**Wilderness Trail Report**

Name of the person who filled out the form: Molly Travis

Date (s) of visit: 9/6/2014-9/7/2014

Trail Name: Summit Valley Trailhead 8.1 mi to the intersection of South Kelsey Trail. From here is ~3mi to the South Kelsey Trail Head. The thru-hike is around 11.1mi.

*Were there trail obstructions?  (circle one)  Yes****No***

*If yes, please describe them. (Logs down, washouts, snow, etc.)*

The Summit Valley Trail had a few fallen trees that were easily navigable on the trail. 4-5 trees were avoided in the first mile. There are a couple of down trees past the Summit Valley Meadow but most have partially decomposed. Past the turn off to the old lookout, there are new fallen snags and limbs (3-5” in diameter) that require lifting or limbo to get around/under.

Nearing the last mile of the Summit Valley Trail, there is a rocky washout marked with orange flagging tape. Cross this quickly and have good footing.

The South Kelsey Trail has around 5 down trees from the junction of Summit Valley and the SKT just before Elkhorn Bar.

*Were these obstructions navigable by stock animals?****Yes   No***

Some are more difficult than others. The fallen trees on the South Kelsey Trail are not navigable by stock as they require crawling under or straddling over them. On the Summit Valley Trail, most trees are navigable. The washout on this trail, however, is very narrow and might not support or fit stock. However, there has been recent evidence of stock use on the Summit Valley Trail.

*Describe grazing areas/grasses growing.*

Summit Valley Trail has three very large meadows to graze in. The South Kelsey is much more cramped and the best grazing location would be at Gunbarrel camp. Grasses in these areas are unidentified.

*Was there water access?* ***Yes   No***

*Describe the nature of the water access. (Streams, lakes, spigots, dried up water sources, etc.)*

There were many dry streambeds along the Summit Valley Trail. The only water available is a spring 45 ft. South east from the large summit valley campsite. The water looked dirtier this time although it was still cold, possibly due to increased foot traffic around the water source. This is the only access to water found along the Summit Valley Trail for another 6 miles. The second water access is marked by a yellow, diamond-shaped sign on the trail and appears as an arm of the Eight Mile Creek that intersects the trail on the map **HOWEVER** there is currently **no water located** in this secondary source. Please pack in as much water as personally necessary for the Summit Valley Trail.

The South Kelsey Trail has plenty of water access: many streams and waterfalls on the trail and river/creek access at Buck creek, Eight mile creek, and Harrington Creek, all of which merge into the south fork of the Smith River. Some of the streams are currently dried up but some are still flowing well.

***Campsite locations:***

*Campsite quality—surface comfort (flat or sloping, smooth or bumpy, dry or wet, dirt, rock, or sand, etc.), scenic views from site, shaded or open, proximity to water, ease of access to water, water quantity and quality, annoyances (bugs, cattle, cow pies, etc.)*

Summit valley meadow campsite is comfortable and established. It is large, dry and spacious with dirt and young grass. The meadow and trail did not have many bugs or flies. A beautiful open meadow with great stars at night, and on a clear night you can see the Milky Way! Water can be found 45ft southeast on the trail in a very small cool pool or possible underground spring. There is still debris left from the dilapidated shelter, caution is advised near shelter remains as broken glass and rusted nails or metal bits may be present.

There is a small campsite located around 7-8 miles in from the trailhead (closest to the South Kelsey Trail junction) that is hidden among the oaks and madrones. It is about .25-.5 miles away from a branch of 8-mile creek that has water in it during the beginning of the season but is currently dry.

*Campsite quantity—number and size of sites, number of people/tents that can fit in each site*

At summit valley meadow campsite there are 3 possible pre-established sites each site can fit 2-3 tents. The valley is large and more sites can easily be created, although this is not advised. 0.1 miles from the spur trail to the lookout on Summit Valley there is a large clearing on the ridge. The lookout provides many dispersed campsites on dry rocky soil.   The campsites are not nearly as appealing or comfortable as the lower meadow campsite and are further away from the nearest water source. The same small dry rocky campsites have been established along the short spur trail to the summit valley lookout. The look out offers spectacular views of the ridge tops and the pacific to the west. Rubble from the old lookout is still present, with wires, metal, and glass concentrated in the area of its previous existence.

