Dear Snake River Power boater, Welcome to the Wild and Scenic Snake River of Hells Canyon!

Managed by the US Forest Service
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. If you would like a free DVD on river etiquette, please contact the Snake River Administrative office at 509-758-0616.

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 White bird, 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!

River Portals
Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Site has a visitor information station, toilets, paved parking and a concrete ramp. 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 that can be as low as 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.

Information 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. It also notes campsites areas, which are on a first come first serve basis. It is available at our Clarkston, Riggins and Joseph offices and at the Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Routes through rapids may change as water levels fluctuate. You can also call the Clarkston Office and order this map by phone. In addition, we 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. You can also request this free video by calling the Clarkston, Washington Snake River office at 509-758-0616.

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, cat-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, the boat 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 would 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.

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

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

To obtain flow information call Idaho Power: 800-422-3143 or access it at [www.idahopower.com](http://www.idahopower.com).
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 are 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. **Retrieval of sunken or disabled boat vessels are the responsibility of the boat owner. Personal water vehicles such as jet skis are defined as non-valid in the wild river corridor and in the scenic river corridor.**

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.**

Permits and Reservations
Permits are required year round for each access to the Wild and Scenic Snake River in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. **Reservations for the permit are needed during the Primary Season** and can ONLY be made by accessing [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or by calling the Reserve America helpdesk at **(877) 444-6777** The summary below describes the reservation process.

- **THE PRIMARY SEASON** extends from the Friday proceeding Memorial Day through September 10th each year. In 2022 this will be May 27th through September 10th. Reservations are needed during this time accept in the Scenic river section Monday through Thursday.

- **THE SECONDARY SEASON** extends from September 11th through the Thursday before Memorial Day the following year. Self issue permits are accepted during this time and no reservations are required.

- **You can only initiate your launch on the same date as your reservation.** The available river reservation sections are as follows.

  **SCENIC:** These reserved permits are only required Friday through Sunday, and holidays. There are **18 available permits per day.** These permits allow Scenic river access from the Cache Creek, Dug Bar or Pittsburg Landing river portals up to the Wild river section which begins at Pittsburg Landing.

  **WILD:** These reserved permits are required 7 days a week, with **6 permits available per day.** These permits encompass both the Wild and Scenic River section and can be accessed at any Hells Canyon River Portal. The wild segment of the river is from Pittsburg Launch to Hells Canyon Dam.

  **SALMON ACCESS-DAY USE:** Permits are required Friday through Sunday, and holidays. There are **5 available permits per day.** These permits allow access to the Salmon River by way of the Cache Creek, Dug Bar or Pittsburg Landing. Boaters can use the permit to access the Salmon River, however no overnight use is allowed with this permit.
LIMITED WILD RIVER NORTH: There are 5 available permits per day and can only be issued during the Non-Motorized period. These permits allow limited wild river access from the Pittsburg portal to Kirkwood Ranch during the non-motorized period. **Motorized craft is not allowed in the wild river segment between Kirkwood Historic Ranch and Wild Sheep rapids with this permit.**

LIMITED WILD RIVER SOUTH: There are 2 available permits per day and can only be issued during the Non-Motorized period. These permits allow limited wild river access during the non-motorized period from Hells Canyon Creek Launch to Wild Sheep Rapids. **Motorized craft is not allowed in the wild river segment between the top of Wild Sheep rapids to Kirkwood Historic Ranch with this permit.**

- **NON-MOTORIZED DAYS** are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday every other week beginning the first week in June and continuing through the last week in August. **In 2022, the first non-motorized period will be June 6, 7, and 8th.** If the 4th of July holiday falls on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday that week will be skipped and the non-motorized periods will continue the following week and every other week thereafter. **The non-motorized section of the wild river is from Kirkwood Historic Ranch to Wild Sheep Rapids.**

- **The total amount of launches** a user can reserve are unlimited through out the season. However, like the previous reservation process, the online system will only allow for **3 reservations** to be held by a user at one time. Rec.gov will not allow the permit to be printed until 14 days (or less) prior to the launch, giving the user time to update the details of the trip prior to the launch date.

- **The NO SHOW policy is as follows:** When a reservation is not canceled on the rec.gov website the penalty is the trip leader will be unable to place reservations for the remainder of the season and unable to make reservations the following season.

- **Cancellations must be made no less than 7 days prior to the launch date to avoid a penalty.** If there is an unavoidable emergency that may cause a “no-show” or not allow a cancelation within the 7 day policy, please contact the USFS Snake River Administrative Office @ 509-758-0616.

- **A powerboat permit allows up to 14 consecutive days of use.** However, there are overnight campsite restrictions. During the **primary season**, stay lengths of three days and two nights per campsite in the **wild section**, and four days and three nights per campsite in the **scenic section**, will be permitted within ¼ mile of the high watermark. Once the permitted boat is withdrawn from the water, the permit for that period ends.

- **Each trip leader must reserve their own reservations and cannot make reservations for other trip leaders.** In order to secure a reservation, the online system requires a specific user account which is associated to a user profile and email address. Therefore, each trip leader must reserve their own reservations and cannot make reservations for other trip leaders.

- **Permits cannot be issued at some portals,** except during self issue periods. Since the remote launches/entry points do not have telephone or internet capabilities, obtaining a permit on site will not be possible. In addition, they will not be able to make reservations for you or process the reservation fee except at **Hells Canyon Creek Launch**, where electricity is available.

**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. An approved, washable, leak-proof, reusable toilet system that allows for the carry-out and disposal of solid human body waste in a responsible and lawful manner is required. The system must be adequate for the size of the group and length of the trip.

**Leaving solid human body waste on beaches and in the river corridor is in violation of your river permit. In addition, dumping it into vault toilets or trash receptacles at Forest Service facilities is prohibited.**

There are **SCAT Machines for cleaning and sanitizing carryout equipment** located at Chief Looking Glass Park in Asotin, Washington. 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. The scat machine at the Chevron station in Riggins, Idaho is no longer available. Several forest fires have started from burning toilet paper; don't do it. **Pack it out!**

• **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.

• Public Drinking water is available at Pittsburg Landing on the Idaho side of the river corridor.

• **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 the 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.

- **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 in your own wood and pack out your ashes. **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.

- **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. **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.

- **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, 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.

- **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 and re-launching their boat with the same permit the following day.
• **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 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.

• **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 reds (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. The *Snake River Boaters Guide* is also sold at this site.

• **Both sites provide public toilet facilities**. Communications are also available---report fires and emergencies here.

• **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 its 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 becoming part of the volunteer program please contact the Snake River administration office @ 509-758-0616 or reference www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/recreation.com.

View of HCNRA River Corridor from Hells Canyon Creek Launch near Oxbow, Oregon.