

Historic Highway- Lake Crescent Highway US 101 MP 221 to MP 231.3



Figure 1 Newly constructed Lake Crescent Highway along the south shore of Lake Crescent, as shown in 1922, prior to re-routed 0.9 mile segment at Barnes Point (1949)



Figure 2 Lake Crescent Highway ca. 1920s.



Figure 3 Lake Crescent Highway, ca. 1927



Figure 4 Lake Crescent Highway and bridge.



Figure 5 Present US 101 (historic Lake Crescent Highway) crossing Half-Bridge #101/326.



Figure 6 Lake Crescent Half-Bridge #101/326, 2014.

Statement of Significance

A 10.3 mile segment of US Highway 101, formerly known as the Olympic Loop Highway, along the southern shore of Lake Crescent was determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places per Criterion A as an early example of a Federal Aid Forest Road Project, a partnership involving federal agencies (the US Forest Service and Bureau of Public Roads) and the Washington State Highway Department in the early years of the national highway system. The segment is also NRHP eligible per Criterion C as a representative of early twentieth century highway engineering, design, and construction methods in Washington State. The highway is largely intact and retains most of its character-defining features, plus aspects of integrity essential for NRHP eligibility including location, design, setting, and feeling. Construction contracts, original as-built plans, historic photos, and modern maps suggest the segment maintains all but approximately 0.9 mile (at Barnes Point) of its original alignment. Although some widening and removal of original timber retaining walls and culverts has occurred, the present roadway dimensions coincide with profile and prism engineering drawings of the segment dating to 1949 and earlier.

Background

Until just after the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Lake Crescent remained inaccessible by automobile. In 1912 Clallam County commissioners funded construction of a ferry to haul cars across the lake. Motorists could then drive from Port Angeles to East Beach, catch a ferry to Fairholm, and drive west as far as Beaver. Department of Highways "State day labor" forces began work 1 June 1921 and completed work 1 May 1922 on a 10.8 mile segment of highway from Fairholm to East Beach. Sited within what was then the Olympic National Forest, the segment met the requirements of Federal Forest Road Projects which were administered jointly by the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Public Roads. When completed, the so-called Crescent Lake Highway provided the first direct road connection between the east and west ends of Clallam County. It became a segment of US Highway 101 and part of the 365-mile-long Olympic Loop Highway when Governor Roland Hartley officially opened Primary State Highway 9 on 26 August 1931. At that time Crescent Lake was within the boundaries of the Olympic National Forest, established in 1897. On 29 June 1938 Olympic National Park was established, bringing the lake and portions of US 101 within the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, including the segment of highway along Lake Crescent. In 1949 Hugh Govan widened that segment of highway, built a retaining wall on a steep slope above the highway, and completed other improvements of the highway along the south shore of Lake. In conjunction with Govan's work, the Port Construction Company of Port Angeles built the Lake Crescent Half Bridges #s 101/326 & 101/327 at Storm King Point. To diminish rock fall onto the roadway, the bridge construction contract included installation of wire mesh attached to steel strands secured on 13 trees atop the cliff above Bridge 101/326. A debris slide caused by heavy snow and rainfall closed the highway in this vicinity in February 1923.

Description

The 10.3-mile highway segment of US 101 follows the southern shoreline of Lake Crescent from Mile Post 221 near Fairholm at the southwest end of the lake to a point where the roadway diverges from

the southeast shoreline at Mile Post 231.3. It is characterized by narrow 10 to 11-foot-wide lanes, shoulders that vary from nonexistent to 12 inches in width, limited sight distance, and minimal clear zones.

Upgrades and improvements to the Lake Crescent Highway have continued to the present day, reflecting a subtle evolution beginning shortly after its completion in 1921. Minor upgrades to the roadway and its features were necessary for the segment to continue functioning as a modern highway, particularly as traffic volumes increased. The cumulative effects of multiple decades of modifications have slightly changed the road's profile; however, a majority of upgrades are over fifty years in age and are considered elements contributing to the highway's significance, including the Lake Crescent Half Bridges #s 101/326 & 101/327 at Storm King Point (1949).