

# LOCAL, STATE & REGION

## Reblooming & Reopening

Closed for over a year, many Oregon lands managed by The Nature Conservancy are back just in time for spring

BY JAMIE HALE  
The Oregonian

What do a grassy headland on the Oregon Coast, a lake in the High Desert and a wildflower paradise in the Columbia River Gorge all have in common?

All are owned and managed by international environmental nonprofit The Nature Conservancy, and all have been closed for more than a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Most of those spaces reopen to the public Thursday, the nonprofit announced recently, just in time for spring wildflower blooms and the return of sunny weather to the Pacific Northwest.

That includes places such as the Tom McCall Nature Preserve in the Gorge, the Zumwalt Prairie near the Wallowa Mountains and Table Rocks in Southern Oregon. Two locations will not reopen right away: Cascade Head on the Oregon Coast and the Camassia Nature Preserve in West Linn — both require naturalists on hand, which the organization is not staffing at the moment.

Allie Gardner, marketing director for The Nature Conservancy in Oregon, said the nonprofit is looking forward to reopening the areas but could not say why its lands remained closed so much longer than almost all other outdoor recreation areas in the region — including most of the places owned by The Nature Conservancy in



Jamie Hale/The Oregonian file

Fields of yellow balsamroot and purple lupine flowers greet hikers on the McCall Point Trail, part of the Tom McCall Nature Preserve at Rowena Crest in the Columbia River Gorge, in May 2019. The preserve and other lands managed by The Nature Conservancy are reopening to the public.

neighboring states.

“We just felt like it was worth erring on the side of safety,” Gardner said. “It was a judgment call. We didn’t want people getting sick. As much as we wanted people to get back out into nature, it felt like the safest thing do.”

The Nature Conservancy initially closed its 15 public spaces in Oregon on March 23, 2020, as virtually all public lands in Oregon became off-limits for recreational use during the initial spread of COVID-19.

State and federal lands began reopening in May, with most open by

the summer as public health officials acknowledged the relatively low risk of spreading the virus at outdoor recreation areas — as long as people follow requirements for social distancing and face masks.

Despite new decisions by other land managers, as of the start of this spring the Nature Conservancy still cited Gov. Kate Brown’s original year-old executive order as the reason for its lands remaining closed.

Now that the wait is over, however, people may return in large numbers — as they have to other outdoor recreation areas around Oregon. The Na-

**Online**  
To see a full list of lands managed by The Nature Conservancy, their locations and their current reopening status, visit [nature.org](http://nature.org)

ture Conservancy hopes visitors will continue to play by the rules, Gardner said, including staying on trails and not bringing dogs.

“We really do appreciate everyone’s patience,” she said. “We’re all very excited to get back out there too.”

## Legislature again considers funding for Wallowa dam

BY BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain  
WALLOWA LAKE — Although sales for bonds to fund refurbishment of the Wallowa Lake Dam were supposed to begin this month, the Oregon Legislature had to put that on hold for a year because the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp drop in Oregon Lottery revenue.

But lawmakers are optimistic the funding will come through this year.

“What they have decided to do is include those in discussion for this year’s funding cycle. Because they were in the governor’s, that gives us some options,” state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, said recently.

He said that although the lottery funding is “trending in the right direction,” it may not be necessary to rely on the bonds and the funding could come out of the general fund or another fund.

“We won’t need to go to lottery bonds in that case,” he said.

The plan was to raise \$14 million through sale of bonds from lottery revenue and begin selling them this month, with work on the dam to begin after irrigation season ends Sept. 30. Another \$2 million of the \$16 million project will be raised from “other sources,” said Dan Butterfield, president of the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District, which owns the dam.

He said the project is waiting for the state money to be assured before seeking the additional funds. “That has to be solidified before we break ground,” he said.

# SPRING SAVINGS EVENT

Mattresses • Recliners • Sofas • Sectionals • Bedroom Sets • Dining Sets • Accessories

**Chofa**  
Just **\$549**

**SALE ENDS APRIL 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Lift Chairs**  
From **\$699**

**Swivel Glider Recliner**  
Just **\$549**

**THERAPEDIC**

**FREE Foundation or FREE Pillows with Purchase**

**AIRELOOM**

Since 1962  
**WILSONS of Redmond**  
Still The Oldest & Largest Furniture Store in Central Oregon!

**FREE DELIVERY & SPECIAL FINANCING AVAILABLE\***

\*Subject to credit approval. See store for details

**Wilson's MATTRESS Gallery-Bend**

2071 S. Hwy 97, Redmond 541-548-2066 • [www.wilsonsofredmond.net](http://www.wilsonsofredmond.net) • 63485 N. Hwy 97, Bend 541-330-5084