

Gifford Pinchot National Forest Winter Recreation Update – 2011-12

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest is a winter recreation destination for people from all over the Northwest. There are 17 Sno-Parks on the Forest, each offering its own attractions and activities. For the 2011-12 winter season, visitors should be aware of the latest conditions and access changes.

Mt. Adams Ranger District

Skamania County is contracting out the plowing of the Wind River Highway (Forest Road 30) to provide access north of Carson, WA. Plowing will provide access up the Wind River Highway to Koshko Sno-Park for as long as funding allows.

Koshko Sno-Park is designated for motorized winter recreation access to popular areas on the south end of the Forest via the unplowed Forest Road 30 beyond Koshko. This Sno-Park will be designated for motorized use, but that does not exclude non-motorized recreationists from parking here.

Old Man Pass Sno-Park will remain designated for non-motorized use only. These trails will remain open only to non-motorized use and the parking here will be only for these users. The snow-play area will also be plowed providing access to the sledding hill.

On the east side of the Mt. Adams Ranger District Forest officials report “business as usual.” All Sno-Parks (including Flat Top, Snow King, Pine Side and Atkisson) will remain open and accessible with no changes to use designation or parking.

Mount St. Helens Management Area

Plowing in the Mount St. Helens area will also continue as long as funding allows. Forest Road 90 will be plowed to the Skamania County Fire Prevention District Six building at Northwoods. There will be no parking provided in this area and Curley Creek cut-off road will be closed by snow. This popular Forest driving loop will not be accessible for the 2011-12 winter season

Forest Road 83 accessing Marble Mountain, Cougar and Trail of Two Forests sno-parks will be plowed for the season maintaining access to these popular destinations on the Mount St. Helens area east of the town of Cougar, WA. The Marble Mountain Snow-Shelter was lost to fire and has not yet been replaced (call the Mount St. Helens Headquarters to learn how to donate for a new shelter). Trail of Two Forests parking will continue to be plowed for non-motorized access up FR 8303 to Ape Cave.

Cowlitz Valley Ranger District

Forest Road 25 to Wakepish will be closed beyond the Benham Creek Crossing as of Feb. 1 to all traffic for bridge replacement. This project is slated to be completed in July, 2012. Until that date, and in regards to all other Sno-Parks on the Cowlitz Valley District (Skate Creek, Johnson and Orr Creek), the winter recreation season will be business as usual as soon as sufficient snowfall arrives.

Please Keep in Mind

- Gifford Pinchot Recreation staff reminds Forest users of winter recreation road-closures in effect as of Dec. 1. These closures remain in place even when snow does not hinder automobile access. Please refer to the Motor Vehicle Use Map for details on these and other closures.
- A Washington State (or reciprocal states’) Sno-Park parking pass is required at all Sno-Parks.
- Washington State Sno-Park passes are honored in both Oregon and Idaho, as are those states’ passes in Washington.
- An avalanche preparedness seminar is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 14 in Trout Lake, WA during the Cabin Fever Festival (call the Mt. Adams RD for more information).
- While the popular driving loop over Curley Creek will not be accessible this year, there are still many opportunities for out-and-back drives to beautiful winter scenic areas including the Flattop and Snow King sno-parks north of Trout Lake, up FR 90 to Pine Creek and South from Randle, WA on FR 25 to the Benham Creek Bridge.