

Dear Snake River Powerboater,

Welcome to the Wild and Scenic Snake River of Hells Canyon!

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HNCRA) straddles the Snake River, which forms the boundary between Idaho and Oregon. About 67.5 miles of the Snake River in Hells Canyon was designated in 1975 as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The 31.5-mile section of the river between Hells Canyon Dam and Pittsburg Landing is designated *Wild* and the 36-mile section of river downstream from Pittsburg Landing and north to Cache Creek is designated *Scenic*. Although uncommon on most Wild and Scenic rivers, powerboats have been used on the Snake River in Hells Canyon for many years and Congress included specific language in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act which allow their continued use. As a result, floaters and powerboaters have shared the Snake River for many years and have historically helped each other during on-river emergencies. The river recreation experiences of both users will continue to benefit through cooperation and proper on-river etiquette between the two groups.

Access

You can reach the launch facility at the Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Site (located downstream from the Hells Canyon Dam) This site, 23 miles north of Copperfield (Oxbow), OR, is accessible year round via a paved Idaho Power Company road. An improved gravel road leads 17 miles to Pittsburg Landing from U.S. Highway 95 near Whitebird, Idaho. A Paved, gravel and dirt roads lead 62 miles from Joseph, Oregon to Dug Bar. The Heller Bar launch ramp near the mouth of the Grand Ronde is 23 miles south of Asotin, Washington via paved and graveled county road. **Powerboaters should be aware that there is no gasoline available anywhere on the river between Pine Creek, Oregon and Heller Bar, Washington.**

Be sure you have enough fuel to complete the trip into and back out of Hells Canyon!

Launch and Takeout Sites

Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Site has a visitor information station, toilets, paved parking and a concrete ramp. Major flooding over the years has caused damage to the ramp, raft slide, dock and cargo elevator. Please call prior to launch for an update on the status of the launch facilities (541) 785-3395. Parking space is limited in the launch area. Launching a powerboat from a trailer requires a vehicle with good traction, as the ramp is steep. At flows below 6,000 c.f.s., it is difficult to impossible to launch powerboats due to problems getting the trailer in and out of the water off the end of the ramp. Pittsburg Landing, a launch and takeout site, has a visitor contact station, toilets with changing areas, a double concrete ramp, float apron, and paved parking. Dug Bar launch/takeout has a single concrete ramp and a toilet. However, the road leading into Dug Bar is primitive so allow lots of travel time and a high clearance vehicle. Heller Bar launch/takeout is owned by the State of Washington but operated by the Bureau of Land Management. It has a double concrete ramp and toilets. Although this site is larger than the others, it is also more heavily used.

Numerous launch ramps can be found in the Lewiston, Idaho and Clarkston, Washington area.

The Snake River Guide, a water resistant, one inch = one mile, topographic river map with information on river rapids and campsites is available at our Clarkston, Riggins and Enterprise offices and at the Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Site. A map order form can be provided by the Clarkston office (509)758-0616, if you prefer to order by mail.

Routes through rapids may change as water levels fluctuate.

To help plan your trip, the table below gives some important reference points on the river and their distances from the major access portals:

Location	River		From		
	Mile	HC	Pitts	Dug Bar	L/C Valley
Hells Canyon Dam	247.5	0.5	32.6	51.3	104.5
Hells Canyon Creek (HCC)	247.0	0	32.1	50.8	104.0
Wild Sheep Rapid	241.4	5.6	26.5	45.2	98.4
Granite Creek Rapid	239.2	7.8	24.3	43.0	96.2
Rush Creek Rapid	231.5	15.5	16.6	35.3	88.5
Kirkwood Ranch	220.5	26.5	5.6	24.3	77.5
Pittsburg Landing	214.9	32.1	0	18.7	71.9
Dug Bar	196.2	50.8	18.7	0	53.2
Imnaha River	191.7	55.3	23.2	4.5	48.7
Salmon River	188.3	58.7	26.6	7.9	45.3
Cache Creek	177.0	70.7	37.9	19.2	34.0
Heller Bar	168.3	78.7	46.6	27.9	25.3
L/C valley	143.0	104.0	71.9	53.2	0

To obtain flow information call Idaho Power: 800-422-3143.

