

Crater Lake plans to more strictly enforce no-drone rule

By ZACH URNESS
Statesman Journal

SALEM — The videos are nothing short of spectacular.

In one film posted to YouTube, two skiers are captured shredding down the rim of Crater Lake, filmed from an eye in the sky that takes in the full sweep of the United States' deepest lake.

In another, the footage showcases the cliff-walled circle of the lake from directly overhead, providing a bird's eye view into the belly of the exploded volcano.

Both videos are unique, have been watched thousands of times and, of course, were filmed illegally.

The use of drones is outlawed at national parks nationwide — and has been since 2014. But the dropping price and improving technology of what are officially known as unmanned aircraft have meant an increase in the number buzzing Oregon's only national park.

"It's becoming quite a problem," Crater Lake superintendent Craig Ackerman said. "People are using them without concern for the impacts, and we intend to start stepping up enforcement of the rule."

Park officials say they see drones flying over the lake on a regular basis, especially in



Marc Adamus/The Register-Guard via AP, File

In this 2006 file photo, the sun rises over Crater Lake. Crater Lake officials say more drones are buzzing over Oregon's only national park, and they plan to increase enforcement. The use of drones is outlawed at national parks, but they've become a greater presence because of falling prices. Violation of the ban is a misdemeanor with the maximum penalty of six months in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

the summer. Ackerman said they've even buzzed boat tours on the lake.

Marsha McCabe, chief of interpretation and cultural resources at the park, said she comes across people getting ready to launch drones on a regular basis.

"I would say it's a growing problem," she said. "There might be some folks who just don't know, but we make it pretty clear in the park newspaper you get upon entering the park, on our website and in signs around the lake."

Violation of the ban is a misdemeanor with the maximum penalty of six months in jail and a \$5,000

fine. When park officials spot a drone in flight, they call law enforcement rangers, who try to figure out who's controlling them.

Whether they allow people to get off with a warning depends on the situation, McCabe said.

"People come here for quiet and solitude, and if there's a drone buzzing overhead all of a sudden, that's pretty intrusive," McCabe said. "We're also home to several endangered species and drone noise has been shown to disrupt wildlife."

"There are plenty of public lands where they are allowed, but at national parks,

our mission is different."

Where people are allowed to fly drones varies. They're allowed in most national forests, but are prohibited in federally designated wilderness areas and some wildlife refuges.

It's also a mixed bag at Oregon's state parks. Park managers make a case-by-case determination of where they're allowed, but they tend to be outlawed at extremely popular sites, such as Smith Rock and parts of Silver Falls.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department formed a policy group to address the issue last year.

But, at Crater Lake, the issue is settled: no drone use allowed by the public. Even when a film company does a commercial shoot at Crater Lake, and pays for a permit, they're not allowed to use drones, McCabe said.

The National Park Service is allowed to use drones for search and rescue operations, fire operations, scientific study, and aerial photography.

And, if you produce one of those videos and post it to YouTube, you could be getting a call. Crater Lake officials said their law enforcement would "look into" some of the videos posted.

BLOOMIN' BLUES



Photo contributed by Bruce Barnes

Serviceberry, *Amelanchier alnifolia*

Serviceberry an early bloomer

By BRUCE BARNES
For The East Oregonian

Name: Serviceberry
Scientific name: *Amelanchier alnifolia*

This is the first article for 2018, and though lots of flowers have been blooming in town not many of our native plants are blooming yet. It has been a cool spring overall. This usually means once they get started, we will be seeing the progression of spring flowers accelerate. However, in the past 16 years of writing these articles, every spring has been different.

A week ago, from Cayuse to near Umatilla Forks, about the only plant blooming was serviceberry, which is now at its peak and is covered with white clusters of blossoms. It is easy to identify by the way its narrow, oblong petals twist, curve, or turn every which way with no consistency.

Serviceberry is a tall shrub or occasionally a small tree found in Alaska, western Canada to California and eastward to the northern Great Plains and New Mexico. Other *Amelanchier* species are common in the northeast United States. *Amelanchier* is a French word for the genus. The species name *alnifolia* means "alder leaves" which are similar to those of Serviceberry. The common name Serviceberry is generally applied to most of the species in North America, referring to the many purposes it has served for people of this continent. Other common names used are Shadbush

and Saskatoon.

The plant is about 6 to 15 feet tall with gray bark and no thorns, and rounded oval leaves with teeth along the edge toward the tip. The round fruits are about a half inch or less in diameter, somewhat sweet and juicy, black to dark purple when ripe, and begin to ripen late July or early August.

Birds and many animals enjoy the fruit, and it has been a major food for Indians throughout much of North America and for early settlers in the area. The berries were eaten fresh or dried for later use and helped many to survive long winters. They were dried into cakes, used as candy, and made into nutritious food when mixed with salmon, venison, or buffalo fat. The fruits were also made into jams, jellies, and wine. Sticks were used to preserve sturgeon oil, as well as for harpoons, digging sticks, arrow shafts, and the rims of baskets.

Medicinal treatments were prepared from the plants, and varied by tribe. They were used to treat upset stomachs, colds, coughs, fevers, as a laxative, eye drops and ear drops, and to aid childbirth.

Where to find: Serviceberry plants are now blooming at low elevations along steam banks and in moist areas through the Blue Mountain region, and will be blooming up to middle elevations into June. Not all black or dark purple small fruit are edible so be sure of what you might eat. Be aware that these can sometimes be wormy.



AP Photo/Nicholas K. Geranios

Water moves through a spillway April 11 of the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River near Almota, Wash.

