



# Rebuilding Rainier

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Mount Rainier National Park

## ONE STEP CLOSER: WORK CONTINUES ON THE NISQUALLY ROAD

Rather than a staged opening to Longmire and then Paradise, the road will open as a unit when all work is complete, probably in early May. The rumble of massive rock trucks through the Nisqually Entrance continues at a steady pace. We're acquiring all the rock we can get for road and levee repair while supplies last. With rock in high demand in the region, if we take a break in deliveries to complete other work we might not get another chance. So we're moving ahead with repairs at Milepost 9.1 before completing work at Kautz Creek.

### Mileposts 5.2 and 9.1

There has been substantial progress on the rock work at Milepost 5.2, with all jetty rock in place and smaller rock being installed. Large rock is being hauled in and placed at Milepost 9.1. Park staff should limit traffic on this section of road while rock deliveries continue, and watch for stop signs.

### Kautz Creek

The 12-foot culverts are on hand, site drawings are complete, and the plan for dewatering the construction site is ready. Installation will begin when work at Mileposts 5.2 and 9.1 is complete.

The installation of the 12-foot culverts will be a substantial undertaking. Road crew will place sandbags to divert water into roadside ditches and down to the 30-inch culverts. Once the construction site is dewatered they can dig in and install the massive culverts. Park employees should be

prepared for the huge visual impact of this work. We're accommodating a new river channel and Kautz Creek is going to look nothing like it did before the flood.

## CARBON RIVER ROAD PLANNING UNDERWAY

The Carbon River corridor exceeds other areas of the park in the complexity of the issues surrounding road reconstruction. It's a popular destination for hikers and campers from the region. It has a history of repeated flooding. It provides nesting habitat for northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets and critical habitat for bull trout. The presence of so many threatened and endangered species limits the construction season to just a few months per year.

In January Superintendent Dave Uberuaga called together an Interdisciplinary Design Team (IDT) to identify alternatives for opening the

Carbon River Road to Ipsut Creek. The group was to assess the feasibility of establishing some level of vehicle access before the start of owl nesting season March 15. The group explored in detail issues of constructability, environmental conditions, resource impacts, visitor use, and administrative needs.

The IDT identified and analyzed five alternatives. These ranged from providing access to Chenuis Falls by



The 12-foot culverts ready for installation

March 15 to delaying the onset of construction until August to blading in a rough lane for administrative traffic. Based on the team's recommendations, the superintendent decided to postpone construction until August; the Carbon River road won't open this summer.

The next step in the planning process will be preparation of an environmental assessment (EA). The EA will present a range of alternatives on road reconstruction.

## BACKCOUNTRY REPAIRS

One of the big unknowns remaining in flood recovery is the status of backcountry trails. The full extent of damage to trails, bridges, and campsites won't be known until the snow melts. Meanwhile the park is developing plans for how to manage backcountry use this summer.

Most park trails should be accessible following some early season work to clear windfall, restore foot logs and establish reroutes. However, the flood severely damaged two sections of the Wonderland Trail. On the Carbon Glacier Trail just upstream from the Lake George junction the Carbon River scoured away the trail and the base of the hill, leaving nearly vertical scree and bedrock. Repair will require a 1,500-foot reroute 50-100 feet above the original trail. During construction hikers will be rerouted across the Carbon River at the Lake James crossing then south along the Northern Loop Trail to the Carbon Glacier.

An earth slide in Stevens Canyon during the flood created a steep and unstable slope. The Wonderland Trail will have to be rerouted for 1,000 feet to bypass the slide scar. Until the trail is fixed Wonderland Trail hikers will have to walk along the Stevens Canyon Road for about four miles. Those planning their "once in a lifetime" trip on the Wonderland Trail might want to postpone the experience until next year.

Because of the uncertainty of trail and backcountry campsite conditions, the



Work continues at Milepost 5.2 on the Nisqually Road. The road will reopen to the public in May.

park will not begin taking reservations for full Wonderland Trail itineraries until June. We will take reservations earlier for shorter trips in areas known to be undamaged.

### OPENING DATES SET

Park staff met on February 28 to set opening dates for park roads and visitor facilities for the coming summer. Flood recovery work, snow conditions, and operating budgets were all considered in setting the schedule.

The Nisqually Road to Longmire and Paradise will reopen when repairs are complete, probably May 1-15. The Longmire Museum and Jackson Visitor Center will reopen at that time, with the Longmire WIC following on May 25. Cougar Rock Campground will open May 18, one week earlier than last year to offset the loss of camping at Sunshine Point.

Stevens Canyon will be plowed to Reflection Lake by May 25, but

otherwise will be allowed to melt out naturally. It'll probably not be snow free until July, when road assessment and repair will begin. The Stevens Canyon Road will not open this summer.

Highway 123 will open as far as Stevens Canyon on May 18. Road repairs will keep Highway 123 from Stevens Canyon to

Cayuse Pass closed all summer. The Ohanapecosh Visitor Center and Campground will open May 25.

Highway 410 will open as usual in mid-May with the date determined by Washington State Department of Transportation. The road to White River Campground will open May 25, providing trailhead access to hikers and climbers. The campground itself will open at the end of June.

The Sunrise Road and Visitor Center will open two weeks earlier this year than in years past, on June 15.

The Carbon River Road will not open this summer and Ipsut Creek Campground will be managed as a backcountry camp. Mowich Lake will open as usual on June 29.

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*Together we preserve, for future generations, the natural and cultural resources in Mount Rainier National Park. Through a variety of high quality park experiences, we promote park values, personal connections, and responsibility for the environment in our local and global communities. With integrity, teamwork, pride and motivation, we demonstrate environmental leadership and deepen our understanding of the park's ecosystems. We value our diverse range of individual contributions by showing respect and concern for each other and the park. The Mountain inspires stewardship. Its protection and preservation is our legacy.*