



The Ranger's Corner

Ian Reid
Sisters District Ranger

District had a productive summer

Recent seasonal transitions remind me it's time for another Ranger's Corner.

It's been another productive summer here, and even with shorter days and cooler temperatures on the horizon, we have a full plate of work planned for the fall. One of the tasks we accomplished this summer was much-needed major road maintenance on the 1234 road to Jack Lake trailhead, which accesses Canyon Creek Meadows, Wasco Lake, the Pacific Crest Trail, and many other popular wilderness destinations. Our road maintenance funds are sparse given the large footprint of

our forest road system, so we have to prioritize. However, our skilled forest heavy-equipment crew and engineers completed the needed work this summer and the bevy of Prius-swallowing potholes was eradicated.

I was up at the Jack Lake trailhead during the past Sisters Folk Festival weekend returning from an early deer hunt and counted 33 vehicles with a wide diversity of passengers in the parking lot. There were man-buns and soccer moms; crusty PCT through-hikers; trail-runners; birders with binoculars; golden retrievers and mutts; deer hunters with long-range, sniper-style rifles; flatbeds; stocktrailers; and Subarus; and the most adorable three-generation family hiking down the trail to fill their plastic jack-o'-lantern buckets with the last plump huckleberries of the season.

It's days like these that remind me that public lands truly offer something for everyone, regardless of how people like to spend their precious free time. How might this trailhead look differently next year with the implementation of the recent Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project decision? With up to 120 people (60 day-use and five overnight

groups) allowed per day at that access point, the parking lot could look very similar in early September.

What else has been happening on the Sisters Ranger District? We recently authorized a project to remove dead, dying, and diseased trees from 250 acres around Suttle Lake, Dark Lake, and Scout Lake and plan to implement this in winter and spring 2020. We, along with our wonderful volunteers from Friends of Metolius and beyond, are restoring the Black Butte cupola lookout, a logistical feat given the lack of road access and power. We are also currently replacing the trail bridge over Indian Ford Creek at Indian Ford Campground which will provide better stock, bike, and hiking access on the Sisters Tie Trail. And we worked with our partners at Sisters Trails Alliance to install a

permanent bathroom at the Whychus Overlook trailhead. Speaking of trails, e-bikes are still currently prohibited on all designated non-motorized trails and roads on National Forest System lands, regardless of recent changes with the Department of Interior.

Our pilot project to staff our visitor information services at our front desk on Saturdays this summer was an overwhelming success with over 700 visitors served just on eight Saturdays, and we hope to continue this service in 2020. We have been working hard at consolidating the equipment and supplies on our compound as we are in the process of selling the northern portion of our ranger station administrative site and have a willing buyer.

Finally, once we dry out a little, we will start implementing our fall prescribed burning program.

Mother Nature gave us a little reprieve this summer. Even though we received a lot of lightning resulting in numerous fire starts, it was accompanied by ample precipitation which allowed our firefighters to make short work of these blazes. With our moderate indices this summer, we also took advantage of a good opportunity to let wildfire do its ecological work and manage for wilderness values with the Pacific Fire on the flanks of Mount Washington.

And speaking of fire, we hope you join us at the free public showing of the Big Burn, a PBS American Experience documentary on the evening of September 26 at the Belfry. An expert panel on fire management and Forest Service history will immediately follow the one-hour movie. Doors open at 6 p.m. and seating is limited. Hope to see you there!

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