

# Campfire safety critical in Oregon

It's camping season in Oregon's natural places. Despite recent rains, dry conditions are already present in many areas and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) reminds visitors to enjoy their campfires responsibly.

"Regularly reviewing campfire safety practices, even if you're a seasoned camper, is a good habit to get into," said Chris Havel, OPRD associate director. "It's especially important if you're camping with children or folks that are learning about responsible outdoor recreation."

Follow these tips for a safe and enjoyable campfire:

- Know before you go: research conditions for the area surrounding your campground. Fire restrictions may be in place at the park, county

or state level.

- Maintain campfire flames at knee height, or roughly two feet high. This helps prevent ash or embers from becoming airborne, especially during the dry summer months. If you see wind stirring up embers from your fire, play it safe and extinguish it.

- Only build campfires in the existing fire ring in your campsite. Fire ring locations are carefully picked, and park rangers clear vegetation around rings to create a safe buffer zone.

- Always keep plenty of water nearby to extinguish your campfire. To put out your fire, drown the flames with water and stir the embers to make sure everything is wet. The stirring step is important: ash and wood debris often maintain heat and embers

unless they are drowned out.

- Beach campfires should be started on open sand, away from driftwood or vegetation. Use water to extinguish your beach fire, not sand. Covering the fire with sand will insulate the coals, keeping them hot enough to burn unsuspecting beachgoers hours or even days later.

- For propane fire rings, follow the same safety precautions you would with a log-based campfire. Propane fire rings should be placed in, on or directly next to installed park fire rings.

- Make sure everyone in your campsite, even children, is familiar with campfire safety. Always keep an eye on your campfire; many accidental fires are started because campers left their fire unattended for "just a minute."

# Region sees increasing tree mortality

BEND (AP) — An Oregon State University forester says dry winters and long periods of drought, combined with fire suppression, are affecting the health of Central Oregon trees.

Nicole Strong, a forestry and natural resources extension agent for OSU, described an increased amount of tree mortality — including junipers — in Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson counties.

*The Bulletin* reports that Strong says junipers on the High Desert have become more fragile in recent decades, thanks to fire suppression policy. Periodic fires thin forests and improve the health of existing trees. When fires do not occur, forest density increases, resulting in more competition for water and space to grow.

"This is the main reason we see a lack of resilience and mortality during

periods of drought, as well as when there are insect or disease outbreaks," she said. "If nothing is done, such as prescribed burns, this will be compounded in the future according to climate change models."

The tree deaths have also been noticed by the Bureau of Land Management, which manages thousands of acres of juniper woodlands in Central Oregon. Deschutes Field Manager Jeff Kitchens described dying junipers in the High Desert between the Bend Airport and Powell Butte, as well as Crooked River Ranch.

"I am getting calls from landowners regarding trees on adjacent public lands and we wish we could provide an answer. People are noticing the dying trees and we are directing them to reach out to local extension offices," Kitchens said.

Juniper trees typically grow between an elevation of 2,600 and 9,800 feet and can live up to 1,600 years. Their berry-like cones, 5-10 millimeters in diameter, are an important source of food for birds native to Central Oregon, including Clark's nutcracker and the American robin. Native Americans used the berries for medicinal purposes.

The BLM has no imminent plans to remove dead trees.

"If at any time areas affected were to directly be safety hazards to human life and or property we would work with our partners and neighbors to prioritize treatments. Some mortality, which may be a natural process of thinning and forest/woodland succession, will most likely benefit the ecosystem and require little, if any, active management from us," Kitchens said.

## Buckaroo Breakfast...



PHOTO BY JEFF OMODT

Sisters Kiwanis will host its traditional Buckaroo Breakfast on Sunday morning, June 9, from 7 to 11 a.m. Funds raised support the club's outreach programs.

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