

## Lost hiker found safe

A man who got lost while taking a short hike near Three Creek Lake was found cold but safe last week.

According to the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, search and rescue personnel were dispatched at about 5:20 p.m. on Thursday, January 7, on a report of a lost person who had been hiking in the area of the Metolius-Windigo Trail about 1.5 miles north of Three Creek Lake.

Brandalyn Stevens reported that her son, William Neason, age 23, of Bend, had decided to go for a hike while he was waiting for Stevens and Stephen Rhinehart to arrive with snowmobiles, after which they were going to ride together. Neason parked his vehicle at the Upper Three Creek Sno-Park at about noon and walked up toward Three Creek Lake. The plan was to meet at the junction of Road 370 and Road 16, Three Creek Road.

When Stevens and Rhinehart arrived about two hours later, they learned Neason was lost, but believed he was in the area of Snow Creek, west of Road 16. Stevens and Rhinehart drove back down to the Upper Three Creek Sno-Park where they waited for law enforcement arrival. A Forest Service officer responded to the snow park and provided updates that Stevens would periodically receive from Neason via text messages.

Neason reported that he had been walking in three-foot-deep snow, was wearing tennis shoes, blue jeans overlaid with Carhartt pants, a sweat shirt and a Carhartt jacket. Neason had means of starting a fire.

Law enforcement attempts to call and/or text Neason were not successful. Neason

was able to call 911 at about 5:46 p.m. Neason was dressed for an overnight stay, but was now wet. Neason also advised he had food and water. Dispatch was able to obtain an accurate ping of Neason's location, which put him near the Metolius-Windigo Trail about 1.3 miles northwest of Three Creek Road.

Neason called 911 again at 7:15 p.m. to report that he had stopped walking, had been able to build a fire — and was cold. Based on the ping of the phone this time, the coordinates showed that Neason had walked about 200 yards downhill in a northeast direction.

Three DCSOSAR snowmobiles, one towing an ambused, and five SAR members were deployed to the Upper Three Creek Sno-Park parking lot arriving at about 8 p.m. From there snowmobiles were needed to travel about 3.5 miles to the intersection of the Metolius-Windigo Trail. Snowmobiles went off-trail to the west toward the GPS coordinates through narrow stands of trees and blowdown.

At about 9:30 p.m., Neason called 911 again to state he had been able to start a fire, which had since began to die, but the embers were helping his feet from getting too cold. The ping on the phone confirmed Neason had not moved since his prior 911 call.

SAR personnel located Neason at about 10:20 p.m. He was provided warm fluids and was wrapped in a couple sleeping bags and transported back down to the Upper Three Creek Sno-Park in the ambused. Neason was released to the care of Stevens and Rhinehart.

## Public to weigh in on forest project

The Sisters Ranger District is looking for the Sisters community to weigh in on the Melvin Butte Vegetation Management Project draft environmental assessment (EA).

"Your comments will help us craft our final decision regarding the project," wrote Sisters District Ranger Kristie Miller.

The Sisters Ranger District proposes "to maintain and restore forest resiliency and forest health in conifer stands to provide habitat for interior forest species, maintain and enhance large old trees and habitats, and reduce the hazard of large-scale wildfires in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)."

The project area is about 5,375 acres about nine miles south of the city of Sisters.

The draft EA describes three alternatives, including the "No-Action" alternative. The proposed action (Alternative 2) would thin "understory shade-tolerant conifers such as white fir; restoring ponderosa pine where it was historically present through the creation of small group openings and planting these openings to pine; treating areas infected with dwarf mistletoe while maintaining large-diameter trees; and reintroducing fire through underburning in the project area. Alternative 2 would harvest about 6.6-million board feet of timber. Alternative 2 would construct

about 0.8 miles of temporary roads. About 4,469 acres would be treated.

"Alternative 3 responds to key issues raised during public scoping," Miller wrote.

Similar to the proposed action, Alternative 3 would maintain overstory ponderosa pine by thinning from below and reintroducing fire through underburning in the project area.

"No group openings would be created; these areas would be thinned from below favoring any ponderosa pine that is present," Miller wrote.

Under Alternative 3, no temporary roads would be constructed. Alternative 3 would harvest about 6.3-million board feet of timber on about 4,405 acres.

The draft EA will have a 30-day public comment period, which is now underway. Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider (36 CFR 218.2). Comments will be reviewed and addressed in a Response to Comments section of a draft decision.

There are three ways to obtain a copy of the draft EA: Request a hard copy — one will be mailed to you or you can come by the district office to pick up your copy; request a copy of the draft EA on a compact disk (CD); or download

the draft EA at: [http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=44107](http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=44107).

Submit your comments to Melvin Butte Vegetation Management Project, District Ranger, Kristie Miller, P.O. Box 249, Sisters, Oregon 97759; FAX 541-549-7746. Email comments should be sent to [comments-pacific-northwest-deschutes-sisters@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacific-northwest-deschutes-sisters@fs.fed.us). Those submitting electronic comments must do so only to the email listed above, must put the project name in the subject line, and must either submit comments as part of the email message or as an attachment in only one of the following three formats: Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf), or PDF. Include your mailing address if you are submitting comments by email.

For more information about the project or a copy of the EA, contact Michael Keown, Environmental Coordinator, Sisters Ranger District, P.O. Box 249, Sisters, Oregon, 97759 or call 541-549-7735.

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