

USFS: Community partners helped create overlook

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community engagement.

The overlook has been in the works for the last couple of years.

“The implementation of the Whychus Creek Wild and Scenic River Plan and the construction of the overlook was completed with a lot of people volunteering and a lot of funding provided by others,” said Kristie Miller, Sisters District Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service.

Miller expressed her gratitude for the role of the community in reaching this milestone.

“The Forest Service would have had significant hurdles to accomplishing [this project] without a lot of people helping us along the way. We may have never been able to build the overlook without all of our partners. We thank them for their support.”

The overlook is yet another project designed to make the local outdoors accessible to more people and provide a greater variety of outdoor experiences. The Forest Service, National Forest Foundation, the Sisters Trails Alliance (STA), and dozens of others were among the organizations

that have worked tirelessly to provide such additional opportunities. The overlook and its loop trail are barrier-free and handicapped-accessible. The trail also now connects to the creek itself and the Whychus Creek Trail, which was completed four years ago.

Bjarne Holm is an STA board member who has been very involved in these local projects. He commented that “The construction of the Whychus Creek Overlook and Trail represents a tremendous effort of a widely diverse group of government and private organizations dedicated to the restoration and preservation of a truly spectacular natural setting with stunning views of the Cascade volcanoes and that of Whychus Creek below.”

Holm also pointed out that the impact of the project goes far beyond the addition of a new trail.

“This effort,” he said, “helps to correct significant inappropriate abuse of the area in recent years. With the new trail and overlook, there will be barrier-free access to the overlook, and this general area is going to become one of the favorite hiking destinations in the Sisters area, linked in with the Whychus Creek Trail below the lookout and the Peterson Ridge Trail System to the east.”

One of the principal forces

behind the completion of the Whychus Creek Overlook Trail was Maret Pajutee, U.S. Forest Service Ecologist for the Sisters Ranger District, who also served as the project coordinator. Pajutee, who will be retiring from the Forest Service this week, spoke about bringing the project to fruition and presented awards and offered recognition to others who helped to make the project a reality.

District Ranger Miller pointed out that the site has historical importance and that it is not just another trail.

“The overlook is a site that people have been coming to for centuries,” she said. “It’s an important place for people to experience for a wide variety of reasons. It’s not just the views but to be outdoors, smell the smells, hear the sounds, feel the air, and experience being out in the natural world.”

“Access to this wonderful place was developed so people with a wide variety of abilities can get there,” she said. “The trail is flat enough, stable enough, and has resting places along the way that many people who are unstable walkers, people with canes, crutches, and many in wheelchairs might be able to get to the viewpoint. Even people who are visually or hearing-impaired would be able to get there and enjoy the area. Remember, it’s not just



PHOTO BY BJARNE HOLM

Sisters District Ranger Kristie Miller and Project Leader Maret Pajutee pose by the new Trailhead sign for the Whychus Creek Overlook.

about the view!”

The overlook is accessible via a very easy loop trail of just one mile. It is mostly flat with a gradual grade leading up to the overlook. The base is of smooth, fine, hard-packed gravel that is suitable for walkers, strollers, and wider-wheeled wheelchairs. The trail is suitable even for small children, and there are attractive log benches placed along the route. It is also an ideal destination for your city-dwelling visitors who are not quite ready for a full-scale wilderness adventure.

In order to minimize contact with other hikers, the trail is designed for one-way counterclockwise travel and winds through a young, healthy pine forest and passes several scenic

lava-rock extrusions from the lava flow that created Peterson Ridge. A fire scar from a fairly recent forest fire just touches the southern edge of the trail. There are two “scenic turn-outs” on the way to the overlook with sweeping mountain views. A dirt connector trail splits off from near the overlook to lead down to the creek and the Whychus Creek Trail.

The overlook is constructed from natural rock and looks down upon the creek. To reach the roadside parking lot and trailhead, head south on the Three Creek Lake Road (Elm Street in town) for a little over five miles. The turnout is near the summit of Peterson Ridge, on the right hand (west) side of the road, just a short distance beyond the five-mile marker.

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