



**Pacific Northwest Region**  
**Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**  
1550 Dewey Ave.  
Baker City, OR 97814  
[www.fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman](http://www.fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman)

# News Release

Contact: Larisa Bogardus (541) 523-1246

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## **Snow, ice block Wallowa Mountain Loop Road (Forest Service Road 39)**

**Baker City, OR** – Snow and ice have stifled efforts to open the Wallowa Mountain Loop Road (Forest Service Road 39) and the detour route on FSR 66 as planned, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest announced Thursday. Therefore there will not be though traffic from Halfway to Joseph and vice versa until Mid-June.

Neither route is normally open to vehicular traffic until June 16, but due the unusually mild winter led Tidewater Contractors from Brookings, OR, attempted to open the road with the intent of getting an early start on road construction this season.

Despite recent warm days, a half-mile section is iced over and cannot be cleared, said Randy Strohm, project manager for the WWNF. The alternate route, FSR 66, also is impassable due to depth of the snow around, primarily around Twin Lake.

Forest Service engineering staff and the contractor will continue to monitor conditions as the season progresses, but unless conditions change dramatically, they will stick to the current schedule of having both routes open on the original date of June 16.

FSR 39 is designated as a seasonal snowmobile route until April 15 of each year. It is not plowed and normally does not melt off sufficiently for vehicular access until mid-June.

Beginning June 16, FSR 39 will be open to passenger vehicles from 5 p.m. Thursday to 8 a.m. Tuesday to allow campers and others to use the route on the weekends.

Starting July 1, through completion of construction, visitors can expect rough surfaces and delays of up to one hour on FSR 39, or use the designated alternate route of FSR 66.

FSR 66 is a 30-mile, single-lane gravel road with pullouts so motorists should plan accordingly. It is not recommended for motor homes.

Tidewater crews began reconstruction of the roadway beginning at the junction of Highway 86 (10 miles east of Halfway) and northward to the junction of FSR 66 in 2013. The \$5.3 million contract to reconstruct 18 miles of the roadway is funded by



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## NEWS RELEASE

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the Federal Highway Administration. It is the largest of its kind in the Forest Service system and scheduled for completion this fall.

First designated as a National Forest Scenic Byway in 1992, the Wallowa Mountain Loop Road was named a State Scenic Byway in 1996. In 2000, the Federal Highways Administration established the Hells Canyon All-American Road for its qualities of exceptional scenery, widely varied terrain, recreational opportunities, and historical significance.

For more information about the construction project, closures, and detour information, please continue to visit the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest web site at: [www.fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman](http://www.fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman) or contact the Wallowa Mountains Office at 541-426-5546.

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Wet, icy snowdrifts on Forest Service Route 66 are making it impossible for crews to plow through. Both FSR 66 and 39 are impassable.