

Cycling in burn area a constant reminder of June 2007

By Kathryn Reed

In every burned forest a line clearly marks where the fire was put out. That contrast of charred wood and lush green gets me every time.

I know for the people who call Gardner Mountain home and who re-create there regularly, the Angora Fire of 2007 has forever changed this little part of the South Shore. Maybe I need to ride there more often to get used to it. Or maybe that's just not possible.



Sue Wood rides through burned Gardner Mountain.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

Sadness fills me every time I go there. Maybe it's being immersed in dead, black trees. This same reaction does not befall me when I see the scar every day I drive in town or even when I go where those 254 houses were destroyed. It's being outside, among the trees. It's a feeling so hard to describe.

Mountain biking behind South Tahoe High School will continue to be one of my favorite places to pedal – no matter what it looks like. With so many offshoots, it seems I never take the same route.

Sometimes I start at the end of the football field near Mount Tallac High, other times I ride in from the side of St. Francis of the Woods condos.

I would say it's impossible to get lost. Just keep heading north and the route always lets me out on Fallen Leaf Lake Road.

It's not a technical route and it's not all that long – perfect for me. But it's fun. And it's scenic.

As gut wrenching as it can be to see so many charred trees, it's been interesting to watch Mother Nature heal herself in these three-plus years. Some vegetation has come back. Lake Tahoe is visible in the distance – one of the byproducts of the fire.

It's not a route to fly over because it's so popular with runners, walkers and dogs. But it will give you a bit of a workout depending on if you choose one of the uphill routes or stick to some of the flatter terrain.

At times it's wide enough for the two of us to ride side-by-side. This is the area where U.S. Forest Service contractors came in to rid the area of dangerous trees.

Carrying forward the black turns to green. It's almost like another world. Soon a gate is in front of me, with Fallen Leaf Lake Road close by.

It's decision time – ride through the campground to the lake and then on trails in that area, or head down the road and catch the paved trail that leads to Camp Richardson. This time it's the latter.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)