

MEET THE MONUMENT MANAGER

In Celebration of Newberry National Volcanic Monument



Introducing Scott McBride

A Conversation Between Discover Your Forest's Marketing & Events Director, Amy Jensen, and Scott McBride, Monument Manager and Developed Recreation Team Leader for the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District on the Deschutes National Forest

We were able to sit down with the Monument Manager and Developed Recreation Team Leader for the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District on the Deschutes National Forest, Scott McBride, for a conversation about the Monument from a management perspective. Scott's path to his current position came from a variety of previous positions centered around his passion for recreation and wilderness management with the Forest Service. These positions gave him experience in, and a love for, excellent public service; specifically in providing high quality recreation opportunities, protecting special places and inspiring people of all ages to care for and advocate for public lands.

DYF: Scott, you've been the Monument Manager for the Newberry National Volcanic Monument (NNVM) for a decade now. You've had plenty of time to explore the little known places, and appreciate seasonal changes 10 times over. Where is your absolute favorite place on the Monument?

Scott: Being drawn to moving water, I love standing at the lower viewpoint below Paulina Falls in the Newberry Caldera. The vegetation, cool air, stellar view and the geologic story of the twin falls, make this site a true gem. Paulina Falls is the only accessible location you can see the 75,000 year old deposits from a Caldera forming eruption and pyroclastic flow. There is a lot of competition out there at Newberry when considering the Big Obsidian Flow, Lava Butte and the vistas of Paulina Peak. But all considered, this spot has my vote...for now.

DYF: Central Oregon is home to a vast array of geologic features - you can see the difference in landscape even traveling from west of Bend, to east of Bend. What do you think sets the Monument apart from other areas of the forest in Central OR?

Scott: Newberry has an incredibly rich variety of volcanic features that are very accessible to visitors. This offers tremendous grounds for



learning about this region's volcanic legacy as a whole, as well as the impressive role Newberry Volcano has had on shaping the ecology, culture and landscape of Central Oregon. When you cross-walk this with the multiple ways visitors can recreate and engage with the landscape throughout the year, it's clear that Newberry will have an ever increasing importance in providing opportunities for residents and visitors from across the globe.

DYF: Speaking of visitors, it's worth noting that NNVM draws more than 270,000 visitors annually. What areas of the Monument are most heavily visited from late spring to early fall?

Scott: Late spring draws an intense interest by fishermen and fisherwomen, anxious to cast their lines at Paulina and East lake after the lakes thaw from the winter freeze. Others who are excited about hiking and biking will seek out the trails around the Lava Butte area and Lava Cast Forest until the Caldera snow recedes enough to offer its riches to hikers, bikers and equestrians. From Memorial Day to Labor day, visitation intensifies and is spread between a number of higher developed areas including Lava Lands and Paulina Visitor Centers, Lava River Cave, Lava Butte, the 6 campgrounds in the Caldera and the resorts, who operate under special use permits. In the fall, all uses continue across the Monument and the crowds are replaced with smaller numbers, typically more local residents as well as those desiring and able to travel outside of peak tourism season.

DYF: There are annual road closures due to inclement weather, but the Monument continues to be a recreation destination for winter sports enthusiasts as well. What are some of those opportunities?

Scott: Snowmobiling is an activity that was recognized and allowed at this Monument upon its designation in 1990. This as well as Nordic skiing and snowshoeing are all popular winter activities at Newberry Caldera when the conditions are right. Luckily this area doesn't feel crowded in the backcountry, even when the 10 Mile Sno-Park is full of vehicles!

DYF: Ok, so we can imagine what a day at Newberry could look like for visitors, but what does it look like for a Monument Manager?

Scott: Great question! A typical work day has dramatic variety through the year. Generally, I aspire to keep vision on long-term strategies while actively working, guiding and positively influencing the important public service work occurring each and every day. This means that within any given day I may be involved with planning or implementing programs centered around conservation education, visitor and interpretive services, recreation facility improvement and maintenance, collaborating with partners, serving on environmental analysis teams, historic structure preservation, health and safety for visitors and staff, forming teams and leading them through ongoing change, learning from mistakes and the past, listening to visitors,

swimming in my appreciation for working for the public here in Central Oregon and anchoring into gratitude for being able to work alongside the talent and passion of the staff, volunteers and partners of the Deschutes National Forest.

DYF: It sounds like there are many complexities that can affect what needs to be done to manage a site like this. Can you tell us a little bit about how governmental, environmental, intra-agency etc. shifts affect the work that happens in a public land site like NNVM? What are some of the challenges that you are faced with?

Scott: The number of challenges are layering and expanding it seems. NNVM is a congressionally designated area established by legislation through Congress, which means that it has its own comprehensive management plan. Meeting the vision, goals and objectives are the foundational challenges which are laid out clearly. We are doing well in many of those areas - including implementing numerous restoration projects across the landscape, interpreting the outstanding resources at Newberry and providing for high quality recreation opportunities. We don't rest on these successes, rather continue to improve and expand upon those areas of success. We do so by looking to where we can expand partnerships, monitoring conditions and change, and striving for the optimum workforce to meet the needs of this and future generations in community with the residents of Central Oregon.