Degree of Difficulty

The degree of difficulty in normal summer flows varies from Class II (International Scale) to Class IV. However, difficulty varies with water volumes. Flows may be as low as 5,000 cubic feet per second (c.f.s.) in summer to 80,000 c.f.s. or more in the spring runoff. Since dams control the river flow, releases can vary from day to day and hour to hour. Powerboating the rapids of Hells Canyon is not recommended for the inexperienced or poorly equipped. Major rapids should be scouted before running. **Open bows on powerboats, overloaded boats and boats designed for flat-water fishing can be extremely hazardous in rapids.**

Recommended Equipment

The importance of having good PFD's and boating equipment suitable for the Snake River can not be stressed enough. A Coast Guard approved, personal flotation device (PFD) is required for each person on any rivercraft. Each year drownings and near-drownings occur. A PFD designed for and worn by your pet will also help avoid the tragedy of losing a faithful companion. People body floating in PFD's create a unique hazard. They are difficult to see, especially when in rapids or if they are a long distance from their float or powerboat party. Since powerboats travel the river, body floating can create a serious risk of personal injury and is strongly discouraged.

Children 12 years or younger are required to wear PFD at all times while rivercraft is under way.

Types of Valid River Craft

Valid Motorized Rivercraft: Valid motorized rivercraft will be defined as rigid hull craft with water-cooled exhaust (inboard shall have through-the hull exhaust) that are driven by propellers or jet pump(s), that are equipped with mufflers and/or other noise reduction devices. **Motorized rivercraft must be at least 12 feet in length**

Valid Non-Motorized Rivercraft: Valid motorized rivercraft shall be defined as sweep boats, pontoons, cats-a-rafts, inflatable rafts, rigid hull and inflatable kayaks, canoes, dories, and drift boats. Rivercraft must be controllable by paddles, oars, sweep, or outboard motors limited to 15 hp (if motors are used they (boats) must meet State and Coast Guard licensing specifications). Motors are restricted to downstream propulsion and maneuverability. Rivercraft are not capable of being mechanically propelled through rapids.

Non-Valid (Motorized and Non-Motorized) Rivercraft: Non-valid non-motorized rivercraft shall include wind surf boards/sail boards, sailboat, or rivercraft that are not under maneuverable control. Non-valid motorized rivercraft shall include water-skis, airboats, motorized surfboats, hover craft, winged craft, any powerboats not equipped with a water-cooled exhaust, amphibious craft, mini-submarines, powerboats under 12 feet length, and rivercraft that must be straddled when ridden by the operator/passenger. Personal water vehicles such as jetskis are defined as non-valid in the wild river corridor and in the scenic river corridor.

Retrieval of sunken or disabled boat vessels are the responsibility of the boat owner

Reservations & Permits

Permits are required year round for each access to the Wild and Scenic Snake River in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and Reservations are needed during the Primary Season. Hells Canyon Powerboat Reservations can be made by calling: (509) 758-0270 seven days a week from 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM through 4:00 PM, Pacific Time during the Primary Season. The Primary season is the Friday before Memorial Day through September 10th each year.

The earliest time to make a powerboat reservation or get on the waiting list begins at 8 a.m. (PST), the first Monday in March

