

# LOWER ROGUE 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!



Rogue River Estuary, photo by Priscilla Macy

# ROGUE RIVER PADDLING

Another of the South Coast's nationally-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, the Rogue starts its 215-mile journey to the Pacific Ocean high in the Cascade Range, near Crater Lake. It's popular for fishing, swimming, boating, rafting and paddling for nearly its entire length. So popular, in fact, that permits are required to float, boat and paddle along certain stretches. There are Class V rapids in some places, but as it nears the ocean, the Rogue settles down to offer current-assisted paddling through some of Oregon's most spectacular scenery. At this writing, no recreational permits were required to paddle below Foster Bar.

Out and back excursions in the river's estuary near Gold Beach can be fun, challenging and rewarding. Tidal influence extends about 4 miles upriver. While the Rogue's current can be strong, it's actually a series of pools and riffles.

In summer, a persistent north wind that blows upriver in the afternoon and dazzling sunshine (when the fog burns off) can be important factors to consider. Paddlers sometimes do moonlit tours to avoid the sun's heat.

Most trips from upriver sites require a vehicle shuttle. There are a handful of easy put-ins/take-outs at US Forest Service campgrounds and other locations. There is a truly remarkable 12-mile stretch downriver from where the Illinois River enters the Rogue where there is no river access. This section flows through Copper Canyon and is on par with many of the country's most amazing river segments.

Whether you start within sight of the ocean or 30 miles upriver, the Rogue River offers paddlers a memorable experience.



## HISTORY & ECOLOGY

The river's cultural history is as dramatic as the landscape that formed it, touching many generations of people and providing resources and recreation to this day. Centuries of Indian habitation was followed by "discovery" by European trappers and gold-seekers, culminating in misunderstandings, massacres and bloody battles of the so-called Rogue Indian Wars in the 1850s. Indians were eventually overwhelmed, with survivors forced into a bitter "Trail of Tears" forced march up the coast to a makeshift reservation shared with other tribes and bands. After a few years even that land was coveted by settlers, so reservations closed and the Indians returned to their ancestral homesites, only to find them occupied by whites.

Gold was discovered on the beach in the early 1850s, drawing hundreds of placer miners. The town's name, originally Ellensburg, was changed to reflect the bounty and avoid confusion with a Washington State town with the same name.

Pioneers prospected and trapped game, sold fruit and produce, and guided sportsmen in pursuit of the fabled salmon and steelhead. In later years some lands were returned to Indian tribes who had fought for official recognition, and other concessions were made to aid economic conditions. The prized fish runs continue to bring hundreds of anglers to the river every year.

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](http://oregon.gov) for current standards. Or call the Oregon State Marine Board at (503)378-8587.



## 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 AIS permit and carry on board. ([www.dfw.state.or.us](http://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.

