

OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Trails Section



South Shore Phillips Lake Trail

Trail Management Plan

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© Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
725 Summer Street NE, Suite C
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-0707

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Part 1 – Trail Map and Description of Route

The South Shore Phillips Lake Trail is a lakeside trail meandering along the south shoreline of Phillips Lake. The 6.6 mile non-motorized trail is located approximately 17 miles southwest of Baker City and 10 miles from Sumpter in Baker County, Oregon.

The trail (#1610) is entirely located on public lands managed by the Whitman Ranger District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (WWNF), USDA Forest Service. It was developed after the construction of the lake (reservoir) in the early 1970s. Although the area around the lake is closed to motor-vehicles off of designated routes to protect the bald eagle nesting habitat, this and other trails in the area are open to non-motorized recreational users. Popular spring through fall uses include hikers, mountain bicyclists, runners, and equestrians, and as dual-purpose trail in the winter months for cross country ski and snowshoe recreationists. The trail is accessible on public and forest roads year-round



The lake side trail winds along the waters-edge at the 4100 foot elevation with only slight elevational changes. This makes it a family friendly trail rated as 'easy' with minimal experience or technical riding levels needed.

As a multi-seasonal trail, users can enjoy the spring season with an abundant of trailside wildflowers and occasional views of song birds, chipmunks, mule deer and possibly a herd of Rocky Mountain elk. Extended views of the snow-capped views of the Elkhorn Mountains are also available along most of the trail until early June.



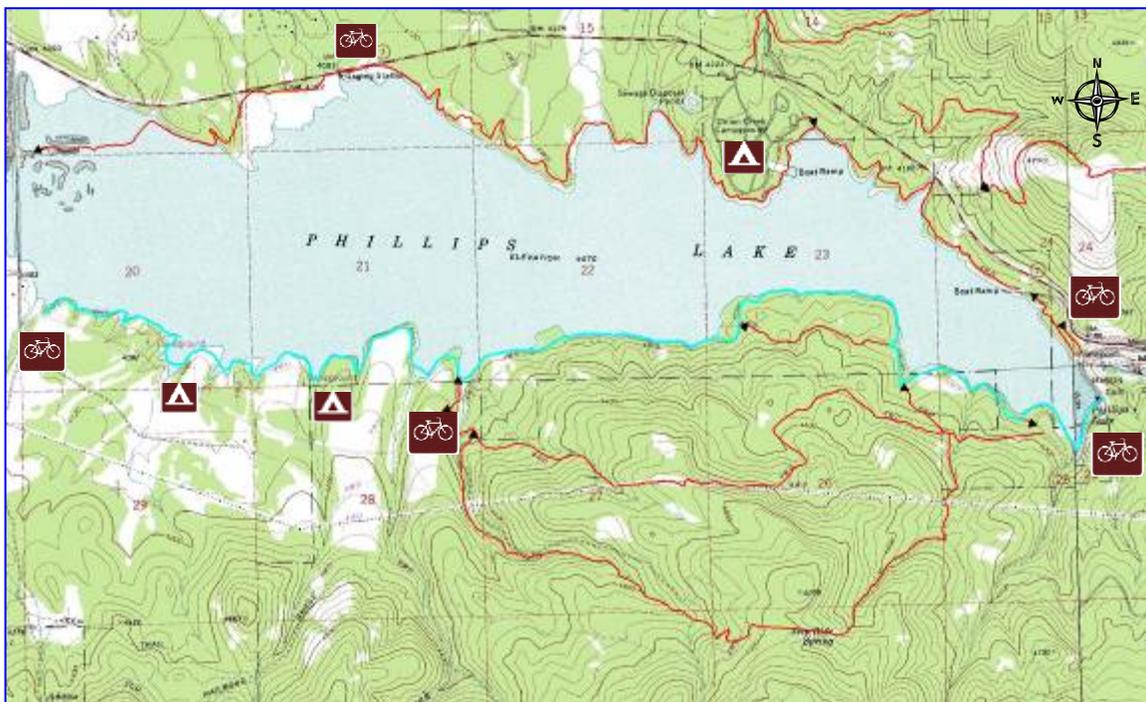
The spring recreation season gently transitions into the summer months providing more activities on the trail as well as the adjacent lake. Trail users can continue to enjoy more summer wildflowers, views of ospreys diving for fish, and the sights and sounds of anglers, boaters and water skiers. The fragrances of the younger and old growth ponderosa pine and fir forests mixed with the lake are an added sensory experience along the trail.

