

News Release

Nez Perce National Forest

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Memorial Day on the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests

Orofino, ID – It's been a cold, damp spring on the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests, but with Memorial Day Weekend – and the promise of better weather – just around the corner, Old Man Winter is finally starting to loosen his icy grip on the backcountry. There are plenty of great reasons to enjoy a getaway to Idaho's "Big Wild"; what are you waiting for?

Campsites

Most campgrounds offer first-come, first-served site selection although you can reserve a campsite at a few campgrounds.

To reserve a campsite at campgrounds with reservable sites call Recreation.gov at 1-877-444-6777, or visit the Recreation.gov website to make your reservation:

www.Recreation.gov.

Visitors can camp at sites outside developed campgrounds called "dispersed sites." However, due to this year's abnormally wet conditions, campers who choose to stay in undeveloped sites must take extra care to protect natural resources, such as plant life. If you camp at a dispersed site, leave no trace of your stay. Use existing fire rings if available, and pack out your trash.

On the Moose Creek Ranger District, all of the campgrounds that flank the beautiful "Wild and Scenic" Selway River are open. Several sites at the popular O'Hara Campground may

be reserved by contacting Recreation.gov. The Johnson Bar Group Site is also accepting reservations.

Castle Creek Campground, South Fork Campground, and Spring Bar Campgrounds are charging a fee and potable water is currently available. Fish Creek Campground will not be open until late June due to the winter snow pack. A volunteer campground host will be available at South Fork Campground from May 25 – September 12.

According to Adam McClory, Recreation Staff Officer, this winter's above-average snowfall and a couple of well-placed landslides have delayed the opening of two popular campgrounds along the North Fork Clearwater River; the Hidden Creek and Cedars Campgrounds will remain closed through the Memorial Day Weekend. The Aquarius, Washington Creek, Noe Creek and Kelly Forks Campgrounds are already open to forest visitors. The water systems at these campgrounds may not be operational, so recreationists should be sure to bring their own drinking water. The Weitas Creek Campground and Bungalow dispersed site are also ready to welcome holiday campers.

If you're looking for a pretty campsite along the Lochsa River, you may want to consider the Wild Goose or Apgar Campgrounds. Both campgrounds are up and running.

Are you interested in reserving a riverside campsite? Consider Wilderness Gateway Campground, 49 miles east of Kooskia along U.S. Highway 12. Camp Loops B, C and D are open and the campground has some sites available for reservation through Recreation.gov.

On the Powell Ranger District, White Sand, Whitehouse, Wendover and Powell Campgrounds will be open for Memorial Day. The Jerry Johnson Campground will remain closed all summer.

All four of the developed campgrounds on the Palouse Ranger District, including Laird Park, Little Boulder, Giant White Pine and Elk Creek, are open and all standard campground

amenities are available. The Elk Creek Campground, located one mile west of the town of Elk River, features 23 sites with electrical hookups.

Some of the sites at Elk Creek Campground can be reserved through Recreation.gov by calling the toll-free number or making reservations on the Recreation.gov website.

There is no trash service at Little Boulder or Elk Creek Campgrounds. Please take your refuse with you when you leave.

You can reserve group picnic areas at Little Boulder and Laird Park Campgrounds by calling the Potlatch Ranger Station at (208)875-1131.

River and Stream Conditions

River users are asked to be extremely careful when recreating on or near rivers. Water levels are already high, and the potential for peak flows is looming. A considerable amount of floating debris makes river access especially difficult and dangerous.

An added note of caution: Be extremely careful near streams. All streams are running very high and fast with snow melt from recent rains and warm weather.

Roads and Trails

Trails:

On the Nez Perce National Forest, the Rapid River Trailhead is nearing completion and will soon provide a nice new service to the public. The site will offer ample parking and toilet facilities. The trailhead will be a jumping-off spot for the Rapid River Trail System.

Due to an above average snow pack and continued cold temperatures at this time only lower elevation trailheads and roads are accessible. Highway 14, McComas Meadows, Salmon River Road, Slate Creek Road #354, and Rapid River trailhead are the main areas of interest currently open and accessible to campers and trail users. Road construction is

continuing on the Salmon River Road, and construction schedules are available online at www.salmonriverroad.org .

