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JOURNEY
THROUGH GRANT COUNTY AND BEYOND

Scenic vistas abound for TOURING MOTORCYCLISTS

Grant County boasts lots of curves, little traffic

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Motorcyclists interested in "the road less traveled" — free of heavy traffic — will find the sights, curves, forests and rock formations in Grant County a breath of fresh air.

Whether on a Harley Davidson, BMW, Yamaha or Suzuki, riders say they enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the people.

Alice LeBarron, president of BMW Riders of Oregon, sponsors the long-standing Chief Joseph Motorcycle Rally in John Day. She said the group enjoys its rides in the area.

"I hear it over and over," she said. "The community is so welcoming."

Jay Bennett leads riders on various tours through the area during the rally. He said one of his favorite routes is the Middle Fork Ride, a 124-mile loop. They start in John Day and head east on Highway 26 through Prairie City and Austin Junction. They turn left onto Oregon 7 and travel 1.1 miles, then turn left onto Middle Fork Lane (County Road 20), motoring for 39 miles alongside the Middle Fork John Day River, which travels through a spot called Galena. At Highway 395, they take a left turn and go 13 miles to the town of Long Creek and another 29 miles to Mt. Vernon, where a left turn is taken on Highway 26 back to John Day, 8 miles away.

Bennett said he enjoys this particular ride for its peaceful scenery and clean roads, generally free of gravel or fallen rocks.

Locals and visitors alike enjoy an 87-mile loop that takes them from John Day, south on Highway 395 up Canyon Creek, 23 miles to Seneca where they turn left on Forest Road 16.

The road goes through Logan Valley on the back side of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness. After 25 miles and a bend in the road, another left turn is taken onto Forest Road 62, the Summit Prairie Road. That 23-mile stretch leads to Prairie City. Forest Road 62 becomes Bridge Street where another left is taken on Highway 26 to travel west 16 miles to John Day.

Doug Carpenter of Prairie City said it's a great ride up through the mountains, and there are places to stop along the way.

"You're out there, enjoying, relaxing and cruising and looking around," he said.

As with any route through Eastern Oregon, riders must be on the lookout for wildlife at all times, but especially in the morning and evening hours. Motorcyclists must also start with a full tank of gas.

One ride surrounded by stunning geological features takes riders west on Highway 26 through Picture Gorge. It's a 31-mile trip to Dayville. After continuing 7 miles, a right turn in Picture Gorge onto Oregon 19 leads to the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument's Sheep Rock Unit. The Thomas Condon Paleontology Center, Blue Basin Overlook and Foree trailhead are along the 18-mile route to Kimberly.

Riders can then turn around to return the way they came, or continue the loop from Kimberly on Highway 402, traveling 14 miles to Monument, then another 21 miles to Long Creek. In Long Creek, riders turn right on Highway 395 and travel 29 miles to Mt. Vernon, then left on Highway 26 for an 8-mile trip back to John Day. The 128-mile loop is a favorite for riders throughout the region.

Eagle photos/Angel Carpenter

A motorcyclist takes a route through the Malheur National Forest on County Road 65.
TOP IMAGE: BMW riders drive through the Malheur National Forest on County Road 65.

"YOU'RE OUT THERE, ENJOYING, RELAXING AND CRUISING AND LOOKING AROUND." — **Doug Carpenter** of Prairie City

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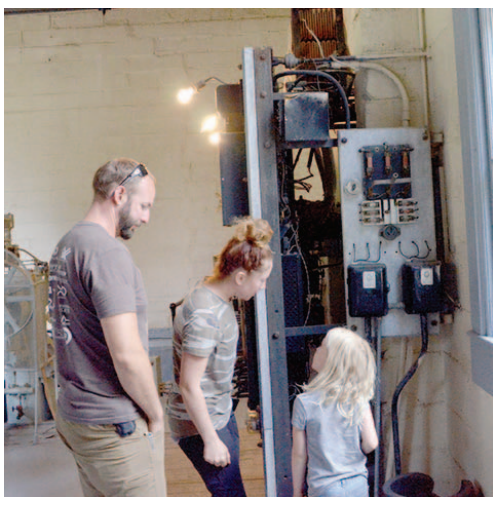


FROM LEFT: The control panel for the Fremont Powerhouse is all lit up for visitors touring the historic site. The Fremont Powerhouse was built in 1903 to supply power to the Red Boy Mine and was rebuilt after snow collapsed the roof in 1993. Homes used by the staff who operated the Fremont Powerhouse are now available as cabin rentals through the Forest Service. A family looks behind the control panel at the historic Fremont Powerhouse.

