



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest | 2023 Vol. 4

Rogue Currents



Welcome to the 2023 Edition of the Rogue Currents!

Yet another year where public lands stewards adapt to making adjustments in plans, working through challenging obstacles, and keeping sights set on the line to thread through the whitewater. 2022 was another chance to prove that when we all band together, we can problem solve, set goals (and achieve them!), and make sure we're still working towards a commonality that brings everyone together.

Thank you for being a part of our community, and working with us to solve the solvable, achieve the achievable, and uniting in those commonalities!

The Wild and Scenic Lower Rogue River is managed jointly by the Bureau of Land Management's Medford District and the USDA Forest Service's Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

The Rogue Currents Newsletter is produced biannually by the USDA Forest Service.



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Reflections: Going With the Flow, once again...

This floating season we had another variable to contend with, and not only was COVID safety in mind, now we had the Rum Creek Fire in play. As always, the first priority was the safety of employees, partners, and the public. Thankfully, the COVID pandemic eased up a bit last year, giving everyone a bit of breathing room. Some of the safety precautions implemented in the 2021 permit season remain in place this year, such as plexiglass barriers at the Visitor Centers. Outdoor portable toilets were ordered and installed. Sanitizing and mask-wearing protocols were still in place, and we are all grateful for the adherence to these safety measures to reduce spreading illnesses. After getting into the flow with safety, cleanliness and health precautions implemented for COVID in the previous year, Mother Nature threw another variable in to the river flow – lightning caused wild fire.

On August 17th, 2022 the Rum Creek fire was reported just outside of Galice, OR in the Rum Creek drainage. Firefighter suppression response was swift, but the combination of steep, harsh terrain with hot and dry late summer conditions lead to very challenging containment efforts. Crews worked endlessly to ensure the safety of the community, properties and structures that were at risk in the area. On August 26, hot and dry conditions combined with winds caused significant increases in fire activity and fire spread. As the fire grew, the communities of Rand and Galice became threatened. Teams from the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office (OSFM) and Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) arrived, and a unified command was established by Northwest Incident Management Team #13, OSFM and ODF. OSFM resources were primarily engaged in structure protection and evacuation efforts. Many properties were outfitted with sprinkler systems and structure protection wrap. By the end, the fire had affected approximately 22,000 acres.

What does the future look like? Access to Grave Creek boat launch will be limited for a while, due to debris fall hazards just past the community of Galice. A plan is in motion to get debris fall infrastructure installed in high risk areas, as well as getting the guardrails along the road repaired. The river corridor in this section will also look a bit different until vegetation regrows.



Marine 31 Patrols



Through a USFS Resource Advisory Committee grant, the **Curry County Aquatic Safety Pilot Program** was able to **assist the Gold Beach Ranger District on the RRSNF again this season.** Time was spent on the Wild and Scenic Rogue with Marine 31, as well as outreach floats on non-motorized craft and frequent visits to Foster Bar. The program is thankful for all of the hard work that the local Ranger District, the BLM, and cooperative partners put into management of the Wild and Scenic Rogue.

Marine 31 performed weekly patrols of the Wild and Scenic corridor emphasizing user contacts and compliance checks, river safety, river corridor stewardship (fire order education, site maintenance, bear fences etc.), Forest Service presence, and performed multiple gear and personnel transports throughout the season. This year, there were a few less patrols that occurred due to the jet boat being out of commission for repairs from June – August.



Will Sayne,
Gold Beach RD Recreation
Technician & Marine 31 Jet
Boat Pilot

Will performs all duties related to recreation on the RRSNF.



Luke Martinez,
Curry County Aquatic Safety
Pilot Program

Luke provides water safety outreach and education to users on the waterways and shorelines of the RRSNF within Curry County.



MARINE 31 2022 Numbers

17

Number of patrol runs Marine ran in the 2022 season



460+

Miles patrolled in the 2022 season

Aug. - Oct.



