



Oregon Department of Transportation

NEWS RELEASE

Region 4 Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Jefferson, Wheeler,
Deschutes, Crook, Klamath and Lake Counties

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McKenzie Pass Highway Opens July 15

Marks the longest seasonal closure ever

BEND -- The McKenzie Pass Highway (OR 242) will officially open to all traffic on Friday, July 15. The highway has been closed due to winter snows.

ODOT closed the highway on October 25, 2010. The opening at 8am on July 15 will mark one of the later openings but not the latest, which occurred on July 29, 1999. The Highway will have been closed 263 days, which makes it the longest seasonal closure ever.

Motorists driving on this curvy road need to be aware of bicyclists and pedestrians on the roadway and take proper precautions. **Vehicles longer than 35 feet are prohibited from using the highway.**

The first route over the McKenzie Pass, known as Craig's McKenzie Salt Springs/Deschutes Wagon Road, was completed in 1872. This toll road connected the Willamette Valley with Camp Polk, near what is now Sisters. The charge was \$2 for a wagon drawn by two horses, \$2.50 for a wagon with four horses, \$1 for a man on a horse and 10 cents each for loose cattle and horses.

Modern construction techniques allowed crews to rebuild the road in the 1920s. At that time, the McKenzie Pass Highway was built and the former wagon route was abandoned, except in places where the new highway followed the same path.

In 1936 the Clear Lake-Belknap Springs section of OR 126 was completed, giving motorists a new, straighter, year-round alternative for travel between the Willamette Valley and Central Oregon.

The McKenzie Pass Highway became a seasonal scenic highway in 1962 with the completion of the Clear Lake-Belknap Springs section of OR 126. Even during its tenure as the main route between the southern Willamette Valley and Central Oregon, the narrow, twisting roadway and high elevation (5,325 feet) made the highway too difficult to maintain and keep clear during the winter months.

##ODOT##