

THE KRASSEL R.D. BUZZ

What's the buzz?

Tell me what's happening!



FEBRUARY 2011

Ranger's Rant

Welcome to the Krassel Ranger District. We are open for business. Although for a time in the spring, we weren't sure that would be true after the heavy rains we received in June that washed out the South Fork Road. It has been a challenging first nine months on the District. I arrived in May 2010 and have been busy ever since learning about ongoing and future projects, as well as the vast, beautiful landscape on the District. I have enjoyed meeting the people who work and live on the District and I hope to meet more people this year. As you will discover, the District accomplished great things last year and I am proud to be a member of this team. We are not without (cont'd last pg.)



Anthony Botello

SFSR Road Repaired in Record Time!

It may be old news to many, but the SFSR Road is now open at the Buckhorn Bridge after a four month closure. Re-construction of the washed out road began on September 7, 2010 and was completed on October 15. The road was damaged by surging water on June 6 when much of the road washed away due to a high intensity rainstorm that caused multiple wash outs, culvert failures and flooding incidents across the forest.

The PNF obtained Emergency Federal Highway Administration funding to pay for the \$475,000 repair. Kesler Construction was contracted to repair the road and finished the project on



The newly repaired SFSR Road

October 15 much to the relief of the residents of Yellow Pine who rely on the SFSR road for their winter driving access.

The washout necessitated the closure of the damaged portion of road on June 10. The closure remained in effect during Chinook salmon fishing season and required the residents of Yellow Pine and forest visitors to travel via Johnson Creek Road and Lick Creek Road. A path was improved by the Forest Service to allow people to cross over the damaged portion of road by foot.

“I am very pleased with the finished product and with the way folks came together to fix the road. This was a joint effort where we used rocks from the Boise National Forest, had great contractors, and had lots of input from partners and cooperators as to the design of the repair,” said Anthony Botello, Krassel District Ranger. “The design incorporated construction techniques that created fisheries habitat and minimized impacts to the river, and even used rocks native to the area to minimize visual impacts.”

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The PNF Engineering Staff and the Krassel District Ranger thank the public for their cooperation and patience while the repair took place. The project was finished in record time with good results. "Aquatic specialists from the district worked with the construction crew to minimize sediment and reduce effects to Chinook salmon, which were in the river at the time of the road repair work," said Jim Fitzgerald, Krassel District Hydrologist.

"We will continue our restoration of the repair area, and I'm convinced that in a year or so, most folks won't be able to tell the road was damaged at that location," added Botello.



The SFSR Road was damaged on June 6.

ARRA Funds Make Recreation and Road Projects Possible

American Re-investment and Recovery Act (Recovery) funding assisted the District in accomplishing about 250 miles of trail maintenance in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness during the 2010 field season. Recovery funds were used to cover the cost of half of an eight person Student Conservation Association (SCA) crew that were trained in tool use and sent to work out of our remote Wilderness Work Stations at Chamberlain, Cold Meadows, Cabin Creek and Big Creek. During their twelve week Wilderness stay crew members did 10-day backpacking swings clearing and maintaining trail.

The South Fork Salmon River (SFSR) Road chip seal, paving, and sub-grade repair work was accomplished with Recovery Act funding as well. This project had been on the District's wish list for many years, but the expensive repair and maintenance work proved difficult to accomplish in light of the Forest's backlog of road maintenance needs. Subgrade repairs were completed this past summer while chip and crack sealing operations will resume next summer and should be completed in 2011. About 2.7 million dollars in recovery funding covered the cost of these repairs.

District Recreation Program Works with Partners to Complete an Array of Projects

In addition to the ARRA funded trail work that was completed this summer, the Recreation Program also installed 4 new trail bridges on the Fitsum and Buckhorn Trail system. These additional bridges will better accommodate two-wheeled motorized use in the area. A new bridge is being planned to replace the one washed out



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by surging water on Buckhorn Creek, and hopefully this bridge installation and needed trail repair will be started next spring. The District has applied for Idaho Parks and Recreation funds to help cover these repair efforts on the Buckhorn Creek trail. The Forest Engineering Section is storing the new bridge over the winter until it can be installed.



