

McKenzie Magazine



Winter 2022



NPS

Cover photo by Tabitha Crystal Eck

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Out & About at Potato Hill

Text & Photos Courtesy Hike Oregon



Lost Lake and Three Finger Jack are clearly visible from the viewpoint.

The Potato Hill Sno-Park is one of the smaller sno-parks in Oregon, but can be combined with nearby Little Nash Sno-Park, especially if you're on cross-country skis or a snowmobile. If you are snowshoeing, the Hash Brown Loop and/or going up Jack Pine Road and the summit of Potato Hill will make for a great all-day excursion.

Potato Hill Sno-Park has a small parking area that will fit about 20 cars and it is one of the few sno-parks that does not have a pit toilet. The trailhead has a large map and the beginning of the trail is a wide road that winds uphill for 0.36 miles to a sign. The entire sno-park is very well marked with blue signs and blue diamonds. To start the Hash Brown Loop and/or go up Jack Pine Road/Potato Hill Summit, you will take a left at the sign. The road/trail continues through the forest for another 0.87 miles to another sign. Here the views start opening up and you will have to make a decision on what length you want your trip to be.

If you're looking for a shorter 3.4 mile excursion, you can opt to go up Jack Pine Road and back down. If you would like to extend your trip, you can go up past Jack Pine Road and summit Potato Hill for spectacular views, then head back down and complete the Hash Brown Loop which is a 7.4 mile trek. Regardless of the route you choose, at the Jack Pine Road and Hash Brown Loop sign there is a nice little 0.2 mile out and back to a gorgeous viewpoint that everyone should take. Take a left at the sign through the burnt trees and it will

lead you to the edge of the hillside where you can see Lost Lake and Three Fingered Jack.

After the viewpoint side excursion, continue up Jack Pine Road. Here the terrain starts to open up and tracks start going all over the place. Then head uphill for 1.1 miles to the summit of Potato Hill. The views along the way and from the top are incredible. You can see the old cascade crest to the west, Sand Mountain and Hoodoo close by, as well as Mt. Jefferson and Three Fingered Jack to the north. To the south you will see Mt. Washington as well as the Three Sisters, and to the east you will see Black Butte and Hwy. 20 winding over Santiam Pass.

On sunny days, enjoy 360° views at the summit of Potato Hill. If it isn't too windy, this is a great place to have a lunch break.

From the summit of Potato Hill, head back down the way you came and back to the Hash Brown Loop sign. If you want to continue and do the Hash Brown Loop, you will now continue to your left and follow the blue diamonds on the trees. The Hash Brown Loop is 3.2 miles long and this trail is more narrow, especially once you get into the thicker trees, but it offers a different kind of beauty than what you just saw from Jack Pine Road.

After enjoying 3.2 miles of quiet serenity winding through the moss and snow laden trees, you will come back to the first trail split sign that you saw to finish the Hash Brown Loop. From there it is merely another 0.36 miles along the wide road back down to the car.



Don't get too close to the edge at the top of Potato Hill because snow cornices are not stable and can break off easily.

The Potato Hill Sno-Park has many opportunities for some wonderful snowshoe excursions. Because these trails are steep in some areas and are not as groomed, it is not recommended for first timers. The views you get at this sno-park are absolutely incredible and definitely rival some of the more popular sno-parks in the area. Whether you do the shorter out and back or the longer loop, even on a sunny day you will not see crowds of people here like there are at some of the more well-known parks nearby - like Ray Benson and Maxwell Sno-Park. Enjoy the views, the quiet forests and beautiful snowy trails!

For more info and maps go to hikeoregon.net/potato-hill-sno-park.htm



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Did you know that the snow-pack that makes for great conditions in winter also provides fuel for the region's rivers and hydroelectric system? Hydropower actually begins on snowcapped mountains. Learn more: <https://go.usa.gov/xPHSb> #HydroFlowsHere Bonneville Power Administration

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Take to the hills - at Hoodoo



Looking for a place to enjoy the winter season with all your friends? There's plenty of room to spread out at the Hoodoo Ski Area - the only one in Central Oregon that offers night skiing and riding. Hoodoo's 23 night runs include lights with custom-built filters and diodes that provide optimal visibility, and are open from 3:30 – 9 pm Wednesday – Saturday (except for holidays).

The 800-acre Hoodoo Ski Area sits on the summit of the Santiam Pass and boasts 1,035 vertical feet of skiing options. Located 85 miles east of Eugene, 44 miles west of Bend, and 130 miles southeast of Portland, it includes 34 runs, five lifts and one of the largest tubing parks in the West.



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Wilderness permits have changed



Soda Meadows - USFS

The Willamette and Deschutes National Forests have adopted new changes to the Central Cascades Wilderness Permit System. Officials say the adjustments will increase opportunities for the public and simplify the process.

