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The Valley

Classified

Forest Service to close Yellow Pine road

By Stephen Stuebner
The Idaho Statesman

Another chapter in the seesaw saga of the South Fork of the Salmon River Road unfolded Thursday when the U.S. Forest Service ruled the road would not be used for winter access after Jan. 1. The decision could force many of the approximately 35 full-time Yellow Pine residents — many of them retired — to move from the community this winter or compel them to use snowmobiles to buy groceries. It also would affect employees from several area mines.

Larry Harshfield of Emmett, who owns a ranch in Yellow Pine, said the decision leaves him "flabbergasted."

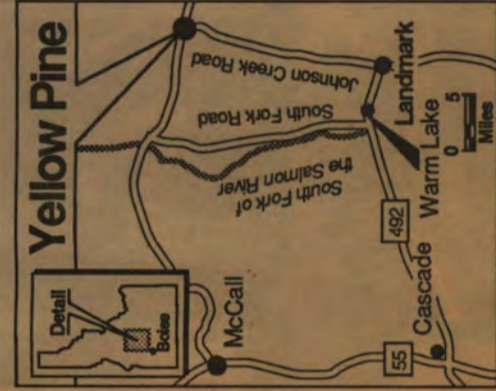
"It's very disappointing. I'm not sure how we're going to proceed,"

he said.

The agency's decision appears to conflict with a U.S. District Court decision last March in which Judge Harold Ryan ordered the agency to keep the road open seven days a week for Yellow Pine residents.

Ryan ruled the residents have a legal right of access to the tiny mountain town, and that the South Fork Road was the only practical route during the winter months.

However, the Forest Service ruled Thursday that the route from Yellow Pine down the Johnson Creek Road and over the 7,300-foot Warm Lake summit was the historic public thoroughfare. Officials said they were concerned that keeping the South Fork Road open would damage the environment by plowing sand into the river and dis-



Greg Harris/The Idaho Statesman

tribution has asked that it be extended to Dec. 31, 1989, said Eric Twelker, an attorney handling the case.

"It looks to me like (the Forest Service) totally ignored the court decision," Twelker said. "They're essentially telling the judge to take a hike."

The road closure is further complicated by the termination of a plowing agreement between the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Valley County on the Big Creek summit. In the 5-year agreement, Fish and Game paid Valley County \$20,000 a year to keep the road open between Cascade and Warm Lake so biologists could dump salmon smolts into the South Fork in April.

That agreement had opened up the option of driving from Yellow

Pine to Cascade via South Fork Road in the first place. Previously, residents had to use airplanes or snowmobiles to leave.

Steve Huffaker, fish hatchery manager for Fish and Game, said the department did it was not productive to use recovery funds for keeping Big Creek summit open all winter when that allowed the South Fork Road to be used for winter access.

Snow-plowing on the road is thought to increase amount of sediment pouring in the South Fork, a key steelhead and salmon spawning area, Hufer said. In addition, automobile traffic may disrupt wintering of and elk along the South Fork, he said.

"We decided who wants to keep (the road) open should pay See Road/Page 2C

turbing deer and elk winter range.

Ryan's order expires Dec. 31, but the Mountain States Legal Found-

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Road

From 1C

the freight," Huffaker said. Fish and Game will wait until late March or early April to contract with Valley County or some other party to clear the road for the smolt release, he said. Rancher Harshfield said, "When you make some ground, you have to lose it. It seems the Forest Service is making protection of resources a higher priority than dealing with the human element."

An additional factor in the equation is the increased presence of three gold-mining operations in the Yellow Pine area. Forest Service officials have said previously that the mining firms might bankroll snow plowing into Yellow Pine via

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Tom Shanahan/The Idaho Statesman

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Landmark and Johnson Creek

But Hann Geertsema, Stibnite Mine manager, said none of the mines will be operating during the winter. "But we still need access during the winter," he added, "and the Johnson Creek route is not practical."

Randy Swick, Forest Service team leader on the road decision, said the Warm Lake-Landmark-Johnson Creek route could be plowed during the winter for a cost of \$157,500 per year, depending on snow conditions.

Diane Peterson, a spokesman for the Valley County Road Department, said, "It's totally ridiculous for us to plow that. The Strath Fork is a piece of cake. The Strath don't think the Warm Lake route was ever meant for use."

Downtown

From 1C

old-fashioned street lights. A \$1 million renovation of The Mode department store also was completed over the summer, and other projects, including the new First Interstate Center office tower and renovation of the old First Interstate building into the 700 Idaho Tower, are nearing completion.

A \$1.8 million federal grant paid for the transit mall, which stretches along Main and Idaho streets from 9th to Capitol Boulevard. The grant paid for repaving, landscaping, brick sidewalks, benches, and other amenities, but it carried a condition. New bus lanes on the two blocks must be kept clear of all other traffic 24 hours a day. Violators face fines beginning at \$37.50.

As buses started using the new system Thursday, motorists on Idaho Street hadn't broken old habits. When traffic backed up in the two regular traffic lanes, a souped-up yellow Volkswagen revved its engine and zoomed into the bus lane, followed soon by a string of other cars. But a police car soon appeared.

reminded the motorists of the new restrictions.

The garage's multi-hued facade has brought complaints from some Boiseans, but those queered at the downtown opening proclaimed themselves fans.

"I think this building is very festive — it gives a festive look to downtown," said retired Boisean Jack Lewis, pointing to both the new Capitol Terrace retail complex and the attached parking garage.

"It's the best-looking parking garage and the most beautiful set-up," bubbled Smith, who added that she also enjoyed seeing horseback-riding police officers downtown. The horses passed a big test when they sat quietly through a 21-gun salute to the new downtown.

Fred Mackenzie said of the Capitol Terrace look, "It's a beautiful design. It's attractive — to attract attention."

"It's different, but it's OK," said Carol Vice.

Records

BIRTHS

Born Nov. 16, 1988:
St. Luke's Regional Medical Center
Boise, a daughter.