

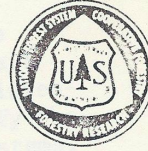
Region 6
P.O.Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208

REPLY TO: 8100 Program Planning
7700

October 7, 1975

SUBJECT: Trail Maintenance Cutback Editorial

TO: Forest Supervisors



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Editor Sullivan has developed an excellent editorial about trails management (copy attached). His observations and recommendations for correction are exactly in line with the current direction in our trails program.

As a part of the FY 1976 Trail Assessment Project, we developed a new management classifications system for trails. R-6 ED #12 to FSM 7703 outlined the new system. A key part of the new system directs the classification of existing trails as either trunk trails, primitive trails or short-term (to be abandoned) trails.

The trunk trail is described as a trail where the Forest is able to provide annual unimpeded, convenient travel into forest areas. These trails are designed and managed in a current maintenance program that permits their use by a wide range of users without interruption or safety problems.

If the current design or the maintenance program cannot provide this service, the pathway might be operated as Primitive Trail. A primitive trail is one where its existing condition makes it safe for only a specific type of skilled user. The maintenance program on this trail would not provide a high degree of convenience. For example, logging out would be less frequent than on trunk trails. There may be a stream crossing problem during high water, or other restrictions. A key requirement for this type of management would be advance notice to trail users of the limitations. Signs, maps, brochures or other public information is an essential element in the management of such trails.

You have also been advised to inventory old abandoned trails that are still traceable on the ground. Those that are no longer needed, or are unsafe, are to be classified as short-term trails. The management program for these trails is eventually to drain dip them, obscure the entrance but post a Trail Abandoned sign just beyond the closure point. This latter precaution would be to warn a previous user that the trail is not safe for travel.

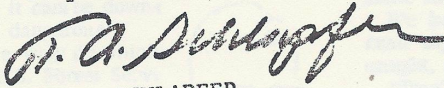
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These concepts are our written policy. The problem is that the current direction is new and is not fully reflected in budget proposals.

The approach must be either budgeting the money to maintain the trail to high standards of convenience or reclassifying the trail to reflect the degree of maintenance. Also, in any minimum maintenance program there must be sufficient dollars expended to notify the public of limitations of use on our primitive or short-term systems.

Mr. Sullivan's editorial is especially appropriate now as we begin the budgeting process for the next period, and as a guide in completing your trails study this year.



T. A. SCHLAFER
Regional Forester

Enclosure

Trail Maintenance Cutbacks 8/1/75 Danger to Northwest Hikers

By J. WISLEY SULLIVAN
Editor, The Statesman

Bureaucratic blindness to the needs of people can be an annoyance in the workaday world. In the wilderness, it can be downright dangerous.

The way in which the U.S. Forest Service is cutting back trail maintenance could leave hikers and backpackers stranded in the woods.



Sullivan

That's exactly what might have happened to my wife and me a few days ago if it hadn't been for an almost unbelievable coincidence.

WE DECIDED to backpack through a northern part of Marion County, in the Clackamas River Basin, an area where few Marion County people ever get.

It contains such exotic names as Bull of the Woods, Silver King Mountain, the Mother Lode Trail and Pansy Basin.

Instead of approaching the area from the Marion County side, however, we entered from the north, leaving our car at the Bagby Hot Springs trail parking lot. We planned a four-day 28-mile loop.

An essential part of that loop, to get us back to our car, involved Forest Trail 552, from a logging road back to Bagby Hot Springs.

THE SCENERY AND the ruggedness of the country lived up to our expectations. The fourth day found us hiking along the logging road, looking for the trail to Bagby. We could find no sign of the trail along the road.

A trail junction sign at the top of Bull of the Woods saddle had pointed us in that direction with "Bagby Hot Springs 7 miles." The most current Forest Service map, put out in 1972, had the trail on it.

Unsure what to do, we stopped to ask two men parked in a pickup truck by the side of the road. They said, "There's no trail sign along here. We've never heard of it." Just then, a Forest Service employee approached the truck, and we repeated our question to him.

HE BENY OVER, picked up a rock, threw it over a small rise at the side of the road and said, "There's your trail. I just hit it."

By sheer coincidence, the truck

had spent some time looking for the trail and had started off cross country, through that densely forested area looking for Bagby.

"I heard they went over that mountain there," he said. "There are some sheer cliffs on the other side."

We began making a temporary trail sign, so others wouldn't be caught, as we were.

"Don't do that," he said. "The Forest Service might be liable for injuries on that trail if there is a sign."

WE PAINTED "Bagby Hot Sp." on a log anyway, with an arrow. We explained that he might not be standing there the next time hikers needed to know where the trail begins.

Our hike later confirmed that the trail hadn't been tended in years. It was an obstacle course of fallen trees. But there it was on the official Mt. Hood National Forest map dated 1972. And there was that sign at the top of the saddle.

The Forest Service is caught in a difficult situation. Budget cutbacks have forced reductions in trail maintenance. The official maps are very

expensive to produce, and can't be revised every year.

But there are some things the Forest Service could do to mitigate the problem. With every map it hands out, it could include a small printed list of the numbers of the trails which are not being maintained. It could alert hikers not to use the trails without a current year's update on trail maintenance.

It could post the current trail information at the trailhead boxes, if not weekly at least on a seasonal basis.

It could make sure that a "Trail Not Maintained" sign, accompanied by "Proceed at Your Own Risk", is posted at the start of every non-maintained trail.

Whether the Forest Service likes it or not, it does have a liability, even for the non-maintained trails, as long as those trails appear on the maps and on the trail junction signs.

As for us, we just hope that the next parties which hike that route notice our crude sign and aren't tempted to start off cross-country through the forest in search of their car.

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By sheer coincidence, the truck happened to be parked and the Forest Service man happened to be at the spot where the trail began.

"The trail has been abandoned for over 10 years," he explained, "and we've taken the signs down because we don't want to encourage people to

HE WENT ON TO say, however, that a few weeks before, a party of hikers

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