

This is YOUR River Only YOU can protect this special place

Enjoying the canyon's splendor, relaxing while floating with the river's flow, or finding a moment of solitude during a side canyon hike are among the experiences found in the 123,430-acre McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. Outdoor enthusiasts can also watch for wildlife or spend quality time with family and friends.

This is one of the last red rock river canyons that offers these opportunities without the need to secure a launch or camping permit. The actions of careless visitors in the fragile river environment could change this policy.

If you treasure the benefits of a Ruby Canyon float trip, then follow the river's few rules. Together we can protect this special place and the freedom to float the canyon whenever it calls.



In October 2000, Congress designated the National Conservation Area (NCA). This legislation provides for the protection of nationally significant resources for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The National Landscape Conservation System, of which MCNCA is a part, adds to these special designations by focusing on the opportunities and management needs of BLM's national treasures.

Directions to Loma Boat Launch. From Grand Junction, take I-70 west to Loma exit (Exit #15). Cross over I-70 heading south. At the T-intersection go left on to the gravel road. Follow the road around the corner. The parking area is on your left. To reach the boat launch continue past the parking area for approximately 200 ft, veer to your left down the hill at the Y-intersection.

Directions to Westwater Ranger Station. From Grand Junction, take I-70 west. Travel west for approximately 28 miles. Once inside the Utah stateline, you will travel another 4.5 miles to the Westwater exit, at the off ramp go left (south) for 9 miles to the Westwater Ranger Station.



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BLM

Colorado River Ruby-Horsethief Canyons

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area • COLORADO



The River Rules

Sign in at the Loma register box so others know what campsites are available, emergency location is easier, and BLM has data to support funding.

Properly dispose of human waste. Washable, reusable toilets are required on all overnight trips. Urinate in flowing water, not on beaches, to prevent odor build up. Pack out solid waste and dispose in a sewer system or EPA-approved bag system.

Save our cottonwoods. Firepans are required. Ground fires started by campers have destroyed many of the river's cottonwood stands. Grasses ignite quickly and spread fire rapidly. Protect wildlife habitat and shade for your campsite by keeping fires in firepans and burning only driftwood or charcoal. Pack out all fire ash with trash. Fires may be banned during high fire-danger, normally occurring during the summer months. Know before you go.

Pack it in, pack it out. Leave no trace of your visit. Strain your dishwater into the river and put scraps in your trash to prevent "micro-trash" buildup that attracts ants to kitchen areas and campsites. Pack out campfire ash.

Camp in established sites. Fewer campsites mean a more natural and scenic river corridor.

Leave what you find. It is illegal to deface or remove any historical, archaeological or paleontological materials. Leave them for others to discover and enjoy.

River Etiquette

Leave plenty of room for others using the put-in and take-out by consolidating your gear and moving vehicles off the ramp as quickly as possible.

When traveling in a small group, pick small campsites and leave larger sites for larger groups.

Respect others' desire for solitude.

It's a Wilderness Out There

This stretch of the river runs through the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA) and along the northern boundary of the 75,550-acre Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness. Help us protect the natural beauty found here by leaving no trace of your visit. Avoid walking on cryptobiotic soils which can take decades to recover. More information about the MCNCA can be found in a separate brochure available at the Grand Junction BLM Office; or on our web site at www.co.blm.gov/mcnca/index.htm.

Wildlife: The Colorado River is a unique thread of life through these desert canyons, providing habitat for many threatened and endangered species. Eagles nest in the cottonwoods. Brought back from the edge of extinction, Peregrine Falcons soar along the cliffs of Mee and Knowles Canyons where you might also see some rare river otters and the reintroduced desert bighorn sheep. Nesting birds may abandon areas if they feel threatened by human activity. Please view them and all wildlife quietly and from a distance.

Attention Motorized Travelers

Be courteous by slowing and yielding plenty of room to non-motorized craft. Upstream motorized travel is prohibited from the Colorado State line to Westwater, Utah to protect bald eagle nesting sites along the river.



Bureau of Land Management
McInnis Canyons NCA
2815 H Road
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506
970.244.3000

www.co.blm.gov/mcnca
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Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a shuttle service? Can I rent the required firepans and portable toilets?

Yes. For a list of vendors call the Bureau of Land Management at 970-244-3000, or the local Visitor and Convention Bureau at 970-244-1480. Information is also available at www.co.blm.gov/gjra/localsvcdir.htm.

