

## The Longest Mile

It has been many years since work first began on this rugged and remote one-mile segment of the MCCT between Patti's Point and the Lower Log Boom on Pardee Watershed. EBMUD mounted patrolmen used this narrow segment of trail to patrol Pardee Reservoir until the 1970's. Lacking regular use, the trail was soon overgrown with vegetation. In 1993 the California Youth Authority (CYA) crews brushed the old mounted patrol trail. Soon afterwards, the Mokelumne Trailbusters started widening the trail and building trail structures on regularly scheduled workdays.



Trail builders hiked in as far as three quarters of a mile, year round, carrying tools and supplies to the various job sites. Given the topography this was no easy task, just ask any veteran Trailbuster; they know every inch of this trail segment intimately.



In many areas, the trail was widened out of solid rock with hand tools. The numerous rock structures, some built by the Trailbusters and others half a century old, were made from native stone that was collected on site and moved using brute strength.



In December of 1995, Bellfree Construction completed installation of the 25' fiberglass and wood bridge at Spanish Gulch. The California Conservation Corps from Delta Center excavated the abutment areas by hand. Then they carried the sack concrete to the site to be mixed and poured to make the abutments. NJROTC students from Lincoln High School in Stockton and the Mokelumne Trailbusters carried in the fiberglass portions of this bridge a distance of one-half mile. The maximum weight of the heaviest component of the bridge was almost 100 pounds. After the bridge was completed, Bellfree Construction drove their trail building excavator, about 3,500 pounds, to the center of the bridge and then added the weight of their four employees. Needless to say, the bridge did not budge.



The route between Spanish Gulch and Patti's Point is very rugged and steep because of property boundaries and topography. The elevation change in this one-half mile is 550 feet. Stairs, landings, and retaining walls were constructed to mitigate these steep grades. Presently 80-85% of the trail use on the Mokelumne Watershed is by equestrians. The wooden stairs were pinned to solid rock and the stone stairs were constructed of massive rocks to reduce erosion and provide a safe route for the horses.





In October of 2002 & 2003 the Mokelumne Watershed and Recreation Division staff worked with the California Conservation Corps focusing on the completion of this challenging segment of trail. While working on the project, corps members camped at Pardee Recreation Area instead of commuting everyday, thereby increasing efficiency of time and providing a more immersing experience for all involved. The funding for this project was a combination of EBMUD operating funds and CCC Proposition 12 Park Bond Funds.

Most of the 100 to 500 pound building rock used in this project, was collected off site using a griphoist, winch or knuckleboom crane. Suitable building rock for stairs, that were too large to be moved, were split in half by drilling a series of holes in the rock and then using feathers and wedges.



A large portion of this rock would be transported 11 miles before it would finally be set in place. The rock was transferred from a truck to a trailer that was pulled by an ATV, then from the trailer to the power carrier or stokes stretcher using a hand operated davit crane or using rock bars and brute strength.



Finally it was unloaded from the power carrier and moved into place using rock bars and brute strength.



Clockwise: California Conservation Corps: Using a grihoist to lower boulder; Mokelumne Watershed & Recreation Manager Kent Lambert installing a step; Ranger Steve Diers building a retaining wall for a landing; Ranger Douglas Stewart building steps in October 2002; Doug passed away suddenly in March of 2003 and below Ranger Will Leigh installs the last steps in March 2004.



On May 1, 2004 the day's the "Longest Mile" dedication event began with Archeologists Steve Horne & Philomene Smith explained the mining history of James Bar and how early maps were made. Then 31 hearty individuals hiked from the Log Boom west to Patti's Point on one of the most beautiful and challenging segments of the Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail on EBMUD land. Much of the route is a difficult grade but we stopped to smell the roses and view the butterflies. We stopped along the way to look at wildflowers that Karen Orso of Wilseyville pointed out and the spectacular vistas.



At Patti's Point we stopped for lunch and shared a watermelon that Kent Lambert carried in! Afterwards, "The Longest Mile" was dedicated. EBMUD's Kent Lambert, Steve Diers, & Will Leigh shared remarks with the gathering about the construction efforts and history of the trail in this area. "It's a pretty monumental task," said Diers. "When we first started on it, I never thought we'd get done." "You're looking at a trail that was maybe 12 to 18 inches wide and our finished product is five feet wide."



EBMUD watershed neighbors John and Patti Garamendi added additional comments regarding the status of the Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail as a Millennium Trail as well as their personal history in the area (they hiked in from their Paloma ranch with son-in-laws (Kevin and Eugene). Trailbusters J.J. Limbaugh, Helen Larson, Philomene Smith and Toni Walker shared their most memorable moments on construction of the “Longest Mile.”



Helen Larson, a volunteer trailbuilder for nearly 10 years, said the steep and the rocky terrain made The Longest Mile most challenging. "We'd go in and work a section and then get back and look at it and say, 'that's not going to work,'" said Larson, who lives in Pioneer. "Knowing we were going to have hikers on it and equestrians on it, we had to have it just exactly right to make it safe for people and to make it stay that way after we were done."

Volunteer Lorraine Morrison, of Valley Springs, said she enjoyed working on the retaining walls and seemed to have an eye for putting rock in the right place. "A lot of it was like a puzzle," she said, "except you were stacking huge boulders." And most people putting together a puzzle aren't doing so a few hundred feet above a river. "We had to dig our toes in sometimes to hang onto the side of the hill or wall where we placing our rocks," she said. "But no one really gave it a lot of thought. It was just something we were doing and having such a good time doing it."



Lt. to rt. Steve Diers, J.J. Limbaugh, John Willard, Lorraine Morrison, Helen Larson & Sean Paussa

J.J. Limbaugh, a longtime Trailbuster from Lodi works for the city of Lodi and has a landscaping business on the side but has managed to log hundreds of hours on the trail jack hammering boulders, using a pick and shovel to widen trails and more." I love dirt," said Limbaugh, 43. Limbaugh said he knew the trail segment would be completed some day "but I just didn't know when." That's why it's so fulfilling for the volunteers to see it finished, he said." It takes a lot of preparation just to get everyone together, to get the equipment and pack it and haul it in there," he said. "This mile has been the toughest segment we've ever worked on."The "Trail Under Construction, Closed Beyond This Point" sign & padlock were then ceremoniously removed from the trail gate, the ribbon was cut and the newest section of the Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail was opened to the public.