

POWDER AND THE PANDEMIC

■ Anthony Lakes Ski Area plans changes to lodge operations, other aspects to comply with health precautions due to COVID-19

By Jayson Jacoby
Baker City Herald

Pandemic or no, it still comes down to powder. There's nothing simple about planning a ski season with the specter of COVID-19 continuing to cast its pall. But even the complicating factor of the virus doesn't change the reality that what defines a successful winter is whether the seasonal parade of Pacific storms delivers its customary bounty of light, dry snow on the slopes at Anthony Lakes Ski Area. "As long as it snows it's all going to be fine," said Chelsea Judy, marketing director for the resort in the Elkhorn Mountains.

"We will be skiing." But even though the snow-draped subalpine firs and the ice-encrusted cleft of Gunsight Butte are likely to look the same as always this winter, skiers and snowboarders will notice some differences.

Probably the most obvious changes, in deference to a respiratory infection that spreads most effectively indoors, will be at the ski area's lodge, Judy said.

Everyone will be required to wear a face covering — visitors as well as employees — except while eating or drinking.

The mandate includes skiers and boarders who wear a helmet with a visor or other barrier, Judy said.

Inside the lodge, about half the usual complement

of tables and chairs will be available to ensure guests can keep a proper distance.

Employees will be disinfecting tables, chairs and high-use areas between each user.

The cafe will be open — with a streamlined menu — but Anthony Lakes is asking guests to limit their time inside the lodge to 30 to 45 minutes to ensure everyone has a chance to warm up and fuel up, Judy said.

"It's just going to be a different feel," she said. "Our whole motto this year is to keep moving."

In a letter posted on the ski area's website, general manager Peter Johnson wrote: "Of course, our staff will be available to guests with families if additional time is needed, but we request that each of our guests respect each other by ensuring people who need a place to sit down and warm up for a bit have it."

An employee who will serve as a "COVID safety compliance officer" will be on duty while the lodge is open to ensure social distancing, disinfect surfaces and answer visitors' questions.

The situation will be similar downstairs in the Starbottle Saloon, with fewer tables and seats.

However, Judy said Anthony Lakes has removed the deck outside the Starbottle, making it possible to expand the "snow deck" — the flat area on the west side of the lodge, overlooking the



Chelsea Judy / Anthony Lakes Ski Area, Contributed File Photo

Skiers and snowboarders will notice changes this winter at Anthony Lakes Ski Area, which will reduce capacity in the lodge and in other buildings due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"As long as it snows it's all going to be fine."

— Chelsea Judy, marketing director, Anthony Lakes Ski Area

meadow where the triple chairlift begins.

There will be more seats outdoors than in past winters, and skiers and boarders can also use a "ski-thru" window to pick up their order at the saloon.

"We're trying to find ways to be creative," Judy said. "We're honestly excited to be presented with this opportunity to look at operations."

Among the questions ski area officials can't yet answer, due to the ever-changing restrictions related to the pandemic, is whether there will be live music as usual at the Starbottle.

Judy said Anthony Lakes has booked musicians, and they will perform if possible. Another possible option is outdoor concerts.

Prioritizing skiers and boarders

Outside on the slopes, Anthony Lakes will have daily limits on the number of skiers and boarders, which is necessary to make social distancing

feasible in the lodge.

Judy said officials don't yet know what those limits will be; more details will be announced before Nov. 1.

One thing that has been decided is how Anthony Lakes will prioritize who's on the mountain, in the event that capacities are reached.

Season pass holders will have the highest priority "no matter what," Judy said.

In his letter, Johnson wrote that "Our pass holders are the reason Anthony Lakes is what it is. So, if you have a season pass, no need to worry about getting as many days in this winter as snow allows."

Season pass buyers will not have limits on how many days they can ski or board, nor will they have to make a reservation.

On a typical day in past years, Judy said, about 25% to 30% of the visitors at the ski area are season pass holders.

The group with the second-highest priority is those who have a discount ticket from one of Anthony Lakes' lodg-

ing partners, which includes motels, vacation rental homes and other lodging establishments.