The changes will run from June 15th to October 15th every year - rather than the Friday before Memorial Day to the last Friday in September. In 2021, people had permits in early June that were unusable due to snow and road conditions (and closures) while wilderness areas were accessible in early October.

This year day use permits will not be available for full season advanced reservations. All day use permits will be released in a ten-day, and two-day, rolling window during the permit season.

The overnight permit system has changed the most. The overnight

quota is now based on the date of entry, meaning there is a daily entry quota for each trailhead allowing new groups to start their trip each day. The 14-day maximum stay limit will remain in place.

Reservations for the overnight permits will begin on the first Tuesday on April 5th, and 40% of the overnight permits will be available for advanced reservations. Once the permit season begins, the remaining 60% of overnight permits will be available in a 7-day rolling window.

Hunters will be able to use their valid tag, without having to secure a separate wilderness permit. A valid tag allows the hunter and up to three additional people into the wilderness area one day before, during, and one day after the season for the species-specific tag.

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The Watch for Wildlife license plate will be available for purchase at all DMV locations starting May 4th. Proceeds from the sale of the plate are dedicated to projects that provide safe passage to wildlife of all kinds throughout Oregon.

All registered drivers can get their own Watch for Wildlife license plate for passenger vehicles, but it is not available as a collectible item.

The plate features an icon of the American west - mule deer - and Mt. Hood, which has become synonymous with Oregon itself. A species already in decline, mule deer are further threatened by collisions with cars and trucks as they migrate to and from their winter range.

Funds received by the Oregon Wildlife Foundation through the sale of vouchers are given to the Dept. of Motor Vehicles to help underwrite production of the Watch for Wildlife license plate. But that doesn't cover all the costs. The Foundation will also need to raise up to \$63,000 in additional funds to fully underwrite production of the plate.

A Watch for Wildlife Fund will receive money from plate sales and renewal fees. After the additional outlay for production, the Fund will support projects that help wildlife migrate safely within their range

and habitat patches.

OWF will mail a physical copy of vouchers after each batch of 500 is sold. After 3,000 vouchers are sold, OWF will send the DMV individual voucher information and the plates will go into production.

When the DMV begins production process, residents will be notified that the plates are available for purchase.

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Monty Wilson, man



Edited by Tim Laue

There is a myth in our culture that posits foresters are only interested in ‘clear cuts’ to harvest as much timber as they can. That has not been true, in my experience and the best example I know of is Monty Wilson, a retired forester living in Blue River.

Monty’s thirty-year career has moved his family all over - from the Sierra Nevadas in California to the Olympics in Washington state, and from the Siskiyou in Southern Oregon to the Colorado Rockies, where he worked at 10,000 feet. His last posting was to the Willamette National Forest, which at 1.7 million acres, is the largest

National Forest west of the Rockies. The Santiam, McKenzie, and Willamette watersheds are all contained within its boundaries, along with eight different Wilderness areas - all on the west slopes of the Cascades.

“When I first came to the Willamette, I was in charge logging and sales planning” Monty said, “laying out sale sites and supervising the administrators who supervise the loggers.” At the end of his career, Monty was the Chief Contracting Officer for all the Willamette NF, a forest which at its height was the largest producer of timber in the United States. Monty did his job, but he loved the forests as well. On



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of the *Forests and Trees*

more than one occasion Monty laid out sales to exclude ancient groves of trees, and when asked why he'd reply, "Because it's beautiful."

One notable example was a planned sale near Wolf Rock where he refused to log some Old Growth stands. He knew this would be unpopular with some of his colleagues, but he held his ground. When asked why he said, "For the Beauty," which bothered some and angered another. "I knew that one guy was disgusted with me," he said.

On the other hand, Monty had difficulties with environmentalists who would go to extremes and make life difficult. "Each sale had someone on watch," Monty said, "and on one particular site, I got a call in the middle of the night from the watchman." Apparently, some of the more extreme preservationists were harassing the watchman and over the phone he heard, "They're coming after me!" On that occasion Monty had to get a truck and drive up to the site to calm things down.

He tried to walk the middle line but wasn't always successful. On

one occasion he'd invited some Earth First people to walk through a site to explain to show how thinning would benefit the forest. More than once, Monty was treated poorly by protesters. One time he ...got a call to go down to Oakridge where they had this timber sale where these environmentalist folk had climbed up and strung a bunch of highwires. You couldn't cut some of the trees because you'd kill someone. This guy was up there and dumped a load of urine on me. I still loved him though."

Monty tried to mediate the differing perspectives. He knew his work would improve the forest's health and make it more beautiful. When a site is like "a brush field almost [where] you can't see the beauty of the trees. If you thin you really show how beautiful the Doug Fir is," he explains. "We have some of the tallest trees in the world. We had quite a few timber sales where we didn't cut the Old Growth."

