

Owyhee River Private Boater Information

The Vale District manages the Oregon section of the Owyhee River from the Oregon/Idaho state line to the Owyhee Reservoir. The Boise BLM District Office (208-384-3300) manages the Idaho section of the river (above the state line).

Owyhee River is truly remote, primitive, and wild. The only facilities are located at the put-in and take-out sites. Depending on the flow and section of river you choose to float there will be at least Class IV rapids, and there could be up to Class V+. Plan for the spring run-off, water temperature, and weather to be variable and cold.

Contact the Vale District Office at (541) 473-3144, or the Rome Launch Site at (541) 586-2612 for current information. River information at Rome is available daily from March through June between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Mountain Time Zone).

The Vale District Office would appreciate any post-trip comments you have on visitor service, river resource condition, and river management. Please take a moment to jot down your trip notes and either mail your feedback to the Vale District Office (100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918) or drop your comments at the Rome Launch Site or Birch Creek Historic Ranch. **YOUR HELP** can truly make a difference.

Human Impact

Responsible use of these fragile resources can ensure continued enjoyment of the Owyhee River for generations to come. Please review the following information, and discuss regulations and expectations with all members of your group.

Put-in/Take-out Sites and Registration

The only authorized river put-in and take-out sites are Three Forks, Rome, Birch Creek, and Leslie Gulch. Development, vehicles, and relatively large crowds are limited to these areas to help control resource and visitor impacts.

Boater registration is mandatory for all boaters at the nearest authorized put-in facility prior to launch. If you launch above Three Forks, and there is no registration box, register at your take-out, or notify the Vale District Office or Rome Launch Site. Permits are not required for private parties. It is highly recommended that you contact the Vale District Office or Rome Launch Site prior to launching for up-to-date information. Owyhee River flow, weather, and road conditions are extremely variable.

Observe posted regulations at put-in sites. Check with the BLM or the on-site bulletin board for updates to float trip regulations.

Group Size

If you share a camp, hot spring, lunch stop, or float with another party; party size is

limited to 15 people above Rome and 20 people below Rome. The Owyhee desert environment is quite fragile and could easily be damaged by overcrowding with even the most careful campers.

Popular camps below Rome include Hike-out (river left, river mile 14) and Greely Bar Hot Spring (river left, river mile 44). Only one campsite is identified at each location, and each campsite is limited to 20 people. The nearest camps to Hike-out are located approximately one quarter mile up river and one mile down river. The nearest camps to Greely Bar Hot Spring are located approximately one mile up river and one mile down river. Help control use impacts and maintain the Owyhee solitude and primitive character by keeping party size as small as possible.

Personal Flotation Devices

Carrying a serviceable and approved personal flotation device for each person on the trip is mandatory.

Campfires and Firepans

A **Firepan or similar device** is required for wood and charcoal fires. All boaters must have a firepan or similar device in their possession before launching. Firepans or similar devices must completely contain the fire and all charcoal and burnt wood; and melted plastic, glass, or metal, etc. Elevate the firepan with rocks to keep the heat from sterilizing the soil or changing the color of the sand. Remove the firepan contents from the river corridor and dispose of the refuse in an appropriate container. Using a firepan eliminates multiple rock fire rings which decrease usable camp space, and keeps beaches free of debris such as ash, charcoal and chipped stone.

Use of a wood fire for cooking is discouraged; driftwood may not be abundant. If you do collect driftwood, gather it before reaching camp from driftwood piles in the high eddies. Even better bring your own wood. Vegetation (live or dead) must not be cut, gathered or destroyed. It is part of the natural setting and provides critical wildlife habitat. Disturbing (trimming, cutting, burning, etc.) hackberry trees (live or dead) is prohibited. Gas or liquid fueled stoves are an efficient, clean, and inexpensive alternative to wood fires.

Hot Spring Use

Camping at Rye Grass Hot Springs Camp (river left, river mile 24) and Greely Bar Hot Spring Camp (river left, river mile 44) is limited to one day and one night per river trip. Laying-over tends to increase pressure on these delicate ecosystems and discourages visits by other boaters and wildlife. Be mindful to impacts on riparian vegetation, associated wildlife, and future visitor experiences.

Camping is prohibited within 200 feet of any hot spring. Do not use soap in or around the hot springs.

Human Waste

Solid human waste and toilet paper produce health hazards and aesthetic problems within and adjacent to campsites. Hopefully, your group will not discover one of these spots while sunning on the beach or setting up your kitchen or tents. All parties **are required** to carry **and use** a leak proof, portable toilet to remove solid human waste and toilet paper from the river canyon. The toilet(s) must be large enough to service the entire party for the complete length of the trip. Toilets using plastic bag removal methods are not acceptable. Toilet systems are available which dispose of waste directly into an authorized facility such as an RV dump, sewer line, sewage plant, or a system specifically designed for solid waste. There are no disposal sites within the river corridor.

