



Oregon Wild

Waldo Lake

Gem of the Cascades

One of the largest natural lakes in Oregon, and the second deepest, Waldo Lake is the source of the nationally designated Wild and Scenic North Fork of the Middle Fork Willamette River. A true gem of the Cascade Mountains, Waldo Lake is surrounded on three sides by the 39,000-acre Waldo Lake Wilderness, designated by Congress in 1984 to protect the area's outstanding forests, scenic mountains, and backcountry recreation values.

Where purity meets peace and quiet

Waldo is located 60 miles southeast of Eugene in the Willamette National Forest. Despite being relatively close to an urban population center, Waldo Lake and its surrounds have remained predominately wild. The lake itself is a natural wonder; scientists have determined that the blue waters of Waldo are among the purest in the world.

Waldo's waters are so pure that boaters can see to depths of up to 120 feet on a calm, sunny day.

Waldo Through Time

1970s: The first paved roads leading to Waldo's shores are built along with the first developed campgrounds

1984: The 39,000-acre Waldo Lake Wilderness is officially protected as part of the Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984

1998: Waldo Lake user survey shows that almost 90% of lake visitors use no form of motorized recreation at the lake

2000: Water quality studies show that pollution has diminished the purity of the lake, although overall water quality still remains high

2000: Waldo Lake Basin Plan Committee recommends phasing out gas motors on the lake

2001: The North Fork of the Middle Fork of the Willamette River which flows from Waldo Lake is designated as a Wild and Scenic River

2001: The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) makes decision to restrict gas motor use on the lake, public comments strongly support decision

2002: USFS backs down from ban, succumbing to pressure from gas motor advocates

2004: USFS initiates new planning process for Waldo Lake management and carries out new Environmental Assessment

July 2007: USFS officially decides to ban gas motor use on Waldo Lake

July 2009: Gas motor scheduled to go into effect, but a legal challenge by motor advocates postponed implementation

January 2010: In cooperation with the Forest Service, the State Marine Board votes to adopt a new rule banning gas motors on Waldo Lake.

2011: Another lawsuit from pro-motor interests threatens the rule.

March 2012: The Oregon State Marine Board votes to reconsider its 2010 motor ban rule and opens a new comment period.

Brizz Meddings

Natural wonder at risk

In the 1970s, new roads to the lake fueled a surge in visitors and an increase in potentially harmful activities such as motor boating, snowmobiling, and general overuse. Recent studies have shown that Waldo's waters are not as pure as they once were. The Forest Service is taking steps to protect the water by removing sewage from campgrounds, controlling erosion on the lakeshore, and removing gas motors from the lake.

Protecting Waldo's purity

Responding to pressure from Oregon Wild, fishing groups, and other concerned citizens, the USFS moved to ban gas motor use on Waldo Lake in 2001. Despite the fact that surveys showed the lake was predominantly used by those in human powered craft, a vocal minority of gas motor users protested and the Forest Service ultimately rescinded their decision. However, questions over deteriorating water quality persisted and in 2007 the Forest Service again determined that gas motors were incompatible with the pristine nature of Waldo Lake. Continued legal action required the USFS to work with the State Marine Board to develop a new rule banning gas motors, which was finally implemented in 2010, enhancing protections for Oregon's Cascade gem.

Oregon Wild could not have fought tirelessly since the 1970s to protect Waldo Lake without the support of members like you. Help us continue fighting for Oregon's wildlands, wildlife, and waters - *become a member today!*



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