

\$3 fee cleans up hot springs

BLUE RIVER — A fee program at Terwilliger Hot Springs, a popular gathering spot in the Cascades east of Eugene, seems to have eased growing problems of drug dealing and violent crime.

"We've had much positive feedback and many fewer complaints, particularly from businesses," said Blue River Ranger Lynn Burditt.

The U.S. Forest Service instituted a \$3 charge last year for use of the natural, steaming geothermal pools.

Many of those who live and work in the McKenzie Valley say they consider the new fee program a success. In a year's time, a recreational region overrun with hot-springs users, campers, drug dealing and other crime has become noticeably more peaceful.

Others say the fee has kept poor people away from the area.

A Fee Demonstration Project approved by Congress in 1998 allows the Forest Service to charge for entrance to the hot springs.

The program allows the Forest Service to put funds it collects back into the area to improve trails, rebuild campgrounds and bathrooms, and increase law enforcement. The agency estimates that about \$28,000 per year will be collected.

The fees -- and the stiff fines imposed on those who fail to pay them -- has cut down on what had become overwhelming crowds in the springs and campgrounds. Less than one-third of the normal number of visitors returned for the Fourth of July weekend and Wednesday's opening of the Oregon Country Fair, Burditt said.

Darin Harbick, owner of a local country store, said the difference

the fee program had made was "nothing less than stunning."

"I think they've curbed the problem," he said. "It's day and night. I'm not worried about it at all anymore."

Cougar Reservoir, one of the favorite gathering places for followers of the Grateful Dead, the Oregon Country Fair and the Rainbow Family, has drawn thousands of visitors every summer since the mid-'60s, when a Forest Service road provided easy access to the popular springs and nearby camp spots.

A public transit bus from Eugene travels to the entrance of Cougar Reservoir Recreation Area several times a day, for a \$1 fare. Two years ago, said Forest Service technician Charlene Mikkelsen, the 7.5-mile Forest Service road that winds through the mountains to the springs was jammed day and night with hitchhikers.

Visitors who streamed into the area throughout the summer set up camp villages in the woods around Terwilliger, Mikkelsen said. Hundreds of campers stayed until late September, traveling to nearby villages every few days to buy or beg for food, she said.

Residents say they've prepared every July for the extensive tent villages and outdoor kitchens that pop up in campgrounds around the area. They've tolerated the nudity, the partying, the panhandling and the violence. But two years ago, for many business owners and community members, the situation finally became overwhelming.

Harbick said the crowd around Cougar Reservoir became so dan-

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Lynn Burditt
Blue River Ranger

gerous that he dreaded getting out of bed in the morning.

"We had a constant problem of people coming to the store bothering the customers, getting aggressive and shoplifting," Harbick said. "It got to the point where a lot of our customers were afraid to get out of their cars."

Although many people are drawn to the hot springs for spiritual renewal and cleansing, said Mikkelsen, a few came to sell drugs and prey on vulnerable young people who bathed nude in the pools.

Forest Service law officers were inundated with reports of drug dealing, prostitution, sexual assaults and, in 1996, even murder.

"It got to the point where something just had to be done," Burditt said.

Jacob Israel, a daily visitor to the springs and a member of the counterculture Rainbow Family, said the fee was aimed at subcultures and designed to keep less-desirable groups out of the area.

"It's part of the war against the Rainbow Family," he said. "There are just as many people coming there, but now you just don't get as many poor people."

— The Associated Press

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Serbs stage anti-Milosevic protest

By Donna Bryson
The Associated Press

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia — Up to 10,000 chanting protesters took to the streets in a southern Serbian town on Monday — the latest sign of growing anger at President Slobodan Milosevic's government.

Moscow and NATO, meanwhile, reached a deal that opens to way for more Russian troops to deploy in Kosovo as part of the peacekeeping force there.

Russia had sought to change an agreement reached in Helsinki, Finland, last month defining where its troops would deploy in Kosovo, hoping to give its troops wider freedom to operate.

The dispute further strained relations between Moscow and the alliance. NATO blocked Russian transport planes from flying more paratroopers to Kosovo on Sunday by persuading Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria to deny permission to fly through their airspace.

NATO's supreme commander, Gen. Wesley Clark, told The Associated Press that Monday's agreement kept more or less the same guidelines laid out in the Helsinki deal. The Russians will patrol in parts of the American, German and French sectors.

NATO said Monday about 29,000 troops have so far arrived in the province for the peacekeeping mission, which is due to reach 50,000 peacekeeping troops overall.

Russia is to send 3,600 troops. Around 750 Russian paratroopers have been deployed at Slatina airport near Kosovo's capital Pristina.

The peacekeepers' control of Kosovo is one of the factors that

has fueled Serb anger at Milosevic's government — on top of the destruction wrought by NATO's 78-day air campaign.

In a sign of how deep the discontent may be, Monday's protests in Leskovac, 120 miles southeast of Belgrade, were not organized by an opposition party — they were inspired by a technician at the local TV station.

Last week, technician Ivan Novkovic came on during a break in a basketball match and accused the local governor — a member of Milosevic's party — of abusing his authority. Novkovic urged people to rally Monday to demand his resignation.

Thousands responded, chanting "Thieves, thieves!" and "Changes, changes!" while police made no attempt to stop the march.

"I am not member of any political party. My moves were motivated solely by my conscience as a citizen," Novkovic, who has since become a local hero, told the Danas independent daily.

Milosevic's government has also been shaken by Kosovo Serbs fleeing the province in the face of revenge attacks by ethnic Albanians for Serb forces' atrocities.

The U.N. refugee agency estimates that more than 71,000 Kosovo Serbs have fled the province since March 1998, but has no figures for how many have left after the NATO deployment began. Belgrade claims more than 100,000 Serbs have left Kosovo.

Leaders of Kosovo's Serb community on Monday demanded the peacekeepers investigate crimes against Serbs in the province and alleged the existence of prison camps in Kosovo

holding Serbs.

"We have clear indications" that the camps exist, Serb Orthodox Bishop Artemije and Kosovo Serb politician Momcilo Trajkovic said in a letter to the private Beta news agency.

They did not give any evidence about the camps or say where they were located.

Sadako Ogata, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees on a visit to Kosovo, expressed concern Monday for the Serb and Gypsy minorities, but said the return of ethnic Albanian refugees was going smoothly.

So far, around 589,600 of the more than 860,000 refugees have come home to Kosovo since NATO troops began deploying June 12, the U.N. refugee agency said.

Many have returned to find their homes burned and relatives killed — sparking reprisal attacks against Serbs and their property.

Former Sen. Bob Dole, completing a fact-finding trip as the head of the International Commission on Missing Persons, visited a mass grave site near Pec on Monday that held the bodies of 97 ethnic Albanians thought to have been murdered by Serb security forces during the NATO air campaign.

Time magazine reported Monday that President Clinton has authorized the CIA to help topple Milosevic, who has been indicted for war crimes.

CIA computer hackers will try to meddle with Milosevic's private financial transactions, deposit cash with opposition organizations in Yugoslavia, and recruit dissidents in the government and military, Time said.

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