



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Environmental Assessment: Ross Powerhouse Rockslide

When did the rockslide happen?

The first rockslide occurred in March 2010 following a period of heavy rain. About 16,000 cubic yards of debris fell during this event, which is roughly equivalent to 1,600 fully loaded dump trucks. Since then, smaller slides have continued to occur. The last notable event happened earlier this month.

What is the purpose of this project?

The area below the rockslide is unsafe due to ongoing rockfall and the threat of another rockslide. This area provides key access for Seattle City Light (SCL), which operates the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project within the boundaries of the park. The site provides the only point of heavy equipment access to the Ross Powerhouse. If there were a large equipment failure, access might not be possible and power generation for the City of Seattle could be compromised. The primary purpose of this project is to re-establish safe administrative access to Ross Powerhouse for Seattle City Light personnel and motor vehicles, including very heavy equipment that is periodically needed to service the hydroelectric facility.

When would blasting begin and how long would it last?

The project would begin late this spring and last through fall 2012. During this time a series of approximately 8 blasts would occur at one to two week intervals over a period of several months.

How will this project affect my visit?

Most visitors will not be affected. During blasting this project will cause 2-3 hour delays for some visitors traveling to and from Ross Lake via Diablo Lake and the Ross Dam Haul Road. Those visitors should be able to resume their planned activities. Two hours before each blasting event, personnel will be stationed within 1,000 ft of the blasting zone along each trailhead, road, or other access point to prevent visitors from entering the blasting zone. During this time, boat traffic will be excluded from entering the gorge section of Diablo Lake. The main area of Diablo Lake will remain open, and all of Ross Lake including Ross Lake Resort will remain open.

Will any areas be closed for recreation?

Please refer to the attached map of the closed area. The area upstream of the current access point for the Ross Dam Haul Road, including the base of the rockslide up to the dam, will remain closed to visitors until the project is completed. The following areas will be closed for 2-3 hours during blasting, but will reopen after blasting is complete:

- The gorge area of Diablo Lake from Ross Dam downstream to the main part of the lake. The main part of the lake would remain open.
- The Ross Dam Haul Road from the intersection of the spur road leading from the Haul Road to the dam down to the landslide. *Access will remain available from the Ross Dam trailhead to Ross Lake.*

- The Diablo Lake Trail leading east from the Environmental Learning Center to the Suspension Bridge on Diablo Lake.
- The Fisherman's Ferry which provides access from Diablo Lake to the Ross Dam Haul Road will remain open, but will be delayed if the Ferry schedule coincides with blasting.

What are the main impacts of this proposed action?

- Blasting and rock scaling will remove rocks, soil and vegetation in the immediate area of the rockslide. The area will be rehabilitated after blasting, but some impacts will remain.
- The area within the vicinity of the blast zone will be temporally closed to visitors, but all other visitor services, facilities and amenities will be available.
- Up to 8 blasts will be conducted, followed by several weeks of debris removal and blast preparation. Each blast will be very loud, and may be heard up to 4 miles away from the blast zone. Some wildlife (and people) may be spooked, but otherwise not affected because blasting will be brief and will not be sustained for long periods.
- Several thousand cubic yards of material may fall into Diablo Lake during blasting. This may affect certain aquatic life, but is not likely to adversely affect fish including bull trout, a federally threatened species which inhabits Diablo Lake and various tributaries.
- There will be long term changes to the visual character of the area in the immediate vicinity of the slide, but the impacts will be relatively unobtrusive from most vantage points.
- This same area is already somewhat affected by the existing hydroelectric facilities, and was substantially manipulated in the past. During construction of Ross Dam, records indicate the canyon below the dam was "widened with dynamite" to accommodate barges for construction due to the remoteness of the area.

How can I comment on this Environmental Assessment?

Please submit comments electronically via the project website noted below. You may also mail your comments to: Superintendent, North Cascades National Park, ATTN: Ross Rockslide EA, 810 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284. Comments must be submitted or postmarked by April 19, 2012.

Are rockslides common in the North Cascades?

Yes, quite common. This particular event was technically referred to as a "debris avalanche", in that not just rock but soil, trees and other materials were entrained in the slide. Several notable debris avalanches have occurred in recent years. After the 2003 flood, a debris avalanche about ten times larger than this rockslide occurred about one mile north of Newhalem adjacent to Goodell Creek. That event blocked the creek and created a small lake, which hikers can easily reach. That same storm also triggered a rockslide that blocked the North Cascades Highway. The landslide is readily visible from the highway about one mile east of Newhalem.