On account of this year's cold, snowy winter, most high elevation trails in the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests are still inaccessible. For your safety and to prevent damage to the land stay on roads and trails but avoid those that are too wet or muddy. Spring break-up can wreak havoc on roads. Check with local ranger stations for trails recommended for your favorite activity.

Early-season hikers and trail users should think twice before planning a trip to the backcountry. Low elevations trails are just now opening and high elevation trails are still blocked by snow and blow-down. Presently, travel on all accessible national forest trails will be "slow going."

Contact your nearest Forest Service office for updates before planning your next hike, horseback ride or ATV adventure.

When on trails, remember to yield to stock users.

Off-highway vehicle users, note: ATVs and motorcycles driven on national forest roads and trails are subject to state of Idaho registration laws and requirements. Contact your local motor vehicle department or the state of Idaho Parks and Recreation website (www.idahoparks.org/recreation) for a listing of registration sticker vendors and regulations.

Roads:

You can travel into the North Fork Clearwater River country via Beaver Creek Road 247. The road is open from Headquarters all the way to Bungalow, but travelers are advised to use extreme caution. Road 247 is very narrow in places, and drivers should be wary of soft shoulders, sinkholes and slumps. Because of residual snow, it isn't possible to access many of the spur roads that junction Road 247.

While parts of Pierce-Superior Road 250, from French Mountain to Bungalow and above Kelly Forks are still obstructed by slides and deep snowpack, Road 250 from Bungalow to Kelly Forks has been reopened. The same traveler's advisories apply to the open segment of Road 250.

Road 103, the Kamiah-Lolo Creek-Weippe Loop is open, but all spur roads are inaccessible.

Unfortunately, many backcountry roads are still blocked by snow, slides and blow-down. The following roads located on the Nez Perce- Clearwater National Forests are expected to remain closed over the holiday weekend;

- Road 250, French Mountain – Closed due to snow.
- Road 255, Kelly Creek – Closed four miles east of Kelly Forks due to a landslide.
- Road 290, Indian Hill – The road will remain closed indefinitely due to slides.
- Road 443, Falls Point section - Closed indefinitely due to slides.
- Road 649, Silver Leggett - Road 649 is closed indefinitely due to a slide / washout.
- Road 650, Lower Clear Creek- The road will remain closed indefinitely due to slides.
- Road 651, Hamby Fork – Road 651 is closed at Milepost 6 due to slides. The road may reopen sometime in late June.

Visitor Centers

There are a handful of places you can stop for information, wood permits and maps while visiting the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests.

In Grangeville, be sure to stop by the Nez Perce National Forest Supervisor's Office, located at 104 Airport Road. The office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. The Supervisor's Office will close on Monday, May 30 in observance of Memorial Day.

The historic Fenn Ranger Station, located just a few short miles from US Highway 12 near Lowell, is on the National Register for Historic Places. A self-guided walking tour highlights this beautifully landscaped working historic ranger station built in the 1930s by the

Civilian Conservation Corps. The ranger station is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. The office will close on Memorial Day.

Currently, the Lolo Pass Visitor Center on Highway 12 at the Idaho-Montana state line is open weekends, only. Beginning June 4, the visitor center will be open seven days a week. Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Pacific Time) each day.

Forty-eight miles east of Kooskia along Highway 12 stop by the Lochsa Historical Ranger Station, open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., six days a week. The ranger station will close on Tuesdays. Retired Forest Service volunteers host the site and are ready to answer your questions about what life was like on remote ranger stations in days gone by.

In Orofino, the Clearwater National Forest Supervisor's Office located along U.S. Highway 12 is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. The Supervisor's Office will close on Memorial Day.

For Information

For more information and updates, call the Nez Perce National Forest Supervisor's Office at (208)983-1950 or check online at www.fs.fed.us/r1/nezperce. You're also invited to contact the Clearwater National Forest Information Desk at (208)476-8267, or visit the Forest's website, www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater.

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