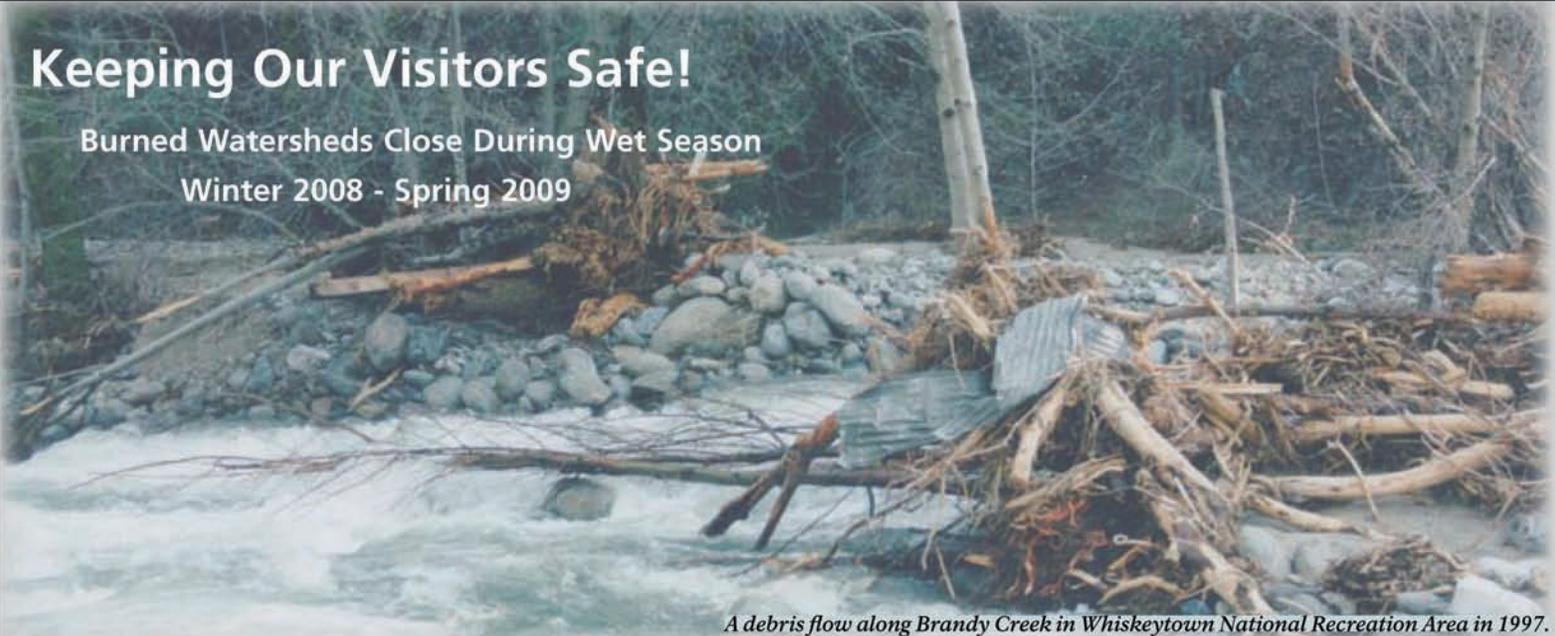




Keeping Our Visitors Safe!

Burned Watersheds Close During Wet Season
Winter 2008 - Spring 2009



A debris flow along Brandy Creek in Whiskeytown National Recreation Area in 1997.

BACKGROUND

A lightning storm passed over California in the early hours of June 21st, 2008, sparking over two thousand fires, including seven in Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. Three of these fires were quickly suppressed. The remaining four merged together, forming the “Whiskeytown Complex” and burned 6,244 acres on the rugged slopes surrounding Shasta Bally.

When the fires were contained, a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team was assembled to determine the impacts to the park’s natural and cultural resources. Of greatest concern was the potential for threats to human life and property down stream of the burned areas from accelerated surface erosion, debris and mud flows, and flooding. The BAER Team geologists conducted field surveys to identify values at risk and determine needs for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation.

