

Wilderness Management Review Three Sisters Wilderness

Submitted by: Art Pope Date: 9/14/18

Report Title: Black Crater Hike

Summary: 250-word max

Black Crater is one of the iconic day hikes in the Sisters area; a quick four mile climb to the top of an old volcanic cone. At the top, the old lookout site offers fantastic views of the Three Sisters to the south and Washington, Jack, and Jefferson to the north. The lower part of this trail burned in 2017. It was a very hot fire that left little green on the lower mountain. A walk through this surreal landscape is interesting and the upper mountain retains all of its original character and beauty.

Wilderness or Wild River: Three Sister Wilderness

Management Unit: Deschutes National Forest

Administrative Location: Bend Oregon

Head of Administrative Unit: John Allen, Forest Supervisor

Contact and Agency Response: please grade the agency's response with an A to F letter grade. Comments must support letter grades in each category.

B Access: is resource damage occurring at campsites, on trails or at trailheads?

The Black Crater Trail has been nicely reconstructed through the burn area. Except for some erosion, currently limited in scope, this trail is in good condition but would benefit from the proactive installation of check dams in critical locations.

Absolutely no litter or sanitation issues were observed. No obvious campsites, firepits or firerings were encountered.

C Management: regulations, permit systems, education, enforcement actions.

The managing agency has proposed a quota-based permit system for all day hikes and overnight trips in the Three Sisters and four other wilderness areas in the Central Cascades. During our hike, we met three other parties totaling six people. We observed absolutely no user-related trash or litter and no signs of sanitation issues. Frankly, this experience leaves one asking how the Forest Service is justifying such an all-inclusive permit system and exactly what impacts such a permit system is designed to mitigate.

Trail head signage is quite good with professional quality, laminated posters that address a full spectrum of issues related to the use and protection of wilderness. A self-issuing wilderness permit is required and available at the trailhead.

B Stewardship; are management actions in accord with wilderness values and best practices in wilderness management

Post-fire reconstruction of the Black Crater trail was extremely well done. The frequency, size, and quality of drainage dips is particularly notable although the quality and frequency tends to decline as you get further from the trailhead.

Opening this trail after the fire required the removal of a lot of logs; work that was nicely done. Crosscuts were used and downed logs were bucked close to the trail to help maintain an appropriately narrow trail corridor.

Exposed soils in this area demand the installation of check dams in areas where the trail is already eroded and incised.

D Wilderness; how well is management protecting the wilderness resource.

Most people agree that a good manager leads by example and treats the land with the same respect they ask of the public. The Forest Service has long encouraged users to "pack-it-in-pack-it-out". In that spirit, it is long past time for the agency to accept responsibility for cleaning up the hundreds of feet of old cable it has left to greet visitors reaching the summit of Black Crater.

B Fire Management, Range management, Wildlife Management, Other.

Reconstruction of the Black Crater Trail through this heavily burned area has been nicely done. However, given the soft soils, now fully exposed by the fire, check dams need to be added to the steeper, already eroded, sections of this heavily used trail to more fully stabilize and protect it.