



# Rubicon Trail 2024

## Annual Report

Report of maintenance activities, projects and summary of the 2024 Rubicon season

# **Rubicon Trail 2024 Annual Report**

The goal of this document is to inform the public of the accomplishments of the volunteers, users, El Dorado County (County) and other agencies and departments on the Rubicon Trail (Rubicon) in efforts to fulfill the direction from the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors. The report documents the activities on the trail and makes recommendations on what needs to be addressed in the future. This provides a record and history for the El Dorado County Parks Division (Parks Division). With the support of both the community and the Board of Supervisors we continue to meet the conditions of the USFS easement (Resolution 117-2012).

## **Adopt-A-Trail Program**

Fifteen different segments were established in 2014 and adopted. As of 2019 there are now sixteen segments in El Dorado County.

In 2024 the Adopt-A-Trail program was put on a temporary pause. This gave County staff an opportunity to complete an overall trail assessment. The County continues to use the ArcGIS application to document activities on the trail. Through this app we have records and inspections for all the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality on the trail. The Parks Division will continue working with County Transportation Engineering staff on completing an assessment of the BMPs.

Although staff is on the trail weekly during the season, there may be projects that users may see that needs to be done. If you have a project that you would like to do, please call the Parks Division at 530.621.5554 to discuss. We are open to ideas or suggestions.

<b>Francis Cow Camp</b> - Airport Flat Turnoff to Wentworth Springs City	6.07 miles
<b>Wentworth</b> - Wentworth Springs City to Junction Ellis Tie-in	1.84 miles
<b>Ellis Trail</b> - Kiosk to Whale Bone	1.64 miles
<b>Ellis Trail</b> -Whale Bone to Tie-in.	
<b>Ellis Creek</b> - Junction Ellis Tie-in to Below Walker Rock	1.0 miles
<b>Walker Rock</b> - Walker Rock to Benchmark above Walker Hill	.70 miles
<b>Soup Bowl</b> - Crest above Walker to Winter Camp	.40 miles
<b>Little Sluice</b> - Winter Camp to Property Line - Spider	.5 miles
<b>Arnold's Rock</b> - Property Line - Spider to Egg Rock (Indian Bypass)	.78 miles
<b>Old True Big Sluice</b> - Old Sluice turnoff to Egg Rock	.60 miles
<b>Mechanic's Pit</b> - Egg Rock to Buck Island Dam	.72 miles
<b>Buck Island</b> - Buck Island Dam to Dive off	.53 miles
<b>Big Sluice</b> - Dive off to Sawtooth	.48 miles
<b>Rubicon Bridge</b> - Sawtooth to Rubicon Bridge	.32 miles
<b>Rubicon Springs</b> - Rubicon Bridge to Property Line	1.02 miles

### Adopt-a-Trail Segments

## Sediment Removal

The sediment removed in 2024 was 17.22 cubic yards, which was the result of 292 buckets worth of sediment removed by staff. Below is a history of sediment removal.

Year	Number of Buckets	Sediment Removed (Cubic Yards)	Water Year Type
2014		5.51	Drought year
2015	620	15.52	Drought year, warm temps, lack of snow pack
2016	436.5	10.91	Average snow pack, large rainfall amounts in fall
2017	678.5	16.96	Well above average
2018	556	13.9	Below normal
2019	321	8.93	Large snowpack, late melt. Late snow November.
2020	238	5.95	
2021	168	4.2	Below normal
2022	527	13.04	Below normal
2023	622	15.39	Wet year
2024	292	7.25	Below normal

## **County Activities**

### **Staffing**

Brian Bettencourt (Senior Parks Trail Maintenance Worker) and Nick Howle (Parks Trail Maintenance Worker) provides maintenance and operations on the trail, including equipment maintenance, pumping toilets, moving debris, logs and boulders from the trail and maintaining trail delineation.

Tim Canavarro is the Parks Program Coordinator and administers the Rubicon and River programs for the Parks Division. Tim works with the GIS field maps application to update and maintain information regarding BMPs on the trail.

Alan Pitts returned as seasonal extra help in 2024. Alan stages at the Loon Lake kiosk and hands out spill kits, wag bags and bandanas. Alan is there to educate the public and provides Rubicon Trail brochures with trail information a trail map.

### **Restrooms and Pumping**

Restroom cleaning and pumping continued with Brian and Nick on the trail every week. There are ten toilets that are pumped from Ellis Creek to the east side of Buck Island Lake. Depending on trail conditions and other trail user traffic, pumping all 10 toilets can be a 16-hour day.

Also, a big thank you to Glen, with the Rubicon Trail Foundations (RTF) Mid-Trail staff for assisting with stocking toilet paper and checking the restroom conditions. Glen and Brian communicated weekly, and Glen provides useful information to Brian about what supplies or maintenance the restrooms need. We appreciate all the assistance that Glen has given.