During the fall season, the use drops off after Labor Day with local users hiking, biking and riding the trail to enjoy the fall colors and cooler temperatures. Even with an occasional early snow that often melts off after a few days, the trail's "dry-season" use extends into November.

Winter time use on the Nordic Trail (#S-1610) usually begins around late December and extends in to early April. After that the trails may have extended periods of low snow or muddy conditions not suitable for most use.



Access is available at several locations along the route. Visitors can start in the east-side of the lake at the Mason Dam trailhead, or near the South Shore Campground in the west. Parking and access is also offered at the Dean Creek Trailhead near the midway point. Overnight camping is available at the 2 developed south-side campgrounds or in numerous dispersed camping sites. Although the South Shore Phillips Lake Trail is a main “trunk” trail, there are over 8 miles of side trails, and connections to the 6.7 mile north shoreline trail,



South Shore Phillips Lake Trail

	Trailheads		South Shore Phillips Lake Trail
	Campgrounds		Other non-motorized trails
			Roads

Part 2 – Public Notification and Stakeholder Involvement

The initial list of stakeholders was identified as having potential interest in the Scenic Trails application process, the specific proposal, how the designation would benefit trail users and how it may affect their interest.

STAKEHOLDER	INTERESTS
—County, State, Federal Governments --	
Baker County – Parks and Recreation Dept.	Local recreation provider and partner
Baker County – County Marketing Committee	Local marketing and tourism
Oregon State Parks and Recreation Dept – Sumpter valley Dredge State Heritage Area	Local recreation provider
-- Local Organizations --	
Baker Loves Bikes	Local recreation partner
Blue Mountain Single Track Trail Club	Local recreation partner
Aud Di Campground Services Inc.	USFS Campground Concessionaire
-- Private landowner within ½ mile of trail --	
Bud Zunino, Baker City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Randy & Linda Joseph, Baker City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Troy Phillips, Baker City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Larry & Susan McNeal, Baker City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Thomas Ruzich, Baker City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Dennis & Shelia Merrill, Baker City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
David & Mary Connolly, Baker City OR	Adjacent Land owner
Richard & Susan Badgley, Baker City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
John D. Arnold, Oregon City, OR	Adjacent Land owner
William M. Champagne, Zig Zag, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Bar-Bar A Farm LLC, Caldwell, ID	Adjacent Land owner
David W. Ego , Hermiston, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Francis E. Deroest Jr, Powell Butte, OR	Adjacent Land owner
Dale F. Heaton, Scapoose, OR	Adjacent Land owner

In order to reach interested trail users and other stakeholders, the following methods were employed for public notification:

Public Meeting

Part 3 – Trail Facility Review

Inventory of Existing Conditions

The South Shore Phillips Lake Trail includes a combination of the main trail along the lake, trail junctions leading to other associated designated trails, support facilities (trailheads/access points, parking, restrooms) and signage:

TRAIL – The South Shore Phillips Lake Trail (SSPL) trail is composed of 6.6 miles of native surface trail that is designated for non-motorized use (See Appendix A). Located entirely on National Forest system lands, the trail (#1610) contours along Phillips Lake and was constructed above the high water line to connect Mason Dam to the two western developed campgrounds. The tread width ranges from 18 to 24 inches. The trail is at 4100 foot elevation with only slight elevational changes. It is rated as ‘easy’ with minimal experience or technical riding levels required although some sections have up to XX% grade for short spans. Known trail structures are found in **Table 1**. The SSPL trail also connects to about 13 miles of adjacent non-motorized trails that are currently being used by hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians riders.

Table 1

Trail structure	Qty	Condition & Improvement Needs
Trail tread	6.6 miles	Good- Fair; 50/50 native surface and spot graveled trail; needs annual maintenance (e.g. Side slope sloughing, grass encroachment; drainage repair)
Trail bridges	46 feet total length	Black Mtn Creek bridge (28 ft) with hand rails and 2"x6" decking in fair condition; Dean Creek Bridge (18 ft) with no curbing or rails, and 2" x 6" decking in poor condition, needing total reconstruction
Culverts and rock drainage structures	5+	Fair- Poor; need replaced or re-set;
Puncheon in wetlands	500 ft	Poor-Very Poor; Total of 5 puncheons ranging from 7 to 226 feet constructed to protect wetlands. Both the short and longer sections need major reconstruction (eg. Replace sills, curbing, decking, approaches)



Typical trail segment going through the forested Ponderosa pine areas on the eastern side of the trail



A meandering section of the trail through the cool pine/fir forest with occasional "sneak peeks" of the lake



A general trail segment in the western side going through the open sagebrush/grasslands with views of the Phillips Lake and Elkhorn mountains



Black Mtn Creek trail bridge located near eastern trailhead; Some handrail and curb repair work was done with partners in 2014



The 226 foot long trail puncheon crossing over wetlands near Dean Creek. Estimated construction over 25 years ago. Decking, sills, and curbing need major reconstruction, and new approaches



Two of the four short trail puncheons vary from 7 to 40 feet. Same maintenance needs as above.

