



THE REGION'S HUB FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Each week in this section, you will find the area's most complete guide of what's open and closed; outdoor activities and events; top picks of places to explore; conditions of hiking and biking trails, fishing holes, water flows, camping spots, parks and more — as well as features from outdoor writers and field experts.

Sled-dog team is pup and running



Bend's Rachael Scdoris leads her dog team along a trail.

Submitted photo

Bend musher Rafael Nelson is set to race in Wyoming with the help of former Iditarod racer Rachael Scdoris

BY MARK MORICAL
The Bulletin

In the sport of sled-dog racing, it really is all about the dogs.

Most mushers would agree with that.

"The biggest thing is the dogs," said Bend's Rafael Nelson, who is racing in the seven-day Stage Stop Race across western Wyoming starting Friday. "These dogs are just incredible. They're so friendly, and they're always so excited about running and meeting people. They're very well trained and intelligent. They make the best co-workers for sure."

Nelson works for the Oregon Trail of Dreams sled dog tours at Mt. Bachelor ski area, founded by renowned dog musher, Rachael Scdoris, and her father, Jerry Scdoris, both of



Rafael Nelson, left, and Rachael Scdoris clip the nails and massage the paws of Richard, one of their sled dogs, in preparation for the Stage Stop Sled Dog Race, a seven-day race in Wyoming.

Dean Guernsey/For The Bulletin

Bend. Rachael Scdoris, 35, was the first legally blind musher to attempt the Iditarod, and she competed in the annual 1,000-mile race across Alaska four times, the last time in 2009.

Nelson, 30, is taking the Sc-

doris' dog team to the Wyoming race for the second straight year, and Jerry Scdoris is going along as support. Starting in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the Stage Stop race is a sprint stage race of about 30 miles per day

on the Bridger-Teton, Shoshone and Caribou-Targhee national forests. Mushers will compete for \$165,000 in prize money.

Nelson finished 10th at the race last year in his first ever sled-dog race, but this time the dog team is more experienced.

"The dogs are stronger, and I'm really excited to see what they can do," Rachael Scdoris said. "Now that Rafael knows what to expect, and knows what these dogs are capable of — we'll see."

At Oregon Trail of Dreams, Nelson, Rachael and her husband, Nick Salerno, take customers on hourlong sled dog rides along groomed trails near Mount Bachelor.

The race in Wyoming will be much more intense than his day job, but Nelson said he plans to just focus on his dog team and not worry about the other competitors.

"I don't plan to look at the standings, maybe until the last day," he said. "The forecast is for it to be pretty stormy and cold. That's fine. But coming from Central Oregon, most of our dogs have been in warmish weather, relatively speaking. If it's really cold, that might not work in our favor. But either way, we'll make it happen."

Nelson compared the Stage Stop Race's format to that of the Tour de France, in which racers travel to a new course each day and are able to sleep in hotels each night. The much longer Iditarod is more of a nonstop slog across Alaska, with occasional breaks for sleeping.

"It's a great tour of western Wyoming," Nelson said of the Stage Stop Race. "Each stage is in a different place, with beautiful mountain scenery on every single stage."

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Counters show thousands more visits to Bend trails in 2020

BY JULIE BROWN
For The Bulletin

Like many people, I'm a creature of habit. I'm a runner who mostly chooses routes based on training distances or time duration that I can squeeze into my busy working mom schedule. But I'm most relaxed when I throw both of those self-imposed requirements out the window and explore a trail to keep me in the here and now. Based on some recent number crunching I'm involved with in my role at Bend Park & Recreation District, I'm not alone among Central Oregonians who explored new places in 2020.



TRAILS

The definition of a trail is "a path or track made across a wild region, over rough country or the like by the passage of people or animals." That's pretty spot-on for most of our trails in Bend, but I would venture that our definition also needs to include our urban and neighborhood areas that are becoming increasingly popular.

With more than 80 miles of trail open to the public within the city, and a couple dozen more planned over the next decade, Bend's urban trail opportunities are rapidly expanding.

Over the past 10 months, getting out of the house for some respite has been a much-

needed outing for regular trail users and newcomers to the enjoyment of outdoor exercise. The park district uses trail counters across the community to glean data about use of trails. We have used the counters for the past several years, and before we pulled the 2020 year-end data, we suspected we might see an increase in use due to the pandemic.

As my trail planner colleague Henry Stroud shared a few months ago in a column, Bendites and visitors to the area flock to national forest lands located right outside of the city limits to access hundreds of miles of natural surface trails and gravel roads.

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Visitors walk along a trail in Shevlin Park.

Submitted photo