

# GEM OF THE CASCADES

Pristine Waldo Lake faces renewed threats

BY TED TAYLOR

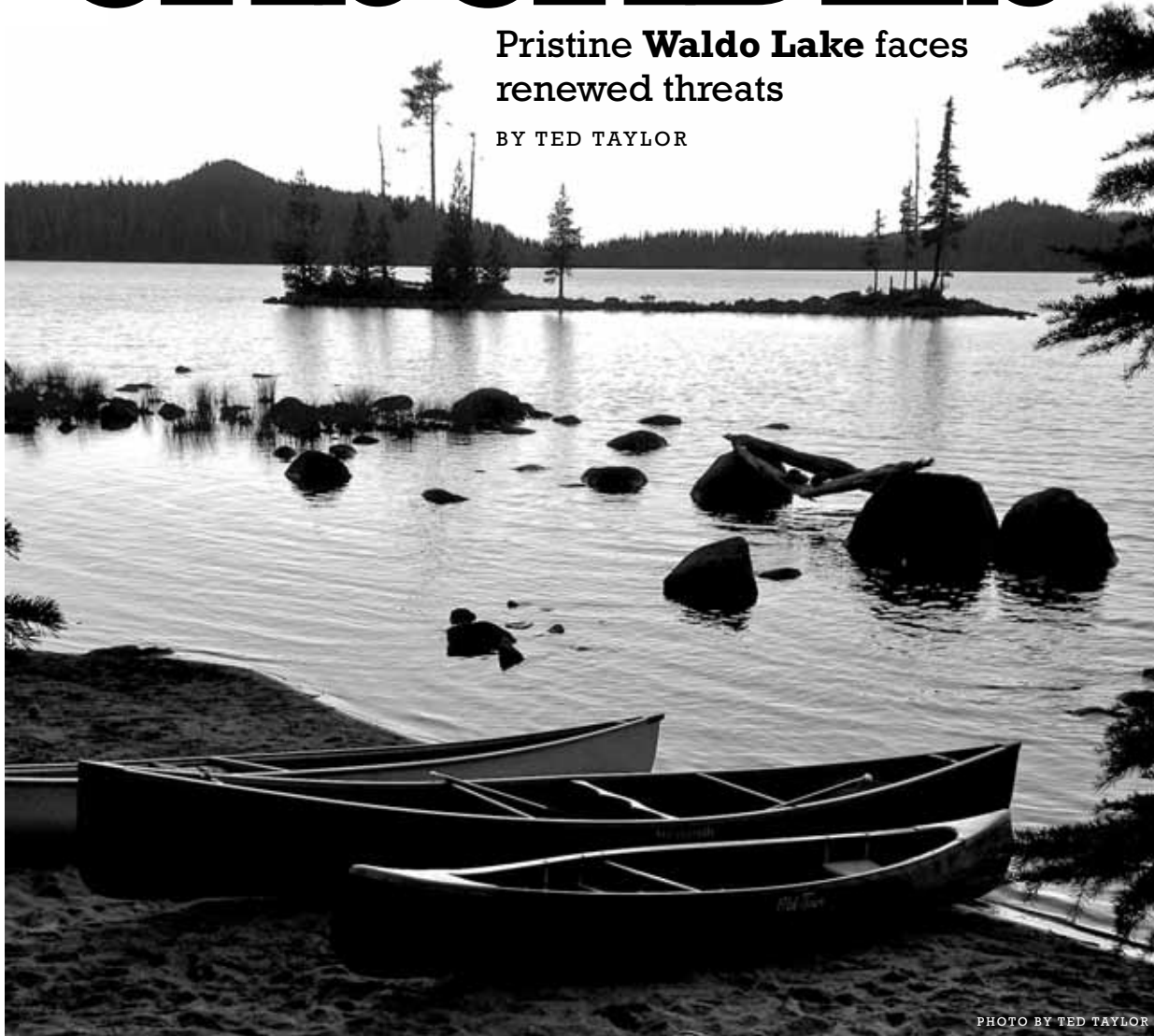


PHOTO BY TED TAYLOR

The struggle to protect the peace, quiet and purity of Waldo Lake and the surrounding forests has been going on for decades and it's likely to continue a while longer as various factions and interests make their cases in court, in front of agencies, and out in the public arena. The fight has become so convoluted that it might take the Oregon Legislature to eventually resolve the conflicts over usage and jurisdiction.

Currently the hottest topic is the 2010 prohibition of gas-powered motorboats and float planes on the high-altitude lake 70 miles east of Eugene. A public meeting of the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) is planned for April 10 in Springfield (see box for information). So far about 3,000 comments in favor of the ban have been submitted to OMB, and only a few dozen comments have been against the ban.

"We're strongly behind keeping the ban in place," says David Stowe, Waldo Preservation Coordinator of the Juniper Group of the Sierra Club in Bend. "As far as I can tell, it's the only large, motor-free lake in the Western U.S. and maybe the whole U.S., certainly the only one in Oregon and the Northwest." He calls Waldo the "unspoken gem of the central Cascades."

Stowe says one of the lesser-known problems with motorboats on the lake was dispersed camping: "Boaters taking stuff to the far shore and tearing things up and littering, the noise of generators and a lot of other things. The Forest Service trail maintenance crews had some difficulty managing it and they are short-staffed and didn't have time to take a motorboat across and clean up the messes." He said damage from dispersed camping is "not a problem anymore" with canoes and kayaks.

"And we certainly don't want to see float planes landing there," says Stowe. "That's just incredibly stupid beyond description and the arguments they are making for that don't hold water at all." He says there are many other lakes where the noisy float planes can land and take off.

Those who have previously commented on the motor ban will need to resubmit their testimony, says Doug Heiken of Oregon Wild. "It's really important for people to participate this time because all the old comments are being wiped off the record and they need to start fresh."

Even though the public sentiment has always been strong in favor of the gas-motor ban, Heiken says this latest rule-making session in response to legal challenges could go either way.

"It's not clear that we have the votes," says Heiken. "Some of the Marine Board members were offended that former Gov. Ted Kulongoski was applying political pressure to try to make this happen, and they felt like their arms were being twisted. So there's a little bit of bad feelings by some members and we need to overcome that."

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