

THE SCENE



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

NEWS & UPDATES FROM COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

AUGUST 2021

www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3



Photo Credit: C2 Recreation Consulting

New Trail Alert!

The Forest Service is partnering with the Port of Cascade Locks and Northwest Trail Alliance to **develop a 15-mile, shared use trail system that will expand opportunities for mountain biking, hiking, and equestrian use in the vicinity of Cascade Locks.**

As more people get into mountain biking, the demand for trails in the Pacific Northwest has skyrocketed and opportunities within the Columbia River Gorge are limited. This new trail system will fit that niche and will also connect to a number of other trail systems in the area, creating multiple, interconnecting mountain biking, hiking and equestrian loop trail opportunities!

The timeline for development of the trail and planned trailhead on Wyeth Road is dependent on funding. The Northwest Trail Alliance has applied for a Recreational Trails Program grant (a program administered by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department) to begin building the first phase of the trail. We look forward to continuing work with our valued partners to expand recreational opportunities in the CRGNSA.

Pop-up Palooza

Visiting the **Gorge Discovery Center** brings many joys: adventure, knowledge, inspiration, and as of late, the opportunity to learn with some of the friendliest rangers in the country!

Now through the end of summer and weekly on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., Forest Service Field Rangers are presenting their "Pop-Up" interpretive tables, covering topics from wildland firefighting to invasive species.



Would you like the Field Rangers to present at your organization's event or gathering? Give us a ring!

Contact Jay Horita, Lead Field Ranger at jay.horita@usda.gov or (541) 645-0562.

We just request a one-week notice.



Re-opening of Eagle Creek

The wait is over! CRGNSA staff and members of the public celebrated the re-opening of the Eagle Creek Trail and Day Use Area on July 1, 2021. The area had been on a bumpy road to recovery since the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire. Through a team effort of Forest Service trail crews, recreation crews, fire staff, contractors, and volunteers from multiple organizations, this crown jewel of the Scenic Area is once again open for all to enjoy.

The area initially reopened January 1, 2021, but wet and wild weather events closed the trail once again requiring more work to make the trail safe. Just a few weeks later, rockslides, debris flows, and 43 windfallen trees covered the trail after an “atmospheric river” dumped 6 inches of rain in 6 hours in the area.

During another major storm in February 2021, an enormous landslide unleashed 4,000 cubic yards of rock, trees, and debris onto the trailhead access road.

Now that these obstacles have been removed, we are happy to welcome first-time and returning visitors back to this special area!



PIKA PIKA EVERYWHERE!

The Columbia River Gorge has not been overrun with loose hamsters, but our favorite balls of fluff are making a comeback following the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire.

In 2017, through a competitive grant proposal process, the CRGNSA and Oregon Zoo applied for and were granted national funding through the U.S. Forest Service’s Citizen Science program. Subsequently, the Oregon Zoo’s Cascade Pika Watch program has been studying what the plight of pikas in the Gorge following the Eagle Creek Fire. In 2018 and 2019, summer volunteers spent upwards of 2,600 hours collecting data on the pika. The data show a positive trend in post-fire pika population growth. Data collection is slated to resume as research sites re-open and we cannot wait to hear the pika squeaks again.

Want to volunteer? Go to the Oregon Zoo website and search for “Pika Watch program.”



What are Pika?

Pika are small mammals related to rabbits, and are well-known for their high-pitched squeak.

They can be easy to miss, with brown fur blending in with their rocky habitat. They typically live amid talus rock formations at elevations between 8,000-14,000 feet, making their presence in the lower-elevation Columbia River Gorge unique.

Fire Season Update



Region 6 (Oregon & Washington) is currently the second busiest region in the country after the Northern Rockies in terms of fire activity. Our region has 16 large uncontained fires and the CRGNSA has had 35 initial attack fires so far this season, putting us on a path of a higher than average fire year if the frequency continues like this.

Both fire engines are busy working long days with 24/7 staffing. Some of our engine personnel are helping staff our Handcrew which is on their second assignment in Montana. Their first assignment was supporting the S-503 fire on the Warm Springs Reservation.

Pictured here is a glimpse into the initial attack on the Lyle Hill fire where our crew was second to arrive after the local Lyle Fire Department. A V-LAT (very large air tanker) was used to drop fire retardant onto the fast moving flames.

Trails Partners in Action - Thanks for all that you do!



Pacific Crest Trail Association



Washington Trails Association



Trailkeepers of Oregon