



Rogue Currents



Welcome to the 2020 Edition of the Rogue Currents!

Public lands stewards are accustomed to making adjustments in plans, working through obstacles, and keeping sights set on the line to thread through the whitewater. 2020 was the chance to prove that when we all band together, we can problem solve, set goals (and achieve them!), and make sure we're still working towards a commonality that brings everyone together.

Thank you for being a part of our community, and working with us to solve the solvable, achieve the achievable, and uniting in those commonalities!



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Reflections: Going With the Flow

With COVID safety in mind, this season looked a little different, but the priority was first and foremost the safety of employees, partners, and the public. Prior to the 2020 permit season, our Visitor Center was fitted with Plexiglas barriers at the front counter. Outdoor portable toilets were ordered and installed. Sanitizing and mask-wearing protocols were developed, and a plan to allow only one customer at a time in the Smullin Visitor Center lobby was implemented.

All of this work was accomplished in a big hurry, and there was no way to know how many people would float the river. The transmission risk was taken very seriously, as people would be arriving from all over the country. Due to diligent cleaning and distancing practiced by the professional BLM Visitor Center staff, there were no known COVID-19 transmission cases at Rand this summer.

Adhering to state mandated COVID-19 prevention protocol proved challenging for commercial guides and outfitters. Some were able to offer smaller trips with family groups. All did their best to maintain social distancing in camp and on the river. Many smaller private groups took advantage of cancellations and picked up permits throughout the summer. As a result, the Wild Section of the Rogue saw its highest number of private boaters in more than 15 years.

What does the future look like? COVID-19 vaccines are on the horizon, yet it remains to be seen how quickly the pandemic will be gone. Regardless of the national health situation next summer the public's desire to float the Wild and Scenic Rogue River will likely be as strong as ever. We have proven that we can make the necessary adjustments to deal with an unpredictable pandemic and get people on the river.



2020 LOWER ROGUE NUMBERS



12,063

People who floated the river during the 2020 regulated use season (May 20th-October 15th)

4,432

People who went down the river via commercial trips (-25% from 2019)



7,631

People who went down the river via non-commercial trips (+16% from 2019)

1,808

Parties launched to float

398

Commercial parties

1,410

Noncommercial parties

14

Average commercial party size



5

Average noncommercial party size



68

Percentage of all spaces used (-3% from 2019)



22

Maximum number of launches in one day (Happened twice: In September and October)

For 2021...

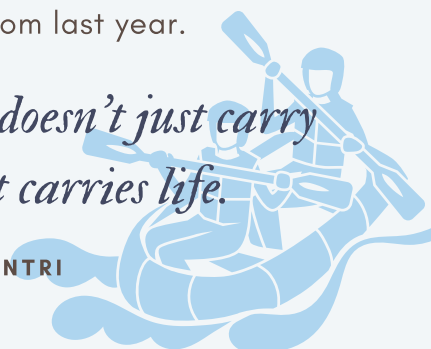
People who won permits for private floats in last season's lottery were given the option to run their trip as scheduled, cancel their trip, or receive a refund and run their trip in 2021 on the same calendar date as their 2020 permit. Some 400 permit holders chose the third option. **As a result, next year's lottery will be for a pool of closer to 4500 spaces, instead of the approximately 9750 that are usually available for private float permits across the season.**

Other items of note:

- **Total use was relatively average**, even with COVID-19 impacts.
- That being said, **commercial use was definitely lower than average**. We usually see approximately a 53% private/47% commercial split.
- This year it was 63% private/37% commercial.
- **Private boater use was the highest we've seen since 2003!** (And by a significant margin in most cases!)
- **There was a total of 15 days that reached the 120-user maximum this season.** That's the highest total in the past decade. (We did see numbers like that much more commonly in years 2000 2010).
- The average noncommercial party size, and what percentage of party leaders were from in- vs. out-of-state, also did not show much change from last year.

A river doesn't just carry water, it carries life.

-AMIT KALANTRI



Marine 31 Patrols

Through a USFS Resource Advisory Committee grant, the **Curry County Aquatic Safety Pilot Program was able to assist the Gold Beach Ranger District on the RRSNF this season.** Time was spent on the Wild and Scenic Rogue with Marine 31, as well as outreach floats on non-motorized craft and frequent visits to Foster Bar. The program is thankful for all of the hard work that the local Ranger District, the BLM, and cooperative partners put into management of the Wild and Scenic Rogue.

