

## “How the heck did we get here?”

Several years ago I was getting withdrawals after a solid summer of packing for the Olympic National Park. I needed a packing fix. All packing work was shut down until the following spring. On the other hand, was it? I needed to get me a job packing as early as possible.

I wondered if there was any packing needed in the Capital State Forest. I contacted the Manager Christine Redmond and all is history. It was not that simple but the working with these folks makes it look simple.

I was delegated, to a gravel packing operation to retread trail that could not be easily reached with their quads and gravel haulers. It became obvious from the get-go that this operation was fast going from an “I” to a “We.” We needed more packers and stock to get this job done in a quality manner and requiring the support people in proportion to the stock hauling gravel. My bright idea had taken on a completely new persona that now was about to get into the potential political arena with set boundaries of different user groups in the Forest. We needed the workers. Could we get folks from all user groups to help and not be bogged down in the swamp of group posturing? We gave it a try! We sent out invitations to any one who may help or may know folks who were in their sphere of influence that may also like to help. It worked.

The backbone concept of this project is that no one trail-user group can declare that it is their doing. In fact, it is a Department of Natural Resources project start to finish. With this issue off the table, any or all of the user groups can declare a solid portion of the

credit for their members showing up and working their behinds off for the betterment of all user groups.

Because of by-laws and other legal positions, many of these groups are mandated to work only for their own members needs or at least until their mission statement is satisfied. This does not allow their officers or sub-groups to focus on or enter into a project without a lot of internal discussion and consideration. The Gravel Pack-in bridges this discussion and consideration by going to individual folks within these groups and allowing them to step out of these boundaries and come together in one spot for a day of effort for all users.

More support is showing up from the organized groups like Back Country Horsemen of Washington in the form of tools and recognition for this effort. That must mean we are doing something right and that the format we have used is working outside the normal routine.

We are grateful to the leadership of these groups for not becoming threatened. There is true win-win value in this kind of effort. This is very similar to the leave-no-trace idea of cleaning up after our piggy brothers and sisters. When individuals step up to the plate and accept personal responsibility to get projects accomplished, it frees up the leadership of all trail-user groups to focus on more pressing matters.

Now you have a program to this event. If someone asks you “who is sponsoring this event” you can fairly respond that you are, all of you. The Third Annual Gravel Pack-in is shaping up to be better than ever. We are getting folks to come from all over western Washington and central Oregon. Your attendance is on the cutting edge of keeping our trails open, for all who wish to use them. Come by and lend a hand there is a meaningful job for everyone.



For more info: [www.capitolforest.com](http://www.capitolforest.com)

Ed Haefliger

