

RECREATION REPORT

Personal-use mushroom picking free on national forests

Personal-use mushroom picking is free on the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur national forests and does not require a permit for people who pick, possess and transport less than 1 gallon of mushrooms in Oregon and fewer than 5 gallons in Washington.

These free mushrooms are only for personal consumption and cannot be sold, bartered, or given away.

Those seeking to pick more than the free personal-use limit are considered commercial gatherers. To help slow the spread of COVID-19, supervisors of the three national forests in the Blue Mountains have decided not to issue any commercial permits this year.

Pikeminnow reward fishery opening late

PORTLAND — A popular Northwest fishing program is getting a late start this year due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The 2020 Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Fishery did not open on May 1, as originally planned. The fishery is tentatively scheduled to open May 11, for registered anglers with licenses to fish in the Columbia and Snake rivers. Fishery updates, including possible opening day changes, will be announced on the website, www.pikeminnow.org.

Stay-at-home orders issued in March by governors in Washington and Oregon closed or limited fishing and limited access to some recreational facilities, including boat ramps. Washington recently reopened many outdoor recreational activities on a limited basis, including opening most fishing seasons and allowing day use of many boat ramps.

When the program opens, anglers will see some changes to registration and turn-in procedures. Program participants should expect additional barriers, signs and floor markers at stations to encourage social distancing. Anglers will be encouraged not to congregate in groups near registration stations and asked to unload their fish into designated containers.

Some program elements haven't changed. Registered anglers will again earn \$5 to \$8 for each Northern pikeminnow that is at least 9 inches long.

RIDE BEGINNING AND ENDING IN ELGIN PACKS A LOT OF VARIETY INTO 20 MILES

The Observer & Baker City Herald



Photo by Mavis Hartz

Looking down Henderson Road toward Mount Harris and the Grande Ronde Valley

Panoramic Pedaling

■ Ride on mainly gravel roads near Elgin features Blue Mountain vistas, historic cemetery and a geology lesson

To beat back the blues, a rippling mixed pavement and gravel bicycle ride around the exposed Cricket Flats is just the ticket.

Spring is the perfect time to grab a bike with a little wider tire and enjoy a meandering gravel adventure. Begin this just over 20-mile route in Elgin.

The epicenter of culture with the Elgin Opera House, the town is the self-proclaimed Jewel of the Blue Mountains and rests where Clark Creek and the Grande Ronde River merge.

Begin at the Veterans Memorial Park in downtown Elgin on the Wallowa Lake Highway next to the Cowboys and Angels Cafe and leave town to the northeast. Use the smooth pavement to climb up the flank of Power House Hill and warm up the legs while keeping an eye out for Parsons Lane.

Parsons Lane juts north after 2 miles of up and is a well-maintained gravel road that loops northeast of the Wallowa Lake Highway through a number of working farms with fields punctuated by stands of ponderosa pine and piles of igneous rock.

As you skirt Power House Hill look down into the Grande Ronde River below and off into the Blue Mountains and the Umatilla National Forest.

Stay on Parsons Lane as it travels east and back toward Highway 82 before ending at the signed Good Road. Turn south (right) onto Good Road's once paved surface and motivate toward Highland Cemetery. For those wishing to take a break, enjoy the picturesque pioneer cemetery and its historic grave markers on the knoll, the breathtaking view and a possible geocache. Upon intersecting the Wallowa Lake Highway again, continue east toward Wallowa County looking for Hindman Road.

Hindman Road travels south toward the Grande

Ronde Valley around and through fields and ancient lava vents, which have left behind majestic lumps of rock and surging hills to test your spirits. Around mile 8.5 turn further east onto Roulet Loop.

Roulet Loop is one of the most beautiful and challenging sections of the ride. The predominately dirt road undulates and twists toward Stubblefield Mountain before shifting south just prior to the tree line. Thus ends the first half of the route, chalking up 1,054 feet of elevation gain but having never broken into a 6% grade.

Roulet Loop plunges back to Hindman Road with only one roller to slow up the downhill glide. Keep an eye out for elk and deer herds as well as chirping birds, fat burrowing mammals and crickets. Turn north once again on Hindman Road for a little less than a mile before rotating west on Witherspoon Lane. Witherspoon Lane begins to climb up the flank of Clark Creek Point before its dead end into Henderson Road.

Henderson Road is the least improved and maintained road of the day. If at any point the road has been too rough for your bicycle, turn north and return to Elgin via the Wallowa Lake Highway. Those looking for more adventure and yet more spectacular landscape turn south. Clark Creek Road gains elevation skirting around Clark Creek Point before topping out to show a panoramic view of the Grande Ronde and Indian valleys, Cricket Flat, Mount Emily, Mount Harris and much of the Blue Mountains.

