

COASTAL UMPQUA RIVER

PADDLE GUIDE



OREGON SOUTH COAST

The spirit of Oregon South Coast flows through its waterways, sharing common characteristics, offering similar bounties, yet each one distinct. Whether finding their sources high in the Cascades, like the Umpqua and Rogue, or rising from the rugged Coast Range, like the Coos, Coquille and Chetco, the rivers play a vital role, from wildlife and fish habitat to early-day transportation corridor and sport-fishing destination. For local tribes, "everything was about the river," and this profound connection is still very much a part of their culture. Today the rivers also enjoy a growing popularity with paddlers who have discovered these little-visited gems of Oregon South Coast.

Parts of Rogue and Chetco are federally-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, and the Umpqua, Coos and Coquille flow into wide-ranging estuaries as they near the sea, with inlets, sloughs, channels and quiet back waters to explore. The waterways teem with wildlife as well, and a quiet approach in a paddle craft is the perfect way to get an up-close view. Every season brings its own rewards and experiences in their recreational wonderland – so let's paddle!



Lower Umpqua River, photo by Priscilla Macy.

UMPQUA RIVER PADDLING

The largest river between San Francisco Bay and the Columbia River, the Umpqua begins as two rivers more than 200 miles inland amidst the snow-capped peaks of the Cascade Range.

The Umpqua is famous for whitewater paddling in its higher reaches, but there's plenty of fun "lower down" in what locals call the Tideways.

As it nears the ocean, the Umpqua commingles with adjacent Smith River, and the two create a sprawling estuary, offering paddling opportunities without traveling longer distances or doing shuttles.

Like many coastal rivers, the Umpqua was dredged for maritime traffic, with the spoils dumped in specific areas of the estuary, eventually creating islands. These days, spoils are barged out to sea, and the islands have become de-facto wildlife sanctuaries, inviting exploration.

There are also potential side-trips along the peaceful inlets of Smith River. Expeditions can be launched from boat ramps in Winchester Bay, Reedsport, Gardiner and many upriver locations. Customize your paddling experience, depending on your energy and sense of adventure!

The twice-daily tides influence both the Umpqua and Smith as far as 30 miles upstream, so consult tide tables. Tides and currents are strong! Try to paddle at or near high tide, and don't attempt overly ambitious treks until you've familiarized yourself with the river, tides and currents. Be especially careful near the ocean in the Winchester Bay area.



HISTORY & ECOLOGY

Its meaning is lost to time, although some speculate Umpqua was a tribal name, for this was Indian land for thousands of years. They mastered the nuances of this special land between the rugged Cascades and Coast Range, roaming its valleys, sometimes living closer to the coast.

European explorers at first hoped the wide river course would lead to bounty, perhaps even the long-sought Inland Passage. But the river's limitations were quickly realized when one of the earliest ships to visit briefly grounded on a sandbar.

The town nearest the river's mouth is Gardiner, another settlement that grew out of a shipwreck. In this case, it was the 1852 wreck of the Bostonian, whose crew salvaged the cargo to site that became the settlement of Gardiner. As at the Columbia, a bounty of salmon spurred development of canneries and other commerce.

Just a couple of miles upriver on an even wider part of the coastal plain the town of Reedsport sprung up in the early 1900s. Named for merchant Alfred W. Reed, it eventually overshadowed Gardiner when the railroad chose a route through Reedsport in 1916.

In later years a large sawmill and pulp plant occupied the Gardiner waterfront, closing in the 1990s. Reedsport now boasts one of the largest marine fabricators on the West Coast.

For many thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived, the native people of these lands lived and thrived off the bounty provided in the waters and forests. It is especially important to be sensitive to this cultural legacy when paddling along the banks of these rivers. Archaeological sites are protected in Oregon on both public and private lands and if you find any artifacts while using the river, be sure to leave them in place and to contact the local tribes or OPRD State Historic Preservation Office at (503)986-0690.

RIVER ETIQUETTE

Be Courteous: Be considerate of other river users. Fishing and boating are popular on the Oregon South Coast, so before approaching ramps be ready so you can launch and take out quickly. Waterways have "lanes of travel" similar to a highway system, so move closer to shore to allow faster water craft to pass.

