

Lower Salmon River Boater's Guide





Lower Salmon River Boater's Guide

Hammer Creek to Heller Bar

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Cottonwood Field Office

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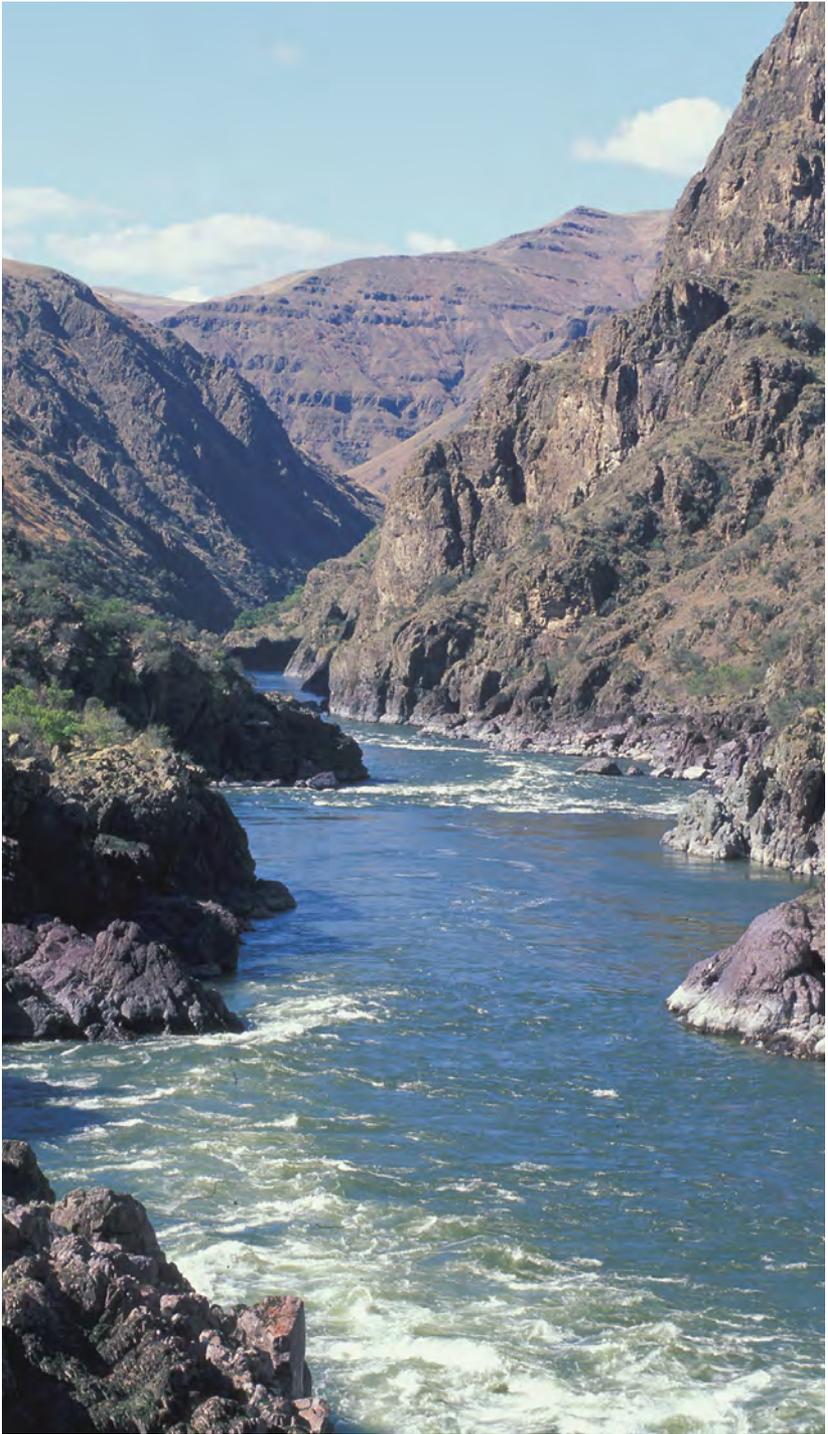
(208)962-3245

www.id.blm.gov/cottonwood/lsr

This guide includes maps and information about:

The Salmon River from Hammer Creek to the
confluence with the Snake River AND

the Snake River from the Salmon / Snake confluence
to Heller Bar below the Snake and Grande Ronde
River confluence.





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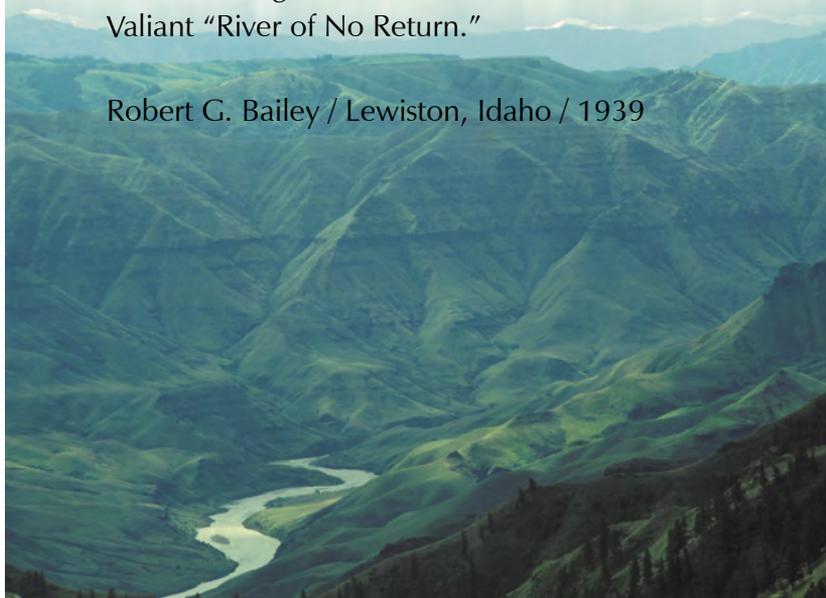
FLIP THIS GUIDE OVER TO START MAP USE

River of No Return

Men have floated on your waters,
They've explored from end to end –
Still they never return homeward,
By the way they did descend.
For your waterfalls and canyons,
And your rapids, swift and strong,
Find them weak and quite bewildered,
As your might they would disarm.

Roll on, roll on, mighty Salmon,
Mystic "River of No Return;"
Through these mighty hills, eternal,
Let your ways be ever stern.
Buried in the deepest canyons,
Gliding on with no concern –
Ever Idaho's greatest treasure
Valiant "River of No Return."

Robert G. Bailey / Lewiston, Idaho / 1939



The Lower Salmon River

The Nez Perce Indians called the Salmon River “Natsoh Koos,” which means “Chinook Salmon Water,” after the fish that once thrived there. Early explorers dubbed it the “River of No Return,” due to the difficulties they experienced trying to transport wooden boats upstream through roaring rapids. Whatever it is called, the dynamic Salmon River and the land it nourishes are very special.

The 425-mile waterway is the longest completely free flowing river in the lower 48 states and one of the few in the nation that contains no dams. The river begins as not much more than a trickle at an elevation of about 8,000 feet in the Sawtooth and Whitecloud Mountains of central Idaho. It gathers force as it makes its way northeast and then west, fed by snows from the Sawtooth and Salmon River Mountains in the south and the Clearwater and Bitterroot Mountains in the north.

About 150 miles further on its westward course, the Salmon River has created the second deepest canyon in North America, which effectively splits Idaho in half. The section known as the Lower Salmon River begins at Vinegar Creek, 25 miles above the town of Riggins. At Riggins, the river swings north and then west for 87 miles where it meets the Snake River. The Salmon and Snake combine to flow into the Columbia River and eventually into the ocean. The drainage area of the Salmon River, which lies entirely within Idaho’s borders, encompasses approximately 13,550 square miles.

Trips can range from one to seven or eight days. The average trip length is 5 days.

The river and its canyon are truly remarkable. The numerous – and unusual – white sand beaches are a reminder that this river is still free flowing. Respect the river, listen to it, learn from it, cooperate with it, and care for it.



Photo: Dave Scott



Photo: Dave Scott

Facts

The Lower Salmon is a “pool and drop” river, with the more difficult rapids in the narrow canyons. Numerous white sandy beaches on both sides of the river offer camping. The 20-mile stretch of the Snake River, from the confluence with the Salmon River to the Heller Bar take-out near the confluence with the Grande Ronde River, contains slower moving water with some rapids and is often characterized by stiff up-canyon winds.

River Mileages

Hammer Creek to Heller Bar	73 miles
Hammer Creek to Pine Bar Boat Ramp	11 miles
Pine Bar to Eagle Creek	29 miles
Eagle Creek to Snake River confluence	13 miles
Salmon and Snake River confluence to Heller Bar	20 miles

Elevations

Hammer Creek	1,440 feet
Salmon and Snake Rivers confluence	900 feet
Heller Bar	840 feet

Difficulty Rating

Class III-IV

Flow Information

Flow measurements are taken daily from the White Bird Gauge just above Hammer Creek. For daily flow information, call the Bureau of Land Management at (208) 962-3245 or go to the USGS website at www.idaho.wr.usgs.gov

The minimum recorded flow is 1,580 cfs; the maximum recorded flow is 134,000 cfs.

Recommended Flows

2,500 cfs - 15,000 cfs

Water Temperature

Ranges from 36 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit

Main Seasons of Use

Seasons of use depend on the water level, but generally the floating season runs from July through October and there are spring and fall fishing seasons. Power boating season coincides with spring and fall fishing and fall hunting.

Regulations

Group size is limited to 30 people. Firepans are required. Human waste carryout is required. Self-issue permits, available at all river access points, are required for all overnight trips year-round AND all day trips from July 1 to the Monday after Labor Day. Camp running is prohibited. Camps cannot be occupied before 1:30 pm Mountain time unless the entire group is present.

Maps

Quadrangle names for the 7.5 Minute Series of U.S. Geological Survey Topographic Maps: For the Salmon River from Hammer Creek to the Snake River confluence – Whitebird, Fenn, Moughmer Point, Boles, Westlake, Hoover Point, Rattlesnake Ridge, Wapshilla Creek, Cactus Mountain, Deadhorse Ridge. From the Salmon and Snake Rivers confluence to the Snake and Grand Ronde Rivers confluence (Heller Bar) –Wapshilla Creek, Jim Creek Butte, Limekiln Rapids.

Access

Hammer Creek Recreation Site (River Mile 52.5) concrete boat ramp, restrooms, drinking water, fee campground, parking.

Pine Bar (River Mile 42) concrete boat ramp, restrooms, drinking water, fee campground.

Eagle Creek (River Mile 12.5) very rough, primitive access road, no facilities.

Heller Bar (Snake River Mile 168.5) concrete boat ramp, restrooms, parking.

Approximate One-Way Shuttle Distance and Times

Hammer Creek to Heller Bar	125 miles / 3 hours
Hammer Creek to Pine Bar	40 miles / 1 hour
Pine Bar to Heller Bar	110 miles / 2.5 hours

Managing Federal Agency

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) / Cottonwood Field Office
RR3 Box 181
Cottonwood, ID 83522
(208) 962-3245

Whitewater Classifications – International Scale

- Class I small waves, passages clear, no serious obstacles.
- Class II medium-sized regular waves, passages clear, some maneuvering may be required.
- Class III waves numerous, high, and irregular, rocks, eddies, narrow passages, scouting usually required.
- Class IV powerful, irregular waves, boiling eddies, dangerous rocks, congested passages, precise maneuvering required, scouting mandatory.
- Class V exceedingly difficult, violent rapids often following each other without interruption, big drops, violent current, scouting mandatory but often difficult.
- Class VI limit of navigability, generally considered unrunnable.



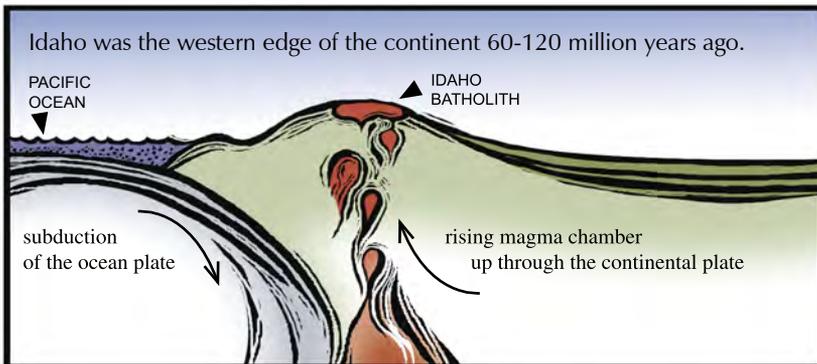
Potholes polished out of the rock by the Salmon River

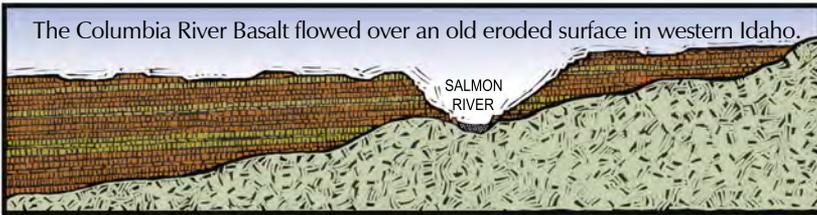
Natural History

Geology

The Lower Salmon River winds through the volcanic rocks and metamorphosed sediments of the Seven Devils Group and the lava flows of the Columbia River Basalt.

About 200 million years ago, the Seven Devils Mountains, now located just west of Riggins, were a chain of volcanic islands called the "Wallowa Terrane." The Wallowa Terrane was located in the Pacific Ocean, near the modern Aleutian Islands. Movement of crustal plates brought the Wallowa Terrane to the west coast of North America where it "slammed" against the continent at the speed of a few centimeters per year. Over time, the slow but relentless collision caused the rocks to fold and push up, nearly vertical in some places. This resulted in chemical and textural changes in the rocks, known as "metamorphism." The boundary, or "suture zone" separating the original North American continent from the exotic rocks of what were once Pacific Ocean islands, runs roughly north and south, just a few miles east of Riggins. These rocks, the oldest in the Lower Salmon region at about 200 million years of age, contain a variety of mollusk shells in limestone beds. Seven Devils rocks are well exposed in some of the steeper Lower Salmon River canyons, such as Blue Canyon.



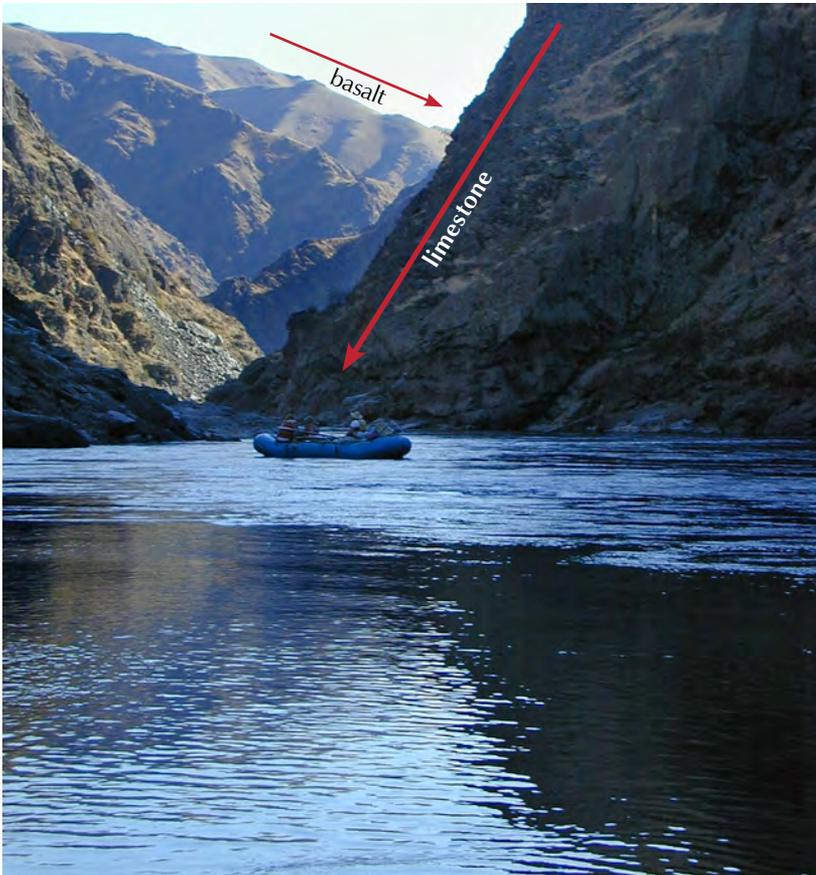


About 15 million years ago, molten basalt flowed repeatedly from large rifts, or cracks, in the earth's surface. Most of the rifts occurred near what is now the Columbia River in the southeastern corner of Washington state. Because molten basalt is very fluid, these enormous flows covered huge areas – nearly half of Washington, large areas of northern Oregon, and northern and central Idaho – before they hardened. As the basalt cooled, columns were formed. These columns are visible today in many places along the Salmon, particularly in the vicinity of Wapshilla Rapids. The width and orientation of the columns was determined by the way the hot lava that formed them cooled. Wide columns indicate slow, even cooling while narrow columns signify rapid cooling. Vertical columns formed when the lava cooled from the surface in – curved and horizontal columns resulted when water entered the lava through cracks and cooling proceeded from the center out.