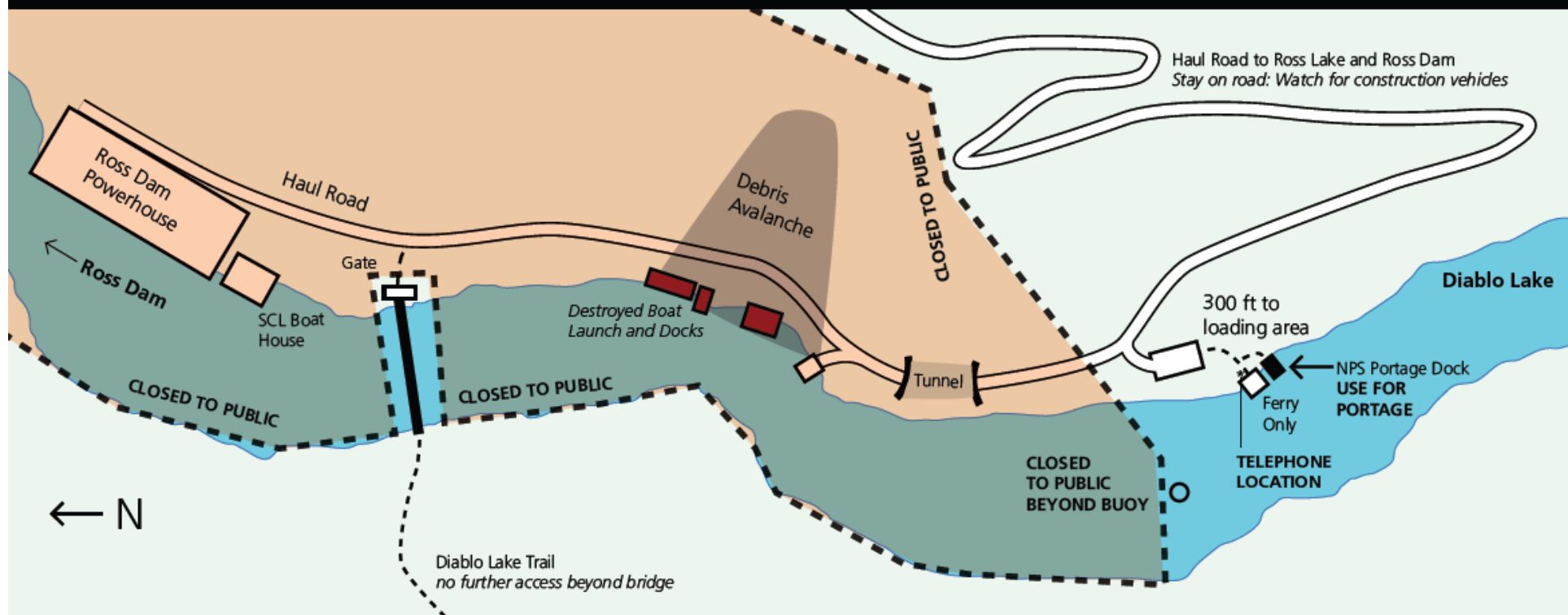
Where can I get more information?

- Please visit the project website: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ross_rockslide
- For information about this project, please contact Roy Zipp, NPS Environmental Protection Specialist, at 360.854.7313 or via email at roy_zipp@nps.gov

Ross Lake Haul Road Closure

Ross Lake National Recreation Area
North Cascades National Park Complex

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Debris Avalanche Blocks Lower Haul Road

In March 2010, a debris avalanche occurred at the head of Diablo Lake, rendering unusable a local access road that connects Diablo Lake with Ross Lake. Due to continued instability and rockfall in the debris slide area, as well as ongoing construction, the road's lower section is closed to boaters and paddlers. Hikers are currently unable to access Ross Lake via the Diablo Lake Trail -- use the Ross Dam Trail instead.

Portage Options between Diablo and Ross Lakes

Please use the new portage dock for all canoe and kayak portage activities (note: do not use the ferry dock). The portage is 1.2 miles over a gravel road, with an elevation gain of 525 feet, elevation loss of 100 feet.

Ross Lake Resort will continue to offer portage service for canoes and kayaks during business hours. Motor boats cannot be portaged. To call for portage service, locate the phone, which is near the steps to the larger ferry dock. You will need to move your boat and gear approximately 300 feet to the loading area. For portage questions or updates, call Ross Lake Resort at 206-386-4437. For all other questions, contact the Wilderness Information Center in Marblemount at 360-854-7245.