Historic Fremont Powerhouse

a gem at the small town of Granite

Restored cabins are available for rent

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Eagle photos/Richard Hanners

Visitors learn about the twin generators at the historic Fremont Powerhouse.

The gold mining boom and bust in Oregon's Blue Mountains left a legacy of altered landscapes and industrial-sized historical artifacts that draw visitors from around the U.S.

The town of Granite, at 4,660 feet elevation, is a good example. Albert Tabor discovered gold in Granite Creek on July 4, 1862, hence the town's original name of Independence. Tabor was the only merchant in town in 1874 and became its first postmaster.

The town really took off by 1899, when it was incorporated with 5,000 people. Granite in 1900 claimed six hotels and restaurants, including a 65-room hotel, 25 retail stores, two newspapers, four saloons, a gravity-fed water system, an electric power and light station, two churches and a public school.

Twelve producing mines and 2,122 mining sites in the immediate area supported the local economy, including the Red Boy Mine. But it all came to a screeching halt in 1942 when the War Production Board shut down gold mining in the U.S., deeming it a non-essential war effort.

Today Granite is the fourth-smallest incorporated town in Oregon, with 38 residents in 2010 — up from 24 in 2000. It lies along the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway, a 106-mile closed-loop route popular with bicyclists, motorcyclists and car tourists.

The Lodge at Granite is open year-round. Call 541-744-5200 for reservations. The Outback Country Store is open in summer and hunting season from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., closed on Mondays and Tuesdays. The store sells gas and diesel and has an RV park in back. Call 541-755-5300 for information.

About 8 miles northwest of Granite is the historic Fremont Powerhouse and four restored rental cabins. The National Register of Historic Places and Oregon's State Historic Preservation Office list the complex as a historic district.

The Romanesque building houses two 500 kilowatt generators and a control panel built from an 11-foot wide piece of blue Florentine marble. Redwood and steel pipes once carried water eight miles away and 1,100 feet downhill from a dam built at Olive Lake to drive the turbines.

Built in 1903, the powerhouse originally furnished power for the Red Boy Mine, which relied on steam power. As mining slowed down in the 1920s, the plant was connected to generating plants at Cove, La Grande and Baker to form Eastern Oregon Power & Light. The Fremont facility also powered the gold mining dredge at Sumpter.

The powerhouse was sold to California Pacific Public Utilities Co. and then shut down in October 1967.

The next year, the company donated the entire complex to the U.S. Forest Service. After snow from a winter storm in 1993 collapsed the powerhouse building's roof, the Forest Service considered dismantling the building and its generating equipment.

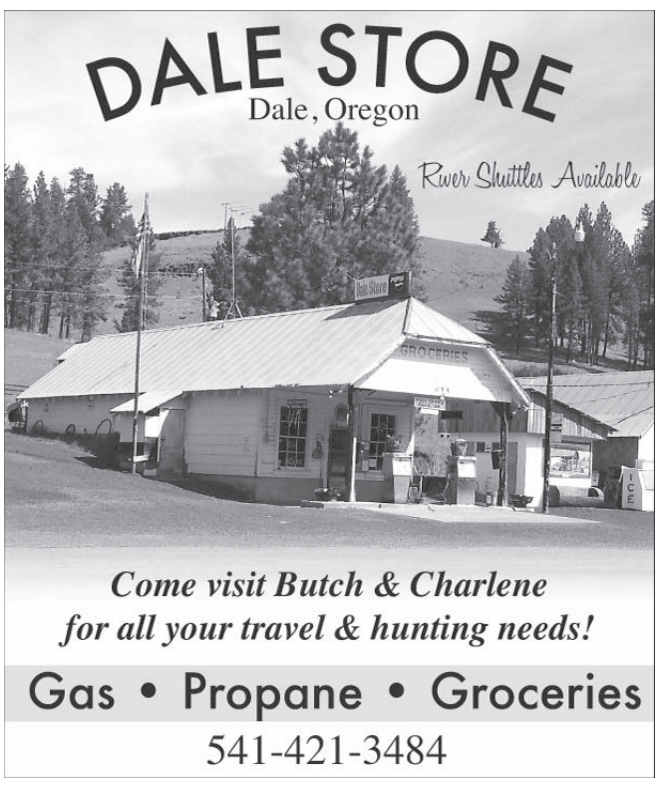
That's when Joe Batty, a longtime Oregon National Guardsman who worked with his wife, Sharon, at the powerhouse from 1968-1981, came in and saved the facility. From 1999 through 2005, Batty and a crew of guardsmen rebuilt the 2,300-square-foot building and the four cabins.