Columnar basalt near Wapshilla Creek

Other features of the Lower Salmon River also provide clues about the area's geology. Where the canyon walls are steep and confining, the rock is generally hard and resistant to the erosive action of water. The "pool and drop" character of the river, or alternating between stretches of deep, slow water and rapids, indicates that some layers of the Seven Devils bedrock are more resistant than others. Blue Canyon (see photo foreground) is a perfect example. Places where the canyon widens and the river slows, making lots of riffles and a few mild rapids, signify passing through Columbia River basalt (see photo background). Basalt is susceptible to erosion and the resistance of every layer is about the same.



Steeper canyons are made of rock types that resist the river's erosive power.

Plant Life

Most of the Lower Salmon River rolls through arid grassland, a relatively small yet distinctive vegetative region of the Pacific Northwest. The semi-arid climate features hot, dry summers and mild, moist winters with the longest growing season and most frost-free days of any region in Idaho. Elevations within the river canyon range from 900 feet to over 5,000 feet, enabling many plant communities to thrive. Native species common to the Lower Salmon River include bluebunch wheatgrass, prickly pear cactus, poison ivy, lupine, arrowleaf balsamroot, yarrow, mullein, willow, curl leaf mahogany, netleaf hackberry, and ponderosa pine.



arrowleaf balsamroot
poison ivy



lupine
prickly pear cactus



Much of the easily accessible land surrounding the river canyon has been disturbed by grazing, logging, or fire, facilitating the invasion of non-native or introduced plant species. Non-native species include yellowstar thistle, cheatgrass, teasel, knapweed, and horticultural species such as apricot, apple, and walnut trees.



yellowstar thistle

Floods, which vary widely in frequency and duration on free-flowing rivers like the Salmon, have created distinct bands of lichen and moss on the canyon walls. Four distinct zones are normally apparent. The low water zone, usually underwater, contains lichen and algae. The normal flood zone, covered by water only during normal high flow periods, contains whitish-gray lichen and eddy moss. The high flood zone, covered by water only during extreme high flow periods, contains two types of flood moss. This zone occurs more consistently than any other. The extreme flood zone supports terrestrial vegetation and is predominantly barren of any lichen or moss.

Wildlife

Fish

Many species of both cold and warm water fish are found in the Salmon River, including steelhead trout, salmon, rainbow trout, smallmouth bass, and catfish. White sturgeon, as much as 12 feet long and 100 years old, also swim these waters.

The Salmon and Snake Rivers and their tributaries provide important habitat for steelhead trout and chinook salmon. These anadromous fish, which require both salt and freshwater in their life cycles, use the rivers as passageways to travel the 500 to 900 miles between the Pacific Ocean where they spend their adult lives and the Idaho streams where they spawn. Fall chinook salmon spawn in the Lower Salmon River in November. Sadly, Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead runs today are only a fraction of their historic size. Sockeye salmon are listed as an endangered species, and fall chinook, spring/summer chinook, and steelhead are all listed as threatened species under the Threatened and Endangered Species Act.



chinook salmon

Birds

The sights and sounds of nature's acrobats fill the air of the Lower Salmon River canyon. Listen for the chestnut brown and white canyon wren's fluid song of decelerating, descending notes resembling the sound of laughter. Look for them in steep, shady sections of the canyon and cliffs. The sooty-gray American dipper, or water ouzel, may be seen bobbing along the water's edge or diving, swimming, and even walking on the river bottom in search of food. A blue and white belted kingfisher may hover, then dive headlong into the water from the air. They can be easily recognized by their deep, irregular wing beats and their loud, rattling call.



chukar partridges

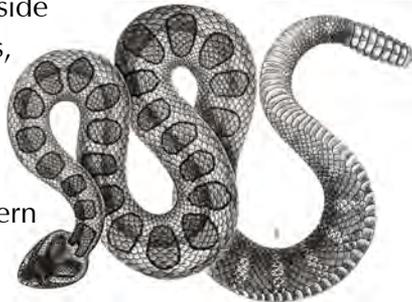
Chukar partridges, natives of India and Pakistan, were introduced to the canyon in the 1950s. These brownish-gray birds, with black and white barred flanks and red legs and bill,

have a distinct and rapid “chuck, chuck, chuck” call. They like rocky desert areas and arid grasslands and are frequently seen at the river’s edge during the summer. Bank swallows nest in large colonies, burrowing into river banks. The more common cliff swallows build gourd-shaped mud nests along the canyon walls. Canada geese and mergansers are common.

The Lower Salmon River canyons also feature one of the highest concentrations of raptors in the world. Golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, Northern harriers, American kestrels, common nighthawks, and ospreys are yearround residents, while bald eagles winter in the canyons.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Western toads are common along the river, and tailed frogs and spotted frogs are found in side drainages. Western rattlesnakes, gopher snakes, rubber boas, racers and garden snakes are all found in the canyon. The Western fence lizard and Western skink are often spotted.



Mammals

Many mammals can also be seen and heard along the Lower Salmon River. Beavers, otters, minks, and raccoons are all area residents. Cougar (also called mountain lion or puma) and bobcat are common, but due to their secretive nature and nocturnal habits are rarely seen. The howl of coyotes can add a special dimension to a river trip. Mule deer, which can be easily identified by their white rumps and narrow white tail with a black tip, and White-tailed deer are often observed in the area. American elk, or Wapiti, winter in the upper elevations of the canyon but are rarely be seen. However, sharp eyes may spot Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in Blue Canyon and along the Snake River.



Photo: Craig Johnson

river otters



rocky mountain bighorn sheep



Human History



17

Pre-Historic (before written records)

The first human inhabitants of the Lower Salmon River canyon were Native Americans who lived in the canyon 11,400 years ago. Climatic conditions were cooler than today, and people probably relied on deer, elk, small game, fish and the multitude of plant resources found in the canyons and the surrounding area for sustenance. The climate changed around 8,500 years ago with a peak in aridity and much hotter conditions than today. The human inhabitants adapted to the new conditions by becoming less reliant on big game for food, and placing a greater dietary emphasis on plant, river mussel, and

fish resources. The climate slowly moderated with increasing precipitation and cooler temperatures by 4,000 years ago. During this period, the use of plant resources and river mussels continued to increase, with big game remaining a part of the diet.

Around 2,000 years ago, there was a dramatic, short term increase in precipitation. The Salmon River began cutting down to its current level, and human occupation once again changed. Permanent winter villages began to appear along the river. These villages often consisted of semi-subterranean pit houses with the floor excavated into the ground for insulation against cold weather. Poles around the outside of the pit were lashed together at the top and covered with mats made of tule or cattail. A fire burned in the middle of the floor. Some of these pits can still be seen today along the Lower Salmon River. The people who lived in these riverside villages hunted deer, elk, and mountain sheep and relied on salmon, steelhead trout, and mussels as important food sources.



As the area's population increased, people began to move seasonally with the migrations of large game animals although they continued to winter in permanent villages composed of pit houses. The importance of salmon, steelhead, and root crops as food sources grew. Roots of the cous, found in river canyons, and camas, common in moist upland meadows and prairies, were eaten raw or baked and stored for winter use.

Around 1720, the Nez Perce Indians, long-time inhabitants of the Lower Salmon River area, obtained horses and a new era was born. Horses enabled the Nez Perce to travel greater distances and expand their already extensive trade networks. Trading and hunting trips into what is now Oregon and Montana became common.



Rock art created by pre-historic and historic inhabitants of the Lower Salmon River area is still visible in many places. Pictographs, designs painted on the surface of rocks, can be found along the river. The function of pictographs is unknown. They may have been drawn to represent events, serve as trail markers, or send messages to others. Along the Lower Salmon River, the pictographs are usually red. The paint was made by grinding ochre, or iron oxide, and mixing it with oil or grease and resin. Please remember that rock art is fragile. View and photograph these sites, but please do not touch the paintings! Rubbing the figures, or even just touching them can destroy this early art.

Historic

The historic period of the Lower Salmon River region begins with the arrival of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in 1805. It was the first significant contact between the Nez Perce Indians and Euro-Americans. Lewis and Clark traveled along the Clearwater River to the north of here. Although they did not visit the Lower Salmon River, Sergeant Ordway and several members of their party travelled to the area between Maloney Creek and Wapshilla Creek on a quest to purchase salmon from the Nez Perce. Soon after, fur trappers began to enter the region. One of the first was Donald McKenzie, who arrived at the confluence of the Little Salmon and Salmon Rivers, near Riggins, in 1811. He travelled along the Salmon River to the White Bird area before continuing north on his search for areas rich in furs.

In 1855, the Nez Perce Indians signed a treaty that established a reservation with the understanding that the tribe would retain control over most of their territory, which included the entire Lower Salmon River. But in 1860, gold was discovered on Nez Perce land, creating pressure from Euro-Americans to change the reservation boundaries. In 1863, a new treaty was drafted which greatly reduced the tribe's territory. Only a portion of the Nez Perce agreed to this new treaty. Those who did not agree were forced to move into the new treaty area in 1877. Before moving to the reservation at Lapwai, several young Indians camping at Tolo Lake near Grangeville killed some of the white settlers along the Salmon River near White Bird. This instigated a confrontation between the U.S. Army and the Nez Perce Indians, which erupted into the Nez Perce War.

The first battle was fought at what is now the White Bird Battlefield on June 17, 1877. After this initial fight in which no Indians were killed, Chief Joseph and other Nez Perce chiefs

led their party across the Salmon River at Horseshoe Bend, near the mouth of Slate Creek. They traveled across Joseph Plains to the west, then turned north and crossed back over the Salmon River near Billy Creek. From Billy Creek they went east, passing Cottonwood, and continued that direction until they arrived in the area of Missoula, Montana. The party then turned south into Idaho, then east through Yellowstone National Park, then north back to Montana where they were finally captured in October of 1877, only a few miles from the Canadian border. About 750 Nez Perce people began this arduous journey of 1,170 miles. After fighting almost the entire way, only 418 Nez Perce were still with the group when they were captured. The others had already been killed or escaped. The trail the party followed has been designated the Nez Perce National Historic Trail.



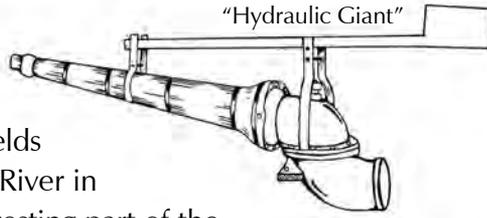
Looking south from White Bird Pass



Mining

Mining began along the Salmon River in 1860 with the discovery of fine, or “flour,” gold. The area was mined intensively through the 1880s. Mining activity continued through the early 1900s with another large influx of miners during the Depression years of the 1930s. Miners used several methods to extract gold from placer deposits, the loose gravel and soil deposited by the river in terraces. In the widely used hydraulic method, water was transported from a nearby stream into a reservoir or pressure box where it funneled into a large movable nozzle called a “hydraulic giant.” A stream of high pressure water was then used to break up the hillside. The excavated material was carried away in sluice boxes with artificial riffles installed to catch the heavier gold. The larger rocks were pitched out into tailing piles. Today evidence of hydraulic mining - high vertical banks, extensive rock tailing piles, and remnants of ditches, canals, and reservoirs - can be seen along the Lower Salmon River. The total amount of gold removed from this area is unknown. Miners also attempted to mine copper north of White Bird and near the Salmon and Snake Rivers confluence.

The presence of Chinese immigrants, who came to work the newly discovered gold fields along the Lower Salmon River in the 1860s, forms an interesting part of the area's history. Most Chinese mining along the river occurred between 1870 and 1900 when Emigrants left extreme poverty in their homeland and came to America to work and save money so they could return to China as wealthy individuals. The Chinese maintained much of their native culture since they planned on returning home, although many eventually decided to stay. They were often victims of discrimination, frequently chased off their claims, robbed, and sometimes murdered. The laws of many mining districts prohibited the Chinese from mining. Since the mineral values along the Lower Salmon River were comparatively low, the Chinese were generally allowed to mine there without much interference. The Chinese who lived along the river usually built rock structures containing a fireplace, with a wooden framework over the top, probably covered with canvas. Many of these rock structures are still standing today. An excellent example is found below Half 'n Half rapids.



Mining was prohibited on land within 1/4-mile of the Lower Salmon River in 1986 when the BLM withdrew the area from mineral entry.



Agriculture and Ranching

Although most of the land along the Lower Salmon is not suitable for agriculture, some gardens and orchards were planted along the river. Some miners, especially the Chinese, maintained garden plots at their mine sites. Most of the land along the Lower Salmon River is, however, suited to ranching. Settlers brought the first cattle to the region in the early 1860s. Grazing from 1890 to 1940 was unrestricted and quite heavy, much heavier than would be acceptable today. Sheep were also brought to the area, and feuds arose between cattle and

sheep ranchers over use of the range. The feuds sometimes resulted in poisoned water holes, crop destruction, and even murder. All land along the Lower Salmon River is still grazed today, primarily from November through May, and ranching continues to be an important part of the regional economy.



Transportation

Ferries were critical to move both people and livestock across the forbidding barrier of the Lower Salmon River in the days before bridges were built. By the early 1900s, many areas in Idaho were settled with a system of trails and roads which led to small communities, homesteads, and mines. The stage road between White Bird and Riggins was completed between 1894 and 1898. When Highway 95 was constructed in 1931, it obliterated most of the stage road. Northern Pacific completed the first railroad survey along the river from Salmon to Lewiston in 1872. However, construction was not feasible due to high cost. From 1920 to 1940, a road from Rock Creek to White

Bird, paralleling the Lower Salmon River, was planned to shorten the distance between Cottonwood and White Bird. The road was under construction in 1939 but was abandoned in 1940, reportedly because of political pressure from the nearby town of Grangeville, which would have been bypassed. A 3-mile segment of that road now provides access to the Pine Bar Recreation Site.



Boating History

Nez Perce Indians used canoes, ranging from 15 to 40 feet long, and water-tight skin boats on the Lower Salmon River. A fur trapping expedition attempted to boat the Salmon River in a small skin canoe in 1832, but the journey ended in failure when two men drowned and two others walked out of the canyon. Surveyors conducting the 1872 Northern Pacific railroad survey traveled much of the river in boats built in Salmon, Idaho. In the 1870s, boating on the Salmon River began in earnest when large wooden scows were built to transport mining supplies downriver. These scows were probably patterned after similar boats used on the Mississippi River a century

before. The scows, 32 feet long and 8 feet wide with double hulls and 3 foot high gunwales, could be built in three days. They were steered by two boatmen operating “sweeps,” two 22 to 28 foot poles with 12 to 14 foot blades, set on a pivot, one on the bow and one on the stern. At the end of each trip, the scows were dismantled and the wood was sold for building materials, since there was no way to get them back upstream. This is how the Salmon River earned the nickname “River of No Return.” The most famous riverman on the Salmon in the early days was Captain Harry Guleke, who piloted scows down the river from 1896 through the 1930s. His trips included a National Geographic expedition in 1935. Although you won’t see wooden scows on the river today, you can see a replica built for the Idaho Centennial in 1990 on display at the Visitor Center in Riggins on Highway 95.

The first known trip on the Salmon River with inflatable craft occurred in 1929 when four men paddled two 9 1/2 foot rubber boats from Shoup to Riggins. Wooden dory-style boats first appeared in 1936. In 1947, Glen Wooldridge, a Rogue River veteran, ran a 32-foot plywood boat with a 33-horsepower outboard upstream from Riggins to Salmon, forever tarnishing the river’s “no return” reputation.

Boating as we know it today-with kayaks, canoes, rafts, and other crafts-began on the Salmon River in the mid-1970s and continues to evolve.





Before Your Trip

Permits

Permits are required for all trips on the Lower Salmon River below Hammer Creek. You can get a self-issue permit at Hammer Creek, Graves Creek, or the BLM office in Cottonwood. This permit also authorizes use of the Snake River in Hell's Canyon below the mouth of the Salmon. Please note that the requirements on the Snake River may differ from those on the Lower Salmon. Different regulations will be posted at launch sites or will be printed on the self-issue permit.

Group Size

There is a maximum size of 30 people per trip.

Water Levels

Call the BLM at (208) 962-3245 or go to the USGS website at <http://www.idaho.wr.usgs.gov> to check water levels.

Equipment

Make sure all equipment is in good condition. Carry repair kits and extra oars. Consider carrying an extra Personal Flotation Device in each boat. Carry safety and first aid equipment and know how to use them.

Drinking Water

Although water quality is high, river water is not considered potable without treatment or filtering due to the presence of Giardia. Bring your own drinking water or plan to filter or boil stream and river water.

Have a plan

Tell someone where you are going and when you will be returning.



Trash lost by boaters and found by BLM river patrol.

Minimum Impact Camping

You affect this river canyon when you pass through. River users come to the Lower Salmon for many reasons, but none of them come expecting to find beaches scarred with fire rings or fouled with human waste or litter. This river cannot survive you if you don't work hard to protect it. Passing through without a trace is a challenge. Here's how you can help care for the river:

Trash

Take out everything you bring in. Spend a few extra minutes to scout your camp and pick up litter that may have been left behind by others. Remember, cigarette butts, twist ties, and food scraps are trash. Carry them out!