LOW-IMPACT PRACTICES

Camp on sand or gravel bars, to avoid trampling vegetation, if water level permits. Choose a campsite that does not require any **digging or trenching**; it scars the land, increases erosion, and endangers cultural artifacts. Leave the camp and beach as if you were never there, so the next floater can enjoy a pristine experience. **Camping** on any area posted "Closed" is prohibited.

Strain kitchen waste water to remove food particles. Place food particles in the garbage and remove from the river canyon. Waste water, including bathing water, may be deposited into the river. **Never use soap or deposit waste water** near side streams or springs. Keeping the camp free of food particles and waste water helps eliminate camp pests such as rodents and stinging insects. Also, snakes which are attracted to rodents are more likely to be found in a trashed campsite.

Remove all garbage from the river canyon; some refuse may be burned in the firepan to reduce bulk, and then placed in the garbage for removal from the canyon: *Pack-it-in-Pack-it-out*.

Pets must be kept under control at all times. Help protect pets, wildlife, and livestock from harassment and injury. **Clean pet solid waste** from campsites and remove from the river canyon. Help keep campsites clean for the next party.

Respect wildlife and help ensure their continued existence in the river canyon. Boaters should maintain a quiet, compact group and stay as far away from wildlife and waterfowl as possible when they are encountered.

Double check your camp before leaving for litter and items you may have left behind. Help keep campsites and beaches clean and pristine for the next floater.

Livestock

During the spring float season, cattle may be encountered at grazing areas (mostly

below Morcum Dam) and at water gaps and trail crossings. The effects of grazing are largely unnoticeable in areas where use is dispersed, but may be obvious at the trail crossings and water gaps (less than 5 percent of the canyon). These locations are indicated in the boating guide to aid you with selecting a camp.

Cultural Values

Owyhee River canyon represents up to 8,000 years of human history. Defacing, disturbing, or removing historic/prehistoric artifacts is prohibited. Disturbing archaeological sites, rockshelters, petroglyphs, and other artifacts is a felony prohibited by federal law. Our cultural heritage is a non-renewable resource. Photographers should use a polarizing filter to enhance petroglyph imaging. Use of chalk and other materials to highlight petroglyphs may cause long-term damage. Any damage to petroglyphs including scratching, chipping, or altering in any way is prohibited by state and federal law. Several cultural sites are on private property, and the rights of private owners should be respected. Enjoy our cultural heritage, and leave archeological features unspoiled and in place for others to discover.

Chalk Basin

Hiking Chalk Basin (river left, approximately river mile 25) is becoming more popular each year. Soils and plants in the basin are very sensitive to disturbance. Limit your hiking within the basin to the drainages. Use the drainage on the south side of Chalk Basin Dome (left when facing the dome) to go around the dome and access the west or back side. Trying to access the back of the dome from the north side drainage requires climbing a steep slope damaging loose fragile soil and delicate plants.

Weeds

BLM has an aggressive weed program to prevent, identify and treat noxious and other unwanted weed species within the river corridor. Treatment methods include hand pulling, backpack spraying and/or wick applying herbicides depending on the weed species and site location. Target noxious weeds include Whitetop, Russian Knapweed, and Canada and Scotch Thistle; other unwanted weeds include Russian Thistle and Cock-a-bur. Your group can assist by: hand pulling Canada and Scotch Thistles (thistles with purple flowers), and Russian Thistle and Cock-a-burs (use gloves, shovel may be helpful); identifying weed locations; and employing techniques to prevent the spread of weeds such as bagging weeds with flowers or seeds. River specialists at Rome or the Vale District Office can provide more information.

Aircraft Landing and Motorized Watercraft

Aircraft landing is illegal within the river corridor. Aircraft landings, over time, have created several unauthorized airstrips sometimes used by poachers. If you see aircraft on the ground within the corridor, please obtain the aircraft tail numbers and a complete

description of the aircraft from a **safe distance**. Do not approach the aircraft yourself. Report the information to the BLM.

Motorized watercraft are only authorized below river mile 55 (down river approximately 5 miles from Birch Creek Historic Ranch). This location is where Owyhee Reservoir slack water begins during full pool conditions. The motorized watercraft use boundary is signed and marked by a prominent pinnacle and drainage (river left) below the second historic water wheel. Please provide BLM with a description of any motorized watercraft and its registration number up river of the described boundary.

Firearms

Discharging of firearms into or from within any area posted “no shooting” or “safety zone,” or in violation of state law is prohibited. During the float season (March-June) it is highly recommended that there be no discharging of firearms anywhere within the river corridor.

Trip Notes

Please send any information you think helpful for managing the Wild and Scenic Owyhee River to: Wild and Scenic Owyhee River, Vale District Office, Bureau of Land Management, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918. Report violations you may observe to the Rome Launch Site at (541) 586-2612, the Vale District Office at (541) 473-3144, or BLM Law Enforcement at 1-800-333-7283.