

New bridge installed on the McKenzie River Trail

By Craig F. Eisenbeis
Correspondent

The popular McKenzie River Trail has a new replacement bridge upstream of Sahalie Falls.

"It was nearing the end of its lifespan and was starting to rot," said Tyson Cross, recreation trails specialist for the Willamette National Forest. "It needed repair, and a new one seemed to be the best option."

Funding became available through a federal grant from the Recreation Trails Program (RTP). Cross explained that the RTP grant funds are channeled through the states, so the projects can be locally assigned and managed. In Oregon, the managing agency is the Oregon Recreation and Parks Department.

The previous bridge was simply a big log fitted with handrails for safety. The new bridge surface is both wider and flatter; and the new design is a significant upgrade, especially for cyclists.

According to Cross, the

new bridge is a double-girder, glue-laminated structure that typically has a lifespan of more than 50 years. After the girders were put in place, Forest Service representative Wayne Chevalier said the bridge was mostly assembled on site.

"We opted to go with the ramp approaches," Cross said, "because we manage it as a Class 4 bike trail that is open to hiking, backpacking and mountain bikes. It is closed to horses."

National Forest trails are classed from one to five, but classification is more closely linked to trail work and maintenance than degree of difficulty. Generally, Class 1 trails have the fewest improvements and refinements. The very fact that this trail has a bridge puts it in a higher class.

Ramp construction was completed last week, and the new bridge is now open for public use. Much of the finishing work, including the ramps, was performed by workers from Lane County Youth Services, a work



PHOTO BY CRAIG EISENBEIS

A new double-girder replacement bridge has been installed on the McKenzie River Trail upstream of Sahalie Falls.

program designed to provide opportunities for "adjudicated youth."

"It's part of the sheriff's work program," Cross explained. "The program is very helpful to us."

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