



# Rubicon Trail 2025

## Annual Report

Report of maintenance activities, projects, and summary of the 2025 Rubicon season

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# Rubicon Trail

## 2025 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. This 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 and Trails Division (Parks Division). With the support of both the community and the Board of Supervisors, Parks Division and partners continue to meet the conditions of the USFS easement (Resolution 117-2012) to maintain and manage the Trail right-of-way, to protect and preserve soil and vegetative cover, and prevent soil erosion.

### Adopt-A-Trail Program

In 2025, the Adopt-A-Trail (AAT) program was relaunched with great reception from the AAT volunteers who came together to make sure every section was adopted. Several of the long-time, dedicated AAT volunteers and the County staff team attended a 2025 AAT kick-off meeting at the Ellis Creek maintenance shed in June. Best Management Practices (BMPs) were discussed, and great suggestions were made for improving digital record keeping through the County's ArcGIS Field Apps mapping system which is used to track all BMPs on the Trail and the associated maintenance and operations work conducted by staff and volunteers.

We are very grateful to the AAT groups that were able to complete work on the Trail in the 2025 season and reported their time and performance. Those volunteer hours apply towards match hours for grant funding which helps tremendously with keeping the program funded and operational. AAT volunteer support is critical to the County's efforts to maintain the Trail and its 16 adopt a trail segments.



*Adopt-A-Trail volunteer meeting at the County's Ellis Creek maintenance shed*

## Adopt-A-Trail Segments

The following table outlines the Adopt-A-Trail Program segments including location, length, and which user group adopted the segment.

<b>Segment Number</b>	<b>Segments</b>	<b>Length of Segment</b>	<b>Adopted by</b>
1	<b>Francis Cow Camp</b> - Airport Flat Turnoff to Wentworth Springs City	6.07 miles	Mud Suckers 4WD
2	<b>Wentworth</b> - Wentworth Springs City to Junction Loon Lake Intertie	1.84 miles	Madhatters 4x4
3	<b>Loon Lake Intertie #1</b> - Kiosk to Whale Bone	1.64 miles	Georgetown Stump Jumpers
4	<b>Loon Lake Intertie #2</b> -Whale Bone to Tie-in.		Auburn Jeep Club
5	<b>Ellis Creek</b> - Intertie to 1.6	1.0 miles	ECV 86
6	<b>Ellis Creek B</b> - 1.6 to Below Walker Rock		Bun Trail Welder
7	<b>Walker Rock</b> - Walker Rock to Benchmark above Walker Hill	.70 miles	Sierra Treasure hunters
8	<b>Soup Bowl</b> - Crest above Walker to Winter Camp	.40 miles	El Dorado Rock Crawlers (EDRC)/ Daystar Products
9	<b>Little Sluice</b> - Winter Camp to Property Line - Spider	.5 miles	SLO Crawlers
10	<b>Arnold's Rock</b> - Property Line - Spider to Egg Rock (Indian Bypass)	.78 miles	Russ and Janet Watkins/MTA
11	<b>Old True Big Sluice</b> - Old Sluice turnoff to Egg Rock	.60 miles	RTF
12	<b>Mechanic's Pit</b> - Egg Rock to Buck Island Dam	.72 miles	RTF
13	<b>Buck Island</b> - Buck Island Dam to Dive off	.53 miles	RTF
14	<b>Big Sluice</b> - Dive off to Sawtooth	.48 miles	Jeep USA
15	<b>Rubicon Bridge</b> - Sawtooth to Rubicon Bridge	.32 miles	MetalCloak / NorCal 4 wheelers
16	<b>Rubicon Springs</b> - Rubicon Bridge to Property Line	1.02 miles	Jeepers Jamboree

Volunteer activities include basic Trail maintenance such as moving fallen trees or errant boulders; organizing work parties to clean energy rock dissipators, rebuild rock inlets and outlet protections; and various other Trail maintenance items.

In the 2025 season, AAT volunteers achieved the following:

**Madhatters 4x4**: In August 2025, twenty-five (25) Madhatters volunteers worked a total of 204 hours on the Wentworth segment clearing and removing sediment from dissipaters and rock outlets.

Madhatters 4x4 AAT Segment at Wentworth



*Rock outlet before clearing*



*Rock outlet after clearing*

**ECV 86**: In October 2025, seven (7) ECV 86 volunteers worked a total of 31.5 hours on the Ellis Creek segment clearings dissipaters of sediment and clearing drainages on the Trail.

**RTF:** In November 2025, three (3) volunteers worked a total of 27 hours at Old True Big Sluice and Mechanics Pit removing sediment and clearing debris from the trail.

Rubicon Trail Foundation at Old True Big Sluice



County staff is on the Trail weekly during the season approximately May through October. If there are projects trail users would like to accomplish, please call the Parks Division's Program Coordinator, Tim Canavarro, at **530.621.5554** to discuss. We are open to your ideas or suggestions.