Human Waste

It is mandatory to carry out all solid human waste with a system that can be emptied into an appropriate treatment facility such as a trailer dump station, home toilet, or a Sanitizing Containers with Advanced Technology (SCAT) machine. Plastic bags may not be used to store or transport human waste. Information about appropriate, inexpensive methods to dispose of human waste is available from the BLM. Please urinate only on wet sand. Urinating on hot, dry sand or rocks creates an offensive odor and attracts insects.

Fires

You are required to use firepans for all camp and cooking fires. However, there are no specifications for firepans-you may use the equipment and methods that work best for you as

long as you keep the beaches clean and carry out all ashes and leftover, unburned trash. Placing your firepan on rocks while in use will prevent it from scorching the sand. Gather only driftwood for fires. Scatter any unused firewood away from camp before leaving.



Sand Anchor

To avoid moving big rocks to tie up a boat, consider making a sand anchor. These can be as simple as a 2-foot long piece of reinforcement bar, or “re-bar,” available at hardware stores, with a 90 degree angle bend about six inches from one end. Sand anchors pushed deep into the sand provide a secure boat tie-up. They are also easy on your back and light on the land. If you must use rocks to anchor your boat or tents, remove the rocks from the beach before leaving camp.

Dishwater

Food bits left in camp are a magnet for biting insects. Bring along a strainer or piece of screen to filter food bits from

dishwater. Scatter the strained water into vegetation away from camp.

Bathing

During the summer, you can reduce the need to bathe by swimming frequently in the river. However, if you need to bathe, do so away from the river and use biodegradable soap. Do not allow any water containing soap, biodegradable or otherwise, to get into rivers or streams.



Trash and tires collected by BLM river patrol in one section of a trip in 2003.



River Etiquette

Although you may find solitude on the Lower Salmon River, you will not be alone. Your actions will directly affect the experience of others on the river. And theirs will impact yours. Following a few simple guidelines will help ensure that the journey down the “River of No Return” is a positive experience for everyone on the water.

Ramp Manners

Because river trips start and end on the boat ramp, your experience there can set the tone for the entire voyage and color your memories of the adventure long after it ends. If the ramp is busy, be patient and wait your turn. When it comes, use the ramp only for loading and unloading. Rig and de-rig off of the ramp. Allow others to go before you if all they have to do is put a loaded boat in the water and take off. Be friendly, helpful, and considerate and enjoy this part of your trip.

River Encounters

Communication and common sense are the keys to successful interaction with other river users. Your trip will be much safer and more enjoyable if you give other boaters lots of space, especially in rapids. Power boats have always been allowed on area waterways. Although they are infrequent on the Lower Salmon River, they are very common on the Snake. Downstream drift traffic has the right-of-way, but remember that a jet boat powering through the middle of a rapid can't simply stop. Float boats that meet a power boat should move toward the side of the channel to give them room to operate safely. The river is large enough to accommodate both float and power boats. Avoiding confrontational behavior, water fighting, and making heavy waves or wakes will help ensure peaceful coexistence.

Camping Protocol

Small groups should leave large camps, marked on the maps with a camping symbol for bigger groups. “Camp running,” or sending a boat ahead to secure a camp, is not allowed, as it creates the stress of hurrying - exactly what most boaters go to the river to avoid. There are usually plenty of camp spots. Set your own leisurely pace, select a camp that fits your group size, and relax. On rare occasions, you may be asked to share a camp with a late arrival. Be courteous, make new friends, and continue to enjoy your trip!



River Safety

Dress for Success! Wear your life jacket.

Remember that personal flotation devices only work when you have them on. Plan for all kinds of weather—even hot, sunny days can turn cool and rainy, creating hypothermia conditions.

When in doubt, scout.

When in trouble, be active.

Get yourself out of trouble first, then help others. Worry about your gear only after all people are safe.

Most accidents happen on shore.

Wet rocks are slippery—wearing your life jacket can help cushion a fall. Rattlesnakes, bees, cactus, and poison ivy are all plentiful in the Lower Salmon River canyon country. Learn how to avoid them and how to treat the symptoms of an encounter.



General Information

Fishing and Hunting

Idaho licenses are required. Learn and observe the seasons and regulations. They are strictly enforced by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Respect Private Property

Although all beaches and shoreline below the average high water mark are public land, there is a small amount of private property along the river above the high water line. Respect private land and enter it only with permission.



Looking south at the confluence of the Salmon River (left) and the Snake River.



Respect Archaeological Sites

You will probably see evidence of historic and pre-historic people and communities along the river. Do not disturb them-it is illegal to remove, deface, or destroy archaeological artifacts on public land.

In Case of Emergency

The BLM carries a satellite phone for emergency purposes on river patrols conducted from July through September and may be able to assist. Note your location in an emergency and call the local sheriff's office (911) or the BLM at (208) 962-3245.



After Your Trip

Lost gear

If you lose or leave any gear on the river, contact the BLM. We maintain a sizable inventory of “lost and found” items!

Trash Disposal

Recycle or properly dispose of all the trash from your trip.

Human Waste Disposal

Dispose stored human waste appropriately. Information about this is available from the BLM.

Let Us Know How It Went

If you encountered any problems on your trip, or have suggestions about how BLM can enhance river recreation experiences, we would like to hear from you.



The Wreckreationist

This sculpture is located at the launch site at Hammer Creek. It is built from the trash collected from the Salmon river and its banks. Hopefully, it creates an awareness to the impacts people have on the river environment. Look for a fisherman, a cataerafter, a jet boater, and a hunter surrounding a tree, a sun, and birds.



BLM river patrol has removed over 7500 tires from the river. Approximately 1 ton of trash is removed every year. PLEASE..remember to pack out all of your trash and trash left by others.

Thanks to the young men and women from Homedale High School, Center Point High School, and Fort Boise Mid-High School who created this sculpture in welding class. This project made possible by a grant from the Wittenburger Foundation and the Idaho Commission of the Arts.

Reading / Reference List

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River Maps

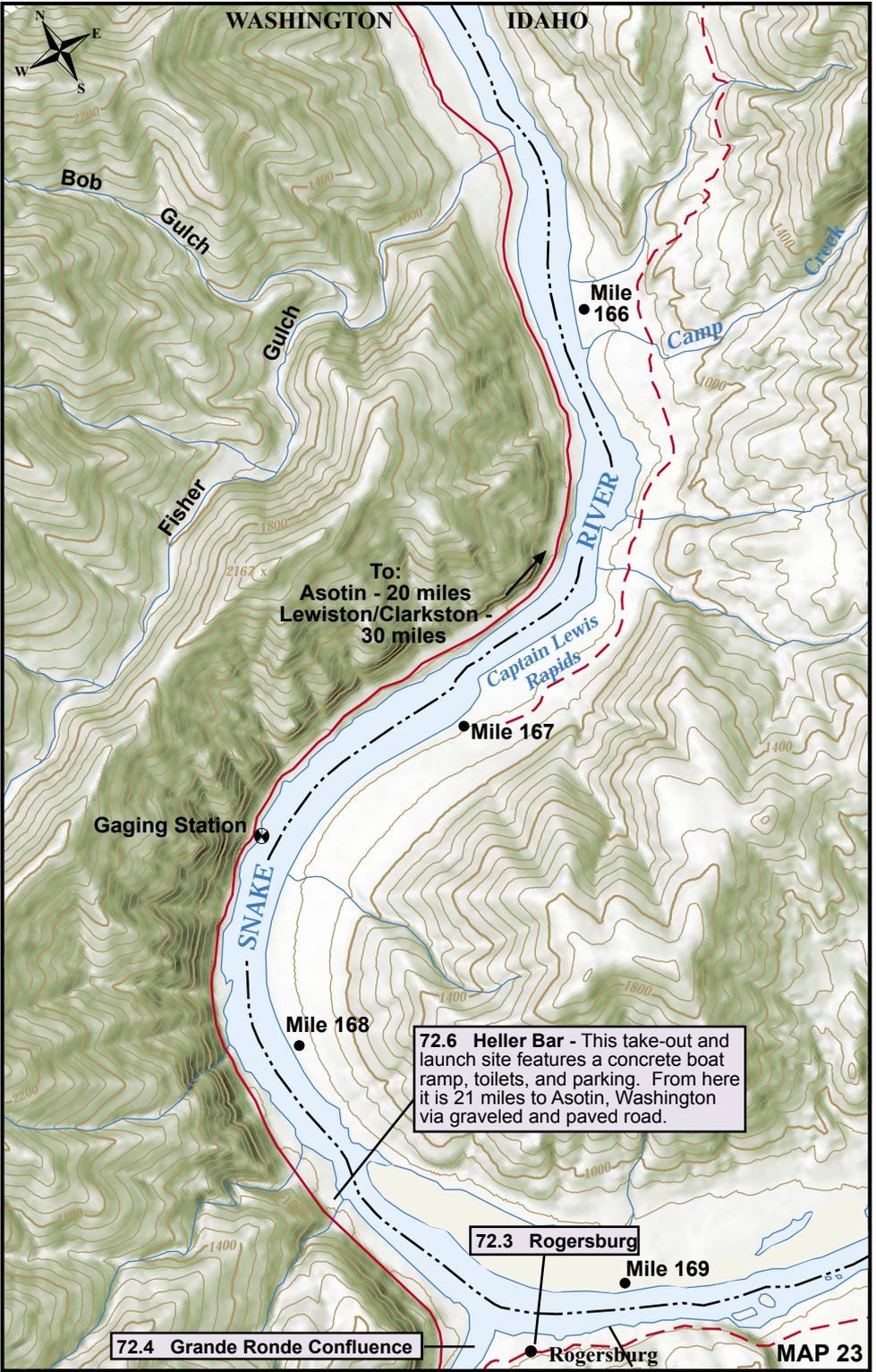
FLIP THIS GUIDE OVER TO START MAP USE



Photo: Dave Scott



Photo: Dave Scott



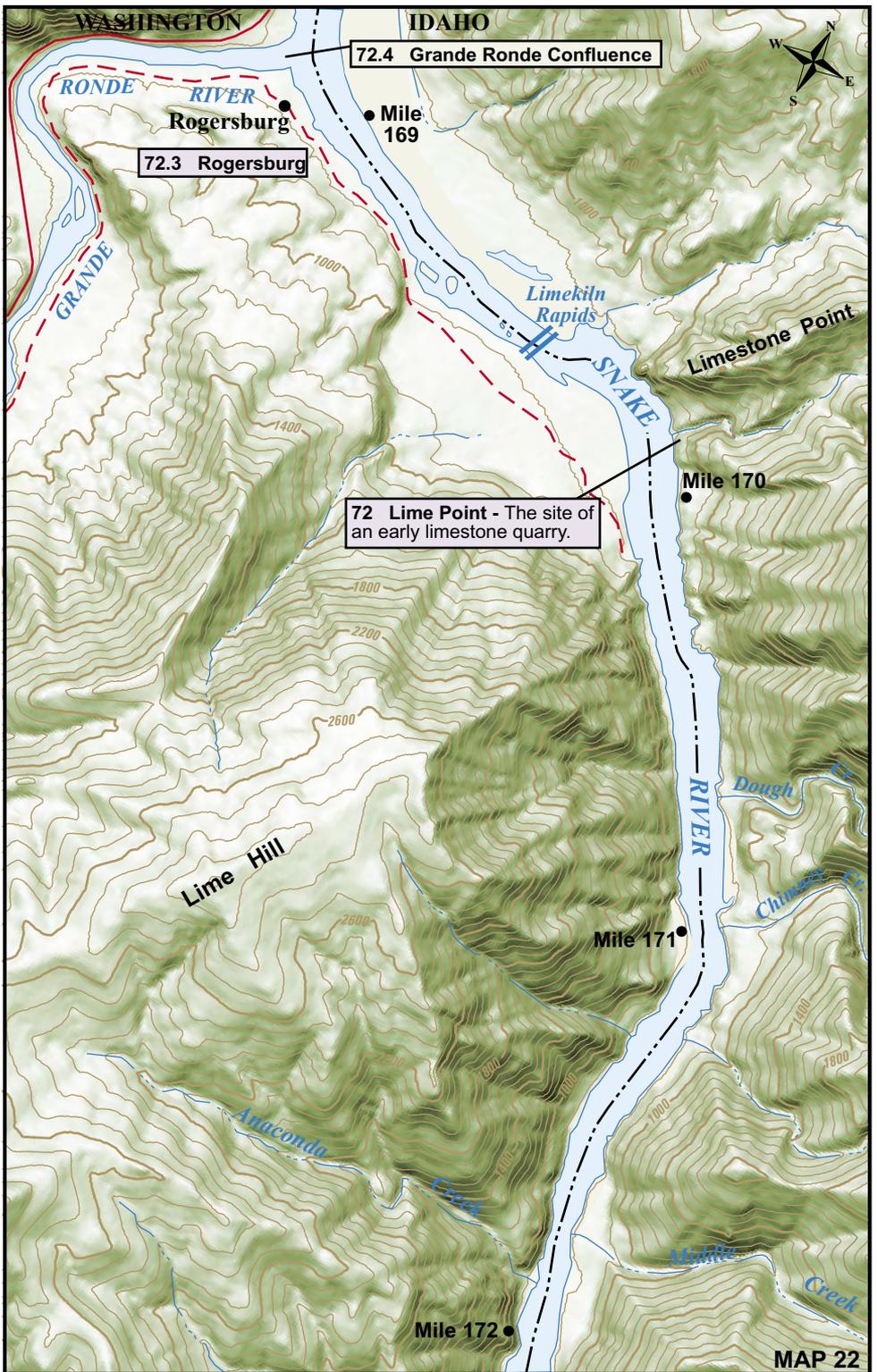
To:
Asotin - 20 miles
Lewiston/Clarkston - 30 miles

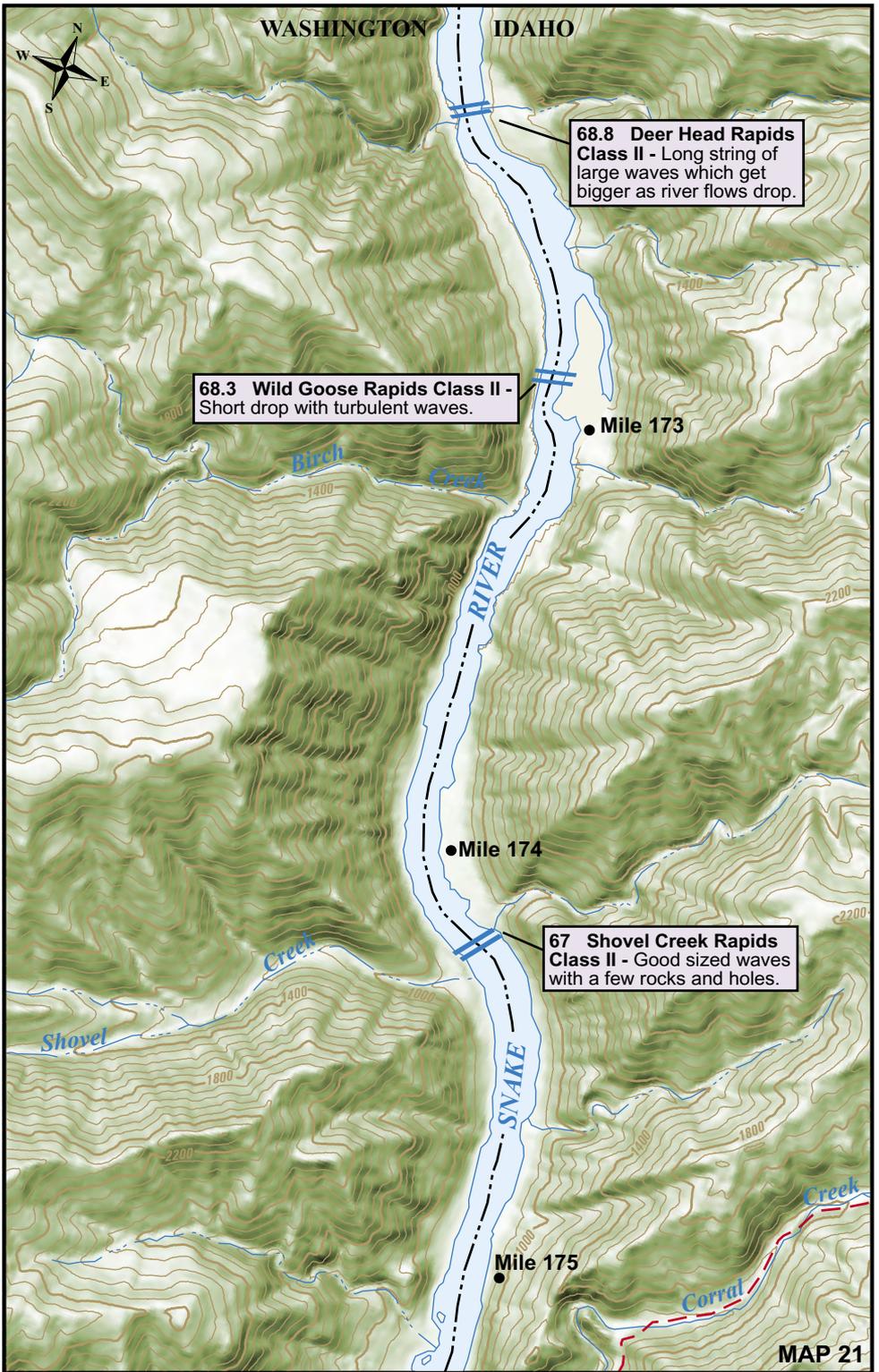
72.6 Heller Bar - This take-out and launch site features a concrete boat ramp, toilets, and parking. From here it is 21 miles to Asotin, Washington via graveled and paved road.

