

Marking the Safety Boundaries on Mt. Hood - west of Timberline

June 2017.

Skiers have gotten lost in the forests and canyons west of Timberline for decades. A [Forest Service map](#) from 1941 identifies both Little Zig Zag canyon and Sand canyon as areas where skiers get lost. They continue to get lost to this day, partly because the fall line west of Timberline doesn't take you back to the ski area. Instead, the fall line will take you away from the ski area and away from Government Camp. At some point, you need to take a sharp left turn and then traverse back to civilization.

Emilio Trampuz, the winner of the FWSA Safety Person of the Year award, has been scouting the forest for the past 6 or 7 years, hiking it in the Summer and skiing in the Winter, identifying and marking the safety boundaries with ribbons. Unfortunately, the ribbons fade and decompose quickly and need to be replaced almost every year.



Kay
Kinyon

So during this past year, Emilio, working with the Forest Service, obtained permission to set up more permanent signs marking the two safety boundaries:

1. **YELLOW boundary** - Last chance to return to the lifts.
2. **RED boundary** - Last chance to return to Government Camp.

Anyone going beyond the red boundary will have to deal with several hours of slogging through deep snow and having to cross a large stream (or small river) more than once. They will, most likely have to spend a cold and wet night in the dark forest. Fortunately, if you just keep going down the hill, you will eventually get to Kiwanis Camp Road (Road 39), which is part of the old

Mt. Hood highway. This road may be partially snowed in, but if you follow it down for another 2 miles, you will eventually hit highway 26.

These safety signs will hopefully help save a lot of people from this ordeal.

Kay Kinyon has joined Emilio in this effort, providing the necessary tools and expertise and making it all a reality, helping to post the signs on trees.

Kay and Emilio received further help from several other members of the Mountain High Snowsport Club, including **Walt Blomberg**, **Kurt Krueger**, **Bill King**, **Tom Rodrigues**, **Jon Waldum**, and **Janis Allen**. Together, they spent hours cutting and assembling the signs, pasting reflective arrows on them, and posting the signs on the trees.



