



TRACKING STEP BY STEP... JOEL HARDIN PROFESSIONAL TRACKING SERVICES

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JHPTS VTATI Tracking Course Write Up

Warm Springs Camp, Stanwood, WA.

Date: 04/06/2018 through 04/08/2018

Instructors: Jo Peterson and Kathy Decker

Weather: Rain, heavy at times with one breezy sunny day and temperatures warming up to the mid 60's. This was followed by a cold heavy rain and windy conditions. We should also note that due to weather, we opted to show the new power point presentation on Saturday morning, versus the typical Friday morning showing. Since we had one brand new student that student received hands on instruction from a Basic Tracker on proper stick set up as well as the other necessary fundamentals in the field. This did not hamper the team in any way and all were pleased with the result.

Students: 2 Basic, 4 Novice, 3 Apprentice and 3 Journeyman

Terrain: forest with a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees; the ground surface was heavy duff with native fern species and other small delicate leafy vegetation.

Setting: This training area is a large camp with numerous outbuildings and cabins. The camp is surrounded by well-maintained trails, grass lands and heavy forest. The grounds are immaculate, and all the housing areas are kept up and in good order. The showers, although older, worked fine and easily accommodated our class. The food is plentiful and very good. The cooks accommodated those with meal restrictions and everyone had plenty to eat.

Class Training: Jo and I split our time between the Novice/Basic and the advanced tracking teams.

The Novice/Basic worked level 3 Novice lines of sign. The teams were able to identify numerous ageing factors within their sign line due to the extreme weather pattern over the weekend. The two teams working this sign were to use their proper team configuration and the step by step methodology, to identify several characteristics within the line of sign. Each team met their objective.

The two advanced tracking teams were shown a "surveillance video" of a woman who was behaving in a suspicious manner. The reporting party was the church. This woman was seen walking through a parking lot and entering the woods carrying a black bag. The surveillance video also captured this woman exiting the woods, without the bag. There was no date time stamp on either video.

The objective for these teams was to locate the sign evidence that coincided with the surveillance video, to identify what that person was doing in the woods; to use the teams efficiently and effectively to get the best results and to take notes to assist them with an oral report to the class.

As expected, the teams viewing of the video beforehand (several times) created a mental challenge as they were struggling to disregard what they *remembered* seeing on the video and to concentrate solely on the physical evidence. The teams were able to quickly identify the ingress but soon found the deer and elk living in the area, along with the older human sign of camp attendees, created a challenge.



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Using sign cutting techniques the teams were able to work through the “confusion” locating the various items of physical evidence that this person had discarded. The teams chose, at one point, to utilize “back tracking” to follow the sign. Although they followed the sign successfully, they soon realized the confusion in trying to sort out the correct forward movement and order of evidence depository. We used this as a teaching point as they presented their oral report to the class.

We concluded our class with the successful boarding of Aaron Job with King County Sheriff and Roxanne Strangfeld with Siskiyou County SAR, to Basic Tracker. Congratulations!!