The vault toilet at Ellis Creek was faded and received a fresh coat of paint to prevent deterioration.

## **Maintenance**

County staff is on the trail every week. Maintenance activities are done as they see the need. Trees and boulders that have fallen in the trail are relocated and various other issues are noted and scheduled for a future time. Weekly staff presence on the trail allows the County to monitor trail conditions, and address illegal bypasses and other hazards as these changes develop.

Here are some of the activities completed in 2024:

- The maintenance shed at Ellis Creek was completed. This will provide a location for the County to store the pumper truck and some extra parts close to the trail.
- Staff removed sediment from several of the dissipators near the Loon Lake intertie and out to Arnolds Rock, clearing out about 292 5-gallon buckets.
- The Rubicon Trail sign, Ellis Creek restroom, and the Wentworth Springs Kiosk all received some attention with paint, repairs and sealing.

The extensive work done in 2023 with the assistance of Veerkamp Engineering from Wentworth Spring to Ellis Creek, County staff were able to address several other issues that our volunteers usually take care of. Some of the accomplishments were excavating dissipaters, adding tons of rock, repairing water bars and moving large boulders to improve drainage.





**Ellis Creek Maintenance Shed**



**Ellis Creek Restroom**





**Cleaning Dissipators**



**Wentworth Springs Kiosk**





Rubicon Trail sign

## Educational Events

County staff along with State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVR), and Jeep Jamboree were at the El Dorado County Fair on June 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>. The Parks and Trails division had a booth and used the opportunity to engage with the public about the Rubicon trail, offering education and advice about respecting the trail. Bandanas, stickers, and brochures were given out to the public. As in previous years, the Rubicon exhibits draw a large number of interested members of the public and staff provides information about the types of vehicles used on the trail, and safe and sanitary trail use.

Staff attended Jeep Jamboree to assist with Camp Rubicon. This event provides fun activities to teach kids about OHV safety, responsible trail use, and vehicle maintenance. County staff gave a presentation on the history of the trail and answered questions the group had as part of our education grant criteria. The kid's activities were handled this year by Tread Lightly.

In November Tim Canavarro attended the OHV Safety week at Prairie City State OHV to promote Rubicon trail etiquette and safety. Tim passed out bandanas and stickers and spoke with many people about Rubicon Trail access.



**Kids Camp 2024**



**Kids Camp 2024**



## Inspections

### March 8 – Report:

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the trail head at Loon Lake. Conditions have not presented any visible melt, and all areas observed were covered in snow. The weather was clear and sunny. BMPs were covered in snow with drainage areas working as designed. Travel was descent in the morning with temps rising later making the conditions to soft for travel to the Wentworth & Post Pile areas.

**County Assessment:** Out of the 7 inspection sites 5 were inspected. All sites were covered in snow with no visible water.

### March 27 – Report:

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the trail head at Loon Lake. Snow depths have begun to show signs of melt. The weather was clear to partly cloudy. BMPs @ Ellis Intertie were covered in snow with Drainage areas working as designed. The drainage at the top of Post Pile grade is working perfectly with the water exiting the trail as designed and minimal exposure of trail within the inspection area. Travel was descent in the morning with temps rising later making the conditions to soft for travel to the Wentworth & points further east from Ellis Creek.

**County Assessment:** Out of the 7 inspection sites 2 were inspected. Ellis Intertie is still covered in snow where Post Pile is starting to show trail features @ the inspection site.

### April 9 – Report:

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the trail head at Loon Lake. Snow depths have begun to show signs of melt. The weather was clear and sunny. BMPs at Ellis Intertie were covered in snow with BMP depressions starting to show. Walker Hill was covered in snow. Soup Bowl trail drainage functioning well as designed. Winter Camp drainage on the north side working as designed. Little Sluice is covered in snow. Post Pile water crossing is greatly improved from last years BMP work.

**County Assessment:** Out of the 7 inspection sites, 6 were inspected. Ellis Intertie, Little Sluice, and Walker Hill are still covered in snow. Winter Camp, Soup Bowl, and Post Pile BMP's working very well as designed.

### May 7 – Report:

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the trail head at Loon Lake. Snow depths have diminished greatly as result of the temps holding near the 40's overnight increasing the melt. The weather was clear and sunny. BMPs at Ellis Intertie were exposed and working as designed. Post Pile site was greatly improved last fall, and the result is phenomenal with all water crossing trail as it should. Wentworth Springs area is holding snow due to tree coverage with drainage functioning as designed. Due to time restrictions from surface conditions staff focused on areas west of, and including, Ellis Creek Intertie.

**County Assessment:** Out of the 7 inspection sites, 3 were inspected. Ellis Intertie, Post Pile & Wentworth Springs BMPs are working very well as designed.