Months the Rum Creek Fire impacted, resulting in lower visitor numbers



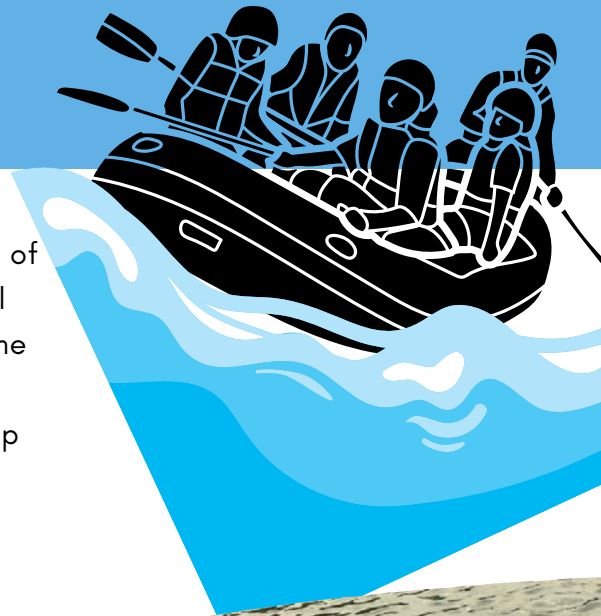
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Bear fences were installed in the early Spring, and subsequently removed in late Autumn.

Stories from the River

We are excited to announce that Steve DiCicco has been chosen as the recipient of the first RMS NW Chapter River Ranger Award in 2022!

Steve DiCicco is an amazing boatman with over 20 years of boating skills and has been working as a river ranger for the past six years on the Wild & Scenic lower Rogue River system with the Rogue River – Siskiyou Forest Service, which also includes some oversight of the W&S Illinois and Chetco Rivers. He has worked alongside BLM Rogue River Ranger crew members and this season he's been a one-man show for the Forest Service on the lower Rogue River.



Many of us who run multi-day rivers like the Rogue, and similar river systems that require human waste pack-out, understand the importance of having an available and working SCAT machine (or other waste disposal option) at the take-out! Steve has helped troubleshoot the SCAT machine at the Foster Bar Boat Ramp to ensure that it is in working order for the river users. Steve has also assisted implementing the yearly river clean up on the Rogue and Chetco Rivers with local river partnerships. He is currently a Curry County Search and Rescue member and has been involved in several rescues on the rivers, trails, and backcountry of the Southern Oregon coast. Steve patrols the rivers, ensuring safety and compliance for hundreds of thousands of Lower Rogue River and Chetco River visitors annually. He passionately and actively works with a variety of key partners, including: Oregon State Marine Board, Oregon State Police, Oregon State Parks, Curry County Sheriff's Office, local watershed councils, outfitter groups, lodge owners, landowners, the public-at-large, and the Medford District Bureau of Land Management which administers a portion of the Lower Wild and Scenic Rogue River.

Steve has made the Rogue River a place that he calls home and is always willing to lend a helping hand to the boating community. The Wild & Scenic River system wouldn't be the same without Steve's devoted dedication.



Congratulations Steve!



Some new tasks for the river rangers ...

Among several people who stepped up to provide critical assistance during the peak of fire activity, Seasonal Rec Tech Thomas Elzy. Thomas arose before dawn to issue river permits at a remote intersection for trips that were then escorted to Grave Creek boat launch via a long backroad to avoid fire traffic. Then they would launch early enough to get past helicopter fire dipping locations by a certain time. Dipping operations were not impacted and permit holders got to run their trips! Win win!

Through the extraordinary efforts of our river ranger staff and many others, permitted river trips were allowed on all but two days. Anna and Gina spent several mornings at the Rainie Falls Fish Ladder assisting boaters and their passengers safely through the notoriously tricky bottleneck. Passengers could not walk around the Falls due to active fire and associated debris danger.



