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## Fiorito Lakes: heading for day-use only

By MIKE JOHNSTON senior writer  
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Campers take advantage of the fishing at Fiorito Lakes on Wednesday. The area may be day-use only next year. Meanwhile, officials from the U.S. Forest Service are preparing for an influx of campers around Kittitas County as warm weather approaches. (Brian Myrick / Daily Record)

Brian Myrick

ELLENSBURG — If a public survey is any indication, overnight camping likely will be prohibited at the popular Fiorito Lakes sometime next year.

An online survey by the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club earlier this year sought public input on how to handle a growing trash problem at the fishing lakes along Interstate 82 about four miles southeast of Ellensburg.

A majority of the respondents to the survey indicated they were in favor of some level of temporary halt to overnight camping at the lakes which are accessed from nearby No. 6 Road.

"It won't happen this year, but likely next year we could see the lakes go to day-use only, with no overnight camping," said Lee Davis, president of the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club.

Davis said nearby Mattoon Lake, also a former borrow pit for the construction of the local freeways, about five years ago lost its overnight access and became day-use only.

The survey indicated about 68 percent preferred restrictions, including going to day-use only.

About a third wanted an overnight camping fee required and-or the establishment of a designated area for overnight camping with a set number of spots.

A small percentage, Davis said, called for the public-use provisions at the lakes to remain as they are.

There's a north Fiorito Lake of about 39 acres and a south lake at 24 acres, separated by a thin strip of land.

### **Volunteer efforts**

The club for many years has kept the state-owned Fiorito Lakes tidy through a volunteer "adopt-an-access" program with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

During the busy, warm-weather months, volunteers, including Davis and his family, pick up and haul away mounds of trash around the lakes weekly.

There are no garbage receptacles at the site and no garbage pick up because of a lack of state funding. Signs tell recreationists to haul away their own garbage.

In addition, there is no potable water at the lakes.

### **Popular spot**

Free overnight camping is offered at the lakes for a maximum 72-hour stay. The area has easy access from I-82 and Interstate-90 and a lake stocked with trout and other fish. As a result, the lakes are packed on most weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

They are overcrowded, at times, Davis said, with motorhomes and RV campers stretched along the shoreline, restricting access to the lakeside.

Davis said it takes only a few visitors to leave their garbage stacked up at the lakes to prompt others to do the same.

He said the club wants to keep the lakes open for public fishing and to give visitors and local residents alike a pleasurable outdoor experience. But he also said something has to change as the lakes grow in popularity and use.

The survey results are going to the state wildlife department which will likely begin the public review process to consider the rule change.

More public comments will be sought in the change, Davis said, with the state fish and wildlife commission making the final decision.

More in print

Check out Friday's VIP and print editions of Daily Record for more on the upcoming camping season.

#### MORE INFORMATION

**USFS prepares for start of camping season**