



Photo: Lara Pettigrew-Stokes

# News from the Trail

January 2017

## WINTER CLUB ACTIVITIES

### A Winter Wonderland – Exploring the Great Outdoors in Eastern Oregon

By Lisa Jacoby

The Wallowa Mountains, so well-known for summertime hiking, morph into a winter wonderland once the snow starts to pile up and familiar landmarks disappear beneath feet of the white stuff.

"It's a whole different world up there in the wintertime," says Whitey Bloom, who lives in Halfway.

He is a member of the Panhandle Snowmobile Club, one of several such clubs in Eastern Oregon that maintain hundreds of miles of snowmobile trails in the wintertime. Outside of Halfway, the club grooms 280 miles of trails — but that's just a small portion of the available area for snowmobiling.

"The groomed trails are just a small part of it," Whitey says. "A lot of people use the groomed trails to get up higher. That's where we do something we like to call "boondockin" — riding out through the trees and up the hills where there are no groomed trails.

"When the snow conditions are right, you can go almost anywhere," says Whitey.

The Panhandle Club publishes a map of snowmobile trails which is available at snowmobile dealerships in Baker City, as well as businesses in Halfway.

Although a couple feet of snow is sufficient for riding the groomed trails, Whitey said four or more feet is preferred for off-road adventures



Photo courtesy of: EOU Outdoor Adventure Program

so fallen trees and other obstacles are covered.

"The more snow, the better," he says. "Early in the season you have to be careful where you go."

The Fish Lake area above Cornucopia is one of the more popular places to snowmobile, and Whitey said last year saw 11 feet of snow — and some years as much as 20 feet.

"The best elevation for snowmobiling is 6,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level. That's where the snow gets deep," he says.

The Halfway area, and up towards Joseph, were recently included in a list of "fifteen extraordinary snowmobiling destinations to check out this winter" on the website

[bestsnowmobiletrails.com](http://bestsnowmobiletrails.com). The small Eastern Oregon town sees an influx of visitors in the winter, drawn by the snowmobile trails.

"It's a pretty good economic boost to Halfway," Whitey says.

In addition to grooming trails, snowmobile clubs provide a way for fellow adventure-seekers to meet others who enjoy the same hobby. That's what happened to Whitey when he moved to Halfway in 2002.

"I got here and someone said, 'Hey, come down and join the snowmobile club.' So I said, 'Sure — what the heck?'"

Membership is \$45, with a portion going to membership in the Oregon State Snowmobile Association (OSSA).

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Photo courtesy of Panhandle Club

Whitey says being a member means you have quite a few potential friends to go riding — a boon for safety as much as social reasons.

“For safety reasons, it's not a good idea to go by yourself,” he says. “If your sled gets stuck, you can dig out but it can take awhile, especially in deep powder.”

Whitey said most snowmobilers have safety gear, including avalanche beacons and walkie-talkies to stay in contact (cell phone coverage is spotty in the Wallowas). A Global Positioning System (GPS) is also handy.

“You get into the cloud or it starts snowing and you can get turned around,” Whitey says.

The Panhandle Club also organizes training on avalanches and search and rescue for its members. As for club rides, he said informal ones are organized on a regular basis — they meet in town then head to the Clear Creek Sno-Park. Usually once a winter a group will ride 70 miles to Joseph, stay the night, then head home the next day.

The Panhandle Club is in the OSSA's District 7, along with the Wallowa County Gamblers and La Grande Sno-Drifters. With their system of groomed trails that lead up to the next club's area, snowmobilers can make quite a variety of trips throughout the wintertime.

Ryan Hensley is with the Sno-Drifters, and he said their club grooms 455 miles of trails. Their snow cat can cover about 100 miles in a day of grooming. Their trail

system links up to Halfway's via Catherine Creek, and to Sumpter's by riding toward the Anthony Lakes area.

“It's kind of a slow process,” Ryan says. “We try to work together as much as possible. We'll try to cover each other's trail systems too (when a snow cat breaks down).”

He said the club also works with the Wallowa Avalanche Center on education, and Union County has two snowmobile trainers who can certify riders as young as six years old through the DMV.

The Sno-Drifters has 70 members, which means there should always be someone available to ride.



Photo courtesy of EOU Outdoor Adventure Program

“The more the merrier — you never know what you'll get into,” Ryan says. “The season for snowmobiling usually runs from mid-December through March, when the club holds its annual poker run.”

The snowmobile season lasts from mid-December to the beginning of April in Grant County, where the Snowballers groom about 500 miles of trail. This club is in the OSSA's District 6, along with the Harney County Snowmobile Club, Burnt River Snowmobile Club and Sumpter Valley Snowmobilers.



