

THE SCENE



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NEWS & UPDATES FROM COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

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www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa

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Multnomah Falls Lodge will temporarily suspend services, as proper distances are hard to maintain

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

Many changes are afoot with the current COVID-19 pandemic that we need to share. Visitors should be aware that there are **recent COVID-19 cases** in several counties adjoining the **Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area**. To protect your health and safety, please **stay at least six feet away from other visitors, cover coughs, and clean hands frequently**. Do not use our sites or facilities if you are sick or have come into recent contact with people with symptoms of COVID-19.

We understand the desire to seek solace outdoors, but we cannot guarantee a COVID-19 free experience, even outdoors. If a site is crowded, visit fs.usda.gov/crgnsa or ReadySetGorge.com to find alternative, less crowded hiking trails.

COVID-19 Facility Updates

The Forest Service remains operational, and our top priority is the health and well-being of our employees and the people we serve. Our goal is to continue providing access to National Forest system lands within agency guidelines. We are monitoring the situation, even as the whole federal government has been called to **help do our part to limit transmission of COVID-19**. So, we may need to make rapid changes to public lands access as the situation warrants. As of now, **services are suspended at Multnomah Falls Lodge** to limit public congregation, and our partners at **Skamania Lodge** and **Gorge Discovery Center** have closed their doors until further notice. Our Hood River administrative office has shifted to virtual service only—visit fs.usda.gov/crgnsa or call **541-308-1700** to reach us.

SPRINGTIME HAZARDS ROCKS AND...VIRUSES???

Originally this issue was going to cover a debris flow on the Historic Columbia River Highway in late January, as a way to talk about geologic hazards.

Yet this spring, a new hazard is on everyone's mind: the **novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19**. Unless you live under a rock (and some of our geologists do!), you have heard that social distancing is THE number one way to "flatten the curve" of exponential growth in infections, to relieve stress to our hospitals and save lives.

The Gorge has always been a dynamic landscape, and 3 years on from Eagle Creek Fire, the unseen risks of flash floods, landslides, and debris flows remain more likely than ever. However, we urge you to take another unseen risk even more seriously and avoid crowds. If you cannot maintain a safe distance of **six feet** from other people, seek a less crowded site.



trail tales

UPDATES & ANECDOTES

In late February, our partners at Oregon Department of Transportation began their project to restore the **Oneonta Tunnel** on the **Historic Columbia River Highway**, which has been closed since it burned in the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire. To prep the site for reconstruction, the area first had to be cleared of rocks with the potential to fall at any moment, through a process known as **rock scaling**.

Behind the scenes, our trail crew partnered with **Trailkeepers of Oregon** to make progress on the lower part of **Oneonta Trail** while the rock scaling limited access to the historic highway. Oneonta Trail is NOT the stream that people trek through to reach **Lower Oneonta Falls** (which remains closed!), but a trail that was popular as part of the **Horsetail-Oneonta Loop Hike**. Currently, the loop remains closed, as parts of Horsetail Falls Trail and much of Oneonta Trail are still unstable. Next, crews will be working to remove hazard trees, so expect more rolling closures on the highway on **Tuesday, March 24**.



This 2018 photo shows a landslide on the historic highway triggered by trail work while it was still closed after the fire

RAPTORS FLOCK TO THE GORGE

Winter marks the appearance of many feathered friends in the Gorge! Migrating bald eagles from northern skies make their annual journey down the Columbia River Gorge from **mid-December to mid-March**. The Gorge serves as a sort of vacation home, where eagles feast on abundant shad in the river and roost in tall treetops. In addition to the usual year-round resident bald eagles, viewers can see as many as 60 visiting eagles in one some areas.

Premier sites for eagle viewing include **Balfour-Klickitat Area & Trail** on the Klickitat River, and **The Dalles Dam**.

Over in the western Gorge, winter marks the breeding and nesting season for **Cape Horn Peregrine Falcons**, who have called these steep basalt cliffs home for centuries. While some falcons have adapted to city environments, more rural peregrine falcons remain watchful, wired, and high-strung raptors. Highly sensitive to human activity and noise disturbance, these stressors can exhaust parent peregrines and leave them unable to care for their young. Each year from **February 19 to July 15**, the **lower section of the Cape Horn trail is closed** to protect these raptors and ensure long-term survival of the species.

Your cooperation is appreciated in helping to protect vital peregrine falcon habitat.



Can you spot the eagles in the trees at the Dalles Dam?

● Outfitter Guide Permits ●

CRGNSA is the Forest Service office responsible for managing the White Salmon and Klickitat **Wild and Scenic Rivers**, even though they are outside the boundaries of the National Scenic Area. Currently, we're working to re-issue **ten-year outfitter guide permits** which authorize guided white water boating on **White Salmon River** and kayaking or fishing on the **Klickitat River**. Special Use Permits issued by the Forest Service authorize and provide parameters and conditions for this use. Outfitter guides play an important role on these rivers, providing skilled guidance and instruction to visitors who might otherwise not be able to access the rivers, supporting local communities, and partnering with the Forest service to provide river stewardship.