- **If you are not already registered in the database**, you will need to provide your name, address, telephone number, driver's license and your boat I.D.
- **You can make a total of six reservations** for two people with one phone call. You can make a total of (3) three reservations per call for yourself and, you can also make three for one other person during the same phone call.
- **Reservations are required in the Wild section of the river** (Hells Canyon Dam to Pittsburg Landing) seven days a week with a maximum number of 6 reservations per day.
- **In the Scenic section** (Pittsburg Landing to Cache Creek) reservations are required Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays with a maximum of 18 reservations each of these days.
- **From Cache Creek to the Lower Salmon** (approx. 10 river miles) Lower Salmon Access/ Day use only Reservations are required Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Holidays with a maximum of 5 each of these days.
- **If you do not have a reservation** unreserved launches are often available at the launch site when you get there. This information is available during the hours the site is staffed. The launch officer will know if there is an unreserved launch available, and he/she will need to assign a reservation number for the launch and actually issue the permit to you. This opportunity is not available at Dug Bar because the site is not staffed.
- **A waiting list is available** on a first come first serve basis if there are no vacant launches available on the date you want to reserve. If another powerboater cancels their reservation, persons on the waiting list for the date are called (in the order they were placed on the waiting list) until all available launches are filled or the waiting list is exhausted. In the event of a cancellation, a message will be left on your answering machine or an attempt to contact you will be made up to three times. If you do not call the reservation line and accept the launch you will be considered a cancellation.

- **There is a penalty for failing to cancel your reservation.** If you do not cancel you are considered a no-show. The main concern is that you will be denying someone else the opportunity take a trip on the river. The penalty for powerboaters and floaters is the same. If you fail to cancel, your name will be removed from any waiting list and additional reservations you have made in your name for the current primary season will be canceled. In addition, you will not be eligible to make a reservation for the following year's primary season.

We ask that all cancellations are made within 7 days prior to launch.

- **A permit must be completed each time you access the HCNRA.** Once you get a reservation you will receive a powerboat reservation packet in the mail that includes your reservation letter, the permit(s) and information. You will need to take that permit form to the portal with you on the date of the reservation. You can complete the form in advance of your arrival at the portal. A permit must be completed each time you access the HCNRA. If you arrive at a time when there is no Forest Officer on site, you can self-issue the river permit at the permit box the same way as in the past. Keep the yellow copy of the permit with you, and deposit the completed white original in the permit box.
- **There is not a daily time restriction** on launching or taking off the river. You decide what time you want to launch on the day of your reservation, and what time to leave on the last day of your trip, subject to wild river restrictions on non-motorized days. Your reservation number allows you the flexibility to complete the permit and manifest yourself if Forest Service personnel do not staff the portal. For instance, you may want to launch early morning or late evening, depending on your personal schedule and travel requirements. Please consider your impact on other boaters who will be in their camps (and may be sleeping) if you decide to launch during early morning or late evening hours.
- **A same day pass can be used** at the Cache Creek portal only, in order to travel on the river to points outside the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area to refuel, pick up additional passengers and/or supplies. The pass is good for the same day it is issued at Cache Creek and the boater can return to the HCNRA without acquiring a new reservation and permit.
- **Leaving the HCNRA to overnight at a cabin downriver** – at home on the Deer Creek Road – or in Oxbow, for example, is considered the end of that trip. A new reservation and/or permit must be obtained and/or completed for access to the HCNRA.
- **The Snake River Management Plan calls for Non-Motorized periods** in three-day blocks of time. The section of river that is considered non-motorized is from Wild Sheep Rapids to Kirkwood Historic Ranch. These non-motorized periods always occur on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in alternating weeks, beginning on the first Monday in June.
- **Trip leaders are responsible for the conduct of the members of their party during the entire trip and each member is also accountable for their own conduct**

The Following will be the responsibility of the permitted Trip Leader:

- **The solid human waste carryout program has been implemented on both the Wild and Scenic sections.** All river users are required to carryout their human waste. River users launching their boat in the river corridor without a human waste carryout system will be in violation of the river permit and subject to ticketing and a fine. Before a permit can be issued to enter the river corridor a portable toilet or carryout waste system must be in your possession during the trip. Be prepared to show that you have this available for use before your launch. Several good systems are on the market and prices vary significantly. Five gallon buckets are acceptable with sealed lids indeibly marked with name, address and phone number of a party member. Equipment that is compatible with disposal at an RV or trailer dump station is the most versatile when looking for approved, off-site disposal facilities. Enclosed is a list of manufacturers of solid human waste carryout equipment.
- **There are SCAT Machines for cleaning and sanitizing carryout equipment** located at Chief Looking Glass Park in Asotin, Washington and at the Chevron station in Riggins, Idaho. There is also a marine sanitation device (MSD) pump station at Hells Gate State Park Marina in Lewiston, Idaho for powerboaters who have MSD's installed in their boats. Several forest fires have started from burning toilet paper; don't do it. Pack it out with your solid human waste.
- **Practice No-Trace camping and recycle** as much of your refuse as possible. Outside of the closed fire season all combustibles should be burned in your firepan. Everything else should be compacted and packed out. Keep trash bags handy during the day for empty beverage cans and incidental litter. Never sink cans or bottles in the river. If you smoke, put the butts in your pocket. They don't belong on the ground or in the river. Before leaving camp, make a final check for small trash such as cigarette butts, twist ties and fish line. Do not bury any trash. No facilities for garbage pick-up are provided at any of the launch or takeout sites.
- **Public drinking water is not available at** Hells Canyon Creek, Kirkwood Historic Ranch, or Cache Creek Ranch. Plan accordingly by carrying ample water supplies or purification equipment. Wash dishes away from camp where inadvertent spills won't attract insects. Waste water should be strained for food particles. Clean up of food preparation areas and food scraps, and proper storage of food is essential to avoid attracting undesirable visitors into your camp such as flies, yellow jackets, skunks and bears. Wash and bathe well away from the river. Disperse all waste and bath water on the surface at least 100 feet or more from water sources and away from camp in a manner that will allow rapid evaporation. Biodegradable soaps should always be used but don't use or dispose of soap, detergents or other pollutants in the river.
- **If you will be carrying extra fuel** for on-river fueling or fueling on boat ramps, you will need to use fuel absorption material and/or fueling bibs to pick up any spills. On-river fueling must utilize fuel absorption material at all times during any fueling operations.
- **Don't load or unload equipment from your boat on a ramp if other space is available.** Floaters and other powerboaters share all launch/takeout sites with your group and must also have adequate time to use the ramp area. Please plan your loading and unloading of boats and gear in such a manner as to clear the ramp area as quickly as possible.

- **Craft traveling downstream, both powered and non-powered, generally have the right-of-way** but don't have a right to intentionally block navigation. While powerboats can only travel in specific narrow routes in some river sections, many floaters may not be aware of this necessity. When you see a float group coming, if possible, pull to one side of the channel and let it by. Be aware of dangerous situations and avoid putting either yourself or the other person into one. Keep as much distance as possible between your powerboat and a float party when passing, and take the appropriate steps to reduce the size of your wake when passing float parties and other powerboats, especially when they are tied up along rocky shorelines. Boaters are required to be familiar and comply with all Federal and State boating laws. **We strongly recommend that you and your party take time to watch the Whitewater Boating Safety and Etiquette video available for viewing at Both Hells Canyon Launch and Cache Creek.**
- **Fire pans are required yearlong for anyone planning to have a campfire.** The past use of rock fire rings blackened and cracked rocks and discolored the precious little sand left in the canyon. A firepan must have sides high enough to be adequate to contain all ashes and charcoal which must be carried with you. If you change camps, one good way to handle them is to place the wet remains of your fire in a container in the morning; use them to line your fire pan that evening. At the end of your trip you'll have about the same amount of ashes as you had that first day. Don't bury or scatter charcoal; it lasts for years in the soil. Fire pans keep the area clean and don't leave the numerous fire scars found at popular sites. They also assure a dead-out fire.
- **The burning of wood in open fires- including fire pans - is prohibited** annually from July 1 to September 15. Permissible equipment for cooking and heating during the closure include the use of charcoal briquettes in a fire pan or a portable, metal based barbeque with a grill (partially consumed briquettes must be packed out). Pressurized liquid or gas stoves are also approved, including space heating devices. If you plan to burn wood when the restricted fire season is not in effect, you need to bring your own wood with you. **Cutting firewood for camp use, including driftwood and down dead material, is not allowed.**
- **Fireworks are banned year long.** Most campsites are located on or close to grassy benches creating an extreme fire hazard in the hot, dry months of summer, especially if there is any wind. A stray spark from a wood cooking fire or fireworks can send fire racing up a hillside; suppression costs can run into thousands of dollars and are usually paid by the party found to be responsible.
- **All artifacts and cultural sites in the canyon are protected by law** with severe penalties for violators. Hells Canyon is rich in both historic and prehistoric cultural resources. These sites are fragile and irreplaceable. Enjoy them but leave them intact for visitors who will follow you.
- **Retrieval of Sunken or wrecked boats, gear, etc. is the responsibility of the owner.**