Photo courtesy of Panhandle Club

## SNOWMOBILE CLUBS:

### Baker County:

Panhandle Snowmobile Club  
Burnt River Snowmobile Club  
Sumpter Valley Blue Mountain Snowmobile Club –  
[www.sumptersnowmobileclub.wordpress.com](http://www.sumptersnowmobileclub.wordpress.com)

### Union County:

La Grande Sno-Drifters

### Grant County:

Grant County Snowballers –  
[www.grantcountysnowballers.com](http://www.grantcountysnowballers.com)

### Harney County:

Harney County Snowmobile Club

### Poker run dates:

Sumpter Club: Feb. 18  
Panhandle Club: Feb. 19  
La Grande Sno-Drifters: March 4

More information on the Oregon State Snowmobile Association can be found by visiting:  
[www.oregonsnow.org](http://www.oregonsnow.org)

Information on conditions in the Wallowa and Elkhorn mountains can be found by visiting the Wallowa Avalanche Center:  
[www.wallowaavalanchecenter.org](http://www.wallowaavalanchecenter.org)

EOU's Outdoor Adventure Program:  
[www.eou.edu/outdoor/](http://www.eou.edu/outdoor/)

\*\* Most clubs also have Facebook pages

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Tim Holly, president of the Grant County Snowballers, rates the trails as “beginner to intermediate.”

“Most people can ride all our trails — not many are steep, and most are on existing roads,” Tim says.

The club grooms from three trailheads: Huddleston Sno-Park near Prairie City, Starr Ridge (near Highway 395) and Canyon Creek in Logan Valley.

Tim said Huddleston is the most used, with its warming hut and large parking lot that can fit at least 30 vehicles.

“Then you can ride anywhere you want,” he says.

Snowballers events and contacts are posted on the website, [www.grantcountysnowballers.com](http://www.grantcountysnowballers.com).

### Getting Out by Ski, Snowboard or Snowshoes

Winter recreation includes more than snowmobiles — Eastern Oregon provides plenty of opportunities for skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, or winter camping.

For those who want to try before buying, the Outdoor Adventure Program at Eastern Oregon University offers an equipment rental shop for members (membership is free to EOU students, \$25 for community members). Rentals geared toward winter activity include an avalanche package (beacon, probe and shovel), snowshoes, cross country skis and ice climbing gear. The shop also rents camping equipment, fishing gear and many options for warm-weather water sports.



Photo courtesy of La Grande Sno-Drifters

Michael Hatch, program director, said offerings also include courses on wilderness first responders and also a workshop on winter camping that includes a weekend camp out.

“If conditions are right, we build snow caves,” Michael says.

Most courses are available to both students and the community.

“We try to make it really accessible,” he says. “They can see there are amazing recreational opportunities right here.”

A staple of outdoor recreation is Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort,

where people come from all over the state — and beyond — to ski or snowboard the fresh powder. A typical season brings about 20,000 visitors to the mountain, although last year saw 24,000 with 79 percent of those Oregonians “with the majority of them traveling from Union and Baker counties,” said Chelsea Judy, marketing director.

The resort’s busiest month is January, and it is open through March.

Chelsea emphasizes the “family-friendly” aspect of Anthony Lakes, where all runs funnel to the same area and beginners can take lessons and practice on the “Surface Tow” and “Magic Carpet” before heading up the ski lift. Those who prefer cross country can check out the Nordic Center for rentals of skis and snowshoes.

Each season also brings special events and live music to Anthony Lakes — for more information and a calendar of events, visit [www.anthonylakes.com](http://www.anthonylakes.com). ●



Photo courtesy of EOU Outdoor Adventure Program

## COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

### Cooperative Principle

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### AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

# Understanding the Value of IVR

In today's world it is becoming increasingly popular for businesses to use automated call answering technology, or Interactive Voice Response systems (IVR) to answer, segment, and route calls. So much so that people who routinely call businesses with IVR systems frequently bypass the menu choices, making their selection before the message is complete because the caller knows they can get an answer quickly. As hard as it is to say goodbye to the days of a "live person" answering the phone, IVR has proven to be a simple, inexpensive and an effective business solution.

Actually, in some cases this new technology helps businesses remain competitive without compromising customer service.

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) recently installed an IVR system for just that reason, and although it may take some time for members to feel comfortable with the new automated services, the benefits are worth being patient.

"Member acceptance is important to us. In spite of the fact it may seem a little impersonal at first, IVR has a lot of value to OTEC, the members and staff," says Sandra Ghormley, Director of Member and Program Services. "We save members time figuring out how to direct their call, which ultimately equates to reducing costs and rates and calls are answered and processed faster."

Several soft benefits of IVR can be overlooked because these systems are at work behind the scenes. Benefits such as being able to customize and change messages and prompts, collect and retrieve information about callers and where/how calls are directed, an automated business center for members to make payments, check account balances, or set up repayment plans. Increased



operational efficiencies along with increased professionalism and increased member satisfaction are typical outcomes due to the fact misdirected calls are reduced and customer resolution is speedier, usually upon the first call. IVR expands OTEC's ability to handle high volumes of calls when it is needed the most.