## Energy Rock Dissipator Sediment Removal

Every year, volunteers assist County staff with cleaning and preparing energy rock dissipators for the winter season. The energy rock dissipators are BMPs that help address water saturation issues and runoff. The dissipators are specifically designed to capture and drain excessive stormwater to keep the Trail protected from sedimentation issues and prevent runoff into the adjacent watershed. The sediment removed in 2025 was 5.841 cubic yards, which was the result of 236 buckets worth of sediment removed by volunteers. Madhatters 4x4 removed 3.2 cubic yards and ECV 86 removed 2.1 cubic yards. The Rubicon Trail Foundation (RTF) volunteers removed .55 cubic yards. The table below displays the history of sediment removal from 2015 to 2025. Cubic yards are calculated by multiplying 5-gallon buckets by 0.02475. Water year type is determined by the California Data Exchange Center (CDEC). In 2025, the water type was below normal illuding to potentially lower volumes of runoff and in turn less sediment being transferred.

Year	Number of Buckets	Sediment Removed (Cubic Yards)	Water Year Type
2015	620	15.52	Drought year, warm temps, lack of snowpack
2016	436.5	10.91	Average snowpack, 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
2025	236	5.841	Below normal

## County Activities

### Staffing

In 2025, County staff consisted of Zachary (Zach) Perras (Parks Manager), Brian Bettencourt, (Senior Parks and Trail Maintenance Worker), Nick Howle (Parks and Trail Maintenance Worker), and Tim Canavarro (Parks Program Coordinator). Brian and Nick performed most of the heavy lifting, servicing the toilets and clearing debris such as logs or boulders that have fallen on the Trail. They would often utilize fallen logs to delineate Trail boundaries. Tim primarily works with GIS implementation and coordinating volunteer efforts. He also rides along on the Trail when necessary to assist with maintenance as well as update GIS monitoring locations. The program is further supported by admin staff, including Jessica Araiza (Parks Admin Tech) who oversees procurement and admin for Trail maintenance and operations, and Shannon McDonald (Parks Admin Analyst II) who prepares and manages grant funding for the program.

Alan Pitts returned as seasonal extra help in 2025 to staff the Loon Lake Trailhead kiosk. Parks Division also recruited River Steen to assist with educational efforts at the Loon Lake Kiosk. The seasonal staff engaged with trail users on safe and responsible use of the Trail, distributed spill kits, WAG bags (portable human waste kit) and bandanas, and provided general information about the Trail.

This season the Parks Division team had to say farewell to Nick Howle who is now with the Grounds Maintenance team supporting the County's Henningsen Lotus Park. While we miss him greatly on the team, we are thrilled that he continues to work with Parks Division through his new role with Grounds. The Parks team would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to Nick for his dedication and enthusiasm during his time working on the Trail, and we wish him well in his new position!



*Nick with the Rubicon Trail sign at Loon Lake Trailhead*

## Restrooms and Pumping

There are twelve (12) toilets that are pumped from Ellis Creek to the east side of Buck Island Lake. Brian and Nick cleaned and pumped the toilets almost every week during the season (May through October). It is a long day driving out to Buck Island and back, usually taking about 16 hours.

Rubicon Trail Foundations (RTF) Mid-Trail staff member Glenn also helped with stocking toilet paper and checking the restroom conditions. Glenn and Brian communicated weekly, and Glenn provides useful information to Brian about what supplies or maintenance the restrooms need. We greatly appreciate all the assistance that Glenn has given.

## Maintenance

County staff is on the Trail every week during the season (May through October). Maintenance activities are completed on the Trail as required, while larger projects are identified, and staff plan and schedule future project workdays to complete the work. Typical maintenance activities include relocating trees and boulders that have fallen in the Trail and delineating the Trail with downed logs in areas where there is evidence of users driving off trail. Weekly staff presence on the Trail allows the County to monitor conditions and address illegal bypasses and other hazards as these issues develop. Best Management Practices (BMPs), which are practices to manage and control water runoff and sedimentation, are assessed for functionality and condition. During late fall and winter Trail monitoring is performed remotely, weather reports are checked and recorded, and on-site inspections are performed to monitor Trail conditions at seven (7) inspection locations.



*Nick Howle, Parks & Trail Maintenance Worker, training on the County's Polaris RZR which is used for trail inspections*

## Winter Monitoring Inspections

In 2025, County staff conducted winter monitoring inspections in February, March, April, and November. Following is each of the inspection reports and associated photos documenting the trail conditions.

### **February 27 – Report**

**Weather Conditions:** The weather conditions for the Rubicon Trail on February 27 were clear and sunny. The air temperature on the Trail was approximately 47(F) at 9:00 a.m. and about 60(F) around 3:00 p.m.

