

... boating the Smith is described as floating on air. . .



Smith River National Recreation Area
Six Rivers National Forest, USDA
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be kept under control at all times. Keeping your pet on a leash helps protect your pet, vegetation, wildlife, and other visitors. Pets must be on leash in developed campgrounds. Clean up after all pets, dispose of waste properly and be considerate of other visitors to the NRA.

**BEARS:** Although most large mammals avoid anything smelling like humans, bears are an exception. The simple rule is: stay away from bears and DO NOT harass them.

If bears are a problem, hang all food, toothpaste, etc., from a tree at least eight feet from the ground and four feet from the trunk. Set your camp up at a reasonable distance from the food,

and allow absolutely NO FOOD in the tent; a tent will not stop a bear!

### WEATHER

Weather in the Smith River NRA is very changeable. Temperatures in the winter may drop into the 30s and 40s with occasional snow. The rainy season normally runs from October through April with an average annual rainfall of 92.55 inches. Summers are dry, with 80° to 100° temperatures. For current weather information, call the Smith River NRA.

# A BRIEF RIVER HISTORY

A river can mean many things to people: a navigation route, drinking water, food, even a source of beauty and inspiration. The Smith River has always been a stream abounding in fish and pure water, and through wise use and careful management, this will continue to be true for years to come. But historically, the waters of the Smith were not a major travel or supply route from the ocean into the interior of northern California, although numerous trails paralleled its shores. While winter whitewater currents quickly carry watercraft downstream to the ocean, these routes may be unnavigable for the remainder of the year. Except for a stretch of the main stem from the ocean to the Middle-South Fork confluence, the Smith River is, for the most part, a one-way street.

At least 600 years ago, the Tolowa people thrived along the Smith River. It is estimated that their population numbered from 1,000 to 2,000 people. They lived mainly near the river's mouth, but they also ventured upstream seasonally and gathered acorns and other foods. One of many places where the Tolowa people



A Tolowa dugout canoe on the Smith River

Del Norte County Historical Society Photograph fished for salmon was at the confluence of Mill Creek and the Smith (called *tsahu me*), a spot that was also a good source of acorns. Another village, *mus-yeh-sait-neh*, stood about two miles down-river from the current Smith River NRA Visitor Center. They built rectangular-shaped wood or stone houses partially into the ground and these provided suitable shelter in the wet, coastal environment.

In June 1828, fur trapper Jedediah Smith and his party from the Ashley fur-trading venture crossed the river, which was later named for him, and camped at the head of Myrtle Creek. They were probably the first white men to enter the Smith River basin, arriving via an overland route. They explored the redwood coast, looking for a better route between the Rockies and the Pacific.

"Gold Fever" brought hundreds of miners to the area in the 1850s, along with farmers and all the other business people needed to sustain this intense migration. Miners sought and found gold in the forks and streams of the Smith River, and when placers (mineral deposits) diminished, many miners used water from the river in hydraulic mining operations. Hydraulic mining was quite destructive to the land, washing away river banks and entire terraces. Signs of this style of mining still exist in remains of ditches and flumes built to contain the water, and in the environmental effects on the Smith River watershed.

In 1907 most of the Smith River basin was included in the Klamath Reserve, the precursor to the Klamath National Forest. The U.S. Forest Service, (Gasquet Ranger District) managed the land and water "for the greatest good of the resource for the greatest number of people." This was an event of major significance to the environmental well-being of the Smith River watershed. In 1947 the newly created Six Rivers National Forest took over management of the Gasquet Ranger District, which in 1990 became the Smith River National Recreation Area.

### SCALE OF RIVER DIFFICULTY

The following classification is based on a guide for rivers established by the American Whitewater Affiliation. The river should be considered one class more difficult than normal if the water temperature is below 50° Fahrenheit, or the trip is in a wilderness.

#### Class I Easy

Fast-moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily avoided by paddlers with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.

#### Class II Novice

Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels, which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-size waves are avoided easily by trained paddlers. Swimmers are seldom injured, and group assistance, while helpful, is seldom needed.

#### Class III Intermediate

Rapids with moderate, irregular waves, which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or "strainers" such as fallen trees, bridge pilings and undercut rocks may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful currents can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy but group assistance may be required to avoid a long swim

#### Class IV Advanced

Intense, powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Depending on the character of the river, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast

maneuvers under pressure. A fast, reliable eddy turn may be needed to initiate maneuvers, scout rapids, or rest. Rapids may require "must" moves above dangerous rapids. Scouting is necessary the first time down. Risk of injury to swimmers is moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance for rescue is often essential but requires practiced skills. A strong Eskimo roll is highly recommended.