CAMPING

- **Camping is allowed at designated, dispersed sites only.** Reference a copy of the Snake River Guide for approved camp locations. Most camp sites are on the grassy benches, limited in number (especially in the upper river) and are on a first-come, first-served basis.
- **During the primary season, camping is limited to 3 days and 2 nights** per site per party in the Wild River and 4 days 3 nights per site per party in the Scenic River. Only one night per party can be spent at Granite Creek, Saddle Creek or the Oregon Hole.
- **During the secondary season,** camping is limited to 14 days and 13 nights within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.
- **Pittsburg Campground is the only developed** campground of its kind in the Snake River Corridor. This 28 unit facility is a great location to base from while enjoying the many recreation opportunities in close proximity. **Potable drinking water is available during the Primary Season.**
- **Powerboats cannot** moor their boats in the water over night near the ramp or along the shoreline at Pittsburg or Hells Canyon Creek. However, when camped at Pittsburg or above Hells Canyon Creek Launch Site at Eagle Bar, powerboaters can pull their boats out of the water each night and camp in the campground without ending their trip.
- **If you are trailering your boat each night,** and using the campground nightly, you must be actively involved in a river trip on a daily basis for the duration of your trip as identified on your river permit. You will also need to check in with the launch officer at Pittsburg Landing or Hells Canyon Creek on the first day of your trip so they will know that you will be exercising that camping option.
- **Camping is prohibited at** the Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Site because of the limited space and lack of camping facilities, but campgrounds are available in the Hells Canyon Reservoir area for camping the night prior to launch. Camping is also prohibited at Cache Creek Ranch because of the limited moorage and the need to keep the dock space open for powerboat traffic in order to administer the permit program.
- **Camping in your boat along the shoreline is acceptable,** since it reduces impacts to campsites. Boaters camping on their boats may moor at locations of their choice except at administrative sites.
- **You may have multiple powerboats** in your camp overnight as long as the total number of people does not exceed the maximum party size of 24 people.