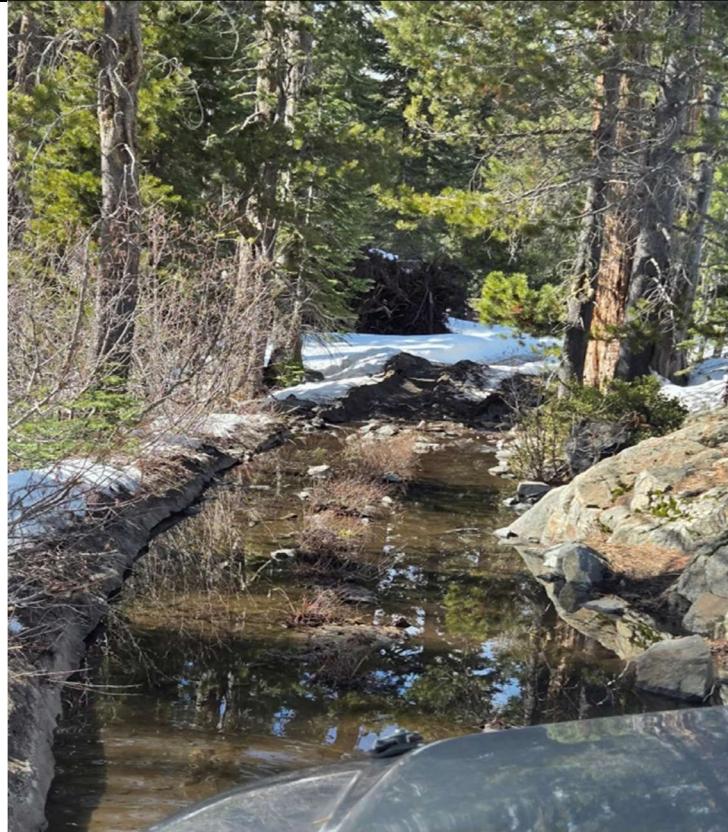


**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff entered the Rubicon Trail using the Loon Lake Trailhead entrance. There was snow from previous storms with 3-4 feet of coverage in most areas. The precipitation for the season had been light in comparison to previous seasons. Comments for each site are included below the respective photos.

**County Assessment:** The five (5) sites

that were visited have held up well and are working as designed. The final two sites (Winter Camp & Little Sluice) were not recorded due to snow depth and warm temperatures making further travel not possible with the equipment on hand.

*Brian Bettencourt, Sr. Parks & Trails  
Maintenance Worker*



**Wentworth Springs Campground**

RT Station 33+65

Water Depths:	0.3 ft.	0.3 ft.	0.2 ft.
Notes:	<b>Some snow damming with drainage working as designed</b>		



**Post Pile**

RT Station 68+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0.2 ft</b>	<b>0.1 ft</b>
Notes:	<b>Water crossing Trail as designed @ top of Post Pile grade</b>		



**Intertie**

RT Station 115+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0.0 ft.</b>
Notes:	Little amounts of water with drainage covered in snow		



**Walker Hill**

RT Station 165+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.0 ft.</b>	<b>0.0 ft.</b>	<b>0.0 ft.</b>
Notes:	<b>Area mostly covered in snow</b>		



### **Soup Bowl**

RT Station 195+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.3 ft</b>	<b>0.2 ft</b>	<b>0.2 ft</b>
Notes:	<b>Water draining off Trail as designed with deep snow in area</b>		

**NO PHOTO AVAILABLE**

**Winter Camp**

RT Station 205+00

Water Depths:	-	-	-
Notes:	<b>Area not visited</b>		

**NO PHOTO AVAILABLE**

**Little Sluice**

RT Station 212+00

Water Depths:	-	-	-
Notes:	<b>Area not visited</b>		

## **March 26 – Report**

**Weather Conditions:** The weather conditions for the Rubicon Trail on March 26 were clear and sunny. The air temperature on the Trail was approximately 50(F) at 9:00 a.m. and about 60(F) around 12:00 p.m.

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff approached the Rubicon Trail at the Loon Lake Trailhead entrance. There was snow from previous storms with 3-4 feet of coverage in most areas. The precipitation for the season has been light in comparison to previous seasons.

**County Assessment:** None of the seven (7) sites were visited due to the snow conditions being too soft making travel not possible.

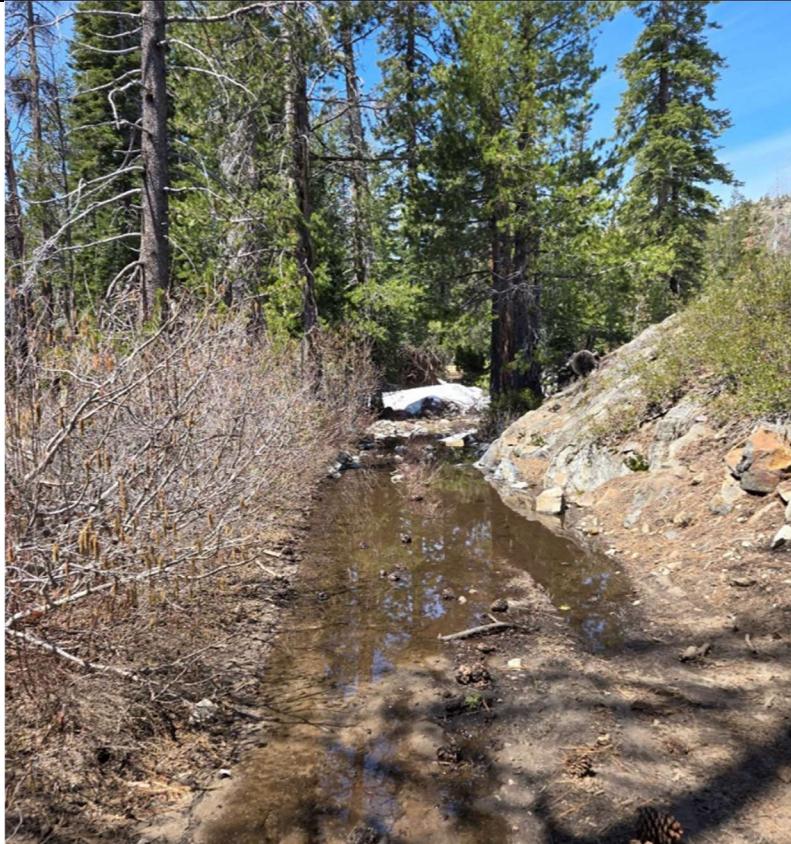
No photos or inspections were documented.

