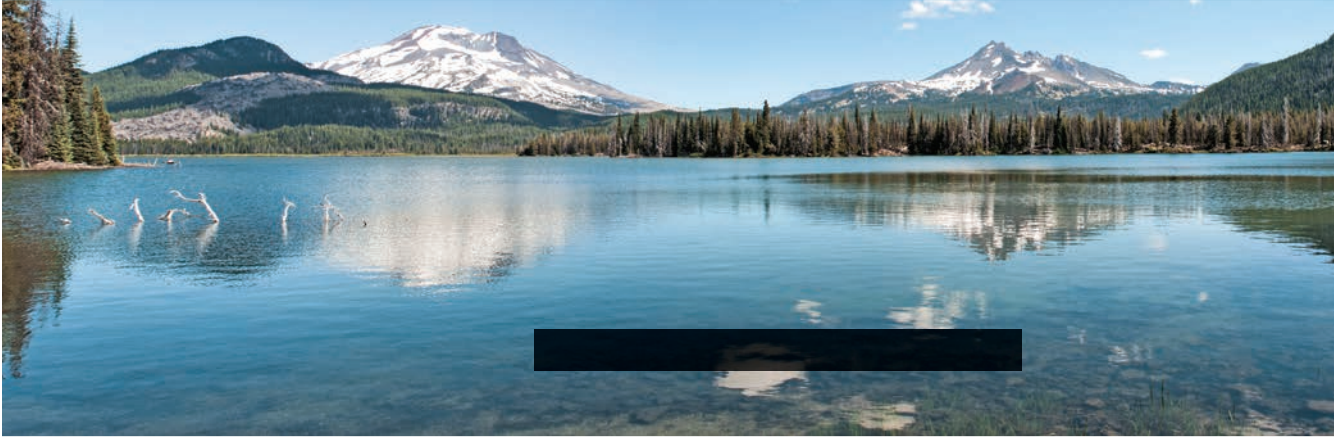




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Time to hit the *HIGH* country



Bend's Will Mowry, 15, rides up the Tumalo Ridge Trail west of Bend on Tuesday.

Mark Morical/Bulletin photos

Tumalo Ridge-South Fork loop is a classic Central Oregon summertime ride

BY MARK MORICAL • The Bulletin

SKYLINER SNO-PARK — It was an exceptional spring of mountain biking here in Central Oregon, as frequent rains made for ideal trail conditions on our renowned singletrack.

Summer is in full swing, and that means drier conditions and dustier trails, but it also means more options for higher-elevation rides.

After significant snowfall well into May this year, some trails in the high country remain under snow. But others are now rideable, including the Tumalo Ridge-Swede Ridge-South Fork loop.

The 14-mile route is one of my favorites in Central Oregon, and it requires just a half-day commitment. While it does not include free-ride jumps and features like the Wanoga area (also west of Bend) that might appeal more to the modern mountain biker, it does feature some grueling climbs, panoramic views and speedy downhill.

I made the 10-mile drive to Skyliner Sno-park, just a couple of miles before Tumalo Falls, on Tuesday.

I started out on the Tumalo Ridge Trail, which took me on a switchbacking climb above Tumalo Creek and the Bridge Creek Burn area. A fire in 1979 tore through the area and opened up dramatic mountain views of Broken Top, South Sisters, Mount Bachelor and Tumalo Mountain.

The steep climb was a challenging way to start a ride, but I reached the top of the ridge in just a half-hour or

so. Tumalo Creek trickled far below, cutting through the narrow valley.

The trail soon rolled through a downhill stretch, and I gained speed as the singletrack weaved among towering ponderosa pines and Douglas fir trees. Eventually I arrived in a clearing along thick snowbrush and manzanita, with sprawling views of Cascade peaks to the west.

Soon thereafter, the singletrack turned to doubletrack and I began the long, slow climb toward Swede Ridge Shelter. This might be the toughest



A mountain biker rides the South Fork Trail near Tumalo Falls on Tuesday.

stretch of the loop, as the climbing seems endless along the dirt road. But I finally arrived at the shelter, located at about 6,000 feet in elevation.

See **Ride** / B9

Emma Maaranen rides through trees that have been marked orange to protect the ride-feel of the trail. Submitted photo



Deciphering the West Bend Project and tree-marking system

BY EMMA MAARANEN
For The Bulletin

It's Friday after work, and I'm pedaling up to ride Lower Whoops.

The trail is closed weekdays for logging operations but opens at 3 p.m. on Friday for the weekend.

I've not ridden the trails in the closed area since last fall and am excited to do a few

Marking refers to those spray paint rings you see on trees.

Orange paint designates a tree that must be left standing.

Blue-painted trees are ones that need to go to thin the number of trees.

playful laps.

When I get to the area I'm shocked by the altered look of the forest.

Bare ground, little canopy,

and one of my favorite big trees is gone. It's hard not to be upset seeing a place I love being changed. Is the forest going to recover?

With this question in mind, I reached out to the Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project. The DCFP is a group of wildlife biologists, ecologists, geologists, recreation advocates and logging industry professionals who have studied the science of a dry forest ecosystem and are working to find a balance of interests.

See **Trees** / B9