

Jeffrey Hall <jch@lowell.edu>

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Good morning everyone,

The latest from Mars Hill:

Astronomy Discovery Center Construction

There has not been much to report over the past month, as the work in August has continued to be final site clearing and commencement of blasting as BEC prepares the site of the future building for laying the pad in the fall. There have been a couple of blasts each week (one is scheduled for 1:00 PM today, Sept 13, in fact), after which they excavate to ensure the blast was sufficient. This should continue for a few weeks yet. If you are hiking up here when one of these goes off, you may well hear the rumble; no one else should. The contractor is of course using the strictest safety protocols during this phase of the project.

Outreach program reopening

We continue to await a definitive decline of the Delta wave before we begin to re-open our general admission programs, and we'll also be looking for continuing news about the effectiveness of the vaccines and prior-case immunity to further variants like Mu. It appears Delta took about 7 weeks to reach its peak in Arizona (July 1 - Aug 17); if it is 7 weeks to go back down, this would put our first general admission days in mid-October at the earliest. But much remains unknown, and I expect we shall soon see the effect (or, hopefully, lack thereof) on case numbers of the academic year, Labor Day, and football games (the Cards looked really good yesterday, though!).

Mars Hill Road Security

We are maintaining the 7-days/week evening security presence at the Mars Hill Overlook for as long as our general admission is closed and tours are by reservation only. While there have been some unnecessarily loud vehicle engines, they've been quite a bit fewer, at least to my observation, than last summer. The overlook itself has been fairly quiet lately as well, which is a good thing. We'll keep an eye on it.

I hope this note finds everyone well.

Best regards,

Jeff