

COOS RIVER

PADDLE GUIDE



OREGON SOUTH COAST

The spirit of Oregon South Coast flows through its waterways, sharing common characteristics, offering similar bounties, yet each one distinct. Whether finding their sources high in the Cascades, like the Umpqua and Rogue, or rising from the rugged Coast Range, like the Coos, Coquille and Chetco, the rivers play a vital role, from wildlife and fish habitat to early-day transportation corridor and sport-fishing destination. For local tribes, "everything was about the river," and this profound connection is still very much a part of their culture. Today the rivers also enjoy a growing popularity with paddlers who have discovered these little-visited gems of Oregon South Coast.

Parts of Rogue and Chetco are federally-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, and the Umpqua, Coos and Coquille flow into wide-ranging estuaries as they near the sea, with inlets, sloughs, channels and quiet back waters to explore. The waterways teem with wildlife as well, and a quiet approach in a paddle craft is the perfect way to get an up-close view. Every season brings its own rewards and experiences in their recreational wonderland – so let's paddle!

COOS RIVER PADDLING

Fed by more than two dozen freshwater tributaries and spread over nearly 20 square miles, Coos Bay is the largest estuary on the Oregon South Coast, offering a variety of year round paddling opportunities. Ride the tides up sloughs and inlets, launch expeditions along the working waterfronts and around bay islands, or explore the peaceful reaches of Sough National Estuarine Research Reserve, the nation's first protected estuary.

Estuaries are protected embayments where rivers meet the sea. They support a fascinating tapestry of life – from worms, clams and other tiny creatures buried deep in the mud, to multitudes of young fish and crabs, to dozens of species of resident and migratory birds.

In addition to its many natural attractions, the area has a rich and colorful history, with fascinating remnants of the early pioneer days, as well as traces of Indian culture.

Waterways have always been an important part of Coos Bay's transportation system, and our coastal rivers serve a wide array of craft, from tugboats, lumber barges and wood chip ships, to US Coast Guard vessels, Army Corps of Engineers dredges, and commercial and recreational fishing boats.



South Slough, photo by Justin Myers.

HISTORY & ECOLOGY

In addition to its many natural attractions, the area has a rich and colorful history, with fascinating remnants of the early pioneer days, as well as traces of Indian culture. The name Coos means “lake” or “place of pines” and here, as elsewhere on the coast, Indians enjoyed the bounty of the rivers, estuaries and ocean. They harvested fish, shellfish, waterfowl and other prey, and made extensive use of wood, especially cedar – everything from dugout canoes and plank homes to skirts, cloaks and other clothing. As with several other coastal ports, Coos Bay’s discovery and settlement by whites began with a shipwreck, the 1852 beaching of the schooner Captain Lincoln. Survivors named their settlement on the bay’s north spit Camp Castaway. Early-day lumber barons saw the bounty of the Coos region, triggering a logging and lumbering boom that survived the Great Depression and two world wars. For years Coos Bay shipped more wood products than any other port in the world.

The country’s last tremendous stands of virgin timber were steadily logged for generations, but stricter environmental standards, set-asides for endangered species and greater mechanization led to an industry-wide decline. Many workers and families left, while others stayed in the remaining wood industries or found employment in an increasingly-important tourist economy. Future industrial development may lift the regional economy.

For many thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived, the native people of these lands lived and thrived off the bounty provided in the waters and forests. It is especially important to be sensitive to this cultural legacy when paddling along the banks of these rivers. Archaeological sites are protected in Oregon on both public and private lands and if you find any artifacts while using the river, be sure to leave them in place and to contact the local tribes or OPRD State Historic Preservation Office at (503)986-0690.



Common Loon. photo by Dimock Photography.

RIVER ETIQUETTE

Be Courteous: Be considerate of other river users. Fishing and boating are popular on the Oregon South Coast, so before approaching ramps be ready so you can launch and take out quickly. Waterways have “lanes of travel” similar to a highway system, so move closer to shore to allow faster water craft to pass.

Respect Private Property: Public access is a privilege to us all. Out of consideration to private landowners, if you are unsure whether the land is private or public, please stay off. Public access is indicated on the maps within this guidebook.

PADDLING SAFETY

Proper planning and preparation will ensure your paddling experience is a positive one. Being knowledgeable about local weather, tides and currents will assist in making good boating decisions. Conditions can change rapidly. Check the current conditions before you hit the water and include them in your trip planning.