72.3 Rogersburg

72.4 Grande Ronde Confluence

MAP 23





WASHINGTON IDAHO



68.8 Deer Head Rapids
Class II - Long string of large waves which get bigger as river flows drop.

68.3 Wild Goose Rapids
Class II - Short drop with turbulent waves.

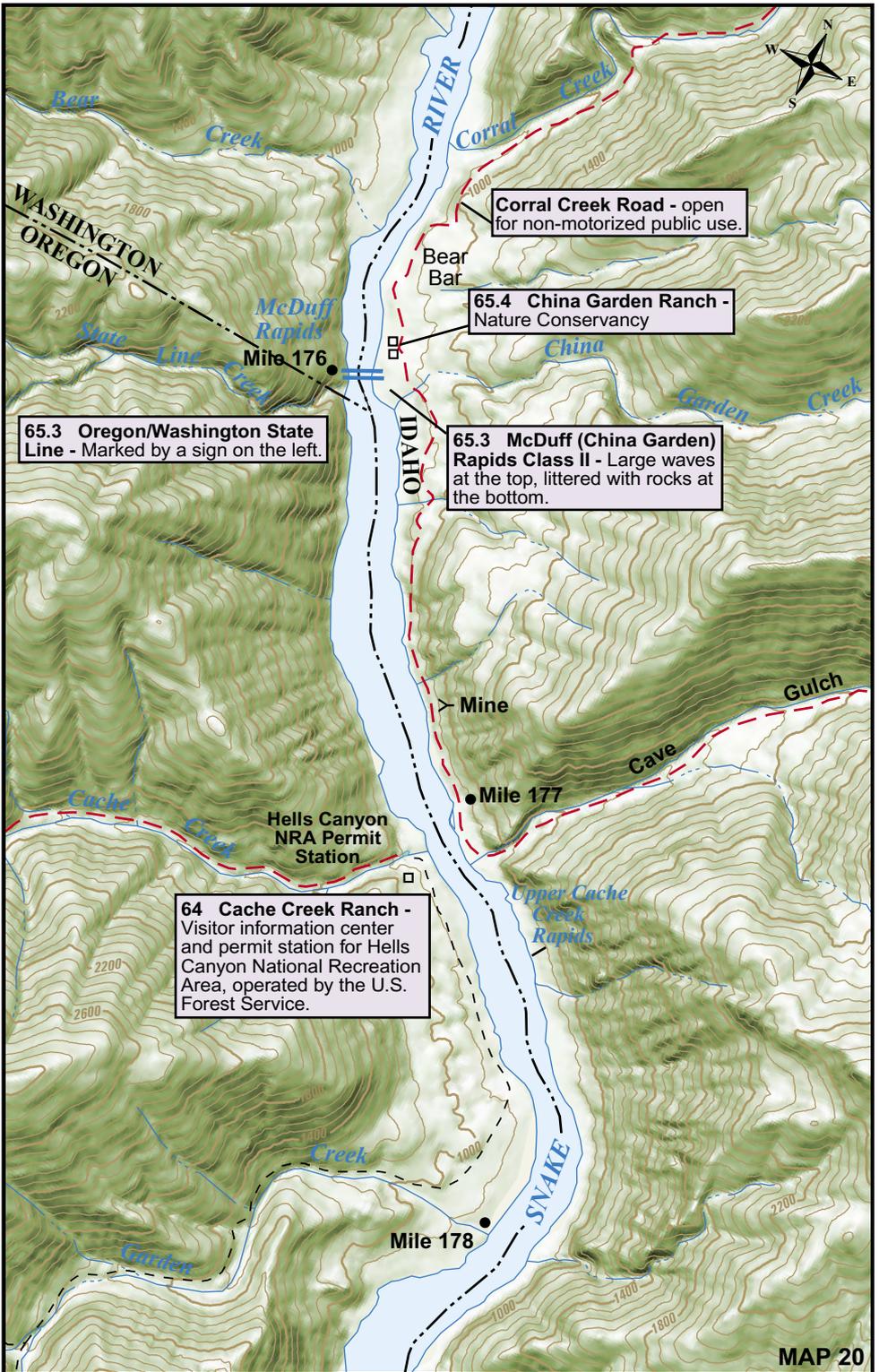
● Mile 173

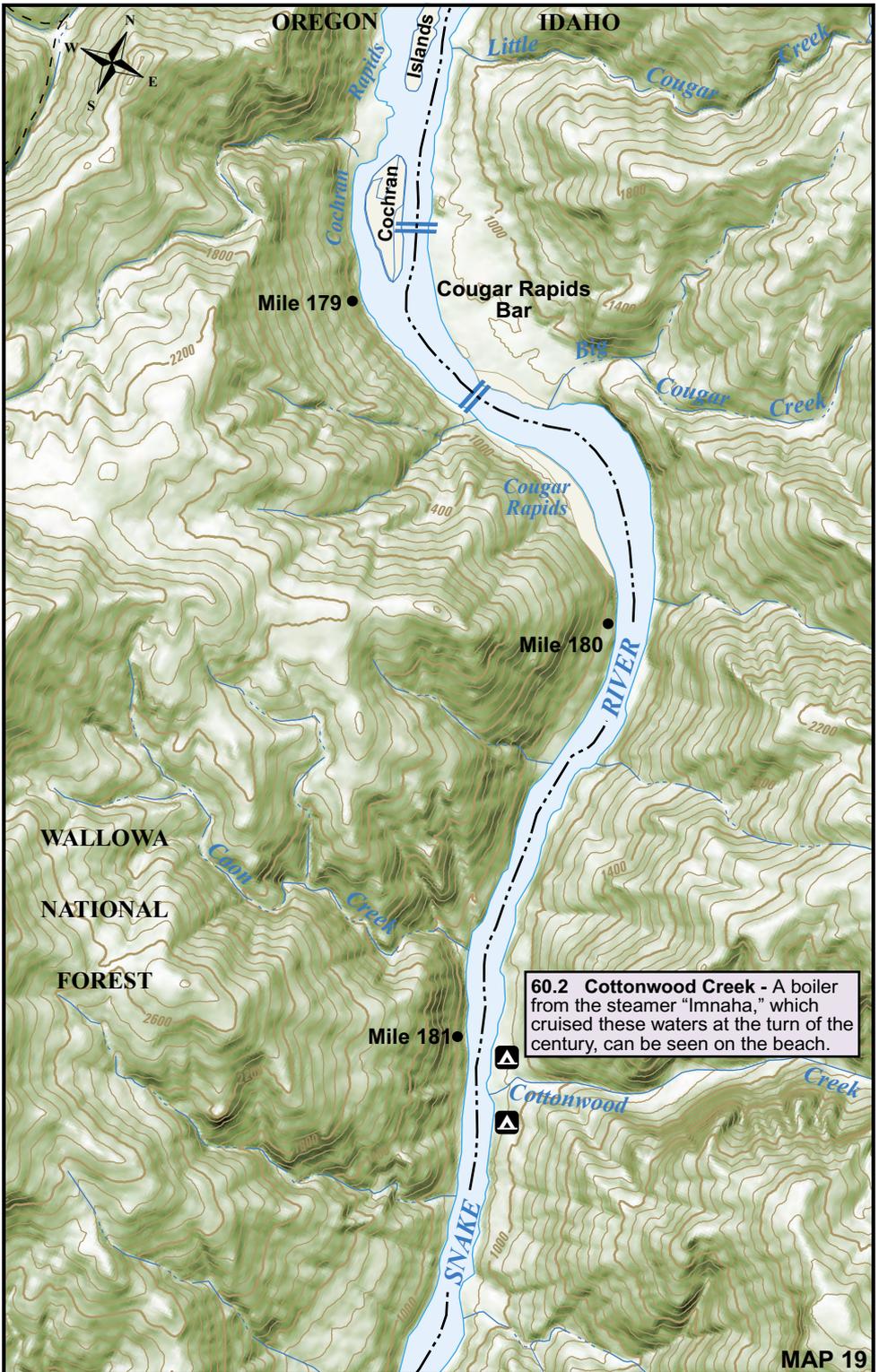
● Mile 174

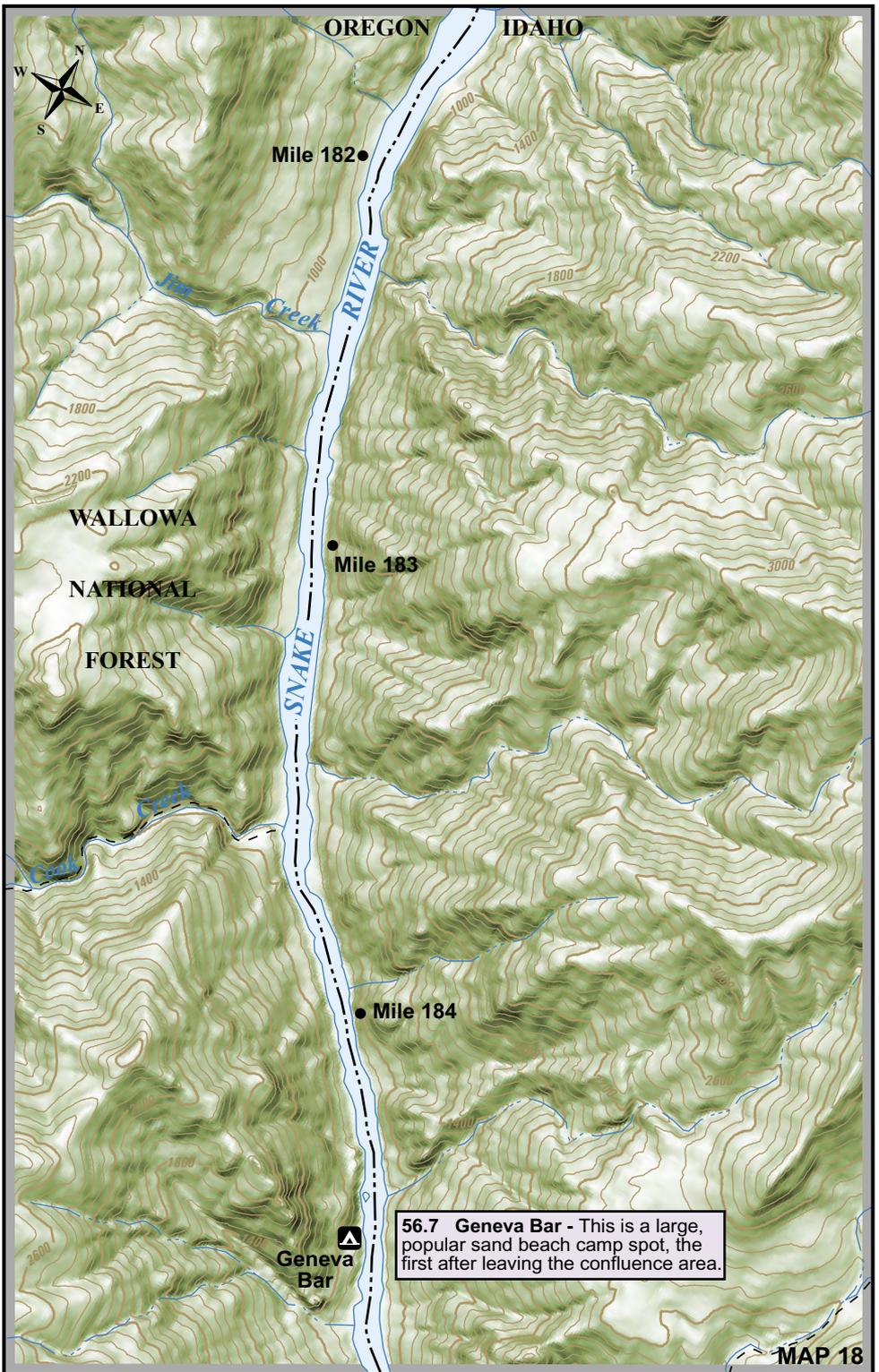
67 Shovel Creek Rapids
Class II - Good sized waves with a few rocks and holes.

● Mile 175

MAP 21







OREGON

IDAHO



Mile 182

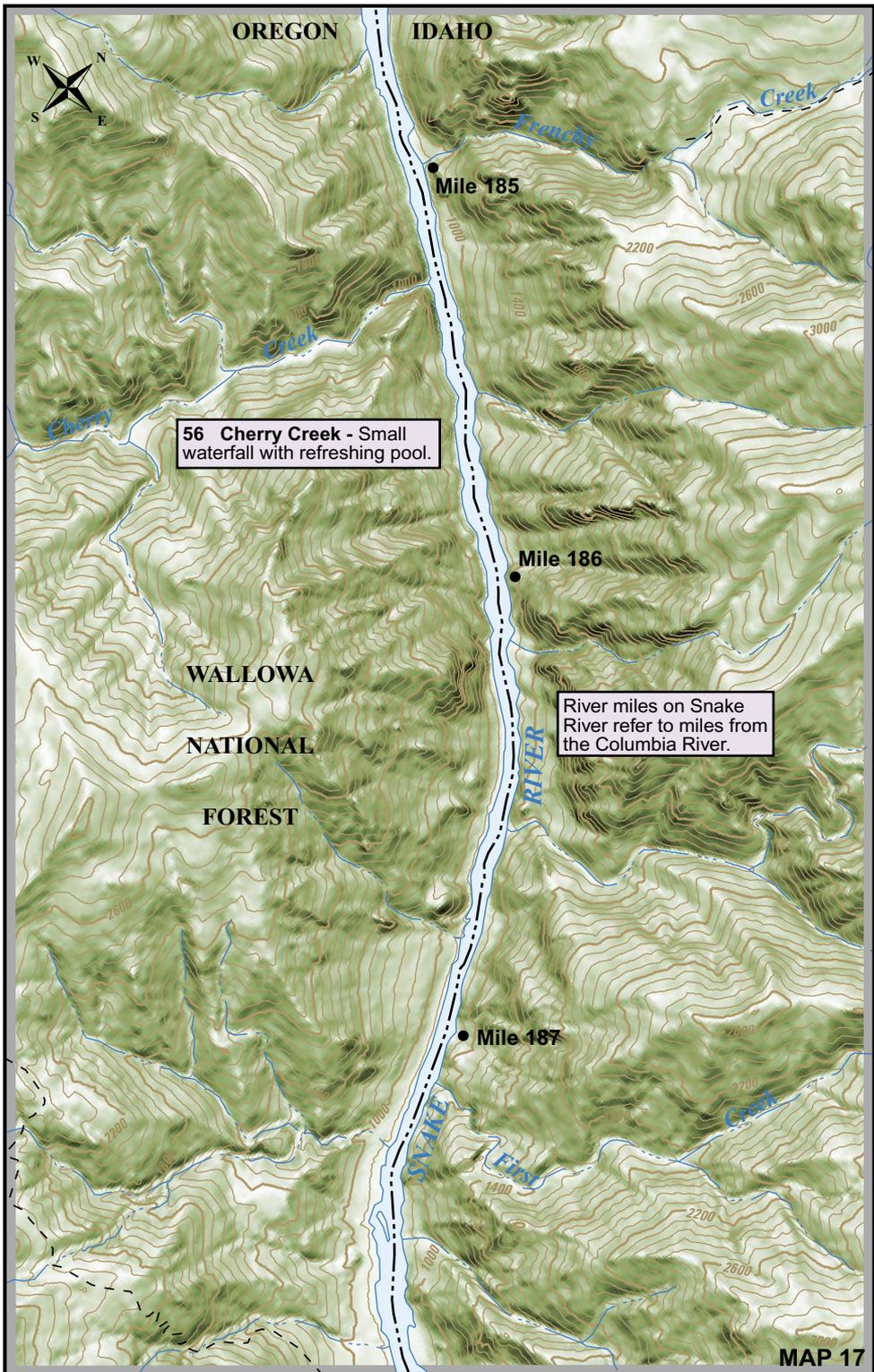
WALLOWA
NATIONAL
FOREST

Mile 183

Mile 184

Geneva
Bar

56.7 Geneva Bar - This is a large, popular sand beach camp spot, the first after leaving the confluence area.



OREGON IDAHO

53 Confluence of the Salmon and Snake Rivers

Mile 188

Mile 189

Mile 0

52.9 Pullman Mine - Copper mine was active in the 1920s. Mining equipment still visible at the mine entrance was probably brought up the Snake River by steamship.

51.5 Checkerboard Rapids Class II+ - A long wave train with some rocks at the bottom.

52 Eye of the Needle Rapids Class III - This short, very turbulent drop is harder than it looks.

53.2 Salmon River Falls Rapids Class II - This long wave train, with strong eddy turbulence, is often congested. Take precautions to avoid power boat and float boat mishaps.

