

Celebrating 100 years of state parks

The state kicks off a year-long celebration in January, commemorating 100 years of Oregon State Parks.

It began with a 5-acre land donation in 1922 that became Oregon's first official state park, Sarah Helmick State Recreation Site six miles south of Monmouth. A century later, the state park system comprises 254 properties and more than 100,000 acres.

"We celebrate the places Oregonians hold dear: the viewpoints, waterfalls, trails, and historic landmarks," said Lisa Sumption, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department director. "We also honor the Oregonians who had the vision and wherewithal to set aside and safeguard these special places that we all enjoy today."

From the first donation until 1989, Oregon's state park system grew within the Oregon Department of Transportation and its predecessor agencies. Oregon



Courtesy Oregon State Parks

A view within Saddle Mountain State Park in Clatsop County.

Parks and Recreation became an independent agency in 1990.

In 1998, when some state parks were on the verge of closing, voters passed Measure 66, dedicating a portion of Oregon Lottery funding to the parks. The vote provided the funding stability needed to keep parks open.

"State parks are here because you invested in them and helped care for them," Sumption said. "The centen-

nial is a celebration, but also a call to action. Only with your continued support can parks endure for the next 100 years."

Oregonians have several ways to participate in the Oregon State Parks centennial celebration.

State parks visitors are encouraged to post photos of their favorite state parks with hashtags #oregon-stateparks and #oregon-stateparks100.

First Day Hikes traditional way to start year

Fort Stevens is one of a handful of state parks that have organized First Day Hikes, an annual New Year's Day tradition in hiking and walking circles.

Fort Stevens' hike begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 1, with participants meeting in the main parking lot of the park's historic area.

The hike will cover about a mile, with brief interpretive stops along the way. It's expected to last about 90 minutes.

The trail is an unimproved natural surface, with no significant elevation change. Those who go will be treated to views of the Columbia

River, Trestle Bay, and various historic features.

Other Oregon State Parks are participating, although most are simply open for the day for self-guided walks.

The normal day-use fee will be waived at the Fort Stevens historic site for New Year's Day and at the 25 other state parks that normally require parking permits.

Expect cold weather and winds along the river. Restrooms are available a short distance from the parking lot. All dogs must be on a leash at all times while in state parks.

"Whatever your choice — a guided hike, exploring a park trail on your own, or enjoying

everything a state park offers — starting out the year in the outdoors can begin a new tradition or keep a longstanding family tradition alive," said Lisa Sumption, state parks director. "Jan. 1 also marks the beginning of the yearlong Oregon State Parks centennial commemoration."

It's also prime time to watch migrating gray whales as they head south to the warm lagoons of Baja Mexico.

While trained volunteers and staff won't be available, most viewing areas managed by OSP will be open to visitors.

Unemployment drops as state gains 10,000 jobs

Oregon added 10,000 jobs last month, good news on the heels of October's gain of 6,400 jobs.

In November, gains were largest in leisure and hospitality, followed by construction, professional and business services, and retail.

The gains were partially offset by a loss of 1,100 jobs in health care and social assistance.

Several industries added enough jobs to reach all-time highs.

Construction employed 113,800 people in November, which was 500 jobs above its prior record reached in February 2020, during the peak of Oregon's prior economic expansion.

Similarly, wholesale trade, which added 400 jobs in November, reached 77,400, enough to boost it to a record high for the first time since February 2020. Professional and business services rose to

257,500 jobs in November, which was 100 jobs above its pre-COVID record.

Leisure and hospitality added 4,100 jobs in November, following a gain of 3,600 in October.

Despite the gains, leisure and hospitality still accounts for a large share of Oregon's jobs not recovered since early 2020, with 25,400 jobs left to recover to reach the prior peak month of February 2020.

Nevertheless, the industry has regained 77 percent of the jobs lost early in the pandemic.

Oregon's unemployment rate dropped to 4.2 percent last month, down from 4.4 percent in October. The U.S. unemployment rate was also 4.2 percent in November.

Oregon's unemployment rate is now close to the state's historically low unemployment rates of 3.9 percent during 2017 through 2019.

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