

RECREATION REPORT

MOUNTAIN BIKING THE SHORELINE TRAILS AT DROUGHT-SHRUNKEN PHILLIPS RESERVOIR NEAR BAKER CITY

HIKES PLANNED TO EXPLORE WILD, SCENIC RIVERS

The Powder Basin Watershed Council is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act with a pair of hikes this fall.

Both are free.

- Saturday, Sept. 22, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., along the North Powder River on the east slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains northwest of Baker City. The trip includes shuttle service from Baker City, moderate hiking and a catered lunch, all free.

- Saturday, Oct. 13, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., along the Powder River below Thief Valley Reservoir. The trip includes strenuous hiking. Hikers should bring water and a lunch.

To reserve a spot for either trip, call the Watershed Council at 541-523-7288 or email pbwced@qwestoffice.net

GRANDE RONDE RIVER

Steelhead season opened on Sept. 1 with a reduced daily bag limit of one hatchery steelhead. As the run progresses managers will re-evaluate these rules. Steelhead should start arriving in the Oregon section of the Grande Ronde over the next few weeks with fishing improving throughout October. The most recent reports are that a couple fish have been caught but fish are still only present in very low numbers. Reports indicate trout fishing has been good for medium size hatchery and wild rainbows. Water temperatures have cooled enough and fish are on the bite.

WALLOWA RIVER

While the Wallowa River has opened for steelhead, it's unlikely fish will be available until later in the fall. Due to an effort to adjust the run timing of hatchery steelhead, fishing can be good in the late fall. Meanwhile fishing for trout and whitefish in the fall with October caddis patterns and medium-sized nymphs can be good. Look for some good afternoon dry fly action as caddis and grasshoppers become active.

SNAKE RIVER BELOW HELLS CANYON DAM

The Snake River from the Washington state line upstream to the deadline below Hell's Canyon Dam is open for fall chinook salmon until Oct. 31 or until further notice. While the season is open, expect slow fishing until fish begin arriving in greater numbers during the fall.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

At the end of a summer of record-breaking heat and severe drought, Phillips Reservoir southwest of Baker City is about 9 percent full, leaving its western end a dry meadow. The lack of water doesn't affect the view of the Elkhorn Mountains, which dominate the northern skyline.

WATER'S GONE BUT VIEWS REMAIN

The chipmunk darted onto the trail a few feet ahead of my front tire, its paws scrabbling for purchase and throwing up a diminutive rooster tail of dirt.

I squeezed the rear brake handle as quickly as my reflexes allow. Which is not very quickly at all, as any number of ponderosa pine cones back up the trail a ways could attest. And those are bigger than a chipmunk, and much less mobile. Besides which the brakes on my 20-year-old Specialized mountain bike are of the archaic design in which a pair of rubber pads clamp on



ON THE TRAIL
JAYSON JACOBY

Fortunately that's quite enough time for a chipmunk to get safely across a trail and so ensure that its life likely will end at the tips of a hawk's talons or a coyote's claws rather than beneath a knobby rubber tire.

I was pleased because it would have at a minimum marred, if not altogether ruined, my ride along the south side of Phillips Reservoir had I smashed a small rodent along the way, inadvertent though this would

the wheel's rim. The whole episode couldn't have taken more than two seconds.

have been.

The network of trails that nearly encircle this 2,400-acre reservoir in the Sumpter Valley, about 17 miles southwest of Baker City, lack the dramatic steep slopes and otherwise challenging terrain that expert mountain bikers relish.

But the trails are an excellent place for beginners to hone their bike-handling skills, what with pine cones and several rocky stretches and the occasional chipmunk.

And there's enough variety in the trails — and enough grand scenery along the way — to keep even experienced riders entertained.

