

EVENT DRAWS
COMPETITORS AND
SPECTATORS FROM
ALL OVER THE WEST

MULE POWER



Photos by Paul Wahl/Chieftain

ABOVE: Brian Cook of Irrigon competes in the early going of Hells Canyon Mule Days in Enterprise on Friday morning at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds. This is Cook's second year as a competitor, but he is a long-time spectator.

RIGHT: Kavet Charles Bridgman Haines, 7, of Enterprise (in red) rounds the curve in the Stick Mule Race on Saturday at Hells Canyon Mule Days at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds. Kavet went on to take first in the Boot Scramble Race that followed.

Find more photos of the
37th annual Hells Canyon
Mule Days on Page 9 and
online at wallowa.com



Paul Wahl/Chieftain

J.R. Collier, state park manager for the Wallowa Lake Unit, responds to a question regarding the update of the master plan for the park Thursday.

What's in store for Wallowa Lake Park?

By Paul Wahl
Wallowa County Chieftain

Yurts are becoming wildly popular with campers across the nation. Wallowa Lake State Park has only one yurt.

It could eventually have several.

Yurts — essentially circular cabins — are one of dozens of improvements included in a master plan released Thursday in Joseph.

Other key features include a fenced dog park, a fueling station for boats, better garbage handling and more.

Don't visit the park next summer and expect to see all the improvements in place, cautioned J.R. Collier, who heads local operations for Oregon State Parks.

He and a number of presenters mentioned several times the master plan is in the concept phase and nothing is set in stone.

In addition, no specific funding has been identified for any of the improvements, according to David Stipe, Integrated Park Service manager for the state.

"What we're looking at is mostly modest improvements within the properties to enhance visitor experience," Stipe told a group of a dozen gathered Thursday evening at Joseph Community Center.

Two overarching impacts on the park in coming years are driving some of the suggested improvements.

A plan to restore the portion of the Wallowa River where it enters Wallowa Lake is under development. It would form several channels in a delta-type formation to allow for better fish breeding grounds

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Joseph to lake bike path on tap for 2018

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

A long awaited .85-mile bike and pedestrian path from the southeast corner of College Street in Joseph to the county park at the foot of Wallowa Lake will likely be built in 2018.

The Oregon Department of Transportation unveiled the project to the public in 2015. The \$2.2 million design was originally slated for 2016 construction, but issues with

the Native American tribes, endangered plants, purchasing private property easement and adding additional ADA accessibility delayed the start.

ODOT media representative Tom Strandberg said the project is on firm footing and could go out for bid early in 2018.

The two-way pavement path is 10 feet wide and generally separated five feet from the highway. The path runs along the west side of the highway and features an ADA ramp at College Street and two additional ramps are slated for placement at the southwest and southeast corners of the East Street and Hwy. 82 intersection.

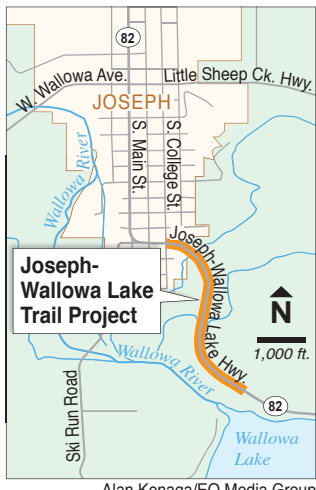
Changes from the original project include the removal of a retaining wall across the highway from the cemetery because of the visual impact it would have looking out from the cemetery and approaching the lake.

Two smaller retaining

walls are slated for construction adjacent to the west side of the path. The walls are located between Iwetemlaykin State Heritage Site parking lot and the south entrance to Iwetemlaykin.

The department added the walls to the project to eliminate the need to lay back slopes, which would have extended into and required obtaining a right-of-way from Iwetemlaykin.

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Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

Lostine residents wrestle with corridor project

This is the latest in an occasional series of stories on the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project.

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Resident who live in the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project are studying the proposal, listening to both sides and hoping their neighborhood isn't burned before a decision is made.

"I'm trying to find out who's telling the truth," said Ron Polk, Lostine Homeowners Association President. "The forest service, who believes they have done this in a collaborative fashion, and the alarms of groups like Oregon Wild who say there's going to be 4.5 million board-feet logged ... Does that mean one percent of the forest or half a percent or 20 percent?"

“What you’re describing is big government, where the process becomes the work. It’ll be in the process for years until it burns.”

— Dennis Prezeau

Polk was one of six residents who gathered recently to discuss the plans, which the U.S. Forest Service calls a fire mitigation project.

All in attendance said they were aware of the project and many, if not all, had participated in field trips as well as attending homeowner meetings and meetings in the town of Lostine.

Polk said he had read the forest service statements on the project but was

also interested in the position of environmental groups Oregon Wild and the Greater Hells Canyon Council. Both filed a joint lawsuit to stop most of the project on May 31.

Another resident, Lael Prezeau, said she believes that the people who understand forest fires should be the ones making the decisions.

"Not people in the community getting worked up because one little law wasn't

quite followed," she said. "In the meantime there's arguing and fighting and lawsuits ... and people up here won't be able to get out of here if a fire starts. Is that worth fighting over because some people don't like how the process works?"

Matt and Lora Melchiorson said they had only recently moved to their Lostine River home and had forest management concerns.

"I'm certainly concerned," Matt Melchiorson said of the forest surrounding his home. "It appears overstocked, and there's ladder fuels, which are written out in their (USFS) report, but I'm not a forester, so I can't speak to that."

He added that a fire would pose a threat to salmon habitat because sedimentation from runoff would change the riverbed.

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