Marine 31 performed weekly patrols of the Wild and Scenic corridor emphasizing user contacts and compliance checks, river safety, river corridor stewardship (fire order education, site maintenance, bear fences etc.), Forest Service presence, and performed multiple gear and personnel transports throughout the season.



Will Sayne,
Gold Beach RD Recreation
Technician & Marine 31 Jet
Boat Pilot

Will performs all duties related to recreation on the RRSNF.



Luke Martinez,
Curry County Aquatic Safety
Pilot Program

Luke provides water safety outreach and education to users on the waterways and shorelines of the RRSNF within Curry County.



MARINE 31 2020 Numbers

10

Number of patrol runs Marine ran in the 2020 season



455

Miles patrolled in the 2020 season

135

Permits checked



1,175

Visitors educated on Wild & Scenic River fire regulations, stewardship principles, and river safety

Patrolling...





Stories from the River

Every year we like to honor our dedicated Recreation staff and others with a wild section float from Grave Creek to Foster Bar. This year, each of our Visitor Center staff already had an opportunity to experience the Wild section as a passenger on a three-day, two-night float patrol with two of our river rangers. The end of the year float provides an opportunity for the staff to do a float as one big group.

Our trip this year included Recreation seasonal employees Shanoa Totherow, Lucy Swaffield and Brandon Te, volunteer John Hockaday, Hydrology Technician Kaylie Butts, Commercial Permit Administrator Ryan Collins, Park Ranger Christine Lazina, Crew Lead River Ranger Patrick Kollodge, and Seasonal River Rangers Rick Fox, Seamus Mcmorrow and Katie Gregory.



One of the tasks taken on was to help restore the pristine condition of the canyon by reducing the numbers of bright orange orbs on the landscape. A friendly pumpkin collecting competition between boats ensued. More than eighty pumpkins were collected, some from very difficult to reach locations. (Seen here, Lucy Swafford high above the river with an impressive pumpkin!)

This being the time of digital outreach, we also utilized social media to help educate people of Leave No Trace practices and the ways in which this long-standing tradition is NOT in keeping with LNT ethics.



For those who have ventured down the Wild and Scenic Lower Rogue River in October, you've likely seen pumpkins placed along the river corridor. They're often placed in precarious places that are hard to get to--that's the challenge! It's a time-honored tradition that has been in place for a LONG time. Some traditions are good to keep going, and others are not. This one falls into that last category. Please: Leave the pumpkins at home. They're really bad for wildlife!

Lower Rogue River Trail Report

The **Rogue River National Recreation Trail**, stretching 40 miles between Grave Creek and Big Bend, offers one of southwestern Oregon's most amazing hiking experiences. It serves up stunning landscape vistas, following the Lower Rogue National Wild and Scenic River along its entire length. The trail serves backpackers and boaters alike, providing a nice alternative for stiff legged boaters to stretch their legs, and serving up plenty of challenge to hardy souls that carry everything they need on their back for days at a time.

Since the trail crosses through lands administered by both the BLM and the USFS, trail maintenance has been handled in various ways over the years. Both agencies have used labor from partners and volunteer groups, agency fire crews and seasonal recreation crews.

This season, **the BLM Fire Crew 10, USFS River Rangers, and the Siskiyou Mountain Club** started sharpening saws after a late winter reconnaissance hike by Siskiyou Mountain Club director Gabe Howe delivered news that a low elevation snow event wreaked havoc on the trees along the entire corridor.

The conifers and hardwoods along the low elevations of the Rogue River do not develop with high snow loads so when a foot of snow came barreling out of the sky January 15th, monster Douglas-fir trees started falling over.....root balls and all. Gabe Howe and the Siskiyou Mountain Club jumped into action in early March, sending a small, highly skilled sawyer team by raft into the USFS section of the trail from Marial to Clayhill Lodge, which received the brunt of the damage.

