among those who have mastered its use. It is once again the most important tool for maintaining the Forest Service's 32,000 miles of wilderness trails. There's more about this beautiful instrument in the Forest Service book [Saws That Sing](#) (26MB). You can hear its song [HERE](#) - a brief video of EWSA and FS sawyers tackling a log. In 2019, our saws were singing in Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness areas as ESWA volunteers and Forest Service staff cleared trails of more than 2,500 deadfall trees, killed a decade ago by the pine bark beetle, now falling in record numbers.

Below, certified sawyer Dr. Frank Gutmann describes the work that ESWA does, and appeals for volunteers to take the training course, offered at no charge. Perhaps you, like so many others, will come to revere this proven tool.



**VINTAGE CROSSCUT SAW**

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**Wilderness Trail Maintenance: Become a Volunteer Sawyer**  
BY FRANK GUTMANN

One of the many important functions of maintaining trails in the Wilderness is removing trees that block established trails. As a general guideline, Wilderness trails are kept clear of underbrush and obstacles three feet on either side of the center of the trail to allow easy passage by humans and beasts of burden, such as horses or even llamas. Trees need to be removed that have fallen across the trail or are leaning across a trail so that a person on horseback can readily pass under them. Such trees need to be cut or “bucked,” using the vernacular. Since no motorized vehicles or tools, which include chain saws, may be used in the Wilderness, a sawyer is someone who removes these trees in the Wilderness using a hand saw, such as a Corona/Silky Bigboy, for trees up to nine inches in diameter, or a crosscut/x-cut saw needed for trees bigger than that. X-cut saw blades used by ESWA volunteers and USFS (US Forest Service) personnel are five feet long and 5.5 inches in height at the center tapering down to 3 inches at each end where two-handed removable handles are attached. The handles are designed so that they can be held horizontally or vertically, depending on the situation. The teeth on only one of the edges of the blade are 1.75 inches in height, are very sharp, and are carefully kept that way for maximal cutting efficiency. A guard covers the teeth when not in use for easy handling and safety while hiking and storing. Read more about crosscut saws at [Wikipedia](#).



The need for sawyers has increased since the lodgepole pine bark beetle epidemic in early 2000 as standing dead are falling with increased frequency across established trails. The USFS focuses on the trees that have already fallen across a trail rather than “felling” the many affected standing dead and rotting trees adjacent to established trails in the Wilderness. Some of these trees are taller than the distance to an adjacent trail and pose a risk of crashing

down on a trail during a wind storm or sudden wind gust and bringing down live/dead trees with them.

Prior to about a decade ago, Wilderness volunteer sawyers were not required to be certified to use a x-cut saw to buck trees that have fallen across established trails. That has changed because of liability issues. To be certified as a sawyer requires taking a free three-day course sponsored by the USFS, which stresses safety and technique. A fully certified volunteer sawyer must also take a first aid and CPR course, a minimum of one day in length. The latter may be free but if not, ESWA is willing to foot the cost if requested in advance. See below for information regarding a specific 2020 training opportunity.

Not everyone involved in ESWA’s sawyer program needs to be certified or specially trained, provided they are supervised by

a USFS certified sawyer. Although a five-foot x-cut saw can be used by a single certified person, it is much easier when there is someone on the other end of the saw. The other person does not need to be certified. However, there is more to bucking a tree than just cutting it.

Underbrush and/or branches on the tree that get in the way of the saw or sawyer

must be cleared to provide easy and safe access for cutting. Bark must be removed at the cut site on the tree so that mineral debris does not blunt the saw teeth. If the tree is big and the cut section heavy, assistance may be required to remove it from the trail. The latter on-the-job skills can easily be learned by [contacting ESWA](#) and volunteering to join a certified sawyer on a sawyer hike. Additionally, a day on a sawyer crew can count as one of the four hikes required to be a VWR (Volunteer Wilderness Ranger) for ESWA. It's a lot of fun, generates lots of visitor comments/interest, and provides personal satisfaction to have enhanced the hiking pleasure for others in the Wilderness.



Jeff and Karrie crosscut sawing

## ABOUT FRANK GUTMANN

I was born in Nazi Germany in 1936. Thanks to my Dad's foresight, I immigrated to the USA with my family the following year, escaping the holocaust with two swastikas stamped on my birth certificate but no number tattooed on my forearm or yellow star sewn on my clothes. I grew up in rural New Jersey where I excelled in playing the piano and running track. As an undergraduate at Princeton University, I joined the Outing Club and participated in white water canoeing, spelunking, rock climbing and mountaineering. I summited most of the major peaks in the Grand Tetons while in college and medical school. I also made a vow while in school to pay back my appreciation of Wilderness when I retired and would have more disposable time.