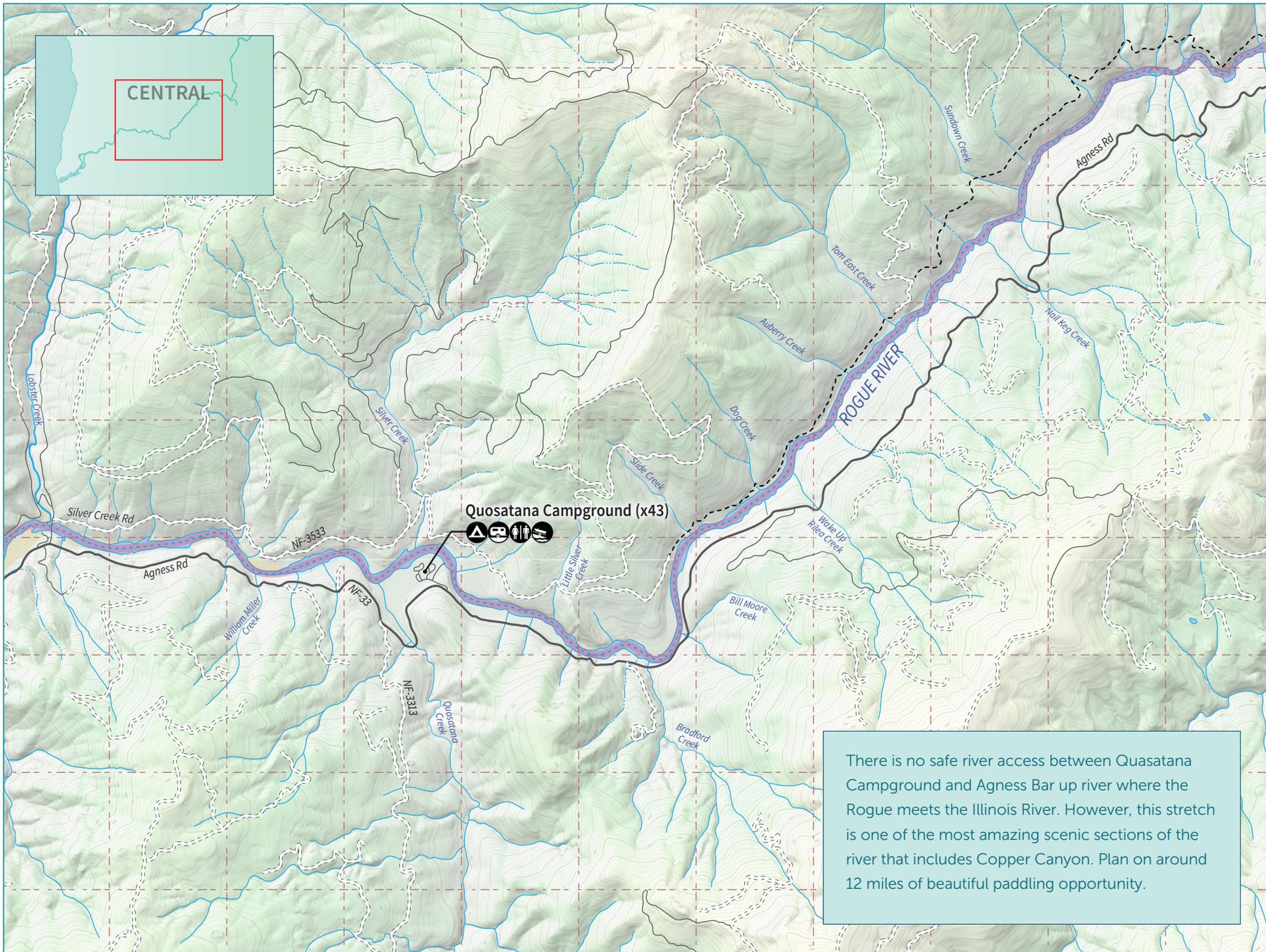


Agness, photo by Erik Urdahl.



There are numerous gravel bars with river access along the Rogue River up to Lobster Creek Forest Service Campground; however, there are no amenities. After Lobster Creek Campground little to no gravel bars are accessible.