What are good hikes along the way?

All of the canyons along the river provide scenic day hikes into the wilderness. Stay in wash bottoms to leave no trace of your visit. More information is available at www.co.blm.gov/mcnca/index.htm.

What are the least crowded times on the river?

Try weekdays or late summer and early fall to avoid crowds.

I have a permit to float Westwater tomorrow. Where do I need to spend the night on the upper stretch of the river to be sure I make it there?

Choose a campsite at Black Rocks or below.

What's the river flowing?

Call Watertalk at 303-831-7135 for real-time information on river flows. Using your touch tone phone, dial Division 5, Station 3 for levels at Cameo and Division 5, Station 10 for levels at Stateline or, on the web at nwis-colo.cr.usgs.gov.

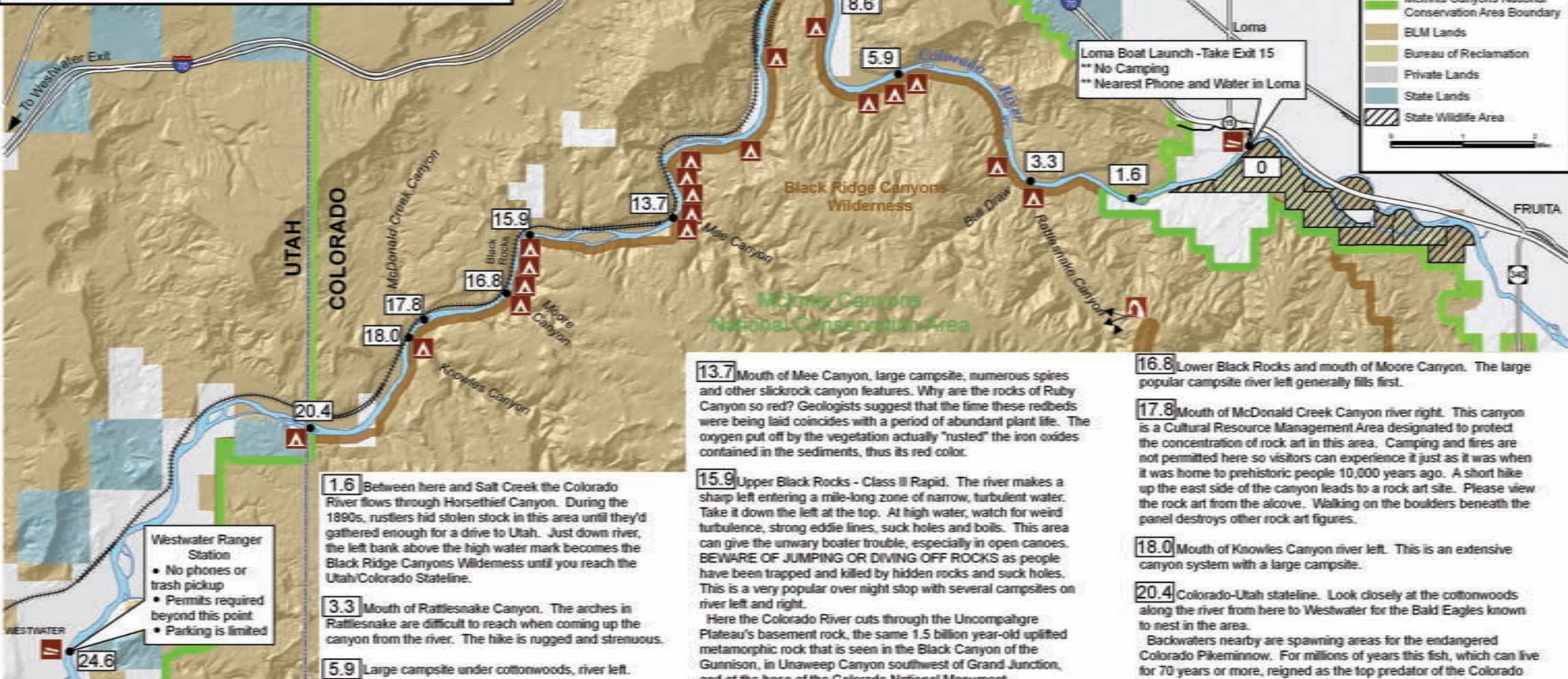
Do I have to wear a life jacket and bring a first-aid kit, repair kit and spare oar?

