



May 19, 2020

Dear FOM members and contributors,

I'm writing to ask you to help get the word out that, like all of us, the Metolius needs protection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the warmer weather here in Camp Sherman, we are seeing extraordinarily high numbers of visitors at the Metolius, both from Oregon and out of state. As just one example, on the Saturday of Mother's Day weekend we counted 50 cars parked at Lower Bridge. The US Forest Service's order that closed developed recreation sites on the river noted that the Deschutes Forest experiences "extremely high levels of recreation use" and will likely become "increasingly congested" as a result of COVID-19. The increased visitor numbers, combined with closed recreation sites, puts tremendous pressure on fragile resources in the basin.

In response to these pressures, the Oregon Health Authority's guidance for outdoor recreation asks agencies to:

Encourage the public to visit parks and recreation areas close to home, avoid overnight trips and minimize travel outside their immediate area for recreation. Especially caution the public to not travel outside of their home area if they live in an area with a high number of reported COVID-19 cases to prevent asymptomatic COVID-19 positive individuals from inadvertently bringing the virus into an area with many fewer cases.

As a result, we are encouraging our members and contributors to get the word out that if at all possible, consider deferring trips to the Metolius until other recreational opportunities open up and visitor numbers begin declining. This will help protect the river from overuse, as well as protect all of us from situations where responsible social distancing becomes impossible.

As I noted in the December 2019 newsletter, when the Metolius Wild and Scenic River Management Plan was adopted in 1995 it recognized that the river was already at its carrying capacity in terms of visitor numbers. Now, with many recreational and leisure activities limited by COVID-19 closures, we are seeing even more pressure on the river. Please join us in helping to preserve this amazing resource so that when you do visit, the Metolius is as unspoiled and pristine as you remember.

Sincerely,

Friends of the Metolius