



Getting There:.....

From Priest Lake to the City of Priest River, the Lower Priest River offers diverse opportunities for family float trips. The river winds forty-four miles along a southward course from Priest Lake to its confluence with the slackwater of the Pend Oreille River. The river experience includes low wetlands, rapids, riffles, pools, and meandering, lazy segments adjacent to forest and farmlands. Views vary from areas of confinement to panoramas with mountain backdrops.

Topography, vegetation, and seasonal variations also offer refreshing changes. During late spring, the waters run turbid, swift, and high. During the hot laziness of summer, the river slows and runs at an average depth of 2 1/2 to 3 feet. Fall rains and the release of storage water from Priest Lake cause the river to rise moderately in October during the period of fall colors and cool temperatures. You should be able to plan an enjoyable trip by choosing a segment and season which match your skills. The major rapids are shown on the map with the respective difficulty ratings.

Canoes, kayaks, and inflatable boats are suitable for floating the river. Inflatable rafts are safest during high water in spring, fall, and after heavy rains. (Large sizes are less maneuverable and smaller ones are more easily capsized.) After mid-July, all types of craft may drag bottom in places. **Life jackets should be worn by all individuals floating the river**

Campsites - Be a pioneer; don't be a crowd follower. Camp only on Federal or State land unless you have received prior permission from the private landowner! Select unused campsites; avoid heavily used areas. Use only dead wood for your camp needs. Use camp stoves or charcoal, if possible. (They are nice in wet weather.)

Fire - Select a site on level ground, sheltered from high wind, and away from heavy brush, logs, tree trunks, and overhanging branches. Clear the ground to mineral soil. Keep your fire small. Never leave it unattended. Put your fire dead out. Take care while smoking on shore.

Pack in - pack out - Keep the river clean. Pack out everything in a litter bag. Use burnable containers, if possible. Remove all evidence of any temporary structure when you leave. Leave the river scene undisturbed. Stay well back from the river when cleaning camp utensils. Keep soap and detergent out of the river. Dump wash and waste away from camp and the river. Dispose of wet organic garbage and fish parts as for human waste. Clean fish away from the river in water you have carried for the purpose.

Human waste - Select a screened spot at least 100 feet from the river or camp. Dig a hole no deeper than eight inches. After use, replace the soil and tramp in the sod. Nature will do the rest.

Water - Surface or spring water along the river should be considered unfit for human consumption. Boil it vigorously for 3 to 5 minutes, or bring water from home.



How Difficult?.....

International Scale for Grading the Difficulty of River Cruising Routes:

Grade I is easy enough for the beginners who know the basics of boat handling technique for white water. It is preferable for a beginner to ride in a two-man boat with an experienced partner on Grade II water. Additionally, during high water the river grades increase, usually one grade.

I EASY - (Practiced Beginner) Sand banks, bend without difficulty, occasional small rapids with waves regular and low. Correct course easy to find; but care is needed with minor obstacles like pebble banks, fallen trees, etc., especially on narrow rivers. River speed less than hard back-paddling speed.

II MEDIUM - (Intermediate) Fairly frequent but unobstructed rapids, usually with regular waves, easy eddies, and easy bends. Course generally easy to recognize. River speeds occasionally exceeding hard back-paddling speed.

III DIFFICULT - (Experienced) Maneuvering in rapids necessary. Small falls, large regular waves covering boat, numerous rapids. Main current may swing under bushes, branches, or overhangs. Course not always easily recognizable. Current speed usually less than fast forward paddling speed.

IV VERY DIFFICULT - (Experienced) Long, rocky rapids with difficult and turbulent passages requiring precise maneuvering. Scouting from shore is necessary and rescue is difficult. Not for open canoes or kayaks.

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Floating Priest River



Priest Lake
Ranger District

Idaho Panhandle National Forests



Access Points (public):.....

The access points to the river are listed and shown on the map in sequence. The time listed after the access point is an average canoe paddling time between the access point and the next in the sequence. These times are shown to allow you to develop your own river trips.

#1 Outlet Campground (Forest Service) 26 camping units - If you use this put-in point, it requires about 1 mile of lake paddling and a portage on the south side of the river around the outlet dam. This section of the river contains the most difficult set of rapids, (1½ hours).

#1A Put in, Unimproved steep trail

#2 Dickensheet Campground [limited parking] (State of Idaho) 10 camp units, developed campground and parking. (3 hours)

#3 White Tail Butte Landing (State of Idaho) Undeveloped parking. (4 hours)

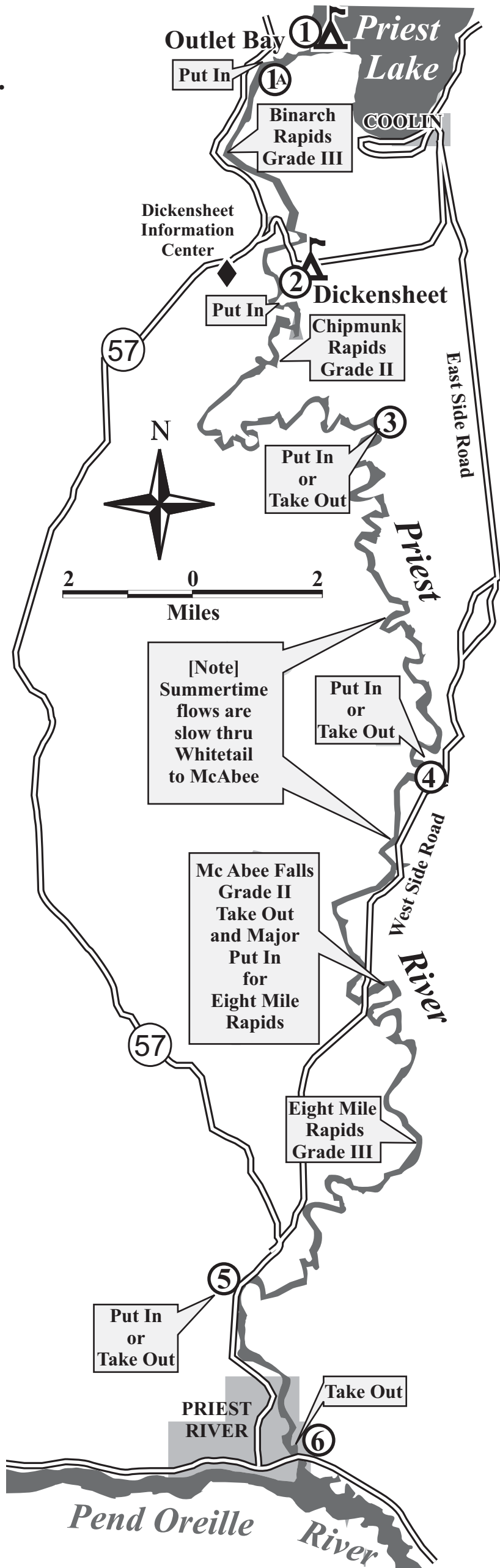
#4 Big Creek Undeveloped parking

#5 Saddlers Creek Undeveloped roadside parking. 3 miles of current. (1½ hours)

#6 Priest River Park/Mudd Hole (Corps of Engineers) Developed campground, beach, and bathhouse; developed parking.

Other access points may be available but are located on private land and require the owner's permission for their use.

Caution! Binarch and Eight Mile Rapids are extremely hazardous during high water, for other than expert canoeists.



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