Several bridges were constructed on popular motorized trails

Trail users will also appreciate the five bridges constructed on 2-wheel motorized trails by FS crews in the South Fork area this past summer. The District maintained or improved approx. 500 miles of trail in the Frank and the South Fork area. The Idaho Trails Association also worked with the District to organize and oversee trail improvements on the popular Duck to Hum Lakes Trail in the proposed Secesh Wilderness this summer. Twelve people cut out and repaired the trail, camping at Duck Lake. Volunteers swung Pulaskis, pulled crosscuts, and worked the trail tread using traditional tools.

The District is developing proposals for several recreation projects in the South Fork Salmon River area. Hazard tree removal in the Ponderosa, Four Mile Campgrounds and the Camp Creek trailhead is a priority for the 2011 field season. Up to 60 mountain pine beetle affected trees need to be removed from the camping areas because they pose a safety risk to campers. In addition, plans are in the works for recreation improvements in the Phoebe Creek and in the SFSR Confluence areas. These areas are very popular during the summer months. The heavy use is causing resource damage in some spots and reduces the recreational experience of hikers, anglers, and campers. The District hopes to upgrade some facilities, provide more traffic control, and disperse some use away from those areas that are showing signs of wear and tear.

Speaking of the SFSR corridor, the 2010 fishing season went much better than in years past from a land management perspective. District staff noticed an improvement in compliance with traffic control and trash regulations and hopes that with continued outreach the situation will continue to improve.

Reed Ranch Airstrip was officially opened with a festive ceremony on July 30. The Idaho Transportation Department Division of Aeronautics will manage the airstrip via a 20-year Forest Service Special Use Permit. The ITD maintains 31 airstrips in the state of Idaho while the USFS owns and operates for public use an additional 22 backcountry airstrips, five of them on the Krassel District. Idaho boasts the largest number of backcountry airstrips in the lower 48. The USFS obtained the airstrip in 2006 as part of a land exchange and the ITD applied for a Special Use Permit to manage the site in 2008.

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District Ranger Anthony Botello and Forest Supervisor Suzanne Rainville raise the windsock at the new airstrip.

In addition to Reed Ranch opening, the District was able to contract extensive maintenance to Chamberlain airstrip. Using a mule team, contractors graded and smoothed both the E-W and N-S runways at the airstrip. Two outhouses will be replaced at Chamberlain and Cold Meadows airstrips and the outhouse at Big Creek was made handicap accessible last summer. Other airstrips received routine maintenance from district crews throughout the summer.



The outhouse at Big Creek Airstrip was made handicap accessible.

Reed Ranch Airstrip is declared open after careful planning and collaboration between KRD and ID Division of Aeronautics.



Engineering and Fisheries Work Together to Restore Fish

Since 2006 the Forest has restored or improved fish passage at 30 road crossings, twelve of which were in the South Fork Salmon River drainage. Upgrades were made at Indian Creek, Phoebe Creek, Parks Creek, Goat Creek and Reegan Creek among others. Three large fish barrier culverts were removed along Cow Creek and Calf Creek and replaced with bridges compatible with two-wheeled motorized travel from Cow Creek to Fitsum Creek. These projects were made possible with forest funding and the Nez Perce Tribe Watershed Partnership. Valley County also assisted in providing equipment and manpower for some projects.

The locations of fish passage projects are determined in several ways. Emphasis is given to streams with fish species listed under the Endangered Species Act such as Bull Trout, Steelhead, and Chinook Salmon. The 2007 wildfires on the Krassel Ranger District provided the impetus to upgrade or remove culverts that posed a threat to forest infrastructure and to provide for public access and safety. The improvements also address fish passage problems when culverts are deemed undersized for the expected increased flows. The Forest Plan also requires that fish passage be provided when culverts are replaced.