## **April 22 – Report**

**Weather Conditions:** The weather conditions for the Rubicon Trail on April 22 were clear and sunny. The air temperature on the Trail was approximately 35(F) at 7:30 a.m. and about 65(F) around 3:00 p.m.

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff approached the Rubicon Trail at the Loon Lake Trailhead entrance. There was still snow remaining in some areas. The season as a whole was light as far as snow depth versus recent years.

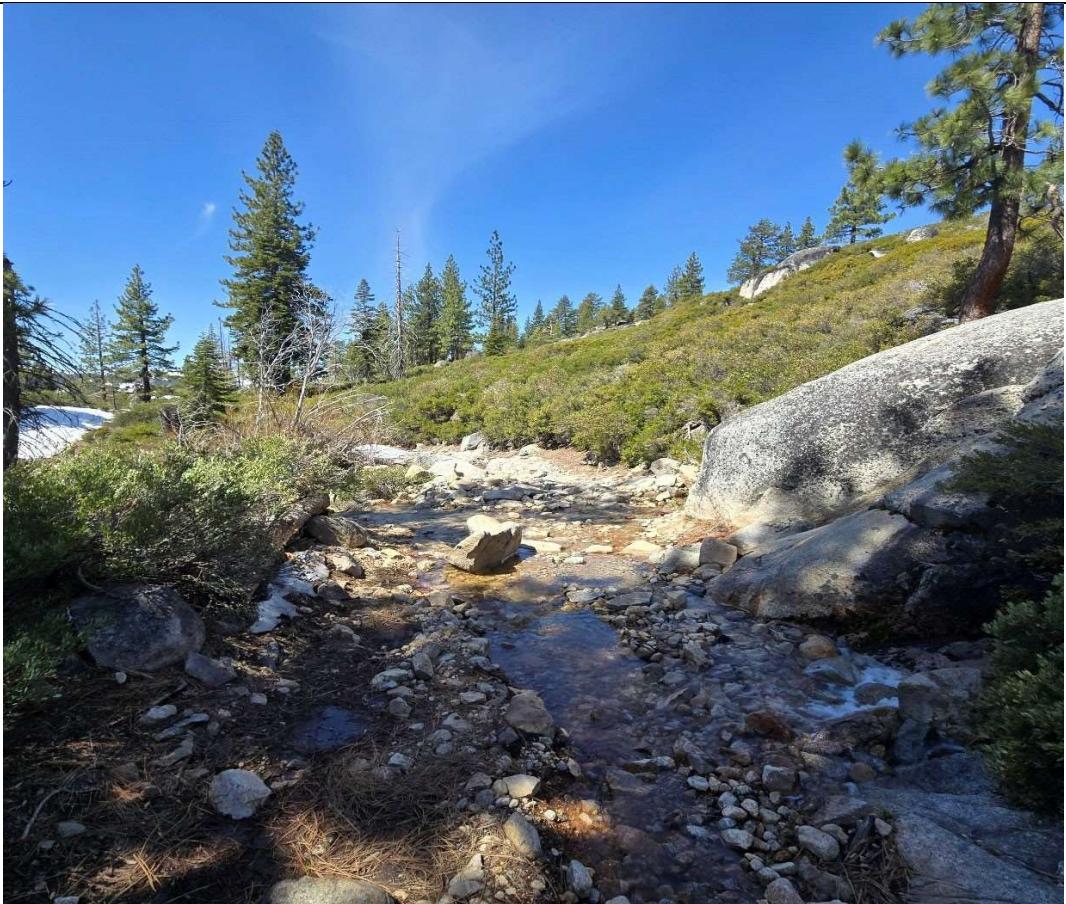
**County Assessment:** All of the seven (7) sites were visited with photos and findings below.



