



***NEWS  
RELEASE***

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## **Debris Flows Create Three New Middle Fork Rapids**

Heavy thunderstorms earlier this week along the Middle Fork of the Salmon River sent debris flows crashing down several tributary streams causing large debris flows and creating three new rapids according to Middle Fork District Ranger Chris Grove. At the present time, the river is open though floaters need to scout ahead and use extra caution when floating past the new debris flows.

River Manager John Haugh flew over the three new rapids July 24 to assess the situation. He said, "I watched oar boats, kayaks, and sweep boats run the new rapids. All appear to be straight forward, large wave-train rapids, but narrow with the river restricted to about 35% of its original width. However, each of these new rapids should be scouted."

Haugh made the following observations:

At mile 13.1, just downriver from Sheepeater Camp, an unnamed creek on river right flooded and the river is backed up forming a new rapid. Parties should stop at Sheepeater Camp to scout the new rapid.

At mile 16.0, downriver from Greyhound Camp, a debris flow from Greyhound Creek on river right has backed up the river forming a new rapid and flooding Greyhound Camp. The camp is not useable. Parties should stop at Johns Camp, or in the eddy immediately below to scout.

At mile 58.5, about a half mile below Tappan Falls, Cove Creek on river right, near Tappan III Rapid, blew out damming most of the river. Tappan II Rapid, just upstream from the new rapid, is completely submerged by the new "lake". Parties should stop

before Tappan Falls to scout the new rapid. The debris flow coming out of Cove Creek also destroyed about 40-50 feet of the Middle Fork trail, and it is not passable by stock.

In addition to the debris flows, there apparently was a logjam above Pistol Creek that has since released on its own.

Ranger Grove said “Our checkers at the Boundary Creek launch are providing specific information on known debris flows to those who are launching and advising people to take precautions. They are also providing a general advisory (as they have all season) of the possibility of other flows and jams due to fires from last season coupled with weather events.” Grove continued, “People should use caution when camping at the tributary stream confluences. There are places at those campsites that can be very hazardous in storm cell weather situations. In some ways it is similar to camping in the Southwest US; choose your campsite carefully with an eye on the weather.”

Grove also noted that while the debris flows, log jams, and washed out trails do create new hazards and inconveniences for visitors, they are all part of what makes the Middle Fork of the Salmon River what it is. “The constantly changing flow of the river, erosion, flooding, debris slides and deposition are what shaped the canyon and river bed. The landforms you see at mouths of streams are old debris flows. These natural processes are the essence of the Middle Fork. They are what keep the “wild” in Wilderness and in Wild & Scenic River.”

Grove concluded that, “Other than informing people of the hazards and assessing and repairing trail damage, we don't believe any management action is necessary or appropriate at this time, in this Wilderness/Wild River setting.”