



Andy Cripe | Gazette-Times  
Randi Hinkley, 8, of Corvallis displays a rough-skinned newt she found during a family outing at Alsea Falls on Sunday.

## Fee increases proposed for Alsea Falls

By KYLE ODEGARD  
Gazette-Times reporter

Cloudy skies and even a few raindrops didn't keep people from wading and even swimming at Alsea Falls on Sunday afternoon.

"It's beautiful," said Felicia Ammons of Corvallis, as she looked over gently terraced waterfalls surrounded by a lush green forest. "We come up here and go camping. Today, for my husband's Father's Day, we decided to go up here and go fishing."

Plenty of other family members came along for the day trip, including Ammons' eight-year-old niece, Randi Hinkley, of Corvallis. "Lookit," she exclaimed, holding up a rough-skinned newt. "There's a whole bunch of animals."

Splashing around at the scenic spot and discovering

critters is going to get slightly more spendy.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has proposed a \$3 per vehicle day use fee for Alsea Falls Recreation Site, as well as slightly increasing camping fees from \$10 to \$12 per night for most sites, effective 2010.

The popular spot, which attracts an estimated 36,500 people every spring and summer, currently doesn't have a day use fee.

This year, the agency shortened the recreation site's season because of budget issues, said Traci Meredith, BLM recreation planner. It previously was open from Mother's Day weekend to Sept. 30, but that changed from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend for 2009.

A handful of other nearby BLM sites, including four spots in Tillamook County, also have shortened their seasons by about a month.

Ammons said she wouldn't mind paying the day use fee, but said the camping fee shouldn't be increased.

Her father, Tim Montgomery of Albany, bristled at any increases. Camping and enjoying the outdoors used to be free when he was a kid, he explained.

"Every time you turn around, there's always a fee around," he said.

Zack and Rebecca Palmer of Eugene, who were visiting Alsea Falls for the first time on Sunday, said they'd support the fee increases if they went to help maintain the area. "So many of the parks have a day use fee," Zack Palmer said.

Meredith said the increased fees would go for budget items such as maintenance, facilities enhancements and to pay the camp host. The price to operate the recreation site seems to increase every year, but its funding hasn't kept pace, Meredith added.

Four other sites in the Salem District of the BLM, such as Yellowbottom and Old Miner's Meadow, up the Quartzville corridor northeast of Sweet Home, also are considering campground fee increases for 2010.

The BLM also wants to cut down numerous trees at the Alsea Falls Recreation Site, in late 2010, to improve forest health.

**At a glance**

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: From Corvallis, take Highway 99W south 15 miles. Turn west on Alpine Road and drive to the town of Alpine. Continue along Alpine Road for nine miles to the Alsea Falls campground

NOTABLE: The 15 camp sites are available on a first-come first-served basis.

ODDS AND ENDS: Spring board notches, from loggers cutting down huge trees decades ago, are still visible on stumps along the hiking trails.

MORE INFORMATION: See [www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site\\_info.php?siteid220](http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site_info.php?siteid220).

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