

RIDGEVIEW PRO RODEO

Gallery photos from this
weekend's unforgettable rodeo
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FAMILY HOME DESTROYED IN BATES ROAD FIRE

GoFundMe to help support
Erica and Brad Crow
PAGE A7

MUSIC IN THE GARDEN



Sallie and Rick played sweet folk tunes for Rise Coffee House customers Saturday morning as part of the cafe's June music series.

Driggs Airport
runway
shortened after
unexpected
water damage

Emergency services
still operating, some air
traffic restricted

KIRA CORASNTI

Water bubbled up through the asphalt of the Driggs-Reed Memorial Airport runway the morning of June 6th, the visible sign of a water failure that would force officials to shorten the runway to 3,850 feet from its original length of 7,301 feet.

"We have rendered that section no longer load bearing. And because of that we cannot safely have it open," Airport Superintendent Billy Cyr said, "What we've done is referred to as a displaced threshold, which basically means that we've moved the end of the runway up 3451 ft away from where it previously was. Which, greatly limits the kind of air traffic we can have at the airport."

The source of the water intrusion is still under investigation, said Cyr. After ruling out a blocked culvert — which Cyr physically crawled through himself to clear sticks and brush — the cause was traced to what they believe is a failed Teton Canal Company pressurized irrigation pipe running underneath the runway.

The blockage caused water to spread across the full length of the runway, bubbling and pushing up through the asphalt from below. Cyr noted the airport is still in the early stages of the investigation, and a full confirmation on the source of the water is pending.

"I think it was just a poor choice when this was done in 2009," Cyr said, "The environment was different then, different planes coming in. Over the past 17 years, it has probably just failed."

When the closure was first issued Saturday morning, Cyr posted a PPR — prior permission required — NOTAM. That meant any pilot wanting to depart had to contact Cyr directly. He has been on the phones left and right with pilots, informing them of the situation and telling them they have to crunch the numbers themselves on whether they can safely fly in or out. By Tuesday morning, the majority of planes that had been grounded were able to get out, though a couple remain while pilots continue working through the math.

Grand Targhee opens select trails to e-mountain bikes

New policy expands
access and education

ALEX BRICKKOWSKI
Contributor

As of this June, Grand Targhee Ski Resort is allowing certain e-mountain bikes on select zones within resort boundaries. Only Class III pedal-assist, no-throttle models are permitted, and access is restricted to the Ricks Basin area and trails west of the main parking lot. All downhill trails and trails leading south into Mill Creek are prohibited.

Adults can rent or buy a Specialized Levo or Levo SL at Habitat for \$139 a day; kids can rent the Levo SL JR. Riders may also use their own e-bikes. Before riding, each person must sign a waiver on the resort's e-bike policy detailing trail etiquette, e-bike handling and general safety information. The decision places Grand Targhee among the first ski resorts to allow cross-country e-bike riding.



Rick Basin Trail System, Grand Targhee Ski Resort

"It is a response to the growing popularity of e-bikes," said Chris Brule, executive director of Mountain Bike the Tetons. "One of the biggest concerns that we've heard as an organization is the need for approachable beginner- to intermediate-friendly trails for e-bikes."

E-bikes first emerged in the U.S. in the 1990s but did not enter the mainstream until 2020-21. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic,

Americans increasingly sought outdoor recreation, and e-bike sales and use exploded. For people with accessibility limitations or time constraints — squeezing in a ride after work or between picking up kids from soccer practice, for example — or an inability to pedal a regular bike, e-bikes became a logical, enjoyable choice.

Supporting this growth is a combination of technological improvements, decreasing

prices, and a federal introduction of a three class e-bike framework that legally allows ebikes to be treated like traditional bicycles.

A bounty of well-maintained trails weave around Teton Valley, and riders from across the country come to experience the Southern Valley, Horseshoe and Teton Pass trails. Few of these, however, allow e-bikes. At Grand Targhee, the newly permitted areas create a meandering trail system of moderate cross-country routes — an ideal place, in Brule's opinion, to accommodate interest and provide an introduction to e-biking and trail education.