#### Wentworth Springs Campground

RT Station 33+65

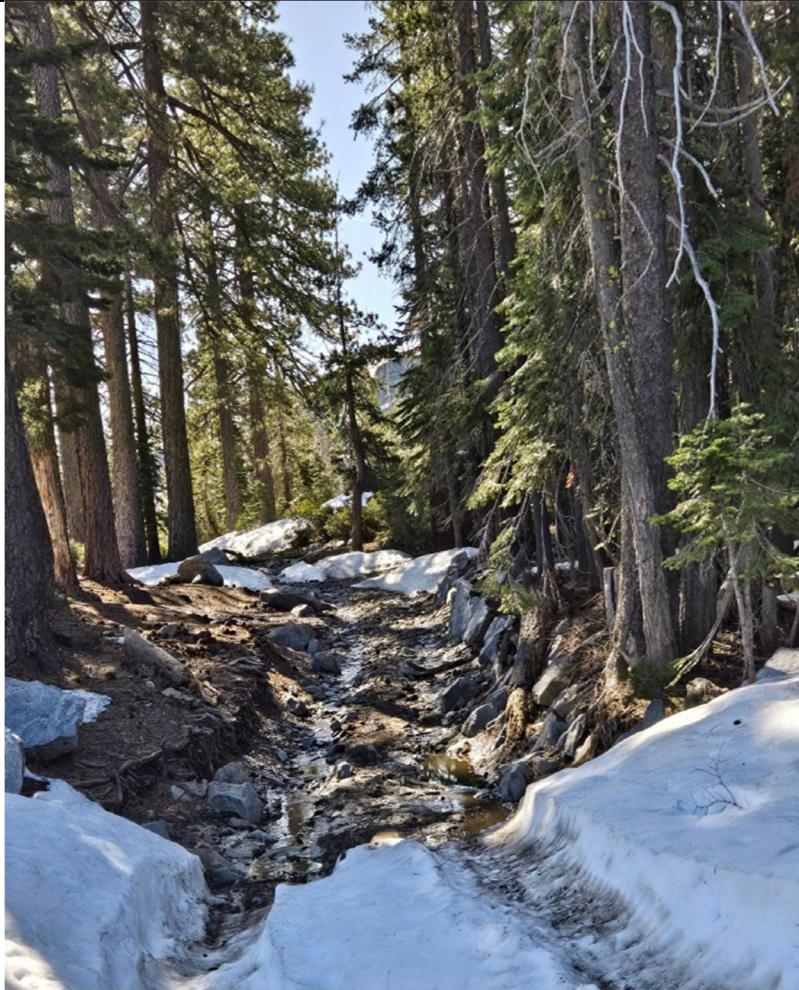
Water Depths:	<b>0.2 ft.</b>	<b>0 ft.</b>	<b>0.2 ft.</b>
Notes:	<b>Water draining to south as designed</b>		



**Post Pile**

RT Station 68+00

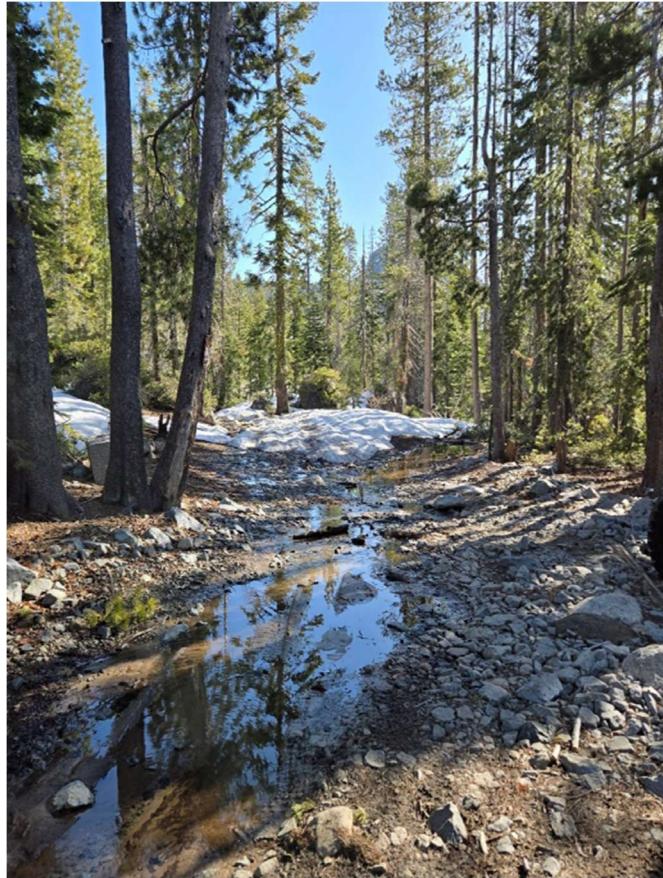
Water Depths:	<b>0.3 ft.</b>	<b>0.2 ft.</b>	<b>0 ft.</b>
Notes:	<b>Water crossing Trail &amp; draining as designed</b>		



