

# Eagle Cap Wilderness inholding purchased, public access retained

Land purchased by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, conveyed to forest

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
East Oregonian

The largest private inholding in the Eagle Cap Wilderness will be kept open to public access after the land was recently purchased by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and conveyed back to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

The 470-acre property, which runs parallel to Hurricane Creek south of Joseph, provides access points to some of the most heavily used trails leading into the wilderness area, including Hurricane Creek and Falls Creek trails.

Bill Richardson, senior lands program manager for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, said the group spent several years working with the Forest Service to buy the land from the Hostetter Family Trust to protect access for hunting, fishing and recreation. The acquisition finally closed in January.

"Public access is huge for us," Richardson said. "It's a real important part of our mission."



Hurricane Creek is seen Dec. 17, 2016, in this photo taken near the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest boundary. Conservation and access groups including the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation worked to purchase 470 acres near here for public land.

Staff file photo by Tim Trainor

The Hurricane Creek project was identified as a national priority for the elk foundation, based in Missoula, Montana. The area lies between elk summer and winter range in the Wallowa Mountains, and spring chinook salmon also use the upper reaches of Hurricane Creek for spawning.

"The access to elk up higher during hunting season is crucial to hunters," Richardson said.

That permanent access

was in jeopardy, however, as Richardson said a private outfitter was also interested in building a lodge on the property. Instead, the elk foundation purchased the land from the Hostetter family for \$520,000, with funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Richardson said they appreciate the family's partnership to secure conservation on the land.

"It is open and available for public enjoyment. I think

that's a huge success story," Richardson said.

The Eagle Cap Wilderness was established in 1940 and now encompasses 359,991 acres. It is the largest wilderness area in Oregon, and home to a variety of species including wolverines, bald eagles, bighorn sheep and mountain goats, in addition to fish and game.

Contact George Plaven at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4547.

## Swampy Lakes offers Nordic skiing solitude

The (Bend) Bulletin

SWAMPY LAKES SNO-PARK — Escaping into winter is not difficult in Central Oregon.

But escaping into winter and finding some solitude can be a challenge.

Century Drive west of Bend is lined with sno-parks and other areas where locals and tourists alike can revel in just about every snow-related outdoor activity: downhill skiing and snowboarding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, fatbiking, snowmobiling, sledding and more.

Avoiding crowds is not always easy.

Last week I went in search of solitude on skis and found it at Swampy Lakes Sno-park.

The sno-park, at about 5,800 feet in elevation, is certainly not an unknown place for wintertime outdoors enthusiasts. But for skiers, Virginia Meissner Sno-park just a few miles away seems to be more popular.

One reason for those crowds is that the groomed trails at Meissner attract skate skiers, who require groomed trails for skiing. Swampy Lakes has few groomed trails, so the area attracts mostly classic skiers, who can cut tracks through deep snow.

But Swampy Lakes is also popular among snowshoers and fatbikers. Miles and miles of well-signed trails — some designated for skiing and others designated for snowshoeing — radiate from the sno-park. Fatbikers are allowed on the snowshoe

trails but not on the ski trails.

I set out on the Swampy Loop last week, planning on a ski of a little more than 5 miles. Snow was falling but there was little to no wind, so conditions were fairly decent on the cold morning.

The narrow trails included tracks from previous skiers that cut through the Deschutes National Forest much like singletrack mountain bike trails.

In fact, many of the ski trails in the Swampy Lakes area follow trails that are used by mountain bikers when those trails are not covered in snow.

I am relatively new to Nordic skiing but have been a mountain biker for many years, so exploring these trails when they are covered in snow is an intriguing experience. The terrain is certainly familiar, but it has a completely different feel in the middle of winter.

About 2 miles into the ski I came to a sign for the new Swampy Shelter, which was finished this past fall and officially dedicated in December.

I had seen the new shelter when I was mountain biking in the area last fall. This time, I almost skied right past it. The roof was protruding out of the 6- to 7-foot snowpack, but the rest of the shelter was concealed by the snow. The entryway was clear, and I stepped down into the entrance, which included two sliding barn-style doors.

The new shelter — much like two other local structures, the Virginia Meissner and Swede Ridge shelters — provides a respite with a

**SKI REPORT**

**Spout Springs**  
Tollgate, Ore.  
**CLOSED FOR SEASON**

**Anthony Lakes**  
North Powder, Ore.  
New snow: 12" since Sunday  
Base depth: 65"  
Conditions: Good new snow, music Saturday by Bourbon Rockwell.