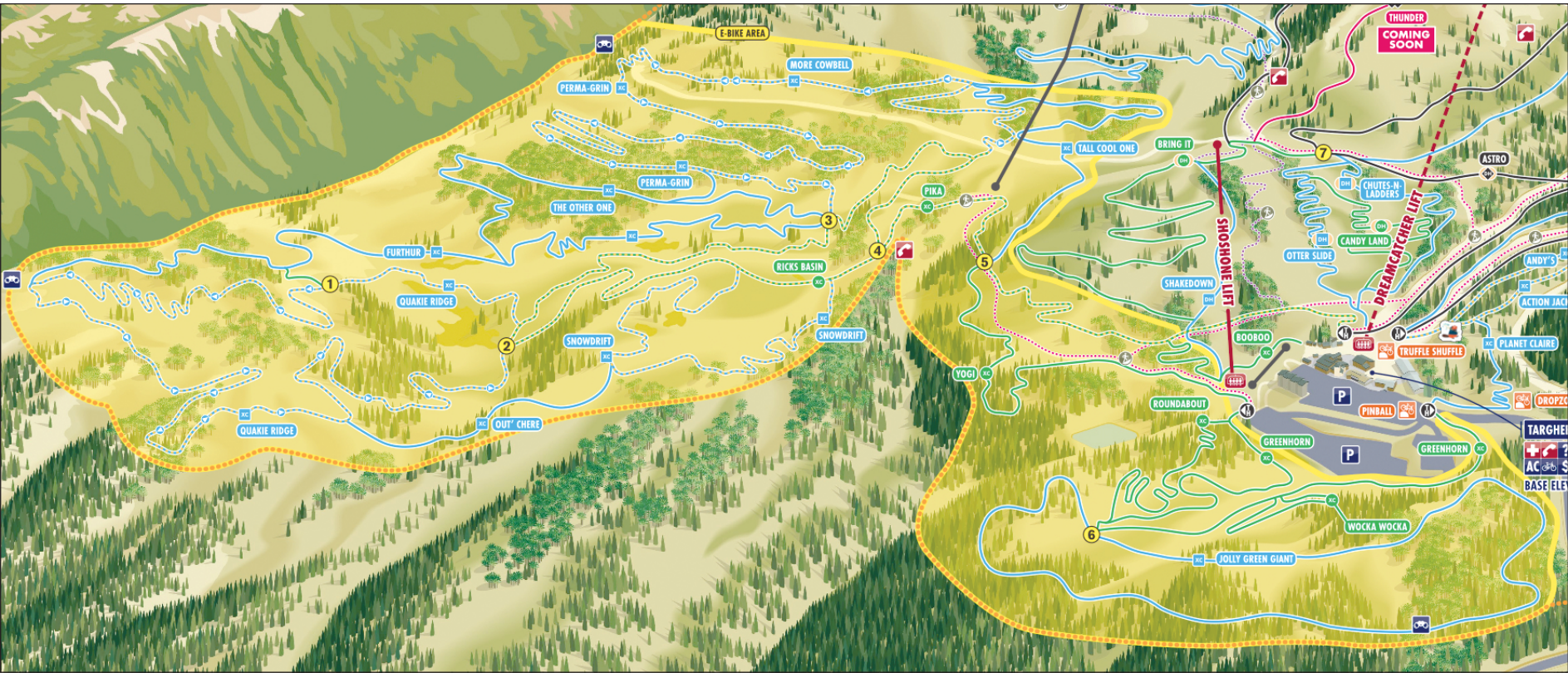
"This opportunity helps address that need," Brule said. "It provides access to trails that are more approachable and built with contemporary trail-building standards. It's a more welcoming environment for newer riders and families."

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SCREENSHOTTED FROM GRAND TARGHEE SOCIALS

Class III e-bikes are permitted in the resort’s designated zone, shown in yellow on its trail map.

Bikes/

from A1

At the same time, Brule said Grand Targhee’s decision serves as a case study to better understand e-bikes’ impact on traditionally non-motorized trails. There are concerns about e-bike user safety and experience, as well as potential trail degradation, and Brule said those questions can now be answered.

“E-bikes are not the same as mountain bikes, and require more understanding for human user experience and trail impact,” Brule said. “By allowing e-mountain bikes on what have been traditionally non-motorized trails, it allows us to assess the physical trail impacts of the tread, it allows us to assess user experience and interactions, and assess trail safety and

overall compatibility with non-motorized use.”

The decision also serves as an opportunity to increase education around e-bikes and trail etiquette. Ricks Basin, as described by Targhee, is a shared trail system used by hikers, trail runners and traditional mountain bikers. In such a well-known, accessible location, a broader audience may be reached, allowing for greater awareness. It comes down to responsible riding.

“What we really want to take away is responsible use and adhering to trail etiquette,” Brule said. “You still have to ride in control. You still have to yield to horses and hikers. You still have to be responsible and ride within your ability.”

On its website, Grand Targhee states that e-bikes allow riders to travel farther and faster, but speed should match



VAIL VALLEY MOUNTAIN TRAILS ALLIANCE

Trail signage, closures and regulations must be followed. Grand Targhee will uphold standard multiuse trail etiquette: Bikes yield to hikers and runners; descending riders yield to climbing riders; riders should announce themselves when passing.

trail conditions and traffic. Riders should ride at a safe, controlled speed; slow down approaching corners, climbs or limited visibility; reduce speed when passing other trail users; and avoid riding on wet or muddy trails. As always, riders should respect wildlife and the

natural environment. The goal, as Grand Targhee puts it, is to make the backcountry experience more accessible while maintaining a safe, respectful environment for all trail users.

Under Grand Targhee’s e-bike post on Instagram, one commenter,

@flowfinder_usa, called it a win for all, writing that e-mountain bikes are not the issue — as with any tool, the operator can be the problem, and that goes for analog bikes as well. The commenter said e-bike owners tend to be more courteous than necessary, and that they expect this trend to continue as options and technology grow. The commenter said they’ve ridden their e-mountain bike at several bike parks, including Mountain Creek in New Jersey and Bogus Basin in Idaho, and had a wonderful experience — no different than riding an analog bike.

In the longer run, Grand Targhee’s decision to allow e-bikes will likely influence decisions made by governing land agencies.

“The Forest Service works closely with Grand Targhee, and they’ll be

able to have discussions of how this use is impacting those trails and potentially influence decisions that are made by our local ranger districts or national forests,” Brule said. “We’ve just been supportive of that decision to slowly integrate this new use into an area that is traditionally non-motorized.”

E-bikes are still not allowed on most public trail systems. With proper education and respect, e-bikes may continue to be allowed in the mountains. As their usage grows, Grand Targhee offers itself as a safe training space for people to learn how e-bikes work and how to manage risk, Brule said, giving people a place to safely and legally pursue their interest.

Grand Targhee was unable to be reached for comment

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