Kay
Kinyon



Emilio
Trampuz

Bill
King

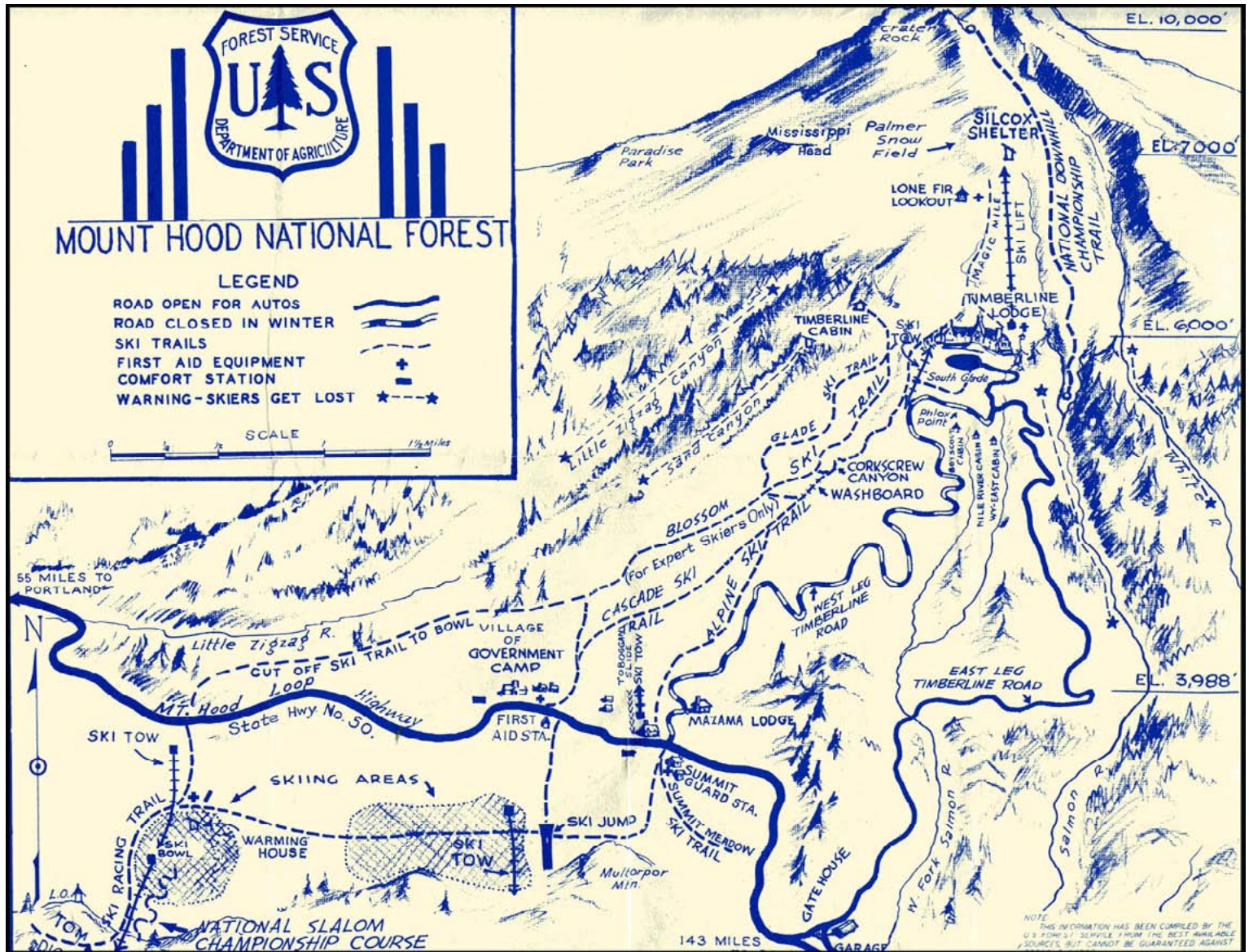


Mark
Engler

The signs were posted under the supervision of **Mark Engler**, the Forest Service West Zone Recreation Program Manager.

The Yellow boundary has been completed. The longer Red boundary needs more work next winter. Also, much more time and effort will be spent over the coming years to maintain the signs and replace them if needed. This is a long term commitment.