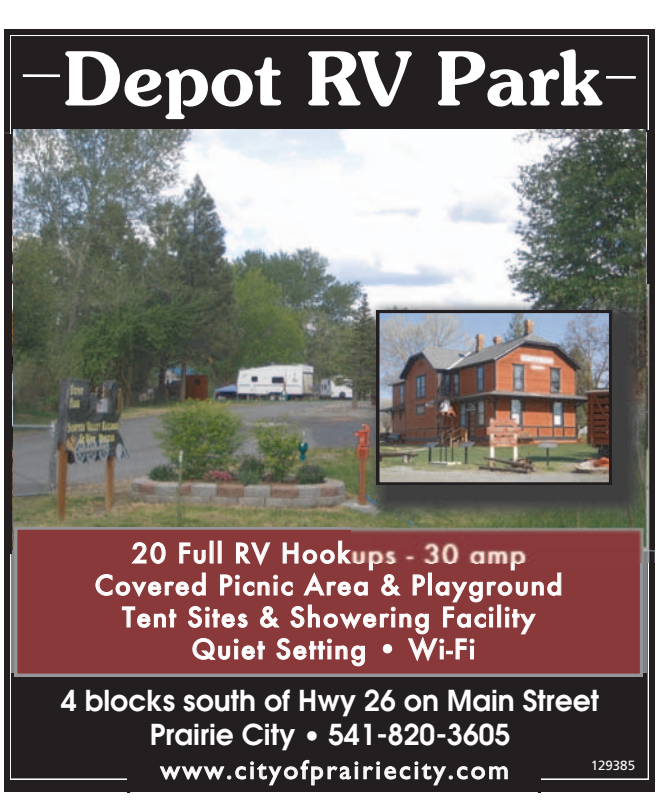
About 1,000 visitors typically stop at the site each year. The Fremont Caretakers Cabin and the Fremont Congo Gulch Cabin each sleep 10 and rent for $80 per night; the Fremont Hilltop Hideaway sleeps four and is $55 per night; and the Fremont Miners Retreat sleeps six and is $65 per night. For reservations, call 1-877-444-6777 or visit recreation.gov.

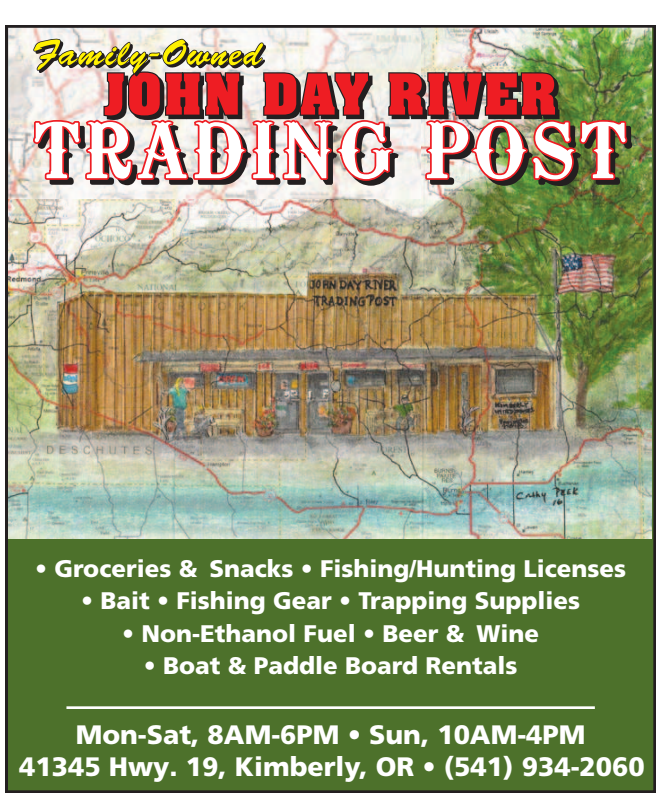
To get to Granite from John Day, drive east on Highway 26 to Austin Junction, follow State Route 7 for 25 miles, turn left on State Route 410 and drive about 20 miles to Granite. To get to Fremont Powerhouse, turn left at Granite on County Road 24 and drive about 6 miles.

For more information, call the North Fork John Day Ranger Station at 541-427-3231 or visit fs.usda.gov/umatilla.

An old schoolhouse is used as a museum in the small town of Granite.







ABUNDANT RECREATION AT MAGONE LAKE

Trail around water passes beach, boat ramp and campground

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

Swimming, hiking, fishing and mountain biking — Magone Lake offers an abundance of recreational opportunities on the Malheur National Forest.