50.2 Sluicelox Rapids Class II+ - A long, steep rapid with big waves in lower water.

Mile 2

Mile 3

Pool Gulch

CRAIG MTN

Wapshilla Ridge

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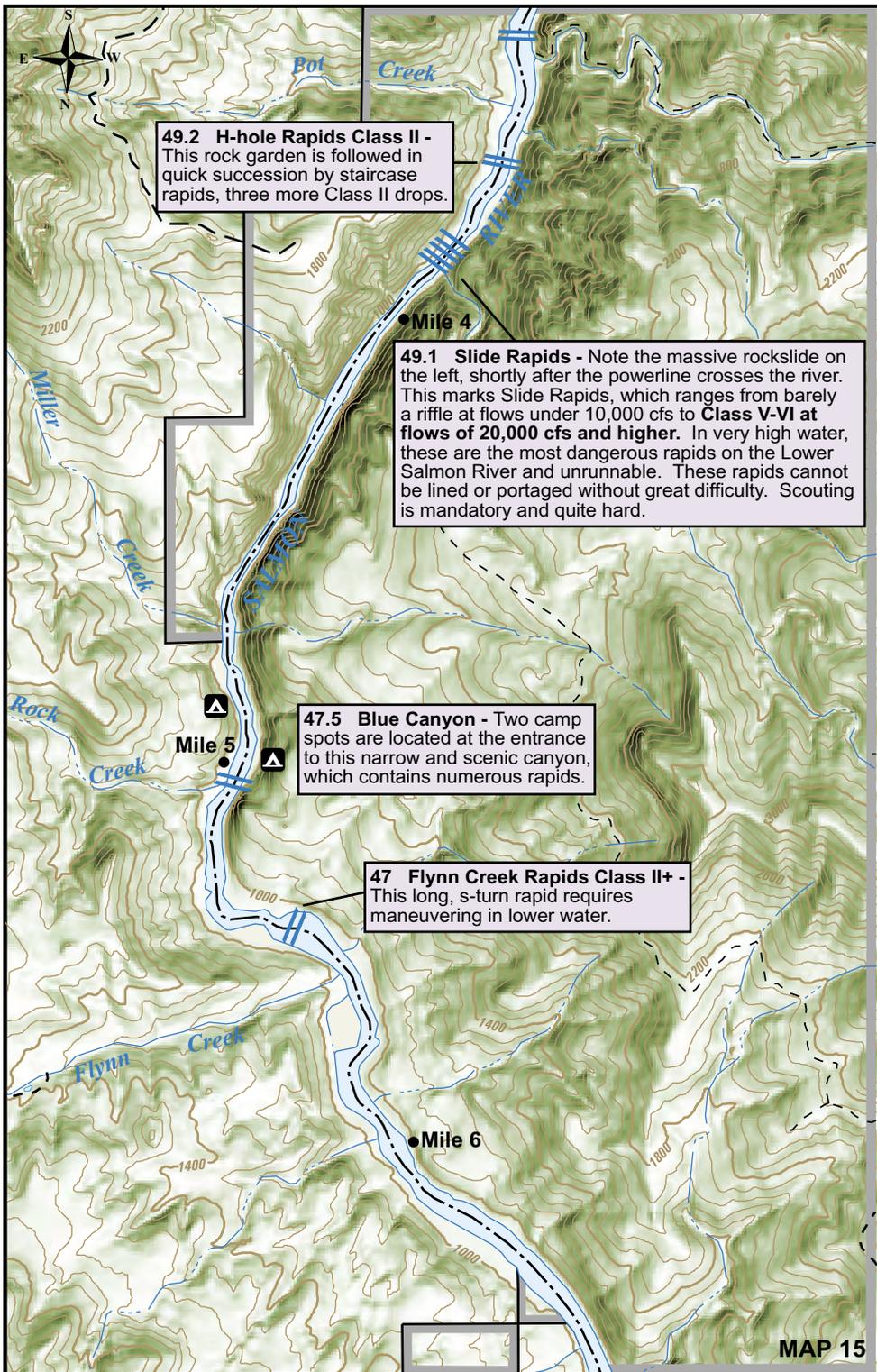
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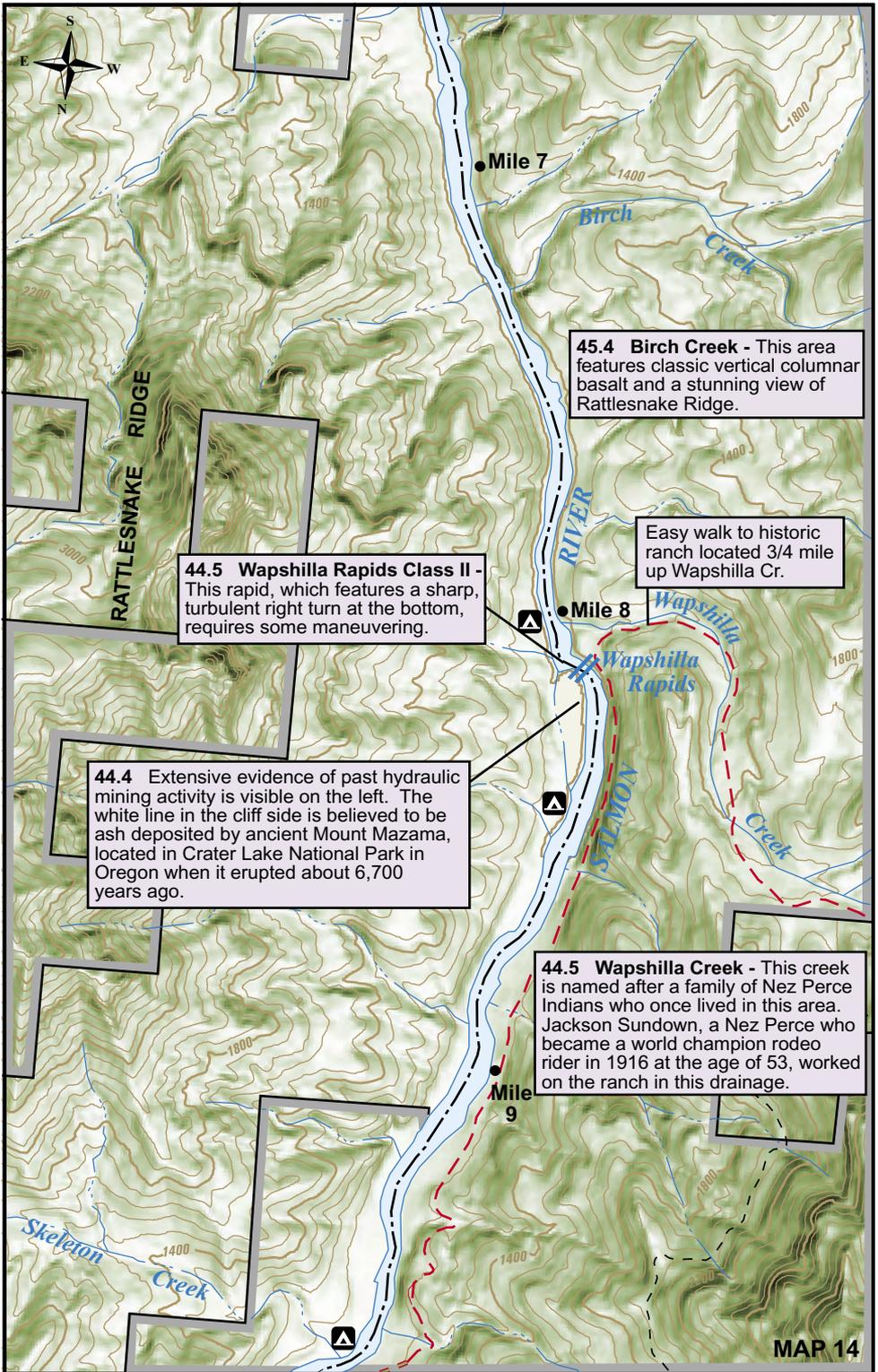


49.2 H-hole Rapids Class II - This rock garden is followed in quick succession by staircase rapids, three more Class II drops.

49.1 Slide Rapids - Note the massive rockslide on the left, shortly after the powerline crosses the river. This marks Slide Rapids, which ranges from barely a riffle at flows under 10,000 cfs to **Class V-VI at flows of 20,000 cfs and higher**. In very high water, these are the most dangerous rapids on the Lower Salmon River and unrunnable. These rapids cannot be lined or portaged without great difficulty. Scouting is mandatory and quite hard.

47.5 Blue Canyon - Two camp spots are located at the entrance to this narrow and scenic canyon, which contains numerous rapids.

47 Flynn Creek Rapids Class II+ - This long, s-turn rapid requires maneuvering in lower water.



● Mile 7

45.4 Birch Creek - This area features classic vertical columnar basalt and a stunning view of Rattlesnake Ridge.

Easy walk to historic ranch located 3/4 mile up Wapshilla Cr.

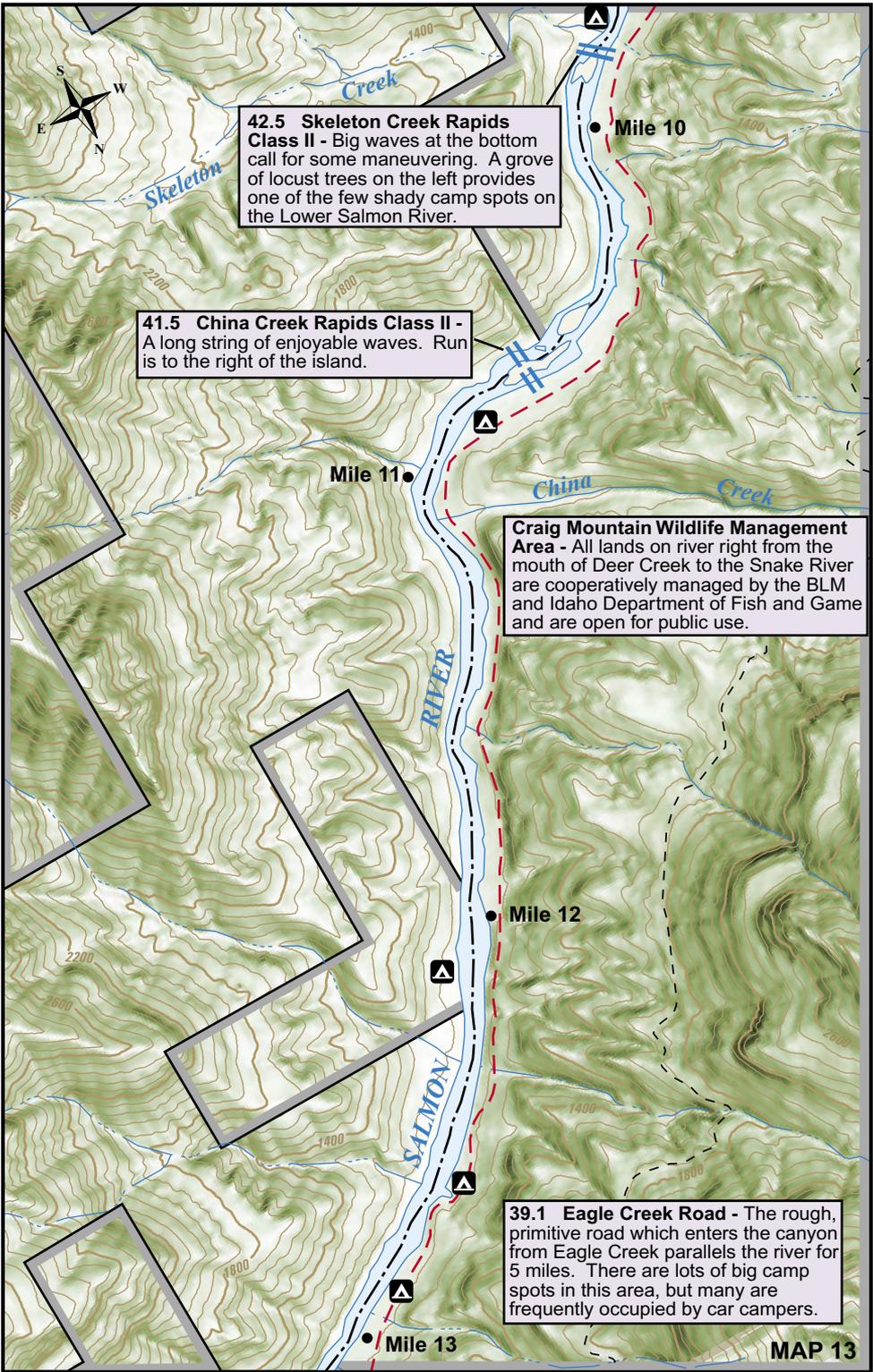
44.5 Wapshilla Rapids Class II - This rapid, which features a sharp, turbulent right turn at the bottom, requires some maneuvering.

● Mile 8

44.4 Extensive evidence of past hydraulic mining activity is visible on the left. The white line in the cliff side is believed to be ash deposited by ancient Mount Mazama, located in Crater Lake National Park in Oregon when it erupted about 6,700 years ago.

44.5 Wapshilla Creek - This creek is named after a family of Nez Perce Indians who once lived in this area. Jackson Sundown, a Nez Perce who became a world champion rodeo rider in 1916 at the age of 53, worked on the ranch in this drainage.