A 1941 Forest Service Map of Mt. Hood's south side



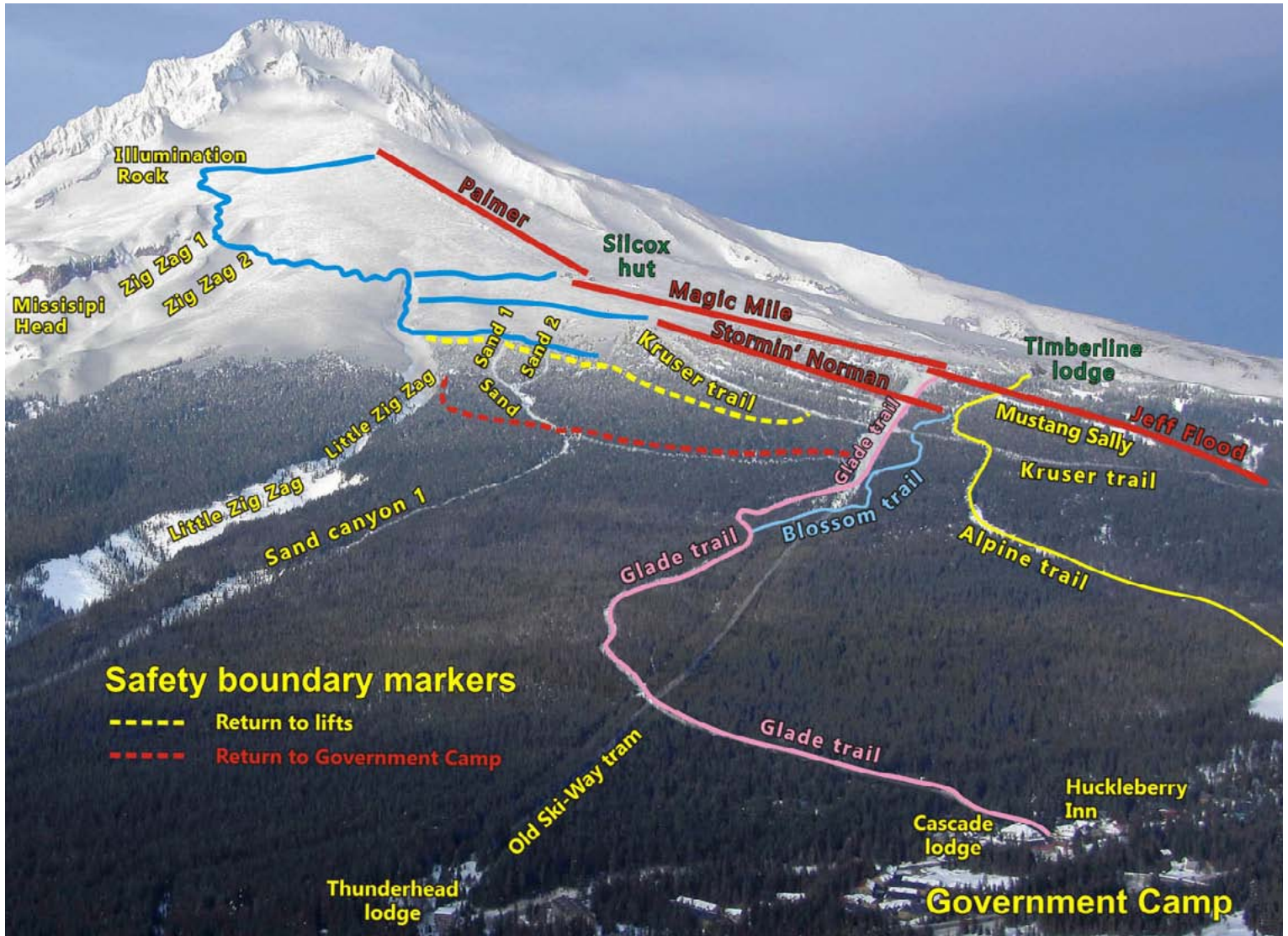
On this Forest Service map of Mt. Hood, dating back to 1941, just 4 years after Timberline Lodge was inaugurated, several areas are marked with broken lines bordered with a star at each end of the line. The map's legend explains that these are the places where skiers get lost.

The map is actually a drawing, and it is not exactly to scale. What appear to be relatively narrow bands of trees in between the canyons are actually very sizeable forests, where it is easy to get disoriented.

The biggest problem is that most skiers usually follow the fall line, but in this case the fall line leads away from the ski area and away from the town of Government Camp. People following the fall line will eventually emerge out of the forest near Little Zig Zag falls. On the map, this is at the spot where the Little Zig Zag river intersects the highway. The highway on the map is not present day highway 26, but it is the old Mt. Hood highway, the first real road built on the flanks of Mt. Hood.

The hike out of the forest takes several hours, and most people who get lost are not able to make it out of there before darkness falls. Nobody has died yet, but many have spend a cold, wet and frightening night in the forest before finding their way out the next day.

A 2017 Map of Mt. Hood's south side showing the location of the two safety boundaries



Whenever the Magic Mile and/or the Palmer chairlifts are open, usually in the Spring and Summer, people like to ski the terrain west of the Timberline ski area. The terrain is out of bounds, but its charms are an irresistible draw for skier and snowboarders. The blue lines indicate some of the typical routes.

Everyone seems to be well aware that Zig Zag canyon leads in the wrong direction, but the terrain around Little Zig Zag canyon looks friendly and harmless. Most people get lost in the area between Little Zig Zag canyon and the ski area. If they go below the tree line and lose sight of the ski lifts, they are in danger of going too far down and getting lost in the forest.

The safety signs have been spread out like safety net between Little Zig Zag canyon, across Sand canyon, and all the way back to the known trails. The Yellow boundary leads to the Kruser trail, and the Red boundary leads to the Glade Trail, which goes to Government Camp..



Yellow boundary leads back to the ski area



Red boundary leads back to town.



In addition to the large signs with text, there are also smaller signs with just arrows.



Walt Blomberg and Kay Kinyon setting up a yellow sign



Emilio Trampuz



Kay Kinyon posting a red sign