There are many in-water hazards to consider; educate yourself about what these hazards are and learn their locations. Understand that new obstacles can arise at any time, such as log ‘strainers’ - downed trees in the water that can be life threatening. As the tide goes out, the water in the rivers moves rapidly, so plan to paddle incoming and slack tides. Pick activities that match your ability, and consider taking classes to improve your skills and knowledge. Wearing a life jacket is critical - adjust it so it’s snug and comfortable. Anticipate the chance of getting wet and dress accordingly, avoid cotton that retains water and accelerates cooling when wet. Wearing bright, noticeable clothing makes you more visible to other boaters. At night, a white light must be shown toward oncoming traffic.

Rules and Laws change periodically. Please visit the Oregon State Marine Board website at oregon.gov for current standards. Or call the Oregon State Marine Board at (503)378-8587.

BE PREPARED

- Wear your life jacket
- Carry proper safety equipment
- Preparation, knowledge and skill building is critical to safe paddling
- Beginners should consider paddling with a companion who knows local waterways and can assist in an emergency
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will be back
- Scout for river and water hazards
- Never grab a stationary object while moving on swift water
- Stay clear of a motor boats path
- Position your boat perpendicular to an approaching wake/wave
- Dress adequately for the water temperatures and weather conditions – avoid cotton
- Obtain an Aquatics Invasive Species (AIS) permit and carry on board.
(www.dfw.state.or.us)

ITEMS TO BRING

- Life jacket/whistle
- First aid kit
- Extra paddle
- Extra clothes
- Map & this paddle guide
- Dry bags
- Rope/Knife
- Pump
- Hat with brim
- Drinking water/food
- Sunscreen
- Flashlight
- Cell phone w/ emergency numbers (coverage can be unreliable)
- Oregon Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) permit

LEAVE NO TRACE

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on established surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly (pack it in, pack it out)
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

Site Conservation: While enjoying the river, be aware of your direct impact on the surrounding area because your efforts will make a difference for the environment. When observing wildlife, allow adequate space so they are not disturbed. Do not remove rocks, plants, or other native objects, as these create habitat for the multitude of species living along these shores.

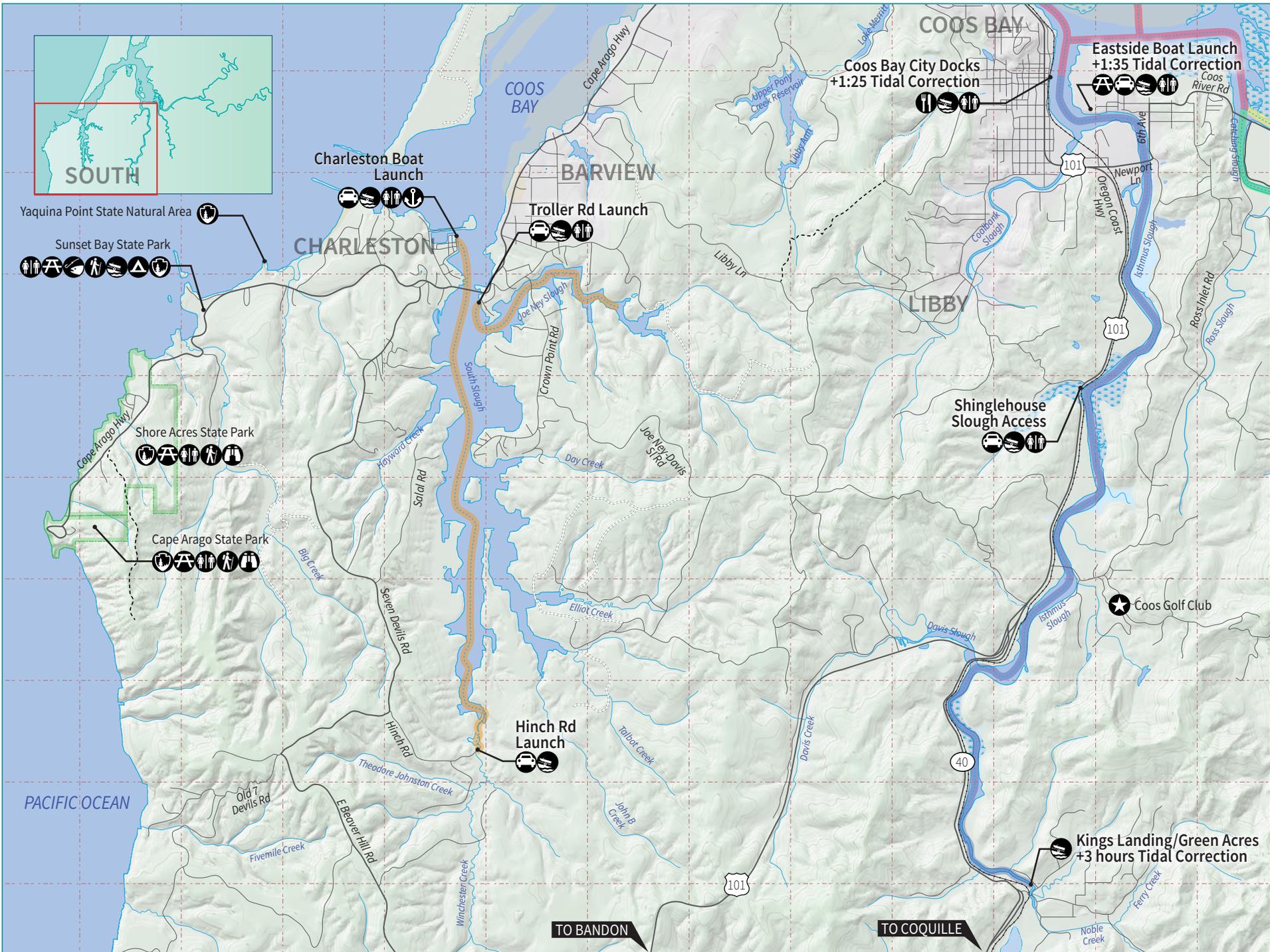
Waste Removal: Secure your garbage to your boat so that it cannot blow into the water and reserve restroom breaks for designated sites indicated on the maps. Strive to leave an area how you found it, or better.