**Ski Bluewood**  
Dayton, Wash.  
New snow: 10"  
Base depth: 65"

**Conditions: Great snow, runs groomed out nicely and chance of sun.**

**Ski Fergi**  
Joseph, Ore.  
New snow: Unknown  
Base depth: 25"  
Conditions: Unknown

**Mt. Hood Meadows**  
Government Camp, Ore.  
New snow: Base depth: 107"  
Conditions: Awesome hardpack groom. Off piste is skier-packed powder and hardpack.

wood stove for winter sports enthusiasts to take a break and warm up.

The Central Oregon Nordic Club raised about \$30,000 for the new log shelter and put in some 5,000 hours of volunteer work to build it.

The shelter made for a nice place to rest about halfway through the ski. I had the place to myself, and I also had the trails to myself for most of the day.

The classic ski trails from Swampy Lakes connect to more trails to the north near Vista Butte. They also connect to the Tangent Loop groomed trail, which leads south to Meissner Sno-park. Swampy Lakes is often used as overflow parking for Meissner on busy days.

As I continued along the loop, the trail led me deep into the forest that skirted the Swampy Lakes, which aren't so swampy in the middle of one of the

biggest winters for snowfall in recent memory in Central Oregon.

The lakes were simply a flat, snowy expanse, which I skied across to reach the other side of the loop. Through the gray clouds, I could just make out the east face of Tumalo Mountain.

The trail back toward the sno-park included a few rolling hills and some sketchy downhill sections. (I am still getting comfortable with going downhill on cross-country skis.)

When I finally made it back to the car, the snow had stopped falling and the sky began to clear — perhaps a brief break before the next winter storm would roll in.

I had encountered just two other winter outdoors enthusiasts on the trip — a fellow classic skier and a fatbiker.

Yes, it is still possible to find solitude on skis near Bend.

## Fyfishers want to ban jetboats from portion of Rogue River

MEDFORD (AP) — A fishing club in Oregon is asking officials to ban jet-powered boat engines from a portion of the upper Rogue River.

The Medford-based Rogue Flyfishers Association and riverside landowner Greg Layton have filed a petition with the Oregon State Marine Board to ban jetboats from a 24-mile stretch of the river, reported *The Mail Tribune*.

It is an attempt to limit where Rogue Jet Boat Adventures owner Taylor Grimes can operate. The petitioners say traditional sports like drift boating, kayaking and fishing are threatened by Grimes' operation.

The speed needed to power a jetboat through the narrow and often shallow stretch of river from TouVelle State Park up to Rattlesnake Rapids puts other users at risk, said Layton. The 25-foot tour boat could crash into another vessel and its large wake could cause issues.

"It just seems to be a use that's not conforming to that part of the river," Layton said. "I know he tries to be careful, but there are still limitations. It's inevitable there will be some kind of mishap."

Grimes said he runs up to four trips a



In this 2014 file photo, Taylor Grimes, with Rogue Jet Boat Adventures, leads a crew up the Rogue River at TouVelle State Park near White City.

Jamie Lusch / The Medford Mail Tribune via AP, File

day through the area during the summer tourism season. The upper Rogue is "a multiuse river" and a jetboat ban would cater to one or two particular interest groups, he argued.

"I don't think the public will really tolerate that," he said.

Marine Board boating safety

program manager Randy Henry said the board has historically been pretty conservative about restrictions between conflicting users and requires a clear safety issue to restrict access to the river.

"That's why we're gathering the public input, to see if it rises to that level," he said.

## Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation banquet in Pendleton March 18

PENDLETON — The Pendleton chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will host its 30th annual Big Game Banquet on Saturday, March 18, featuring an appearance by two of the organization's original founding members.

Bob Munson and Charlie Decker will be on hand to visit with local members at the Pendleton Convention Center. They, along with fellow hunters Bill Munson and Dan Bull, established the foundation in 1984.

"These two are still very active," said Tim Campbell, Pendleton chapter chairman. "It is kind of a big deal we were able to get on their short list."

While last year's banquet drew 285 people and raised just under \$60,000, Campbell said they are hoping for 350 people this year. Proceeds support the foundation's mission of wildlife conservation, habitat restoration and public outreach.

