



Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT PNTA PERFORMANCE TRAIL CREWS

What is a Performance Trail Crew?

A PNTA Performance Trail Crew is a trail maintenance and construction team made up of 3–8 people led by an experienced crew leader and managed by the Pacific Northwest Trail Association. These seasonal employees are paid for their work, given on-the-job training and camp out near work sites on our public lands.

Where do Performance Trail Crews work?

Performance Trail Crews work on public lands on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT) and adjacent trails. The PNT is a 1200-mile pathway between Glacier National Park in Montana, and Olympic National Park in Washington State.

Crews may work anywhere on the PNT in Washington. Each crew typically serves a specific region, currently: Olympic Peninsula, Puget Sound and North Cascades, the Okanogan, and Northeast Washington. We look forward to hosting crews in Northern Idaho and Northwest Montana, too.

Rendezvous locations may vary case-by-case, but crews typically report to a regional USFS/NPS or PNTA station. At this time there are PNTA stations in Sedro-Woolley (headquarters) and Kettle Falls, Washington.

Where do crew members come from?

Most crew members come from communities and schools near the PNT. While local residency is not required, the PNTA does not provide housing for out-of-area crew members during off-time, and only provides transportation between the work site and rendezvous sites in communities near the trail.

How are Performance Trail Crews managed in the field?

Two or more crew leaders provide 24-hour supervision of each Performance Trail Crew during workweeks. These professional trail stewards have all medical certifications and trainings required to provide safe work environments and respond in the case of an emergency. They also have a passion for outdoor youth education and for providing fun and challenging life experiences.



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How long is a Performance Trail Crew's season?

Performance Trail Crews operate from late-June to mid-August during the prime trailwork season. Performance Trail Crews typically have four or five 80-hour (14-day) workweeks in a season, with each trip lasting from five to ten days. Volunteer and Work-based Learning PNTA trail crews are able to work an extended season wherever conditions allow.

When does the PNTA begin recruitment and hiring?

Timelines may vary per region: western vs. eastern Washington. Applications may open as early as January; call-backs and interviews take place February–May. We strive to reply to all applicants by the end of May.

You can learn about recruiting and hiring events near you by following the PNTA on Facebook. You can also subscribe to our job opportunities email list, the PNTA newsletter, and learn more about these jobs by visiting our website: pnt.org. Contact us at: jobs@pnt.org.

Is prior training or experience needed?

No prior trail work experience is necessary to join a Performance Trail Crew. Crew members receive on-the-job training to work safely and to build and maintain trails to professional standards. Prior experiences from outdoor activities like camping, backpacking, hiking are helpful, but are not required. A summer spent on a trail crew is a great way to learn outdoor skills and explore our public lands.

To get a jumpstart on learning about trail terminology, consider reading the [USFS Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook](#), available on our website: www.pnt.org/jobs.

What do crew members need to bring with them?

A [Packing Checklist](#) of required and recommended clothing and gear can be found on our website: www.pnt.org/jobs.

The PNTA may be able to help crew members get the gear they need to participate. Discuss your needs with our recruiters so that we can arrange for loaner items or help you find discounted or used gear at participating retailers.



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What are the physical requirements of a crew member?

Trail maintenance involves physical work. Crew members must be able to hike long distances on steep trails while carrying a pack and tool, and they must be able to perform manual labor consistently for up to 10 days in an outdoor work environment. Crew members must be able to lift and swing a variety of tools, often while standing in a bent posture.

Before applying, consider whether or not recent injuries or medical conditions (such as severe allergies) can be properly managed in a remote outdoor work environment. Discuss any concerns with your doctor or our recruiters to learn if trail work is right for you.

What tools do crew members use?

Crew members are trained in the safe use of hand tools such as: pick-mattocks, hoes, pulaskis, mcleods, shovels, sledgehammers, loppers, small hand saws, etc. Under the direct supervision of crew leaders with certification, they may also use crosscut saws.

What if I cannot work for the entire season?

Crew members who can provide perfect attendance are strongly preferred. A single unplanned absence can impact the entire crew, which may be forced to work shorthanded for the workweek.

Applicants are encouraged to let us know about planned absences during the application process. In some situations, we may be able to hire reserve crew members as substitutes. Another option is to request to be placed on our waiting list— Trail Crew Reserves. In the event that another crew member cannot complete their season, PNTA will contact those on our waiting list about temporary work opportunities.

Does PNTA provide transportation to projects?

Yes. At the beginning of each workweek crew members meet with their crew leaders at rendezvous points. Together, the trail crew will take PNTA shuttles to worksites and campsites on our public lands. At the end of the workweek, the PNTA shuttles crews back to the same rendezvous point.



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Where do crews live while they work?

PNTA Performance Trail Crews camp near their worksites. Basecamps vary by project and may include developed campgrounds, and dispersed (undeveloped) campsites in either the front country (car camping) or backcountry (backpacking).

What is the daily routine like?

No two days on a trail crew are exactly alike. The work performed may vary with each project or work day. Crew members can expect to learn a lot, work hard, be safe, have fun and get a lot done on the Pacific Northwest Trail.

Average Daily Routine:

- Group breakfast in camp
- Morning stretch and safety meeting
- Trail and outdoor skills training
- Hike and work on the PNT
- Lunch and snack breaks
- Group dinner in camp
- Camp chores
- Personal time after dinner

How does the PNTA ensure the safety of crew members?

The safety of our trail crews is our top priority at the PNTA. Our programs meet or exceed all industry standard risk management protocols. We provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to all crew members and strictly enforce its use. In the field, First Aid/ CPR-certified crew leaders are responsible for the wellbeing of their crews.

- Regular safety meetings and briefings that instill a culture of accountability across the program
- Job Hazard Analysis and Risk Management procedures at or above those of federal partners
- In depth emergency management planning
- Training with intentional focus on all aspects of safety
- Crew leaders with medical certifications
- [Following the PNTA's comprehensive COVID Safety Plan](#)



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Are PNTA trail crews paid for their work?

The PNTA manages both volunteer trail crews, who generously volunteer to do unpaid trail work, and Performance Trail Crews made up of paid seasonal staff. PNTA believes in the value of providing summer work opportunities and training to help create the next generation of outdoor leaders and trail stewards. Wages for PNTA crew members start at or above the Washington State minimum rate, with opportunities for bonuses and awards. Returning crew members and crew leaders are eligible for pay increases.

When are crew members paid?

There are two pay periods each month. The first pay period is from the 1st to the 15th; the second pay period is from the 16th to the 30/31st. Paydays occur one month after the end of a pay period. For example, the PNTA generates paychecks on August 15th for the pay period that ended on July 15th.

What can I do to prepare for the work season?

- Break in your hiking/work boots by going for a walk
- Go hiking and practice layering for different weather conditions
- Carry a backpack loaded with your day hiking gear, lunch and snacks, and a gallon of water
- Practice setting up and sleeping in your tent
- Learn outdoor skills from a local outfitter or trail club. REI stores offer many classes, free of charge

Recommended reading and viewing:

- [US Forest Service Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook](#)
- Lightly on the Land: The SCA Trail-building and Maintenance Manual, by Robert Birkby
- Dirtwork: An Education in the Woods, by Christine Byl
- Read the Leave No Trace Seven Principles™ at: www.lnt.org
- Subscribe to the Pacific Northwest Trail Association's free electronic newsletter