"We selected an IVR product that can be adapted and upgraded easily so it can be customized to meet the specific needs of our members," said Ghormley. IVR systems typically include digital recognition features by using the caller's phone number and depending upon the caller's menu choice, the system organizes and direct calls of a similar nature to the right department or agent that can fulfill the need promptly. "If we experience a high volume of calls, members hear music while they wait and can listen to other customized messages about services we offer or the caller has the option to select other electronic solutions such as the automated business

center, or leave a voice mail," said Ghormley. "Integrating OTEC's existing phone system with South Eastern Data Cooperative's (SEDC) new IVR tool, we are giving our members the best solution currently available in our area to ensure their phone call receives the priority it deserves."

The 24-hour outage hotline, 1-866-430-4265, will continue to be active, and should be the first number to call when reporting a power outages or trouble with a service. But without question, deploying an IVR solution is the right answer at the right time for OTEC members, and represents a sound investment.

For questions or additional information, call OTEC's Director of Member and Program Services Sandra Ghormley at 541-524-2822 or email [sghormley@otecc.com](mailto:sghormley@otecc.com).



**OTEC NOMINATING COMMITTEES APPOINTED**



Photo: Lara Pettilerc-Stokes

# From the Boardroom

Upcoming Board Meetings:  
January 24 February 21 March 28

**T**he Board of Directors for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) have appointed the director nominating committees for Baker, Harney and Union Counties. Appointed to serve were:

**Position 1 (Union County)**

Currently held by incumbent *George Galloway*

- Dale DeLong 541-786-4343
- Mike McLean 541-786-5735
- Mary West 541-910-4546

**Position 2 (Baker County)**

Currently held by incumbent *Chuck Hoffman*

- Diana Brown 541-523-3679
- DeeDee Clarke 541-524-1999
- Fred Warner, Jr. 541-524-2040

**Position 3 (Harney County)**

Currently held by incumbent *Robert Cargill*

- Ethel Bossout 541-573-2887
- Mike Choate 541-573-6598 or 541-573-6932
- Scott Franklin 541-573-6171

The nominating committees are responsible for interviewing and recommending qualified candidates for the 2017 OTEC Board of Director Elections. If you are a member of the cooperative and interested in running for the OTEC Board of Directors, please contact the committee members in your county.

The committees have requested any members interested in stepping forward for consideration, please contact them on or by January 23.

Committees must submit their nominations to the board secretary no later than January 27.

Any member wishing to petition for placement on the 2017 Board or Directors Election Ballot should contact Lea Gettle (541-524-2831) or Lara Pettilerc-Stokes (541-524-2858) for the petition and conflict of interests forms. Nominations by petition must be filed no later than February 28, must be signed by the candidate and by at least 50 OTEC members qualified to vote. In addition, there must be a request that the candidate's name be placed on the ballot.

A copy of the bylaws describing the terms of the office, application and qualifications needed to serve on the 9-member board of directors as well as a conflict of interest policy are available online at [www.otecc.com/about/annual-meetings](http://www.otecc.com/about/annual-meetings).

Each director's term of office is for three years. The election will be completed at the annual meeting scheduled for April 29, 2017 in La Grande, OR. All OTEC cooperative members and their families are invited to attend. ●

**Have a question for the board?**  
Email: [BoardSupport@otecc.com](mailto:BoardSupport@otecc.com)



**OTEC is seeking student applicants for a one-week, all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. to celebrate the 2017 Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour**

- Applicants must currently be high school juniors living in a home served by OTEC
- Visit [www.otecc.com](http://www.otecc.com) under the 'community' tab
- Applications are due by: 5 pm — January 13th



## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

# Lori's Coconut Almond Muffins



<b>1 cup</b> flour	<b>1/4 cup</b> melted butter
<b>1/2 cup</b> sugar	<b>1/4 tsp.</b> almond extract
<b>1 1/4 tsp.</b> baking powder	<b>1/2 cup</b> coconut
<b>1/4 tsp.</b> salt	<b>1/4 cup</b> mini chocolate chips
<b>1 egg</b>	<b>1/4 cup</b> sliced almonds
<b>1/2 cup</b> sour cream	additional sugar

## A Call for Recipes

Every bi-monthly issue of "News from the Trail" features a local recipe.

Do you have a favorite recipe, one that friends are always raving about? Submit your recipe along with your name and address to [newsletter@otecc.com](mailto:newsletter@otecc.com) or mail to Newsletter, PO Box 226, Baker City, OR 97814. If your recipe is selected for our next issue, you'll get a \$10 bill credit.

## Directions:

1. In a bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt
2. In another bowl, whisk egg, sour cream, butter and almond extract.
3. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened.
4. Fold in coconut and chocolate chips
5. Fill muffin tins 2/3 full, sprinkle with almonds and additional sugar
6. Bake at 375 degrees for 18-20 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan to wire rack

**Makes 6-7 muffins**

## COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

# OTEC Scholarships 2017

Available for first time college students, returning students and those students who would like to pursue a career in the electrical energy industry by enrolling in line school

Visit [www.otecc.com](http://www.otecc.com) under the 'community' tab



Putting our energy to work for you!

Over  
twenty-eight  
\$5,000  
scholarships  
are available

From:

Your guidance  
counselor

Your local  
OTEC office

Online at  
[OTECC.COM](http://OTECC.COM)

Applications  
are due by:  
**5pm**  
**January 13th**