

Washington’s Manhattan Project park celebrates first year

By **NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS**
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — The Manhattan Project National Historical Park at Hanford is a year old and proving to be quite popular. About 13,000 people visited the park in its first year, despite its relatively remote location in southeastern Washington, far from the state’s major population centers. “It’s a great number,” said Kris Kirby, who recently was named superintendent of the historical park. She’s based in Denver and is splitting her time between the park’s three sites: the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, Washington; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and Los Alamos, New Mexico. Each community played a key role in developing the world’s first atomic bombs during World War II. The park was created a year ago, with the signing of an agreement between the U.S. Energy Department, which owns Hanford, and the U.S. Interior Department, which includes the National Park Service. Kirby is the national park’s first employee, but officials are in the process of hiring a person to work specifically at the Hanford site. The centerpiece of the Hanford park is the B Reactor, the world’s first full-sized nuclear reactor. It was hurriedly built by the Manhattan Project in the darkest days of WWII as the United States rushed to beat Nazi Germany in developing the first atomic bomb. B Reactor produced plutonium for the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, effectively ending the war. Most of last year’s park visitors took buses out to the B Reactor, Kirby said. Another option is to tour the handful of derelict buildings that are all that’s left of the small towns evacuated to create the nuclear reservation. Exhibits tell the story of residents who were forced to leave their homes, farms and businesses in 1943 to make way for the secret wartime project. About 50,000 people eventually worked to create the Hanford site during WWII. A total of nine reactors eventually were built there to create plutonium for the nation’s



In this Nov. 2015 file photo, fourth grade students from White Bluffs Elementary School help local historians and politicians raise the National Parks Service flag for the first time at Hanford’s B Reactor, near Richland, Wash. The new Manhattan Project National Historical Park at Hanford is a year old and proving to be quite popular. About 13,000 people visited the park in its first year.

nuclear arsenal during the Cold War. All the reactors are now closed and the site is mostly engaged in cleaning up the huge volume of radioactive waste left over from plutonium production. Visitors should not expect to see major changes at the national park until after a general management plan is prepared, which will provide guidance for the next 20 years, Kirby said.

Work on the plan could start about a year from now and take two to three years to complete, she said. One question is whether the park should build a visitor center, she said. “Right now we don’t have the budget to construct one, and I don’t know that we ever will get that budget, so we are assessing a variety of options,” Kirby said. It may be possible to convert an existing

building into a visitor center, she said. Park tours are offered spring through fall, and Kirby wants to focus on increasing the number of people who take them. The park also has seen some special events. On the National Park Service’s 100th anniversary this fall, an organized bike ride took place on the Hanford site, which is normally closed to the public.



In this 2001 file photo, beachcombers watch storm-tossed waves crash over rocks near Depoe Bay.

Be careful at the beach: it’s sneaker wave season

JAMIE HALE
The Oregonian/OregonLive

PORTLAND — Never turn your back to the ocean. That’s probably the best piece of advice when it comes to surviving sneaker waves — the sudden, unpredictable surges of water that can knock you over or pull you out to sea. And while there’s no official season for sneaker waves, plotting out major incidents in Oregon shows an undeniable seasonal trend. Since 1990, all major sneaker wave incidents have occurred between October and April, peaking in November and March. In that time, at least 21 people have been killed by sneaker waves on the Oregon coast, and several others have been severely injured. Victoria Hansen, a rescuer with the U.S. Coast Guard, told *The Oregonian/OregonLive* the seasonal occurrence could be the result of a more turbulent ocean. Winter storms toss the ocean about more violently, and the runoff from the land only adds to the volume. Tides also tend to be more extreme, she said, drawing people to the beach when the water is low but pushing them back further come high tide. “These waves become dangerous when beachgoers are in or near the waterline, and expect that the gentle spilling waves they have been experiencing will continue,” Hansen explained. “The sneaker wave will quickly travel further up the beach than expected, and may sweep people off their feet and pull them back into the surf.”

Researchers aren’t sure why or how sneaker waves form, but it’s generally thought that they develop as many waves travelling at the same speed come together, overlapping and combining to create a wave that crests taller and travels much farther ashore than normal. The waves can sweep up people close to the water’s edge in an instant, and can carry large debris — like the massive logs that line the coast — over top of beachgoers. A viral video shot in Charleston this past January shows the terror and suddenness with which a sneaker wave can arrive. Hansen said the best way to stay safe is to be aware if you go near the water, and to stay within arm’s length of small children if they’re playing in the surf. If you do get swept up, don’t try to fight the current — conserve energy and focus on keeping your head above water until rescuers arrive. Bystanders should never enter the ocean to save somebody, she added, but should instead call 911 and keep visual contact with any victims. Warning signs are posted at Oregon beaches, but victims’ families have complained that they’re not enough. After a wave killed two Eugene teenagers in February 2011, a memorial statue at Smelt Sands offered a blunt message: “The Ocean is a treacherous wonder.” “Nobody predicts the ocean,” Chris Havel, Oregon State Parks spokesman. “The only thing you can predict is 362 miles of ocean shore that is a wild area.”