SUPPORT FACILITIES - The trail has two small designated trailheads with minimal amenities and two developed campgrounds along the trail which users can utilize for overnight or day use (**Table 2**). The SE Shore Trailhead is located near the Mason Dam, and heading west along the trail the Dean Creek Trailhead is located about 3.5 miles away. The two campgrounds, Millers Lane and SW Shore are located in the western side of the trail (See Appendix A).



Dean Creek Trailhead on Baker
Loves Bikes workday - 2014

Table 2

Facility	Structures/Amenities	Condition & Improvement Needs
SE Shore Trailhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graveled parking for 7 vehicles Information board Rock parking barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Fee site FS operated (June – Sept) Needs: Additional Information board panel; possible vault toilet
Dean Creek Trailhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graveled parking for 5 vehicles Information board Rock and Buck-n-pole fence parking barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Fee site FS operated (June – Sept) Needs: Additional Information board panel; possible vault toilet
Millers Lane Campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Vault Toilet 8 campsites with tables, firerings, parking, graveled parking spurs (some sites suitable for trailers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee site Concessionaire operated (June –Sept) Fair- Good condition
SW Shore Campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Vault Toilets 16 campsites with tables, firerings, parking, graveled parking spurs (most sites suitable for trailers; 2 sites are fully accessible for people with disabilities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee site Concessionaire operated (June –Sept) Fair- Good condition

SIGNAGE – Overall signage along the trail is adequate for the total number of signs yet their condition is fair to poor. There are approximately 6 trail distance/directional signs at the trailheads and campgrounds; and plastic trail number posts at several locations. Since this is also a multi-season Nordic ski trail there are over 50 plastic ‘blue diamond’ trail assurance blazes all along the route.

Needs:

- More trail overview maps posted at the trailheads and campground
- ‘Grab & Go’ maps available at the 4 main information boards
- Additional trail junction signs with direction and mileages
- Replacement of existing damaged wooden signs



Future Needs Assessment

The future needs are detailed above, however the priority for these needs includes:

Priority	Facility/ Structure Need
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual trail maintenance • Reconstruction of Dean Creek bridge • Repair/reconstruction of Long 224' puncheon
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair of Black Mtn Bridge • Repair/reconstruction of short puncheons • Upgrade to 2-panel style information board at Dean Creek and SE Shore Trailheads • Installation of new trail junction signs • Replacement of existing damaged wooden signs
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair/reconstruction of culverts and drainage structures • Installation of toilets at Dean Creek and SE Shore Trailheads

Existing Management Plans

The management of the SSPL trail is covered under the following Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (WWNF) plans and USDA Forest Service agency direction:

Reference	Direction
Forest Service (FS) Manual - 2350	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency policy for trails • Relevant laws for construction and maintenance • Requirement to establish a Trail Management Objectives (TMOs) to include: Trail Fundamentals (<i>trail type, trail class, managed use, designed use, and design parameters</i>); Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classifications; design criteria; travel management strategies;, and maintenance criteria.
FS Handbook- 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook	<p>General direction for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail Planning • Development • Construction • Operations & maintenance • Construction Exhibits
FS Handbook- 1909.15, National Environmental Policy handbook – Chapter 30	<p>General direction for Categorical Exclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 32.12 (4) “<i>Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries</i>”. (Same as 36 CFR 220.6 (d) (4). • Ch 32.2 (1) “<i>Construction and reconstruction of trails.</i>” (Same as 36 CFR 220.6 (e).
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan	<p>Phillips Lake Area (Management Area 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10. Recreation – <i>Manage recreation consistent with the Reservoir Area Management Plan.</i>
<i>Phillips Lake -Reservoir Area Management Plan</i>	XXXXXX

Part 4 – Management, Maintenance and Monitoring

Coordination of Trail Maintenance

The SSPL trail is a popular multi-season trail that is less than 20 miles from Baker City, adjacent to the “Journey Through Time” State Scenic Byway, and the Union Creek campground complex. Because of this popularity it has always been a high priority for annual maintenance by FS crews.



