

# Wonder “Bail-Out” Downhill Bike Routes

## Summary

This subcommittee’s mission was to evaluate RVMBA’s proposals for a downhill bike route descending from the Lower Wonder trail. RVMBA’s original proposals were either through the proposed water treatment plant area or in an area deemed to be too erosive (north of Lower Wonder) with drainages that culminate in housing in Ashland Creek Estates. The subcommittee did identify an area suitable for at least one and possibly two trails descending to the south of the quarry, ending near the entrance into the quarry. Geology and vegetation seem suitable and the area offers some interesting rock formations and generally hospitable terrain. Nevertheless, some challenges and potential issues may need to be addressed.

## Purpose and Need

The purpose is to facilitate a shorter climbing bike route with an easier, one-way bike-only descent near a lower westside trailhead. This is motivated by the following:

### **1. Few trails lead back to town on West Side and no one-way downhill route**

- There are only two routes—essentially roads—that return to Ashland on the west side of the watershed (FS2060 and FS2060-300/Hitt Road). Fell on Knee trail can be combined with Hitt Rd.
- There is *no* one-way downhill route on the west side of the watershed.

### **2. Climbing the Present Lower Wonder Trail is Hard**

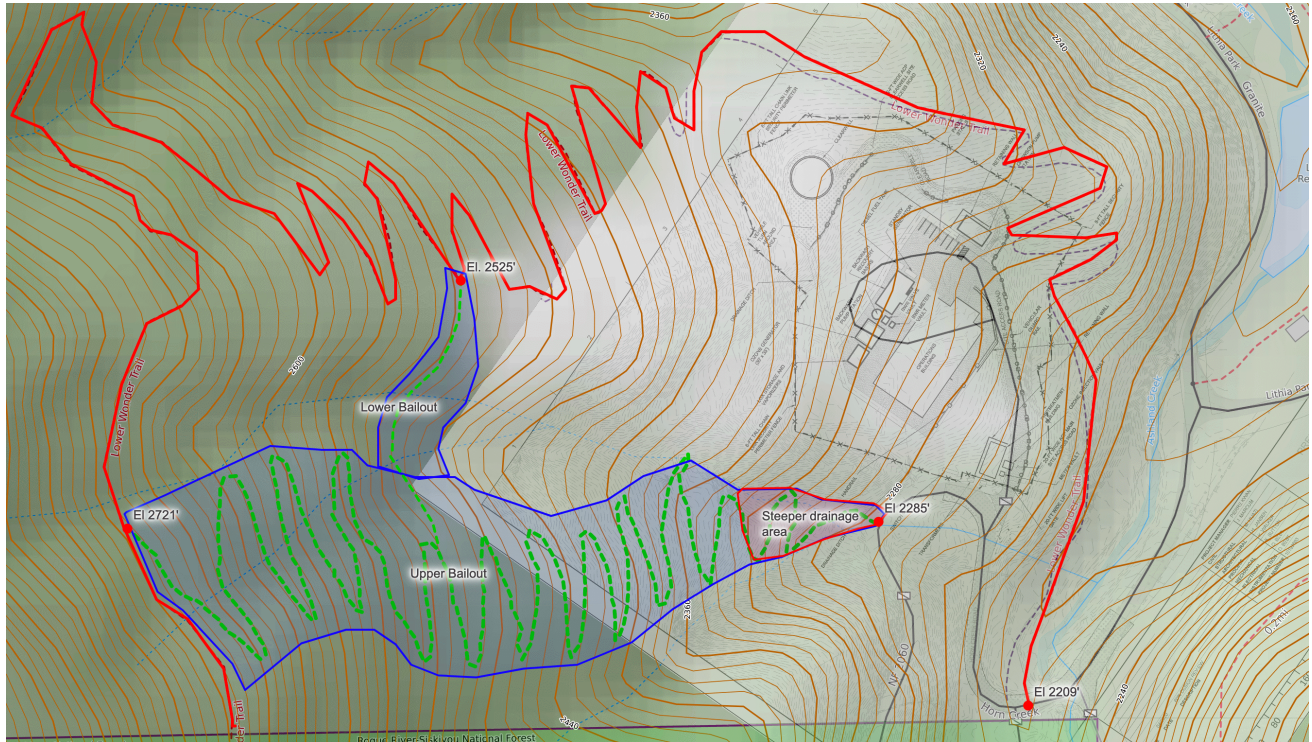
Once you start climbing Lower Wonder trail on a bike, you are committed to the full ~960’ of climbing over ~2.8 miles (you cannot turn back because this is a one-way uphill trail for bikes...peds can go both ways). While the overall grade *average* is only 6.5% for the entirety, the first mile averages 8.8% and brief sections of this climb approach 15-20%. The “reward” for this climb is a descent down the gravel portion of FS Rd 2060. Climbing to Hitt Rd adds an additional ~900 feet of climbing.