A list of the 48 partners is available online at <https://anthonylakes.com/alnr-lodging-partners/>

Judy said that giving priority to guests with a lodging discount ticket is designed both to help local businesses that have struggled during the pandemic, but also to encourage people from outside the region to continue to ski or board at Anthony Lakes.

The ski area attracts visitors from the Boise area, as well as the Tri Cities in Washington, among regional metro areas.

A similar promotion is available to all visitors, whether they're from the area or not.

The ski area will have 20 tickets for each operating day, at a 50% discount, for guests who have a receipt for a purchase of at least \$40, from the past 7 days, from a locally owned restaurant or retail shop in Baker, Union, Grant, or Wallowa counties.

Lodging partner and local business support discount tickets will be available only at

the ticket window at Anthony Lakes. Visitors can show their voucher or receipt and have a ticket printed.

Once the priority groups have been counted, a certain number of general day tickets will be available, Judy said.

Those tickets will be sold online only, at www.anthonylakes.com — there will not be any general day ticket sales at the ski area. These online tickets will be sold starting Nov. 1, and will be available for any operating day during the season.

In his letter, Johnson addressed the limitations on these general daily ticket sales.

"We will not be completely cutting back on ticket sales, just reducing the amount of day tickets sold each day to the point where we can manage day-to-day operations while comfortably practicing social distancing," Johnson wrote. "The number of day tickets available for any given day will be based solely on previous years ticket sales. More details to come prior to November 1st."

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Lisa Britton / For EO Media Group

Two Color campground, along Eagle Creek in the southern Wallowa Mountains, is among 24 campgrounds or trailheads on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest that could begin charging fees in 2021 under a proposal.

Wallowa-Whitman might boost some camping fees

■ Proposal also would apply to several forest trailheads

By Jayson Jacoby
Baker City Herald

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is proposing to increase fees at 28 campgrounds and to charge fees at 24 other recreation sites, most of them also campgrounds, that are free now. The changes could start next summer.

The forest is also proposing to eliminate fees at two campgrounds and one trailhead.

Dispersed camping on the forest — outside of designated campgrounds — will remain free.

The Wallowa-Whitman is soliciting comments from the public about the proposal through Nov. 15. The forest hasn't changed its recreation fee schedule since 2005.

The John Day-Snake River Resource Advisory Committee, a group of 15 residents

of the region that makes recommendations about public land management to the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, will then review the proposed fee changes, which could take effect in the summer of 2021.

"Over the past 15 years, most of the fees have stayed the same across the national forest, and the majority of our recreation sites still do not require a fee," Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman supervisor, said in a press release. "However, we need to keep in check with inflation and maintain what we have for the benefit of the public. Fees are needed to continue the services we deliver at developed sites. The fees will also be comparable with other similar sites that are adjacent to the national forest."

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FISHING & HUNTING FORECAST

WALLOWA LAKE

Fishing for rainbow trout continues to be good. Boats are helpful but fishing from the east shore can be productive. Look for fish to have transitioned in diet to natural foods. Fish with artificial flies and lures that mimic natural organisms in the lake. Use baits such as night crawlers, maggots and eggs.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER

Fishing for trout on the Grande Ronde has been good for large wild and hatchery rainbow trout.

Steelhead have started making an appearance, with reports of fish being caught with flies, spinners, and bait. The bag limit has been reduced to 2 hatchery steelhead per day to ensure enough broodstock can be collected at hatchery facilities. The Grande Ronde is open to

harvest of coho from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30 from the Washington state line upstream to the Grande Ronde River Road Bridge approximately 7 miles above the town of Troy. The bag limit is 2 adult coho larger than 20 inches and 5 jack coho equal to or less than 20 inches with two daily jack limits in possession. Anglers are encouraged to brush up on their species ID before harvesting fish in the Grande Ronde. Fall chinook must be released unharmed.

CHUKAR, PHEASANT, QUAIL SEASON OPENS TODAY

The hunting season for several upland game bird species, including chukars, Hungarian partridges, California and mountain quail and rooster pheasants started today. The season continues through Jan. 31, 2021, except for rooster pheasant, which ends Dec. 31. Details are available online at <https://myodfw.com/game-bird-hunting/seasons>.