

Historic Cabin Heads Up the Road to New Life in the Forest

August 15, 2014 - Five miles north of the Columbia River, in the small rural Skamania County community of Willard, is the site of the former Willard Ranger Station, once a District office for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The Forest Service has removed vacant buildings, some empty and unused for more than thirty years.

The last of these buildings is the oldest at the site: a historic cabin built in 1940 by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees. The CCC-built cabin originally served as a combination tool house and bunkhouse for Forest Service personnel at Willard. On August 22, 2014 the historic cabin will be loaded on a trailer and moved to Peterson Prairie, seven miles west of Trout Lake in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, where it will undergo restoration and rehabilitation for future public use. The Willard Cabin will replace the former Peterson Prairie Guard Station, an older historic cabin that had served the public for many years as a popular recreation rental cabin. The Peterson cabin was destroyed by fire in 2012.

The U.S. Forest Service has awarded a contract to Arsenault, LLC of Bend, Oregon to move the historic Willard cabin. The building will be lifted from its existing foundation, placed on a trailer, and driven slowly over Forest Service roads a distance of 16 miles to its new home at Peterson Prairie. Once placed on a new foundation, the cabin will be remodeled for recreation lodging use, the exterior restored to an original historic 1940 appearance.

Forest Service rehabilitation and restoration of the Willard cabin began in 2013, in partnership with the Mt. Adams Institute, a local non-profit organization based in Trout Lake, Washington. Volunteers with the national Forest Service Passport in Time program contributed many hours to work in preparation for the building move. Additional volunteer work is scheduled for this October, with interior remodeling planned to continue into 2015. The cabin interior has been designed for full wheelchair accessibility.

A recreation lodging feasibility study recently completed by the Forest Service indicates strong public demand for more historic cabin rentals of this kind. Currently, the Government Mineral Springs Guard Station, north of Carson, Washington, is the only recreation rental within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and has a high occupancy rate throughout the year. The recreation lodging program provides a means to fully recovery operations and maintenance costs, at the same time meeting agency historic preservation objectives.

Persons interested in supporting the restoration and rehabilitation effort can find additional information through the Mt. Adams Institute website at:

<http://www.mtadamsinstitute.com/support/petersen-prairie-cabin-replacement->

[project/](#) or by contacting David Wickwire, Mt. Adams Ranger District, at (509) 395-3421; email: dfwickwire@fs.fed.us.

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