Welcome to Warner Wetlands!
Warner Valley and Hart Mountain were formed thousands of years ago when massive faults in the earth’s crust shifted. During the last ice age, a vast lake filled the valley. The remnants of this ancient lake today are known as the Warner Lakes, a 40-mile chain of lakes that includes the Warner Wetlands. Each spring and fall, thousands of birds visit the area during their annual migrations. This high desert wetland habitat is also critical for many other plants, wildlife, and fish species. Being a closed basin for thousands of years allowed the evolution of some unique fish species in the area, including endemic Warner Sucker and Warner Lakes Redband Trout.

The Warner Wetlands was designated as both an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) in 1989. It comprises a 52,033 acre area of seasonally flooded pothole lakes along the base of Hart Mountain. The SRMA was established to provide high quality recreation opportunities while protecting other important resource values. Limited development within this sensitive environment allows for recreational use while maintaining the ecological integrity of the area.

Recreation Opportunities

Facilities
The Hart Bar Interpretive Site, Warner Valley Overlook, and the Warner Valley Canoe Trail offer unique opportunities to experience and enjoy the Warner Wetlands. The Hart Bar Interpretive Site has restrooms, shaded picnic tables, and interpretive panels. From Hart Bar, visitors can stretch their legs on a 0.8 mile out-and-back hiking trail to a wildlife viewing blind. From the viewing blind, more eager visitors can continue into the wetlands with additional opportunities for bird watching on the 1.5-mile loop trail, returning directly to Hart Bar. The Warner Valley Overlook affords a panoramic overview of the wetlands with the desert buttes to the west and interpretive panels along a short hike to the overlook.

Off-Highway Vehicle Use
All motorized vehicle use is limited to designated roads and trails, posted as “Designated Route.” During wet years, portions of many of these roads (especially those crossing channels and lake bottoms) may be flooded and impassable.

Boating/Canoing
Boating opportunities are dependent on the water levels of the lakes which can fluctuate dramatically, both seasonally and from year-to-year. Hart Lake is typically available for boating during both low and high-water years. Motorized boating is allowed throughout the wetlands, although personal motorized watercraft (i.e. Jet Ski and WaveRunners) are not allowed. During very wet years, experienced paddlers can explore the 30-mile Warner Valley Canoe Trail. The trail follows the channels connecting Campbell, Tapir, and Stone Corral Lakes.

Hydrological Cycle
The primary source of water in the lake is determined primarily by the volume of seasonal and rain in the surrounding basins. Enough precipitation needs to occur in both basins to fill Crump Lake (north of Hart Lake) high enough to overflow into Hart Lake and the overflow from Hart Lake fills the lake to the north. With an evaporation rate of as much as 4 inches per year, the water levels of all the lakes can fluctuate widely from one year to the next.

Geology
Warner Valley was formed when large faults in the earth’s crust moved. Portions of thefaults, called grabens, moved down, and others, called horstes, moved up. Forming Hart Mountain and the long north-south valley. During the last ice age, a huge lake filled the valley with water as much as 400 feet deep. The lakelands of this event can be seen on the eastern side of the valley below Hart Mountain. The remnants of this ancient lake remain today as a complex chain of lakes approximately 60 miles long that are separated by a unique series of berm-shaped dunes, formed by the prevailing south winds.

Bird Watching
Birds may find varied and numerous species at the wetlands year round, including many species of raptors, waterfowl, shorebirds, secretive marsh birds, and songbirds. Spring and fall however, bring higher numbers and additional species, especially waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans, and coots) and shorebirds. The Warner Wetlands is an integral part of the Southern Oregon – Northeastern California (SONEC) region, a high priority landscape for conservation. Birds use the Warner Valley as a favors during migration and these wetlands serve as an important staging area to rest and refuel along their journey. In many years, mid-March and October are peak times for overall abundance of waterfowl. Migration timing varies by species, with some being early migrants and others late migrants. Timing of peak numbers may also vary by year depending on weather events throughout the western United States. Some species remain and use Warner Wetlands as a breeding area or as a place to rest round resident birds. Warner Wetlands supports several BLM Sensitive Species, such as American White Pelican, Yellow Rail, and Snowy Egret.

Wildlife
Warner Wetlands provide habitat for many aquatic, semi-aquatic, and terrestrial wildlife species. The plant communities and productive nature of wetlands provide nurseries for bird-nesting areas, nesting sites, escape cover, and plentiful food for invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, fish, birds, and mammals. In the arid west, these ecosystems are an exceedingly small percentage of the larger landscape and are therefore, important to maintain for the stability of wildlife populations over the long term.

Recreational Opportunities

Camping
The wetlands area is open for dispersed camping. Keep all vehicles on routes posted “Designated Routes.” Visitors should bring all necessary camp gear and water with them, pack out all trash and leave areas in better conditions than found. Areas exist along the lake shores for both tents and RVs. The nearest dispersed camping opportunities are located on Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge and the Santiam Public Collection Area.

Fishing
Carp, bass, and bullhead fishing is a popular pastime for lake sports enthusiasts. An occasional native Redband Trout will show up in the catch. Hart Lake usually provides fishing opportunities during dry cycle periods as well. The Warner SRMA is the only area in the region endemic to the Warner Valley, which must be released if caught. It is the only socker species in the Warner Valley. Always check state regulations and license requirements before fishing.

Hunting
Waterfowl hunting is a popular activity throughout Warner Wetlands during the fall. Good numbers of Canada goose, mallards, widows, pintail, and other dabbling ducks can be found throughout the area, with redheads, scaup and other divers concentrated on the larger lakes. Mallard, pintails, green-winged teal, and coots are also popular species to hunt in the area. Always check state regulations, and license and tag requirements before hunting.

Know Before You Go
• This area is remote and may not have cellular service.
• Numerous naturalized opportunities exist for bird watching, hunting, fishing, camping, and boating, however most of the area is dependent on water levels which can fluctuate dramatically.

Directions to the Site
From LaGrande, Oregon travel north on U.S. Highway 395 for six miles, and turn east on Highway 140 for approximately 15 miles to County Road 5-13, known locally as the Flahq Curry Road. Travel on the road for 16 miles to Plush, Oregon. From Plush, travel north for 0.8 miles, and turn east on County Road 5-12. Drive approximately 36 miles to the Hart Bar Interpretive Site, located at the base of Hart Mountain.

BLM Oregon Map Store
For more information on the Warner Wetlands site, please visit our Oregon Map Store. You may purchase maps of BLM managed areas such as Warner Wetlands through the Avenza Mobile App. Many maps of Oregon BLM are available at avenzamaps.com/vendor/472/bureau-of-land-management-oregon. BLM, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and Avenza Systems, Inc. are winners of the Federal Map & Guide Merit Award for the development ofBLM Oregon Map Store.

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Regional & Area Maps
Access a series of maps and self-guided activities by visiting our self-guided recreation opportunities page. Use our interactive map to find current conditions and water levels before planning a trip to the Warner Wetlands.

Recreation Management Area (SRMA)
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