The layering of challenges starts to occur when large agents of change introduce themselves on a regular and recurring basis. As a society, we are finally comprehending and starting to address impacts of climate change and the direct effects it has on Newberry, Oregon and the rest of the planet. We are witnessing those effects today. Extreme weather events, catastrophic wildfires and the preparedness that comes with responding to the threat, meeting demands of extended spring and fall seasons of recreation use, and shifting to incorporate our local vulnerability to climate change. This takes immense project planning to ensure the work we are doing contributes positively to this threat to all species on the planet. It is important for people to know the multi-year ripple effects of government shutdowns. When this happens, it throws systems and coordination processes critical to efficient and sound land management into a spin. Shutdowns bring unnecessary stress, massive inefficiencies, failures and frustrations for staff, the public, permit holders and

contractors alike. As I sit here, we are facing the possibility of yet another congressional budget impasse and looming shutdown possibility. The unforeseen challenges associated with the pandemic have tested our resilience and abilities to pivot towards making decisions with public and staff health and safety as paramount. This has resulted in staggering losses in ability to continue operations expected by visitors, many of which support local economies. With a country divided in values and beliefs, we are sometimes on the receiving end of complaints and frustrations from multiple viewpoints. With these huge challenges, there are of course smaller scale challenges that we collectively rise to, we keep an eye out for and support each other, care genuinely and simply do the best we can with the resources available to us in a given day.



DYF: Certainly in a year like this one, it is easy to notice and name the challenges. What are some of the things you've seen change over your 10 years in this position that you are particularly proud of?

Scott: One of the most significant changes I have been a part of is the strengthening of our partnership with Discover Your Forest (DYF). As a nonprofit, DYF is able to assume critical roles and carry out functions on the Deschutes National Forest that the government is either not able to do, or not able to do well. What this means is that our ability to communicate to visitors, grow other partnerships, educate youth, inspire visitors and spark advocacy for public lands has evolved in

incredibly positive ways. Most notable is our exploded collective capacity to recruit, train, coach and meaningfully thank the citizens who volunteer to care for the land and serve the public alongside the Forest Service staff and partners. In addition, there have been impressive strides and investment into the renovation of recreation facilities including reconstruction of Lava Lands Visitor Center, the recent completion of the replacement of Lava River cave stairs and boardwalk, numerous

interpretive trail improvements, accessibility improvements and historic structure restoration. Lastly, starting in 2019 the Forest Service took a solid step towards long-term investment into Newberry's visitors, programs and facilities by resuming management of the day to day operations of 9 Newberry area campgrounds. I have been very pleased to hear the consistent positive comments from visitors, and see the Forest Service and Discover Your Forest rise in partnership to meet the expectations of our camping visitors at Newberry.

DYF: It is a partnership that we are all very proud to be part of! I know that I can speak on behalf of the rest of the Discover Your Forest team in saying that it has been an encouragement to see a couple of goals checked off the long-term list in a year like 2020. What are some of your hopes for the future of NNVM?

Scott: I hope that Newberry continues to be a place where kids flock to learn and become Jr. Rangers, a place where visitors and residents alike refresh their spirit and maintain wellness, a refuge for wildlife, and a place well cared for, managed and loved by residents of Central Oregon. I would like to see continued and consistent investment in critical facilities to replace aged and failing systems in the Caldera. I need to see that accessibility on the Monument is fully to standard and there are little to no barriers for visitors of all abilities to engage with the wonders of Newberry. I would like to see positive stories and connections with the natural world unfold for families that have visited for decades.

DYF: Scott, can you share with us any of the long-term plans/goals that are currently in the works for the Monument?

Scott: Yes! The planning is never ending. We have submitted a number of proposals for funding which would bring accessibility on the Monument to standards and make tremendous strides in universal access design. This would include restroom replacements and retrofitting, access pathways, picnic table and fire pit replacements, visitor center access improvements and trails enhancements to name a few initiatives. Marine facilities are needing to be updated and replaced, and proposals around those improvements are also in process. An ongoing project will leap towards completion in 2021, centered around restoring the Odd Fellows Cabins in Newberry Group camp

to recreation rental quality and bring them forward as a new opportunity for visitors in the near future. I believe we will see a reservation system in the future at Lava River Cave to help address intense interest at this treasure. Master planning around youth engagement, particularly in the Lava Lands area is still needed. Currently, there is great anticipation and excitement around collaborative efforts with the Deschutes Trails Coalition towards expanding, reconstructing and maintaining the trails network at Newberry, and the possibilities that might lie in that project.

DYF: Thank you again to Scott McBride for taking the time to tell us more about the Newberry National Volcanic Monument from the management perspective. We will see you on the Monument!



Scott & Lead Ranger Ralph Saunders enjoying the eclipse

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