

2006 SE Washington Backcountry Llama Rendezvous

Godman Springs, SE of Dayton, was the setting for the Eastern Washington Backcountry Llama Rendezvous June 16-18, 2006. Located off the beaten path in the high country of the Wenaha-Tucannon southeast of Dayton, WA, this site provided a very scenic backdrop to the weekend activities. Springtime weather can be quite unsettled but after a couple days of rain, wind and even hail, Friday turned out to be just a little breezy, cool and cloudy with Saturday and Sunday very calm, warm and sunny. Conditions were really just about perfect. Patches of snow still dotted the landscape and early season deadfall provided plenty of challenges for the pack trials and poker run. Not expected this late in Spring were some of the road conditions. The main roads were good, but the quickest route from Bluewood was still in rather poor shape with some patches of snow and deadfall. The road from Godman to TeePee was heavily snowed in with a lot of deadfall, which precluded any side trips to those trailheads. The snow was melting fast and actually within a week the road was clear.



Most folks arrived Friday to claim a spot to spread out or to settle into the cabin. This was relatively uneventful except for a bit of misdirection due to some ATV'ers that moved some of our directional signs late in the afternoon. The scout troop that was expected to help set up and keep things organized canceled at the last minute, so the remaining few organizers were kept plenty busy keeping things running.

Despite several other last minute cancellations, there was still a pretty large turnout – close to 50 people and over 30 llamas spread throughout the camp area.

Saturday saw about 40 visitors come up mostly from the Dayton area. Most just wandered around asking lots of questions but several of them made the trek specifically to participate in the fiber arts demonstration offered by the Happy Hummers 4H group where they got to try their hand at needle felting. A few forest service personnel stopped by during the weekend as well.

Friday introductions, mixer and potluck in the gazebo officially launched the event, with a nearby campfire maintained throughout the weekend to keep the chill off. There was plenty of all-you-can-eat fare accompanied by homemade root beer and s'mores. Hearty breakfasts were provided Saturday and Sunday by 4H groups from Kennewick and Moses Lake, which included all-you-can-eat pancakes, eggs, bacon, fruit, juice and more. Pack trial weigh-ins and handling evaluations commenced right after breakfast.



Saturday's pack trial was followed by many

poker run participants on part of the basic trail. The best poker hand received on the trail got the first pick of prizes, and so on down the line. Nat Schadinger did an excellent presentation on GPS use. Various prizes were awarded to those that found the hidden stakes scattered around the surrounding area. A prize was also awarded the person who first reported finding the ancient Native American medicine wheel, which was not far from camp. In the afternoon the youth/llama teams competed in the llama races for more prizes. In all, there were hundreds of dollars worth of prizes awarded, which included llama feed, hiking gear, and various llama gear, including llama packs. Many thanks go to the donating organizations, such as Rocky Mountain Llamas, Quality Llama Products, Llama Hardware, Oakdell Egg Farm, Red Mountain Feed, Basin Feed, GI Joe's, Costco, Backcountry Llama Assn., INLA, Rex and Diana McMullen and Rattlesnake Ridge Ranch.



A BBQ lunch was provided Saturday and Sunday and for those not on the Masters trial there were ample opportunities for driving and other activities. Driving llamas got a good workout on the local roads due to the varied elevation and some folks got to drive for the very first time. There were other youth activities, such as educational guided hikes and craft projects.

People were pretty much free to pick and choose what they wanted to do, including just relaxing and exploring. While hiking amidst various wild flowers, with mountain ridges, valleys and peaks as far as the eye could see, we observed many deer, elk,

chipmunks, birds and even a small black bear. Various edible mushrooms were gathered, including some giant cauliflower mushrooms.

All-in-all, despite a number of last minute challenges the rendezvous was a success. We're looking into organizing another one next year. The Pomeroy Ranger District has asked us to return. The Clearwater Big House area is currently under consideration in addition to Godman Springs, both of which are within the Pomeroy district. We'd like to hear your suggestions and comments. Write to

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