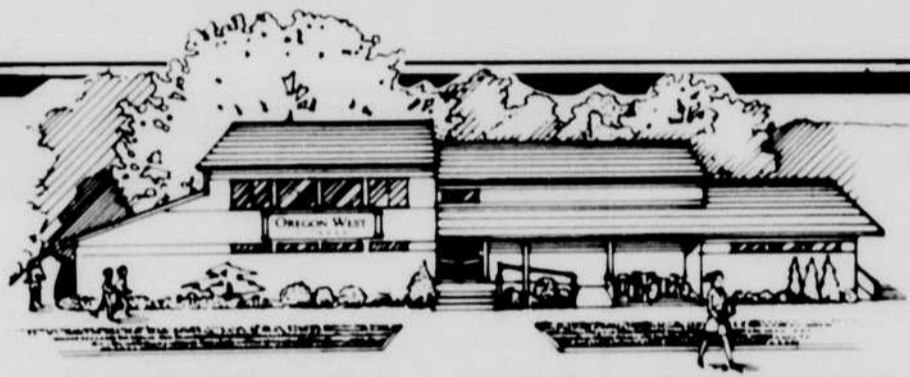


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Season not so merry for ski enthusiasts

Unseasonably warm weather has crossed up the lucrative Oregon ski industry so far this season, forcing normally busy resorts to remain closed for lack of snow and hurting retail sales of winter athletic equipment.

Timberline Ski Area on Mount Hood opened Nov. 26, but closed down at 11 a.m. Monday. "We closed basically due to a lack of business," Jon Tullis, guest services coordinator for Timberline, said Tuesday. Tullis said Timberline had done some "creative snow farming" to produce marginal ski conditions, but rainfall Monday put the area below an acceptable snow level.

Ski areas around the state were closed Tuesday, including Hoodoo Ski Bowl, Mt. Hood Meadows and Timberline. Mt. Bachelor Ski and Summer Resort was operating Tuesday, but with only a 13-inch snow base and no new snow.

Tullis said Timberline normally sold about 400 tickets on a weekday and 1,500 to 1,800 tickets on weekend days at this time of year.

Even the Anthony Lakes ski area near Baker, at 8,200-foot elevation, was closed. A Tuesday telephone message ski report said the area had a 16-inch base, but "the future week doesn't look good for new snow." Anthony Lakes has moved its opening date to Thursday.

The Skibowl Ski and Summer Resort at a 3,600-to-6,066-foot elevation on Mount Hood has been open only two days so far this season, this past Saturday and a half-day Sunday. "We gave our customers rain-checks Sunday rather than have them go away disgruntled," said Ed Martinez, Skibowl's marketing manager.

Even though Mt. Bachelor has managed to stay open since Nov. 25, marginal skiing conditions and a reduced schedule of lifts and open trails has resulted in a sharp cutback in skiers.

The lack of snow has hurt retailers too.

Group appeals forest plans

PORTLAND (AP) — A national environmental group is appealing plans for four Northwest national forests on grounds that they fail to designate rivers eligible for protection under the Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

In addition, the council is challenging the Father Oak plan to log old growth timber along Elk River in the Siskiyou National Forest. The Elk is a federally designated recreation river under the landmark 1988 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

American Rivers Inc., based in Washington, D.C., and its Eugene affiliate, the Oregon Rivers Council, appealed the plans for the Siskiyou, Fremont and Colville national forests and is preparing to appeal the Ochoco National Forest plan.

The Father Oak timber sale, about 4 miles east of Port Orford, contains 6.52 million board feet of Douglas fir, hemlock and Port Orford cedar. It is one of the sales that was released from a federal injunction as a result of the Northwest timber compromise.

"We'll appeal every plan that comes out that has not done adequate wild-and-scenic-river eligibility studies," said Bob Doppelt, executive director of the Oregon Rivers Council. In all, he said, between 25 and 40 eligible free-flowing rivers were left out of draft and final plans for managing the region's national forests over the next 10 years.

Although only a small part of the sale is within the quarter-mile corridor along the Elk River, Doppelt said the soils above the river are unstable and clear-cut logging could degrade the Elk, a river Doppelt said represents "the most important wild anadromous fishery on the southern Oregon Coast and probably on the Oregon Coast."

The group asked U.S. Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson to order revisions of final forest management plans for the forests.

Although it is technically allowed by the law, "there has never been a clearcut in a wild-and-scenic-river corridor that we know of," Doppelt said.



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