● Mile 9

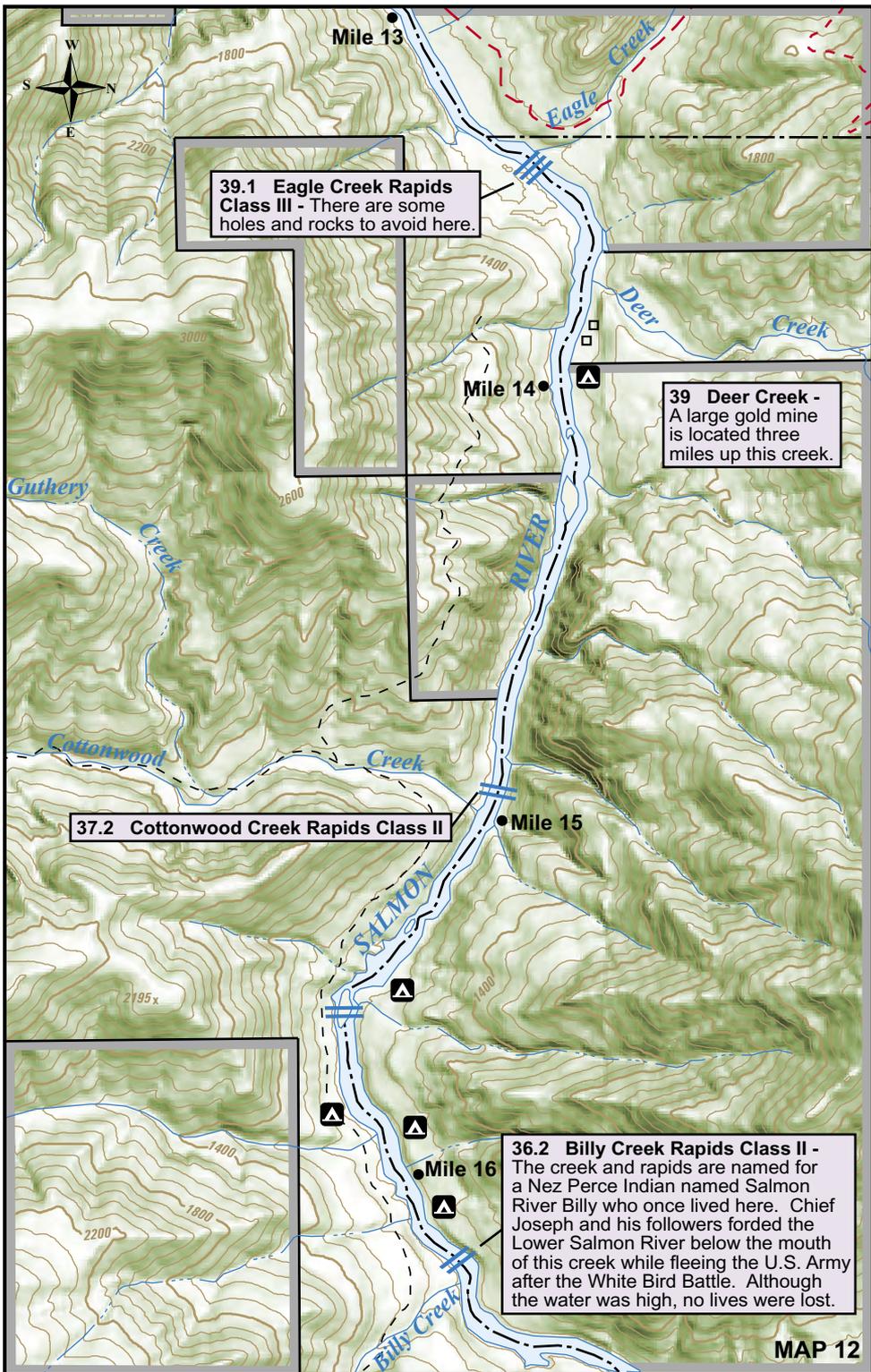


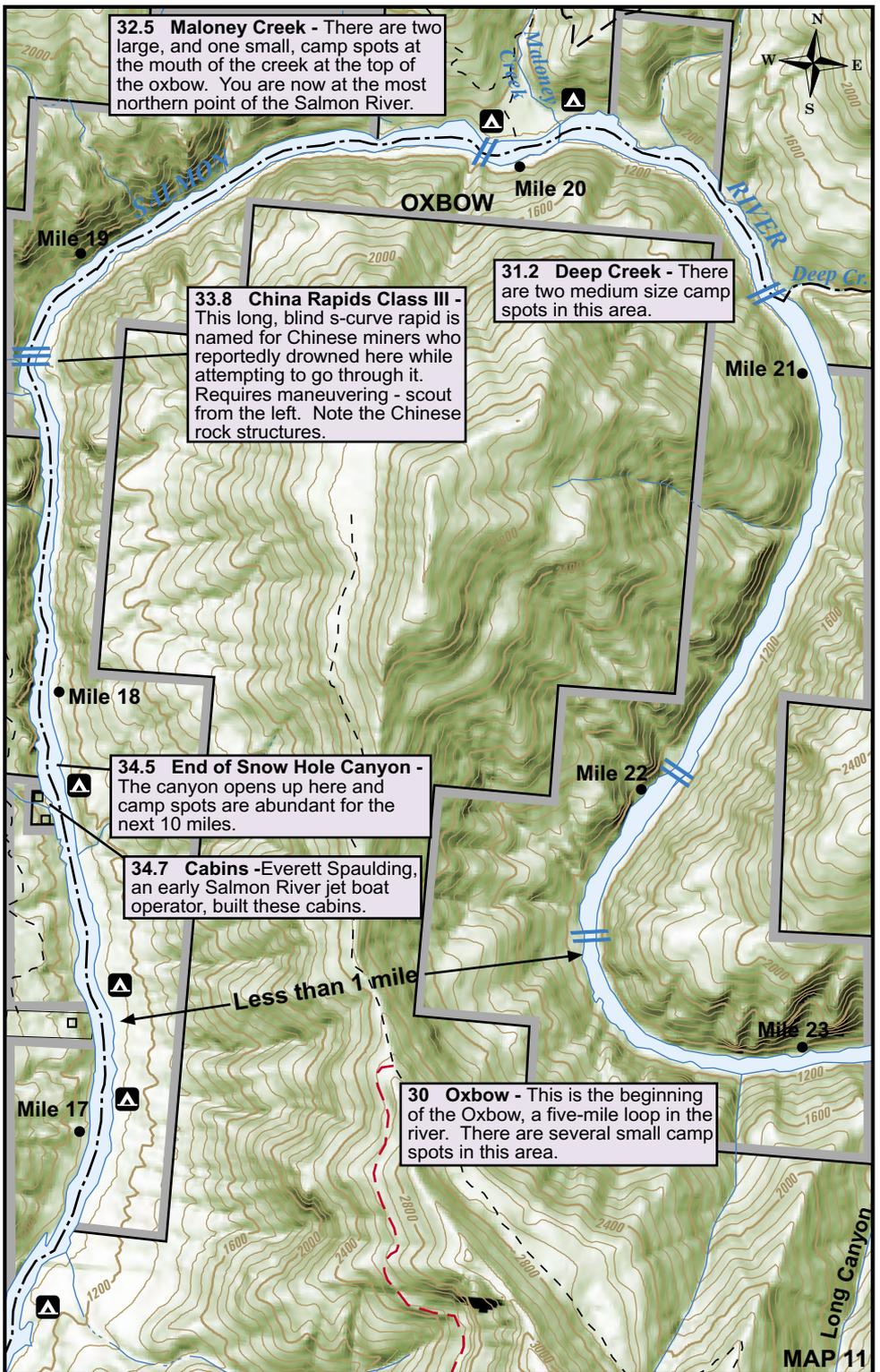
42.5 Skeleton Creek Rapids Class II - Big waves at the bottom call for some maneuvering. A grove of locust trees on the left provides one of the few shady camp spots on the Lower Salmon River.

41.5 China Creek Rapids Class II - A long string of enjoyable waves. Run is to the right of the island.

Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area - All lands on river right from the mouth of Deer Creek to the Snake River are cooperatively managed by the BLM and Idaho Department of Fish and Game and are open for public use.

39.1 Eagle Creek Road - The rough, primitive road which enters the canyon from Eagle Creek parallels the river for 5 miles. There are lots of big camp spots in this area, but many are frequently occupied by car campers.





32.5 Maloney Creek - There are two large, and one small, camp spots at the mouth of the creek at the top of the oxbow. You are now at the most northern point of the Salmon River.

31.2 Deep Creek - There are two medium size camp spots in this area.

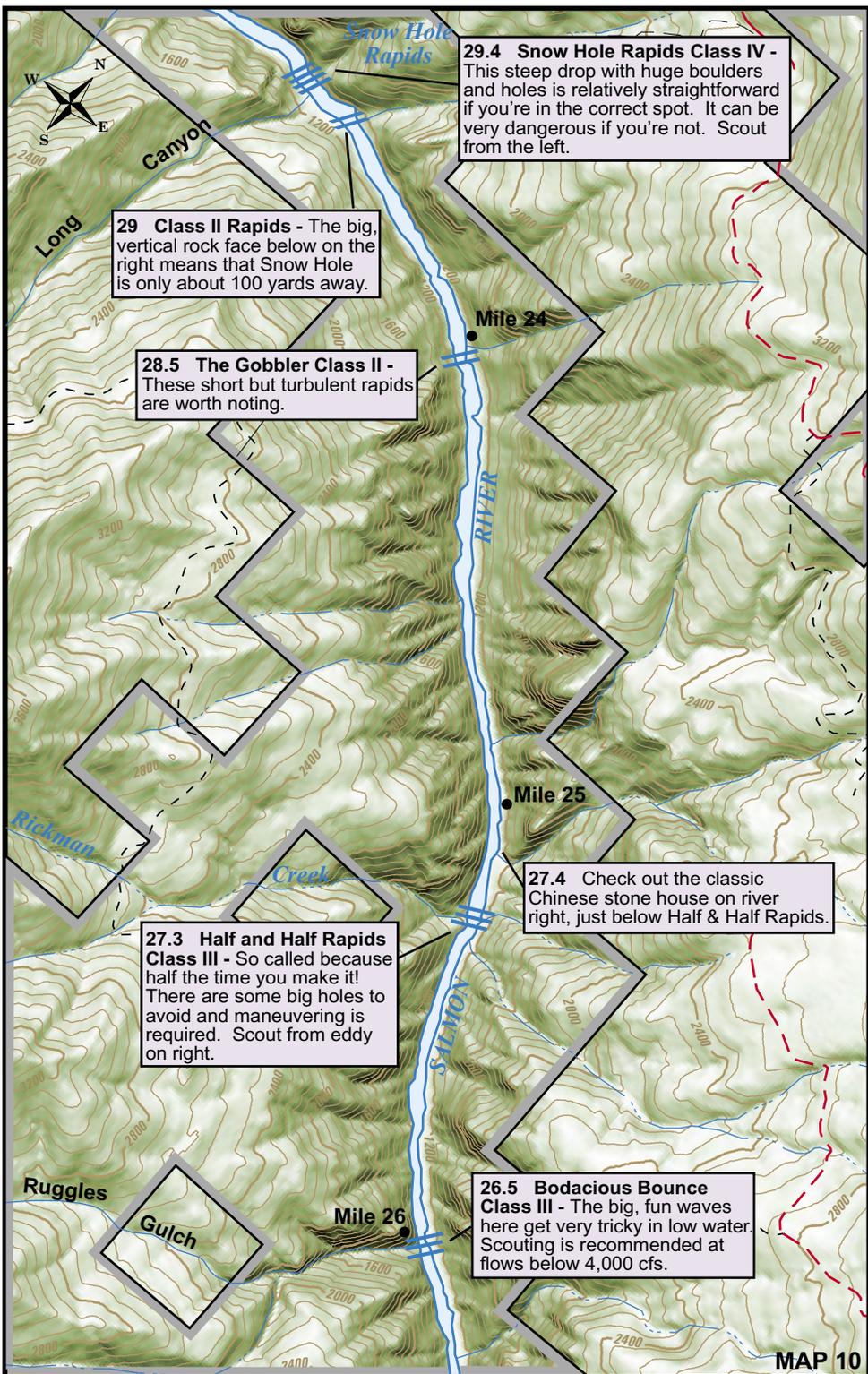
33.8 China Rapids Class III - This long, blind s-curve rapid is named for Chinese miners who reportedly drowned here while attempting to go through it. Requires maneuvering - scout from the left. Note the Chinese rock structures.

34.5 End of Snow Hole Canyon - The canyon opens up here and camp spots are abundant for the next 10 miles.

34.7 Cabins - Everett Spaulding, an early Salmon River jet boat operator, built these cabins.

30 Oxbow - This is the beginning of the Oxbow, a five-mile loop in the river. There are several small camp spots in this area.

Less than 1 mile



29.4 Snow Hole Rapids Class IV - This steep drop with huge boulders and holes is relatively straightforward if you're in the correct spot. It can be very dangerous if you're not. Scout from the left.

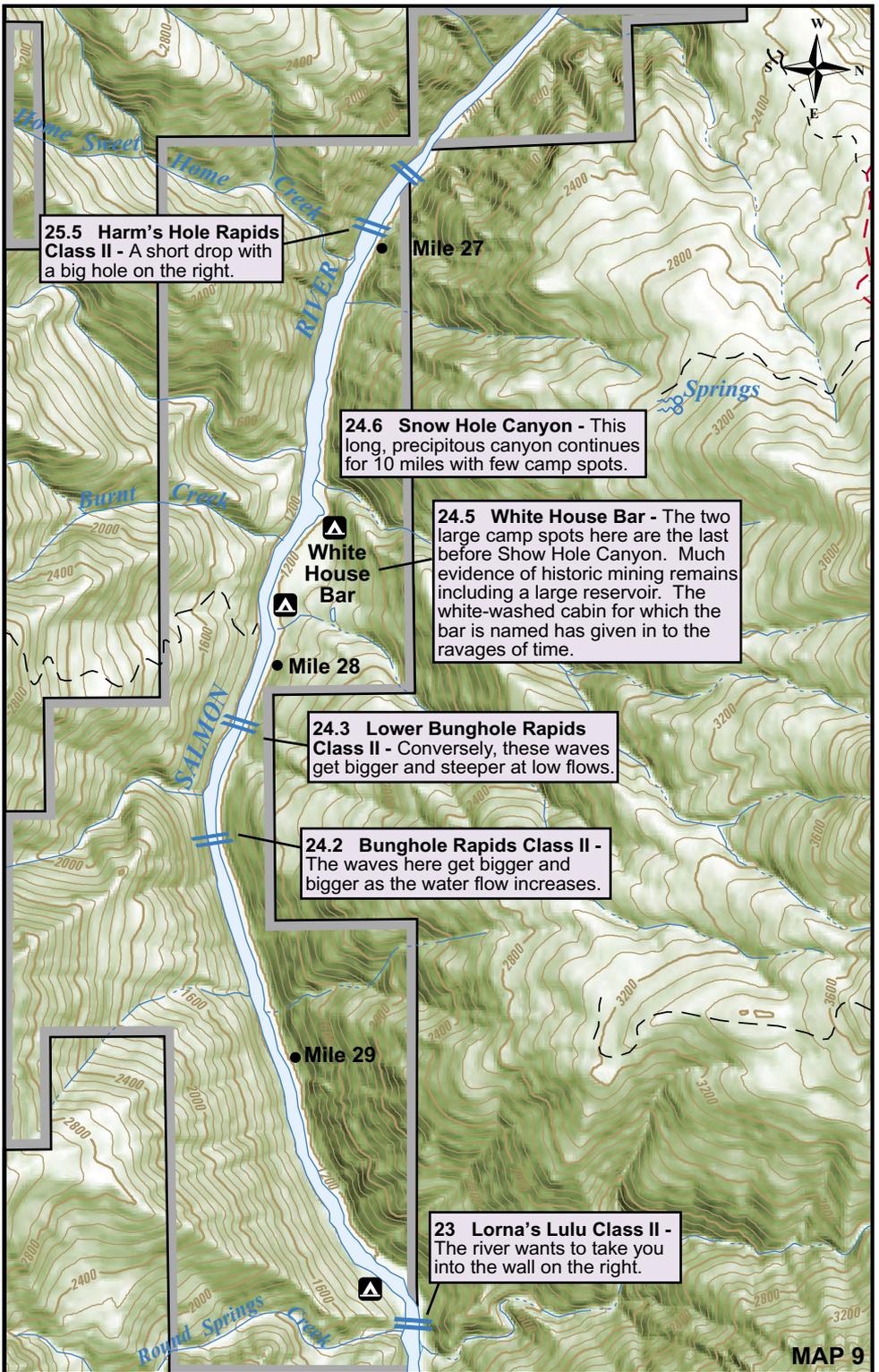
29 Class II Rapids - The big, vertical rock face below on the right means that Snow Hole is only about 100 yards away.

28.5 The Gobbler Class II - These short but turbulent rapids are worth noting.

27.4 Check out the classic Chinese stone house on river right, just below Half & Half Rapids.

27.3 Half and Half Rapids Class III - So called because half the time you make it! There are some big holes to avoid and maneuvering is required. Scout from eddy on right.

26.5 Bodacious Bounce Class III - The big, fun waves here get very tricky in low water. Scouting is recommended at flows below 4,000 cfs.



25.5 Harm's Hole Rapids Class II - A short drop with a big hole on the right.

Mile 27

24.6 Snow Hole Canyon - This long, precipitous canyon continues for 10 miles with few camp spots.

24.5 White House Bar - The two large camp spots here are the last before Show Hole Canyon. Much evidence of historic mining remains including a large reservoir. The white-washed cabin for which the bar is named has given in to the ravages of time.

