

RECREATION REPORT

Spring bear hunters have more time to decide whether to hunt this year

SALEM — Hunters who drew a spring bear tag have extra time to decide if they will hunt this year. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is extending the tag sale deadline until May 1 so hunters have more time to consider their options, especially hunters who would have to travel to hunt as travel is limited to essential needs at this time.

The season opened on April 1 and as always, hunters must purchase their tag before they go hunting. The tag sale deadline is usually the day before the season begins but ODFW is making an exception due to the coronavirus. Spring bear hunters who choose not to go hunting have some options for their controlled hunt tag including reinstatement of preference points and a refund of the cost of their tag. For more information, call 503-947-6101 or email odfw.web-sales@state.or.us

FISHING FORECAST

Phillips Reservoir

Current reservoir storage is at 35 percent of capacity. The reservoir is ice-free.

While campgrounds and restrooms are closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, the boat launch is available for use. The access road to Social Security Point is passable. Fishing for trout at the Powder River inlet can be very good this time of year.

Pilcher Creek Reservoir

Ice is going off the reservoir. There is a band of open water around the perimeter. While the campground is closed, the boat launches are open, and will be usable once the ice is completely off, likely in a week or so.

Unity Reservoir

Reservoir storage is at 85 percent and increasing. The reservoir is ice-free and fishing for 12- to 15-inch rainbow trout has been good. The Unity State Park campground and restrooms are closed, but the boat launch is open.

Wallowa Lake

Good-sized kokanee are available for the determined angler. Fishing for holdover trout can be good during early spring.



Photo by Ethan Shaw
Gunsight Mountain, which looms above Anthony Lake, is an example of a horn — a peak sculpted by glaciers. The most famous “horn” is the Matterhorn in the Alps.

A landscape to celebrate

In this strange time of ours, all of us staying closer to home and staring down no small amount of uncertainty, it's a comfort to watch the “normal” signs of the season unfold: the big white cloudbanks spitting rain and graupel and flurries (and, increasingly, echoing with thunder), the up-and-down-and-up-again routine of the snow line along the



THE LAY OF THE LAND
ETHAN SHAW

mountain fronts, the sandhill cranes and turkey vultures back and the golden eagles on the nest.

It also seems a good moment to remind ourselves of this incredible countryside of ours: to imagine sweeping down from the nearly 10,000-

foot tops of our highest peaks to the whitewater in the heart of Hells Canyon.

We're lucky to live in a place of such topographic variety. Thanks to our odd and scrambled geology and our great climatic and ecological spectrum, terrain here can call to mind all sorts of different geographies: We have vistas here in Northeast Oregon that evoke the Scottish Highlands and the Dartmoor wastes of Southwest England,

the Altai Mountains of Central Asia, the Drakensberg heights of South Africa.

Consider the geomorphic spectrum in our great big backyard: this Inland Northwest province of mountain ranges, level basins, tablelands, canyonlands, rimlands, benchlands. Here we find landscapes shaped by cataclysm — basalt floods, hydraulic outbursts — and sculpted by the slow, steady scrape and shove of glaciers,

sitting side by side and melding into one another. Here you can stand on a bench of rotted granitic grit (“grus”) or a bone-white blockfield while looking at a skyline of dark basalt fangs.

Our mountain peaks may be pyramidal or downright toothy glacial horns, broad domes and whalebacks—or they may be craggy buttes or thick-forested knobs.

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Gunsmithing: A growth industry

At the 2020 SHOT Show Ron Spomer introduced me to Robert Thacker and Jamey Wojtaszek.



BASE CAMP
TOM CLAYCOMB

Robert owns the Pennsylvania Gunsmithing School and Jamey works there. PGS is doing fine but they're concerned about the dropping numbers of students across the country in the majority of the gunsmithing schools.

Due to this concern they're encouraging young people to choose gunsmithing as a career. I hear similar concerns among the gun experts that the numbers of hunters and shooters are dropping and the current ones are an aging group.

So as not to start off as a Negative Nancy, here's some encouraging news. I attended a seminar at the SHOT Show put on by Safe Shoot, which is an Israeli company. One of the speakers said that actually, shooting is the No. 2 sport in America, even ahead of golf. That surprised me.

If that is the case, then it's alarming that the number of kids going to gunsmithing schools is dropping because there will obviously be a need for more, not fewer gunsmiths on the not too distant horizon.

I'm about to say something that up until the last few years I was on the opposite side of the aisle about. In the past I encouraged kids if at all possible to go to college. If they couldn't afford that then at least work and attend a junior college and get an associate's degree. I no longer hold that stance. Let me explain.

Higher learning institutions have lost their compass. Their goal is no longer to teach kids to graduate work ready. They now have too

many hidden social changing agendas. Kids go off to college conservatives and return as socialists. The colleges spend way too much time teaching/pushing these agendas. Many kids no longer graduate with useful skills.

I used to hire a lot of college kids when I was the director of quality control for Con Agra. I had five large beef plants and a cooked plant under me so I had a large QC staff and hired a lot of college kids. Even back then the colleges thought that they knew more what the kids needed to be taught than the industry did. I only had one professor inquire what skills their graduates were lacking in. Is that not bizarre? Would any business survive if it didn't do customer service audits? Investigate open markets?