2014 Baker Loves Bike Work Day

During the 2014 the WWNF entered into a volunteer agreement with a local mountain bike organization (Baker Loves Bikes) to conduct basic trail maintenance, in conjunction with FS crews. Following completion of the partnership agreement summarized below specific maintenance responsibilities will be agreed upon by both the FS and mountain bike clubs.



Major maintenance responsibilities will include:

- Trail or trail segments to be maintained
- Use of FS trail maintenance standards
- Frequency of work
- Reporting methods, local contacts, and time frames

Coordination of Trail Management

As directed in the Forest Service Manual, the local WWNF and Whitman Ranger District will be the primary manager of the trail for tasks such as planning, coordination with other resources, addressing safety concerns and operations and maintenance. However due to the local interest and successful work done in 2014, the WWNF will coordinate the management with the mountain bike organizations in the partnership agreement summarized below. Major management responsibilities will include:

- Existing areas of resource or safety concern
 - Out-year opportunities for trail enhancements
-

- Out-year opportunities for facilities enhancements
- Grant and partnership opportunities
- Reporting methods and local contacts

Intergovernmental Agreements

Since the trail is located entirely on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, there are no other government agency involved in the management of this trail.

Partnership Agreements

For the past several years local mountain bike, equestrian, snowmobile, hiker and OHV clubs and organizations have been completing a variety of maintenance work on the forest's trails. This beneficial work has mainly been covered under special use permits (snowmobile, bike, hiker) and volunteer agreements (bike, equestrian, OHV). Work on the SSPL trail has been done by local bike organizations under a volunteer agreement,

To coordinate all of the mountain bike interests, the WWNF is working with the three main mountain bike organizations to authorize a partnership agreement for 2015 to conduct maintenance and monitoring on SSPL and other forest bike trails. The organizations include: Baker Loves Bikes, Blue Mountain Singletrack Trails Club (bluemountainstc.org), and Eagle Cap Nordic Ski Club.

Monitoring Trail and Support Facility Conditions, Adjacent Land Use, Level of Use

The above referenced partnership agreement with the bike organizations will augment the Forest Service's work in monitoring the trail and support facilities.

The objective of the monitoring reviews (conducted 3-4 times/year) will focus on:

- Seasonal trail or facility hazards
- Loss of signs of trailhead information
- Vandalism
- Trail-side trash, or facility maintenance needs
- Construction of unauthorized features or resource damage (i.e. jumps, user built trails, stream blockages)
- Trail use observations

This information will be reported back to the Whitman Ranger District Recreation Manager for work plan scheduling to immediately address the condition (safety hazards) or out-year planning.

Part 5 – Future Opportunities

Other Connecting Trails

The SSPL trail is one of several other multi-season trails that exist on the south-side of Phillips Lake (see Appendix A). These 6 connecting non-motorized trails provide an additional 8 miles of use for summer and winter recreationists.

The trails exhibit some of the same facility maintenance needs as detailed for SPPL such as rejuvenating the trail tread, brushing, and installing additional signage.

North-side Lake Trail Loop

Although the SSPL is the main trail on the south-side of the lake, there is also a shoreline trail on the northern side of the lake. The Phillips Lake North Shoreline (#1608) is 6.7 miles long and starts at Mason Dam and ends near the upper rock tailings by Hudspeth Road. Trailside facilities include the Mason Dam Boat Launch, Union Creek Campground and Day-Use Area, and Mowich Loop Picnic Area.

One of the more significant improvements needed for this trail is the connection to the South Shore Phillips Lake Trail on the east and west side of the lake. On the west side, trail users exiting off the SSPL must ride along Forest Service road 2226 for 0.3 miles. This is a gravel surface road which is the main access road to the southside lake campgrounds and other forest activities. Trail users then need to ride for 0.7 miles on the paved Hudspeth road to get to the north shoreline trail. To continue the lake “loop” riders on the north shoreline trail end up on the east end of the lake at the Mason Dam boat launch. From here they usually ride for 0.3 miles up the boat launch road, then for 0.5 miles along State Highway 7, then down across the Mason Dam gravel road for 0.6 miles to the SSPL eastern trailhead. There are options available that would involve additional trail sections to connect the north-side and SSPL trails for lake loop recreation experience.
