

A day long indoor classroom of instruction launched our training. The instructions were given on a highly technical basis. We discussed the difference in determining the grade and slope of a trail; what is acceptable (10%) for front country trails and back country (15%), how to “amour” tread, the need to build a turnpike and or rock boxes for wet areas. Check steps, rises, runs, knives, base steps, gargoyles, and deadmen, are now familiar stone concepts that we can translate in our trail building repertoire when working with a major trail repair or trail build in a rocky area. Perhaps one of the most useful learning experiences was being taught and then applying the concept of batter ratios to build a sustainable crib wall. Initially, the technical aspects were a lot to digest. However, the Jolly Rovers have a unique ability to easily translate these concepts to hands on learning experience. A lot of discussion was also held on what is “standard” or acceptable trail structures for frontcountry and backcountry trails, what to focus on for multi-use trails, and for creating or improving heavy use trails.



After the classwork session we headed to Pilot Rock Trail for 3 days of a highly focused field work session. Our work was intense, working in small groups of 3-5 individuals with an instructor, applying all the concepts we learned in the classroom. For many of us, we used different tools than what we are accustomed to, which also a great experience. Working with volunteers from other trail, cycling, and horsemen clubs was absolutely an added bonus.

The art of stone crafting is becoming a lost art. In most circumstances, public (or private) land managers could not afford the labor intensive work involved in naturally integrated stone

structures on trails. CMC is fortunate to have a number of “rock hounds” who love this type of challenge and find it rewarding to see the results of building this type of sustainable trail.

For those who have never taken a course at the Wilderness Skills Institute, check it out! WSI is a partnership between the ATC, the USFS, and SAWS. The Institute features two weeks of training hosted each year in the spring at the Cradle of Forestry. The program is designed to provide volunteers, agency and partnership staff, and other individual's opportunity for growth in wilderness work skills. Training through the Institute is provided for free to accepted students. This is an excellent opportunity for connecting with Wilderness stewards from across the region, both inside and outside the classroom.