



# Forest Service News

## Pacific Northwest Region

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### Wilderness Trail Yields Three Tons of Litter

Volunteers packed out 6,000 pounds of litter last month from one trail along the Minam River in the Eagle Cap Wilderness of eastern Oregon.

The effort, brainchild of Maria Belknap and her father, Dr. Lee Belknap of Portland, and wilderness ranger Beverly Jo Broadwell, started on Labor Day weekend when dozens of hikers began collecting the litter.

As hikers stashed the junk in gunnysacks, equestrians rode up the trail to Minam Lake to remove the bags and six 50-gallon metal drums hunters used to store supplies.

Roger Stamy, recreation officer on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest where the Eagle Cap Wilderness is located, says, "all kinds of wilderness users share in the littering, but perhaps not to the same degree.

"Backpackers blame the equestrians, the equestrians blame the backpackers, and both blame the hunters," Stamy says. "For the most part, backpackers have been exonerated as litterers. But the hunters who visit the wilderness late in the year when the weather is cold and unpredictable, often leave what they don't want or are unable to carry or hope to come back and use in subsequent years."

When the Belknaps talked with Jo Broadwell a year ago, the three decided something had to be done with the litter and the abandoned structures, mostly hunter camps, along the Minam River.

(more)



By the time the Belknaps involved Boyd Hill in their proposed clean-up, they found the Bear Sleds Ranger District's resource assistant already involved in the Wallowa-Whitman's "no trace" campaign, and it fit right in with their plans.

"No-trace camping means just that," Hill says, "and when you go into the wilderness, you adjust yourself to fit the environment, not the other way around. If you pack it in, pack it out."

Wilderness rangers in the Eagle Cap in the past two years have helped remove tons of litter and debris. Along one stretch of the Minam, Ranger Broadwell found evidence of 26 camp sites where people had attempted to alter the environment to suit them. There were cans, bottles, and litter of all kinds, along with abandoned, deteriorating, visually polluting structures.

Hill said the project has been successful from several points of view, not the least of which was "the cooperation of many people from many walks of life, and from as far away as the Willamette Valley, people who realized funds for litter removal are limited."

As a result, Hill said, the trail along the Minam River that was so well-marked -- with litter -- has taken on a new appearance.

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