

## **Determination to Change Crater Lake National Park Regulations**

Consistent with applicable legislation and Federal administrative policies, and based upon a determination that such action is necessary for the maintenance of public health and safety, protection of environmental or scenic values, protection of natural or cultural resources, aid to scientific research, implementation of management responsibilities, equitable allocation and use of facilities, or the avoidance of conflict among visitor use activities, the Superintendent makes the following changes to Crater Lake National Park Regulations.

### **Regulation change:**

Effective 2015, the park will annually designate the last two Saturdays in September as Vehicle Free Days on the East Rim Drive. This is not a special event sponsored by an outside group, but a park designated activity in keeping with the park's approved General Management Plan and Record of Decision to provide alternate non-motorized recreational activities, specifically along East Rim Drive.

To accommodate the designated Vehicle Free Days, the following annual restrictions and conditions will be in place on the East Rim Drive the last two Saturdays in September:

- From approximately one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset each of these days the road will be restricted to non-motorized travel only. The only exceptions would be for motorized wheel chairs utilized by mobility impaired visitors and administrative or emergency use by authorized personnel.
- The restriction will be in place on the East Rim Drive from North Junction to the Park Headquarters/Visitor Center Area. The restriction will include Pinnacles Road which is located off the restricted portion of the East Rim Drive.
- To accommodate the Vehicle Free Days, the Lost Creek Campground will be closed from approximately 3:00 PM on Friday one hour before sunset on Saturday each of the two weekends.
- Parking for visitors will be available at North Junction and at a gravel parking lot 1/4 mile south of Park Headquarters.
- The North Entrance Road, West Rim Drive, Munson Valley Road and Highway 62 through the park will remain open for normal vehicular traffic on these days, weather and road conditions allowing.

### **2. Previous regulation(s) affected by this change:**

None.

### **3. Date of Adoption: March 2, 2015**

#### 4. Reasons for change:

The designation of Vehicle Free Days is in response to significant interest from the public, the Oregon Congressional delegation, and stakeholder groups to provide opportunities to experience the beauty, quiet and solitude of Crater Lake without the intrusion of motor vehicles during the summer season and to provide for a safer environment for non-motorized users to enjoy the same. The designation is also in keeping with the recommendations of the 2005 Record of Decision for the Park's General Management Plan which directed the park to develop "new opportunities along Rim Drive [which] will allow visitors to directly experience the primary resource of Crater Lake in ways other than driving. Any new uses around the rim will be non-motorized and low impact. Opportunities to experience the lake by hiking and biking in a quieter setting will be explored by experimental seasonal road closures of East Rim Drive." See *Record of Decision (ROD) on the Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement for Crater Lake National Park, Oregon, August 31, 2005*. The Vehicle Free Days are also in keeping with the park's goals to promote and increase climate friendly and green modes of transportation in the park and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The days and times were chosen in late September for the following reasons:

- Coincides with traditionally lower park visitation at that time of year.
- Consists of the two Saturdays immediately following the end of the summer Crater Lake boat tours as set by the annual concession operating plan.
- The last Saturday in September is also National Public Lands Day each year for which entrance fees to all national parks, including Crater Lake, are waived for visitors.
- Provides two separate Saturdays for the vehicle free activities to best guarantee against adverse weather conditions on one or the other.
- Allows time each day following the restrictions for visitors in motor vehicles to travel the East Rim Drive prior to sunset and also allows regular access to East Rim Drive for all transportation methods on Sunday of each weekend.

Less restrictive measures were considered, but were determined to be insufficient to provide the intended recreational opportunities in a safe manner for the following reasons:

- Allowing motor vehicle access by the public on one-lane in a one-way fashion or a shuttle operating in a one-way fashion were the only other feasible alternatives and it was determined that either system would result in extreme safety hazards to the potentially hundreds or thousands of bicyclists and pedestrians on the roadway. There is no bike or walking lane provided on or adjacent to the roadway. With the number of participants expected serious accidents and injuries would be a high probability. Many bicyclists and hikers will not be able to complete the 24 mile distance so this will result in those individuals traveling in both directions on the roadway. Keeping them to one lane would be problematic with bicyclists trying to go different directions in the same lane also shared with pedestrians going both directions if those groups were limited to one lane and motor vehicles to the other. The park has experience with such a system during the annual Rim Run running races, a special event held in the park since 1975. For several years now the one-way traffic system around the rim has been in use during this race. This system only works as all runners go in one

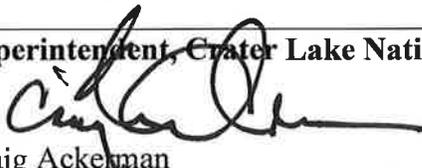
direction in one lane and vehicles proceed in another direction in the other lane. That event is for a shorter period of time and sections of road are reopened as soon as runners have passed. The Vehicle Free Days would be a less controlled group of participants and could not be managed in such a fashion with persons/bicycles going both directions. The Rim Run is also a labor intensive event to manage and the park is able to conduct the operation only due to additional staff that works the event on lieu days with the costs borne by the permittee for the Rim Run. The Vehicle Free Days can be best conducted safely and efficiently without the need of a large number of additional staff through the temporary restriction of motor vehicles on the East Rim Drive during the times specified.

- The Record of Decision for the Park's General Management Plan which underwent public review and comment directed the park to develop opportunities along Rim Drive to allow visitors to experience the resource of Crater Lake in ways other than driving. Any less restrictive measures would have included allowing motor vehicles in some fashion and would be counter to the Record of Decision and the Park's approved General Management Plan.

**5. Effective Date(s):** Until further notice.

**6. Authority for adoption:** Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR, Part 1.5

**Superintendent, Crater Lake National Park**

  
Craig Ackerman

**Date:**

3/25/2015