



Columnist
Cristina Peterson
appreciates
the outdoor
opportunities
Central Oregon
has to offer,
including cross-
country skiing.
Submitted photo

When using the outdoors, remember to give back, too

BY CRISTINA PETERSON

For The Bulletin

I take trips. I take hikes. I take photos. I take chances. I make memories. I get so much from public lands, I sometimes forget that I also have to give. Many people think about giving back as making a donation or volunteering to do trail work. Giving doesn't have to be a grand gesture or time-consuming activity. There are many simple acts that make a difference.

Give respect, even reverence

Some of my favorite childhood memories are from cross-country skiing on miles of trails deep in the woods. I'd stop and without the swooshing of my skis, be astonished by the stillness and the quiet that surrounded me. I followed my dad up endless hills to feel a hint of adrenaline as we descended down. I wound through the winter woods with my sisters and friends. The trails were well-signed and many of them groomed. But I didn't give much thought to those things. Partly because I was a kid. But also because I just showed up and it was all there, ready for me to enjoy.

It wasn't until I worked for the National Park Service that I realized how much effort goes into maintaining trails or campgrounds and managing public lands in general. Some trails through the Rocky Mountains of Montana required intricate rock work or boardwalks to protect sensitive alpine meadows. Even a seemingly simple path through the woods is carefully sited to reduce impacts to plants or wildlife or to reduce erosion. Summer and winter trails need maintenance. Trees fall and must be cut out, steps and erosion control features deteriorate. All this and more takes time and funding. Respecting the work that goes into the places we enjoy can lead us to take better care of them.

It deepens my respect for places when I remember that Central Oregon is home to sensitive and endangered species; that there are many culturally significant sites here; that the places we enjoy today have long histories and delicate resources that can quickly be destroyed by an instance of carelessness. These places aren't here just for us. They have im-

portance spanning from the past and long into the future. This requires everyone to act with reverence for the intricacies we may not see or understand but are present around us.

Give silence, give space

If you're out with friends or family, keep your voices down. This increases your odds of having a unique wildlife sighting and lessens the amount of disturbance you have on animals in the area and on other visitors. Hearing a bird call or even just total silence can be such a magical experience. Many trails in central Oregon are near private homes, respect those residents by giving them peace and quiet.

Give thought to where you park. The ground adjacent to a trailhead or gravel road can look bare and dusty in the fall and winter. But in the spring and summer, that patch of dirt could be carpeted with colorful wildflowers. Many trailheads are designed to match the carrying capacity of an area. The size of the parking lot equates to an appropriate number of people the area can sustain. If a parking area is full, move onto a different location, give others a chance to enjoy that area without overcrowding it.

Give the illusion of a wild place

Most people know the basics, like not littering. Consider other impacts, like keeping your dog under control and picking up after them every time. Central Oregon loves dogs which means there are lots of pups cruising around. Over time, dog poop adds up and so do other impacts such as disturbance to wildlife or trampling vegetation, especially in riparian areas. Do everything you can to not leave any evidence of you or your dog's presence.

It's extraordinary and increasingly rare to find solitude, to feel like I am in a truly wild place where no other people have been in a long time. Impacts, over time, decrease that sense of true wildness.

Maybe you get a workout or exercise for your dog, maybe you get fresh air or a sense of adventure. Maybe you get rejuvenated. We all get so much from our open spaces. Next visit, consider how you might give.

Spring

Continued from B1
Learn the patterns of the season. The freeze-thaw cycle can persist well past the last rain or snow and past when everything seems to be melted out. Popular areas like Horse Ridge, Horse Butte and especially Phil's Trailhead, take longer to dry out than you would think. The first singletrack trail networks to dry out — in roughly descending order — are usually the Madras East Hills, Cline Butte, the Radlands in Redmond, Maston, and the Lower and Upper 66 in Prineville. And watch out for the killer mud and bumps made by cattle at Gray Butte.

Check the conditions. Check out BendTrails.org. Someone has probably ridden there recently and reported on the conditions.

Consider a new or different activity. Downhill skiing or

snowboarding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing and road biking are all great alternatives when the trails are muddy. And that's not even a complete list! Am I dreaming? Do I live here?

Consider paved paths. Running, walking or biking on the area's paved multiuse paths is another great option. Three options are the Rim Rock trailhead to the Cascade Lakes Welcome Station, in Shevlin Park and at Pilot Butte State Park.

Consider gravel rides. DirtyFreehub.com has a huge selection of amazing rides that are predominantly gravel roads, with some paved and trail sections. Many of these rides are long — 30 to 50 miles or more — so you'll definitely get a workout. Most take you to stunning, little-traveled places with beautiful views, guaranteed to fill your day with adventure. We

Riding (bikes or horses), walking or running on muddy trails also does long-term damage. As people try to navigate around the water and mud, the trail widens from fun singletrack to nearly road width. The smooth trail tread that's so fun to ride becomes rutted and bumpy. Soil is displaced, causing erosion that dislodges rocks and other features that make mountain biking exciting and challenging.

suggest the 42-mile Priest Hole ride near the Painted Hills for epic views and solitude. And bonus: Many Dirty Freehub rides are e-bike friendly (check the ride description).

Have a backup plan. If you do venture out on fragile trails, be prepared to turn around or switch to one of the many dirt roads if the trail is muddy. Although the dirt roads will likely be muddy too, you'll avoid damaging the trail and have an adventure. An app like Trailforks will

help you navigate dirt roads. Or if you prefer a paper map, Adventure Maps has Bend covered.

■ Emmy Andrews is the executive director of the Central Oregon Trail Alliance.

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Fire restrictions

Fire danger is currently listed as moderate in the Deschutes National Forest. Fire danger is listed as Low in the Ochoco and Willamette National Forests. Industrial Fire Precaution Level is currently at Level 1 for the Deschutes and Ochoco national forests and the Prineville District — Bureau of Land Management.

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