Green Lakes Trail Closed by Bridge Replacement

by Bend Weekly News Sources

BENDâ€¢Deschutes National Forest visitors should avoid the popular Green Lakes Trail in the Three Sisters Wilderness Area July 24-28, while crews erect a new bridge over Fall Creek.

Forest Service managers will close the trail at that time so crews can quickly and safely complete the project undisturbed. They ask hikers and horseback riders to use nearby trails in the interim.

Alternative routes include the Soda Creek Trail, which departs from the same parking lot as the Green Lakes Trail. Additional trails wind north and west into the wilderness from the nearby Todd Lake, Devils Lake, Wickiup Plains, Sisters Mirror, and Elk Lake Trailheads. The Tumalo Mountain Trail starts at the Dutchman Flat Sno-Park and is another alternative.

â€œWe apologize for any inconvenience, but weâ€™re working hard to improve access to the Green Lakes Trail, replacing the bridge before the busiest summer use begins in August,â€• said Deschutes National Forest Trails Specialist John Schubert.

Map courtesy of USFS He said even if the bridge were not being replaced now, visitors should avoid the Green Lakes Trail at this time because snow and dead trees still cover much of it and thus there is an increased risk of environmental damage. The Sisters Mirror, Elk Lake, and Six Lakes Trailheads lead to lower elevation snow-free routes better suited for travel now, according to Schubert.

Schubert led construction of the new 41-foot bridge built with Douglas fir timber near Sandy, Oregon, using a design compatible with wilderness settings. The bridge is built using timber joinery, rather than metal fasteners. Five other Deschutes National Forest bridges utilize the same design, which increases the life of handrails.

The 1964 Wilderness Act prohibits mechanized equipment in wilderness areas so crews built the bridge off-site, prior to sending the parts for pressure-treatment and final delivery to the trailhead. Trail crews built the existing Fall Creek Bridge about 25 years ago using lodge pole pine timber harvested on-site. They reconstructed it about 10 years ago to extend its life. Forest engineers expect the new bridge to last 50 years.

Annually, about 8,000 people use the Green Lakes trail and Fall Creek Bridge to access the wilderness area from the Cascade Lakes National Scenic Byway. The trail is busiest in August and September, when as many as 250 people use it on weekend days. Hikers and horse riders seeking solitude are encouraged to use other

trails.

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