

THANKSGIVING:

Event will be mostly on a to-go basis

Continued from page 3

Seher said the volunteers are looking into the possibility of offering some limited, appropriately distanced seating in the large church fellowship room. That seating would likely be in “pods” and provided for groups with particular needs.

She said that everyone will miss the hours of camaraderie provided by past gatherings.

“That is going to put a dent in it, because that was a big portion of it — the ability to get people together, the fellowship,” she said.

Regardless, providing a Thanksgiving meal to people who otherwise would go without remains an important mission for Sisters.

Seher said that the one food donation item that remains is pumpkin pies. Those interested in donating may do so through the day before Thanksgiving. Contact Seher at 541-390-4597.

“That is going to put a dent in it, because that [the camaraderie] was a big portion of it — the ability to get people together, the fellowship.”
— Jennifer Seher

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Proxy Falls is an excellent fall hike

By Craig F. Eisenbeis
Correspondent

As we wait to see if the predicted La Niña actually comes to pass, I feel like the mountains are crying “Last Call” for hiking. So, we decided to take one last (maybe) trip over McKenzie Pass this year while we still had a favorable weather window. We selected Proxy Falls but then thought maybe we’d make more of a trip out of it and do the whole Santiam-McKenzie loop, so we added a couple of other stops along the way.

So, even though it’s only about a 27-mile trip to Proxy Falls, we managed to make it into about a 90-mile circuit, stopping at Fish Lake and Sahalie Falls along the way. Fish Lake, of course, is empty this time of year, so we got out and explored some of the lake bottom. I can remember kayaking here in the spring and looking down through the clear water as I glided above the submerged, but well-defined, trail tracing its way along the bottom of the shallow lake. This time, we walked it.

At Sahalie Falls, there are plenty of trails to choose from, but we just made a brief stop to admire the falls. It seemed to take longer than I remembered to get to the

McKenzie Highway turnoff. The junction, after all, is on the other side of Belknap Springs. When we arrived at the Proxy Falls Trailhead, it was obvious that we weren’t the only ones to have that idea for a Saturday hike. There were 15 cars already there, and parking was limited.

Signs told us that this is a fee area; but, after I deployed my Golden Access Pass, we saw that there was a notice exempting passes this year. Kiosk directions suggest a counterclockwise pattern of travel on this loop trail in order to minimize contact with other hikers — an excellent idea in this COVID year, but not one that was universally adhered to. Probably fewer than half the hikers were using masks, but we were occasionally thanked by other hikers for using ours.

The entire loop trail is only about a mile, exclusive of the additional spur trails to the two falls themselves. However, as short hikes go, this one could be considered a little more difficult than some. The first part of the hike passes through and over one of the McKenzie’s trademark lava flows, necessitating some scrambling and awkward footing along the way.

Fall colors are past their peak, now, but were still in



PHOTO BY CRAIG F. EISENBEIS

Lower Proxy Falls tumbles into a glacial valley off a short loop trail west of McKenzie Pass.

evidence during our visit this past weekend. When the trail plunges into the dense forest, huge old-growth Douglas firs dominate the forest but also shelter hemlock, Pacific yew,

and western red cedar. Salal, sword ferns, rhododendrons, lichens, and thick green moss that completely covers much

See PROXY FALLS on page 17

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