White House Bar

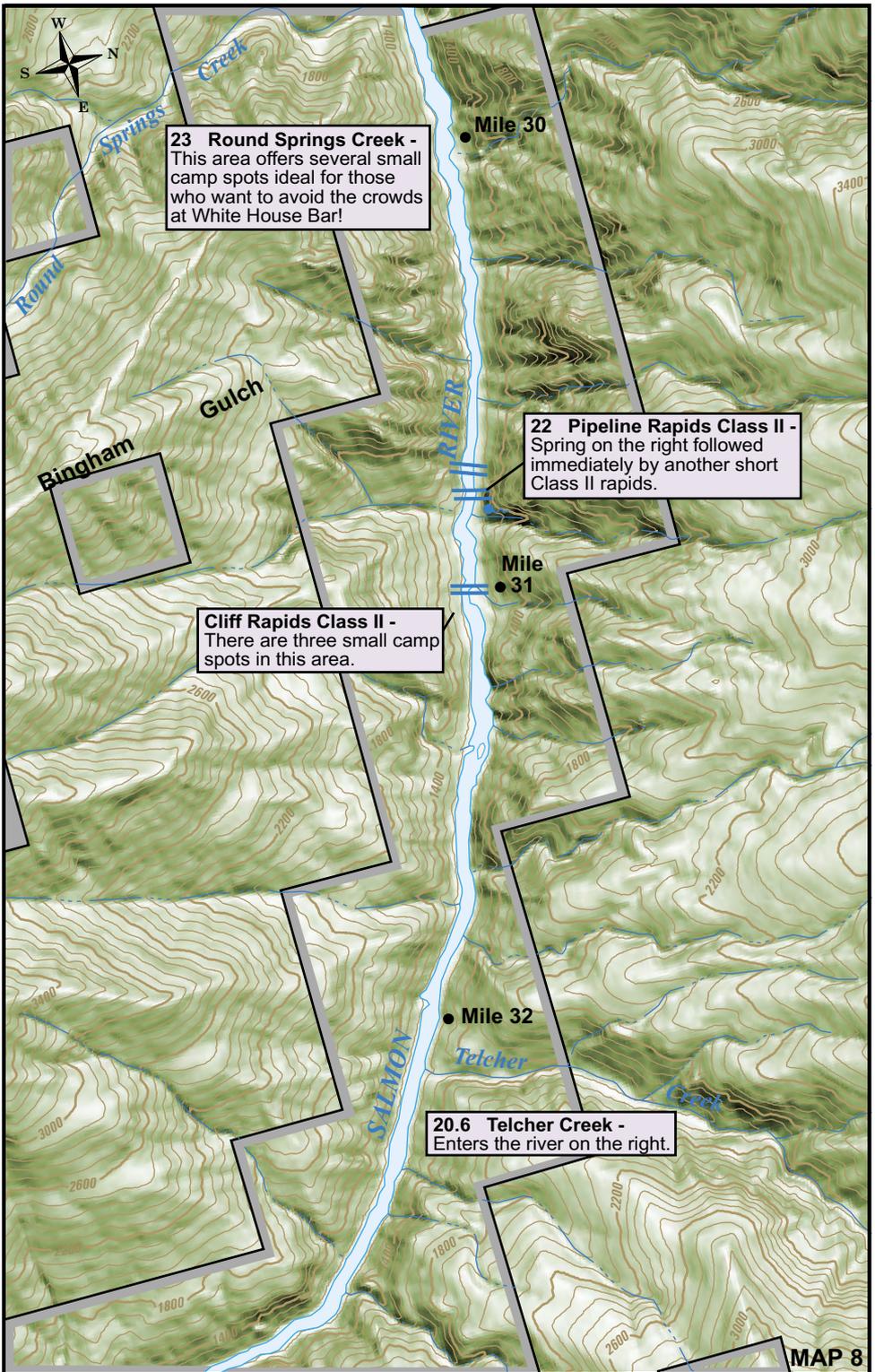
Mile 28

24.3 Lower Bunghole Rapids Class II - Conversely, these waves get bigger and steeper at low flows.

24.2 Bunghole Rapids Class II - The waves here get bigger and bigger as the water flow increases.

Mile 29

23 Lorna's Lulu Class II - The river wants to take you into the wall on the right.

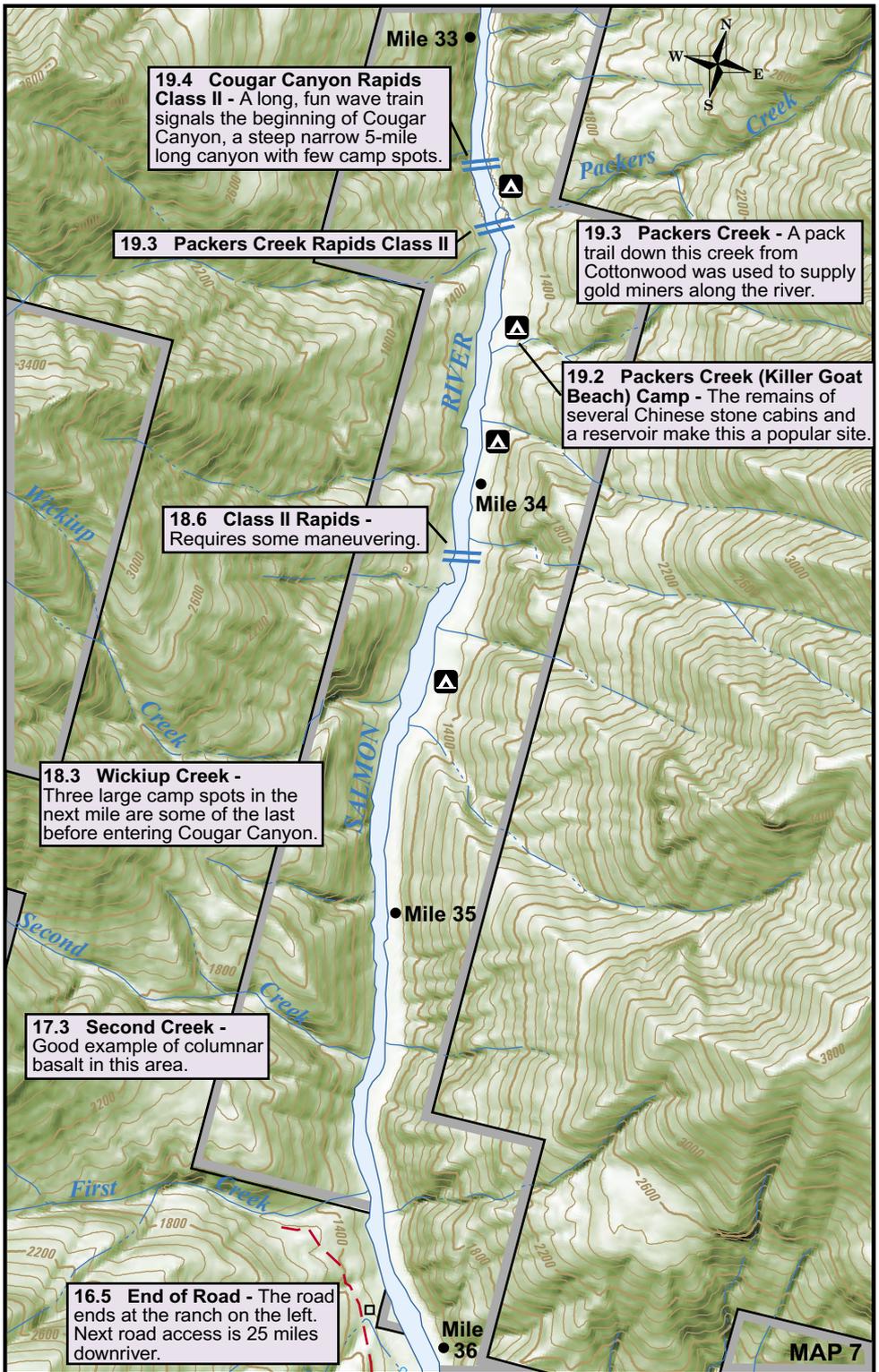


23 Round Springs Creek - This area offers several small camp spots ideal for those who want to avoid the crowds at White House Bar!

22 Pipeline Rapids Class II - Spring on the right followed immediately by another short Class II rapids.

Cliff Rapids Class II - There are three small camp spots in this area.

20.6 Telcher Creek - Enters the river on the right.



19.4 Cougar Canyon Rapids Class II - A long, fun wave train signals the beginning of Cougar Canyon, a steep narrow 5-mile long canyon with few camp spots.

19.3 Packers Creek Rapids Class II

19.3 Packers Creek - A pack trail down this creek from Cottonwood was used to supply gold miners along the river.

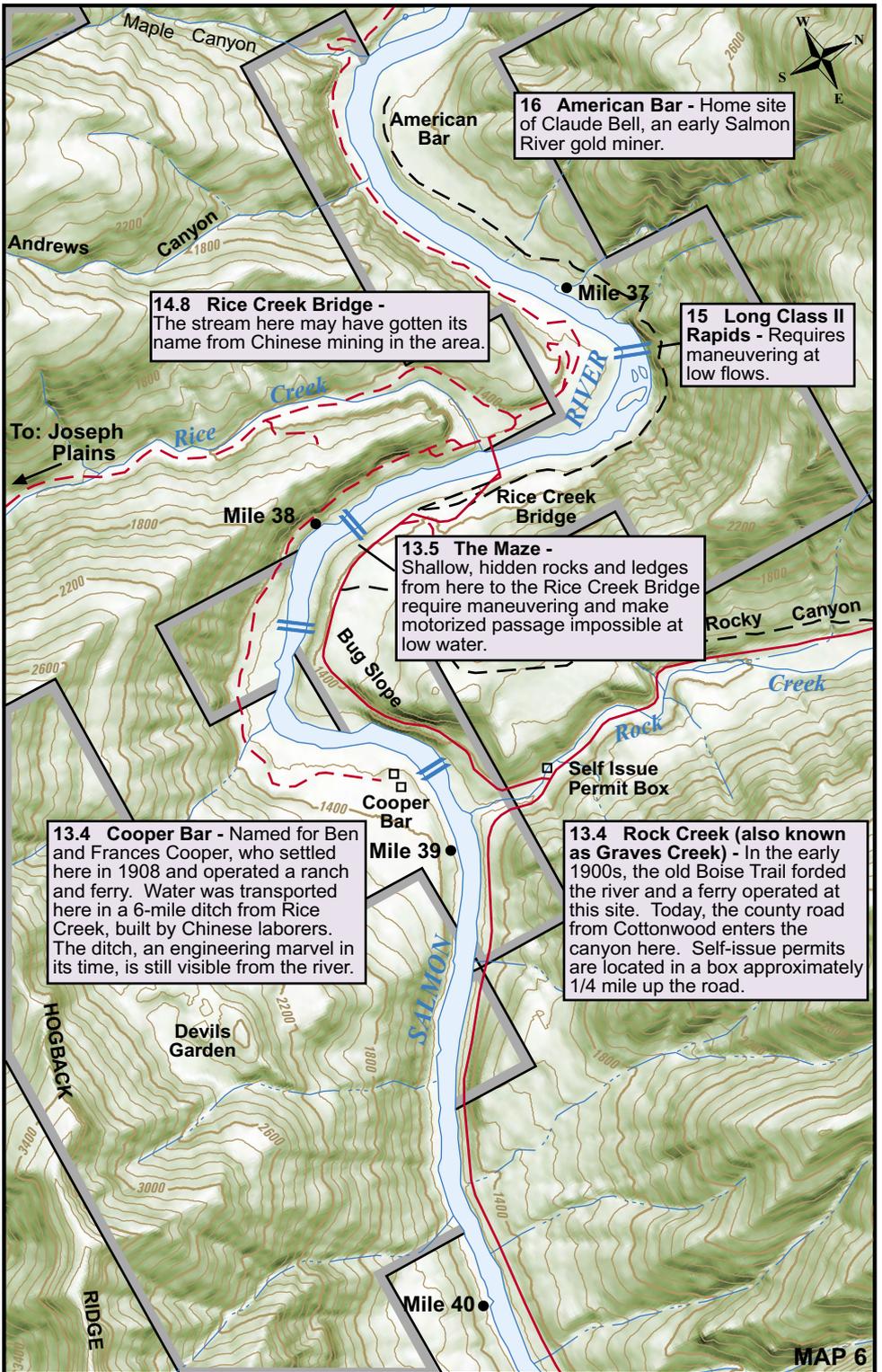
19.2 Packers Creek (Killer Goat Beach) Camp - The remains of several Chinese stone cabins and a reservoir make this a popular site.

18.6 Class II Rapids - Requires some maneuvering.

18.3 Wickiup Creek - Three large camp spots in the next mile are some of the last before entering Cougar Canyon.

17.3 Second Creek - Good example of columnar basalt in this area.

16.5 End of Road - The road ends at the ranch on the left. Next road access is 25 miles downriver.



16 American Bar - Home site of Claude Bell, an early Salmon River gold miner.

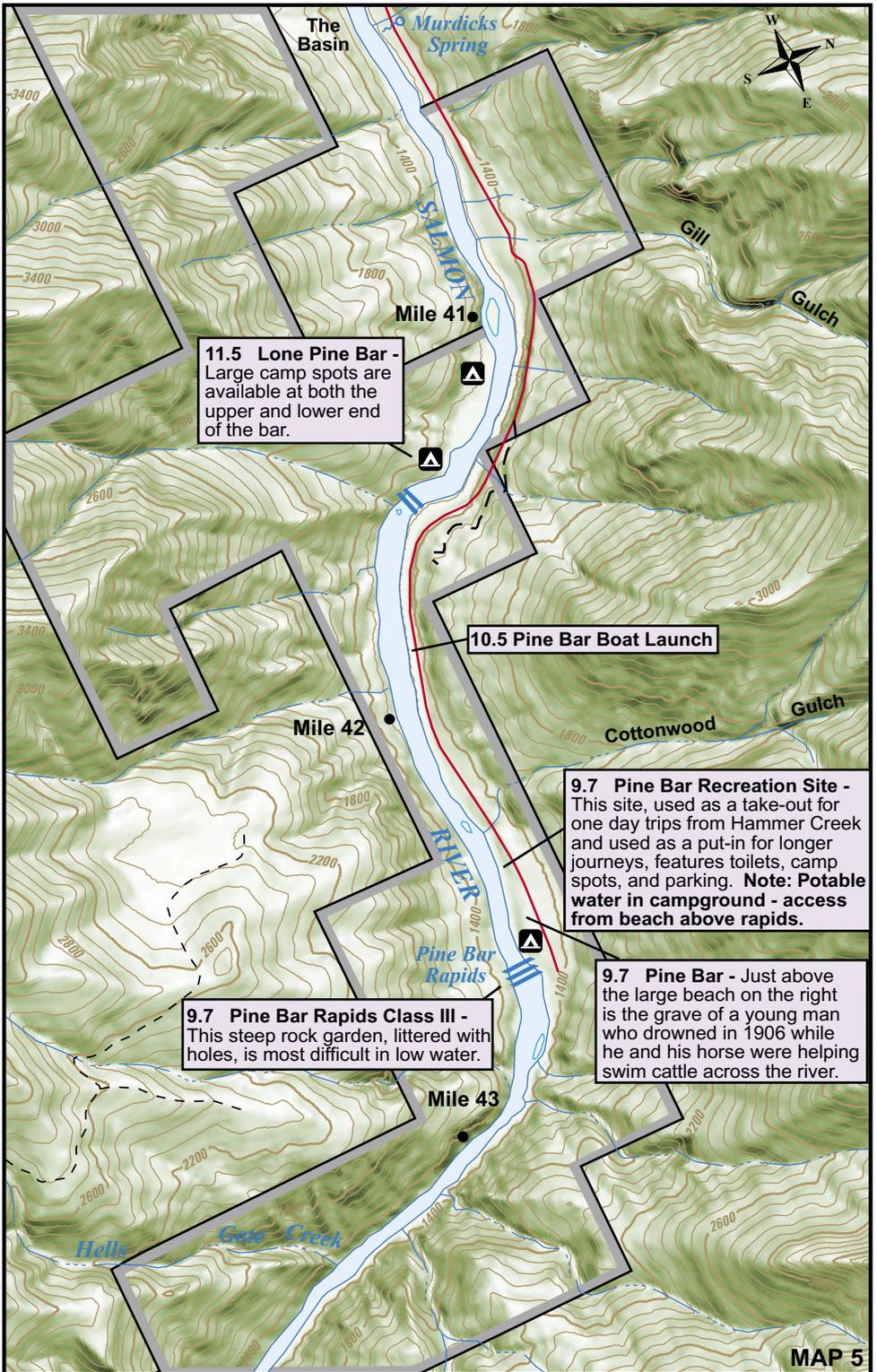
14.8 Rice Creek Bridge - The stream here may have gotten its name from Chinese mining in the area.

15 Long Class II Rapids - Requires maneuvering at low flows.

13.5 The Maze - Shallow, hidden rocks and ledges from here to the Rice Creek Bridge require maneuvering and make motorized passage impossible at low water.

13.4 Cooper Bar - Named for Ben and Frances Cooper, who settled here in 1908 and operated a ranch and ferry. Water was transported here in a 6-mile ditch from Rice Creek, built by Chinese laborers. The ditch, an engineering marvel in its time, is still visible from the river.

13.4 Rock Creek (also known as Graves Creek) - In the early 1900s, the old Boise Trail forded the river and a ferry operated at this site. Today, the county road from Cottonwood enters the canyon here. Self-issue permits are located in a box approximately 1/4 mile up the road.



The Basin

Murdicks Spring



Mile 41

11.5 Lone Pine Bar - Large camp spots are available at both the upper and lower end of the bar.

10.5 Pine Bar Boat Launch

Mile 42

Cottonwood Gulch

9.7 Pine Bar Recreation Site - This site, used as a take-out for one day trips from Hammer Creek and used as a put-in for longer journeys, features toilets, camp spots, and parking. **Note: Potable water in campground - access from beach above rapids.**

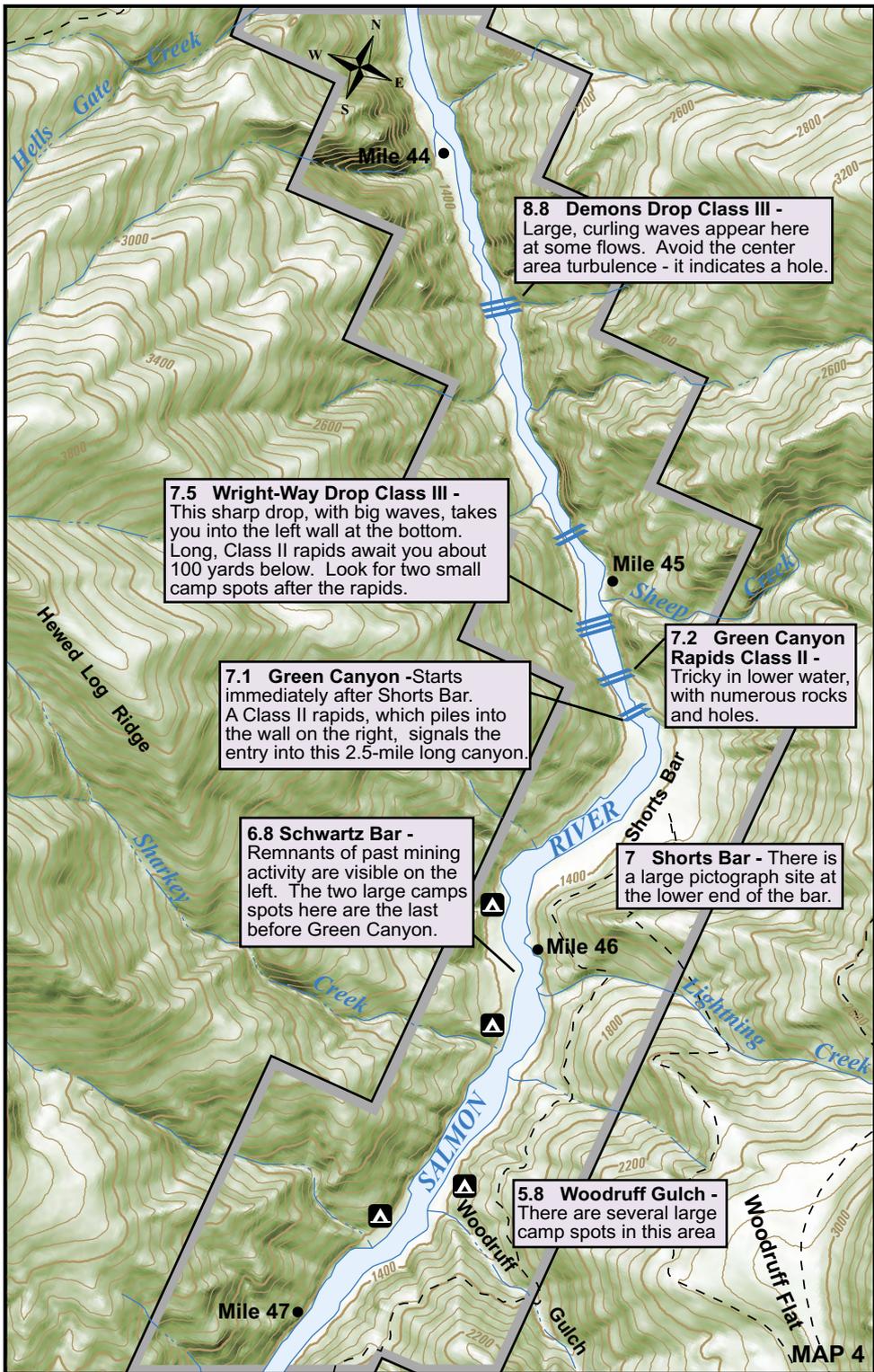
Pine Bar Rapids

9.7 Pine Bar Rapids Class III - This steep rock garden, littered with holes, is most difficult in low water.

9.7 Pine Bar - Just above the large beach on the right is the grave of a young man who drowned in 1906 while he and his horse were helping swim cattle across the river.