Monty loves the forests for very personal reasons as well. Over his career, and a lifetime of walking, hiking, and marveling among the trees, he has seen the real effects of climate change. "You know, the Coast Range stores more carbon per acre than this range does," he says.

Washington and Oregon are tops in the world for storing carbon. Mature and Old Growth trees store the most per acre. "You know what bugs me?" Monty asks, "It's when I talk to someone who I believe is fairly-well informed and they clam up. I know they don't believe it, and a lot of people don't."

Monty Wilson has lived his entire adult life among the trees and within the forests of the western United States. There's so much more to his story. I'll bet you didn't know that he's a member of the Pacific Green Party and once walked two miles out of a Wilderness Area after suffering a heart attack. If you want to see Monty alive and glowing, all you need to do is go with him into the woods. There he marvels at what he calls the 'stove pipes.' They are Douglas firs towering more than a hundred feet tall, and straight as an arrow.

It is there where his eyes glow like a younger man. That is the best therapy for Monty. 'Forest Bathing,' is what his friends call it.

Much of this piece is based on in-person interviews with Monty Wilson and chronicled by Sean Davis



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For Oregon pioneer family, highway robbers were lifesavers

Two armed men who apparently came to rob travelers helped pull them over the pass instead after discovering there were six children in the wagon



Atop the Old McKenzie Pass emergency services today are still many miles away, with first responders often calling in an air ambulance.

By Finn J.D. John
Hwy. 242 over the cascades, from Springfield to Sisters — is closed in wintertime. The pass can be a dangerous place after the snow starts to fly, which can happen any time after around Labor Day.

A century ago, though, the weather was only one of the dangers travelers on the pass faced. Highway robbers were another. These operators patrolled the pass looking for travelers who had gotten stranded by the sudden blizzards and frozen to death.

Sometimes, when they encountered travelers who hadn't gotten around to dying yet, they helped the process along with their six-shooters. And then, of course, they helped themselves to the now-ownerless horses, along with whatever loot they could pack, before shoving the wagons off the roadbank and into the canyon below.

This was exactly the treatment George Harvey Dyer expected to receive in the fall of 1897. And although it's not clear why he didn't, it's at least a good possibility that he was saved by his six children.

Dyer was a Civil War veteran, a Southerner who had been forced

to fight for the North after he was captured — or so the story goes. Whatever the real story was, his service in the Union army made him unpopular at home in Arkansas after the war, so he emigrated to Oregon and settled near Woodburn.

But in the late 1890s his wife died, leaving him with six children — three boys and three girls, none of them over 10 years old — and he found out about an opportunity for work in the town of Burns. Dyer packed the kids in his wagon and set out.

He headed south to Springfield, taking advantage of the Willamette Valley's relatively excellent roads, and took the McKenzie Pass route toward Bend and eventually Burns. This almost turned out to be a fatal mistake. It was late in the year — early autumn, in fact. And if you've ever been over the pass in the spring or the fall, you know how striking and sudden the change of climate is there. While people are still swimming in lakes and frolicking on beaches below, snow is piling up around the Dee Wright Observatory.

As Dyer got near the summit of the pass, his luck ran out. A blizzard

settled in on him. Snow blew, drifted in the wagon road. His horses were floundering in it. The wagon was sliding behind them, dead weight, like a sled with no runners. It didn't look as if they'd make it. This must have been a soul-crushing realization for Dyer, because he was within a stone's throw of the summit of the pass. If he could just make it to the summit, gravity would give the horses enough help to move the wagon down the other side ... but heave and thrash as they might, the big animals simply couldn't do it.

That's when the highwaymen showed up. Three of them on horseback, bristling with weapons.

As Dyer's great-grandson tells the story, the old man — pretending not to know what they were up to — looked them straight in the eye and asked for their help pulling the wagon over the pass. And, after a long and chilling silence, they tied their lariats to the wagon and helped drag it to the top.

Why would hardened criminals do that? Well, it seems likely that the prospect of murdering a wagon-load of toddlers and elementary-school-age children was more than they were willing to undertake. Or maybe they were just feeling unusually merciful that day. Who knows?

In any case, had it not been for the arrival of those three bandits, the entire Dyer family would have frozen to death a few yards short of the pass. Thanks to the robbers, they were able to make it to Burns, where Dyer was able to take advantage of the opportunity he'd heard about and go into business — as a casket builder.

(Sources: Dyer, Ed. "Dangerous Encounter," *Little-Known Tales from Oregon History*. Bend: Sun Publishing (Cascades East Magazine), 1988.)