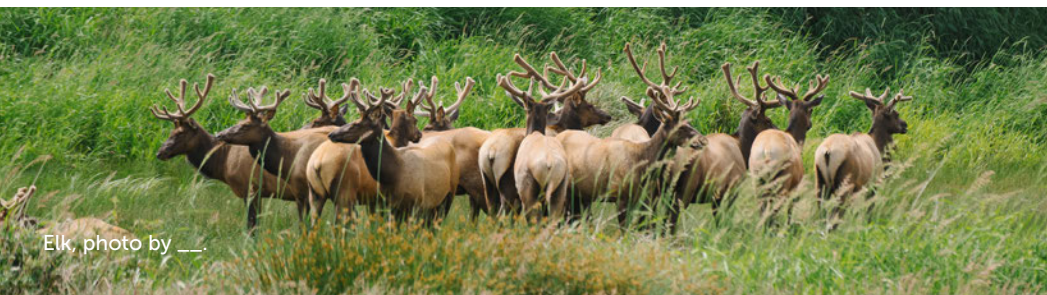
Respect Private Property: Public access is a privilege to us all. Out of consideration to private landowners, if you are unsure whether the land is private or public, please stay off. Public access is indicated on the maps within this guidebook.

PADDLING SAFETY

Proper planning and preparation will ensure your paddling experience is a positive one. Being knowledgeable about local weather, tides and currents will assist in making good boating decisions. Conditions can change rapidly. Check the current conditions before you hit the water and include them in your trip planning.

There are many in-water hazards to consider; educate yourself about what these hazards are and learn their locations. Understand that new obstacles can arise at any time, such as log 'strainers' - downed trees in the water that can be life threatening. As the tide goes out, the water in the rivers moves rapidly, so plan to paddle incoming and slack tides. Pick activities that match your ability, and consider taking classes to improve your skills and knowledge. Wearing a life jacket is critical - adjust it so it's snug and comfortable. Anticipate the chance of getting wet and dress accordingly, avoid cotton that retains water and accelerates cooling when wet. Wearing bright, noticeable clothing makes you more visible to other boaters. At night, a white light must be shown toward oncoming traffic.

Rules and Laws change periodically. Please visit the Oregon State Marine Board website at oregon.gov for current standards. Or call the Oregon State Marine Board at (503)378-8587.



Elk, photo by ___

BE PREPARED

- Wear your life jacket
- Carry proper safety equipment
- Preparation, knowledge and skill building is critical to safe paddling
- Beginners should consider paddling with a companion who knows local waterways and can assist in an emergency
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will be back
- Scout for river and water hazards
- Never grab a stationary object while moving on swift water
- Stay clear of a motor boats path
- Position your boat perpendicular to an approaching wake/wave
- Dress adequately for the water temperatures and weather conditions – avoid cotton
- Obtain an Aquatics Invasive Species (AIS) permit and carry on board.
(www.dfw.state.or.us)

ITEMS TO BRING

- Life jacket/whistle
- First aid kit
- Extra paddle
- Extra clothes
- Map & this paddle guide
- Dry bags
- Rope/Knife
- Pump
- Hat with brim
- Drinking water/food
- Sunscreen
- Flashlight
- Cell phone w/ emergency numbers (coverage can be unreliable)
- Oregon Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) permit

LEAVE NO TRACE

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on established surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly (pack it in, pack it out)
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

Site Conservation: While enjoying the river, be aware of your direct impact on the surrounding area because your efforts will make a difference for the environment. When observing wildlife, allow adequate space so they are not disturbed. Do not remove rocks, plants, or other native objects, as these create habitat for the multitude of species living along these shores.

