

Washoe Park trail upgrades improve access



Erick Estrada, from left, Eddie Cuttman and Zackery Schell finish trail improvements at Washoe Meadows State Park. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

WASHOE MEADOWS STATE PARK – Trudging through water or creating a side trail is no longer necessary in sections of Washoe Meadows State Park.

Work was completed this month on about a mile of trail. Included is a rather major bridge over Angora Creek and smaller crossings to get people out of other wet areas.

“Now people have access to this section of the park longer and earlier,” explained Nathan Shasha with California State Parks.

Water had been a barrier.



Before the work began the trail was impassable.
Photo/California State Parks

This nearly 600-acre park on the South Shore is a bit of a secret to many because there are no signs, trailhead markers or parking. But for those who know about it, there are myriad walking, mountain bike, snowshoe and cross country trails, as well as a slew of entrances.

Carol Curran of South Lake Tahoe was walking in the park with her husband, Larry, and their dog last week. This was their second time to Washoe. When they looked up online how to get to it the directions had them go to Sawmill Road. But there is no access from that road.

When the general plan is created for the park basic amenities like signs are expected to be addressed. State Parks has taken inventory of the trails and everything else in the park so it knows what it has, but no plan has been created for what do with the park. Part of the holdup has to do with a lawsuit involving realigning the Upper Truckee River and moving holes of Lake Tahoe Golf Course.



The park and its access points.

The trail upgrades, which cost about \$70,000, will allow for more recreation throughout the year. The money came from state agency, Tahoe Fund, Proposition 84 and Bureau of Reclamation.

“This is a hundred times better. There is an actual trail. Now I don’t have to deal with mud,” said Candace Raynar, who was jogging with her two dogs. She drives from Christmas Valley and parks on the Lake Baron side of the park to start her 11-mile run. “The transformation is amazing. It was so needed.”

The quickest way to access this improved section that park employees and California Conservation Corps members worked on is from Mountain Meadow Drive. Shasha said this section was chosen for rehabbing because it is a major thoroughfare and is heavily used.

Gone is a trail that was wide as a road with compacted dirt. Even with the limited moisture this fall puddling was occurring which made for less than a pleasant experience.

The trail is now more like a single-track, but it’s raised a bit in places. The crown will also help the trail last longer.

Chunks of asphalt were removed. Berms built by previous

landowners are still evident.



Nathan Shasha with State Parks shows the contour of the new trail. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Shasha described creating it being like making lasagna, where various substances are put down in a layered manner – fabric, rock and dirt.

Rocks are on the side so water can run between them. The improvements should also allow more people into the area because of not having to wade into the water and giving access year-round. One user group Shasha would like to restrict is equestrians.

“I would like horses only on park roads. They have such an impact on our trails,” he told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Shasha and his crew will return in the spring to see how things held up and if any changes need to be made. By that time some vegetation should be sprouting along the trail sides.

Dirt used in the project has been stored at the park since it was brought in from the 2007 Angora Fire. This same dirt pile was used for the detention ponds by South Tahoe High School.



A sturdy bridge crosses Angora Creek. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The redwood bridge across Angora Creek is much heftier than what was there. The old one was made out of 2 x 6 plywood by neighbors. Two years ago a horse fell through that necessitated State Parks to do something.

If there were no structure, horses and others would likely still cross the water. The bridge was built for safety reasons as well as environmental. Angora Creek is the largest tributary of the Upper Truckee River.

The bridge is 35-feet long, while the entire crossing is 85 feet. It was built to State Parks specifications. Individual parks don't have much say in how these things are constructed – same with the paths.