



Rebuilding Rainier

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Mount Rainier National Park



View of the new Kautz Creek channel above the 12-foot culvert site

KAUTZ CREEK: THE MISSING LINK

With the completion of the road work at Mileposts 5 and 9, the Kautz Creek repair is the final link needed to reopen the Nisqually Road. The road crew is ready to proceed with the project pending permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Washington. Permits are required under the Clean Water Act for construction in stream beds.

Representatives of the Corps toured the park March 19 to view flood damage and emergency repairs, and to discuss planned recovery actions. They required a permit for the work at Kautz for a variety of reasons. The proposed work, with longer culverts and stream channelization, extends beyond the previous road prism. The Army Corps permit was approved

March 21 with the Washington State permit soon after.

Project Description

The installation of the 12-foot culverts will be a substantial undertaking. Sandbags will be placed to divert the creek down the roadside ditch to three 30-inch culverts. The road crew will excavate a stream bottom 20 feet wide that will extend upstream 140 feet. They will also construct a catchment basin on the downstream end of the culverts. The bottom of the culverts will be 15 feet below the road surface and sealed in with pumpable low-density cellular concrete. The change in appearance from before the construction to after will be striking.

EMPLOYEES VISIT KAUTZ CREEK PROJECT SITE

On March 15 a group of more than 20 park employees gathered at Kautz Creek to learn how the construction will progress and what the area will look like when it is complete. Project Manager Pete Gonzales, with the Federal Highways Administration, explained how the area will be dewatered, the preparation work that will occur above and below the road, and how the culverts will be installed. Superintendent Dave Uberuaga answered a wide variety of questions from the group about recovery plans for Sunshine Point, Carbon River, and other areas of the park. "I want employees to be prepared for just how different Kautz is going to look," said Uberuaga.



Employees visit Kautz construction site with Superintendent Dave Uberuaga



Streams like Ipsut Creek may pose a special danger for hikers this summer

CROSSING STREAMS SAFELY

On March 19 two hikers lost their lives trying to cross Ipsut Creek. One slipped crossing a log and the other leaped in to help. The drownings highlight a compelling safety concern this summer. With so many backcountry bridges out hikers may have to find their own way across streams. Here are some guidelines to minimize risk when crossing running water.

Whether you're going to cross on a log, step from rock to rock, or wade, choose your spot carefully. Find an area where the water is slow and shallow. Look downstream: if you see logs or other debris that could trap you if you fall in, find a different place to cross.

Carefully assess the depth and speed of the water before deciding to walk across. If the water is up to your knees it's too deep to ford. Drop in a stick and walk alongside it. If you can't keep up, the water is too fast to wade. Use a sturdy stick for balance while crossing. Always keep two points of contact on the ground. If you can't see the bottom, probe with the stick before each step. On log crossings staring down at the water can make you dizzy; try to keep your eyes forward as much as possible. And select a log that isn't too slippery! If the log is stripped of bark or wet it's likely to be slick.

When you're ready to cross unfasten the belt of your pack so you can ditch it quickly if you end up in the water. If you do fall in, try to point your feet downstream and keep your head up. Never jump in to help another person—it's highly unlikely you'll be able to offer any aid in the fast, cold water. Instead keep the person in sight and follow on the bank until you can safely attempt a rescue.

Use good judgment—if you have any doubts at all about the safety of a crossing, don't do it! You can always go back the way you came.

STAFFING UP FOR FLOOD RECOVERY!

In the aftermath of last fall's devastating floods it became clear that we couldn't repair the damage without additional funding and staff. The Management Team has approved more than 100 new positions to contribute to the flood recovery effort. The new staff will implement repairs, mitigate impacts, and manage visitors during flood work.

Of course we're adding staff to perform road construction, maintain heavy equipment, repair campgrounds, rebuild fire lookouts, and restore utilities. But there will be other work going on behind the scenes. A whole team of people will work to ensure that recovery work minimizes impacts on natural and cultural resources: architects, archeologists, compliance specialists, resource advisors, and a variety of field crews.

New employees will produce handouts, wayside exhibits, and a traveling exhibit to tell the flood story. They will also coordinate a much-expanded volunteer program and work closely with the news media.

Our trail crew staff will grow to accomplish the huge task of restoring backcountry trails, camps, and bridges and supervising volunteer crews. And with road closures and changes in visitor use we will need additional rangers at Carbon River, Mowich Lake, and White River.

So where are all of these employees going to work and live? A small group of employees is working on the logistical details of how to provide space and equipment to support the additional workforce.

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.