"I think a healthy elk herd benefits everyone here in Oregon," Campbell said.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has more than 222,000 members nationwide, including 15,496 in Oregon. The group has spent more than \$55.5 million across the state to help protect 786,813 acres of habitat.

Approximately \$125,000 is slated for projects on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests, according to Campbell. He cited a recent land acquisition along Hurricane Creek in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, where the foundation purchased 470 acres from a family trust to protect public access into the wilderness area.

"This was a national priority project," Campbell said. "When you talk about limiting access, it affects a lot of people."

For the fourth straight year, the Pendleton chapter also plans to partner with the Umatilla National Forest to build fencing around aspen groves on the North Fork John Day Ranger District. The work event will be held June 3-4 on the forest south of Ukiah.

Campbell added the money spent on improving habitat not only benefits hunters, but local businesses throughout rural Eastern Oregon.

"I think our membership represents a demographic that is important to business owners," Campbell said. "That whole outdoor industry is huge dollars, obviously."

Doors will open at 4 p.m. for the Pendleton banquet. Unlike previous years, tickets will not be sold at the door. Raffle tickets and auction prizes will be up for grabs, including 32 different guns and a pair of youth antlerless mule deer hunts donated by Ruggs Ranch of Heppner.

Tickets are \$35 per meal, or \$70 for a meal and membership. Guests are encouraged to become members, Campbell said. Other ticket packages are available to purchase online at [www.events.rmef.org](http://www.events.rmef.org).

For more information, contact Marla Campbell at 541-379-0488.

### BRIEFLY

**Oregon lawmaker looks to replace meadowlark as state bird**

SALEM (AP) — An Oregon lawmaker says the current state bird is unoriginal, and instead wants to replace it.

*The Statesman Journal* reports that state Sen. Fred Girod sponsored a resolution to replace the western meadowlark as Oregon's state bird with the osprey.

The Stayton Republican says the meadowlark is also the state bird of Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and Wyoming, making it unoriginal.

He also says the meadowlark is no longer commonly seen in Oregon, making it an inappropriate choice. Girod says the osprey can be found throughout Oregon and better captures the state's spirit.

Salem Audubon Society president Ray Temple says meadowlarks are declining and could use the extra attention of being the state bird.

**\$5,000 reward up for grabs in Crater Lake ammo theft case**

CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK (AP) — Authorities have increased the reward for information that leads them to whoever stole 10,000 rounds of ammunition at Crater Lake National Park.

Park spokeswoman Jennifer Evans says the reward has been boosted from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

The rifle and pistol ammunition was discovered missing Feb. 6 from a building near the park's headquarters.

Investigators have released a video of a vehicle entering the Annie Creek entrance station early that morning. It's unknown if the occupants had anything to do with the theft, but investigators want to speak with them.

The ammunition was used as part of the park's law enforcement program.

**Raptors to be featured guests at outdoors show**

Eagles, hawks, owls, falcons — a variety of these birds and others will be featured guests this weekend at the 21st annual ServPro Sportsmen's & Outdoor Recreation Show at the Douglas County Fairgrounds.

The birds will highlight the Extreme Raptors show. They'll be on stage, but will also do some free flying overhead.

"The flying demos are fantastic," said Jonathan Wood, the owner and trainer of Extreme Raptors. He said eight birds usually take flight during each presentation.

Those are scheduled every two hours during the three-day show. The birds will be on display throughout the show.

"Some of those birds will get up to 60 mph, maybe 80, if they have the space," said Wood who will have about 20 birds at the show. "It's pretty amazing."

He said the birds will include a bald eagle, golden eagle, an eagle owl that is the largest owl species in the world with a 5-foot wing span, a pure white snowy owl from the North Pole, a white arctic falcon from Iceland, a gyrfalcon, which is the largest of the falcon species with a 4-foot wing span, and a aplomado falcon, an endangered species that is now found only Texas.

"The cool thing about my show is that people will get to see the birds at arm's length all day long, not just during a show," Wood said. "There are amazing photo opportunities. The bald eagle in front of the American flag is one of the best photo opportunities there is."

Wood, 60, was first attracted to birds when he found a baby falcon on the beach when he was 12 years old. The falcon had attempted to fly out of a nest in a New York area lighthouse.

"It was trial and error, but I developed some unique techniques," he explained. "I managed to create a unique rapport with the bird. I made some mistakes, but I got it to fly."