August 19, 2022, River Ranger Gina Porzio (right) looks at the Rum Creek Fire, only a few days old, from the Whiskey Creek viewpoint. The Rum Creek Fire presented the River Rangers with a couple new tasks to lend their skills and expertise. River Rangers were crucial in both the suppression efforts as well as the post-fire monitoring data collection.



Gina, and Medford/Roseburg District Hazmat Lead Anna Tankersley used drift boats to transport firefighters and equipment back and forth across the Rogue River to help protect structures threatened by the Rum Creek Fire in hard to access areas.

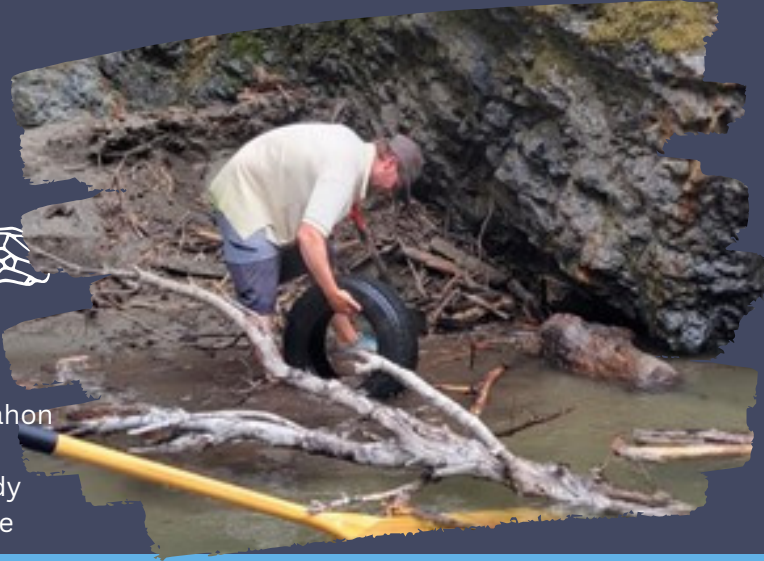
Once the Rum Creek Fire was contained, they supported a float to monitor the edge of the burn, look for hazards and support hydrologist data collection. Also on the trip were BLM Recreation Specialist Cara Hand and Freshwater Trust technician Jessica Reeves. They collected DNA from the Rogue and tributaries that would later be analyzed to identify species of animals in the water.



Some NOT so new tasks for the river rangers ...



River ranger Chris Keahon removes a tire from its muddy grave on the Rogue



Among standard duties, the River Rangers play a vital role in maintaining the Wild and Scenic river portion by removing litter that others have not. This clean up effort is kicked off at the annual Rogue River Lovers trash clean up. BLM provided trash grabbers, gloves and trash bags to the volunteers.



And... Invasive Plants

Another thing that regularly happens on the river: Invasive plant removal floats! In the pictures to the left, River Rangers, Recreation staff and Botanists remove the Ludwigia plant (top), and parrot feather watermilfoil, another non-native aquatic plant (bottom). These plants outcompete and choke out native plant species.

Thanks for your hard work!



Lower Rogue River Trail Report

The **Rogue River National Recreation Trail**, stretching 40 miles between Grave Creek and Big Bend, offers one of southwestern Oregon's most amazing hiking experiences. It serves up stunning landscape vistas, following the Lower Rogue National Wild and Scenic River along its entire length. The trail serves backpackers and boaters alike, providing a nice alternative for stiff legged boaters to stretch their legs, while serving up plenty of challenge to hardy souls that carry everything they need on their back for days at a time.

Since the trail crosses through lands administered by both the BLM and the USFS, trail maintenance has been handled in various ways over the years. Both agencies have used labor from partners and volunteer groups, agency fire crews and seasonal recreation crews.