State law requires a life jacket for each passenger. A first aid kit, repair kit and spare oar are a normal part of trip preparation. We also suggest sunscreen, hats, clothing for changing weather conditions, and lots of drinking water.

Loma to Westwater

Distance: Approximately 25 miles
Shuttle Time: 1 ½ to 2 hours
Float Time: 8 to 15 hours, depending on water levels and winds
Difficulty: Class I & II

• Afternoon winds cause delays and can sometimes be strong enough that boaters must row to continue downstream. With this in mind, day trippers should plan to be at or past Black Rocks by noon.



Westwater Ranger Station

- No phones or trash pickup
- Permits required beyond this point
- Parking is limited

Milepoints:

0 Loma Boat Launch, elevation 4440'. Vault toilet, parking and boat launch. Day use area only. No overnight camping. Please sign in at register before launching.

1.6 Between here and Salt Creek the Colorado River flows through Horsethief Canyon. During the 1890s, rustlers hid stolen stock in this area until they'd gathered enough for a drive to Utah. Just down river, the left bank above the high water mark becomes the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness until you reach the Utah/Colorado Stateline.

3.3 Mouth of Rattlesnake Canyon. The arches in Rattlesnake are difficult to reach when coming up the canyon from the river. The hike is rugged and strenuous.

5.9 Large campsite under cottonwoods, river left.

8.6 The confluence with Salt Creek marks the end of Horsethief Canyon. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad enters Ruby Canyon via Salt Creek Canyon, then travels along river right to Westwater Valley. This portion of the river was first surveyed for the Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railroad in the spring of 1889 to determine the possibility of running a railroad along the entire length of the Colorado, through the Grand Canyon and as far as the mouth of the river.

13.7 Mouth of Mee Canyon, large campsite, numerous spires and other slickrock canyon features. Why are the rocks of Ruby Canyon so red? Geologists suggest that the time these redbeds were being laid coincides with a period of abundant plant life. The oxygen put off by the vegetation actually "rusted" the iron oxides contained in the sediments, thus its red color.

15.9 Upper Black Rocks - Class II Rapid. The river makes a sharp left entering a mile-long zone of narrow, turbulent water. Take it down the left at the top. At high water, watch for weird turbulence, strong eddie lines, suck holes and boils. This area can give the unwary boater trouble, especially in open canoes. BEWARE OF JUMPING OR DIVING OFF ROCKS as people have been trapped and killed by hidden rocks and suck holes. This is a very popular over night stop with several campsites on river left and right.

Here the Colorado River cuts through the Uncompahgre Plateau's basement rock, the same 1.5 billion year-old uplifted metamorphic rock that is seen in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, in Unaweep Canyon southwest of Grand Junction, and at the base of the Colorado National Monument. Geologists call it schist and gneiss, and this same formation creates the rapids of Westwater Canyon.

At this point the river is a surprising 85 feet deep. The fast moving, turbulent water is perfect habitat for the endangered Humpback Chub which uses its hump and large wing-like fins as hydroplanes in the swift currents. Chubs are known to travel between Westwater and Black Rocks, possibly using riffles and eddies as spawning habitat.

16.8 Lower Black Rocks and mouth of Moore Canyon. The large popular campsite river left generally fills first.

17.8 Mouth of McDonald Creek Canyon river right. This canyon is a Cultural Resource Management Area designated to protect the concentration of rock art in this area. Camping and fires are not permitted here so visitors can experience it just as it was when it was home to prehistoric people 10,000 years ago. A short hike up the east side of the canyon leads to a rock art site. Please view the rock art from the alcove. Walking on the boulders beneath the panel destroys other rock art figures.

18.0 Mouth of Knowles Canyon river left. This is an extensive canyon system with a large campsite.

20.4 Colorado-Utah stateline. Look closely at the cottonwoods along the river from here to Westwater for the Bald Eagles known to nest in the area.

Backwaters nearby are spawning areas for the endangered Colorado Pikeminnow. For millions of years this fish, which can live for 70 years or more, reigned as the top predator of the Colorado River, reaching weights of 50-80 pounds and lengths of up to 6 feet. Known as the "White Salmon" or "Colorado Salmon" to early settlers, it was once so abundant that it was commercially harvested. Now dams along the river have stopped the annual floods necessary to create its spawning habitat, and changes in the rivers' sediment loads and water temperatures threaten its continued existence.

24.6 Westwater Ranger Station. Take out river right. No phones or trash pickup. Permits required beyond this point. Parking is limited.