

## **Teamwork makes the Dream Work**

**By Becky Hope and Dani Wright, Eugene Chapter**

During the second week of January 2024 the Springfield-Eugene area got hit with two days of continual temperatures below 25 degrees. With unrelenting rain, a continual layering of ice covered everything. There were many reports of 1-2" of ice burdening trees, power lines and roads. Power lines and poles, limbs, and whole trees came down everywhere. Many lost fences and more. Some residents had no power for more than a week, and many others were without as long as two weeks. Many will be cutting and cleaning up tree debris for months. But humans are very good at coming to the rescue and many hunkered down and got to work.

Like many others, Becky and Matt Hope had an initial emergent need to get power back to their fence lines and water. Friends arrived to help cut trees off fences. Everyone had work to do at home.

But local equestrians, once their homes and animals were safe and cared for, needed a place to get out and ride. Dani Wright, as the OET ambassador for Elijah Bristow Park made the initial calls on January 14 to Park Manager John Mullen, and Park Ranger, Steve Hancock. What was the situation at the park? Lane county was closing all their parks. John and Steve were both out of town and did not know the extent of the damage. Once they returned John let Dani know the damage was extensive and it would be months before they could reopen the park. John could not promise timely contract crews due to the month-long bidding process.

Dani found this unacceptable and quickly reached out to Della Webb, who suggested Becky Hope and Eugene Emerald Chapter of BCH may be able to help with their saw expertise. Della also connected with the Scorpion Crew, our local volunteer trail crew.

One issue to overcome was getting the trust of the local Land managers. Unlike the Forest Service, who has a history of working with volunteers with saws, the state park folks were unfamiliar with the capabilities of our volunteers. BCH and OET are used to running trail projects and park leaders were not used to letting volunteers out on their own.

So Dani wrote to John Lively, Oregon State Representative, and brought to his attention the damage and the park situation. On Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, Lively responded and he agreed that it was imperative that "danger" trees be removed from trails as soon as possible to allow for safe recreation, and he sincerely appreciated all the hard work volunteers in our organizations are undertaking on behalf of the public. He reached out to John Mullen who, blessedly, agreed to allow a variety of help due to the extensive damage and extenuating circumstances.

Within a couple of days, Becky and Dani had experienced crew leaders and certified sawyers to lead groups of volunteers and local horsemen. Using email lists, social media and word of mouth they got word out about planned work parties. Within three days the equestrians were removing trees off the trails.

People stepped up to do what they were able to do. Some fed lunch. Some took care of paperwork. They all moved limbs. The biggest Job was raking the trails. There was so much small debris on the trails, this needed to be done to make the trails safe. The Scorpions who have large tree removal experience, cut out the big fallen trees and unsafe trees. Working over a week, the volunteers cleared the 6+ miles of trails at Elijah Bristow State Park.

The park opened back up to horses on Tuesday, February 13th. Caution was still advised, and the park continued to have contract crews working to eliminate any possible unsafe areas.

John Mullen repeatedly indicated how amazed he was at the scope of work that was completed and the speed it was done. He believes the entire group's effort led to opening the park in an exceedingly speedy manner.

Here are the Statistics of this powerful effort:

BCHO, OET and OPRC (Old Person Riding Club) members and some not affiliated to a group showed up.

73 individual visits (some folks working three days, some doing one day)

514 total volunteer hours - combining working hours with driving hours.

47 individual persons (not counting the Scorpions)

This could not have been done without the cooperation of all the local volunteers, park leadership and equestrian groups. **Good job and "Way to Step up" Everybody!**

Extra Note: The effort was then transferred to Mt. Pisgah, another local area with equestrian and hiking trails closed due to the storm damage.