

# 'Normal' returns to Wallowa Lake State Park

## Popular area taking reservations for May 1 season

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA LAKE — Things are getting back a bit more to normal this year, now that state parks are beginning to reopen — including Wallowa Lake State Park, which began taking reservations Thursday, April 15, for the group campsites that open May 1.

According to a press release from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, some state

parks were to begin taking reservations April 15. A complete list of which ones are opening is available at the OPRD website at [www.oregon.gov/oprd/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/Pages/index.aspx).

Mac Freeborn, manager at Wallowa Lake State Park, said Wednesday, April 14, that a few campers already were at the park. But they were the ones who could do without park-provided water, which won't be turned on until May 1.

"My park has been taking reservations for a while now," he said. "The ones opening May 1 are group campsites."

The park's website bills it as being "ideally positioned as a base camp for both wil-



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

**Campers are already moving into Wallowa Lake State Park on Wednesday, April 14, 2021. The park was set to begin taking reservations the next day for the season that opens May 1.**

derness treks and water sports fun."

He said those there now are ones who take advantage of the park's opening throughout the offseason.

"We had a recent request for more reservations ... and we're accepting walk-ins," he said.

Last year, the park was forced to be closed until June 5 by the closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The group facilities are reopening after

being closed for more than a year due to revenue shortfalls and reduced staffing associated with COVID-19.

"Summer is quickly approaching, and we want to give visitors plenty of time to plan their group events," said Jason Resch, communications manager for the OPRD. "Although we can't open all group areas in all parks and the lower group limits isn't what we are used to, we ask for your patience as we move forward."

But now it's returning to closer to normal.

"As normal as it can be," he said. "We're back on track for bringing back seasons in hiring. ... Normal is a subjective term, but we're going to be back for full operation this summer."

He said the docks won't go back into the water until around May 1.

"We start really ramping up things in early May," Freeborn said.

But campsite reservations are already nearly fully booked.

"If people are not finding anything online, it's because we're already booked. It's been fast and furious with reservations," Freeborn said.

He said that's probably a combination of people missing last year's camping season and an eagerness to recreate outdoors where they're not cooped up in a hotel or the like.

He said that if recreationists find they can't rent day-use areas, they can look into getting a special-use permit. Day-use areas consist of two reservable picnic sites and one reservable covered shel-

ter named Ice Creek. Boat reservations and information are available at [www.wallowalakemarina.com](http://www.wallowalakemarina.com).

He said the park — and all Oregon parks — are still closely adhering to COVID-19 guidelines set by the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Oregon Health Authority. Those, he said, can be subject to change.

Available at the park are:

- 121 hookup sites (including two ADA sites).
- 88 nonhookup sites.
- Two hard-sided rustic yurts.
- Three group tent areas.
- A hiker-biker area.

Site-specific alerts and information can be found by clicking on the site name then scrolling to the bottom of the Reserve America website page.

Freeborn said those interested in trying for a reservation can still try to get one at 541-432-4185, ext. 26. Reservations must be made one day ahead of arrival and can be made up to six months in advance.

"We booked out pretty fast," he said.

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## Windfall of cash awarded to Winding Waters

Clinic receives more than \$1.2 million through American Rescue Plan funds

By **RONALD BOND**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The American Rescue Plan signed last month by President Biden provided a major financial boost for community health centers.

Winding Waters Medical Clinic was among those who received help.

More than \$84 million was allocated to health centers in Oregon through the ARP, Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley's office announced last month, with Winding Waters receiving more than \$1.2 million.

Nic Powers, CEO of Winding Waters, said he was aware of the money set apart for health centers in the \$1.9 trillion bill, and expected Winding Waters would be able to apply for a grant.

"I absolutely was shocked by the amount," he said of the \$1,210,625 awarded to WWMC. "It was unexpected."

The money was dispersed to 30 centers in Oregon, with dollar amounts ranging from

about \$671,000 to nearly \$11 million. The money, which will be available once WWMC budgets the funds approved by the Bureau of Primary Health Care, is a one-time, two-year award.

"Over the next two years, this one-time funding will go toward our COVID response efforts, staff development and the tools, equipment and spaces we need," Powers said.

He noted that part of the use for the money will be expansion of services in Joseph and Wallowa, but the uses can be varied, and are more than just COVID response.

"Certainly as a health care provider working through a pandemic, we've

been under a lot of stress and strain, just like everybody, we continue to adapt," Powers said. "Here in Wallowa County, we have done well. Ourselves and our partners have done a lot better than in other places."

Community needs, Powers said, will be heavily in mind as staff and the volunteer board of directors formulates a budget, which it has to turn in by May 31 — 60 days after WWMC was made aware of the award.

That includes "what is needed out there (in the community), and how do we do things that are promoting our partnerships across the community. We don't want to duplicate services," with other providers, Powers said. "We are working hard to have a thoughtful process, and we have a deadline."

The situation is unique, he said, in that the money has been awarded, but the budget needs to be provided before it can be used.

"We certainly don't have it in the bank," he said. "I can see it in our federal grant management system. I can see it's there, and once our budget is approved we can start spending the funds."

Powers said that with the money, the clinic needs "to do things that invest in our community."

"It's a lot that's coming rather quickly and a little bit out of the blue. We are working hard to budget wisely," he said. "(The mindset is) both recover from the pandemic and make sure we are here for the long term."

**LIZ ROWLEY**

Wallowa Valley's Liz Rowley got off to a fast start on the 2021 softball season, helping her team win two of its first three games last week. Rowley batted .385 with two home runs, two doubles, nine RBIs and six runs scored earning her this week's honor of Athlete of the Week!

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