Surrounded by spruce and pine, geologists believe the 50-acre mountain lake was created by a landslide in the 1800s. Some of the trees submerged remain standing, and visitors can jump into the water from a stump sticking out in the middle of the lake.

The lake is surrounded by a mile-long trail that meanders past a sandy beach in the day-use area, a campground and a boat ramp. No wake is allowed, but motors under 10 horsepower are permitted.

Stocked annually, the lake contains eastern brook and rainbow trout. Major Joseph Magone is said to have carried the first trout to the lake by bucket from the John Day Valley on foot.

Eagle photos/Sean Hart

Magone Lake provides opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, camping and mountain biking.

The campground offers 21 single sites and one double site, first-come, first-served. Three of the sites are tent only, and seven are ADA-accessible. RV camping is allowed, but there are no hookups. A 75-person group site and covered picnic shelter can each be reserved at recreation.gov.

The site features drinking water and vault toilets, but no garbage service is provided.

The trailhead for Magone Slide Trail takes off from near the campground. The 1.5-mile trek ascends about 300 feet through ponderosa pine stands that have been growing since the landslide created the lake.

Mountain biking trails are also available. Over the next several years, work is expected to be completed on an 18-mile bike trail project.

To reach the site from John Day, follow Highway 26 east about 13 miles to County Road 18/Keeney Forks Road. Travel about 12 miles on County Road 18, then turn left onto Forest Service Road 3620 (there will be a sign pointing left to Magone Lake). Travel 2 miles on Forest Road 3620 to the junction with Forest Road 3618. Follow 3618 for approximately 1 mile to the day-use area.

A chipmunk scampers off the trail at Magone Lake.

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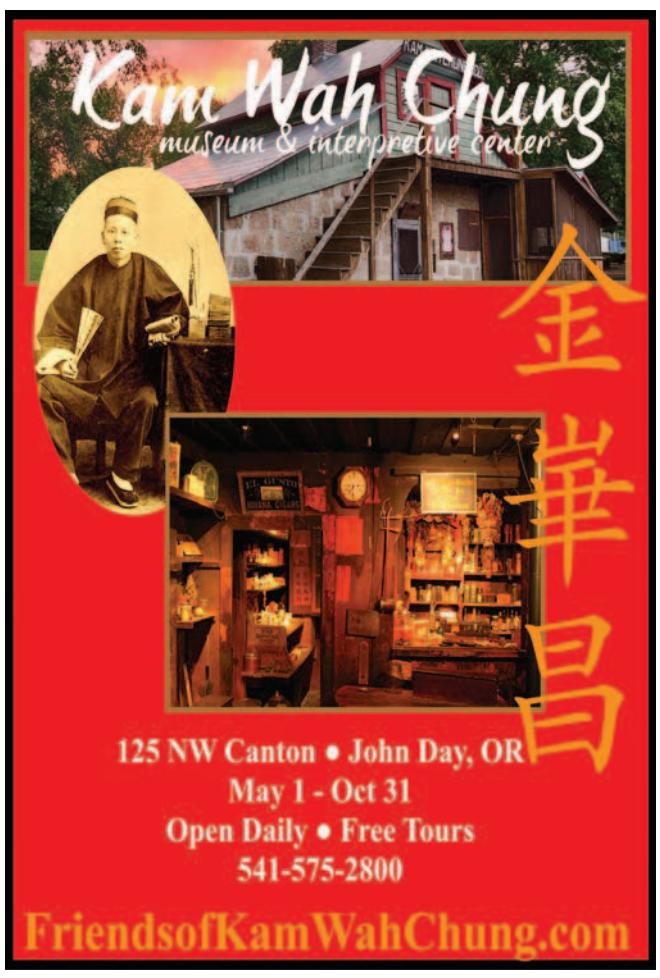

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Eagle photos/Richard Hanners

Gold dredges in the Powder River Vally removed about 128,570 troy ounces of gold. The last dredge is still intact at a state park in Sumpter.

SUMPTER VALLEY DREDGE: A MONUMENT TO AREA MINING

Machines pulled $180 million in gold from Powder River Valley at today's prices

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Rich gold diggings in the Elkhorn Mountains of Eastern Oregon drew 5,000 residents to the town of Sumpter in the early 1900s. At its height, Sumpter claimed plank sidewalks, seven hotels, 16 saloons, three newspapers, two churches, an opera house and a red light district.

A fire in 1917 burned much of the city. Today, about 175 people call Sumpter home, but the population booms during flea market events held on Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends.

