



PHOTO BY KATE BAILEY FRENCH /WEINSTEIN PR
The entrance to Oneonta Gorge is often very crowded on weekends, which is raising concerns for land managers with the U.S. Forest Service.

Gorge crowds are 'concerning'

ZACH URNESS
APPEAL TRIBUNE

The off-trail hike into Oneonta Gorge has long been an iconic experience in the Columbia River Gorge.

The moss-draped canyon east of Portland features high, vertical walls and a 100-foot waterfall only accessible by hiking upstream within the river.

But sharply increasing crowds at Oneonta during recent summers — numbering in the hundreds on weekends — has the U.S. Forest Service concerned about the impact to the gorge's ecosystem. It's yet another case of a famous Oregon landmark being "loved to death."

"It's a place that's been popular for many years, but this is the most crowded I've ever seen it," Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area recrea-

tion staff officer Stan Hinatsu said. "It has reached the point where we're very concerned about the impact caused by the number of visitors."

Hinatsu said the canyon's riparian vegetation — its moss and plants — have been damaged by visitors. He also said that sediment stirred up could have a negative impact on fish.

"This gorge is a unique botanical place, with lots of mosses and plants growing in that damp environment," Hinatsu said. "There's also the issue of water quality."

The Forest Service is considering a range of options, but Hinatsu said it's still an active discussion, and no decisions have been made.

"We've been thinking about how we could mitigate impact in the canyon but still offer this unique

opportunity," Hinatsu said. "We haven't made a decision yet, but suffice to say we are concerned about the level of use."

For those still interested in the journey, Hinatsu suggested starting early in the morning. The gorge is not safe during the rainy season, as the river level gets very high. He encouraged people to follow Leave No Trace principles.

The issues at Oneonta are shared by many nearby trails in the western half of the Columbia Gorge, particularly between Bridal Veil Falls and Horsetail Falls along the Historic Columbia River Highway.

The Forest Service is launching a new campaign called Ready, Set, Gorge that seeks to mitigate the heaviest use and parking problems.

Suggestions include ar-

iving before 10 a.m., carpooling or taking the Gorge's transit system to trailheads. Forest Service officials encouraged visitors to explore less-discovered, equally beautiful trails and picnic areas in the eastern Gorge or Washington side.

Officials also emphasized staying on official trails, and not following "user trails." Last week, two hikers followed a user trail up a rockslide, got trapped, and had to be rescued.

Zach Urness has been an outdoors writer, photographer and videographer in Oregon for eight years. He is the author of the book "Hiking Southern Oregon" and can be reached at zurness@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Zach Urness or @ZachsORoutdoors on Twitter.

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CITY OF SILVERTON SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

The City of Silverton is seeking volunteers who are interested in serving on the Silverton Planning Commission. Two terms will be filled; one immediately to fill a vacancy and the other will begin in January 2017. The Planning Commission was established in 1942; they recommend and make suggestions to the City Council concerning parking layout, locating of streets, the establishment of zones and other similar matters involving future growth, development and beautification of the City.

The Commission meets monthly on the first Tuesday, beginning at 7:00 p.m. and occasionally as needed. Interested applicants must reside within the City of Silverton or its Urban Growth Boundary and have an interest in the subject areas.

For applicant minimum requirements and additional detailed information of the Planning Commission, please visit the City of Silverton website at www.silverton.or.us/pc. Application forms are available on the City Website at: www.silverton.or.us/pcapp.

Applications must be submitted electronically to the City Clerk, Lisa Figueroa, no later than Friday, October 7, 2016. If you have any questions please contact her at 503-874-2216 or via e-mail at lfigueroa@silverton.or.us.
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• Wednesday publication deadlines the Wednesday prior

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• Affidavit Fee - \$10.00 per Affidavit requested



ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Willamette Valley Children's Charity raised nearly \$6,000 to purchase CuddleCots for both Salem Hospital and Silverton Hospital.

Babies

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Babies

have more time to say goodbye. The equipment, the first of its kind for both hospitals, includes a cooling pad that is filled with cold water and connected to a cooling unit that is plugged in. The pad can be placed in any bassinet, crib or bed.

Willamette Valley Children's Charity, a nonprofit that supports families who unexpectedly and suddenly lose a minor child or a parent, originally planned to raise enough money to buy one for Salem Hospital. After hearing about its efforts, Silverton Hospital contacted Johnson Funeral Home, which donated \$200 to the project and assisted with fundraising, to see if the charity would be willing to help it acquire a CuddleCot. Around that same time, Dick Bladorn of Sa-

lem contacted the funeral home to inquire about donation opportunities in memory of his late wife, Frieda. After discussions with Willamette Valley Children's Charity, Bladorn offered to donate the \$2,900 needed to purchase the device for Silverton.

"We were just floored," said Roberta Gruber, one of the founders of the charity.

She said Silverton Hospital is "over-the-top excited because it happened so fast."

Frieda's name is inscribed on a memory plate that is attached to the cooling unit and to the storage box. The CuddleCot delivered to Salem Hospital is dedicated in memory of Macey May Freese (Nov. 11, 2010) and Tate Michael Freese (July 18, 2012), the children of Michael and Kelsey Freese.

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