



United States Department of Agriculture

## Forest Service

Olympic National Forest  
1835 Black Lk Blvd SW  
Olympia, WA 98512  
(360) 956-2401

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/olympic/>

# News Release

Media Contact: Susan Garner

[susan.garner@usda.gov](mailto:susan.garner@usda.gov)

360-489-4456

**Mason County, Washington, August 20, 2020** - For the safety and health of the public, employees, and volunteers, the section Forest Roads 24 and 2451 that provide public access to Lake Cushman, several trails, day-use sites, and the Staircase entrance of the Olympic National Park (Park) will be closed to vehicles and pedestrians starting August 22, 2020.

Recent increased visitation along the narrow road corridor has far exceeded capacity and led to gridlock, resulting in hazardous conditions for the public, the Park and Forest Service staff. Overflow of vehicles prevented emergency response vehicles and personnel from responding to recent requests for help. Overuse of the area has also led to resource damage along the corridor.

“The extreme numbers of people recreating at Lake Cushman are creating unsafe conditions and degrading the experience for everyone. No one wants to be stuck in a 6-mile long traffic jam on a narrow, gravel road with no way to turn around,” said District Ranger, Yewah Lau.

According to Lau, the area will be closed and there will be no public access to Lake Cushman. Access to that area, however, will be allowed for residents who live beyond the road closure, emergency response personnel and administrative staff. The closure of the road, associated day-use sites and trailheads will continue until the weather cools and visitation returns to a manageable level.

Throughout the country, outdoor recreation sites on public lands have experienced highly increased visitation leading to overcrowding, overparking, excessive trash and scattered human waste this summer. This comes during a time of limited Forest Service staffing to keep up with cleaning and trash pick-up.

“This was a hard decision to make, but necessary for the health and safety of visitors and staff. I hope people can discover other less crowded areas to enjoy,” said Lau. This decision was made in cooperation with the National Park Service, Mason County, Tacoma Power, Washington State Patrol, the Skokomish Tribe, and other local partners.

During the increased visitation on public lands, the Forest Service recommends people be prepared for overcrowding and prepare a Plan B. To find out about local conditions, please visit websites and social media of those recreation areas.



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