#### Class V Expert

Extremely long, obstructed or very violent rapids, which expose a paddler to above-average danger. Drops may contain large unavoidable waves and holes or steep, congested chutes with complex, demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distance between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. What eddies exist may be small, turbulent, or difficult to reach. At the high end of the rating scale, several of these factors may be combined. Scouting is mandatory but often difficult. Swims are dangerous, and rescue is difficult even for experts. A very reliable Eskimo roll, proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential for survival.

#### Class VI Extreme

These runs exemplify extremes of difficulty, unpredictability, and danger. The consequences of errors are very severe and rescue may be impossible. For teams of experts only, at favorable water levels, after close inspection and taking of all precautions. This class does not represent drops thought to be unrunnable, but includes rapids that are only occasionally run.

A BOATING TRAIL GUIDE TO THE





SMITH RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



# WELCOME TO THE WILD AND SCENIC SMITH RIVER

This guide to the Smith River is published by the California Department of Boating and Waterways in cooperation with the United States Forest Service (USFS), whose Smith River National Recreation Area manages most of the three main forks of the Smith River, numerous tributaries, and a short segment of the main stem. The remainder of the main stem flows through a combination of public and private lands and the Oregon segment of the North Fork is managed by the USFS, Siskiyou National Forest.

The Smith River is one of the crown jewels of the National Wild and Scenic River System, which recognizes and protects rivers across the country.

Approximately 300 miles of the Smith River system are designated wild and scenic, more than any other river in the country. The emerald-green Smith River flows freely and naturally, without a single dam, for its entire length — the only major river system in California to do so. The Secretary of the Interior named the Smith River and its tributaries as part of the national system in 1981.

The Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA), located in the Six Rivers National Forest in northwest California, is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The NRA was created by Congress in 1990 to protect the area's special scenic value, natural diversity, cultural and historical attributes, wilderness, wildlife, fisheries, and the Smith River watershed's clean waters. The Forest Service has been designated as the steward of the NRA to provide recreational opportunities and to manage this diverse area and all of its valuable resources.

This guide was designed to enhance the enjoyment and safety of visitors to the Wild and Scenic Smith River, whether running the winter rapids, fishing, or enjoying a swim in the calmer summer-time waters of the Smith. Those wishing to navigate the whitewater trails of the Smith should obtain the map/guide entitled Whitewater of the Smith River Watershed, which contains information essential to kayaking, boating, and rafting on the Smith. Contact the Smith River NRA Visitor Center for maps and other information on the area.

# COME PLAY IN THE NRA!

The Smith River National Recreation Area invites you to a scenic playground encompassing more than 450 square miles of densely forested mountains, pristine botanical areas, remote wilderness landscapes, high-mountain lakes, and rocky canyons. Weaving through this natural wonderland are hundreds of miles of the Smith River's forks and streams, 75 miles of hiking trails, and several hundred miles of roads,

including 27 miles of the Smith River Scenic Byway.
The NRA offers a year-round menu of recreational opportunities.

# SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS



WINTER: fish watching, whitewater rafting and kayaking, steelhead and salmon fishing, waterfalls, snow in the high country, mushroom gathering.



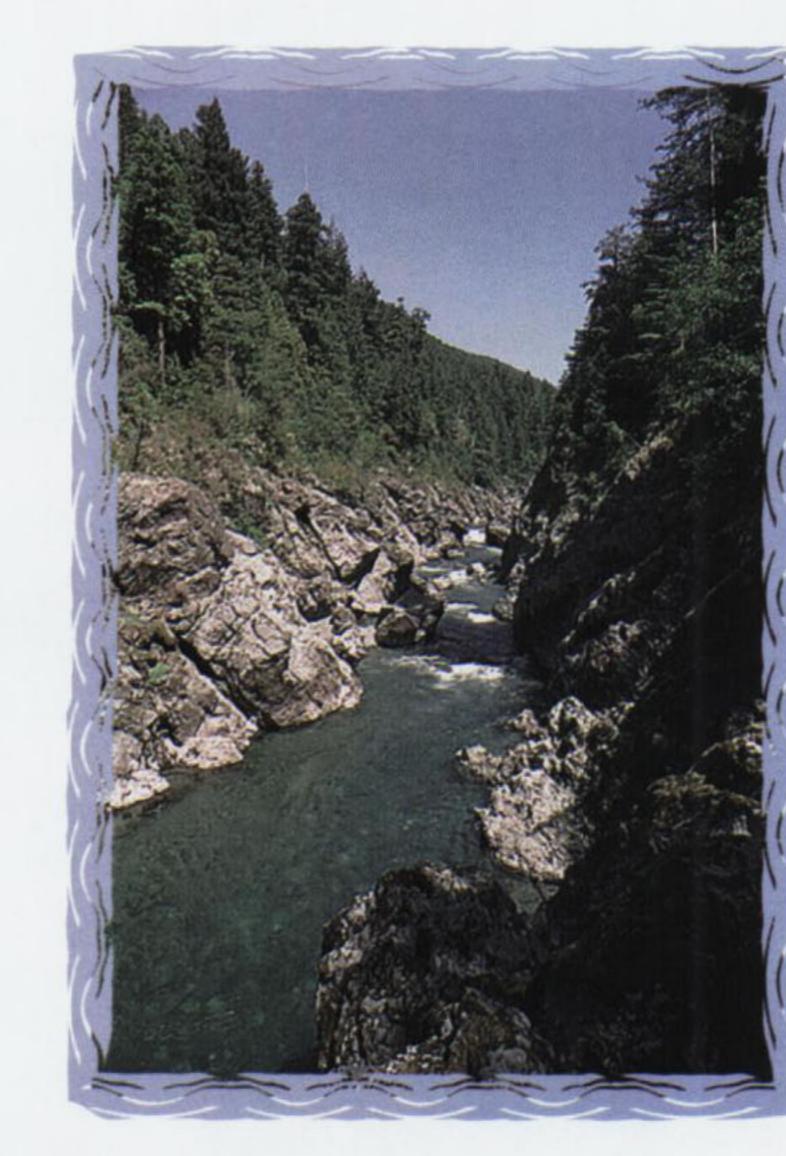
SPRING: blossoming Pacific Dogwoods, wild azaleas and rhododendrons, ladyslipper orchids, lilies, and more.



