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John Cissel, research liaison for the U.S. Forest Service, looks over plans at the site of a new trail under construction in an old-growth stand.

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# Trail to make old-growth forest accessible

By KATHLEEN MONJE

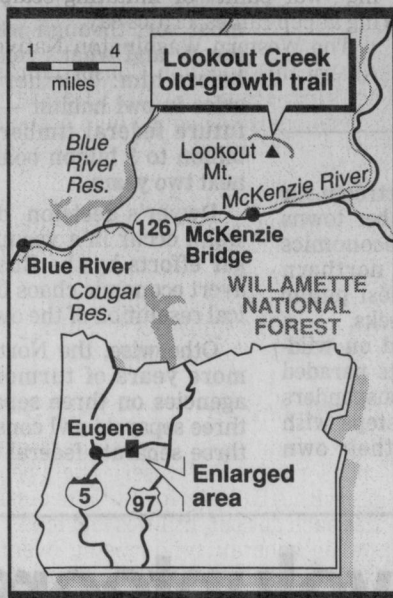
Correspondent, The Oregonian

**BLUE RIVER** — One stand of old-growth forest near Springfield isn't likely to provoke controversy, even though its lofty branches do welcome northern spotted owls.

The venerable trees, some 500 years old, soon will shelter a unique experience for human visitors as well, thanks to organizers and volunteers building the Lookout Creek Old Growth Trail.

"There aren't many places where you can come out and find two or three miles of unbroken old growth, even in wilderness areas," said John Cissel, research liaison for the U.S. Forest Service at the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest.

The trail, the beginning of it new and the rest a reconstruction of an older path fallen into disuse, will take hikers down a slope into a classic forest of old-growth Douglas fir. Hikers will go over the softly roaring Lookout Creek and three miles



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around the base of Lookout Mountain.

The mountain, still covered with

snow recently, loomed over the tall firs and the dappled forest floor, which spring has not quite reached. The leaves of wild yellow violets and ground dogwood have emerged, but their flowers were waiting for more warmth before they appear in all but the sunniest spots. The vine maples were just budding.

"It does something special for me," said Cissel, who with Fred Swanson of the Forest Service's research arm and Art McKee of Oregon State University, decided to renovate the trail and open it to the public.

The old trees are located in the experimental forest in the Blue River Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest about 50 miles east of Springfield on Oregon 126. The trees boast all the required attributes of an old-growth forest, Cissel said.

The stand encompassess large dead trees called snags, fallen trees, the huge live trees — some more than 6 feet in diameter — and a mul-

ti-layered forest canopy that includes rhododendrons, hemlock and yew trees.

The trail through all this abundance is being built in a new way, according to Gene Flint, the Blue River district's trails and wilderness manager.

The least possible amount of vegetation is being removed and the "duff," the spongy, resilient layer of needles and other plant material that covers the forest floor, is being kept in place, not removed as it is in traditional trail-building, he said.

Volunteers from the University of Oregon's Outdoor Program, led by student organizer Laura MacLennan, cut about a mile of the trail two weekends ago. Cissel hopes the new trail will be ready in about two weeks. Directions will be available then at the Blue River district office.

District Ranger Lynn Burditt said the project wouldn't have been completed this spring without the Outdoor Program volunteers.