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North Fork Park closed until early June

Crews work to remove fire debris

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

A popular park along the Little North Santiam River won't open at its normal time this season.

North Fork Park, known for its emerald swimming holes and scenery, will remain closed

past its traditional May 1 opening date.

Marion County Parks coordinator Russ Dilly said crews still needed to remove downed timber and debris from a fire last season to ensure visitor safety before opening the park for the season. He said crews were expanding North Fork's parking

area as well.

Dilly said he hoped the park would open by June 1, but couldn't guarantee it.

Marion County will open other parks in the Little North Fork area, including Salmon Falls and Bear Creek Campground, along with a handful of other parks.

Here's a breakdown of the parks that will be opening May 1.

Scotts Mills

Located along Butte Creek northeast of Silverton, the 13-acre park is a much-loved destination with a swimming hole below a small waterfall.

Picnic tables, playground equipment installed last year and fishing also are popular pastimes.

Directions: Highway 213 east, past Silverton five miles

and turn right onto Mt. Angel Scotts Mills Road NE for 2.3 miles into the small town. Stay right on Crooked Finger Road to the park on the left.

Salmon Falls

A 30-foot waterfall drops into a clear emerald pool at one of the most scenic parks in Marion

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RIDING INTO SILVER FALLS' BACKCOUNTRY



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEALEGS MEDIA

Joe Cooper rides the new Catamount Trail at Silver Falls State Park.

Mountain bike-specific trail open to cyclists

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Three years ago, Silverton residents Paul Prough and Dewayne Powell had an audacious idea.

The duo loved mountain biking at Silver Falls State Park but sometimes ran into trouble on a trail system crowded with different user groups.

"A couple of times I was speeding downhill and had to slam on the breaks to avoid running into people riding horses," Powell said. "They were not happy with me. It was definitely a problem."

To remedy the situation, Powell proposed building a mountain bike trail in the park's remote backcountry, far from the waterfalls that lure almost a million people to Silver Falls each year.

The idea succeeded beyond his wildest dreams.

A galvanized Mid-Valley biking community arrived in droves, volunteering their time, money and machinery to build what became known as the Catamount Trail.

Parks officials jumped on the

bandwagon, keen to lure new and younger park visitors.

The 4.5-mile trail officially opened May 1 with a celebration of an idea conceived by Powell but created through communal effort.

The Salem Area Trail Alliance, the nonprofit group that supported the project, will lead tours of the trail and offer bike shuttles beginning at 11 a.m. at the 214 Trailhead.

"It's overwhelming to look back, see all the work we've done and know this trail will be here for my children to ride," said Ty Hurl, a longtime volunteer on the project. "It's a cool feeling, knowing that you helped create something a lot of people are going to enjoy."

Considered an "enhanced" cross-country trail, the route has turns, berms and rock features that will make it fun for mountain bikers but won't be too difficult for average cyclists.

"It also has amazing scenery," said Beth Dayton, a surgeon from Salem who helped organize volunteers and trail parties. "Really

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CATAMOUNT TRAIL

In a nutshell: An enhanced cross-county trail designed for mountain biker but open to hikers and trail runners at Silver Falls State Parks. No waterfall views.

Length: 4.5 miles

Difficulty: Intermediate

Starting point: 214 Trailhead

Notes: Must ride up Lookout Mountain Road 0.4 miles, following pink paw prints, to reach beginning of trail, which then takes riders downhill and back around, returning to 214 Trailhead.

Directions: From I-5 near Salem, exit onto Highway 22 headed toward Bend and Detroit. Follow Highway 22 7 miles to an exit for Highway 214 and follow signs to Silver Falls State Park. Just after entering the park's boundary, watch for a sign on the right pointing to the 214 Trailhead. Follow this gravel road to the parking area. If you reach the South Falls Day-Use area, you've gone too far.



PHOTOS BY DANIELLE PETERSON/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Residents of The Salvation Army's Lighthouse Shelter visited Silver Falls State Park last week.

Lighthouse Shelter residents explore Silver Falls' beauty

KAELLEN HESSEL
STATESMAN JOURNAL

After living on the streets, surrounded by pavement and "ugliness," a field trip into Oregon's great outdoors reminds one resident of The Salvation Army's Lighthouse Shelter that there's "a world of beauty" out there.

"It's hard to see beauty," she said, "when you're struggling to put your life back together."

She was one of eight transitional shelter residents who this week took a break from their daily realities of job hunting and overcoming barriers, to explore Silver Falls State Park.

Tuesday's outing was the first of many field trips shelter residents will take this spring and summer. The trips began in 2015 with visits to the Oregon coast, Multnomah Falls, a Volcanoes baseball game and a fishing spot. The trips were such a hit that plans call for one

trip every two to three weeks during the warmer part of 2016.

Half of this week's group embarked on a 5-mile hike, called the Winter Falls Loop, that brought them to seven of the park's 10 waterfalls. The other half stayed behind by the South Falls Lodge and reclined in the sunlight, played in the creek and wandered around the day-use area.

As the motley bunch ducked behind waterfalls, scampered up hills and paused to catch their breaths, they joked about what they'd do if they saw a bear, shared stories from their differing life experiences and talked about everything from the financial crisis to movies. One particularly flexible hiker even performed some trail yoga.

"It smells like Christmas," Ted Bennett said of the evergreen trees.

The trips give both staff and clients a chance

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Shelter residents David Kelly, left, Marshall Weaver and Gary Erickson visited Silver Falls State Park last week.

Cascade Foothill Winegrowers hold 'coming out ball'

VICTOR PANICHKUL
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Mt. Angel's Festhalle, usually home to beer events, was the stage for "Taste. Learn. Celebrate." on Saturday. The event was an opportunity for wine lovers to taste wines from 15 members of the Cascade Foothills Winegrowers, an association made up of vineyards and wineries east of Inter-

state 5 — an area not on the radar of most wine lovers. About 200 wine lovers from the Mid-Valley gathered to enjoy wines poured by 15 different wineries from an often-overlooked part of the valley.

The event was also an opportunity for a little wine education, with harvest equipment, grape-

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