SUMMER: swimming or snorkeling in deep, natural pools of clear, emerald water; tubing and rafting on the main stem Smith; hiking back-country and wilderness trails like this trail to Island Lake.



AUTUMN: wonderful weather, fall colors, berry picking, mountain biking.





# A SCENIC BYWAY

The Smith River Scenic Byway along Highway 199 passes through four miles of impressive redwood forests, winds 27 miles along the awesome river for which it's named, and then continues into Oregon. The Byway presents spectacular views of rugged canyons, turbulent rapids, the confluence of the South and Middle Forks of the Smith River, plus historic and picturesque recreation sites such as Patrick Creek Campground. It also features the first bridge in the state of California named after a woman, Mary Adams Peacock, a pioneer who became famous for the hospitality she offered at her Mary Adams Station lodging facilities.

# WORLD-CLASS FISHING

The Smith River's natural fishery is one of its greatest assets, with more than 175 miles of anadromous fish habitat. The Smith has exceptional runs of salmon and steelhead. Salmon appear in late October and continue through December and there is good angler success. Steelhead start arriving in mid-December, and remain until late April or May. The fishing is not easy, but the rewards are great.

Anyone 16 years of age or older wishing to fish the Smith River must obtain a valid California state fishing license and a current fishing regulation guide and follow its rules on seasons, fish size and variety, bait, and other restrictions. For more information call California Department of Fish & Game (707) 464-2523.

# BOTANICAL AREAS

Four botanical areas in the NRA protect unique and outstanding botanical communities:



The Myrtle Creek Botanical Area features unique Darlingtonia bog plants and towering redwood trees.

The Broken Rib Botanical Area has a high concentration of many coniferous species.

The Bear Basin Butte Botanical Area contains 14 different types of evergreens, including the beautiful Brewer's spruce.



The North Fork Botanical Area hosts many rare plants and the fragrant wild azalea.

#### CAMPING

The Smith River NRA features four developed campgrounds plus numerous opportunities for dispersed camping. Developed campgrounds have fire rings, tables, vault or flush toilets, parking pads, and drinking water (except for Big Flat). Camping limit: 2 weeks per year. For reservations call toll free: (877)444-6777; TDD: (877)833-6777; INTL: (518)885-3639; Internet: ReserveUSA.com.

Panther Flat: Fee charged. Open all year. Mile post 16.75 on Hwy. 199. Hot showers, flush toilets, drinking water, 39 sites (some barrier-free sites). Reservations accepted.

Grassy Flat: Fee charged. Open mid-May to mid-September. Mile post 18.87 on Hwy. 199. Vault toilets, drinking water, 19 sites. Reservations accepted.

Patrick Creek: Fee charged. Open mid-May to mid-September. Mile post 22.0 on Hwy. 199. Flush toilets, drinking water, 13 sites (some barrier-free sites). Reservations accepted.

Big Flat: Fee charged. Open mid-May to mid-September. Mile post 14.1 South Fork Road, left on #405 for .2 mile, left on 15N59. Vault toilets, no drinking water, no garbage service (pack in/pack out), 28 sites. No reservations.