Mile 43

Hells Gate Creek



8.8 Demons Drop Class III - Large, curling waves appear here at some flows. Avoid the center area turbulence - it indicates a hole.

7.5 Wright-Way Drop Class III - This sharp drop, with big waves, takes you into the left wall at the bottom. Long, Class II rapids await you about 100 yards below. Look for two small camp spots after the rapids.

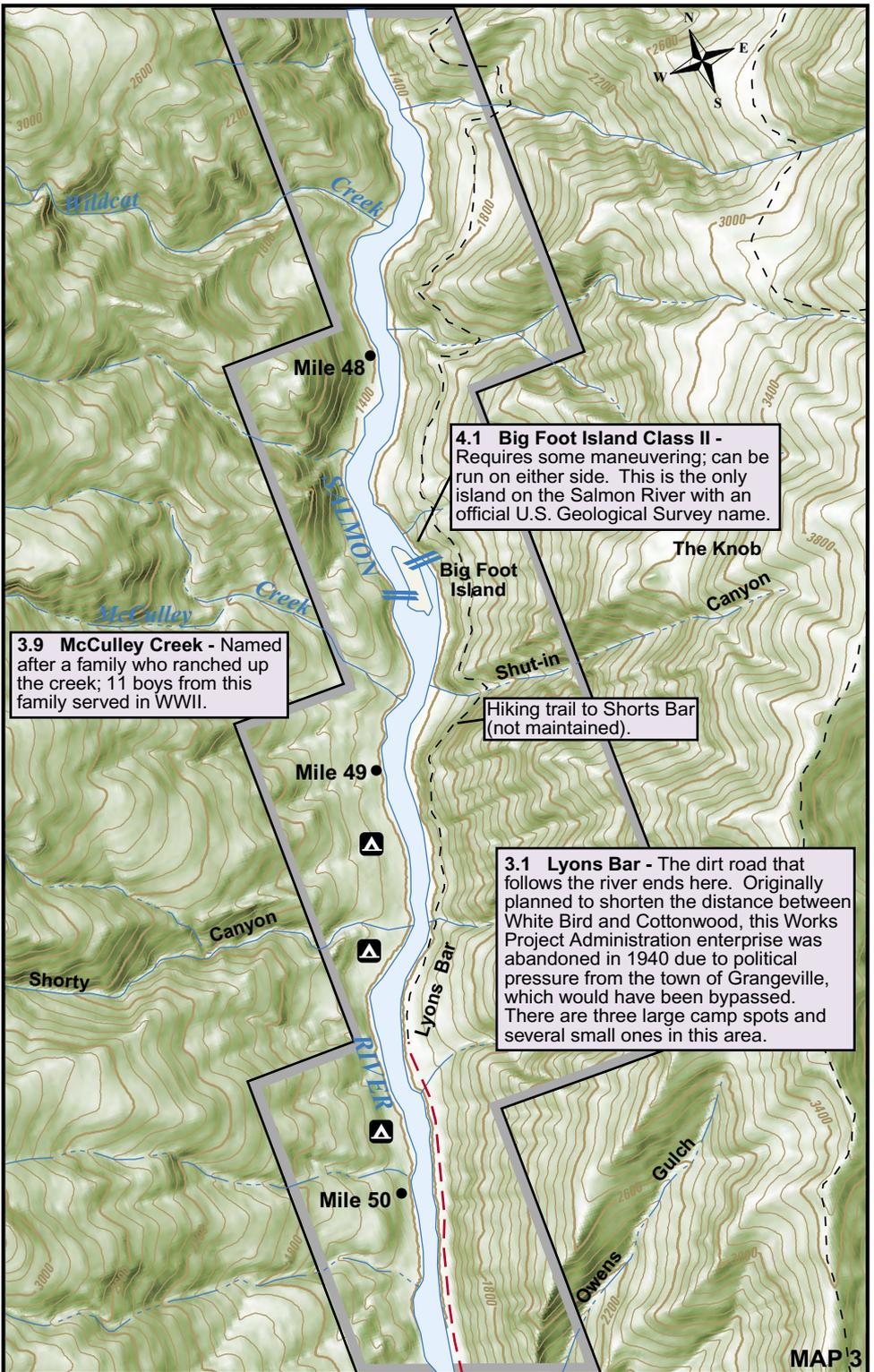
7.1 Green Canyon - Starts immediately after Shorts Bar. A Class II rapids, which piles into the wall on the right, signals the entry into this 2.5-mile long canyon.

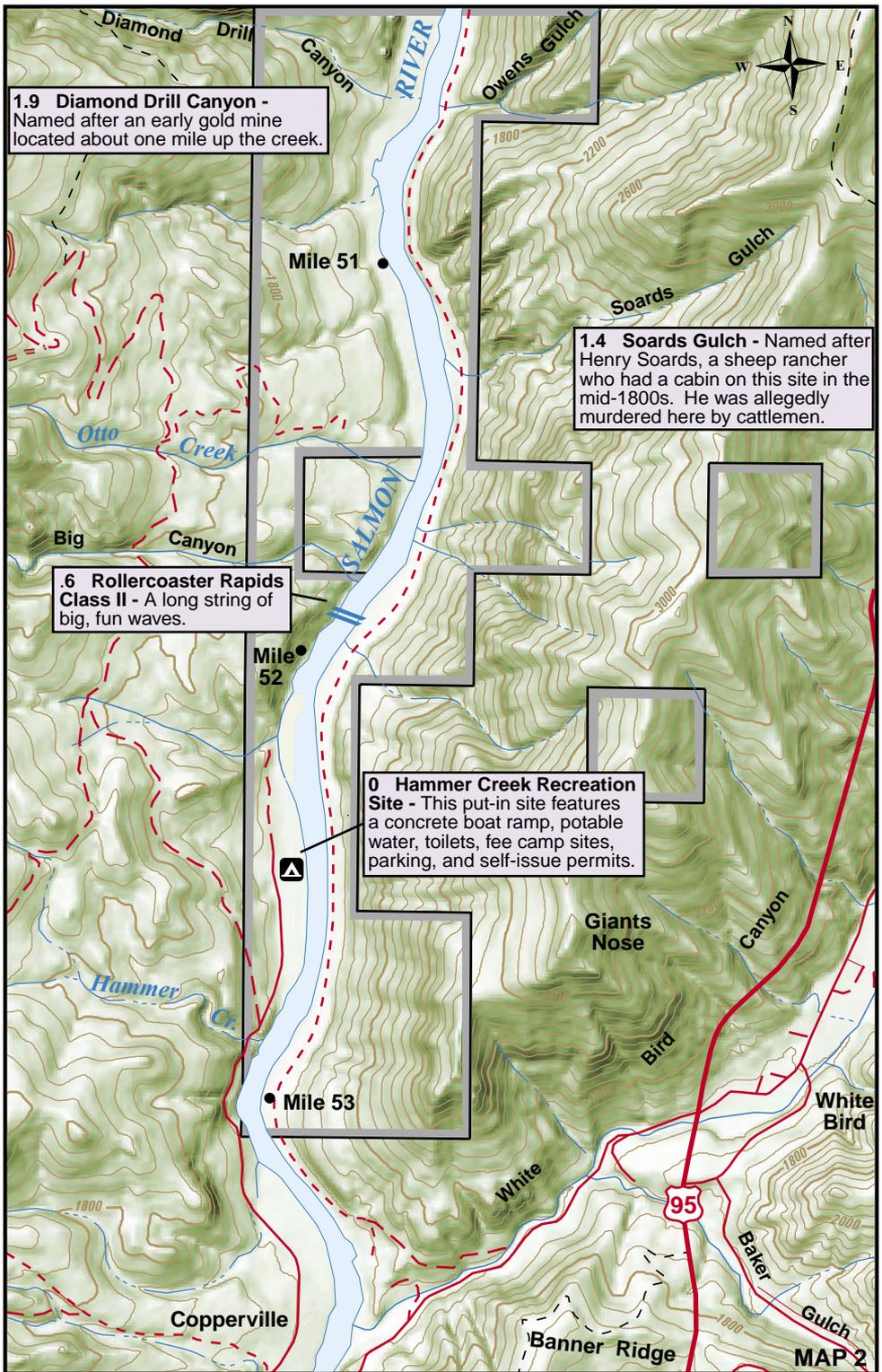
7.2 Green Canyon Rapids Class II - Tricky in lower water, with numerous rocks and holes.

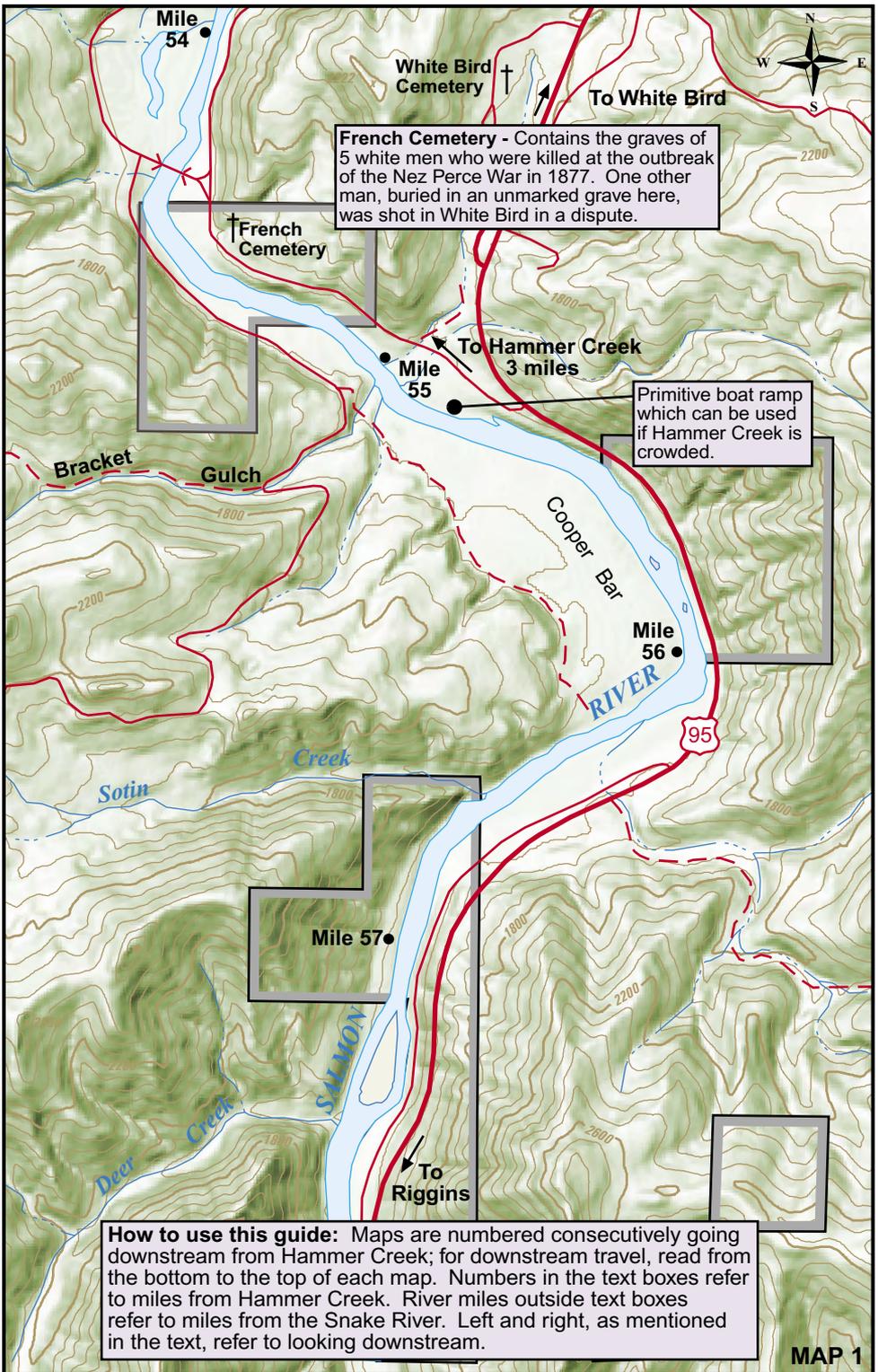
6.8 Schwartz Bar - Remnants of past mining activity are visible on the left. The two large camp spots here are the last before Green Canyon.

7 Shorts Bar - There is a large pictograph site at the lower end of the bar.

5.8 Woodruff Gulch - There are several large camp spots in this area







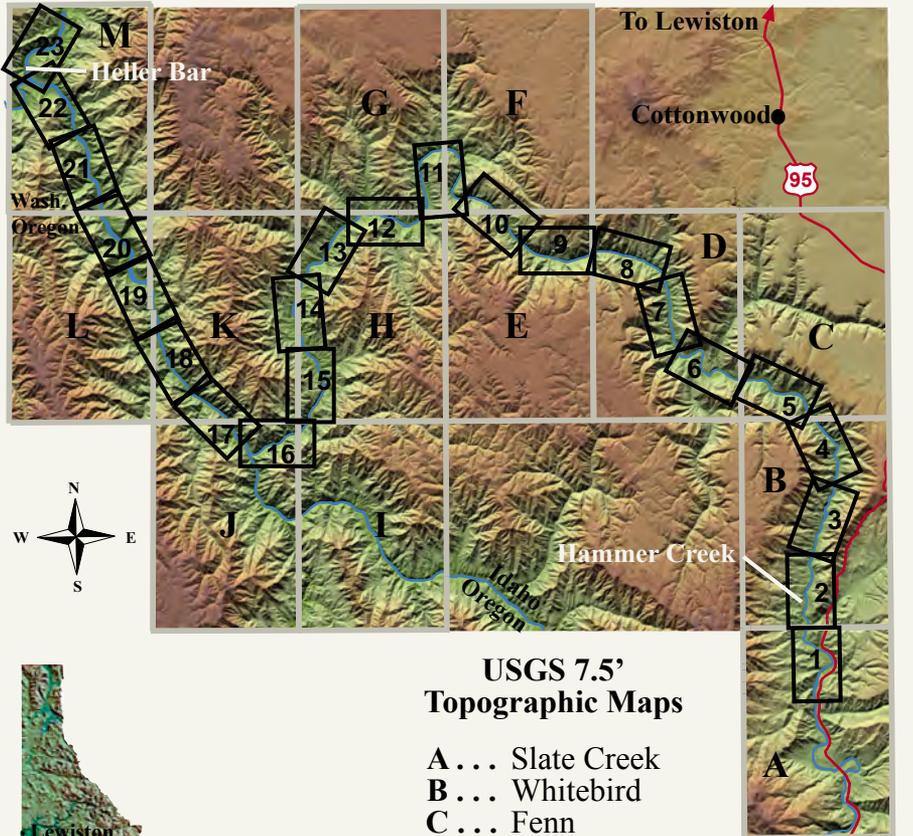
French Cemetery - Contains the graves of 5 white men who were killed at the outbreak of the Nez Perce War in 1877. One other man, buried in an unmarked grave here, was shot in White Bird in a dispute.

Primitive boat ramp which can be used if Hammer Creek is crowded.

How to use this guide: Maps are numbered consecutively going downstream from Hammer Creek; for downstream travel, read from the bottom to the top of each map. Numbers in the text boxes refer to miles from Hammer Creek. River miles outside text boxes refer to miles from the Snake River. Left and right, as mentioned in the text, refer to looking downstream.

Lower Salmon River Location Map

and Index to USGS 7.5' Topographic Maps



USGS 7.5' Topographic Maps

- A ... Slate Creek
- B ... Whitebird
- C ... Fenn
- D ... Moughmer Point
- E ... Boles
- F ... Westlake
- G ... Hoover Point
- H ... Rattlesnake Ridge
- I ... Cactus Mountain
- J ... Deadhorse Ridge
- K ... Wapshilla Creek
- L ... Jim Creek Butte
- M ... Limekiln Rapids

To Riggins



Location Map

Even though every effort is made to depict the road network and other features as accurately as possible, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) cannot guarantee road classification and/or positional accuracy of roads and other features in all cases. No warranty is made by the BLM for use of this data for purposes not intended by BLM.

Lower Salmon River Map Legend



Rapids



Federal and State Lands



Large Group Camp Spot (accommodates 15 or more)



Salmon River Miles

(miles from the confluence of the Salmon and Snake Rivers)



Snake River Miles

(miles from the confluence of the Snake & Columbia Rivers)



Paved Roads



Gravel Bar



Unpaved Roads



State Boundary



Trail



County Boundary



River



Building



Perennial Stream



Mine

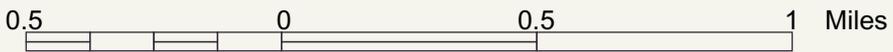


Intermittent Stream



Spring

Scale 1:24,000



Elevation (approximate)



Contour interval is 80 feet

BLM

Cottonwood Field Office

Lower Salmon River
Boater's Guide
MAPS

Hammer Creek
to Heller Bar