The next mile loses 595 feet of elevation in an ineloquent plunge to Clark Creek. Henderson Road can occasionally be mistaken for a bubbling brook and the layers of erosion sport interesting colors of chalk. If you choose to walk this section you would

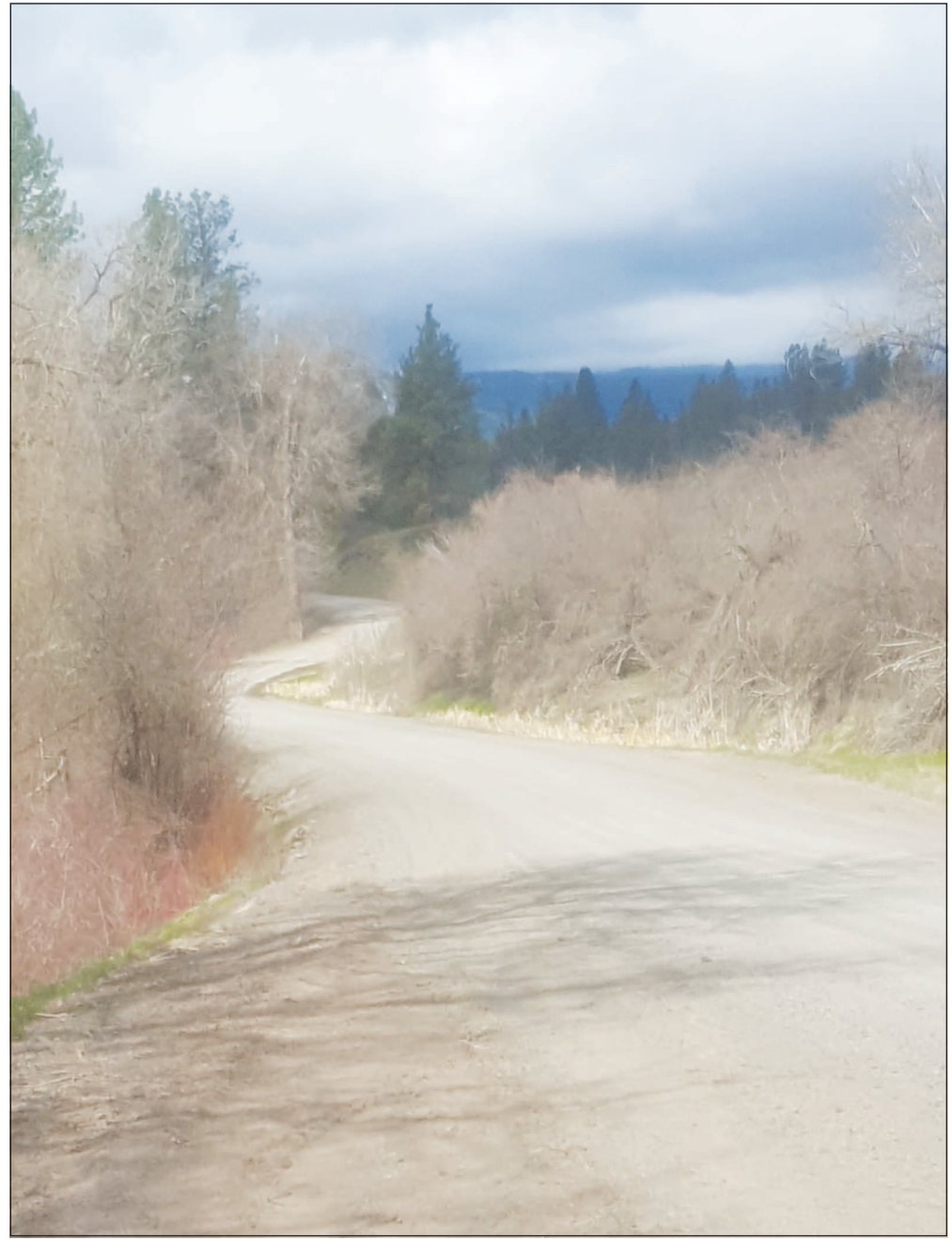


Photo by Mavis Hartz

Smooth dirt downhill along Clark Creek back to Elgin.



Photo by Mavis Hartz

Roulet Loop undulates toward the foothills of Stubblefield Mountain.

not be alone and the cows will be the only ones to know. Henderson Road snakes out next to a working farmstead to tee into Clark Creek Road. Continue west in a swift

and smooth descent back to Elgin. Once back in Elgin, be sure to read the kiosks in the park to appreciate the history of trading, railroad and logging.

As thanks, assuage your curiosity in the quaint downtown shops and possibly some coffee, spirits or a pickled egg from the deli on the other side of the street.

Black Bears Of Many Colors



Photo and caption by Jim Ward

Our local bears come in several color phases — red, black, cinnamon, and even blonde. Despite the color differences, they are all referred to as the black bear species. Oregon's spring bear season opened on April 1 and will run through May 31. Females with cubs are illegal to harvest.