Plenty of comfortable campsites can be found along the South Kelsey Trail. The Eight Mile Creek campsite is a small campsite with room for about 4 tents. There is a large campfire ring and a small bank near a beautiful swimming hole where Eight Mile Creek meets with the south fork of the Smith River. A quality campsite on soft moist forest floor surrounded by moss covered rocks, ferns, willows, and Douglas fir. Beautiful stands of the Port Orford cedar can be found along the trail. The mosquitos are bothersome near the campsite but one can find easy relief at the riverbank. About a mile from Eight Mile Creek, the large Elkhorn Bar campsite holds over 6 campsites with room for multiple tents and easy river access. 3.5 miles from the Eight Mile Creek campsite the Gunbarrel campsite holds about 3 different sites with each site holding room for 5-3 tents. Gunbarrel is very grassy and exposed, making it very hot in the summer. The ground is a bit hard and uneven in spots with dry dirt, but the campsites are many and convenient.

*List wildlife seen and general location of sighting. (Mosquitos, bears, snakes, etc.)*

The Summit Valley Trail and South Kelsey Trail were free of bugs and mosquitos, and 8 mile creek camp was pleasant and free of pests. There are plenty of signs of wildlife but no sightings. Bobcat, skunk, and bear scat were a common sight on the Summit Valley Trail and there was bear scat every .25 miles or so, right on the trail! Really cool birds were seen at 8 Mile camp, including the American Dipper, king fisher, & evidence of hawks and northern flickers.

***Trail conditions:***

*How easy was the trail to follow? (Unlabeled forks, absent cairns, indistinct tread, etc.)*

The Summit Valley Trail is pretty easy to follow once you seei the wilderness boundary. It is easy to follow but the trail has become brushier.

The South Kelsey Trail is easy to follow until reaching Gunbarrel Camp, and then one has to look for cairns and tread to find their way to Harrington Creek. There is some flagging across the creek as well as a trail sign. One must look out for the nest of flagging to find the turn off to continue on the rest of the South Kelsey trail (be careful to not go too far and pass it!)

*Were there trail signs? (At forks, at trailhead)*

There is no trail sign at the wilderness boundary on the Summit Valley Trail but there is one at the trailhead off the G-O Road.  0.5 mi from the trailhead the Summit Valley Trail flattens and splits continuing right, heading in the northwesterly direction. The Summit Valley Trail has a Siskiyou wilderness sign. There is a trail sign at the big meadow and a cairn at the side trail to the lookout. At the end, there are multiple signs at the junction of the two trails. There are also mile markers throughout the whole trail.

The South Kelsey Trail has good signage until heading towards Gunbarrel Camp after 8-mile Creek. Mile markers are fading, and there is a fallen sign about 1 mile from Gunbarrel Camp. There is no trail sign after crossing Harrington Creek for the Gunbarrel Trail, only orange flagging tape across the river indicating a crossing area.

*How navigable were creek crossings?*

8 mile creek is very navigable to cross, water is flowing slowly and in the shallowest sections comes up to mid calf/knee. It is necessary to get in the water to cross.

Harrington Creek is a bit faster flowing and comes up to the knee in the deepest sections. You can possibly avoid getting in the water to cross, but the rocks are slippery to stand on.

The South Fork of the Smith River is the fastest moving water to cross but the current is surprisingly manageable. It is deeper than the creeks, and on average will come up to the knee to mid thigh.

*Were there any burned over areas?*

There is a dry and burned area (burned a while ago) section of the Summit Valley Trail, around 5 miles from the start of the trail. It is dense with tan oak, manzanita, brackens, and other disturbance loving/chaparral plants.

*Did you see any wildflowers or poison oak?*

There is mallow, red paintbrush, and some asters growing around and near the big meadow on the Summit Valley Trail. There is some poison oak at the end of the Summit Valley Trail and it is predominantly along the South Kelsey Trail. It has turned red and yellow so it is easier to identify, but has encroached more into the trail so it is impossible not to walk through it in certain sections.