

SLATE LAKES WORK TRIP - 16-18 July 2021

The ESWA trip to Slate Lakes went well. A huge thanks to all our volunteers and the wilderness rangers (and llamas) that made it possible.

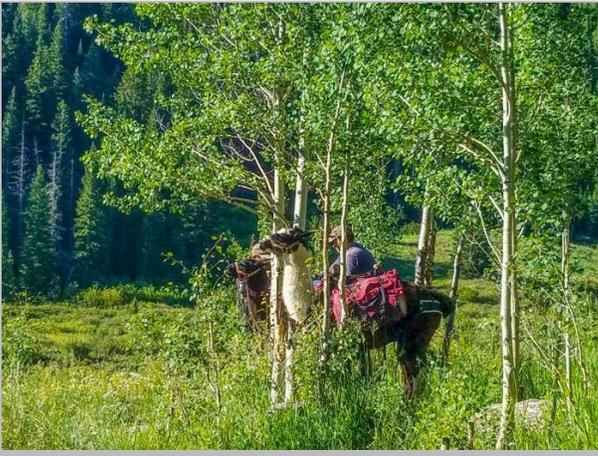


Unfortunately we lost half our volunteers in the week and a half before the trip, but we still had five energetic volunteers and three USFS wilderness rangers (Megan Sullivan the Dillon Lead Wilderness Ranger and Mark and Adam from Minturn who wrangled the llamas) plus two llamas (Dominguez and Monte). Unfortunately Rocio, the other Dillon wilderness ranger, had a minor injury so she used the weekend to recuperate.



Dan Austin, Rick Williams, Dan Schweitzer, and Brad Benz (last year's llama rescuer) joined me in volunteering, and with the wilderness rangers did a tremendous job of clearing trail. Originally we feared that the Gore Range Trail would not be cleared so Zauk Kauk, ESWA's lead sawyer on the Dillon side generously offered to join us for the hike in. But the RMYC cleared that portion of the Gore Range Trail the week before, so Zauk bowed out. However the trail above our campground was another matter...

We camped on a beautiful open knoll overlooking a series of beaver ponds on Slate Creek about a mile below the lower lake. Several moose wandered through the willows below while across the valley a cascade tumbled thousands of feet down the cliffs. What little rain and graupel we got was welcome, the afternoons were warm and humid. Dan Austin actually skinny-dipped in the lower lake. Thanks to the recent rains the wildflowers put on a real show and of course there were some mosquitos, thank goodness for bug repellent.



Saturday was one busy day. In addition to lopping back the scrubs and trees to open up the trail, we cleared 102 trees on the 3.5 mile trail up to the upper lake. Many were big trees. We kept both crosscut saws busy into the evening. There are still a few trees up there, but the trail is fairly clear. The backpackers we met were very grateful. We also cleaned up three illegal fire rings next to the lower lake. We didn't get back to our campsite until after 7 pm, some of us a little later.



1b.





The beverages and snacks that ESWA provided were greatly appreciated, along with the wine that Rick brought and the Scotch from Dan. Sunday morning we considered pulling some of the many musk thistle in the area, but Megan said Steve Elzinga said not to as the spraying crew was scheduled for next week. I did scout around and I will send an email to Jim about thistle locations. Sunday morning we broke camp and headed the 6.5 miles back returning about 2pm. A great job by our volunteers and the wilderness rangers, a special thanks to all of them.

Dave B