The year-round daily attraction in Sumpter is the gold dredge that recovered about 128,570 troy ounces from the Powder River Valley, worth about $180 million at current prices. The Sumpter Valley Dredge State Heritage Area covers 93 acres and sees more than 100,000 visitors each year.

Citywide flea markets are set up across Sumpter for the Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends.

The last of three dredges that traveled about 8 miles across the valley starting in 1913, Sumpter No. 3 was constructed in 1935 from pieces of the second dredge, which had sat idle for a decade. Sumpter No. 3 operated until 1954.

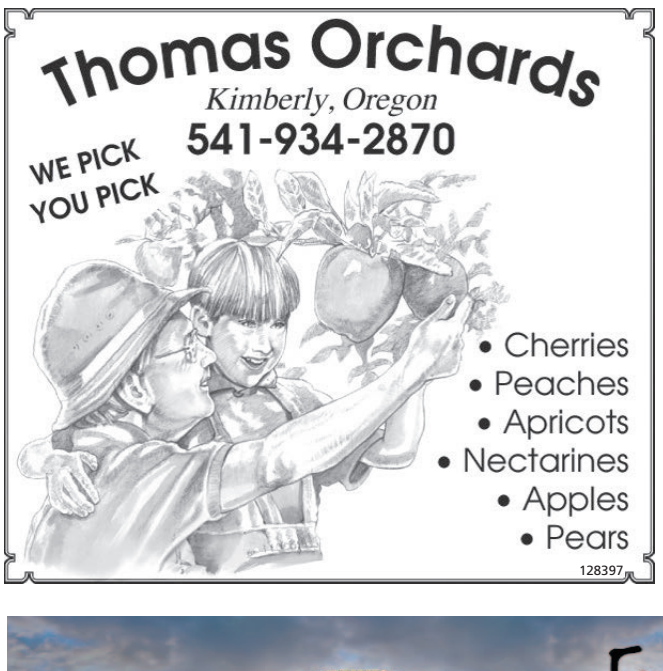
The dredge was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Restoration work began in 1995, and the state acquired the site and associated equipment and buildings for a park after that.

The principle of dredge mining is efficiency gained through volume, but it cost more to run Sumpter No. 3 than the gold could pay for, and the company was $100,000 in debt when it shut down.

It took three men to operate the machinery and another 17 for maintenance, book-

See Dredge, Page 5

With 72 one-ton buckets digging at 20 buckets per minute, gold dredges traveled about 8 miles across the Powder River Valley.



Dredge

Continued from Page 4

keeping, surveying, truck driving, management and other roles.

On the outside, a mining dredge resembles a boat floating on a pond of its own making. Projecting from the bow is a boom with 72 one-ton buckets that dug up the countryside at the rate of 20 buckets per minute. Another boom at the stern deposited tailings across the landscape that, seen from the air, resemble worm castings and can be seen for miles along State Route 7.

Inside the dredge, electrically powered machinery duplicated on a larger scale the same processes used by placer miners during the gold rush across the West. Large rocks and gravel were sifted, sorted and separated from finer minerals and then washed over a series of riffles, where gold settled and was trapped.

A film crew shot footage of Sumpter No. 3 for an episode in the 2013 television series "Ghost Mine" about a phantom called Joe Bush. Dredge workers claimed to have seen wet footprints, flickering lights and doors opening and closing on their own.

The name Joe Bush does not appear in company records, but in 1918 an oiler named Chris Rowe was crushed in the gearbox of Sumpter No. 1, and the story goes that his spirit may have ended up inside the third dredge — along with equipment from the earlier dredges.

To reach the historic dredge from John Day, drive east on Highway 26 to Austin Junction, follow State Route 7 for 25 miles, turn left on State Route 410 and drive about 4 miles to Sumpter.

The state park is open May 1 through Oct. 31 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Guided tours, gold panning lessons and other programs are offered on weekends.

Admission to the park is free. For more information, call 541-894-2472 or visit historicsumpter.com.

Eagle photos/Richard Hanners

Sumpter has several museums and a state park that present the rich history of gold mining in the Powder River Valley.

The Sumpter Valley Railroad depot in Sumpter is located on the same road that leads to the gold dredge state park site.

This machine on display at the Cracker Creek Museum of Mining in Sumpter combined a 1900-era cone crusher with a 1950s-era gasoline engine.

Citywide flea markets are set up across Sumpter for the Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends.

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A harvest of local offerings on the John Day River Food Trail

Western Grant County businesses team up to promote agritourism

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

A drive through Dayville, Kimberly, Spray, Monument and Long Creek offers an abundance of scenic views, but the area is more than just a feast for the eyes.

The prime micro climate, rich soil and water sourced from the John Day River are ingredients for an ideal area for growing crops, raising livestock and having recreational fun.

