

# Oregon relocates sea lions from Willamette Falls



A sea lion is relocated from Willamette Falls to the Oregon coast in the back of a pickup truck. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Cassandra Profita OPB

Oregon wildlife managers are trapping sea lions at Willamette Falls and trucking them out to the coast in an effort to protect a very fragile run of steelhead.

Biologists estimate the sea lions at Willamette Falls are eating at least a quarter of the winter steelhead run. At that rate, they say, there's about a 90 percent chance at least one population of the fish will go extinct.

Bryan Wright, a biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said the state is waiting for federal approval to kill sea lions at Willamette Falls. In the meantime, they're moving as many sea lions as they can to the coast.

"Everyone knows it's not a long-term fix," he said. "It's barely a short-term fix. ... But right now, it's the only tool we have, and it does save about three steelhead per day according to our estimates."

So far, they've moved three sea lions to the beach near Newport. That's given the marine mammals the chance to demonstrate that they can swim back in a

matter of days.

One sea lion swam the 230 miles in less than four days – a rate of about 3 miles an hour.

Wright said that supports the state's argument that lethal removal will be necessary to protect the dwindling wild winter steelhead run, which reached a low of around 500 fish last year.

"It would be great if we could just take them to the coast and they could stay there, but that's not what we've found," Wright said. "I wish it were that simple."

The states of Oregon and Washington have been lethally removing sea lions from below Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River since 2008. One of the sea lions on the lethal removal list turned up in the Willamette Falls trap last week and was euthanized on Thursday.

According to ODFW, other sea lions with a documented record of killing salmon and steelhead near Bonneville Dam may also be killed if they are captured in the Willamette Falls trap.

A decision on additional lethal removals at Willamette Falls isn't expected until the end of this year.

# Silver Falls State Park hosts Owl Prowls

Christena Brooks Special to Salem Statesman Journal USA TODAY NETWORK

Silver Falls State Park is hosting two more owl prowls, evenings of "feathered fun" in March.

The March 10 event is 6-8 p.m. at the North Falls Meeting Hall. The March 24 event will be 7-9 p.m. at the Old Ranch.

Both start with hands-on activities and end in dusk hikes to find owls in the surrounding forests.

The events are free, but the usual \$5 parking fee applies. More information and a registration link can be found online at <https://silverfallsstatepark.wordpress.com/>.

Several park maps are online at [http://oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=v.dsp\\_publications](http://oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=v.dsp_publications).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Thanking community for aid in fighting Detroit Dam Downstream Passage Project

I would like to personally thank the City of Salem, our Marion County Commissioners and the Governor's office for their detailed letters to the Army Corps of Engineers about the Detroit Dam Downstream Passage Project that is potentially going to drain the Detroit Lake Reservoir for two to five years. Their well-thought letters of concern outline the potential economic and environmental impacts that arise from this project. If not properly implemented, this project is sure to cause irreversible economic hardship on many communities that have become reliant upon the reservoir over the past 60 years. This includes not only the communities of the North Santiam Canyon but the downstream users of the water resources that the reservoir provides. Too often hardships are placed upon the small rural communities in order to satisfy and ideology of a distant population base. Rural communities have the right to be economically viable.

**Tim Kirsch**  
Mayor, City of Mill City

## IN BRIEF

### Silverton annexations still on hold

The Silverton City Council voted this month to extend, for up to a year, its ban on taking annexation applications for properties larger than 2 acres.

Along with other Oregon cities, Silverton awaits the outcome of Corvallis' legal challenge to Senate Bill 1573, which in 2016 took annexation decisions away from cities' voters and gave them back to their representatives on council.

Before SB 1573, Silverton voters themselves decided whether or not to bring new acreage into the city limits. Historically, they denied annexations by a 2-to-1 margin. Councilors had – and still have – the pow-

er to annex properties 2 acres and smaller.

During Silverton's moratorium, property owners have had the right to take their larger annexation proposals to a vote, though no one has done so.

Corvallis' suit argues that Senate Bill 1573 violates the Oregon Constitution's right to "home rule" by outlawing its 40-plus-year-old voter-approval requirement for annexations. After losing in Benton County Circuit Court, Corvallis, submitted its case to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Silverton's moratorium, now in its second year, will continue through March or 2019 or until the appeal is decided.

— Christena Brooks

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