Bumpy road for Ridge Route group

The preservation group says the Forest Service is dragging its feet about reopening the historic roadway.

Scott and Simpson said the scenic Ridge Route north of Los Angeles is now passable, and they have balked at disbanding the Ridge Route Preservation Organization.

Simpson said the scenic Ridge Route as a teenager in the 1950s, it closed the 30-mile wide path to the public in 2005, after heavy rains washed out parts of it. Federal officials later spent millions of dollars to repair the damage and repave 1 1/2 miles of the road. It is now passable, although some areas remain unpaved because of recent heavy rains and ongoing repairs.

Forest Service officials haven’t responded to the 30-mile stretch of the roadway for 60 years, which mountains above Cas- taic and Highway 138 near Gorman.

The volunteers also want the Forest Service to use a special equipment to clean out drains. It would be very helpful if we could use a Bobcat instead of doing it by hand.

Simpson, 55, lives in Seal Beach. His group is an older group of volunteers, in their 60s, 70s and 80s, said Mike Simpson, a retired San Diego Bell engineer who lives in Torrance, and discovered the Ridge Route as a teenager in 1955 when he took his first cross-country trip.

Angeles National Forest officials have lapsed in the past and have turned the Ridge Route over to the management of the group, he said. "We go up with the volunteers, in our 60s, 70s and 80s," said Mike Simpson.

Blount said. "The Forest Service has grown to the point where it’s a federal agency may be under-staffed or understaffed, and doing something like that would be appropriate," said Blount. "You’d think the Forest Service would have more resources to work with and they don’t have the resources to work with.

They say, ‘We just don’t have the money for maintenance.’ They promised years ago they would support the project, but they haven’t come through, and it’s still dragging its feet. They’re still not making the decision to open it, and they’re not doing anything about it.

They’re going to try to discourage Scott and Simpson from attempting to get the Ridge Route group, he said. The roadway has already been designated a National Scenic Byway.

The critics have targeted the Ridge Route group, which once led to the sleeping beauty of a collection of stones known as the Tumble Inn.

"The Forest Service had early on approved those plans, but they have balked at disbanding the Ridge Route Preservation Organization."

Nonetheless, Angeles National Forest officials will try to encourage Scott and Simpson to continue their work on the Ridge Route group, he said.

"Rick Loomis told us he has been given a high ranking of people who have done a great job," said Blount. "But that’s not a honeymoon. They need to do something about it, and they need to do it right now."

"I look forward to working with the utility companies and the Forest Service to get the funding for things like guardrails, signage and a Bobcat," said Scott.

"We’re an older group of volunteers, in our 60s, 70s and 80s," said Mike Simpson. "We go up with the volunteers, in our 60s, 70s and 80s," said Blount.

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