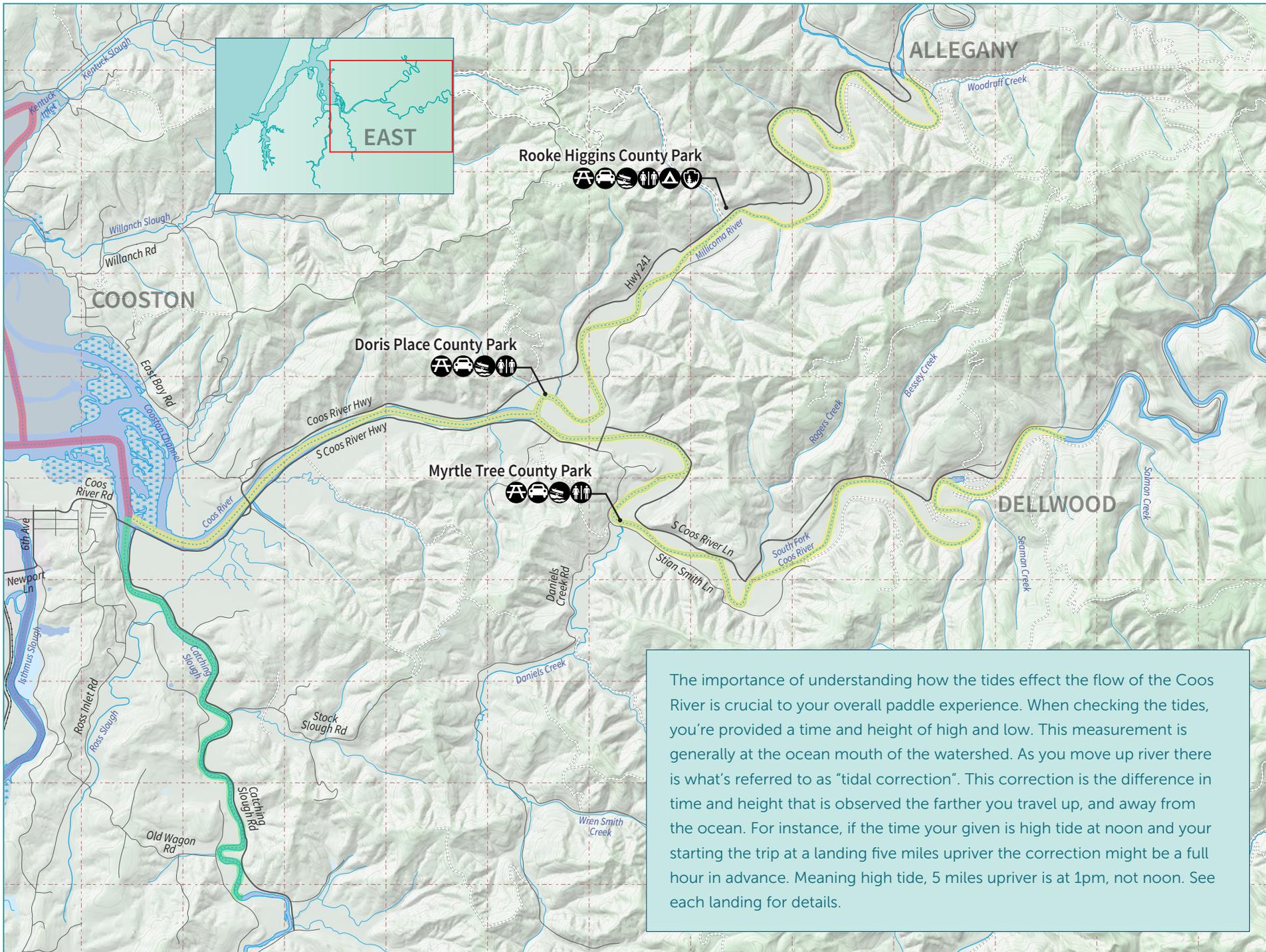
Fires: Wildfires can dramatically impact the region. Respect local fire restrictions, make fires only where it's permitted, keep them small and put them out completely.

