

PO Box 14145 Salem, OR 97309-5065
Media Contacts: Ashley Massey

Phone: (503) 378-2623
Fax: (503) 378-4597



For Immediate Release

Date: Wednesday, July 27, 2016

Low Water Means High Vigilance for Boaters

It's easy to see the exposed gravel bars and shoals that formed on area waterways as the water levels drop and the temperature steadily creeps up. Many reservoirs too, are showing previously submerged stumps. Low water levels can create specific challenges that boaters need to be aware of.

The dynamic landscape, especially in rivers, changes from

week to week. It's important for boaters to be aware that what wasn't visible or dangerous a week ago, could be now, and to know how to alter their boat operation for a safe and enjoyable time on the water. The Oregon State Marine Board offers the following tips on how to have fun and stay safe:



How to Run the River
Always travel with an experienced trip leader who is familiar with the waterway. Never boat alone. A three boat standard is used for a white-water run. Keep both preceding and following boats in sight, never get ahead of the lead craft, and never lag behind the sweep/drag (last) craft. Safely navigating a waterway requires more than the ability to handle your craft. It also requires the ability to read a river, to know when to scout, and when to portage. Watch out for these hazards to avoid.

Key
Scout
Portage - - - -

A. Put-In and Take Out
Just before getting underway examine the put-in point. Observe how the take-out point looks from the river before landing.

B. Need to Read
Paddlers need to know how to read a river to maneuver their craft through the safest course. Example: Upstream Vs indicate objects or obstacles in the water "danger." Downstream Vs indicate a path through the objects.

C. Get Out and Scout
When approaching obstructions like rocks or sharp bends in the river plan your approach in advance. Paddle to shore, get out and scout. Examine obstructions. Portage if necessary.

D. Portage
Carry your craft over and around obstacles or rapids you are unsure of. If portage is difficult and water is passable, "line" your craft (tow it from shore).

E 1. Watch Horizon Lines
A river's horizon line, where the river's flow drops from sight, can tell you what's ahead. If you see large rocks and white caps, you may be approaching a rapid. If the horizon line disappears, look out! You may be headed for a drop. Get out and scout.

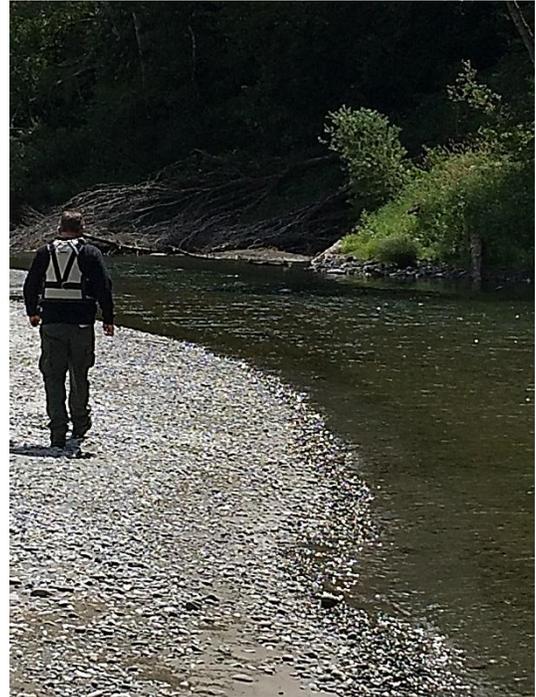
E 2. Waterfalls, Drops and Dams
Avoid waterfalls, drops and all dams; they may form reversals. Scout and/or portage if necessary.

F. Reversals/Hydraulics
Also known as holes and "keeper" holes, these are especially hard to escape around man-made dams. When water falls over an obstacle, it curls back on itself. This forms a strong upstream current which may hold a boat or swimmer. (See Below)

G. Strainers
Strainers are formed by trees, branches, logs or debris lying across or just under the water's surface. Avoid them as they allow water to flow through, but can catch and entrap paddles and paddlers underwater or entangle lines on boats.

H. Log Jams
Stay away from them. They can damage or upset your boat if you paddle too closely and can sweep paddles or paddlers under the jam.

- Boat with a buddy. Especially in paddlecraft. Have at least two boats and a plan if the party is separated. Always let a friend or family member know where you're going, when you expect to return, what clothing you're wearing, and who's with you.
- Stand Up Paddleboards are considered boats in Oregon, and require having a properly fitting life jacket and a sound-producing device like a whistle, on board. Better yet –wear the jacket and attach the whistle. If you use a leash, ensure it's the [appropriate leash](#) for the waterway you're paddling.
- Keep a proper lookout and look what's ahead, not what's just in front of you.
- Scouting ahead is worth your time. Determine the safest course around boulders, gravel bars, or fallen trees/root wads.
- Read the water. Where is there whitewater? Where does the water eddy? How is the water riffling? These water characteristics indicate what's below the surface, a sense of depth and gives key information on how to safely navigate.
- Go with your “gut feeling.” If something doesn't feel right, listen to your gut. When in doubt, portage (drag or carry) the boat over and around an obstruction. Skill level and confidence can mean the difference between an easy run and a potentially dangerous one.
- Stay well clear of log jams and strainers (root wads, trees, branches, logs). They allow water through them, but can catch and entrap paddlers underwater or entangle lines on boats.
- Know your limits. –Not when you're at your best, but at that specific moment. Stick to rivers with Class I or II rapids unless you have the skill and conditioning for advanced water levels.
- Use the right gear for the type of boating. When running Class III or higher rapids, a helmet, properly fitting life jacket, a throw bag and secured gear are incredibly important.



- On reservoirs and lakes, sharp drop-off's are a given. Tree stumps, boulders and fallen trees may not be visible. Take special care when operating near the banks, where many of these obstructions lie just below the surface. Always wear a life jacket when on the banks. Banks are often unstable.
- On coastal bays, pay attention to the weather and the tide. A receding tide could leave a boater "stuck" at the wrong place at the wrong time.
- Check the Marine Board's [website](#) for reported navigation [obstructions](#) and report serious or unexpected ones. The Marine Board will coordinate an evaluation of the obstruction with local law enforcement. By reporting obstructions, you can help ensure safe navigation on popular waterways for everyone.

###