Finn J.D. John teaches at Oregon State University and writes about odd tidbits of Oregon history. His weekly column appears in the McKenzie River Reflections newspaper. To contact him or suggest a topic: finn@offbeatoregon.com or 541-357-2222.



Highway 242, the Old McKenzie Pass, was placed on the National registry of Historic places in 2011. The development of the McKenzie Highway, according to the Oregon Dept. of Transportation, "represents a facet of history that is significant on the state level because it illustrates the mechanics of building the first forest road in Oregon after the passage of the 1016 Federal-Aid Road Act, and it uses the prevailing concepts of scenic road construction found in national parks and forests in the 1920's and 1930's."



OSU Archives

NASA workers and an unknown astronaut conduct tests on a space suit in 1968, in the lava beds near McKenzie Pass in Central Oregon.



The Dee Wright Observatory, near the top of McKenzie Pass. The observatory was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression, using the distinctive rock of the lava fields there.

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Staying Connected

By Sean Davis

“The owners are a lovely couple who couldn’t have been nicer.”

“What a gem of a place. Comfortable and cozy cabins, with outstanding views of the McKenzie River.”

Those quotes from online reviews describe a collection of comfortable cabins - the Caddisfly Resort. The property was developed over 70 years ago by the Lauer family, with deep roots on the river that go back much farther. Florence Lauer grew up in the Deerhorn area, and those roots include the work of her father who helped build EWEB’s Leaburg Power Plant fifty years earlier.

The family vacationed at the McKenzie Bridge Campground every August, and in 1952, Marlo and Florence Lauer bought the McKenzie General Store from the Brewsters. After that purchase, they also purchased the adjoining land from Mrs. Hayes, whose family homesteaded the acreage around McKenzie Bridge way back when it was called Strawberry Prairie.

In 1953, the Lauers constructed the three cabins on that second plot that people continue to rent today. Current owner Richard (Dick) Lauer’s mother originally drew what she thought she wanted the cabins to look like.

Dick’s uncle, along with his father’s brother-in-law, Art Grenfell, had a portable mill that Art took to Northern California. There he fell and milled redwood and knotty cedar logs, and hauled the lumber up



Now named the McKenzie General Store & Obsidian Grill, the historic building remains a centerpiece of the McKenzie Bridge community.

the McKenzie to build the cabins - adhering as close to Florence’s sketches as they could.

Local contractors including the Richardson and Stovie families pitched in and handcrafted the structure’s interiors. The result

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was three fishermen's cabins right on the crystal clear banks of the McKenzie River.

Unfortunately, Marlo Lauer died in 1965. The Lauers eventually sold the McKenzie General Store, but Florence and the family kept running the resort.

Florence had a creative spirit and was known for taking long walks. From her outings she often returned with a pinecone, a burl, or some other unique piece from the landscapes. She'd craft unique objects visitors asked to take home as a reminders of their time on the McKenzie and at the Caddisfly.

Florence also transformed a garage on the property into an antique and craft store for the entire community to sell their wares. She ran the resort with help from the family until her death in 1999.

Dick and Doris Lauer bought the property from Florence and have

been running it since 1995. In the years since, they've added more family to the list of owners, and more friends now help with the up-keep and booking. Today, when people stop by or call, they'll more than likely meet Steven Barker.

The Caddisfly has three rustic and charming redwood cottages along the McKenzie River. All have been modernized with a warm, cozy atmosphere and retain their wonderful views of the river. They have fully equipped kitchens, fireplaces, cable TV and large windows and decks. All have Wi-Fi internet access.

Whether you're visiting to go fishing, ride the bike trails, rafting, or hiking, you won't find any place full of such rich history and pure natural beauty for such an affordable price. The Caddisfly is where many locals tell their extended family and friends to stay when they come to visit because they know they'll be in good hands. For more information call (541) 822-3556 or visit their website at www.caddisflyresort.com.



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The Old McKenzie Highway closes annually from mid-November to mid-June. The earliest opening is the third Monday in June. Some years, that date may be later, depending on weather and road conditions. ODOT posts signs and locks access gates when the road is closed. The Oregon Dept. of Transportation advises people to contact either the Willamette or Deschutes National Forests to learn about the status of campgrounds, trailheads, and other facilities.

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541-822-6006

ROOFING

River Roofing
1484 South B St, Springfield
541-746-5000

McKenzie River Roofing
1500 South A St, Springfield
541-744-2448

SEPTIC

Royal Flush Environmental
Services
Eugene/Springfield
541-687-6764

TAXES

Shelly Willford
shellywillford@gmail.com
541-747-4692

UTILITY

Lane Electric Coop
787 Bailey Hill Road
Eugene, OR
541-484-1151

VETERINARIAN

Companion Animal Clinic
5620 Main St.
Springfield
541-747-2307