**Walker Hill**

RT Station 165+00

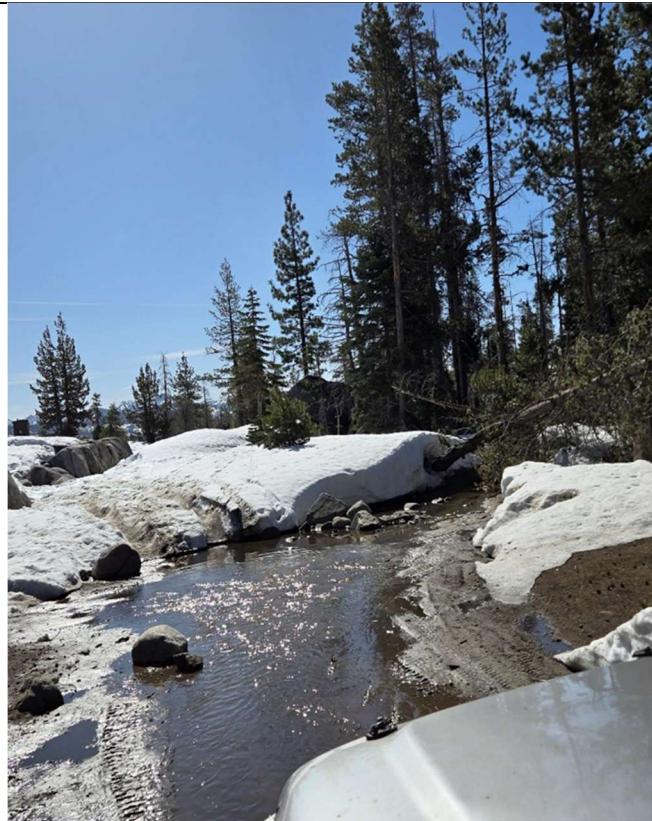
Water Depths:	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0.0 ft.</b>
Notes:	<b>Little water on Trail / visible water draining properly</b>		



**Intertie**

RT Station 115+00

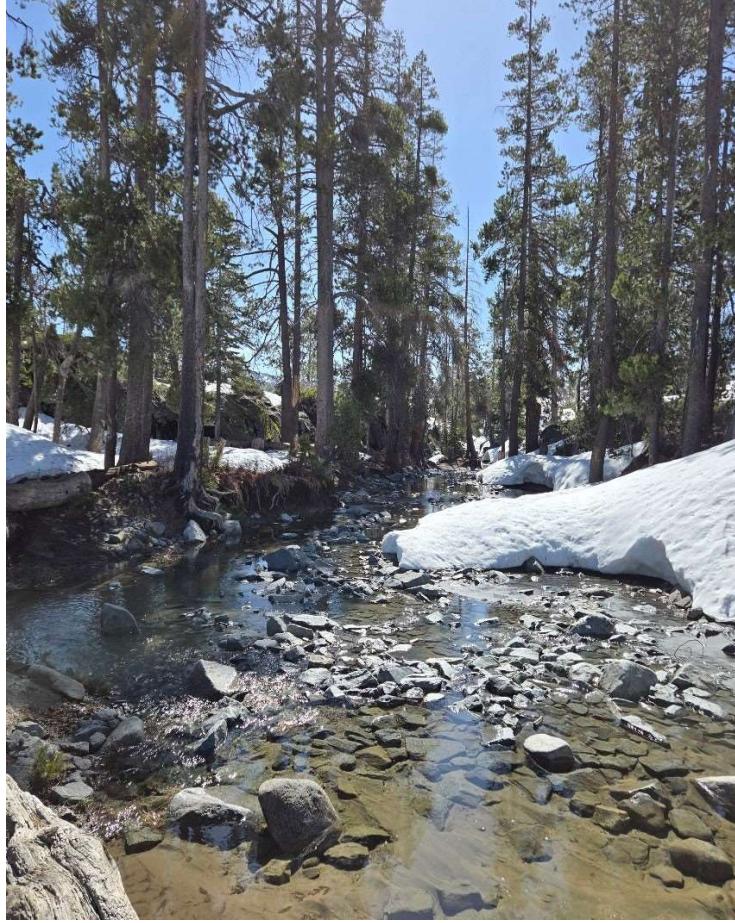
Water Depths:	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0 ft.</b>	<b>0.2 ft.</b>
Notes:	BMP working as designed with some snow remaining.		