**May 14 – Report:**

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the trail head at Loon Lake. Snow depths have diminished greatly as result of the temps holding near the 50's on average increasing the melt. The snow is mostly gone from the BMPs in the Ellis Intertie area with all features working as designed. The Walker Hill site is surrounded with snow still and the inspection area showing very little water on the trail / working as designed. The drain @ Soup Bowl remains clear and effective resulting in low water depths again. Winter Camp is draining as designed to the north keeping the water off of the hardened trail surface. Little Sluice is still mostly covered in snow. Due to time restrictions from trail clearing (downed trees) staff focused on areas east of, and including, Ellis Creek Intertie.

**County Assessment:** Out of the 7 inspection sites, 5 were inspected. All sites that were visited are working very well as designed.

**May 29 & June 6 – Report:**

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the forest road 14N05/ Ellis Creek. The snow & water are completely gone from the BMPs in the Ellis Intertie area with some moisture in the area. The Post Pile site is still draining across trail as designed with water depth very low and zero water traveling down trail as in years past. The Wentworth Springs site is rid of water with little moisture in the base remaining. Staff returned on June 6 to inspect the remaining 4 sites.

**County Assessment:** Out of the 7 inspection sites 3 were visited on 5-29 and the remaining 4 were visited on 6-6. All 7 sites that were visited have held up well & are working as designed. At this point the monitoring for the season is complete due to lack of snowpack and limited water depths in the inspection areas.

**December 11 – Report:**

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the Wentworth Springs entrance. There was little snow from previous storms with some standing water in areas. This kicks off our 2025 monitoring season.

**County Assessment:** All 7 sites that were visited have held up well & are working as designed. This is the kickoff of our monitoring season for late 2024 going into 2025.

**Hazardous Material Removal**

The Hazmat sheds were cleaned out during the annual fire suppression inspection. The damage at the Tahoma shed was repaired by Tahoe Basin Management Unit Staff. A new sign to replace the weathered sign at Loon Lake has been requested and will be installed when it is ready.

## Education

The Education message for 2024 was Sedimentation. Our 2025 message will be “Stay on the Trail.” This message is to focus on habitat and sensitive species protection as well as protecting the trail. New bandanas are currently being designed for the 2025 season.



## Law Enforcement

### **2024 Rubicon Trail Patrol Report**

Prepared by Sergeant Paul Hadjes

The 2024 Summer Season Rubicon Trail patrol began on May 26, 2024, and ran until September 15, 2024. During the operational period of May 26 through September 15, 2024, EDSO engaged in patrol operations every weekend, Friday through Sunday and extended those hours on several event and holiday weeks. The unit logged 855 hours of patrol time in 2024, interacting with roughly 6,400 trail users and 3,800 vehicles. Enforcement actions addressed resource damage, trespassing, and registration violations. OHV Deputies responded to various incidents, including lost or injured persons and disabled vehicles, and assisted EDSO Echo 1 in a search and rescue of a 71-year-old male. The unit issued 38 warnings, three citations, and made one arrest.

Measurable totals include:

- 855 hours of Deputy Hours on the trail
- 3,800 vehicles encountered on the trail.
- Over 6,400 people on the trail
- Forty-seven enforcement contacts
- Thirty-eight warnings
- Three citations
- One arrest

## **Grants**

The Rubicon Trail Operations and Maintenance (O&M) grant for FY 2022 was set to expire on 10/31/2023 and was extended to 10/31/2024 to provide funding for FY 2023 and FY 2024. The total project amount was \$298,242 with the grant amount at \$220,698 and \$77,544 in match. The O&M grant funded trail operations and maintenance, restroom cleaning and pumping, and monitoring activities.

The Rubicon Trail Education grant for FY 2024 was awarded in the amount of \$109,340 with a grant amount of \$78,152 and \$31,188 in match. This grant provides funding for educational materials, outreach and events, Park Aide to staff the Loon Lake Trailhead kiosk, and spill kit materials that are distributed for free to trail users.

In FY 2023 the County was awarded a three-year Rubicon Trail Planning grant that expires 9/30/2026 to complete thirty percent design plans, environmental reporting, and public engagement for the expansion of the Tahoma Trailhead parking lot. The County is working with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and a contractor to prepare the plans and environmental documents public outreach of the project will begin in Spring of 2025.

In FY 2020 the County was awarded a three-year Rubicon Trail Development grant that was extended through 11/30/2024 to construct a maintenance building at Ellis Creek to provide onsite storage for equipment and maintenance shop space to repair the custom-built pumper truck and other maintenance needs on the trail. The total project cost was \$255,998, with a grant amount of \$186,875 and \$66,123 in match. The building was completed in October 2024.

## **Conclusion**

Through the efforts of county staff, volunteers, contractors, agencies and many others, the Rubicon Trail continues to be a world class destination for OHV users as well as hikers, campers and other nature enthusiast. The 2024 year involved re-assessing the Adopt-a-Trail program, staff changes and training, and Grant program changes. Everyone's efforts toward keeping the trail safe, clean, and open remained the priority of the entire Rubicon Trail community.