### **3. Few “easy” downhill routes exist and virtually none without substantial climbing—in the entire watershed.**

- Few beginner-advanced beginner bike descents exist in the watershed. The lone exceptions are Rabbit Hole and Caterpillar (and possibly Lizard) (all on FS property). (See Appendix 1)
- Most Ashland downhill routes, in general, require a substantial climb from Ashland or a car/van shuttle
- Easy downhill routes are all in the White Rabbit TH area necessitating a shuttle or an additional long climb up Ashland Loop Rd/2060 (from Witzend TH is an additional 2.2 miles, and 982 feet of climbing). (See Appendix 1)

## Proposed Wonder “Bailout” Routes Area

The map below depicts the area for two potential “bailout” downhill bike routes with the most current water treatment plant location included as a semi-transparent layer as well as the Lower Wonder trail on city property (in red) for reference. Various elevations are included at relevant points and the Forest Service boundary is at the bottom of the map. North is up.

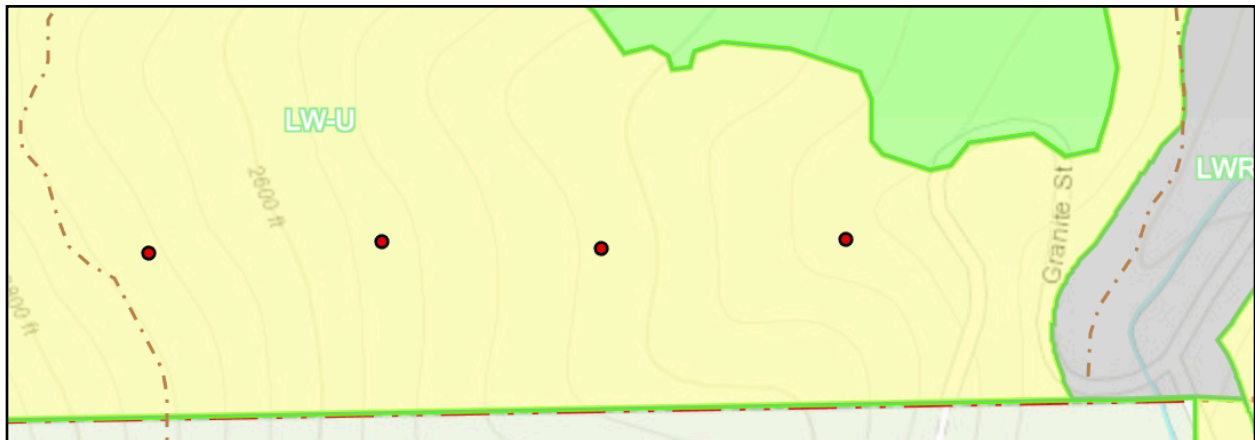


The blue outlined areas represent potential places where trails could go. Potential routes are represented in green. Both blue and green are conceptual-only (and probably represent excessive turns). In walking the area multiple times, several of us were able to identify potential routes with long runs without too much difficulty. The terrain also provides adequate locations for turns.

A lower bailout trail could merge into the upper bailout trail. Both trails would end at FS Road 2060.

The upper area generally allows for long runs perpendicular to the fall line with plenty of turn opportunities. Slope steepness is similar to the Wonder area, possibly somewhat steeper in the upper part.

Soils appear to be decomposed granite but less sandy than to the north. The area is treed, but not densely, with a mix of pines, firs, some oak and madrone. A fair amount of poison oak exists. According to the [online map](#) for the [Ashland Forest Plan](#), the area is LW-U and designated as a moderate wildfire hazard zone (as opposed to high or extreme).



