

Salmon Homecoming

Self guided tour – Oxbow Regional Park



Salmon facts

- Salmon have a “smell memory” of the river they were born in. They use that memory to return to the same river to make their nests.
- There are five types of Pacific salmon in North America: Chinook, chum, coho, pink and sockeye. Chinook and coho are found in the Sandy River this time of year
- The Sandy River’s salmon swam up the Columbia River from the Pacific Ocean.
- As part of their lifecycle, when the salmon return to spawn, they begin to lose scales and can be seen with white splotches.
- After spawning, salmon die. Their bodies become important fertilizers for plants along the river and as food for other animals.
- Salmon can move rocks as big as your head using their tails to create their redds, the nests where they lay their eggs.
- Environmental factors that impact salmon lifecycle. **Harmful:** Dams, fertilizer run off, deforestation, overfishing, ocean warming caused by climate change. **Supportive:** Sustainable energy other than dams, organic/no-spray farming, reforestation, fishing in moderation, reducing fossil fuel consumption

Importance of Salmon to Indigenous People

Spiritual

- Salmon are sacred to many Tribes and Indigenous People in the Willamette Valley and Columbia River basin.
- Salmon and their importance are present in traditional and cultural practices, such as creation stories and songs.

Cultural

- Salmon runs are major cultural events for Tribes in the Willamette Valley and Columbia River basin.
- Salmon is a First Food and integral to feasts and traditional meals for many Tribes.

Economic

- Salmon has been a key part of the massive trade networks between Indigenous People and Tribes.
- Fishing is a respected tribal role and important livelihood in tribal communities.

Political

- Treaties with many Tribes reserved the Tribes' rights to continue to fish.
- Many treaty rights, include fishing, housing and education, are not fully honored.
- Tribes and tribal organizations spend millions of dollars every year to protect and restore salmon runs throughout the Columbia River basin and Willamette Valley.

Be prepared

Pack your essentials: A Map, sun protection, insulation (jacket, hat, gloves), light source (flashlight, head lamp), first-aid kit, food, and water. One can never predict the great outdoors and in case you get turned around or have other issues on the trail having the right supplies can save your life.

Be safe

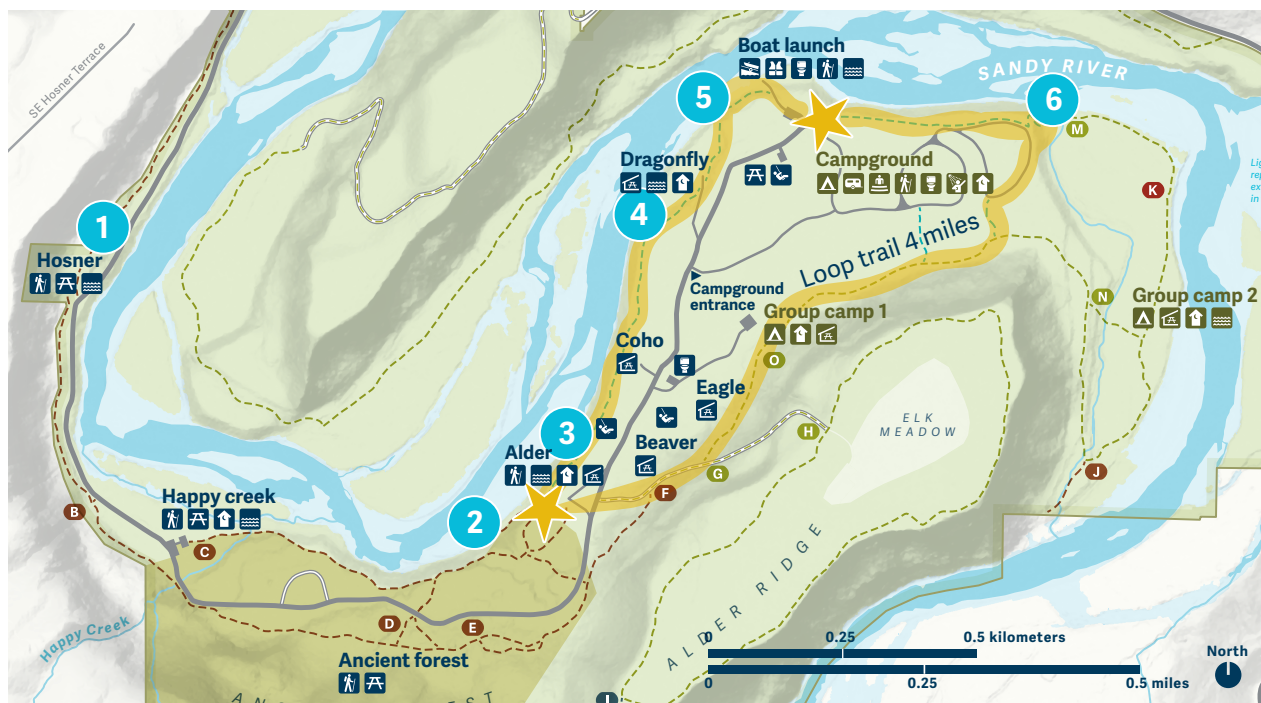
Please follow current public health and safety guidance during your visit.

Remember to always wear a United States Coast Guard Approved life preserver when interacting with or near open water ways. You can crouch when you approach the river to avoid being seen by a watchful fish, and help your stabilization as you watch them. Just remember leaning over the river isn't necessary as you can usually find a better vantage point safely nearby and if you can't then it isn't worth it.

In case of an emergency

- No cell phone coverage in the park.
- Call 911 using one of the call boxes located outside the Welcome Center at park entry, the campground shower building or the boat launch.

Self guided tour



This is a zoomed in map of Oxbow Regional Park. To pick up a full map, stop by the Welcome Center.

Salmon viewing tips

- Look for redds. Redds, the salmon nests, are often visible from the shore. They consist of large river rocks placed in a circle, with clean gravel in the middle.
- Look for rocks and gravel. Salmon are more likely to be in gravelly parts of the river.
- Wave watcher. Salmon can make "waves" when they move through the river.

- Bird's-eye view. Try looking for salmon from a place that gives you a large field of view
- Wear polarized sunglasses. The lenses help you to see into the water.
- Use binoculars.
- Practice patience. It may take a while to catch a glimpse of a salmon, but they are out there!

- 1 Has river access and can walk up and down a rocky beach looking for salmon redds.
 - 2 Can be accessed through Alder parking area and is a place to walk along the river or a short small hike down to the rocky beach to look for redds or jumping, spawning salmon.
 - 3 Past Alder shelter there is an overlook where the fencing bows out. You can see the bends in the river that give Oxbow its name. It is a great place to see the salmon from a bird's eye view.

Continue that direction on the trail to walk the whole river front down to the amphitheater.
 - 4 Just before Dragonfly shelter there is a trail that takes you down to the water and is often our most active area for salmon spawning.
 - 5 Walk up and down the beach until you see rocky, shallow areas in the river. On good days you can see spawning activities.
 - 6 The trail across the road from site 71 leads you to the beach. Look into the shoreline toward the middle of the river and beyond for redds and major splashing in the river. Note: If driving to this stop, park at the Boat Launch. Campground parking is for reservations only.
- ★ A great salmon-viewing trail starts at Alder shelter, goes along the fence and river and ends at the beach (about 3 miles round trip) and can be taken on a loop if you want a longer hike (about 6 miles). If you're hiking the longer loop, grab an Oxbow trail map at the front gate or Welcome Center kiosks.