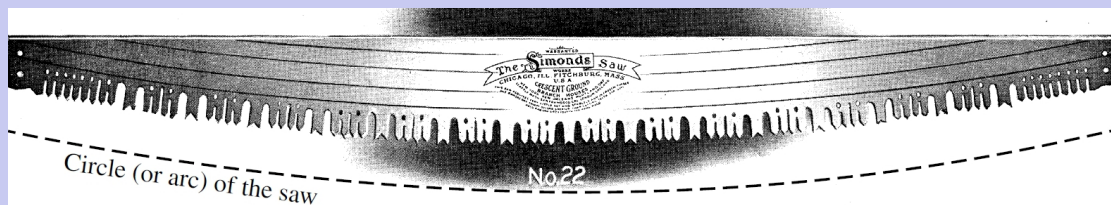
After completing medical school at SUNY in Brooklyn, NY in 1963, I went on to train, teach, practice and do research as a board certified internist and nephrologist at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and Milwaukee. In 1963, I also married Mary Chen, who eventually became a PhD clinical psychologist and rose in the ranks of US Peace Corps to become Acting Associate Director. Vacations in the wild included my wife and two children whenever possible. Trying to stay fit in my 40s and 50s, I ran 35 competitive

marathons and four 50 milers.

In 1991, I joined US Peace Corps staff in Sierra Leone, West Africa and spent most of the subsequent 15 years working as a physician all over the world in places like Bosnia and Herzegovina (where my wife Mary was a Fulbright scholar), Ethiopia, Kingdom of Tonga (where Mary was the Peace Corps Country Director), Ivory Coast, Russia and Bangladesh. In the interim in 1999-2000, I enrolled at the Uniform Services University in Bethesda, MD to earn the degree of Master of Public Health, which was challenging but very enriching. In 2006, I retired from medicine and the rest of the world and moved to Silverthorne, CO where I still actively pursue my passions for alpine skiing, gardening, and jogging.

A decade ago I finally fulfilled my college vow to pay back my appreciation of Wilderness by joining FENW/ESWA as a VWR, board member and sawyer. Being a volunteer sawyer in the Wilderness has been particularly rewarding and enjoyable.

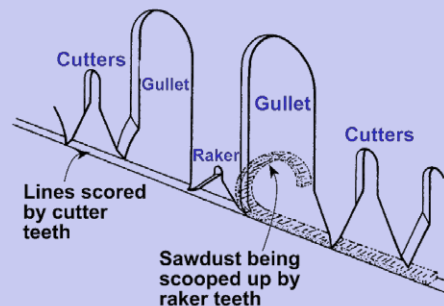
## The crosscut saw: a brief primer



What makes the crosscut saw so special? For starters, as shown in the image above, the cutting edge of the saw is formed in a gentle circular arc, the better to follow the arc of a sawyer's arm.

The typical saw possesses two kinds of teeth. The slightly longer **cutters** slice through the wood fibers at the sides of the **kerf** (the groove that the saw rests in) and then the **rakers** collect the thin wafer of wood set free by the cutters, curling it up into the **gullet** (the cove between the cutters and rakers). As the teeth move out of the kerf with each stroke, the sawdust wafer drops out of the gullet.

The saw cuts in both directions and needs to be at least twice as long as the diameter of the log being cut; some crosscut saws used in the redwood forests were 16 feet long! Finally, the finest examples of these saws are not simply cut from a flat piece of metal, but are beveled - thicker at the cutting edge, thinner at the back; this reduces binding as the saw cuts through a log.



**AN ADDITIONAL WORD FROM OUR CHAIR**

## MIKE BROWNING

WE NEED YOU! As noted in Frank's article above, a certified sawyer is required on only one end of a x-cross saw. YOU can be on the other end, or can help our certified sawyers get more done by cutting/removing smaller trees blocking the trail that don't require a big x-cross saw, and by hauling away the branches and log segments that our sawyers produce.



This summer we hope to expand our sawyer program by enlisting such sawyer helpers to assist when our certified sawyers go into the field. The goal is to have a ready list of such helpers that our certified sawyers can email to see if they can help when they need such assistance. If you are interested, please [email me](#) and I'll put you on our list. Then, when our sawyers need help on a particular day, we can email to see if you are available. I have personally found that helping clear trails is one of the most satisfying things you can do to help.

## EXTRA EXTRA – GET YOURSELF CERTIFIED

Interested in becoming a certified sawyer yourself? The USFS training courses are usually full, and the certification courses offered by other non-profits are costly and often located in far-away places. **BUT FEAR NOT.** ESWA has arranged for a **FREE sawyer certification training session** of its own to be held in Summit or Eagle County on May 29-31, 2020. There will be one day of classroom instruction (which can be done on-line if necessary) and two days in the field. The class is limited to 8 people, and any necessary precautions will be taken if COVID 19 is still around. To sign-up or get more information send an email to [Mike Browning](#).



A huge thanks to [ARAPAHOE BASIN SKI AREA](#). For more than two decades, A-Basin staff have donated generously to their **Employee Environmental Fund**, of which ESWA has been a steady beneficiary. Last year, more than 150 employees donated, led by A-Basin Director **Alan Henceroth**. Our enduring THANKS!

Make a donation to ESWA...



... make a difference!

Check out other [recent monthly eNewsletters](#)



The Spring-Summer 2020 hard copy newsletter is in production.

We'll mail out copies in early May - it will be chock full of information about our 2020 season. If you didn't receive by mail last November's issue, then *we don't have your mailing address*. Please [send an email](#) it to us with your mailing address. The newsletter contains about two dozen fun and informative articles about us - past, present, and future.

Follow us



Join us! Next **Planning Meeting Thursday, APRIL 9** at 5:30 PM, The meeting will be held virtually, via Zoom. Join us via internet with one click: <https://ucdenver.zoom.us/j/4732124622>

Full logon information (e.g., phone-in) is at [zoom\\_join\\_meeting.pdf](#)

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