

ODFW limits fishing hours in some areas

Restriction designed to reduce stress on fish when water is warmest

EO Media Group

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has enacted emergency fishing regulations, as of July 1, to protect salmon, steelhead, trout and sturgeon that are at risk due to severe drought.

The regulations will be in effect until Sept. 30, but could be lifted earlier, or extended later, depending on conditions.

In some rivers and streams, fishing for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon and trout is not allowed from 2 p.m. until one hour before sunrise. This “hoot owl” regulation is designed to protect fish from stress when water temperatures are warmest, according to a press release from ODFW.

“There is a tough summer and early fall ahead for fish, and we want to take steps to help them survive,” said Shaun Clements, ODFW deputy administrator for inland fisheries. “We appreciate anglers following the regulations and being flexible with their plans to help fish this year.”

In Northeastern Oregon, rivers and tributaries that have the hoot owl regulation are:

- John Day River and all tributaries.
- Umatilla River and all tributaries (not including reach within the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, where ODFW does not have jurisdiction).
- Willow and Butter creeks.
- McKay Reservoir, McKay Creek and tributaries (hoot owl applies to steelhead only).
- Walla Walla River and all tributaries.

For full details, see the emergency regulations for your angling zone at <https://myodfw.com/recreation-report/fishing-report/>

ODFW also urges anglers to use these practices when fishing in areas where catch-and-release is required:

- Use appropriate gear and land fish quickly. The longer the fight, the less likely the fish will survive.
- Avoid removing the fish from the water.
- If taking a photo, cradle the fish at water level and quickly take the picture.
- Remove hooks quickly and gently while keeping the fish under water.
- Use long-nosed pliers or hemostats to hook out a hook.
- If a fish is hooked deeply, cut the line near the hook.
- Revive fish (point them into slow current or move them back and forth until gills are working).
- When possible, let the fish swim out of your hands.



Beat the heat on a lake in the Blue Mountains

Dennis Dauble/Contributed Photo

Picturesque Jubilee Lake can be fished by wading along the shoreline or from a nonmotorized vessel.



DENNIS DAUBLE
THE NATURAL WORLD

The history of the Blue Mountains does not begin with 10-foot-tall mastodons, wandering Indian tribes, or the Oregon Trail. It is written in ancient rocks. According to the noted geologist Ellen Morris Bishop, the Blue Mountains of Northeastern Oregon began their life as a volcanic archipelago 400 million years ago. Only during the Ice Age did glaciers advance to scour bedrock, erode valleys, and sculpt tall mountain peaks. Examples of such activity can be found in the Lake Basin of the Willowa Mountains.

In contrast, the Blue Mountains were not glaciated. Consequently, they have few if any natural lakes. However, over the past several decades, creative engineering has led to a trio of scenic high mountain lakes having high recreational value. Each water body is well worth a visit as valley temperatures heat up.

Indian Lake

You could do no worse than start your summer trout experience at Indian Lake (Lake Hiyuump-tipin). Located near the crest of the Blues at 4,200 feet elevation, Indian Lake was created in the late 1960s by damming tiny Jennings Creek. Three years ago, I camped in the shelter of lodgepole pine with military veterans who affiliated with a recovery group called Heroes on the Water. We camped in the shelter of slender lodgepole pine, swapped tall tales, and trolled flies from pontoon boats and kayaks for rainbow trout up to 14 inches long.

Much of Indian Lake’s shoreline is accessible by well-worn trails. However, wading can be difficult because a rim of submerged aquatic vegetation lines much of the bank. Hence, launching a non-mechanized floating vessel to fish from is an advantage.

Owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Indian Lake is 34 miles southeast of Pendleton. Drinking water, 43 fee-based campsites with fire pits, tipi rentals, and an RV disposal station are available for public use. A reserva-

tion fishing permit is required and can be purchased at the lake during the camping season (See ctuir.org).