Owners of orchards, farms, ranches, beehives, stores, cafés, RV parks, Airbnbs and more are promoting the local economy while introducing visitors to what they have to offer.

A group of west-side proprietors gathered to create what they call the John Day River Food Trail, which uses Kimberly as its hub.

Beekeepers Matt Allen and Liz Lovelock, who own Apricot Apiaries in Kimberly on the Thomas Orchards property, manage 400 beehives.

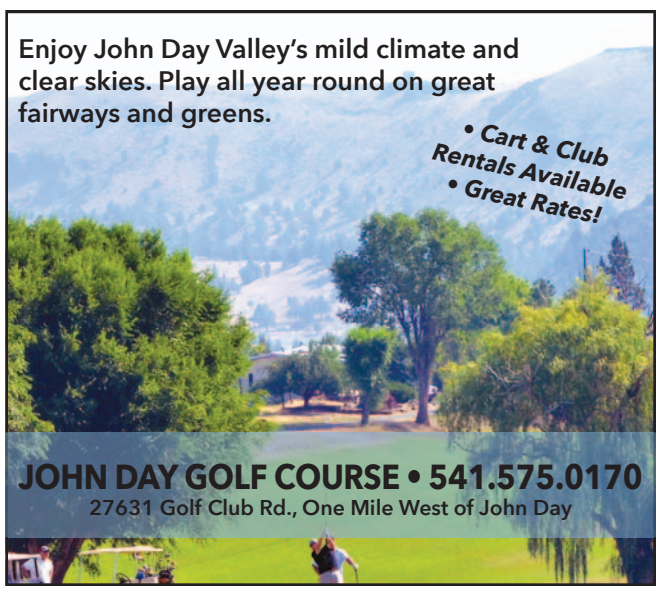
Allen and Lovelock cooperate with Jeff and Laura Thomas family and family. They own and operate Thomas Orchards, a 100-acre property at Kimberly with a diverse crop of fruit trees.

The beekeeping couple started their family business in 2012, and their blue beehive boxes are spread across 50 miles, focusing on honey production in the John Day River Basin. They keep a couple dozen beehives at Thomas Orchards and operate a stand there with a variety of honey and beeswax items, such as lip balm, salve and candles.

See Trail, Page 7

The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Pat Irwin weighs a box of nectarines at Thomas Orchards on June 29, and Christy Howell, at the cash register, helps Linde Irwin as she purchases their four boxes of fruit.



Trail

Continued from Page 6

An active hive, with busy bees at work behind glass, can also be found at the honey stand.

The bees benefit the orchards by doing what comes natural — pollinating. Other bees are trucked to pollinate almond trees in California and cherries and blueberries in the The Dalles, Hermiston and Boardman areas.

They also sell bees.

"Tomorrow morning someone is coming to pick up half a dozen queens," Allen said. "I sell mostly queens this time of year. In the springtime we sell starter colonies."

Allen said he couldn't operate his business without the mentors who have helped him over the years, so he likes to give back and in the spring and fall and lead hands-on beekeeper workshops.

The business is a part of an "agritourism" movement, which is growing in popularity and involves commercial enterprises at a working farm or ranch allowing visitors, in varying degrees, to observe and enjoy. One might just call it friendly folks sharing the work they're involved in.

Activities for those stopping by may include educational experiences, on-farm direct sales or outdoor recreation.

Thomas Orchards' well-known fruit stand opened on June 25 this season.

Located in Kimberly off of Highway 402, they're open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week, and presently, visitors can buy apricots and cherries, which they can pick themselves, if they'd like. There are also packages of dried fruit and jams.

Eagle photos/Angel Carpenter

Jeff Thomas of Thomas Orchards works at the business.

The Happy Hens Egg Farm owners Dan and Grima Horgan, located west of Dayville off of Highway 26, invite visitors to stop in and buy cage-free fresh eggs and seasonal produce.

Near the end of July peaches will also be available, followed by plums, nectarines and Bartlett pears in August. Early apples, including golden delicious, cameos and ambrosia are ready in September with peaches and pears, and through the end of October, apples and pears are still in harvest.

Jeff Thomas said his top priority is producing high-quality fruit, but he said the orchards are also a place where people have the opportunity to see how the fruit is grown.

"A lot of people have a disconnect between the city and where your food comes from," he said. "They can see how it's grown and what we do. Obviously, you want to sell fruit, and you want to educate people in what you do."

He said the "greatest generation" followed by the Baby Boomers grew up canning fruit.

