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For More Information Contact:
Joe Harwood, 541-685-7471
Eugene Water & Electric Board

Roof project will restrict access to Trail Bridge Campground and Smith Reservoir

In order to continue to provide citizens of Eugene and the McKenzie River Valley with affordable, hydro-generated electricity they need for daily life, the Eugene Water & Electric Board is investing in the care and maintenance of several structures in the Upper McKenzie area. First, a roof reinforcement project at the utility's Carmen-Smith powerhouse, and secondly, a safety improvement near the spillway gates at Smith Reservoir. These efforts will result in changes, delays and reduced access to Trail Bridge Campground and Smith Reservoir.

The roof work will impact the primary access road to Trail Bridge Campground and Smith Reservoir with a closure beginning at 7 a.m. Monday, June 20. The road closure is expected to continue through 5 p.m. Friday, June 24.

During the June 20-24 phase of the project, no vehicles will be allowed past the powerhouse on Forest Service Road 4779.

A secondary access route to the campground, via Forest Service Road 655 to the Trail Bridge Bypass Road, will remain open only to high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicles for the duration of the work. The secondary roads to the campground and reservoir are single-lane, graveled with steep grades and feature limited pull-outs or passing areas. The secondary roads are not suited for passenger cars, motor homes or vehicles towing trailers or fifth wheels. Due to the primitive condition of the roads, recreational vehicles and vehicles towing trailers are prohibited.

Following the 24/7 closures June 20-24, the primary access road will again be open June 27 through July 1 with traffic control measures in place. Motorists can expect temporary delays of up to 30 minutes between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. There will be no restrictions in place July 2 through July 10. Temporary delays minutes may be in place the week of July 11-15 as the contractor demobilizes. At this time, EWEB doesn't anticipate any weekend closures.

Also starting the week of June 20 is a project to begin closing dispersed camping sites adjacent to Smith Lo Road, which descends from Smith Reservoir down to Trail Bridge Campground.

In order to protect public safety, EWEB later this summer will begin prohibiting parking, day use activities and dispersed camping on both sides of Smith Lo Road. The road parallels the spillway that runs from Smith Reservoir to Trail Bridge Reservoir. Under certain conditions, the spillway gates could open with little or no notice and pose a significant threat to those present on Smith Lo Road. Installation of physical barriers as part of the planned closure will continue through July.

The Carmen-Smith Hydroelectric Project, located on the McKenzie Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest, is EWEB's largest utility-owned power source. The project is off of state Highway 126 East about 70 miles east of Eugene, and about 41 miles west of Sisters.

The Carmen Diversion Reservoir, filled by the McKenzie River flowing from its headwaters at Clear Lake, has minimal storage capacity and is used to divert water into a tunnel leading to Smith Reservoir.

From Smith Reservoir, water is routed through a second tunnel to the Carmen Power Plant, which discharges into Trail Bridge Reservoir, and then flows through the Trail Bridge Power Plant and back into the McKenzie River below Trail Bridge Dam.

The Carmen-Smith project is operated as a peaking and load-following facility, using the water stored in the three project reservoirs. Power generation is increased during the times of the day when customers' use of electricity is the greatest – in the winter that is typically early morning and early evening hours. In addition to peaking, the project provides on-demand power to support EWEB's alternative energy resources including wind power.

For updates on the roof reinforcement project and accessibility to Trail Bridge Campground or Smith Reservoir, go to www.eweb.org or go to the Willamette National Forest's Current Condition page, www.fs.usda.gov/detail/willamette/home/?cid=stelprdb5136474

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