Invasive Species: Aquatic nuisance species are a serious threat to Oregon's waterways. Introduction and spread of harmful non-native species can upset the delicate balance of our fragile ecosystems. Aquatic nuisance species are often spread between waterways by hitching a ride on boats and gear. Please wash your boats when switching from one river to the next.



South Slough, photo by Octave Zangs.





The importance of understanding how the tides effect the flow of the Coos River is crucial to your overall paddle experience. When checking the tides, you're provided a time and height of high and low. This measurement is generally at the ocean mouth of the watershed. As you move up river there is what's referred to as "tidal correction". This correction is the difference in time and height that is observed the farther you travel up, and away from the ocean. For instance, if the time your given is high tide at noon and your starting the trip at a landing five miles upriver the correction might be a full hour in advance. Meaning high tide, 5 miles upriver is at 1pm, not noon. See each landing for details.

RESOURCES

GUIDES & OUTFITTERS:

South Coast Tours: www.southcoasttours.net / (541)373-0487

TRANSPORTATION:

Coos Transit:

Wavecrest Discoveries:

CHAMBERS:

[Coos Bay-North Bend Visitors and Convention Bureau \(VCB\)](#)

WATERSHED INFORMATION:

Coos Watershed Association

<http://www.cooswatershed.org>

300 Central Avenue

P.O. Box 388

Coos Bay, Oregon 97420

Phone (541)888-5922

ENCOUNTERING WILDLIFE:

Quietly view wildlife, giving a wide berth to the birds and animals you may encounter. A small pair of binoculars can stow easily on your boat and help you maintain a safe distance while viewing. Do not disturb stranded or wounded animals. Instead, contact the Wildlife Center of the North Coast at (503)338-0331.

Birding: www.oregoncoastbirding.com

Wildlife Rehab: www.coastwildlife.org; (503)338-0331

Duck Hunting Regulations: www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/waterfowl/

Fishing Regulations: www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/

Shellfish Toxicity Alert: www.oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish_status.shtml

Oregon Wildlife Recreation Report: www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/

PERMITS:

Rules and permitting are subject to change, currently all boats over 10' need an invasive species permit with the state of Oregon.

<https://myodfw.com/articles/buying-aquatic-invasive-species-prevention-permit>

WEATHER & SAFETY INFORMATION:

USGS Real Time Water Data: www.waterdata.usgs.gov

Tide Predictions: www.saltwatertides.com

Surf Report: www.oregonsurfcheck.com

Local Weather: <http://weather.yahoo.com/forecast/USOR0239.html>

Wind Report: www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php

Oregon Rivers: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/rt>

Tide Predictions: www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/tide_predictions.html

Tide tables provided at local markets.

NOAA: www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/; www.wrh.noaa.gov; www.noaa.com

Buoys: www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php

Surf Report: www.oregonsurfcheck.com

Road Report: www.tripcheck.com

State Marine Board: (503)378-8587

U.S. Coast Guard Sector Sector North Bend: (541)756-9220

Station Coos Bay, Charleston: (541)888-3267

Oregon State Police Headquarters, Salem: (503)378-3720

After Hours: Salem Dispatch: (503)375-3555

SW Region HQ: (541)726-2536

Coos County Sheriff Offices: (541)396-7800



Haynes Inlet, photo by Brian Kraynik.

Thanks to our partners and sponsors, and a special mention to Tom Baake for his involvement in the creation of the South Coast Paddle Guides. Tom is a published author of many outdoor recreation guide books. Very few people have as much knowledge about our region's recreational opportunities. His guide books can be found online and at many area outlets. We thank Tom for his passion in helping visitors and residents alike discover the many recreational opportunities Southwestern Oregon has to offer.

We recommend this book by Tom Baake and Ron Wardman:
Oregon South Coast Canoe, Kayak and Stand-up Paddle Guide.

Coos Bay: Westways Press

Email: westways@frontier.com | Website: www.scod.com/guidebooks

This paddle guide printed on Polyart waterproof paper.



**TRAVEL
OREGON**



South Slough, photo by Octave Zangs. Cover photo by Justin Myers.