For your Information

- **A commercial trip** is any trip for which consideration is paid, collected, received, or requested regardless of whether or not a profit is made, except that a trip on which all parties share equally in the actual and direct expenses incurred in the trip is not a commercial trip if no other monies or consideration are paid, received, collected, or requested. A non-commercial trip is a trip for which there is no payment, collection, receipt, or request for consideration. Non-profit status of any group organization does not in itself determine whether a trip or trips arranged by such a group or organization is non-commercial. If you have any questions about your status, please contact our Clarkston office at:(509) 758- 0616
- **Illegal commercial outfitters** using the river under the guise of being private boaters are stealing opportunities from the legitimate private sector, are not covered by insurance to protect their passengers, and may not be qualified to run safe trips. Powerboaters who use the river without a reservation or permit are also unfairly impacting the Canyon and could directly impact your recreation experience, now and in the future. If you encounter these people please report them to the nearest Forest Service officer as soon as possible or notify the Forest Officers at Hells Canyon Creek Launch Site, Kirkwood Historic Ranch, Pittsburg Landing, Cache Creek Ranch, or the Forest Service Patrol Boat. Information resulting in convictions of illegal outfitters can lead to combine rewards of up to \$500.00.
- **Read the Fish and Game laws**, understand them and follow them. The river corridor supports a great diversity of fish and wildlife species. Fish in the Snake River include cold water species such as Steelhead, Chinook and Sockeye Salmon, and Rainbow trout; it also supports warm water species such as Bass, Crappie, and Catfish. Hells Canyon is one of the last strongholds of the Giant White Sturgeon which is managed as part of a catch and release only fishery. Chinook and Sockeye Salmon are listed as endangered species. Boaters may not enter areas of the river that are marked with floats as exclusion zones set aside for protection of Chinook redds (nests). Bull (Dolly Varden) Trout are listed as a threatened species and must be released unharmed if caught.
- **Bear, cougar, deer, elk, and river otters** can be found on both sides of the river. Mountain goats can often be seen on the Idaho rims between Hells Canyon Creek and Dry Diggins Lookout. Bighorn sheep herds have rebounded in recent years and may be encountered at various locations along the river. Peregrine Falcon, Chukar and year round populations of Canadian Geese also inhabit the corridor.
- **Licenses are required** to hunt and fish in each state because the Wild & Scenic Snake River forms the boundary between the States of Oregon and Idaho. Bag limits for game species, seasons, and other requirements vary between the states. Only one state's license is required to fish the river when the person fishing is in a boat that is afloat, even when tied to the shore. However, when standing on the shore or having one foot on the shore you must have the fishing license for the state you have committed to.

- **Rattlesnakes** and black widow spiders are common in the canyon.
- **Poison ivy abounds** along the river; much of the low shrubbery you see along the river bank is this shiny, three leaved, white berried species.
- **Visitors are welcome to the historic ranch on Kirkwood Bar**, which offers a taste of canyon life in the 1930's. A small museum contains displays of historic and prehistoric artifacts and interprets their significance to early canyon inhabitants.
- **Cache Creek** Administrative site, the northern most entry portal into the HCNRA, is another location where visitors are welcome to take a break, picnic under the shade of the fruit orchard. A visitor center with information and interpretive exhibits is also a wonderful feature of this site.
- **Both sites provide public toilet facilities.** Communications are also available---report fires and emergencies here.
- **Good Book and Map Resources:** ~*Wild and Scenic Snake River Boaters Guide*~ This water resistant guide has a great page by page river map of Hells Canyon beginning from Hells Canyon Creek Launch to Heller Bar and lists additional interpretive, historical and geological sites to visit in the canyon. ~Home Below Hells Canyon~ by, Grace Jordan and ~Snake River of Hells Canyon~ by Carrey, Cort and Barton are also great book references about life in the Hells Canyon and ~Islands and Rapids~ by, Tracy Vallier is another perfect book reference for the geology of the canyon.
- **A Volunteer Program is in place in Hells Canyon.** Like many of the forests, parks and public resources you will visit this year, the Snake River of Hells Canyon will be utilizing the services of volunteers at many sites and on the river in support of patrols and maintenance. Our volunteers come to us from everywhere -- other agencies -- visitors who now want to contribute to their recreation area -- students whose future plans are to work for the public in our resource environments -- and retirees with wonderful accumulated skills and talents to contribute. We are fortunate to have as varied a volunteer program as the Canyon and it's history, culture and features represent. We appreciate their time and efforts and hope that you will enjoy the diversity this program brings to **Hells Canyon -- truly, a work in progress.**

For more information about the surrounding areas contact any of the following Chamber of Commerce offices.

Halfway
PO Box 841
Halway, OR 97834
541.742.5722

Wallowa County
115 Tejaka Lane
Enterprise, Or 97834
541.426.4622

Weiser
309 Stare St.
Weiser, ID 83672
208.414.0452

Clarkston
502 Bridge St.
Clarkston, WA 99403
509.758.7712

Whitebird
PO Box 93
Whitebird, ID 83546
208.839.2499

Riggins
PO Box 289
Riggins, ID 83549
208.628.3778