See Phillips/Page 2B

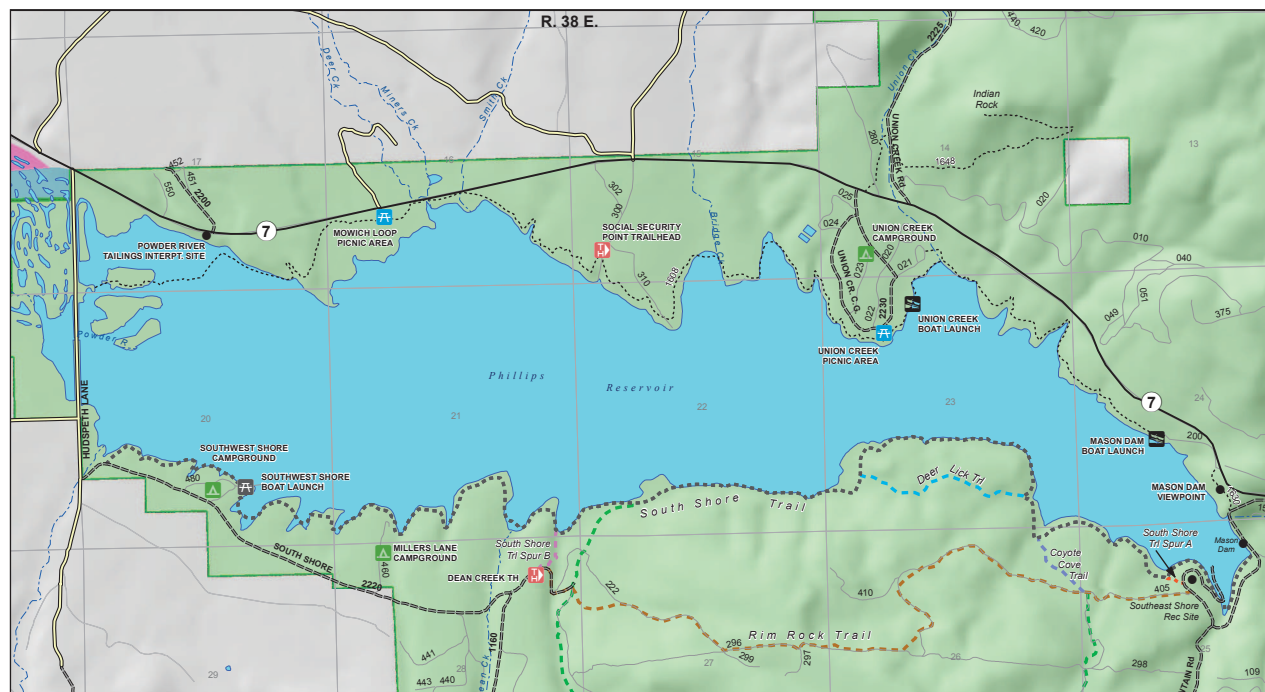
If you go. . .

From Baker City, drive Highway 7 south and then west toward Sumpter. For the South Shore trail, turn left onto the Black Mountain Road, just beyond Milepost 35, about 15 miles from Baker City. Follow the gravel road across the top of Mason Dam. The trail starts near the dam, on the right (reservoir) side of the road.

Other access points are at Millers Lane campground, five miles from the dam, and Southwest Shore campground, 6.6 miles. Both are accessible by turning left off Highway 7 onto Hudspeth Lane, between Mileposts 30 and 29.

There are also several places to get onto the North Shore trail. A popular one is at the boat launch near Mason Dam. Turn off Highway 7 about an eighth of a mile beyond the Black Mountain Road. The trail starts on the right side of the paved road, near the restrooms. From here, Union Creek Campground is about 1.5 miles away, and Social Security Point about 4 miles. The trail ends near the west end of the reservoir, about 6.5 miles from the boat ramp road.

Trails on both sides of the reservoir are also open for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.



Dove hunting: Good practice, great eating

Dove hunting is upon us. If you've never dove hunted you are missing out on a great bird hunt, plus some great eating. I've dove hunted since I was 6 years old. We had great hunts as a kid, which speaking of, it's a great hunt to take your kids on to introduce them to hunting.

What's not to like about it? The weather is warm, you don't have to be stealthy and quiet like when big game hunting and there is a lot of shooting going on. Sounds like the ingredients for a great day to me.

So how do you dove hunt? Scouting is important. Doves do well with agriculture so the first obvious spots to check are milo fields or sunflower patches. If you see a lot flying around or setting in dead trees and on telephone lines stop and ask for permission to hunt.

You'll want to set along tree lines or fence rows. They have what I'll called preferred flyways. If you're not getting any shooting, move. If they're out feeding, go do some jump shooting. If you have other people with you this will get them moving around and help them out too.

Especially on dry years, hunt water sources. They like to water at ponds, sloughs and slow-moving creeks/rivers. We hunt these at daylight and dark. I've had some great hunts on water sources.



BASE CAMP
TOM CLAYCOMB



Ron Spomer Outdoors photo

With the invasion of Eurasian doves they can be shot year round with any gun. Use an airgun around barns to expand your hunting opportunities. The season for mourning doves runs through Oct. 30.

See Doves/Page 2B