

New resource launched for OR, WA forest fire conditions, usage restrictions

Members of the public planning their next outdoor adventure on National Forests in the Pacific Northwest now have a tool they can use to check fire information for more than one forest, quickly and easily.

The new resource can be found on the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region website, at go.usa.gov/xfTHh. Website visitors will find current fire information and usage restrictions for all National Forests in Wash-

ington and Oregon on one page, in an easy-to-use, at-a-glance format.

The page can also be found linked to the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region website's homepage, or by clicking "Fire & Aviation," "Fire Information," "Current Fire Status," and "Fire Restrictions Across the Region" at the top of the page.

The chart displays fire risk levels (low, moderate, high, very high and extreme), common public use

restrictions (PURs) — such as whether campfires are allowed in or outside of designated fire rings, if there are limits on ATV and chainsaw use, and industrial fire precaution levels (IFPLs) for each forest.

It also includes a link to current forest orders which links with each forest's "Alerts and Notices" page where current fire and other related closure information are posted. These forest orders may include large area

or forest closures and other restrictions necessary to protect resources and ensure public safety.

The Pacific Northwest is facing a very challenging fire season. Fuels on the landscape are very dry; vegetation, including leaves and grasses as well as larger shrubs and trees, have been further stressed by extreme heat and drought. Members of the public are encouraged to plan carefully and "know before you go."

- ### Tips
- Determine what hazards may be present in an area (including fire risk), and what closure orders and other precautions may be in effect before visiting.
 - Carry the "ten outdoor essentials" every trip to a forest, even while driving through or for day hikes and short trips. During fire season, include water and a shovel, fire extinguisher, or other tools to put out fires.
 - Have a safety plan; make

sure someone knows where you are and when you expect to return, and ask them to contact local law enforcement if you don't return when expected or they have a reason to believe you're in danger. Leaving a copy of your trip plan in your tent or on your vehicle may also help others find you if an evacuation is ordered. Familiarize yourself with maps of the area and have a plan for what you'll do if a wildfire emerges without warning.

TRIATHLON from B1

The normal course spot, Lakeside State Park, was still offered as a location where competitors could do the on-foot racing portion of the triathlon. Still, no activities or even course markings were allowed at the park.

While Lakeside was still accessible, other locations like the Cottage Grove Lake and Dorena Lake were highly discouraged due to ecological reasons.

Oregon is currently in the midst of one of its driest and historically low water level seasons ever. The water at both the Dorena and Cottage Grove Lake are several hundred feet away from shore, and the shore itself has turned into greasy quicksand.

The low water levels also create problems with the timeline of the event. There are typically two launch points in the water during the triathlon: one for the competitors, and another for those watching the event. One of those launches was forced to close due to COVID, meaning that hundreds of people would be forced to cluster together if the event was put on, which is a fire hazard in itself.

From one fire hazard to

another, the event was also forced to go virtual because of the parking dilemma. Fans are usually encouraged to park in a grassy lot before watching the event, but with the wildfire season Oregon has already had, kiboshing this wasn't the worst idea.

In the end, the danger and high-risk associated with putting on the event this year mixed with the lack of a permit due to COVID outweighed the positives of doing the event in-person.

Competitors were asked to confirm their results via Global Positioning System (GPS), or just by any evidence possible. Although it's not the usual way to go about things, competitors still seemed to be honest about their times in a safe fashion.

The option to choose one's own time and place to race was a benefit for many, said Blair Bronson, co-race director.

"They don't have to drive anywhere. It takes a lot of stress out of it," he said. "Especially for first-timers who were just looking for a little extra motivation to keep them moving, to keep that goal in focus, they have that on the calendar, and they know they're going to do it."

Next year, Bronson is

hopeful things will return to a kind of normalcy, though he does anticipate some changes.

"We'd love to bring it back to normal and have another fun sporting event for the community and the ability to get some of those community fundraisers going again," he said. "We might need to look at changing some of our logistics just based on some of the challenges that we had this year with the current time frame of events."

Bronson is also taking into consideration that low lake levels and fire hazards may be issues in the future.

"But we're trying to get an operational plan in place that all of those can be managed in a way that won't be detrimental to the race itself," he said.

The results of the event this year have yet to be posted — but considering all the hype surrounding the race and the thousands of times that need to be documented, it could take a few days.

Even if the event is virtual, it's still progress. With Bohemia Mine Days returning two weekends ago and the Tri at the Grove making a reappearance last weekend, it's evident that summer in the Grove is swinging back.

ARCHERY from B1

Comments can also be sent to odfw.commission@odfw.oregon.gov

The remainder of the 2022 hunting regulations will be presented at the September Commission meeting.

There are other potential changes to archery elk hunting as well.

Under the proposal, 13 wildlife management units (WMUs) and three sub-unit hunts would move to

controlled archery seasons. These hunts would be added to the current seven WMUs within the Blue Mountains already managed for regulated archery seasons. These controlled hunts would be the only opportunity for archers who draw and purchase those tags.

Within the units proposed for regulatory change, ODFW is proposing a mix of single WMU and a zone hunt to obtain the reduction in harvest

that is the goal of moving to controlled archery. Both alternatives provide the control necessary for wildlife managers to regulate take to achieve the overall bull harvest reduction needed to meet agency objectives.

WMUs not proposed for controlled hunts would remain under the current statewide general season framework, allowing archers to continue to move in response to conditions throughout the state during the archery season.

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SAFE BOATING

Boating should be fun, but keep in mind that operating a boat is a serious responsibility. In 2014, the Coast Guard counted 4,064 accidents that involved 610 deaths, 2,678 injuries and approximately \$39 million dollars of damage to property as a result of recreational boating accidents. Be a responsible boater and follow these simple tips to help keep yourself, your passengers and fellow boaters safe on the water:

ALWAYS WEAR A LIFE JACKET.
84% of all victims in fatal boating accidents were not wearing life jackets.

STAY SOBER ON THE WATER.
21% of all boating fatalities resulted from some involvement with alcohol.

TAKE A BOATING SAFETY COURSE.
77% of all boating fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not finished a safety course.

The National Safe Boating Council also suggests having a Vessel Safety Check (VSC) and installing carbon monoxide detectors on your boat to enhance safety.

(Statistics are from U.S. Coast Guard's "Boating Statistics 2014" which is based on reported incidents only.)

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