

Department of Forestry urges safe campfire practices

As temperatures rise over the summer months, the Oregon State Fire Marshal and Oregon Department of Forestry urge Oregonians and visitors to the state to follow some basic outdoor safety tips:

- **Know before you go.** Call your local forestry or fire district to learn if there are any current campfire restrictions at your recreation destination.

- An interactive map of Oregon's fire restrictions is available at www.oregon.gov/ODF/Fire/Pages/Restrictions.aspx.

Tom Fields, ODF's fire prevention coordinator, says the

map continues to improve and is "an excellent tool for folks to use from home or from their mobile device."

- **Kick the campfire habit this summer.** Portable camp stoves are a safer option to campfires at any time of year.

- Areas that prohibit campfires outside maintained campgrounds with established fire pits often allow camp stoves.

- **Select the right spot.** Where campfires are allowed, avoid building the fire near your tent, structures, vehicles, shrubs or trees, and be aware of low-hanging branches overhead.

Clear the site down to miner-

al soil, at least five feet on all sides, and circle it with rocks.

Store unused firewood a good distance from the fire.

- **Keep your campfire small.** A campfire is less likely to escape control if it is kept small.

- A large fire may cast hot embers long distances.

- Add firewood in small amounts as existing material is consumed.

- **Attend your campfire at all times.** A campfire left unattended for even a few minutes can grow into a costly, damaging wildfire.

Stay with your campfire

from start to finish until it is dead out.

That ensures any escaped sparks or embers can be extinguished quickly, and it is required by state law.

- **Never use gasoline or other accelerants.** Don't use flammable or combustible liquids, such as gasoline, propane or lighter fluid, to start or increase your campfire.

- Once the fire starts, wait until the match is cold and then discard it in the fire.

- **Have water and fire tools on site.** Have a shovel and a bucket of water nearby to extinguish any escaped embers.

Before you leave, *drown* all embers with water, *stir* the coals, and *drown* again.

Repeat until the fire is *dead out*. If it is too hot to touch, it is too hot to leave.

- **Burn only wood.** State regulations prohibit the open burning of any material that creates dense, toxic smoke or noxious odors.

- Burning paper and cardboard can also easily fly up to start new fires.

Escaped campfires can be costly.

Oregon law requires the proper clearing, building, attending and extinguishing of

open fires at any time of year.

A first-time citation carries a \$110 fine. But by far the biggest potential cost is liability for firefighting costs if your campfire spreads out of control.

These can range from a few hundred to tens of thousands of dollars or more.

Visit the Keep Oregon Green website at www.KeepOregonGreen.org for other wildfire prevention tips.

Contact Kristin Babbs, president Keep Oregon Green Association, at 503-945-7499 or email Kristin.a.babbs@oregon.gov for more information.

ODFW from 1B

out of your hands

- Fish when it's cool out — likely early in the morning or late in the afternoon — fishing is better and stress on fish is less.

Upriver summer steelhead forecasts are very low this year

at approximately 119,000, compared to 5- and 10-year average actual returns of 236,000 and 315,000, respectively.

Wild upriver summer steelhead forecasts are low as well, with a forecast return of just 34,000 fish versus the 5- and 10-year average actual returns of 87,000 and 105,000, respec-

tively.

Snake River wild "B" steelhead returns are the most imperiled, with a forecast of just 1,100 fish.

With returns of steelhead so low, another strategy is to not target them and focus on other species, including warmwater species such as bass, walleye, and pikeminnow.

These species are not only fun to catch but they also prey on juvenile steelhead and salmon.

For more fishing ideas and opportunities, visit ODFW's Fishing Resources Page at www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/index.asp.

Flag from 1B

tackle football program for fifth and sixth graders.

"I was researching a program that was similar to our basketball program, where we teamed up with the Portland Trailblazers through the NBA's community outreach program," said Aaron. "That's when I started finding research and articles on youth football.

"The research is overwhelming in terms of the long-term damage those kinds of hits can cause kids."

The most recent statistics show that 70 percent of all football players in the U.S. are under the age of 14, with each child between the ages of 9 and 12 experiencing an average of 240 head impacts each season.

"I know how passionate people are about football. I am too," said Aaron. "But if we can't offer a program that's safe for kids, I'd rather not offer it at all."

Aaron approached B&G Club Director Chuck Trent about her findings and concerns, and the two agreed to suspend the program in favor of a flag football alternative.

Tuesday, parents of club members received a letter from Aaron, informing them of the decision.

"Unless we can find a new way to protect kids playing tackle football, we are not going to offer it this year and beyond," Aaron stated in her letter, which also cited how, at every level of youth football, from Pop Warner to NFL, the number of lawsuits being leveled on programs and school districts across the country due to traumatic head and neck injuries was growing.

In an article published this past Wednesday in the journal *Neurology*, a study led by researchers at the Boston University School of Medicine showed that playing tackle

football before the age of 12 is associated with a markedly increased risk of developing memory and thinking problems in middle age.

"The findings suggest that sustaining repeated head impacts during a critical neu-

decided not to have their youngest play tackle until middle school.

"I didn't play tackle football until seventh grade and neither did our two older sons," Johnson said. "They're not coordinated enough yet as fifth

tackle football hasn't been met with a positive response from some parents, which Aaron said she understands.

"It wasn't a decision we came to lightly, but when we put our kids' safety above all else, it was clear what direction we needed to take," said Aaron.

That direction is a flag football program partnered with NFL and USA Football's official 2017 Flag Football, which focuses on fundamental skills in all areas except tackling.

In addition, there will be a football skills clinic taught by a former NFL player and scout for the Chicago Bears.

"It's a way to teach the fundamentals and provide skill building without the dangers of full-contact tackling for kids that age," said Aaron.

Signups have begun and will continue through Friday, July 28, for all flag football players, grades 1 through 6.

For more information, call the Teen Center, 1501 Airport Road, at 541-902-0304, or visit www.bgcwl.org.

rodevelopmental period may increase the risk of later-life cognitive impairment," authors of the study concluded.

Last year, the B&G Club tackle football program documented two players who suffered concussions, with three documented concussions the year before.

At the middle and high school levels throughout Oregon, coaches are required to take a certified class educating them on recognizing the potential signs of a concussion.

Given that the B&G Club sports program are coached by volunteers, there is no such requirement and turnover is ongoing from year to year.

"I don't think it's fair to put our volunteers in a position to have to make that kind of determination," said Aaron. "It's not fair to them or to our kids."

Andy Johnson, who coached football at the junior varsity and middle school levels for 19 years, said he supports the decision by the B&G Club.

As a father of three boys, including two who played varsity football at Siuslaw and a nine-year-old entering fourth grade in the fall, Johnson said he and his wife had already

Each child between the ages of 9 and 12 who plays football experiences an average of 240 head impacts each season

— Boston University School of Medicine study

Siuslaw News

garage sale GUIDE

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