



**Pacific Northwest Region  
Malheur National Forest  
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[www.fs.usda.gov/malheur](http://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur)**

# News Release

July 13, 2017

## Rainbow Gathering Update

**John Day, Prairie City and Hines, Ore.** – By the morning of Wednesday, July 12, about 390 attendees were still on site of the unauthorized Rainbow Family Gathering taking place at Malheur National Forest's Flagtail Meadow.

Forest Officials would like to strongly discourage the general public from visiting the gathering site because of the unknown of the health hazards that may remain.

"Only time will tell, but we will do our very best to continue to document damages and impacts to the land, water, and wildlife as well as establish long term monitoring to assess impacts," said Blue Mountain District Ranger, Dave Halemeier.

Resource specialists worked tediously to document pre-event conditions as soon as the forest was informed of the gathering location, but approximately 500 attendees were already on site. Having that large of a crowd present not only limited the forest's ability to enforce existing permitting requirements, but it also put a severe strain on local infrastructure. At its height, the 13,120 participants was nearly double the population of Grant County.

As part of the recovery efforts, long term water quality monitoring sites will be established. The majority of the area is anticipated to be 'recovered' within one year. Other smaller more localized areas will take significantly longer to recover. The Forest is working to quantify the amount of forage impacted during the last three weeks and will continue to work closely with the impacted grazing permittee to ensure full use of the grazing permit.

A contingent of attendees stayed behind as the clean-up and repair crew to meet the forest's Rehabilitation Plan. The intent is to assist the Forest Service and cooperating agencies in returning the site to as close to original conditions as possible in the shortest amount of time. Resource specialists will meet with this crew to ensure repair and rehabilitation is to U.S. Forest Service standards.

Up to July 10, there have been 15 arrests, 117 violations, and 454 warning notices given. The onsite Mobile Court was a tremendous success, resulting in plea agreements for all those issued citations. In compliance with a notice from the State of Oregon Water Resources Department, spring water access to the gathering was shut off the morning of July 10.

All further updates will be posted to the forest website at:  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/news/malheur/news-events>.

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