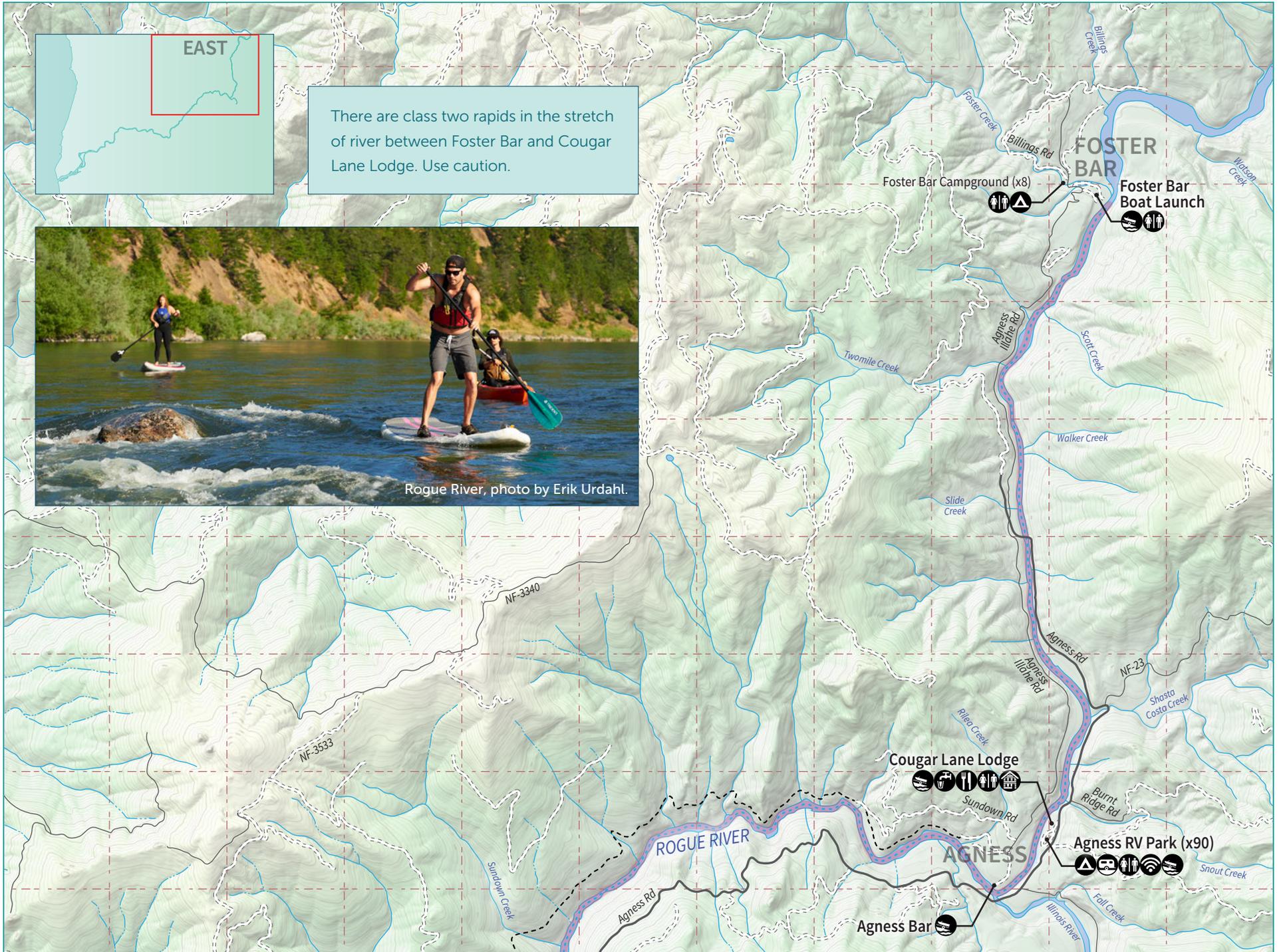


EAST

There are class two rapids in the stretch of river between Foster Bar and Cougar Lane Lodge. Use caution.



Rogue River, photo by Erik Urdahl.



# RESOURCES

## GUIDES & OUTFITTERS:

South Coast Tours: [www.southcoasttours.net](http://www.southcoasttours.net) / (541)373-0487  
Myriad of Fishing Charters: <https://visitgoldbeach.com/attractions/fishing-guided-fishing/fishing-guide-directory/>

## TRANSPORTATION:

Curry Public Transit: <https://currypublictransit.org/>  
South Coast Tours: <https://www.southcoasttours.net/>

## CHAMBERS:

Gold Beach Chamber of Commerce: <https://goldbeachchamber.com/>

## VISITOR CENTER:

Gold Beach Visitor Center: <https://visitgoldbeach.com/>

## WATERSHED INFORMATION:

Lower Rogue Watershed Council  
[http://www.currywatersheds.org/lower\\_rogue\\_watershed\\_council.aspx](http://www.currywatersheds.org/lower_rogue_watershed_council.aspx)  
P.O. Box 666 | 29692 Ellensburg Avenue  
Gold Beach, OR 97444  
(541)247-2755

