



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STANLEY, IDAHO—The Sawtooth Society’s Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer program has ended its third season of volunteer work with miles of trails cleared, old fences clipped, thousands of weeds pulled and scores of campsites cleaned. All told, there were more than 1,200 hours of boots-on-the-ground work completed by the Austin Kraal Memorial youth and adult volunteers who all gave back to the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (NRA) in a big way this season.



Courtesy photo

A group of boys from Cherry Gulch in Emmett, Idaho work together to build a logworm fence along the shore of Alturas Lake. The fence will help keep foot traffic away from badly eroding banks.

“I’ve backpacked quite a bit in the Sawtooths, and I saw this program as an opportunity to give back to a special place that I love,” said Will Gattiker, a youth volunteer who participated in the program.

The volunteer program is more than a plan to help maintain and enhance the Sawtooth NRA, it gives people a chance to experience the Sawtooths in a different and more meaningful way.

“I’ve had experiences in the outdoors since I was very young,” Gattiker said. “But this was different and special in that I was able to share it with a great variety of people—people I might not otherwise have had the opportunity to camp and work beside.”



Courtesy photo
Kids from The Boise Parks and Recreation and Foothills Learning Center
Sawtooth Camp pull Spotted Knapweed on the steep banks of the Salmon River.

Gattiker was one of 11 youth who traveled from Boise to spend a week volunteering for the Sawtooth Society through the Boise Parks and Recreation and Foothills Learning Center Sawtooth Camp. Gattiker and his campmates spent their time pulling Spotted Knapweed, an invasive weed that crowds out native species, along the banks of the Salmon River. They pulled over 40 bags of weeds total.

When not giving the Sawtooth NRA their time and sweat, the youth attended a presentation on riparian health and how invasive weeds affect it and spent time exploring the area and recreating at Redfish Lake.

Gattiker's group was one of 15 who, from May to September, volunteered their time. Because of the willingness and hard work of these volunteers, the Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer program is the largest of its kind in the area. This summer alone, it brought over 150 youth and over 200 volunteers total to the Sawtooth NRA.



Courtesy photo

The Sawtooth Camp kids pose in front of the 40 bags of weeds they pulled.

"This volunteer program is fulfilling a need in the area," said Sawtooth Society Volunteer and Membership Coordinator Kelly Conde. "Both of the Forest Service, who needs more people helping with on-the-ground work, and of visitors, who are looking for more meaningful ways to spend their vacation. And with the new Wilderness designation, this volunteer program is more important than ever."

The Sawtooth Society was one of several conservation groups involved in Congress recently establishing the remarkable Boulder-White Clouds area as Wilderness. With the growing success of the volunteer program, the Sawtooth Society plans to focus much of their work on the Boulder-White Clouds to engage groups of both youth and adults in maintaining Idaho's newest Wilderness.



Courtesy photo

Employees from the Wood River Valley YMCA and Nature Conservancy work together to construct a barbed wire fence. The fence will keep grazing cattle out of a sensitive marsh area near Crooked Creek.

“The establishment of the Boulder-White Cloud Wilderness permanently protects this area with the ‘gold standard’ of protection,” Conde said. “Now we’re determined to be active in protecting the area we helped make Wilderness.”

Sawtooth Society, formed in 1997, is the only non-profit group dedicated exclusively to serving as an advocate for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, preserving open space in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and enhancing its recreation facilities and services. In addition to its volunteer work, the Sawtooth Society has funded over 165 recreational-related projects throughout the Sawtooth NRA.

Those interested in volunteering for the Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer program can contact Kelly Conde at kelly@sawtoothsociety.org or visit the website at www.sawtoothsociety.org/volunteer. Help us preserve, protect and enhance the Sawtooth NRA—anyone can volunteer.