

SANDY POST

Former Marmot Dam site finds new use

In the aftermath of the dam removal, a new use for the land is developing

BY JIM HART



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Near the Sandy River, Project Payback participants are seen creating a day-use area on BLM property.

Marmot Dam on the Sandy River, initially built in 1913 and taken down after serving for nearly 95 years, is being recycled.

After the breach that reduced the water barrier to gravel, all of the dam's residue is

being used to build a road and trails through a day-use park, with shelters, restrooms, trails and a boat ramp. The area is still being developed.

When the old dam was destroyed, the source of water for the former Roslyn Lake was lost, and PGE's entire Bull Run hydroelectric project was abandoned.

Removing Marmot Dam in 2007 gained worldwide attention, said Adam Milnor, a Bureau of Land Management outdoor recreation planner. He said it took 23 agencies to decide how to remove the dam.

"This is the largest dam removal in the history of the state," he said while standing a short distance from the site. "More sediment was released from this removal than any other dam removal in United States' history.

"So this is a pretty neat spot, and we're all pretty lucky to be working in a place that has been studied worldwide by a wide variety of groups."

The work Milnor referred to is the construction of a "park and public recreation site." BLM now manages the land formerly owned by PGE, and it is building a large day-use (picnic) area alongside a remote section of the river frequented by fishermen.

Among the materials used to improve the road as well as build trails throughout the day-use area are the thousands of tons of gravel produced when the concrete structure was exploded.

Youths have been working on the project during the summer through the Clackamas County Juvenile Department's Project Payback, which gives the juvenile offenders a way to earn money to pay court-ordered restitution.

Another group of about 100 people from the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service regional offices in Portland will continue their annual in-service day for the third year by working at the site Tuesday, Oct. 4.

“They’ll be working on the areas that the (youth) crews got ready for planting,” Milnor said. “They’ll be planting trees and native species. These are folks who don’t typically get to work in the field.”

In addition, as the BLM budget allows, contractors from Sandy and Portland are being hired to perform some of the work on this major project.

The project will eventually include reservable shelters as well as restrooms, tables, shaded picnic areas and lots of parking as well as improved access to the river. Also in the conceptual plan is an interpretive kiosk with information about the picnic area development as well as the dam and the impact its removal has had on the river.

But Milnor says public safety projects are a higher priority than the picnic tables, so the bridge will be repaired and river access will be made safe before the picnic area is complete and the public is invited behind the locked gate.

To date, the project has invested nearly \$20,000 in plants purchased from local nurseries.

“We have used a couple of contractors from Sandy,” Milnor said, “and we’ll continue to get supplies and equipment operation locally. We’ll also stick with Project Payback and Wilderness International for our youth workers.”

Completing the project, Milnor said, is dependent on congressional appropriations.

“Optimistically, it could be five years,” he said, “and more realistically it could take five to 10 years before it is fully open to the public.”