

OUTDOORS



A campsite at Southshore Campground at Detroit Lake. ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Detroit Lake, Santiam Canyon partially reopen

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

Last week I took my two girls camping at Detroit Lake and, within our little bubble on the south side of the reservoir, it felt like the beginning of any other summer in Oregon. • We swam and paddled and roasted hot dogs, hiked our favorite trail and made friends with other campers as our kids reenacted scenes from “Frozen II” and “Moana.” • It all seemed very normal. Blissfully so, after two and a half months of being limited from our favorite outdoor destinations. • Yet a deeper look at outdoor recreation in the Santiam Canyon and Detroit Lake area shows that even as things open up, it’s far from a normal season in the outdoors.

“This isn’t going to be a normal summer, that’s just the reality right now,” Forest Service Detroit district ranger Dave Halemeier said. “That’s especially true early on.”

While trailheads and recreation sites have reopened, many bathrooms are not open or won’t have toilet paper. While a handful of campgrounds are currently open — and even more should reopen by June 9 — others will remain closed deep into summer.

And the campgrounds that do open are likely to be short-staffed and short on amenities.

The Statesman Journal reported last week that Oregon’s State Parks department is facing a \$22 million shortfall that will mean severe cutbacks on rangers and amenities. In the case of Detroit Lake State Park, scheduled to reopen June 9, showers won’t be available and trash removal could be limited.

Another example of an outside-the-

norm situation is on the North Santiam River. While the majority of river access points have reopened, Fishermen’s Bend, a frequently-used put-in and take-out, is still closed with no reopening date, leaving an awkward situation for raft and fishing trips.

The reason for closures remaining in place is to allow land managers to clean up and prepare for visitors, including removing hazard trees. The importance of that work was illustrated in heartbreaking detail Memorial Day weekend, when a large tree fell and killed a 13-year-old Utah girl at Detroit Lake.

Even so, the scattershot combination of open and closed areas is likely to cause confusion and frustration as the weather warms and the region is swarmed by a population weary from COVID-19 stress, job losses and a historically difficult few months.

“There’s a lot of tension coming into this summer and people have been anxious to find a place to relax,” Halemeier said. “The problem is that many of the normal experiences won’t be there right away. What we really need is for people to do a lot of research before they come

up here, have a backup plan and bring their own amenities like toilet paper.

“Most importantly, I hope people have grace for each other. We’re all doing our best and we’re all in this together.”

Problems have already emerged, Halemeier said. Where bathrooms are closed, people have been answering nature’s call in unacceptable places.

“Unfortunately, some of our dispersed campsites have gotten overrun and ended up being a hazmat site with all the human waste,” he said. “We’re really hoping people can learn to use Leave No Trace practices when camping.”

What all this means is that this summer is a time to prepare for the unexpected and embrace self-reliance, from packing out your own trash to understanding how to go poo in the forest without creating a stink. Those measures, as much as anything, will allow Oregon’s outdoors to be the peaceful refuge so many people need it to be right now.

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June free fishing survived cancellations



Fishing

Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Talk about a depressing litany: St. Louis Ponds: event canceled. Silverton Reservoir: event canceled. Salmon River Hatchery: event canceled.

OK, so they’re not the Oregon State Fair or the Salem Art Fair & Festival doing viral patty melts this year.

But dropping the bulk of this year’s June statewide celebration of all things fishing still hurts, a lot.

On the plus side, Oregon’s traditional Free Fishing Weekend still went on.

Saturday and Sunday no licenses, tags or permits were required to go fishing, clamming or crabbing for residents of the Beaver State, although regulations such as bag and size limits as well as rules about gear restrictions and area closures remained in effect.

On the major-downer side, by my count off of the events list posted on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife website, 22 events that traditionally draw thousands, many of them kids fishing for the first time, are toast because of coronavirus precautions.

“It’s kind of sad ... It’s a letdown be-

cause its one of the highlights of the year,” said Michelle Dennehy, the communications coordinator for Fish and Wildlife.