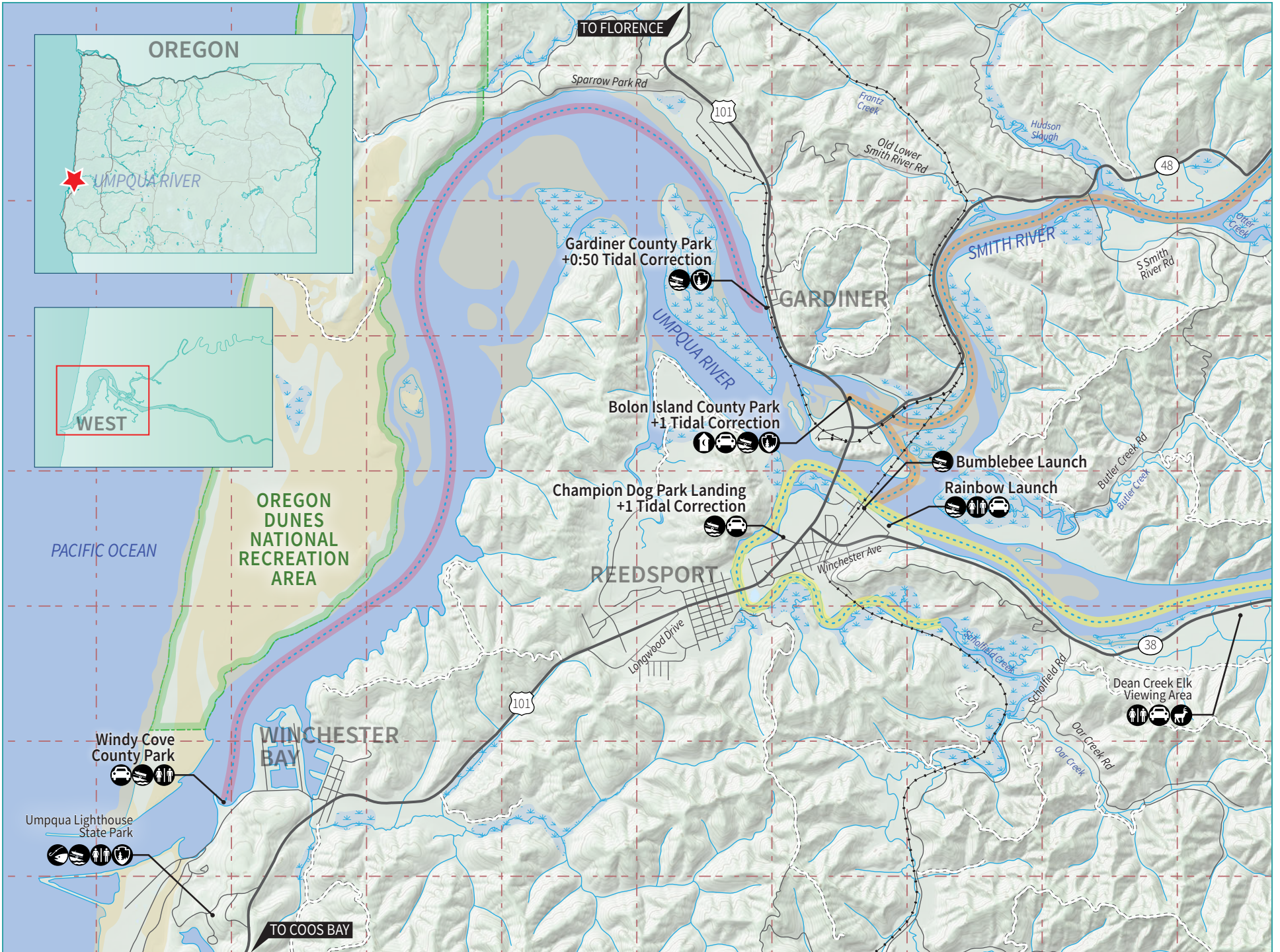
Waste Removal: Secure your garbage to your boat so that it cannot blow into the water and reserve restroom breaks for designated sites indicated on the maps. Strive to leave an area how you found it, or better.