DEBRIS FLOWS

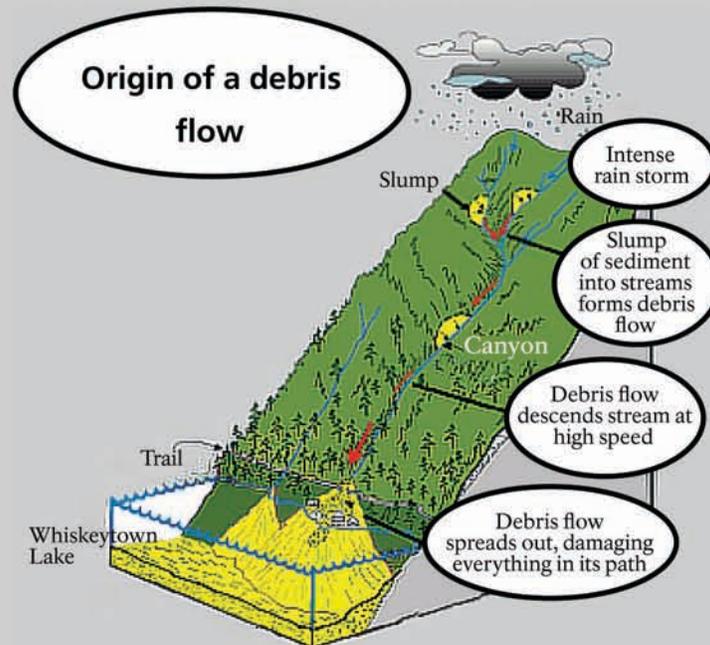
The granitic soils that support Shasta Bally are very susceptible to these large scale mudslides, in the form of debris flows. Debris flows are like an avalanche of water and soil that picks up boulders, trees, and other material as it flows rapidly down slope or down stream. These events are largely unpredictable and can occur when heavy rainfall and/or snowmelt saturates unstable soils.

The Whiskeytown Complex burned across extremely steep terrain and exceptionally erosive soils. Therefore, the potential for large-scale mudslides will likely be very high in areas that experienced moderate to high vegetation mortality, which were primarily the uppermost portions of the Brandy, Boulder, and Crystal Creek drainages. Most of the lower slopes that are more easily seen from trails and roads had lower vegetation mortality but are at risk of debris flows from above.

The average annual precipitation at park headquarters is 60 inches, which is nearly twice as much as the average rainfall for Redding! Back-to-back storms with significant snow and rainfall in these rugged mountains can create conditions favorable to erosion and debris flows.

Even on a sunny spring day, the saturation of soils from rain and snowmelt can occur at any time, endangering visitors on roads and trails

down stream. In 1997, a significant rain storm fell on snow pack. It was this combination that triggered two debris flows within the park: one in Brandy Creek and the other in Paige Boulder Creek. You can still see evidence of this along the lower sections of the Brandy Creek Trail, where there are numerous large boulders and logs above the banks of the current streambed and even above the trail.



Adapted from Turner, R. J. W., J. J. Clague, and B. J. Groulx. 1996: Geoscape Vancouver, living with our geological landscape; Geological Survey of Canada, Open File 3309, 1 sheet.



Closures

It is clear that the potential for debris flow poses a very serious threat to visitors. To ensure that you and your pets are safe this winter, park staff have identified watersheds that pose the greatest risk. Beginning with the first major winter storm of the season, the following trails, campgrounds, and roads will be closed until further notice.

Trail Closures:

- Brandy Creek Falls Trail
- Boulder Creek Falls Trail
- Mill Creek Trail
- James K. Carr Memorial Trail (Whiskeytown Falls)
- Crystal Creek Water Ditch Trail
- Crystal Creek Falls
- Salt Gulch Trail (closed 1 mile west of Peltier Trail)
- Rich Gulch Trail
- Upper Portions of the Kanaka Loop Trail

Campgrounds and Picnic Areas:

- Boulder Creek Campground
- Crystal Creek Campground
- Sheep Camp Campground
- Brandy Creek Campground
- Brandy Creek Picnic Area

Road Closures:

- South Shore Drive
- Brandy Creek Road
- Mill Creek Road
- Shasta Bally Road
- Queen Mary Road

Note: The Mill Creek, Shasta Bally, Queen Mary, Peltier Valley, and upper Crystal Creek Roads are closed every winter due to hazardous driving conditions.

Where Should You Go Instead?

Many Whiskeytown trails will remain open. The southeastern portion of the park was unaffected by the fires, including Paige Bar Road, Muletown Road, and all the trails in that area. We recommend the following trails and roads for non-motorized recreation such as hiking, biking, and horseback riding:

- Mount Shasta Mine Loop Trail
- Davis Gulch Trail (hiking only)
- Oak Bottom Water Ditch Trail
- Clear Creek Vista Trail
- Camden Water Ditch Trail
- Lower Portions of the Kanaka Loop Trail
- Upper Crystal Creek Road
- Peltier Valley Road
- South Fork Mountain Lookout Road

The Oak Bottom, Peltier Bridge, and Horse Camp Campgrounds will also remain open along with numerous scenic picnic sites at the Brandy Creek Marina, Whiskey Creek Launch Ramp, Tower House Historic District, and Carr Powerhouse.



Debris flow at Brandy Creek Picnic Area on January 1st, 1997.

Whiskeytown NRA Closures in Watersheds Impacted by Whiskeytown Complex Fires

