



# New Oregon Life Jacket Law



**Beginning January 1, 2010 all boaters operating in Class III or higher white water rapids in Oregon must wear an approved U.S. Coast Guard Type I, III or V personal flotation device that is suitable for use on whitewater rivers.**

**The primary rapids on the Wallowa and Grande Ronde Rivers in Oregon are Class III**

## **AMERICAN SCALE OF RIVER DIFFICULTY**

(Used by the Oregon State Marine Board. Classes I-IV shown.)

**Class I:** Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.

**Class II:** Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers. Swimmers are seldom injured and group assistance, while helpful, is seldom needed. Rapids that are at the upper end of this difficulty range are designated "Class II+".

**Class III:** Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims. Rapids that are at the lower or upper end of this difficulty range are designated "Class III-" or "Class III+" respectively.

**Class IV:** Intense, powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Depending on the character of the river, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. A fast, reliable eddy turn may be needed to initiate maneuvers, scout rapids, or rest. Rapids may require "must" moves above dangerous hazards. Scouting may be necessary the first time down. Risk of injury to swimmers is moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance for rescue is often essential but requires practiced skills. A strong kayak roll is highly recommended. Rapids that are at the lower or upper end of this difficulty range are designated "Class IV-" or "Class IV+" respectively. Limit of open top canoes.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

BLM River Station at Minam (541-437-5580) or visit: [www.rivers.gov](http://www.rivers.gov)  
Oregon State Marine Board Website: [www.boatoregon.com](http://www.boatoregon.com)