Due to my ignorance I thought trade schools were for kids like those in my high school who would have dropped out but due to shop classes they hung in and graduated (yes, this was all nearly 50 years ago).

Then.... 15 years ago I started learning what some of the skilled workers were making. Such as linemen, electricians, dental assistants etc. It costs an arm and a leg to hire a good maintenance man — if you can even find one. So now, if a kid can't afford college, I recommend they go to a reputable trade school. They may graduate right off the bat \$200,000 ahead of the normal college graduate because of no student loans and have an extra

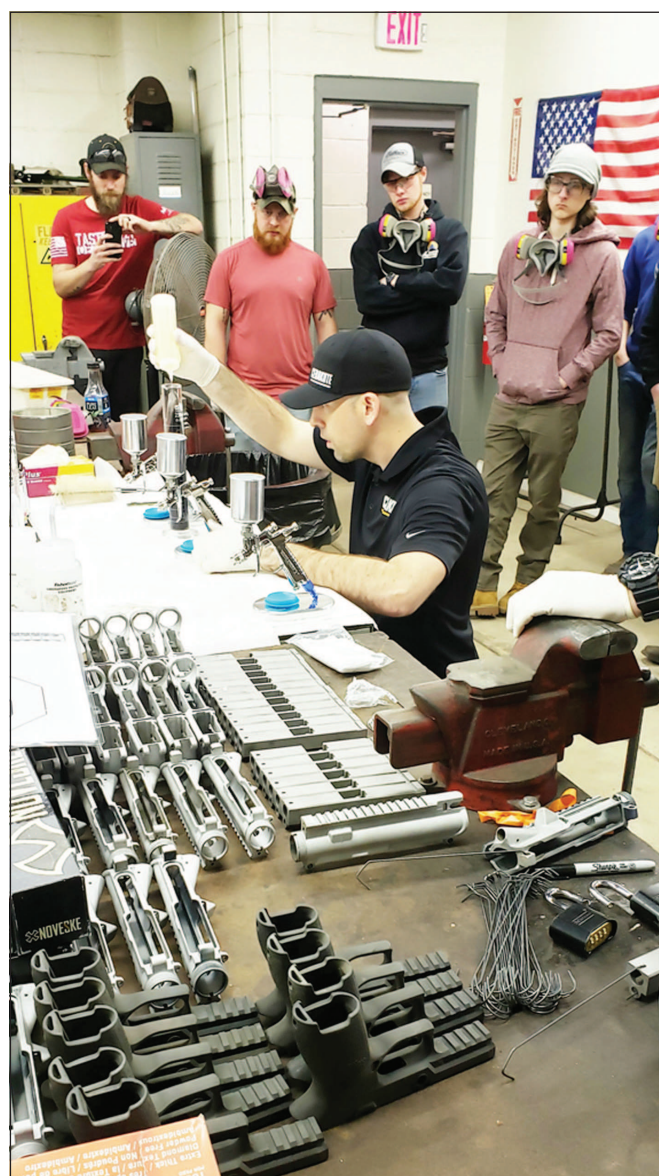


Photo by Jamey Wojtaszek

An instructor at the Pennsylvania Gunsmithing School demonstrates techniques to a group of students.

2½ years of wages already in the bank by the time their college buddies graduate.

So, let's play this out. They could work for an established gunsmith after school and learn the ropes. After 4-5 years they could then open their own shop while their college graduate counterpart is still in some menial job barely getting by with no hope in sight and a huge student loan hanging over

their head.

So what I'm saying is, if a kid is a hustler but for whatever the reason doesn't have the option of going to college, I don't see him/her as being handicapped. There are a million options. Go to a hand school. Same scenario. Work for someone else, learn the ropes and then in a few years open your own shop. When you have a few employees then you are making money

off of them as well as your own labors.

Before you say I'm nuts, think about it for a minute. A high percentage of kids go to a 4-year school and graduate with a degree that is not in demand and come out with huge debts. On the other hand, a kid could go to somewhere like the PGS and graduate in 16 months. With a part-time job, they may be lucky enough to graduate with no/low debt.

It takes four semesters (2,496 hours) to graduate. Students of any skill level can expect to complete the program. Every student starts at the same spot and being a course hour program, they typically finish at the same time. They have graduates in all 50 states and 18 countries. I've never been to the school but here's what I'd loosely suggest if you attend the PGS school or another trade school. Get a part-time job so you're not racking up loans. After you graduate, get a job with a reputable gunsmith you can learn from. Work for him a few years and learn the ropes instead of opening your own business right off and making costly mistakes at your expense. Then in a few years, when you're comfortable, open your own shop.

I stand to gain nothing if you go to the Pennsylvania Gunsmithing School or not. If gunsmithing isn't for you, find what you like to do and be the best you can at it. Don't be the moral to the story — the moral to the story is — don't feel like a second-class citizen if you can't afford or have no desire to go to college. Be a hustler and sharpen your skills and you may actually end up better off.