GOP criticize spill of dam water to help salmon

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Republican Congress members from the Pacific Northwest are upset with a federal judge's order to spill water from four Snake River dams to help speed migrating salmon to the Pacific Ocean.

They say the water could be saved for other uses and are denouncing the spill, which began April 3, and a push by environmentalists to remove the four dams to increase wild salmon runs.

"Dams and fish can co-exist," Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Dan Newhouse, whose Washington districts include the dams, said in a joint statement.

The four dams, built in the 1960s and 1970s, provide hydropower, flood control, navigation, irrigation and recreation benefits, supporters say. But the giant dams are also blamed for killing wild salmon, an iconic species in the Northwest.

McMorris Rodgers and Newhouse have introduced a bill that would prevent any changes in dam operations until 2022. The measure was co-sponsored by Republican House members from Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Nevada, along with Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader of Oregon.

It passed the House Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday and heads to the floor in coming weeks.

"Without Snake and Columbia river dams and the many benefits they provide, life in central Washington as we know it would be unrecognizable," Newhouse said.

Hydropower is the North-



AP Photo/Nicholas K. Geranios

In this April 11 photo, a fish is seen in a viewing window at the visitors center of the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River near Almota, Wash.

west's lifeblood, said Republican Rep. Raul Labrador of Idaho.

"For a liberal judge to ignore the broad scientific consensus of the federal government and the states of Idaho, Washington and Montana is unconscionable and must be stopped," he said.

The increased spill will cost some \$40 million in lost power sales, and could hurt transportation and barging on the rivers, flood control and irrigation systems, Republicans contend.

But Democrats argue studies of the dams, including whether they should be removed, must go forward.

Democratic Sen. Patty Murray of Washington recently sent a letter to House and Senate leadership saying the river's management must include salmon recovery.

The letter criticized the bill to prevent changes in dam operations. It was signed by Murray and Democratic Reps. Adam Smith and Pramila Jayapal of Washington.

"The Columbia and Snake River system is essential to the Pacific Northwest's culture, environment and economy," the letter said.

The four dams — Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and

Lower Granite — span the Snake River between the Washington cities of Pasco and Pullman. Together they produce about 4 percent of the region's electricity.

Replacing that power would require the equivalent of two nuclear power plants, Labrador said.

Environmental groups disagree.

A new study contends other renewable sources could replace the dams' power for a little more than \$1 a month for the average Northwest household.

The study "explodes the myth that we can't have both wild salmon and clean energy," said Joseph Bogaard, director of the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition. "We can remove these four deadly dams, restore one of our nation's great salmon rivers and improve the Northwest's energy system."

But supporters of the dams say wind and solar power are too unreliable to replace the lost hydropower.

The Columbia-Snake river system holds more than a dozen imperiled salmon runs, and the federal government has spent more than \$15 billion since 1978 on efforts to save the fish.

But those efforts have pushed wild salmon, orca and

other fish and wildlife populations closer to extinction, Bogaard said.

Removing the dams is the only way to save the salmon runs, conservation groups say.

"Salmon are in desperate need of help now," Earthjustice attorney Todd True said.

Advocates for fishermen also hailed the decision to increase spill, saying it will produce larger adult salmon returns.

Proposals to remove the four dams have percolated in the Northwest for decades, and have devolved into a largely partisan issue with Democrats generally on the side of the fish and Republicans for keeping the dams.

The latest skirmish began in March 2017, when U.S. District Judge Michael Simon of Portland, Oregon, ordered the dams to increase spill beginning this spring. Federal agencies have estimated increasing spill until mid-June will cost electric ratepayers \$40 million in lost power revenues in 2018 alone.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in early February rejected an appeal of Simon's order. The dams operate under a plan created by a collaboration of federal agencies, states and tribes during the Obama administration to protect salmon.

But Simon found it does not do enough. He ruled a new environmental study is needed, and it must consider the option of removing the dams. Simon also wrote that wild salmon were in a "precarious" state.

That was disputed by Terry Flores, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, a group that includes farmers, utilities, ports and businesses.



Darin Oswald/The Idaho Statesman via AP, File

In this 2003 file photo, fisherman Larry McBrom works along the Snake River shoreline below Hells Canyon Dam in southwestern Idaho. Idaho officials have approved an agreement allowing a utility company's \$216.5 million in relicensing expenses for a three-dam hydroelectric project on the Snake River on the Idaho-Oregon border.

Deal approves \$216 million for Idaho utility's expenses

By KEITH RIDLER
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho officials have approved an agreement allowing a utility company's \$216.5 million in relicensing expenses for a three-dam hydroelectric project on the Snake River on the Idaho-Oregon border.

The Idaho Public Utilities Commission issued the order last Friday that allows Boise-based Idaho Power to include the costs involving the Hells Canyon Complex in customer rates in the future. That rate increase would be preceded by a separate request from Idaho Power. The company in December 2016 requested about \$220 million to cover relicensing costs that started in 1991.

"We are pleased that we were able to reach an agreement," said Idaho Power spokesman Brad Bowlin.

He said the company does not currently have a rate increase request planned involving the relicensing.

The company's 50-year

license with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission expired in 2005, and it has been operating the dams under annual licenses renewed each August.

A significant hurdle to getting a longer license is that Oregon officials are refusing to agree to relicensing until salmon and steelhead can access four Oregon tributaries that feed into the Hells Canyon Complex, as required by Oregon law for the relicensing.

But Idaho lawmakers have prohibited moving federally protected salmon and steelhead upstream of the dams, which biologists say is too environmentally degraded to support salmon.

Idaho Power in February petitioned the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to review a 2017 decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission dismissing the utility's request that it exempt the three-dam Hells Canyon Complex from the Oregon law requiring fish passage as part of relicensing.