

Firewood cutting opens in Sisters

Beginning May 1 and continuing through May 31, the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and the Crooked River National Grassland will offer free personal-use firewood cutting, without the normal requirement to obtain a permit from a Forest Service office or vendor.

This interim change to the firewood permitting process is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and an effort to maximize social distancing measures to the extent possible. After May 31, the Forest Service plans to return to the regular process of issuing firewood permits and load tags at offices and vendor locations, but this timeline may be extended depending on how the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

Firewood cutters can take up to four cords of firewood for personal use only. Inquire by phone or email with your local district office regarding commercial firewood permits.

Firewood cutters taking advantage of this opportunity will be required to follow the same rules and regulations that are in effect during the regular firewood cutting season. These rules and regulations are found in the “2020 Central Oregon Personal Use Firewood Synopsis” and on individual firewood cutting area maps.

Free personal-use firewood cutters will be required to have the following in their possession while cutting, loading, and transporting firewood:

1. A completed and signed hard-copy version of the Free Personal-Use Firewood Authorization.
2. A digital or hard-copy version of the 2020 Central Oregon Personal Use Firewood Synopsis.
3. A digital or hard-copy version of the appropriate firewood cutting area map.

The Authorization, Synopsis, and maps can be acquired for Deschutes National Forest at <https://go.usa.gov/xd4xV>, at Forest Service offices, and local participating vendors starting May 1. Firewood cutting area maps can be downloaded onto your electronic devices with the Avenza maps app available from Avenza.com.

Woodcutters should use caution while driving on Forest Service roads. Many may remain snow covered and icy at higher elevations. Roads at lower elevations are wet and muddy and the soft roadbed can easily be damaged by vehicle traffic.

Commentary...

Helping those hit hard by crisis

By Janel Ruehl
Columnist

Sisters Country has come together to address those affected by the economic impact of the coronavirus.

Tom Hesper, along with a team of dedicated volunteers, coordinates the Kiwanis Food Bank in Sisters. One of two local Food Banks, Kiwanis and Westside Church are both open and experiencing a major increase in demand. Fortunately, Hesper says they have also seen a boost in donations and new volunteers.

“When I was working out in front of the food bank on April 2, people were driving up in their cars and waving a check out the window. That happened six to seven times that day!” said Hesper.

He’s confident that the food bank is funded through the end of year, and will be able to continue to deliver consistent service to their clients. They’ve also received generous donations of other kinds from community members, including 100 bandanas from the Sisters Community Church to use as face coverings for their clients, a gift of classic children’s books, and lunch for their volunteers.

However, they’ve had to

undertake a major restructuring of their delivery model to adapt to CDC guidelines and social distancing requirements, moving from an efficient “shopping cart” model to a menu and box program that requires more volunteers to deliver successfully.

This has temporarily forced the food bank to reduce their service from once a week to once every other week (the Westside Church Food Bank is still open once a week). Hesper says they hope to get back to their old model as soon as possible, but in the meantime are in need of a few additional volunteers — particularly younger community members. Most veteran volunteers are over 60 and at higher risk from the virus. If you’re interested in volunteering, Hesper encourages community members reach out to him directly at hgang68@aol.com.

Fully 20 percent of the Food Bank’s clients are experiencing homelessness, Hesper estimates. George Myers, Sisters Country resident and local homeless advocate, says he is grateful that the City of Sisters elected to keep local public restrooms and showers open during the crisis, providing critical access to clean water

and sanitation facilities. Sisters Cold Weather Shelter closed on schedule at the end of February, and Myers says a big challenge now is outreach. He is working with the Homeless Leadership Coalition to distribute “outreach cards” to local camps and individuals, containing information on COVID-19 symptoms and available resources.

For those looking to plug in, Myers encourages donations to local partners like the Family Access Network (FAN) and the Food Banks.

“They know what people need, and are doing their very best to provide it,” said Myers.

To support local businesses impacted by the crisis, the Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce and EDCO-Sisters have been working

hard to understand needs, connect business owners to available resources, and provide marketing support. In collaboration with *The Nugget*, the Chamber of Commerce has offered advertising support to local businesses. EDCO has helped local traded sector businesses pivot their business model and distribution methods to meet emerging needs. Both encourage business owners to reach out for additional support.

Janel Ruehl is Program Administrator for Community & Economic Development with the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC). She is working on the implementation of the Sisters Country Vision Project. For more information, visit www.sistersvision.org.



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Helping Hands To Feed Your Family



The Sisters Kiwanis Food Bank is open and we welcome your visit!

If you qualify by meeting the federal standard of poverty income level, we provide a wide variety of food choices tailored to your family's tastes and geared for healthy meals.

The Sisters Kiwanis Food Bank is open every other week and you are encouraged to anticipate your food needs for two weeks at a time between visits to the food bank.



The next pick up date is Thursday, May 14, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

We are located at 328 W. Main Ave. in Sisters