This season, 24 miles of trail were cleared of fallen trees/debris thanks to the efforts of log out floats supported by BLM River Ranger Gina Porzio (right) with hydrologists Robert Lange (left) and Jonathan Lambert (middle) who hiked sections of the trail and cut downed timber and cleared fallen debris.

The Hydrologists set off to complete analysis of mainstem Rogue River and tributaries in the Wild and Scenic section. Lead Hydrologist Robert Lange (right) and Seasonal Hydrologist Tech James Vilgos (left) collect data on a tributary.

Thanks for the additional work!



A good river is nature's life work in song.

-MARK HELPRIN





2022 *Bear Report*

Viewing wildlife on a river trip is always exciting, but when people and bears find themselves in close proximity, it can become an issue for both the bears and the humans.

The FS and BLM developed an observation report form to assist wildlife biologists with:

- Promptly identifying aggressive bear-human interactions, and when necessary, mitigating safety concerns together with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- Educating and preventing intentional and unintentional feeding of bears;
- Encouraging food/garbage security (e.g. electric fences, food hoists, bear proof boxes); and
- Monitoring the effectiveness of bear deterrents when they are used (e.g. yelling, banging pots).

Electric fencing is installed each year at camp sites along the river that are most frequently visited by black bears in order to help prevent the bears from accessing human food. In 2022, fences were installed on both BLM and FS portions of the river May 23rd-24th, and removed by November 13th.

A total of **194 observation forms (down from 211 last year)** were received between April 26th and November 6th:

- **186** of those forms included bear sightings (up from 152 last year).
- A total of **154 adult black bears** (down from 159 last year) **and 22 cubs** (down from 74 last year) were reported*.
- The highest frequency of observations occurred at **Tacoma (16)**.
- There were **no reports** of bears showing aggressive behavior toward people, and only **two reports** of a bear coming closer than 30' away from humans.
- There were **3 incidents** where bears were able to obtain access to food due to unsecured coolers or trash left behind.
- **34 reports** of bears attempting to access food were deterred by locked coolers or people scaring them away by making noise.
- **96 reported** uses of the electric fences being utilized.

In summary, using electric fences, bear proof boxes, locked coolers, and BearVaults were very successful at keeping bears from accessing human food.

*The total number of sightings does not equate to the number of individual bears in the area since the same animal may be reported numerous times.

Introducing the partner-led Bear Canister Program!

There are a variety of ways to be Bear-aware, and not advertise that you are transporting potentially tasty snacks:

- Utilizing the electric fence storage areas that are installed every spring;
- Hoist line method;
- Lockable/bear proof coolers or storage boxes;
- Most recently a very exciting announcement: the **BearVault bear canister rental program!**

The bear canister rental program is a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service's Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Bureau of Land Management's Medford District, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State Police, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Kalmiopsis Audubon Society, Rogue Riverkeeper, and the Humane Society of the United States.

- The goal of this pilot program is to reduce human-bear conflicts, inspire personal stewardship, and foster human-bear coexistence along the Wild and Scenic Lower Rogue River.
- BearVaults can be rented online [here](#). Scroll down page to find canister rentals on the right side.

If you are keen to see some videos on how to be more Bear-aware-prepared, check out this series of [videos](#).



WELCOME TO BEAR HABITAT!

ALWAYS PROPERLY STORE ALL WILDLIFE ATTRACTANTS.

HIKERS and BOATERS:

- Store all food, trash, and other wildlife attractants properly at all times.
- Choose a method that works best for you:
 - Suspend food and garbage from a tree.
 - Use bear resistant containers.
 - Use bear fences where available.
- NEVER store attractants in your tent.
- REMEMBER: A fed bear is a dead bear.