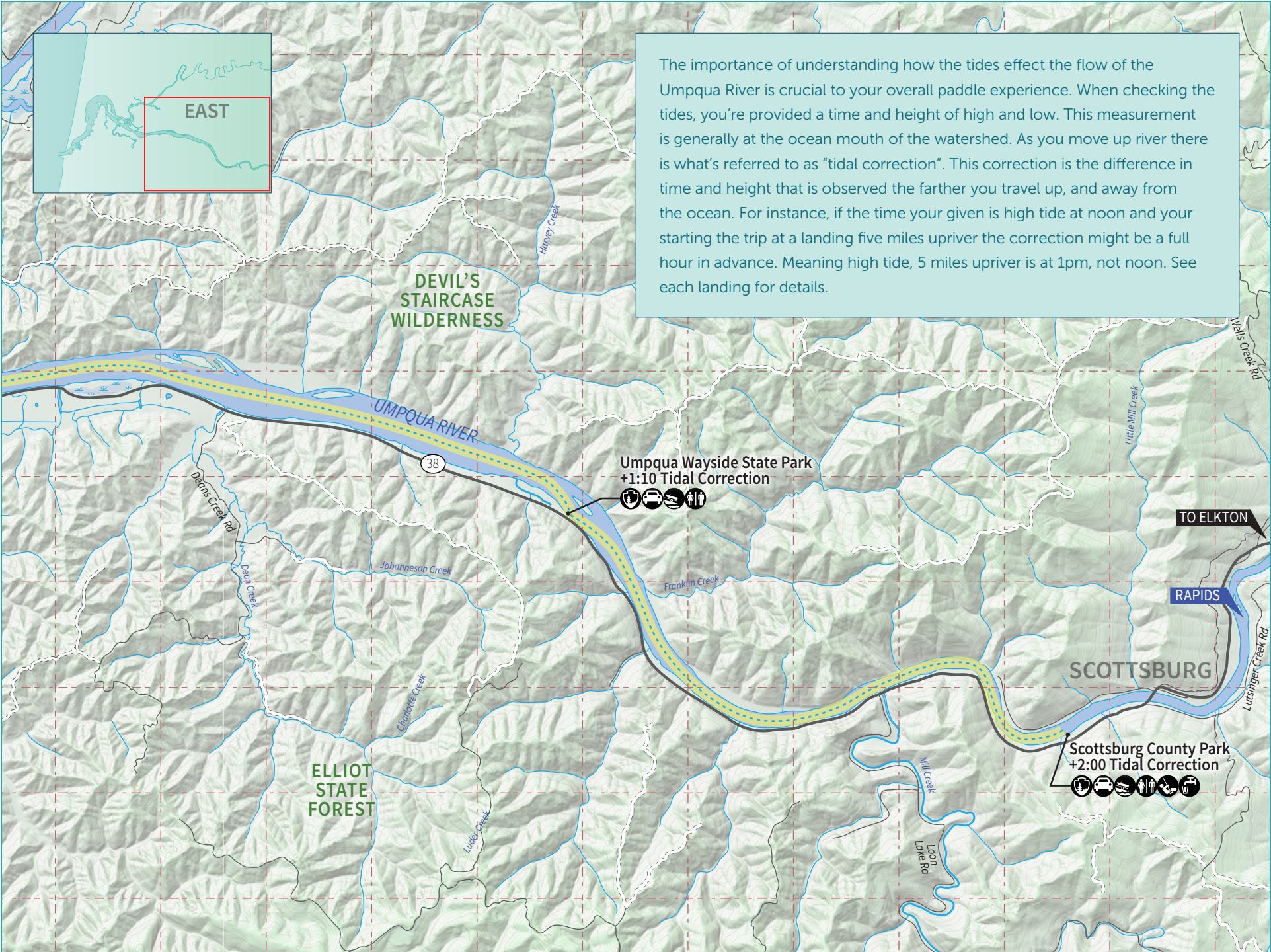
Fires: Wildfires can dramatically impact the region. Respect local fire restrictions, make fires only where it's permitted, keep them small and put them out completely.

Invasive Species: Aquatic nuisance species are a serious threat to Oregon's waterways. Introduction and spread of harmful non-native species can upset the delicate balance of our fragile ecosystems. Aquatic nuisance species are often spread between waterways by hitching a ride on boats and gear. Please wash your boats when switching from one river to the next.