No kidding.

I’ve covered about three decades’ worth, from the grins on kids’ faces and the gleam in their eyes as hatchery workers tossed net-loads of trout in front of eager families waiting for the “go” signal at Foster Reservoir near Sweet Home in the late 1990s to more recent events in which anglers lining the fishing platform at Hoover Campground on Detroit Lake and the accessible docks at St. Louis Ponds west of Gervais.

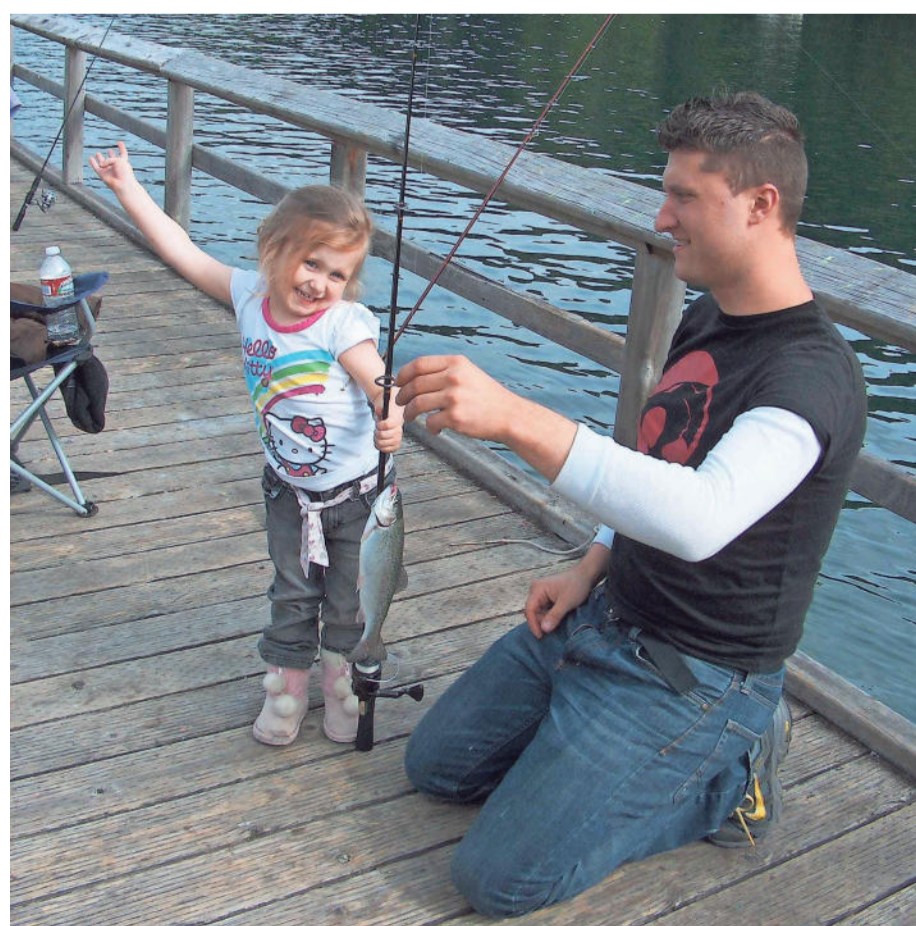
Not to mention the annual free family shuttle buses for families from downtown Silverton to Silver Creek Reservoir on the special day.

Oregon’s traditional Free Fishing Weekend in June has always been a very, very big deal both for anglers and for the hundreds of organizers and volunteers for the clinics, events, derbies and other activities that take place.

Sans the parade of events, though, fishing opportunities still are available.

While fishing, clamming and crabbing are free for Oregonians, for out-of-state visitors, clamming remains prohibited statewide, as well as crabbing on the coast south of Cape Falcon, near

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A lot of kids catch their first fish at Free Fishing Weekend events such as this one in 2011 at Hoover Campground at Detroit Lake.

HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL