Protecting Cultural, Environmental, and State Resources at Crump Lake

The Oregon Department of State Lands is working to protect cultural resources and artifacts and prevent impacts to the environment and state property in and around Crump Lake, located in Lake County. There is currently an emergency closure in place and DSL is exploring options for long-term solutions to protect the area in future dry years. The following document provides additional background and information on next steps.

History of Impacts to Resources
In recent years, drought has caused water levels in Crump Lake to fluctuate exposing the lakebed. During such conditions, the Department of State Lands has periodically received reports from Burns Paiute Tribe, Oregon State Police, and nearby leaseholders of individuals entering the lakebed and removing, damaging, or destroying cultural, environmental, and state resources.

The reports describe irreparable damage and loss of historic and cultural resources, including the looting of artifacts and protected funerary objects. In pursuit of these objects, artifact hunters have dug and cut into the lakebed. The activities have also impacted surrounding state property; fences have been cut and at least one gate destroyed.

Emergency Closure to Public Access
On July 11, 2022, Vicki Walker, Director of the Department of State Lands, enacted a 180-day emergency closure of publicly-owned lands in and around Crump Lake (OAR 141-088-0007). The closure restricts public access to these lands, including any foot traffic and motor vehicle use. Users with permission from DSL may access the land for administrative or land management purposes.

A previous emergency closure in 2021 helped decrease damage to resources; however, the closure has since expired. The Department has determined more time is needed to gather information that will inform permanent rulemaking to address and prevent future vandalism and looting of protected resources.

To inform the public of the closure, the Department has posted onsite signage. DSL is also distributing a news release and placing a public notice in The Oregonian and a local newspaper. We encourage our partners to help us spread the word.

Future Rulemaking and Long-Term Solutions
The Department has been exploring the use of satellite mapping to assess water levels at Crump Lake. Data collected will inform future development of permanent rulemaking in which a closure is triggered once the mapping shows water levels dropping past a certain point. Collaborative engagement with affected communities and stakeholders will be integral as we work to develop enduring solutions that can be implemented before lake levels rise and fall once more. We look forward to listening and working toward shared solutions.