Dunes near Winchester Bay, photo by Priscilla Macy.





The importance of understanding how the tides effect the flow of the Umpqua River is crucial to your overall paddle experience. When checking the tides, you're provided a time and height of high and low. This measurement is generally at the ocean mouth of the watershed. As you move up river there is what's referred to as "tidal correction". This correction is the difference in time and height that is observed the farther you travel up, and away from the ocean. For instance, if the time your given is high tide at noon and your starting the trip at a landing five miles upriver the correction might be a full hour in advance. Meaning high tide, 5 miles upriver is at 1pm, not noon. See each landing for details.

EAST

DEVIL'S STAIRCASE WILDERNESS

UMPQUA RIVER

Umpqua Wayside State Park
+1:10 Tidal Correction

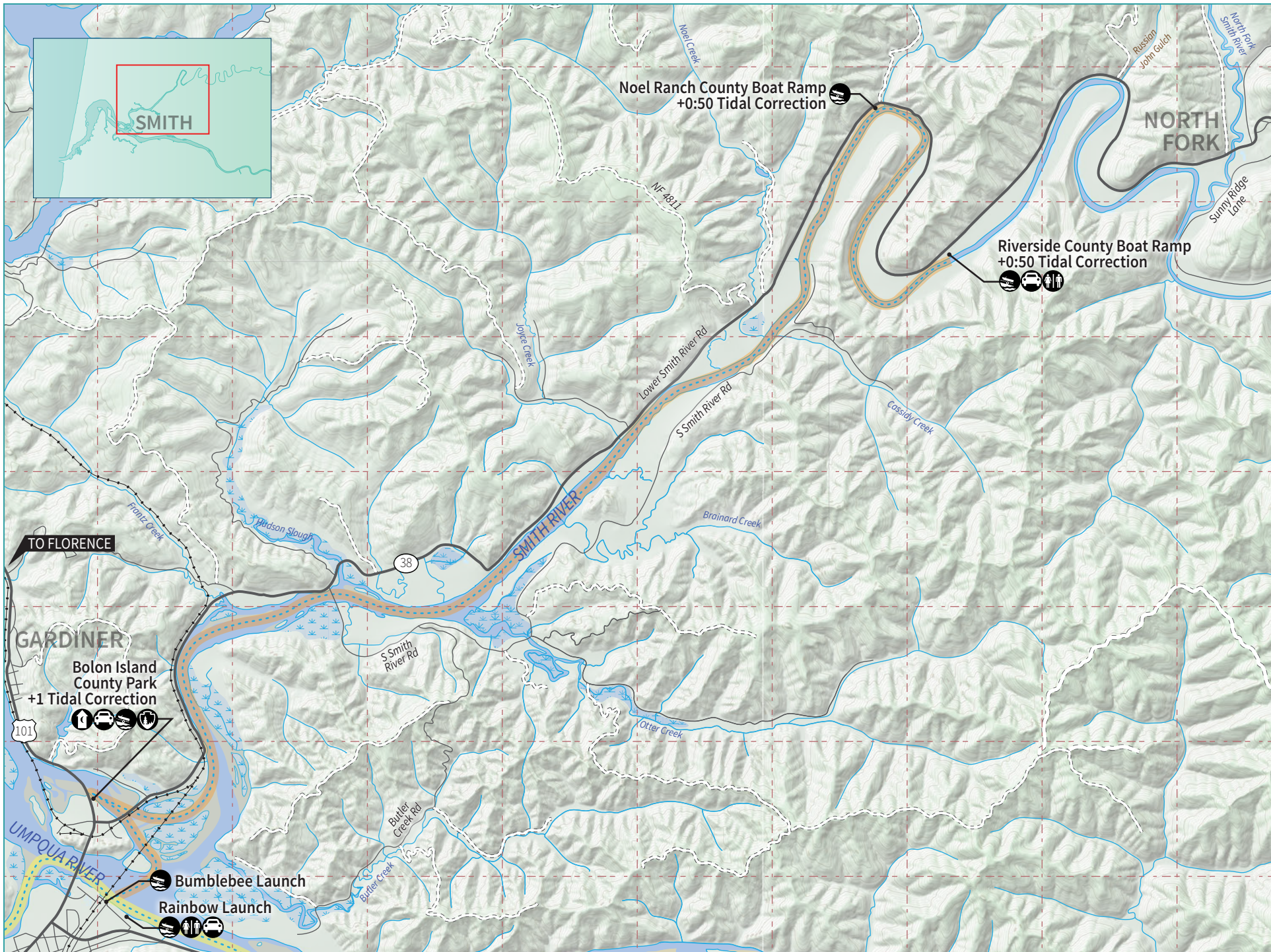
TO ELKTON

RAPIDS

SCOTTSBURG

ELLIOT STATE FOREST

Scottsburg County Park
+2:00 Tidal Correction



RESOURCES

GUIDES & OUTFITTERS:

South Coast Tours: www.southcoasttours.net / (541)373-0487

Coos Boat Tours: www.coosboattours.com / (541)999-6575

Wavecrest Discoveries: www.wavecrestdiscoveries.com / (541)267-4027

WATERSHED INFORMATION:

Umpqua Watersheds

<https://www.umpquawatersheds.org>

539 SE Main Street

Roseburg, OR 97470

(541)672-7065

ENCOUNTERING WILDLIFE:

Quietly view wildlife, giving a wide berth to the birds and animals you may encounter. A small pair of binoculars can stow easily on your boat and help you maintain a safe distance while viewing. Do not disturb stranded or wounded animals. Instead, contact the Wildlife Center of the North Coast at (503)338-0331.

Birding: www.oregoncoastbirding.com

Wildlife Rehab: www.coastwildlife.org; (503)338-0331

Duck Hunting Regulations: www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/waterfowl/

Fishing Regulations: www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/

Shellfish Toxicity Alert: www.oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish_status.shtml

Oregon Wildlife Recreation Report: www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/

PERMITS:

Rules and permitting are subject to change, currently all boats over 10' need an invasive species permit with the state of Oregon.

<https://myodfw.com/articles/buying-aquatic-invasive-species-prevention-permit>

WEATHER & SAFETY INFORMATION:

USGS Real Time Water Data: www.waterdata.usgs.gov

Tide Predictions: www.saltwatertides.com

Surf Report: www.oregonsurfcheck.com

Local Weather: <http://weather.yahoo.com/forecast/USOR0239.html>

Wind Report: www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php

Oregon Rivers: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/rt>

Tide Predictions: www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/tide_predictions.html

Tide tables provided at local markets.

NOAA: www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/; www.wrh.noaa.gov/; www.noaa.com

Buoys: www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php

Surf Report: www.oregonsurfcheck.com

Road Report: www.tripcheck.com

State Marine Board: (503)378-8587

U.S. Coast Guard Sector S Umpqua River, Winchester Bay: (541)271-2138

Station Chetco River, Harbor: (541)469-3885

Station Coos Bay, Charleston: (541)888-3267

Sheriff, Umpqua River-Douglas: (541)440-4447

Oregon State Police Headquarters, Salem: (503)378-3720

After Hours: Salem Dispatch: (503)375-3555

SW Region HQ: (541)726-2536

Coos County Sheriff Offices: (541)396-7800



Pacific Tree Frog.

Thanks to our partners and sponsors, and a special mention to Tom Baake for his involvement in the creation of the South Coast Paddle Guides. Tom is a published author of many outdoor recreation guide books. Very few people have as much knowledge about our region's recreational opportunities. His guide books can be found online and at many area outlets. We thank Tom for his passion in helping visitors and residents alike discover the many recreational opportunities Southwestern Oregon has to offer.

We recommend this book by Tom Baake and Ron Wardman:
Oregon South Coast Canoe, Kayak and Stand-up Paddle Guide.

Coos Bay: Westways Press

Email: westways@frontier.com | Website: www.scod.com/guidebooks

This paddle guide printed on Polyart waterproof paper.



**TRAVEL
OREGON**