## 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](http://www.oregoncoastbirding.com)  
Wildlife Rehab: [www.coastwildlife.org](http://www.coastwildlife.org); (503)338-0331  
Duck Hunting Regulations: [www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/waterfowl/](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/waterfowl/)  
Fishing Regulations: [www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/)  
Shellfish Toxicity Alert: [www.oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish\\_status.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish_status.shtml)  
Oregon Wildlife Recreation Report: [www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/](http://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](http://www.waterdata.usgs.gov)  
Tide Predictions: [www.saltwatertides.com](http://www.saltwatertides.com)  
Surf Report: [www.oregonsurfcheck.com](http://www.oregonsurfcheck.com)  
Local Weather: <http://weather.yahoo.com/forecast/USOR0239.html>  
Wind Report: [www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php](http://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](http://www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/tide_predictions.html)  
Tide tables provided at local markets.  
NOAA: [www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/); [www.wrh.noaa.gov/](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/); [www.noaa.com](http://www.noaa.com)  
Buoys: [www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php)  
Surf Report: [www.oregonsurfcheck.com](http://www.oregonsurfcheck.com)  
Road Report: [www.tripcheck.com](http://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  
Oregon State Police Headquarters, Salem: (503)378-3720  
After Hours: Salem Dispatch: (503)375-3555  
SW Region HQ: (541)726-2536  
Curry County Sheriff Offices: (541)247-3242



Cormorants on the Rogue River Estuary, photo by Priscilla Macy.

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.*

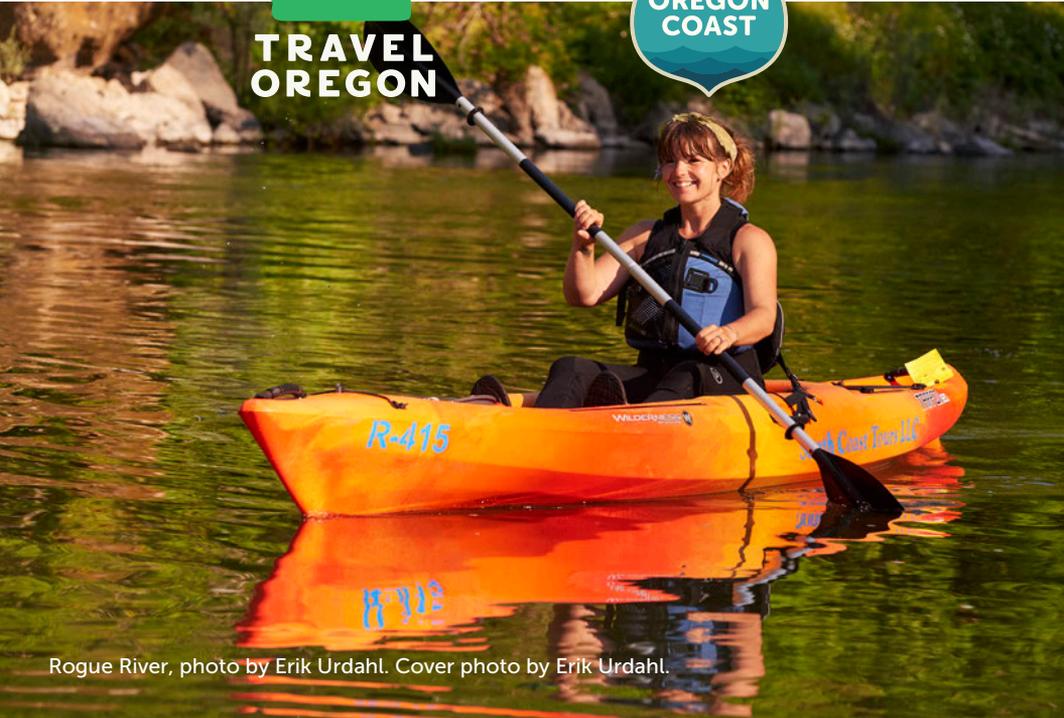
Coos Bay: Westways Press

Email: [westways@frontier.com](mailto:westways@frontier.com) | Website: [www.scod.com/guidebooks](http://www.scod.com/guidebooks)

This paddle guide printed on Polyart waterproof paper.



**TRAVEL  
OREGON**



Rogue River, photo by Erik Urdahl. Cover photo by Erik Urdahl.