WILDLIFE ATTRACTANTS INCLUDE:

- Food and beverages, uncleaned grills and cookware
- Pet food
- Fish carcasses and parts
- Scented items like soap, candles, deodorant and toothpaste
- Garbage

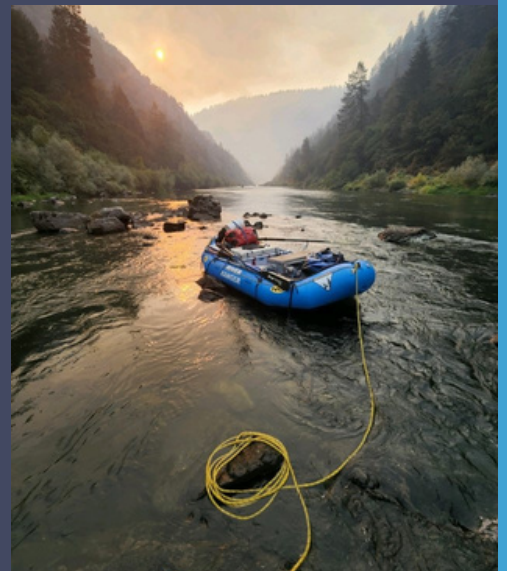
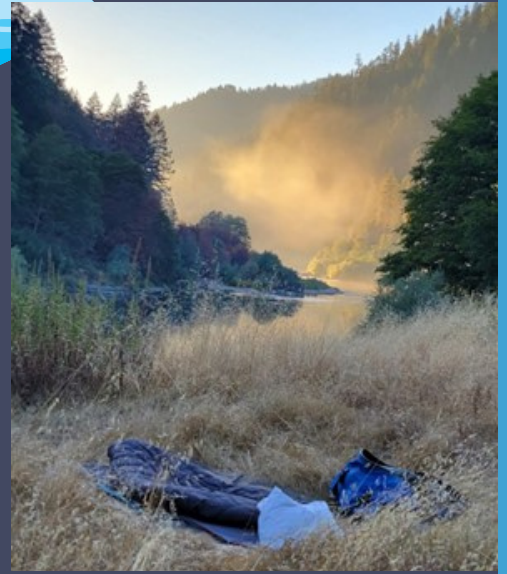
IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR,

- Remain calm. Do not approach the bear. In most cases, the bear will flee.
- Stand your ground and face the bear.
- Identify yourself as human by talking in a calm tone of voice.
- Back away slowly.
- Never run. Although unlikely, it is possible that running could invite pursuit.

DO YOUR PART TO PROTECT BEARS AND PEOPLE.



On the River



**Todd Neville, BLM Assistant Field Manager--Recreation**

About: I supervise and support the Rogue WSR permit program, and the staff involved at Rand Visitor Center, River Rangers, and Maintenance crew.

Email: cneville@blm.gov

**Patrick Kollodge, BLM Crew Lead River Ranger**

About: I am in charge of day-to-day river ranger operations, including scheduling, training, equipment and project coordination.

Email: pkollodge@blm.gov

**Ryan Collins, BLM Rogue River Commercial Permit Administrator**

About: Living the dream! I have worked for the BLM for the past 5 years as the Non-Commercial Permit Administrator at the Rand Visitor Center.

Email: rpcollins@blm.gov

A river doesn't just carry water, it carries life.

-AMIT KALANTRI



Meet and Greet

**Michael Appling, RRSNF Gold Beach District Ranger (Acting)**

About: Serving as Line Officer & Manager of the Gold Beach Ranger District of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

Email: michael.appling@usda.gov

**Amy Hartell, Recreation Program Manager for Gold Beach & Powers RDs**

About: Provides supervision and support to the recreation staff involved with the Rogue WSR permit program.

Email: amy.hartell@usda.gov

Steve DiCicco RRSNF Gold Beach Recreation Tech

About: I row rafts for the Forest Service and team up with the BLM for joint float patrols. You can find me digging and sawing on the Rogue River Trail, too!

Email: stephen.dicicco@usda.gov

**John B. Newman, RRSNF River Permit Manager/Special Uses Administrator**

About: "Newman" joined the recreation team in January 2021. He came to us from the Snake River, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in Clarkston, WA.

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