Two large boulder outcroppings in the lower third make for an interesting aesthetic highlights.

In general, the area is bordered to the south by the FS boundary adjacent to a large, steep ridge popular with campers. There is a trail leading from the proposed trail area to campsites. To the west is the Wonder trail and to the east is FS Road 2060. To the north and east is the quarry area, where the proposed water treatment plant would be located.

At least at first glance, this area affords a suitable terrain for two downhill routes.

The climbing required for the lower bailout trail is: 316' (i.e., less than a third of the climbing required for the entirety of Lower Wonder).

The climbing required for the upper bailout is 512' (still only 53.3% of the total Lower Wonder climbing).

### **Challenges of the proposed routes**

The bottom of the proposed route(s) ends in a relatively steep gully near FS Rd 2060 (about 100 feet below the yellow gate.) Nick McDaniel, recreation planner for the BLM, hiked this area and stated that he believed a “workable” trail could be constructed in the area.

### **Potential Adverse Outcomes**

- Some riders may feel compelled to enhance features (build jumps, etc) as they have on other trails like Marty's, BTI and Jabberwocky, turning a beginner trail into something approaching an advanced trail
- Spur trails or short cut routes could emerge
- Bike traffic would likely increase substantially on Lower Wonder

- Some hikers may use the trail(s)
- Less likely: some bikers may climb trail (e-bikes might afford the ability)
- Increased habitat fragmentation could occur: but note that proposed H2O treatment plant would be immediately adjacent to north and east of this trail.
- There is erosion potential in general and especially near the bottom.

## Appendix: Table of Representative Bike Trail Climbs and Descents

In the case of Wonder bailouts, part of the mission of this subcommittee was to identify potential routes with reduced difficulty of climbing and with reduced skill level needed to descend.

These representative routes are described both in terms of climbing difficulty and skill needed to descend; these two are not necessarily the same thing. Climbing difficulty is mostly a function of *physical fitness* while descending is mostly a function of riding *skill*. However, these examples show that the difficulty of climbing often goes hand in hand with the descent difficulty.

### “Easy” Climbs and Descents:

Note: the routes in this “easy” category require either driving up to White Rabbit TH or a substantial additional climb up Ashland Loop Rd/2060 from Witzend TH (2.2 miles, 982 feet of climbing) which would quickly push these routes from “Easy” climbs to “Intermediate” or “Advanced”.

**White Rabbit Uphill- Rabbit Hole downhill** (climb up White Rabbit and descend Rabbit Hole)

– Distance: .6 miles

– Climbing: 141’

**2060 - Turn Left Down Caterpillar - Rabbit Hole (Short Version)**

– Distance: 1.14 miles

– Climbing: 200’

**2060 to Lamb Saddle, Full Caterpillar Descent with Rabbit Hole** (Longer Version)

– Distance: 2.5 miles

– Climbing: 400’ ft

### “Intermediate” Climbs and Descents

**BTI Short Loop** From Witzend TH to BTI via Ashland Loop Rd/2060 and JubJub

– Distance: 2.3 miles

– Climb: 516’

**Alice-BTI Loop** From Witzend TH to White Rabbit TH via Ashland Loop Rd/  
2060, down Alice to BTI

- Distance: 4 miles
- Climb: 940'

**Wonder - 2060 Loop** From Fairy Ponds TH up Wonder, down 2060

- Distance: 4.4 miles
- Climb: 960'

**“Advanced Climbs” and Descents:**

**Caterpillar - Lizard - Jabberwocky** From Witzend TH to Lamb Saddle via 2060

- Distance: 6.5 mi
- Climb: 1,438'

**Wonder - Fell on Knee - Hitt** From Fairy Ponds TH up Wonder down Fell on  
Knee down and then Hitt Rd

- Distance: 8.2 miles
- Climb: 1,699'

**Proposed Wonder Bailout Routes for Comparison**

From Fairy Ponds TH up Wonder to First Bailout and down

- Distance: ~1.3 miles
- Climb: 316'

From Fairy Ponds TH up Wonder to Second Bailout and down

- Distance: ~2 miles
- Climb: 512'