"With my generation, 'the Gen Xers,' you start to see a little disconnect," he said. "We were the first generation with year-round produce — apples, grapes, tomatoes out of Mexico."

Thomas said he's now seeing millennials, in their 20s and 30s, who are part of the "buy-local movement" and want to pick and even grow their own fruit.

He's planning to host a Camp and Can event with a food preservation specialist to teach people how to can.

"It's a small part, compared to our wholesale, but it may be the most important part because people get to see where their food comes from," he said.

Happy Hens owners Grima and Dan Horgan have a "fresh eggs" sign at their driveway off of Highway 26 west of Dayville.

Grima keeps 70 cage-free chickens and grows a large garden, selling eggs and produce at her door and at the John Day Farmers Market on Saturdays through the summer months.

She said she enjoys eating fresh fruit and vegetables she grows, including watermelon, tomatoes, lettuce, cucumber, cilantro, tomatillos and more.

"It's fresh and the best taste," she said. "The things we grow are tasty."

She added, "I know what I put into the ground — no chemicals in the ground — I enjoy feeding people good stuff and no chemicals."

Rose and Darrell Howe offer a look at life on the ranch for their visitors at Triple H Homestead ranch in Monument.

They rent a five-bed bunkhouse, which looks like a barn from the outside, and guests can tag along as they work on the ranch, gathering eggs, feeding cows and pigs and making milk-based soaps and lotions.

Rose said she started equestrian clinics 10 years ago, and that's how the bunkhouse started.

She no longer hosts the clinics, but about five years ago, they made the bunkhouse a vacation rental and it is now listed as an Airbnb.

The rental includes four twin beds and a double bed with handmade quilts as well as a kitchen so visitors can do their own cooking.

"It seems to appeal to folks with young children, because they get to see me milk in the morning, they get to 'have a go' at milking," said Rose in her English accent. "They get to help feed the cows and feed the pigs, gather eggs from the hen house and, such as today — a cheese and butter-making day for me — they are welcome to come in and watch the process."

"When we know we're going to have the younger children here, I'll let them come down to the chicken house and gather the eggs from the chicken boxes," she said. "It's amazing how many children don't know where their food comes from."

Experiences such as these, and more, can be found along the John Day River Food Trail and beyond.

John Day Food Trail business owners and others include: in the Dayville area, Prairie Springs Fish Farm, Bergin's Organic Custom Seeds, Guyon Springs Inn, Fish House Inn & RV Park, Dayville Café, Dayville Merc and Happy Hens Egg Farm; in the Kimberly area, Sheep Rock Unit of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, Land's Inn Oregon, Stellar Cabin Hideaway, John Day River Trading Post, Sage River Ranch, Thomas Orchards, Apricot Apiaries, Campbell Ranch and North Fork Ranch; in Monument, Triple H Homestead and Hunter's Rendezvous; and in the Spray area, which is in neighboring Wheeler County, Nighthawk Valley Homestead and Historic Corncob Ranch.

