

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Snake River Floaters Guide



- Hells Canyon Creek Launch, Oxbow, Oregon: 541-785-3395
- HCNRA Snake River Office, Clarkston, WA: 509-758-0616
- HCNRA Idaho Office, Riggins, Idaho: 208-628-3916
- Wallowa Mountains Office, Joseph, Oregon: 541-426-5546

This Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) Snake River Floaters guide is provided to help you organize and plan for your float trip.

Boat permits are required year-round. During the primary season, reservations are required seven days a week in the Wild River section and Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Holidays in the Scenic River section.

The Primary HCNRA Float Season extends from the Friday preceding Memorial Day through September 10th each year. **Secondary Season** extends from September 10th through the Thursday before Memorial Day each year. Self-issue permits are available at the river portals.

- **Three private Wild River float launches are available each day, during the primary season.** Reservations are secured through www.recreation.gov either through the 4-Rivers Float Lottery process or after the float lottery allocation has completed, which is March 15th each year. For more information, reference the recreation.gov website or contact the Snake River Administration office at 509-758-0616.
- **Scenic River** float launches from Pittsburg Landing and Dug Bar are self-issue year-round. However, permits and boat tags are required prior to float trip launches Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Holidays during the Primary season. These permits are not secured through recreation.gov but can be reserved by calling the Snake River Administrative office at 509-758-0616 or issued at the Pittsburg or Dug Bar portals when a launch officer is available.

Required equipment is inspected at Hells Canyon Launch, this includes:

- Approved human waste carry-out system.
 - Firepan
 - Children 12 years or younger are required to wear a personal flotation device (PFD) at all times while rivercraft is under way. A Coast Guard approved PFD is required for each person on any rivercraft
 - Aquatic invasive species sticker for either Idaho or Oregon. More information on the permits may be obtained through: www.oregon.gov/OSMB/ or www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/activities/boating
- **Prior to your reserved Hells Canyon float launch**, dispersed camping is available within the Hells Canyon Reservoir as well as reserved campgrounds managed by Idaho power.
 - **Overnight camping is prohibited at the Hells Canyon Creek Launch Site.**
 - **Overnight camping is limited within the Hells Canyon Snake River corridor.** Campsites are on a first-come, first-served basis. 1 night only per party at Granite Creek and Oregon Hole. 3 days and 2 nights per site in the wild river and 4 days and 3 nights per site in the scenic river.
 - **A non-motorized section and time is recognized** in the Wild River section between the top of Wild Sheep rapids and the upper landing of Kirkwood Historic Ranch during the non-motorized periods. These periods are Monday -Tuesday- Wednesday beginning the first Monday in June and continuing every other week though the end of the Primary Season, not to exceed 21 days. If the July 4th holiday falls in a non-motorized period, the non-motorized period will move to the following week and every other week thereafter.

Launch and Takeout River Portals

- **Hells Canyon Creek boat launch** near Oxbow, Oregon is accessible year-round. It has a visitor information center, a double concrete boat launch, parking, public toilets, picnic area and trail head. No potable water or overnight camping is available at this site.
- **Pittsburg boat launch** near White Bird, Idaho is accessible year-round. It has a visitor contact station, a double concrete boat launch, public toilets, a 28-unit campground. Potable water and overnight camping is available.
- **Heller Bar** near Asotin, WA is accessible year-round. It has a double concrete boat launch and separate float boat apron, parking, and public toilets. Potable water is not available and undispersed overnight camping is available with a Washington State Discovery Pass.
- **Dug Bar**, 27 miles from Imnaha, Oregon is open year-round (pending weather conditions). This is the least used river portal due to the intensity of the steep gravel road (FR#4260) that leads to the river portal. A high clearance vehicle is recommended. Primitive camping and restrooms are available, but no potable water.

River Portal takeout locations from Hells Canyon Creek Launch/ MILES/DAYS

- PITTSBURG LANDING 32 miles, 2-3 days
 - DUG BAR 51 miles, 3-4 days
 - HELLER BAR, ASOTIN, WA 79 miles, 4-6 days
 - LEWISTON, ID/CLARKSTON, WA 104 miles, 6-8 days
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- **The degree of difficulty** in normal summer flows varies from Class II (International Scale) to Class IV. However, difficulty varies with water volumes.
 - **For flow information**, call Idaho Power at 1-800-422-3143 or call www.idahopower.com or view flow monitors located at Hells Canyon Creek, Pittsburg Launch, Cache Creek and the Clarkston, Washington Forest Service office.

Rules of the Road

- **It is recommended that you review** the Whitewater Boating Safety and Etiquette video available at the Hells Canyon Creek Visitor Center.
- **Maximum float party size is 24 persons**, including overnight use at river campsites. Multiple parties (float and/or power) may camp together if the maximum party size is not exceeded.
- **Maximum float craft is 8 per party and includes kayaks and stand-up paddleboards.** All boats must carry at least one U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal floatation device for every person on board.
- **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.
- **Plan your assembly and disassembly** of boats and gear to clear the ramp area as quickly as possible.

- **Kickers (outboard engines) on float craft may not be used in the wild river** but may be used in the scenic river. Float boats using a kicker motor require boat registration.
- **Fuel carried for kickers must always remain on the boat.** On-river fueling must utilize fuel absorption material during any fueling operations.
- **Craft traveling downstream**, both powered and non-powered, generally have the right-of-way but don't have a right to intentionally block navigation.
- **Human waste must be carried out from river corridor.** This equipment will be checked prior to launch. 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.
- **No campfires are allowed within the river corridor from June 1st through September 30th each year.** If you plan to burn wood when the restricted fire season is not in effect a firepan with sides at least 3 inches high is required. Cutting firewood for camp use, including driftwood and down dead material, is not allowed. Pack in your own wood, pack out your ashes.
- **Fireworks are banned year-round.** 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.
- **Trash---Pack it in, pack it out!**
- **Retrieval of overturned or wrecked boats**, gear etc. is the responsibility of the boat owner.
- **Hells Canyon is rich in both historic and prehistoric cultural resources.** All artifacts and cultural sites in the canyon are protected by law with severe penalties for violators.
- **Beware of natural hazards in the canyon.** Rattlesnakes, spiders, scorpions and poison oak and ivy are common in the canyon.

Points of Interest

- **Kirkwood Ranch located on the Idaho side of the river corridor and at river mile 220.** This historic site offers a taste of canyon life in the 1930's. Kirkwood is hosted by USFS volunteers year-round. Visitors are welcome to stop at the museum and learn about ranching life in the canyon. A short $\frac{3}{4}$ mile hike up Kirkwood Creek takes you to the Carter Mansion, an unusual vertical-log home built in 1920. Primitive camping sites and a picnic area are nearby as well as the Snake River trail#102. Public restrooms are available but not potable water.
- **Cache Creek Ranch located on the Oregon side of the river corridor**, one mile south of the Washington/Oregon border (about 7 miles upriver from Heller Bar) is at river mile 177. This administrative site is a powerboat permit check-in station and hosted by USFS volunteers year-round. Cache Creek is well known for one of the best river views in the canyon. It includes a visitor center with interpretive exhibits, picnic area and public restrooms. No camping or potable water is available.

***Hells Canyon National Recreation Area** is managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Like many of the national forests, parks and public resources, the host positions include volunteers. They are dedicated to maintaining the resource and providing support to the visitors. We appreciate their time and efforts and hope that you will enjoy the diversity they bring to the program. If you are interested in becoming a part of the HCNRA volunteer community, please contact the Snake River Administrative office at 509-758-0616.*