Forest Service Christmas Tree Permits Now Available

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Retail outlets and Forest Service offices throughout Central Oregon are now selling permits to harvest Christmas trees from the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests.

About 7,000 Christmas tree permits were sold in Central Oregon last year. More than half the proceeds from the sale of permits will be retained for use on the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests.

The permits can be purchased for $5 at Forest Service offices and at some retail outlets. A validated permit must be attached to each tree that is transported, with a maximum of five per household.

Permit holders can harvest any tree species shorter than 12 feet on national forests. They cannot cut trees within Forest Service nurseries and plantations, or within 150 feet of highways or 300 feet of streams.

Paul Brna, sale preparation specialist for the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests, said Oregon Department of Transportation Sno-Park permits are required to park on some highways. He recommends people use national forest maps to stay oriented and off private property that often abuts public land.

Forest Service officials also encourage people to hike or cross-country ski away from roads to collect trees. Dogs are not permitted on Deschutes National Forest trails north of the Cascade Lakes Highway from Todd Lake east to Meissner Sno-Park, according to Chris Sabo, Bend/Fort Rock Ranger District trails coordinator.

The restriction started in the mid-1980s to reduce user conflicts on the trails from November to May. Sabo said winter trail users can further reduce conflicts by not hiking or using snowshoes on cross-country ski tracks.

Christmas tree harvesters can find pine trees near Bend and Sisters at lower elevations, and firs and cedars in higher country. Pines around Prineville grow on south and west slopes, whereas firs and cedars are on slopes facing north or east.

The publication "Guidelines for Collecting Your Christmas Tree" and instructions printed on permits give additional information on Christmas tree harvesting. Forest Service officials also recommend:

â€¢ Checking weather and road conditions before departing.

â€¢ Dressing warmly, and packing water, food, tools and a first-aid kit.

â€¢ Letting friends know your travel plans and expected return time.

â€¢ Equipping party members with a signal whistle and being aware of their location.

â€¢ Driving a well-maintained vehicle, equipped for winter driving.

Christmas Tree Permits can be purchased this year at the following locations:

Bend: Deschutes National Forest Headquarters, Bend/Fort Rock Ranger Station, G.I. Joe's, Butler Market South, and Bend Visitor and Convention Bureau

Camp Sherman: Camp Sherman Store on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays

Crescent: Crescent Ranger Station

La Pine: Quick Stop

Madras: Crooked River National Grassland office and Madras Bi-Mart

Paulina: Rager Ranger Station on the Paulina Ranger District and the Paulina Store

Prineville: Ochoco National Forest Headquarters and R&R Grocery

Redmond: Redmond Air Center administration office

Sisters: Sisters Ranger Station, Lutton's Ace Hardware and The Hitchinâ€™ Post

Terrebonne: Terrebonne True Value Hardware

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