Jubilee Lake

Jubilee Lake is the only game in town for still water trout in the Tollgate region of the Blues. This 20-acre jewel of a lake was created in the late 1960s by damming meandering Mottet Creek. Jubilee is primarily a put-and-take fishery for catchable-sized rainbow trout; however, holdovers up to 16 inches are possible following a mild winter. The first stocking by ODFW occurred in early June this year with additional plants planned over the summer for a total of 16,000 legal-sized and 300 trophy-size trout (14 to 16 inches).

The lake’s picturesque shoreline is lined with bulrush, willow, and conifer, yet provides plenty of access for bank anglers. Cast from the gentle sloping shoreline or troll the inlet arm and deep area near the outflow where trout seek cool water refuge in late summer. Only nonmotorized watercraft, including float tubes, pontoon boats and car-toppers, are allowed, which lends to a quiet atmosphere. Jubilee Lake is 12 miles north-

east of Tollgate. Forest Service Road No. 64, off Highway 204 between Weston and Elgin, leads you there. Adjacent to Jubilee is the largest (53 camp sites) and most popular fee-based campground in the Umatilla National Forest. Handicap access is located near the day-use area and a graded perimeter trail circles the entire lake.

Olive Lake

Travel south down the spine of the Blues and you find 160-acre Olive Lake at 6,200 feet elevation. A once-small natural lake was deepened and enlarged by a 30-foot-high crib-and-rock dam built in the early 1900s by the Fremont Power Company to provide hydroelectric power to the then booming gold mining community.

Anglers have plenty of choices when it comes to fishing Olive Lake. Approximately 3,800 rainbow trout were stocked by ODFW in late June of which 1,050 are trophy-size. Natural-spawning populations of brook trout are also present. Kokanee, or landlocked sockeye salmon, can be caught trolling or jigging.

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Reviving an ailing trail in the Elkhorns

The Trailhead Stewardship Project is making progress on the Cunningham Cove trail



JAYSON JACOBY
ON THE TRAIL

Snowbrush is the curse of the Cunningham Cove trail, and Victoria Mitts is its blessing.

If not for Victoria’s dexterity with a pair of metal pruners, I’d likely still be floundering about among the shrubby thickets, half-crazed in my fruitless search for the path, and bleeding from dozens of shallow scratches besides.

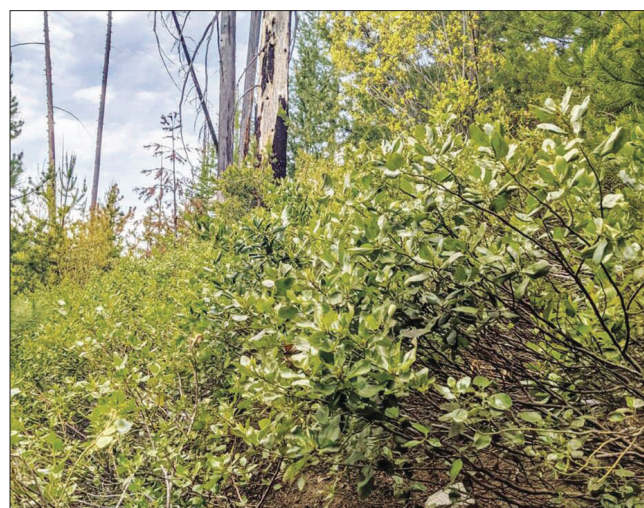
My hiking companions, being considerably less stubborn — and more wise — would have long since abandoned me to my ineffectual meandering.

Fortunately no such conflict marred my June 27 hike with my wife, Lisa, and our kids, Olivia, 14, and Max, 10.

Such would not have been the case without Victoria’s efforts.

The Cunningham Cove trail is her first task as the initial employee with the Trailhead Stewardship Project.