### **Soup Bowl**

RT Station 195+00

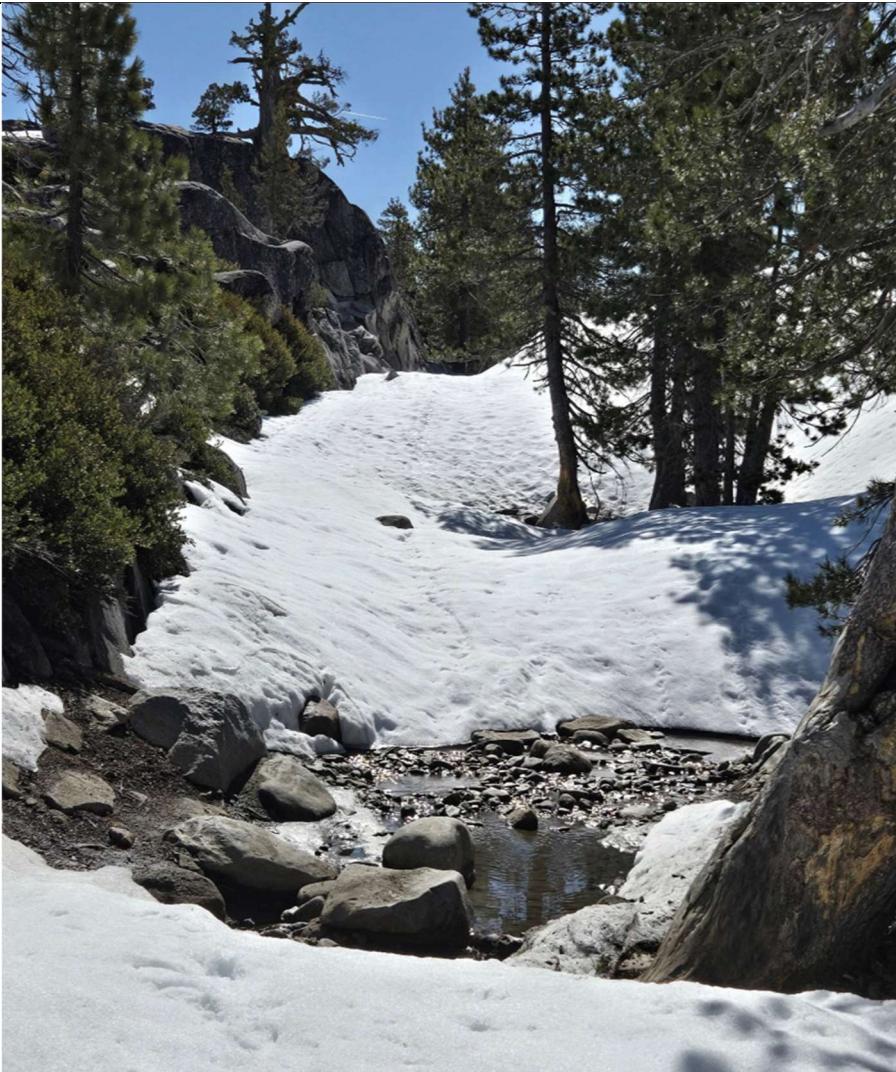
Water Depths:	<b>0.1 ft</b>	<b>0.2 ft.</b>	<b>0.3 ft.</b>
Notes:	<b>Water flowing off Trail to the east as designed (Leaning/fell tree to be cleaned from above drain this summer)</b>		



**Winter Camp**

RT Station 205+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.5 ft.</b>	<b>0.3 ft.</b>	<b>0.2 ft.</b>
Notes:	<b>Water flowing/draining as designed</b>		



**Little Sluice**

RT Station 212+00

Water Depths:	0.1 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.
Notes:	<b>Area mostly covered in snow.</b>		

## **November 14 – Report**

**Weather Conditions:** The weather conditions for the Rubicon Trail on November 14 were overcast with intermittent rain. The air temperature on the Trail was approximately 42(F) at 8:30 a.m. and about 45(F) around 12:00 p.m.

**Trail Conditions / Observations:** Staff approached the Rubicon Trail from Wentworth Springs and entered the Trail at Ellis Creek. Conditions were wet from previous rain.

**County Assessment:** All seven (7) inspection sites were observed with BMPs functioning.



#### **Wentworth Springs Campground**

RT Station 33+65

Water Depths:	<b>0.2 ft</b>	<b>0.1 ft</b>	<b>0.1 ft</b>
Notes:	<b>Drainage on west side functioning as designed</b>		



**Post Pile**

RT Station 68+00

Water Depths:	0.1 ft.	0.1 ft.	0 ft.
Notes:	<b>Previous maintenance performing as designed</b>		



### Intertie

RT Station 115+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.2 ft.</b>	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0.1 ft.</b>
Notes:	BMPs functioning as designed		



**Walker Hill**

RT Station 165+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.2 ft.</b>	<b>0.1 ft.</b>	<b>0.0 ft.</b>
Notes:	<b>BMPs functioning as designed</b>		



**Soup Bowl**

RT Station 195+00

Water Depths:	0.1 ft	0.2 ft	0.3 ft
Notes:	<b>BMPs functioning as designed. Previously cleared rock outlet.</b>		



**Winter Camp**

RT Station 205+00

Water Depths:	<b>0.3 ft</b>	<b>0.4 ft</b>	<b>0.2 ft</b>
Notes:	<b>BMPs functioning as designed</b>		



**Little Sluice**

RT Station 212+00

Water Depths:	0.2 ft	0.2 ft	0.1 ft
Notes:	<b>BMPs functioning as designed.</b>		

## Education

Education about Rubicon Trail safety, responsible use, and preservation is a very important aspect of the program. County staff engages with trail users, new and experienced, to provide information and education as well as foster collaboration.

Educational bandanas for 2025 were completely revamped and well received by the public and trail users. The bandana program has become legendary and highly collectible. Every year, the bandana focuses one of the “4S” themes which include sedimentation, sanitation, safety, and spills. The theme this year was sedimentation to educate users about the importance of staying on trail to prevent sedimentation issues and resource damage. For the new design, Parks Division partnered with Arts and Culture El Dorado and local artist, Nate Reifke, to develop the design. We are thrilled with the look and feel of the new bandana and look forward to future collaborations.



