



NEWS RELEASE

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Forest Service

Lolo National Forest
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Blue Mountain Trailhead to be Closed April 27

MISSOULA, MT -- The Missoula Ranger District is reminding the public that the Main Blue Mountain Trailhead will be closed for approximately three weeks beginning Monday, April 27 while work is completed on the ongoing trailhead parking expansion and improvement work there. The trailhead is expected to reopen May 15.

The trailhead expansion, approved in May 2004, will increase parking capacity, provide equestrian facilities and separate hiker and mountain biker parking from horse trailer parking.

The expansion was made necessary by growth in the Missoula Valley and subsequent use at this popular trailhead, according to Missoula Ranger District officials.

According to Andy Kulla, Missoula District Resource Staff Officer, the expansion, and improvements will separate equestrian parking from existing parking and increase the capacity of the existing parking area. "This will relieve a lot of the parking congestion and reduce conflicts when things get busy," Kulla said.

The expansion is intended to accommodate the next two decades of growth in the valley, according to Kulla. There will be 44 automobile parking spots and room for 15 horse trailers. The horse trailhead will be designated for equestrian parking only, the same as the horse trailhead across town at the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area. Landscaping, earthen mounds and fencing are also planned to make the trailhead more organized and visually aesthetic. The Missoula Backcountry Horsemen will be helping with some of the improvements at the horse trailhead.

Construction began on the new equestrian parking on March 30, 2009.

If all goes well, the new and improved trailhead should be open again May 15, Kulla said. "We apologize for the inconvenience, we're trying to compress the closure as much as we can and when we reopen, it will be a much nicer facility," he added. During the work, Blue Mountain recreationists are asked to avoid the trailhead area and hike, bike or ride in other nearby areas -- such as the northern Blue Mountain area, O'Brien Creek, Pattee Canyon Recreation Area, or the Rattlesnake Recreation Area.

For additional information, contact the Missoula Ranger District at (406) 329-3814.

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