That partnership between the Willowa-Whitman National Forest and The Trailhead, the Baker City bike, ski and outdoors shop that Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort opened several



Victoria Mitts/Contributed Photo

This is what the Cunningham Cove trail looked like before Victoria Mitts pruned back the snowbrush.

years ago, aims to reverse years of trail-maintenance neglect that have left paths such as Cunningham Cove in deplorable shape.

Assuming you can actually find the trails to brand them as such. And in the case of Cunningham Cove, this is far from a certainty.

Victoria did find the trail.

But she had to look pretty hard.

Cunningham Cove, a roughly five-mile trail that climbs from the North Fork John Day River at Peavy Cabin to a junction with the Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail, has deteriorated to a disturbing degree since I first hiked it in 1990.

The Sloans Ridge fire in 1996 was a primary culprit.

The blaze burned the mature forest of tamarack, lodgepole pine and, along the streams, Engelmann spruce.

Relatively few big trees survived the flames — enough, though, to provide the seeds for the young forest that’s thriving now.

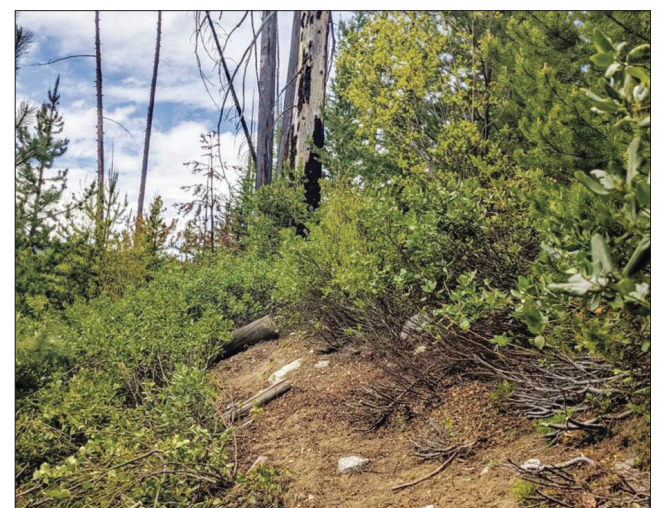
As is typical in the few decades following a severe fire, lodgepoles, which sometimes have serotinous cones (sealed by resin) that release their seeds only when exposed to flames, dominate.

Well, at least lodgepoles dominate among conifers.

But even their ubiquity is challenged by snowbrush, one of the ceonathus shrubs, that also has seeds with a protective layer that generally germinate only after some sort of disturbance.

And fire is nothing if not a disturbance.

In the aftermath of the Sloans Ridge fire, snowbrush has formed dense, almost unbroken, mats on the slopes where the Cun-



Victoria Mitts/Contributed Photo

The trail post-pruning is again obvious as it climbs through a forest burned in the 1996 Sloans Ridge fire.

ningham Cove trail runs.

Snowbrush is not an altogether malevolent plant — nothing like poison oak or devil’s club.

Indeed, on the day of our hike the snowbrush was in full bloom, its clusters of white blossoms attractive and its fresh scent pleasant.

But as with many things — beer, processed cheese and ABBA, to name but three — beyond a certain amount, snowbrush’s attractive attributes are overwhelmed by the deleterious effects of its sheer volume.

Snowbrush is basically the chaparral of the Blue Mountains.

A few clumps dangling over the edge of the trail are easily dodged.

But when the stuff grows thick on both sides, overhanging and meeting in the middle, the only way to get through is to

wallow.

This is unpleasant, because snowbrush, although it lacks the spines of, say, hawthorn, is a stout shrub, and if you have to plunge through any significant stretch, the limbs will inflict copious scratches.

Enter Victoria and her pruners.

I had talked with Peter Johnson, Anthony Lakes general manager, a couple days before our hike. He told me Victoria had started working on the Cunningham Cove trail and was making good progress.

As we started the climb — around 8 a.m., in deference to the heat forecast later in the day — we hadn’t gone a quarter mile before we saw, and much appreciated, her handiwork.

See, [Trail/Page B2](#)