2025 Rubicon Trail Bandana designed by local artist, Nate Reifke

## Educational Events

County staff along with State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVR), and Jeepers Jamboree hosted booths at the El Dorado County Fair on June 12 – 15. Parks Division staff engaged with over 400 members of the public about the Rubicon Trail, offering education and information about respecting the Trail including safe and responsible use. Educational materials such as the bandanas, stickers, and brochures were distributed to the public. As in previous years, the Rubicon Trail exhibit of OHV vehicles drew a large number of interested members of the public and staff provided information about the types of vehicles used on the Trail, and safe and sanitary Trail use.

Parks Program Coordinator, Tim Canavarro, hosted an educational outreach booth at the Cantina for the Con held in August. Tim engaged with over 250 trail users to provide information and distribute bandanas, brochures, and kids' activity books, as well as had several conversations about volunteer opportunities on the Trail and the County's Trail maintenance program.

Parks Manager, Zachary Perras, and Senior Parks and Trail Maintenance Worker, Brian Bettencourt, attended the Jeepers Jamboree Camp Rubicon to assist Tread Lightly with delivering hands-on training to the kids and their parents in attendance. This event provides fun activities to teach kids about OHV safety, responsible trail use, and vehicle maintenance. Sheriff Leikauf from the El Dorado Sheriff Office and several deputies also attended.



*Field Training at Jeepers Jamboree Camp Rubicon 2025*



*EDSO Rubicon Trail patrol unit at Camp Rubicon*

## **Law Enforcement**

### **2025 Rubicon Trail Patrol Report**

Prepared by Sergeant Paul Hadjes

The 2025 summer season Rubicon Trail patrol began on May 23, 2025, and ran until September 15, 2025. During this operational period, El Dorado Sheriff Office (EDSO) engaged in patrol operations every weekend, Friday through Sunday and extended those hours on several event and holiday weekends. The unit logged 873 hours of patrol time in 2025, interacting with roughly 19,317 trail users and 7,724 vehicles. Enforcement actions addressed resource damage, trespassing, and registration violations. OHV Deputies responded to various disabled vehicles as well as following up on numerous resource damage incidents. The unit issued thirty-eight warnings, two citations, and made five arrests.

EDSO measurable totals include:

- 873 Deputy hours on the Trail
- 7,724 vehicles encountered on the Trail
- 19,317+ people encountered on the Trail
- 170 enforcement contacts
- 38 warnings
- 2 citations
- 5 arrests

## Grants

### *Ground Operations and Maintenance*

Although the County was not awarded a G24 State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVR) Operations and Maintenance (O&M) grant for work performed in calendar year 2025, Parks Division continued sanitation operations to keep the toilet facilities clean, and Trail staff conducted several trail delineation projects to keep trail users on the designated Rubicon Trail and prevent resource-damage, as well as worked with Adopt-A-Trail volunteers to prepare the Trail for the winter season.

In October 2025, the County was awarded a G25 OHMVR O&M grant in the amount of \$161,540 for work in 2026. This grant will fund Trail maintenance, a delineation project at Soup Bowl, a gabion basket repair project at Buck Island, toilet facility cleaning and pumping, and winter monitoring activities. The County is also undergoing the post-federal process for the Recreational Trails Program intent-to-award grant, and if approved, the funding will be used to pair with OHMVR O&M grant funding for work performed in 2026.

### *Education and Safety*

The G24 OHMVR Education and Safety grant for 2025 in the amount of \$78,152 was successfully used to develop the Rubicon Trail Bandana “4S” educational campaign that focused on the theme of “sedimentation” in partnership with Arts & Culture El Dorado. Additionally County Staff participated in providing educational instruction to aid in training the next generation of trail users Trail stewardship practices in partnership with Tread Lightly at Jeep Jamboree’s Camp Rubicon. County Staff also hosted a booth at the El Dorado County Fair; purchased materials for spill kits; and engaged Trail users and distributed spill kits and educational materials at the Loon Lake Trailhead kiosk.

In October 2025, the County was awarded a G25 Education and Safety grant in the amount of \$70,227 for work in 2026. This grant will provide funding to conduct two field trainings on Trail etiquette and best practices, provide outreach and education at two events, develop the 2026 Rubicon Trail Bandana educational campaign, purchase spill kit materials, and a Park Aide to staff the Loon Lake Trailhead kiosk to distribute materials and provide education.

### *Planning*

In 2023, the County received a three-year OHMVR 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 contracted with a civil engineering firm in 2024, and they conducted public engagement for the project in 2025, which included an online survey and public workshop. The next stage of the project includes completing the environmental reporting. County Parks

Division is now in discussion with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit who is responsible for completing the thirty percent design plans.

In October 2025, the County was awarded a three-year G25 Planning grant in the amount of \$78,373 to contract with a qualified biologist to develop and update the County's Habitat Management Program (HMP) for future Rubicon Trail operations.

## **Conclusion**

The Rubicon Trail remains a premier destination for OHV enthusiasts, hikers, and campers from around the world, bringing significant economic and recreational benefits to El Dorado County.

Its continued accessibility is the direct result of the sustained commitment of County staff, dedicated volunteers, user groups, contractors, partner agencies, and many others who contribute to its stewardship. We extend our profound appreciation to all who support the ongoing preservation and maintenance of this remarkable public resource.