

Fondo draws an appreciative crowd

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

After besting her competitors over a 117-mile bike ride Sunday morning, Misha Fuller had but one request from the organizers of the Oregon Gran Fondo: ChapStick.

"At other races, they come around at the starting line and just hand it out," Fuller said. "It's something that comes in very handy."

Aside from that one small concession, Fuller said she had zero complaints about the "Fondo," which translates loosely to "big ride" in Italian.

"This was my first year, and it was really fun," she said. "There were nice, rolling hills complemented by some hard climbs. I just moved to Eugene, and there were a lot of roads that were new to me,

which was very cool."

Similarly glowing reports were offered by many of the over 400 riders in the Fondo, which left downtown Cottage Grove at 8 a.m. Sunday bound for points very remote in the surrounding countryside. Riders chose from the Gran route at 117 miles, the Medio route at 71 miles or the piccolo, a 15-mile out-and-back route.

"We do Cottage Grove as a loop frequently," said Gallen Mittermann, who bested all male comers at the Fondo. "It's a beautiful ride, and this race is a great avenue to show people from Portland and elsewhere how awesome the riding is down here."

Teammate Josh Liberles agreed.

"The roads are amazing, and we only saw about a dozen cars," he said. "It was somewhere between a race and a fun ride, but there were



Gallen Mittermann was the overall winner in Sunday's Gran Fondo.

photo by Greg Lee

still team tactics."

This year marks the first Gran Fondo for Mudslinger Events, whose owner, Mike Ripley, purchased the event from dark:30 Sports representative Steve Cash following

the 2014 event.

"The best thing about this race is the sense of adventure," Ripley said. "You truly are on your own out there on the course, and you come back gaining something from

Cottage Grove."

Riplinger said he plans to cap the Gran Fondo at 500 participants next year.

"We want to make sure this is still a quaint event," he said.

WILDWOOD

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"I don't know if Wildwood itself is the issue," he said. "But that water was very cold and very fast, and it could've caused a swimmer problems wherever they happened to be."

Raade said South Lane Fire has inquired about removing debris from the area around the falls and is awaiting word on whether the Sheriff's Office wants to undertake such an effort.

For her part, Carver said that she believes Wildwood is "just a really dangerous area."

"The falls create a violent undercurrent that can pin people down, and the air injected into the water by the falls actually reduces a person's buoyancy," she said. "I feel like we're sending a dive team out there every year, and it's just so sad."

Carver said that Nelson reportedly saw several other individuals dive from the falls before attempting to do the same. In light of the incident, the Sheriff's Office sought to remind those who recreate in and around the area's "beautiful lakes and rivers that cold spring runoff and swift moving water can make a dangerous combination. Everyone should maintain awareness of your surroundings and to wear a properly fitting life jacket."

WATER

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at the reservoirs are not usable right now, and many others will be useful for far shorter than their usual time."

Such should not be the case at Dorena, however.

"There is about 10 feet of water over the Harms Park boat ramp," Clemans said. "That means Dorena should have recreation opportunities available far later into the summer than other places might."

Barring significant rainfall in the near future, many local reservoirs have filled to their capacity and are already starting to draw down, Clemans said last week (before a significant rainstorm Sunday evening.) A "teacup diagram" showing the percentages of water currently contained in each reservoir shows Dorena at 98 percent full, with Cottage Grove Reservoir filled to 72 percent of its capacity. But other reservoirs have indeed fared much worse, with Detroit Reservoir — a popular recreation

destination — only about 38 percent full. Overall, the Willamette River basin is only about half as full as it should be, according to the diagram, which can be viewed at <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/nwp/teacup/willamette/>.

"Cougar Reservoir is really lagging; it's only 35 percent full," Clemans said.

The lack of rain could prove especially harmful to the species that call area reservoirs and rivers their home, Clemans said.

"Cougar is only a third full when it should be completely there," he said. "And the McKenzie River is one of the best identified habitats for spring Chinook salmon anywhere in the basin. We're pretty much not going to be meeting the flows that are generally required of us for endangered species anywhere. We'll be working with (the Oregon Department of) Fish and Wildlife to identify what the most appropriate flows are for each tributary based on

the water systems at each."

Which means that the Corps may decide to pull water from some reservoirs to help fill others, particularly where endangered species habitat is concerned. That activity has already occurred at Cottage Grove Reservoir and may happen at Dorena.

"To compensate for keeping the other reservoirs supplied, we've dialed way back on the minimum flow in reservoirs that have very specific roles in providing flows later in the summer for endangered fish. We'd like to hold what water we can on the McKenzie to help the salmon life cycle later in the summer, and we're compensating for that a little at Dorena and Cottage Grove," Clemans said.

With regard to municipal water supplies, Clemans said the Corps should have no problem meeting its requirements despite the difficulty filling the reservoirs.

"We don't think it's going

to be an issue because Dorena is full," Cottage Grove Public Works supervisor Jan Wellman said of Cottage Grove's water supply. "The only thing that could affect us is if they start seriously drawing out of the reservoir to maintain minimum flows."

The City requires about four million gallons of water during peak usage in the heat of summer, Wellman said, though 2-3 million gallons per day is a more normal figure.

"We're in better shape than anybody else," he said. "We've got a very good watershed to draw from that's about 385 square miles in size."

So how did Dorena Reservoir fill when so many others have not?

"We've had these flashy little weather systems, and it all rained right there," Clemans said. "Many of the other reservoirs didn't respond to those systems at all."

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