



The Chush Falls Trailhead is about a 30-minute drive, much of it along dirt and gravel roads, from Sisters.

Mark Morical/The Bulletin

Chush Falls

Continued from B1

Snow and deadfall still covered the trail in certain areas. Warmer temperatures this week should help to melt some of the snow. At one section where downed trees seemed to block the trail, I stayed to the right and crossed a small creek, and the trail continued.

I could hear the waterfall, a rushing cascade growing in intensity as I drew closer. From a small overlook, I glanced down at the waterfall, which is about 70 feet high and 80 feet wide. Upper Whychus Creek surges strong all year, as it is fed by snowmelt and glaciers from Broken Top, Middle Sister and North Sister.

A steep and challenging unmarked trail leads to the base of the waterfall, and I managed to carefully negotiate my way down through the snow.

Once down to the creek, I glanced at the waterfall that rose before me, a seemingly

hidden gem in the middle of the quiet forest. The water splashed off the surrounding rocks and snow with intensity.

After making my way back up to the main trail, I viewed the falls from high above, a much easier way to enjoy the waterfall than making the perilous trip down the unmarked trail.

I made my way back toward Chush Falls and then on to the main trailhead. The Three Sisters rose above the fire-altered forest as Whychus Creek carved through the canyon.

According to the Deschutes National Forest, the Pole Creek Fire (26,584 acres) led to significant alterations of both the

trailhead and the trail itself. The U.S. Forest Service closed some roads and rerouted the driving approach to the trailhead and the trail.

Before the changes, the hike to Chush (pronounced SHOOSH) Falls was barely more than a mile. Now the hike is 2½ miles.

Much restoration work has taken place on Whychus Creek in recent years to help restore the native fish species of red-banded trout, steelhead and chinook salmon. The Forest Service asks hikers to respect the restoration work by avoiding areas marked as closed and using only existing roads and trails.

Chush Falls Trail

Directions: From Sisters, take Road 16 (Elm Street) south for 7 miles. Turn right on Forest Road 1514 and continue 4.8 miles to Road 600. Turn left and follow Road 600 for about 1½ miles to the Chush Falls Trailhead.

Rating: Easy to moderate

Contact: Sisters Ranger District at 541-549-7700

Twelve trailheads in the Three Sisters Wilderness will require advance permits, which went on sale on April 6 at recreation.gov. According to the Forest Service, the remainder of the day-use permits — somewhere between 50% and 80% — will be released on a seven-day rolling window on May 28.

“The 7-day rolling window means that every day new permits will be available,” the Forest Service website says.

The permit system will apply to the period May 28 through Sept. 24. A helpful online map shows which trailheads require a Central Cascades Wilderness permit purchased in advance.

But even if it is more difficult to access some of the most popular trails, many trails, like Chush Falls, remain available for a spur-of-the-moment trek along the creeks and peaks of the Three Sisters Wilderness.

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TOP PICKS WHERE TO EXPLORE

South of Bend



Mark Morical/Bulletin file

Fishing guide John Garrison battles a rainbow trout to the boat on Crane Prairie Reservoir.

Black Rock — One of the oldest mountain bike trails in Central Oregon according to bendtrails.org, the 4.1-mile-long section of single track hugs the lava fields at Lava Lands and offers some technical climbs over the rocks themselves. The easy trail also runs almost parallel to a paved path for riders of every skill level.

Crane Prairie Reservoir — The reservoir famous for its “crane-bow” fishing reopened last week with some patches of snow remaining on the way to the resort. Wild rainbows must be released. The water level at the lake is one of the highest out of all Central Oregon reservoirs, yet not completely full.

Rosyland Day Use Area — The 42-acre community park in La Pine has river access to the Little Deschutes River, making a great place for families to paddle around in the slower-moving stream on the warmer spring days. You can make a longer day of floating out of a visit to the park by putting in at Leona Park to the south and floating along the gently winding river for 7.5 miles. Just make sure you have a car parked at each end as it’s a long way to walk back with your kayak in tow.

— Makenzie Whittle, The Bulletin

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