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Outdoors blog

Lochsa historic ranger station victim of Forest Service cuts



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Posted by Rich

Jan. 30, 2012 8:38 a.m. • 0 comments

NATIONAL FORESTS — Reduced recreation funding on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests will keep the Lochsa Historic Ranger Station from opening its doors this summer, according to a report by the Lewiston Morning Tribune.

The log structure on the Lochsa River, about 48 miles east of Kooskia, depicts life at remote Forest Service ranger stations in the 1920s and '30s. It is normally open from Memorial Day to Labor Day and staffed by volunteers.

Rick Brazell, forest supervisor, told the Tribune the site is a victim of the severe cuts to the recreation budgets for the two forests.

“It is either close that or close campgrounds,” he said. “It’s an interpretive site which is very good to have, but it’s not a destination site where people spend days.”

Read on for the rest of the story by Tribune outdoor writer Eric Barker:

Jim Fazio of Moscow called the decision not to open the historic site “heartbreaking.”



“It helps educate people about the history of the agency and the natural resources and it provides a tourism service and a contribution to the region,” Fazio said.

Fazio and his wife Dawn have served as volunteers at the station for a week the past two summers. He said an average of about 30 people a day traveling on U.S. Highway 12 would stop and look at the museum-like displays.

“It is all walks of life — motorcyclists, campers, old, young — everybody loved it,” he said. “Everybody would say this is the best thing the Forest Service has ever done.”

A change in the way the Northern Region of the agency allocates spending on recreation ships more money to forests closer to population centers. The new formula will leave Brazell and his staff with half as much money as they have had in the recent past and is expected to lead to some popular campgrounds being operated by vendors instead of the agency.

In a letter sent to volunteers, Lochsa District Ranger Craig Trulock said he is proposing to “turn over all recreation fee sites to a concession permit in 2013.”

Brazell said it’s possible a vendor could run the historic ranger station as well. He said his staff is still trying to figure out how much money the forests will have to spend on recreation this summer, and if any other sites will fall victim to the cuts.

“When you cut recreation budgets in half between the two forests something has got to give,” he said. “We can’t provide the service we have in the past. We just can’t do it. The concessionaires is a way we hope we can alleviate some of that.”

Barker may be contacted at ebarker@tribune.com or at (208) 848-2273.

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About this blog

News, field reports and insights on the Great Outdoors.

Rich Landers – hunter, animal lover, hiker, paddler, angler, naturalist and conservationist – has been covering the outdoors beat for more than three decades. His versatility and field research as a trails and waterways guidebook author help him connect issues to a wide range of interests.

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Rich Landers writes, photographs and gathers information for a wide range of

Outdoors coverage, with a special feature package in the Sunday Sports section. Landers' outdoors column runs Thursdays in the Sports section.

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