Snowy forecast delights ski hills

EUGENE (AP) — The forecast calls for a snowy December in the Oregon Cascades — and businesses that rely on winter weather couldn’t be happier. Ski resorts, ski shops and mountain tourist towns are gearing up for a white December by making extra hires and planning for crowds, *The Register-Guard* reported. The first major winter storm brought a foot or more of snow to the Cascades over the weekend, with more expected in the coming days. Hoodoo, in the Santiam Pass northwest of Bend, hopes to open in mid-December, Williams said. The mountain reported about 18.2 inches at its lodge as of 9 p.m. Sunday, most of it having fallen during the past few days. Forecasts showed up to 10 more inches could fall by late Monday evening. The mountain needs 30 inches of heavy, hard-packed snow for crews to groom the trails and prepare the mountain for skiers and snowboarders, Williams said. The resort sent out a notice this week that it’s hiring extra employees for the upcoming ski and snowboard season in addition to the 40 to 50 seasonal workers already



Snow covers part of a sign at the 5,000 foot elevation point along Highway 58 east of Oakridge on Monday as fresh snow falls in the Cascades.

hired. “We need more applicants for our ski school, and we need some more people to fill in the kitchen,” Hoodoo spokesman Leif Williams said. Record low snowfalls kept Hoodoo closed for nearly the entire 2014-15 season. “The storm that’s coming in is supposed to bring a lot of (snow) in the next six or seven days. That’s very promising,” Williams said. “Last year, it was more or less expect the worst and hope for best. This year it’s a little more hopeful.” Oregonians who want to ski now already have some options.

Mount Bachelor near Bend opened its first lift Friday, and Mount Hood opened four lifts. Timberline Lodge reported that more than 10 inches of snow fell Sunday and another foot was expected Monday — the same day the resort offered up one-day online deals for lift passes and holiday gift cards. Berg’s Ski Shop in Eugene is training several new employees to handle equipment sales and rentals, general manager Chris Stowell said. “We’re prepping up and getting ready to go,” he said.

Idaho hunting and fishing licenses online again

By **KEITH RIDLER**
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Online sales of hunting and fishing licenses resumed Tuesday following a three-month shutdown due to a computer breach at the vendor that handles those sales, Idaho officials announced. Idaho Fish and Game officials said additional security features include requiring online buyers to create an account with a password. Dallas-based Active Network reported a computer breach in late August with the possibility that millions of records in Idaho, Oregon and Washington, including Social Security numbers, might have been compromised. “We worked with them to patch the vulnerabilities,” said Michael Pearson, chief of administration for the Idaho agency. “Fish and Game had to modify the website to put additional security measures in place.” Oregon resumed online sales in early September with added security, which includes removing driver license information, said Oregon Fish and Wildlife

spokeswoman Michelle Dennehy in an email to The Associated Press. Washington state is also back online. About 10 to 20 percent of hunting and fishing sales occur online at the three states. Pearson said it’s difficult to tell if some hunters or anglers couldn’t get Idaho licenses, but that it appeared most figured out early how to buy the products they wanted. Licenses continued to be sold in person at Idaho Fish and Game offices and certain businesses. Shortly after the breach, Active Network mailed notices to license holders with instructions on how to check for identity theft. The company, whose event and activity management software is used by tens of thousands of event organizers nationwide, including marathons and other races, has said the potential threat was isolated to fishing and hunting licensing systems in the three states. The company didn’t respond to phone or email inquiries from The Associated Press on Tuesday. Idaho Fish and Game spokesman Mike Keckler said it’s still not clear if any personal information was actually stolen, and that the FBI continues to

“It’s not behind us. We are still learning from what happened.”
— **Mike Keckler,**
Idaho Fish & Game spokesman

investigate. Before the computer breach, Fish and Game had already started the process of seeking bids for a contract to run the online sales when the current contract with Active Network ends in February 2018, Keckler added. He said the request for bids just ended, but declined to say how many bids the state received or who made them. He said the bids will be examined for beefed-up security measures following the computer breach. “It’s not behind us,” Keckler said. “We are still learning from what happened. We’re doing everything we can to make sure nothing happens now or with the next contract.”

Have a photo of a trophy bull, huge salmon or an amazing wildlife experience?
Email it to outdoors editor Tim Trainor at ttrainor@eastoregonian.com.