

Post-Eagle Creek Fire – Newly Reopened Sites (June 2018)

Questions and Answers

Q1: Which trailheads, trails, and parks reopened on June 14, 2018?

- Benson State Recreation Area
- Benson Ruckel Trail (#405A)
- Benson Way Trail (#405B)
- Benson Spur Trail (#405C)
- Bridge of the Gods Trailhead (access to the Pacific Crest Trail)
- Casey Creek Trail (#476)
- Gorge 400 Trail between Cascade Locks and Wyeth (MP 25 - 35)
- Gorton Creek Trail (#408)
- Green Point Ridge Trail (#418)
- Herman Bridge Trail (#406E)
- Herman Creek Cutoff Trail (#410)
- Herman Creek Trailhead and Trail (#406)
- Mud Lake Trail (#406A)
- Nick Eaton Trail (#447)
- Pacific Crest Trail (#2000)
- Plateau Cutoff Trail (#412)
- Ridge Cutoff Trail (#437)
- Wyeth Trailhead and only a small segment of Wyeth Trail that connects to Gorge #400. The remainder of Wyeth #411 is closed until the junction with Green Point Ridge Trail (#418) on the Mt. Hood.

Q2: Why are there “open” trails within the “closed” area”?

Due to public safety concerns, we’ve enacted an “off-trail” closure which limits hikers to remain within 25 feet of the centerline of the trail. Staying on trails is always an important part of being a responsible hiker so that you can minimize impacts to soil and the overall environment. In the burned area, staying on trails is even more important because trails have had work to stabilize and repair their walking surface, while surrounding burned areas may be unstable and unsafe for cross-country exploration. Note that many areas within 25 feet of the trail may also be unsafe and that extra precautions are warranted at all times in the burned area. Therefore, we recommend staying on the trail itself as much as possible.

Q3: Does the reopening mean that these trails are safe? What hazards should I expect?

There is always a certain level of risk on backcountry trails, but now there are additional post-fire risks. These include falling snags (dead trees), falling limbs from standing trees, difficulty navigating trails in places where there are many downed trees, unstable ground due to burned root systems, falling rocks from unstable slopes, and stump holes. Landslides, rockslides, and debris flows are also a concern. Navigation can be challenging in parts of the trail.

Q4: What should I watch out for and how can I be as safe as possible in burned areas?

- **Scan** for overhead hazards.
- **Listen** for falling trees, limbs, and rocks.
- **Watch out** for stump holes and higher than usual stream flows.
- **Stay** on established trails.
- **Leave when windy.** If wind is forecast greater than 30 mph, don’t go into a burned area. If it picks up while you are out, leave immediately. Wind can bring down fire-weakened trees.
- **Stay out of closed areas.**

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Trail signs may be missing, so stick well within your comfort level navigating an area, ensuring you have navigation tools such as a map, compass, or GPS. Turn back if you are beginning to lose your bearings.

We do not recommend hiking during a major rain storm or winter storm event. Be aware that a heightened risk of flash floods, unstable ground, or landslides remains for a few days after major precipitation.

Q5: Can backpackers camp along the trail? If so, where is it allowed?

Normally, Leave No Trace guidance for backpackers is to camp 200 feet off the trail or outside of view of the trail. However, circumstances are very different right now in the Eagle Creek burned area. The best approach is to look for unburned sections of the trail where you can camp in an established campsite. Even the area within 25 feet of the trail may not be safe for camping. Furthermore, areas close to the trail will create impacts to other hikers so we do not recommend camping within the burned area.

Whether or not you are in a burned area, you should always look around for hazard trees before setting up camp. Some of the established campsites along the route may be fairly exposed along edges so it may not be worth taking a risk. Others, such as Smokey Camp on the Pacific Crest Trail, are not recommended for camping due to the severity of the burn.

In other words, camping is legal within 25 feet of the trail but campers are advised take precautions and use your judgement about camping based on the terrain and surrounding conditions.

Q6: How can I practice Leave No Trace when answering the call of nature (dispose properly of human waste)?

We recommend treading lightly by carrying a waste disposal kit as a means to pack out your waste. If you do choose to dig a cathole, please minimize impacts by packing out your toilet paper. The Leave No Trace organization's website offers helpful details on human waste disposal [methods](#) and [waste disposal products on the market](#) for use in sensitive environmental areas.

Q7: Can I go to view Dry Creek Falls?

Yes, hikers are allowed on the short trail from the Pacific Crest Trail to Dry Creek Falls.

Q9: When will the rest of the trails impacted by Eagle Creek Fire reopen?

- National Forest System trails in the Columbia River Gorge west of Multnomah Falls are expected to open by the end of 2018. This includes Larch Mountain Trail, Wahkeena, Devil's Rest, Angel's Rest, and the Return Trail.
- National Forest System Trails in the central part of the fire zone (between Cascade Locks and Larch Mountain Trail) currently have no timeline for reopening. Some of these trails have not yet been assessed. The Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail between Cascade Locks and Toothrock State Park also has no current timeline for reopening.
- There is no timeline for reopening the northern segment of Wyeth Trail, due to severe damage to the trail caused by Eagle Creek Fire.

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Q10: What are the plans to reopen the rest of Wyeth Trail? Will it be rerouted?

We have not yet made a final determination. For the time being, there is no estimated reopening date due to the heavy damage it sustained after the fire. We are concentrating our resources on assessing and reopening other trails.

Q11: How do I find out what's open before heading out?

We recommend always directly checking the website of the land manager -- Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Mt. Hood National Forest, or [Oregon State Parks](#) -- for alerts before heading out. Other options include:

- Check the interagency list showing the status of sites impacted by Eagle Creek Fire at bit.ly/eaglecreekfireresponse.
- In the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, check ReadySetGorge.com.

Q12: Is horse riding and camping allowed?

Horse riding is allowed on the Forest Service trails that reopened in the Mark O. Hatfield unless posted as prohibited. Note that Wilderness rules that apply. Horse camping is not illegal but not advised at this time, due to limitations in the space off trail. Call the National Forest Unit before heading out if you are considering this.