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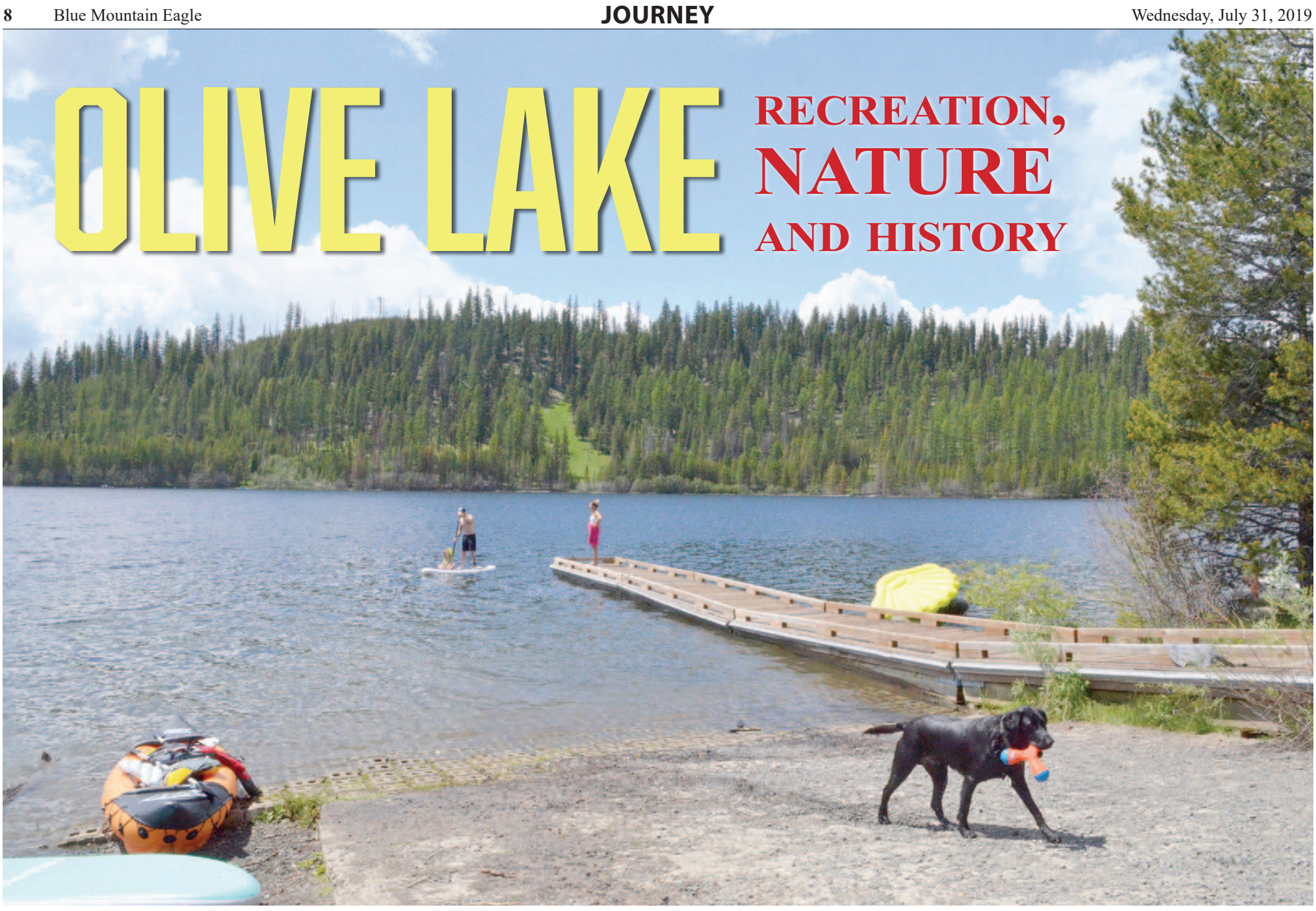

Eagle photos/Richard Hanners

Olive Lake's 160 acres of deep water offer a wide range of boating and fishing opportunities.

160 ACRES, 100 FEET DEEP AT 6,200 FEET IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Olive Lake features 28 campsites, and many were well stocked with firewood after a hazard tree mitigation project ended.

Olive Lake is unique in offering visitors a trifecta of recreation, nature watching and history all in one package.

The 160-acre, 100-foot deep lake sits at 6,200 feet elevation in the Blue Mountains about 12 miles west of the historic mining town of Granite. Legend says the lake was named for the wife of a miner or dam caretaker. Remnants of a cabin can be found in the Forest Service campground.

The campground features 28 campsites and seven accessible toilet facilities. A 2.5-mile trail circles the lake, providing access to wilderness and scenic trails, a boat ramp and two docks. No potable water or garbage service is available.

Visitors to Olive Lake will find fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, hunting and photography opportunities. Gas and electric trolling boat motors are allowed but no wakes, water skiing or personal watercraft.

Nesting osprey, swimming otters and abundant wildflowers can be seen at the lake. Anglers will find redband rainbow and brook trout up to 15 inches, the occasional Lahontan cutthroat trout and kokanee salmon up to 12 inches.

The log crib and rock dam was originally built in 1908 to increase water storage for the Fremont Powerhouse about 8 miles away. A redwood pipe at the base of the dam once brought water to the powerhouse.

The Forest Service is working on plans to fix a discharge gate in the man-made dam that stopped working properly in 2016. Half an acre around the 30-foot dam is closed to hikers and a string of buoys mark a 200-foot portion of the lake that is closed to swimmers and boaters.

The Olive Lake Campground is available on a first-come, first-served basis with fees at $12 per night for single campsites, with $5 per additional vehicle, and $25 per night for group campsites.

From John Day, drive east on Highway 26 to Austin Junction, follow State Route 7 for 25 miles, turn left on State Route 410, drive about 20 miles to Granite, turn left on County Road 24, after 3.6 miles bear right on Forest Service Road 10 and drive 7.5 miles to the lake.

For more information, call the North Fork John Day Ranger Station at 541-427-3231 or visit fs.usda.gov/umatilla.

A dam built in 1908 raised the level of Olive Lake to increase water storage for the Fremont Power Station.

Kayaking, paddleboarding and canoeing are popular pasttimes on Olive Lake.