



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Buffalo National River
402 N. Walnut
Harrison, AR 72601

870-365-2700 phone
www.nps.gov/buff

Buffalo National River News Release

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Contact: Caven Clark, Public Information Officer 870/365-2790

More Rain Brings More Damage of Buffalo National River Roads and Campgrounds; Lost Valley Closed

Repeated episodes of heavy rain have taken a heavy toll on trails, roads, and campgrounds in the Newton County portion of Buffalo National River. Damage to all river and stream crossings in the Erbie area are worse after Tuesday's (June 16) rainfall. With remnants of Tropical Storm Bill arriving today and tomorrow, National Park Service officials are preparing for additional flooding.

Extensive damage was done to the recently restored Lost Valley Trail with additional damage to the access road along Clark Creek. Superintendent Kevin Cheri has closed Lost Valley until further notice, expressing concerns for visitor safety along the heavily eroded segments of the trail. Lost Valley is the most heavily visited day-use destination in the entire park and this closure will impact thousands of our visitors until remedial measures can be taken to insure public safety. In addition to the safety concerns allowing continued hiking will invariably result in a proliferation of new trails which have the potential to damage or destroy unique plant communities along the trail route.

Access to campgrounds at Erbie, Steel Creek, Kyles, and Ozark are essentially unaffected although drivers can expect areas of rough road where erosion or debris is present. The campgrounds themselves received relatively little damage: At Erbie the group sites were inundated but undamaged; there was erosion in some areas of Kyles (one steel picnic table moved about 100' from its campsite); and at Ozark the few sites at the downstream end were temporarily inundated. Access to the Erbie Horse Camp on the north side of the river near the Erbie Church is still limited and hauling of trailers on that road not recommended.

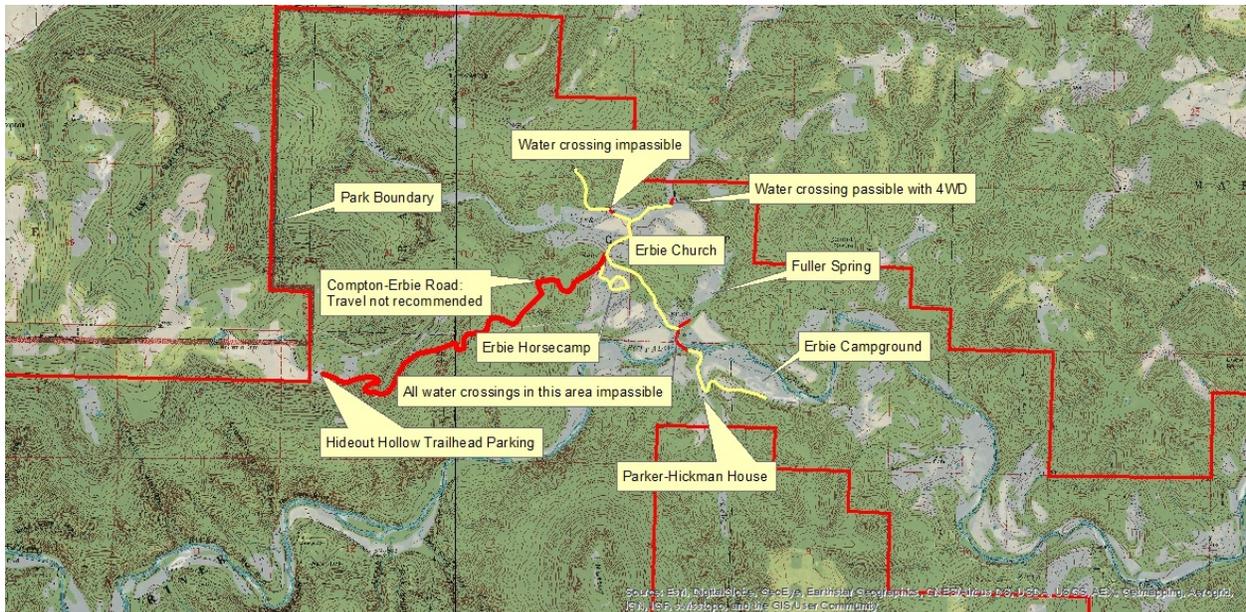
Major erosion at all crossings has initiated emergency funding requests for repairs to restore crossings and Federal Highway Administration is toured the park yesterday to assess the situation. It is not possible at present to determine when repairs will be completed. In the meanwhile, visitors should plan their routes in this area accordingly, and avoid these water-crossings altogether. Crossings should never be attempted when the water is cloudy and actual depth and bottom conditions cannot be safely determined.

At current water levels, canoeing and kayaking should only be attempted by highly experienced paddlers. For those who want to swim or wade in the river, keep in mind that if the water is brown and fast it is also carrying a high load of debris, including submerged logs that could trap or injure a swimmer. If there is a need to leave a vehicle at any location along the river please park in the highest possible parking area.

High water usually recedes very quickly, so please exercise caution and avoid unsafe conditions. To report unsafe conditions or emergencies visitors may call Buffalo National River's dispatch at 888/692-1162 or for emergencies only dial 911.

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Map showing current conditions of water crossings in the Erbie area.



Section of hiking trail at Lost Valley is being inspected by Youth Conservation Corp Work Leader Rachel Norton. (NPS photo)



Some visitors chose to ignore the closure. The park would like to avoid the creation of new trails around eroded areas that may result in damage to unique plant communities. (NPS photo)