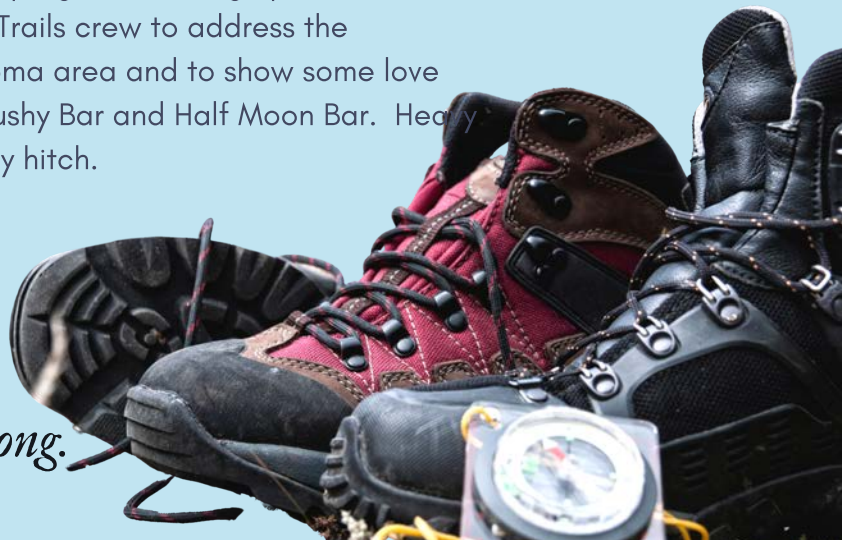
With Covid-19 hampering the ability of large crews to put boots on the ground in late Spring, log-out operations for the BLM commenced in mid-June, and USFS continued log-out operations from Clayhill to Big Bend in mid-July.

In mid-August, the Siskiyou Mountain Club stepped up again, teaming up with USFS River Rangers to support their 10-person Wilderness Trails crew to address the dangerous landslides developing near Clayhill/Tacoma area and to show some love for the Devils Backbone connector-trail between Brushy Bar and Half Moon Bar. Heavy tread work was the name of the game for that 8-day hitch.

Truly a remarkable effort all around!

A good river is nature's life work in song.

-MARK HELPRIN





2020 *Bear Report*

Viewing wildlife on a river trip is always exciting, but when people and bears find themselves in close proximity, it can become an issue for both the bears and the humans.

The FS and BLM developed an observation report form to assist wildlife biologists with:

- Promptly identifying aggressive bear-human interactions, and when necessary, mitigating safety concerns together with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- Educating and preventing intentional and unintentional feeding of bears;
- Encouraging food/garbage security (e.g. electric fences, food hoists, bear proof boxes); and
- Monitoring the effectiveness of bear deterrents when they are used (e.g. yelling, banging pots).

Electric fencing is installed each year at camp sites along the river that are most frequently visited by black bears in order to help prevent the bears from accessing human food. In 2020, fences were installed on both BLM and FS portions of the river May 13–19th, and removed from BLM November 6–8th and from FS November 10th.

A total of **211 observation forms** were received between April 11 and November 1:

- **152** of those forms included bear sightings.
- A total of **159 adult black bears and 72 cubs** were reported*.
- The highest frequency of observations occurred at **Tacoma (16)**.
- There were **no reports** of bears showing aggressive behavior toward people, and only **one report** of a bear coming closer than 30' away from humans.
- There were **3 incidents** where bears were able to obtain access to food due to unsecured coolers or trash left behind.
- **6 reports** of bears attempting to access food were deterred by locked coolers or people scaring them away by making noise.

In summary, using electric fences, bear proof boxes, and locked coolers was very successful at keeping bears from accessing human food.

*The total number of sightings does not equate to the number of individual bears in the area since the same animal may be reported numerous times.



Todd Neville, BLM Assistant Field Manager--Recreation

About: I supervise and support the Rogue WSR permit program, and the staff involved at Rand Visitor Center, River Rangers, and Maintenance crew.

Email: cneville@blm.gov



Patrick Kollodge, BLM Crew Lead River Ranger

About: I am in charge of day-to-day river ranger operations, including scheduling, training, equipment and project coordination.

Email: pkollodge@blm.gov



Ryan Collins, BLM Rogue River Commercial Permit Administrator

About: Living the dream! I have worked for the BLM for the past 5 years as the Non-Commercial Permit Administrator at the Rand Visitor Center.

Email: rpcollins@blm.gov



Meet and Greet



Wade McMaster, RRSNF Gold Beach District Ranger

About: Serving as Line Officer & Manager of the Gold Beach Ranger District of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

Email: wade.mcmaster@usda.gov



Steve DiCicco RRSNF Gold Beach Recreation Tech

About: I row rafts for the Forest Service and team up with the BLM for joint float patrols. You can find me digging and sawing on the Rogue River Trail, too!

Email: stephen.dicicco@usda.gov



Amy Hartell, Recreation Program Manager for Gold Beach & Powers RDs

About: Provides supervision and support to the recreation staff involved with the Rogue WSR permit program.

Email: amy.hartell@usda.gov

John B. Newman, RRSNF River Permit Manager/Special Uses Administrator

About: "Newman" will join the recreation team in January 2021. He comes to us from the Snake River, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in Clarkston, WA.

Email: john.b.newman@usda.gov

