

RECREATION REPORT

FIRE RESTRICTIONS IN EFFECT

Due to increasing fire danger, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest has imposed Phase A public use restrictions. These include the seasonal campfire restrictions in place each year from June 1 through Oct. 31:

- Campfires allowed only in fire pits surrounded by dirt, rock, or commercial rings and in areas not conducive to rapid fire spread, at a minimum clearance of all flammable material within a radius of 3 feet from the edge of the pit and free of overhanging material. Use existing pits wherever possible.

- Campfires must be attended at all times and completely extinguished prior to leaving.

- Persons with campfires are required to have a tool that can serve as a shovel and one gallon of water in their possession. The intent of this requirement is to ensure individuals with a campfire have the tools. Portable cooking stoves using liquefied or bottled gas and wood-burning stoves equipped with a chimney that is at least 5 feet in length with a spark-arresting screen consisting of ¼-inch mesh hardware cloth are allowed.

- Use of charcoal briquettes is permitted under the same restrictions as campfires as described above.

- Smoking, except within enclosed vehicles and buildings, or areas cleared of flammable material with a minimum clearance of 3 feet.

- Operating a motorized vehicle off National Forest System roads.

- Operating a motor vehicle on National Forest System roads where vegetation or other flammable material comes into contact with the vehicle's undercarriage.

- Being on a closed National Forest System road where access has been impeded or blocked by earthen berm, logs, boulders, barrier, barricade or gate.

For more information about Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Public Use Restrictions, visit this website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/wallowa-whitman> or call 541-523-1234.

THIEF VALLEY RESERVOIR

The reservoir is about 66 percent full, and has been stocked with approximately 7,500 legal-size and 500 trophy-size rainbow trout. Some holdover trout are also available. The boat launch is functional and dock is in place.

TERRIBLE ROAD LEADS TO BEAUTIFUL RED MOUNTAIN LAKE TRAIL IN THE ELKHORN MOUNTAINS



Lisa Britton/ForWesCom News Service

Red Mountain towers 1,700 feet above its namesake lake. The source of the lake's previous name — Green Lake — is obvious the first time you see its emerald water.

Seeing red, seeing green

■ The access road might test your patience, and the steep trail might test your lungs and legs, but the scenic rewards at a green-hued alpine lake are great

The great reward for hiking uphill is that you get to hike downhill.

(Also you might get to eat s'mores.) Your knees will perhaps dispute that this qualifies as a reward, great or otherwise.

But your lungs will agree, and wholeheartedly.

So to speak.

Your results may vary, as the marketers remind us, but in my experience it's common that on a steep trail hiking out takes about half as much time as hiking in.

And with considerably fewer gasps, which can frighten other hikers and for all I know attract predators.

Kids, owing to their tough tendons and limber ligaments, tend to take particular advantage of gravity, careening down rock-strewn paths in a way that explains the origin of the term "breakneck speed."

Driving to the trailhead, however, is a different matter:

A very different matter, in the



ON THE TRAIL

JAYSON JACOBY

case of Red Mountain Lake in the Elkhorn Mountains northwest of Baker City.

The road along the North Powder River, a route that leads to both the Red Mountain and Summit Lake trails, refutes absolutely the notion that going down is easier, or at least faster, than going up.

In fact the road all but obliterates the advantages that more than a century of dogged effort by automotive engineers — a clever bunch, to be sure, with their automated this and computer-controlled that — have afforded people who get around via four wheels rather than their two legs.

To describe the North Powder River Road as rough is to engage in gross understatement — akin to saying an erupting volcano is a trifle



Lisa Britton/ForWesCom News Service

Eastern brook trout abound in Red Mountain Lake. The west side has some of the best casting places.

warm.

Indeed I hesitate to refer to it as a road at all. That word implies a certain standard which is wholly inappropriate in this context.

I have talked with longtime Baker County residents who recall driving the road in regular passenger cars — which is to say, cars that don't have hip-high knobby tires and enough ground clearance that a reasonably flexible person could limbo under

them.

That road is no more.

After decades of being sculpted by spring snowmelt freshets and summer downpours and the occasional avalanche or windstorm, but rarely if ever by a bulldozer's blade, the North Powder River Road today is less a road than a series of boulder patches, gullies and stream crossings.

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FOUR-DAY WORKSHOP AT LOSTINE WILDLIFE AREA

Search dogs put their noses to the test

By Katy Nesbitt
ForWesCom News Service

ENTERPRISE — As long as people explore the planet's loneliest places, search and rescue teams will be employed. In early July the Lostine Wildlife Area in Wallowa County was one of the training grounds for the team's friendliest members.

On the last morning of a four-day workshop, Heather Howard ran a quick drill with her 18-month-old German shepherd, Gracie. A few minutes after the "victim," Jennifer Hafer, hid behind a tree several hundred yards

away, Howard gave Gracie Hafer's glove to sniff.

Trainer Bonnie Whitman of Bozeman, Montana, said she's been training search and rescue dogs for 30 years. Gracie was on what is called a trailing exercise — where the dog is encouraged to follow the victim's scent on the ground. Other exercises over the course of the weekend trained dogs to find their victims using "area search" — when a dog tracks the victim's scent in the air.

"What works for some dogs doesn't work for others," Whitman said.

When someone is reported lost, Whitman said a search and rescue team will have the dog handler collect personal articles from the missing person's home or car. Whitman said this won't confuse the dog because it knows the difference between the victim's scent and its handler's.

"Let's do a high-energy search," Whitman said as Howard attached a long leash to Gracie. "We like to have a positive, very successful, high energy search at the end of the day. This is a game to them, it has to be fun."

Howard and Gracie started off in

the general direction of Hafer, but she started to get off trail. Glen McDonald, a 22-year search and rescue veteran, said when that happens the handler gives the dog more line and stands still until the dog gets back on the scent trail. When the dog is actively following the scent trail, the handler lets out the leash and, eventually lets it go. Within a few moments Gracie found her trail and Howard let out the line.

"Gracie really improved her detailing this weekend," McDonald said.

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