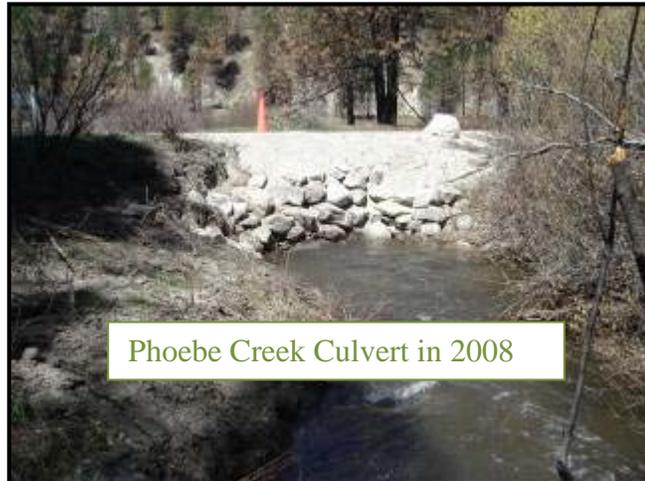
Phoebe Creek

Phoebe Creek was identified during the 2007 Burned Area Emergency Response assessment as needing to be upgraded for flow and fish passage. The need to increase capacity was apparent in the spring of 2008 when

high flows in Phoebe Creek and the SFSR nearly washed out the culvert. The culvert, originally a pair of 26 inch corrugated metal pipes was replaced with a large 16 foot multi-plate arch with natural bottom. Fish inventories have documented Chinook, steelhead, and cutthroat trout in Phoebe Creek. Phoebe Creek is designated as critical habitat for both Chinook and steelhead.

Goat Creek

Goat Creek is a large fish-bearing stream near the boundary between the Payette and Boise National Forests. Although Goat



Creek drains one of the most intensely burned watersheds in the Cascade Complex Fire of 2007, it was already scheduled for replacement. Fires in both 2006 and 2007 prevented completion of the project during those years. The Goat Creek culvert required replacement as mitigation for the SFSR Road Reconstruction Project, which paved the SFSR road between Warm Lake and the confluence with the Secesh River. The original pipe was a large, 8 foot CMP “shotgun culvert” with a very tall drop and was upgraded to 20 foot open bottom arch culvert.

Improving Wildlife Habitat and Reducing Fire Hazard a Priority

Through the use of prescribed fire and timber removal the Bald Hill and Eiguren Ranch projects will reduce the potential for high intensity wildfire and improve wildlife habitat in the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River (EFSFSR) drainage. The Bald Hill project calls for the prescribed burning of approx. 13,000 acres over multiple years in order to encourage the growth of large trees and remove small trees and brush that could carry crown fire through the forest. This project area extends along the EFSFSR from Williams Peak to Bald Hill. This spring, as part of the project, a 2000 acre area near Bald Hill is planned to be prescribed burned using helicopter based ignition devices.

In addition to the Bald Hill prescribed burn, a fifty acre area adjacent to Eiguren Ranch is scheduled to be hand ignited using drip torches. The purpose of this burn is to reduce the amount of forest vegetation and is intended to slow down a potential wildfire and make it easier to suppress. This will provide added safety to firefighters and nearby residential properties. Both projects are located near the town of Yellow Pine, a community at risk to wildfire in an area where wildfire is a frequent occurrence.



A 2004 prescribed burn above the town of Yellow Pine.

High Metals Prices Keep Minerals Staff Busy

The Forest has funding to move forward on the Thunder Mountain Restoration Project and hopes to complete the public involvement and environmental review process before the end of the coming summer. The project would include backfilling the Lightning Peak Pit, creating vegetative islands to encourage the naturalization of mined areas, constructing a campground, relocating the Lookout Mountain trailhead, creating ATV and foot trails through historic areas, and providing interpretation of the rich cultural and mining history of the Thunder Mountain Mining District.

The high price of metals has meant an increase in the number of exploration proposals on the District. Early stage exploration is ongoing in Quartz Creek and Big Creek, a significant drilling

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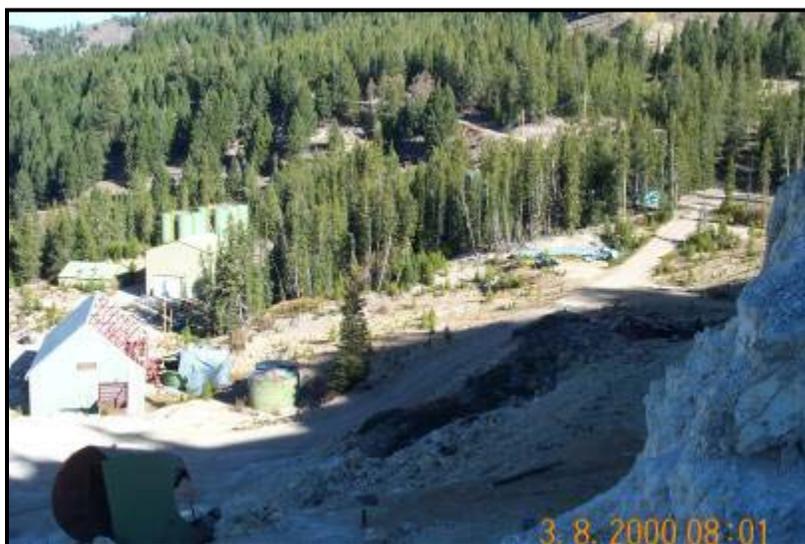
program at Stibnite is in its third year, and the District is completing the approval of a controversial drilling program at the Golden Hand property in the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness.



Re-contoured mine area where vegetative “islands” will be established



Historic “Chilean Mill”



The Dewey Mill which is being salvaged

Wilderness Fire Management is Relatively Uneventful

There was minimal fire activity on the Krassel Ranger District during the 2010 fire season. A total of five fires were managed, all of which were located in the Frank Church River of No



Return Wilderness. These fires had a total perimeter of approximately 524 acres. Three of these fires were staffed to ensure they were meeting objectives and to ensure trails remained open. There were no motorized intrusions in the wilderness area during the fire activity. The largest fire, Copper, burned 409 acres along Big Creek. Personnel monitoring this fire were supported by a Forest Service Pack String out of Big Creek.

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Historic Lookouts Going Green

Miners Peak and Williams Peak Lookouts will be outfitted with new solar power equipment next spring as part of project to update and improve conditions for employees at the look outs. The current use of propane tanks inside the lookouts to power appliances was found to be unsafe. An environmental analysis is taking place on the installation of the solar panels and accessory equipment, including consultations with state and Forest Service heritage staffs. The Forest Service will work with the Forest Heritage Program Manager and others to insure that the installation of the new equipment is done in a manner that is sensitive to the historic nature of the lookouts while also making them a safe place to live and work.



Wilderness, Recreation, Trails & Weed Program Manager Awarded Top Honors in Washington, D.C.

Clem Pope, who has worked for the Krassel Ranger District since about 1979, received a 2010 National Wilderness Award from the Chief of the Forest Service, Tom Tidwell during a ceremony held in October. The Bob Marshall Award for Individual Champion of Wilderness Stewardship was awarded to Pope for his commitment to demonstrating by example, and for his encouragement of others to become champions for wilderness resources. Clem began working for the Forest Service in Montana in 1967 as a member of a trail crew. After receiving his Master's Degree he began working on the PNF as a packer for the Big Creek Ranger District in the Idaho Primitive Area, which later became the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.



Clem Pope with
USFS Chief Tom
Tidwell and other
dignitaries in
Washington, D.C.

Clem enjoys the challenges of working in recreation and wilderness management on the present-day Krassel Ranger District, where land use management grows more complex as time goes by. "One of the best things about my job is working with young people who are just starting out as packers and crew members in the backcountry. They are the future and I work hard to support and mentor them so that Wilderness values will be sustained and championed on the Frank or wherever they find themselves years from now," said Pope.

Other Notes & Highlights:

* **Mushroom Picking:** Preparations had been made for a return of commercial moral pickers. However, a season did not materialize and commercial activity was non-existent.

* **Search and Rescue:** There were two significant S&R events on the District.

NYC: one injured crew member was retrieved by FS helicopter off Mosquito Ridge in the Wilderness.

Private hunters: A hunter thrown from a horse in Crescent Meadow within the Wilderness sent a "SPOT" 911 message and was picked up by Life Flight.

* **Film Project in the Wilderness:** A partnership agreement was on-going for a non-profit endeavor to produce a Wilderness documentary that proposes to provide a multifaceted message about Wilderness. The proposal has information and an education message with the potential to benefit Wilderness management efforts and programs. The video has been shot and the work initiated to develop a product.

* **Romine Ranch cleanup:** on-going cleanup efforts involved removing a portion of the debris left at this acquired property in the Wilderness using a packing contract. There is still a need to define a long term management strategy for this property and other similar properties / structures with potential historic values.

* **Poverty Flats Overlook:** An effort to provide a ½ mile loop trail with five natural history interpretative signs was nearly completed. The signs along the trail have been installed. Since the parking area is being used to stock pile chips for road re-surfacing, completion is targeted for the next field season after completion of the road work.

* **Lake Surveys:** Visits to several of the high mountain lakes on the District were made and a rudimentary "Survey of Recreational Use Impacts", which was initiated in 1982, continued. Rainbow, Tsum, Cly and 33 Lakes were visited. Tentative results appear mixed, with some lakes showing a substantial increase in user impacts with other lakes actually evidencing less use and impacts.

* **Research & Resource Monitoring:** These kinds of activities continue to account for a surprising amount of use and activity on the District. Numerous entities and organizations are active. The Branch approach is to view these activities in a recreational context, except where the research / resource monitoring involves uses that would not otherwise be allowed, generally in terms of extended stays or permanent / semi-permanent installations or markings. In support of the authorization process to address these types of uses, measures to minimize the visual or physical impacts are recommended.

- ✓ Screw traps on the South Fork of the Salmon and the Secesh Rivers were operated by the Nez Perce tribe.
- ✓ The Nez Perce tribe installed and operates PIT tag antenna arrays at five (5) different sites on the Secesh, South Fork and East Fork of the Salmon Rivers.
- ✓ NOAA – NMFS (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration - National Marine Fisheries Service) conducted PIT tagging of salmon and steelhead.
- ✓ The Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) was involved in several efforts: an ongoing "Birds & Burns" research project, monitoring for wolverine presence, micro-climate sampling using microclimate stations ("i-buttons"), wolf scat collection for DNA sampling, salmon redd surveys and the Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) plot inventory program.
- ✓ The USGS Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center have an ongoing project studying stream communities.

- ✓ The University of Idaho supported research projects and also offered credit courses, many hosted & based at the University's Taylor Ranch Research Station. A Forest Service – U of I MOU is in place to provide additional guidance and structure for Wilderness research efforts.
- ✓ The Idaho Department of Fish & Game was granted approval for helicopter landings in the Wilderness to support trapping and collaring of wolves. This work was conducted in conjunction with winter big game counts.
- ✓ The Forest annually conducts some level of “in-house” resource monitoring. In 2010 the Forest wide contract for a “Forest-Wide Intensified Grid Inventory”, based on the FIA plot grid, was completed.

Ranger's Rant - cont'd

our challenges here at Krassel, But I am excited about the opportunities ahead to work with employees, forest visitors, the communities within the District, and others to have a positive impact on the management of the District. Many people have told me that we should do a better job of telling people about the work that we do and planned projects. In that light, I am very thankful that our Forest Public Affairs Officer has compiled this information to help tell our story. We hope to make “The Buzz” a semi-regular newsletter. Please feel free to stop by the Krassel District headquarters in McCall or contact me anytime at 634-0601 or abbotello@fs.fed.us.

Happy New Year From All of Us at the Krassel Ranger District!