

# Trail Advocates

of the Clackamas River Ranger District of the Mount Hood National Forest

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## Bull of the Woods trail conditions

**Topic:** Bull of the Woods trail conditions

**Author:** Rob Williams

**Topic Started:** 7/12/2009; 6:58:00 AM

**Last Posted:** 7/27/2009; 9:34:45 AM

### Bull of the Woods trail conditions

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**Rob Williams** : 7/12/2009; 5:58:00 AM

Reads: 276, Responses: 8 ( [view responses to this item](#) )

Just got back from a 3 day/2 night backpacking trip to the Bull of the Woods. Started at Elk Lake on 559, went up to the junction with the Welcome Lakes Trail (554). Camped night 1 at upper Welcome Lake. Had a hard time finding the lower lake, which we never did get a good look at due to all the vine maples growing around it. Next morning took the West Lake Way trail (558) over to the Schreiner trail (555) to Dickey Creek (553) back to the Welcome Lakes trail. Up to the lookout, then back down on the Motherlode Trail to just before the Battle Creek shelter area for night 2. On morning 3, we went up a bit of the Geronimo trail (557) to find the Geronimo mine (not much to see, really) and then back to Elk Lake creek trail and back to the lake. On the way home we decided to huff it up to the Gold Butte Lookout. Incredible view from up there, but it is quite a hike (more than the 1 mile reported on the website), especially after 3 days of backpacking.....

It was a great trip, although a little much for me and my daughter. (too many miles in too few days). My body will be complaining for a few days yet. I haven't added up the GPS track yet, but it was somewhere in the 25-30 mile range and 6000 feet of elevation gain.

Trail conditions in the wilderness continue to degrade. There were LOTS of down trees. We tried to count, but stopped after 40 or 50 on each day. I'm pretty sure I'm safe in saying there were well over 100 down trees on our trip. Many were stepovers, but there were WAY too many trees that were very difficult to get over, under or around, especially with a pack. The worst area is the short but very steep section of Dickey Creek (I think that is the trail) that is between where it meets the Schreiner and the Welcome Lakes trail. It is very steep with LOTS of short switchbacks. That whole hillside is full of downed trees. The switchbacks are being re-created to re-route around the blowdown. It

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was VERY tough. The other really bad section was from where that trail meets 554 (Welcome Lakes) until it goes up to the lookout. It was VERY brushed in in places, and it had LOTS of blowdown.

There are sections of many of these trails that are danger of being lost or essentially impassible due to the blowdown and encroachment of brush on the trails. There are already many sections where the trail is faint and difficult to follow. We met a couple on the Elk Lake trail, and they were not familiar with the area and were concerned about taking a wrong turn due to the faint trail and lack of signage. I unfortunately didn't bring my hand pruners (I forgot them-they are in my day pack), otherwise I would have done some work on the brush issue.

With all the negatives, it is still some BEAUTIFUL country.....

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**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions**

**Donovan** : 7/12/2009; 7:08:27 AM

Reads: 230, Responses: 3 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)

Thank you for the report Rob. Sorry about the trail conditions.

There are periodic plans to deal with the downed trees but they keep falling through for various reasons. The primary difficulty is finding a crew that can haul in tools plus a base camp for extended stays. We just don't have the volunteer resources to do so.

We do have in the District a youth crew for brushing but they need to go home each day so it is not effective to have them drive fours hours to spend four hours at the first mile or two of trail.

Did you put pictures on your trail site?

Donovan

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**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions****Doug Firman** : 7/12/2009; 8:14:18 AMReads: 237, Responses: 0 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)

Rob,

Did you encounter any problems on the Elk Lake Creek trail coming down from Elk Lake to Battle Creek? The Forest Service mentions a washout on its website, but I didn't see anything like that when I hiked in to Battle Creek from the Collawash trailhead a few weeks ago. In fact I saw very little change from last fall.

Here's the quote from the FS site (July 9):

"Trail 559 has a washout, difficult to relocate trail (hiker reported losing trail twice)."

Just curious to know where that might be.

Doug

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions**[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 7/12/2009; 6:16:36 PMReads: 247, Responses: 2 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)

Donovan:

Yes, I posted the pictures this morning. I also have a couple of the worse areas (the switchbacks), although it is hard to see from the pictures how bad it was. There is literally a new trail that is being worn from avoiding the blowdown. I never cut switchbacks, but on that trail I had to! :)

**Here is one** of the switchbacks

**Here is another (yes there is a trail there)**

No need to apologize for the conditions. I totally understand the reasons, I just wish there was someone who could help fix the situation. The sad part is that if nothing continues to be done, some of those trails are in danger of being lost or worse, having people get lost on them since they are difficult to follow. On some of the trails the brush problem is worse than the blowdown. I wish I had brought my hand clippers with me, I could have helped a little bit in that area. I did manage to move a few larger pieces off the trail, and did my usual branches and rocks sweeping off the trail.

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**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions**

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**Rob Williams** : 7/12/2009; 6:22:08 PM

Reads: 240, Responses: 0 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)

Doug:

I didn't see (don't remember seeing) a washout area on the 559. Honestly, one of the toughest sections of the trail to follow was near a creek crossing. The trail was so brushed in, the trail was actually a short tunnel through the vine maple.

559 is a very interesting trail. I've never hiked a trail with so many creek crossings on it. And so many that you have to get wet on! It was a fun time for me and my daughter.....

I don't know where Welcome Lakes got its name, though. The lakes didn't seem terribly welcoming to me.....

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**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions**

**Donovan** : 7/12/2009; 9:23:37 PM

Reads: 231, Responses: 1 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)

That looks like crosscut saw hell to me. Lot's of bind and trees that keep on coming down the hill. Not that it it can't be done, of course.

There are crews out there that could make the whole Bull first class. But they want to be paid, that's all.

Thank you for your help and pictures.

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**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions**[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 7/13/2009; 8:46:49 AMReads: 235, Responses: 0 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)

It would definitely be crosscut saw hell.....Even with a chainsaw it wouldn't be easy to clear some of the mess.....

I do what I can, but I wish I were able to do more.

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions**[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 7/26/2009; 5:06:26 PMReads: 194, Responses: 1 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)

Hey Doug:

I apologize.....There WAS a washout on the Elk Lake Creek trail. It wasn't a big deal, so I kind of forgot about it, but tonight, when I was working on the GPS track and pictures and stuff, I realized/remembered there was one. If you look in the far left of this picture, you can see the washout:

**Picture** of washout

Honestly, it wasn't bad at all following the trail. I'm not really sure how you could lose the trail, but maybe coming the opposite direction it was tougher. The section that was washed out wasn't too long.

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**Re: Bull of the Woods trail conditions****Doug Firman** : 7/27/2009; 8:34:45 AMReads: 206, Responses: 0 ( [↩](#) view responses to this item)













Rob,

Yeah, I know the spot you're talking about. But it's nothing new. It's even mentioned on the FS info sheet ("mile 4.3 - top of sharp rise over eroded bank"). Here's a shot of the same area looking upstream:

[http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3270/2970621682\\_c9b292de75.jpg?v=0](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3270/2970621682_c9b292de75.jpg?v=0)

As you say, it's not hard to navigate around this. So I'm still curious as to what washout the FS is referring to in its recent update. But if you didn't have any problems coming down from Elk Lake, and I haven't seen anything coming in from the Collawash, then it doesn't sound like there really is anything. That's good!

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