Dispersed Camping: Permitted anywhere in the NRA except where specifically prohibited. Remember that no dispersed camping is allowed in Redwood National or State Park or on private lands. Camping limit in the Forest is 30 days per year. Campfire permit required for gas lanterns, camp stoves, campfires, or grills. Always make certain your campfire is DEAD OUT before you leave camp. Pick up and pack out all trash. Bury human waste 6-8" deep and at least 100' from any river or stream. Store food out of the reach of bears and other animals.

### STAY IN A LOOKOUT!



Want to experience a night at the top of Bear Basin Butte (elevation 5303") and see for yourself what life would be like for a fire fighter? A historic fire lookout and a new 1930s style cabin may be rented for one to seven nights between June 15 and September 30, with reservations taken after January 1 for the current year. Contact the NRA Visitor Center for information on this unique opportunity.



### Superb winter whitewater, serene summer boating, spectacular scenery year round!

When winter rains fall on the mountains of the Smith River NRA, water swiftly finds its way to the nearby ocean. The headwaters of the North Fork, Middle Fork, and South Forks of the Smith are within 30 miles of the Pacific. The Smith's three main forks and countless creeks drain a beautiful, rugged terrain of steep, rocky canyons. Torrential rains may bring almost immediate whitewater conditions. Surprisingly, the water is crystal clear again soon after a storm because rocks in the Smith River Basin break down into smaller rocks rather than decomposing into sediment. At times the clarity of the water is so good that boating the Smith is described as floating on air.

Once the three forks join to form the main stem of Smith River, the land levels out somewhat, and the last 16 miles to the ocean present less demanding in a day. water conditions (Class 1-2 in medium flows). Just past The Forks (the confluence of the Middle and South Forks), the River leaves the NRA and flows through Redwood National and State Parks, offering visitors stunning views of giant redwoods and great summer floating in Class 1 and 2 waters. In the summer you'll find many picturesque locales for sunbathing and swimming along all three forks of the Smith.

The Smith River offers winter and early spring whitewater opportunities. With average annual

Los Angeles

precipitation for the basin at over 100 inches, rainfall runoff is the dominant component of yearly river flow. During the rainy season (late October to May), all rivers are usually available for boating for their entire navigable length. In summer months, the river forks become quite shallow and boating opportunity

is largely restricted to the main stem of Smith River.

At the start of the rainy season it takes two or three good basin-wide rainstorms to recharge the ground water system enough to achieve a sustainable, boatable base flow. River flow is as highly variable as the intensity, duration, and location of individual storms. The Smith River has no dams to control river levels. An individual basin-wide rainstorm can cause the river to rise from low water to near flood levels in a day. On the other hand, flow may also drop by half

### WHITEWATER CHALLENGES

The Smith River abounds with Class 4 and 5 rapids on all three forks, and the creeks offer even greater challenges. Its 145 miles of navigable white water require a fairly high degree of technical skills from the boater. Having a winter whitewater season and a technically demanding river also mean fewer visitors, so whitewater enthusiasts may enjoy relatively uncrowded outings. The Smith River offers surprises for even the most seasoned boater. While some

rapids may change little for many years, others are different every year. Careful planning and advance research are essential to having a successful whitewater experience.

#### THE CREEKS

Creeks offer some of the most challenging whitewater in the watershed but the window of opportunity to experience them is relatively small (see chart). Snow or seasonal road closures also may limit access for the portion of the year when water is at a boatable level. Creeks require expert boat handling and water reading skills. They also require the ability to maintain vigorous physical exertion for the length of the run. If you cannot realistically fulfill these requirements, do not attempt the creeks.

Creeks at boatable flows possess a constant gradient character. Pools between rapids, as well as most eddies, are small to nonexistent. Strainers such as instream brush and large woody debris do exist. Creeks are too shallow to float a boat at very low to low

At high flow and above, the opportunity to stop downstream travel, and, more importantly, stop and scout rapids, is very limited. There are no pools between rapids. Eddies, if any, are very small and likely in the trees. Boating the creeks and river headwaters at these flows is not recommended.

#### THE RIVERS

At very low flow, river pools are deep, but rapids are shallow. Rapids tend to be steeper than at higher flows, and in some cases, unnavigable. Boating the river forks at this flow will likely require several portages around rapids too shallow to navigate. The Mainstem usually has enough water for boating at

At low through high flows, the rivers exhibit a "pool and drop" character (pool being relatively calm water and drop being quickly dropping rapids). These are the flows that provide the greatest variety of boating opportunity within the watershed.

At very high to extreme flows, the character of the river tends to change from pool and drop to constant gradient. Pools between rapids tend to disappear. Eddies may be very turbulent. Hydraulics are large and in charge. Debris such as floating trees may become an obstacle.

### FLOW MONITORING

Smith River flow rates are monitored at the Jed Smith Gage Station, located on the Mainstern about 3/4 mile south of Tyron Bridge that crosses the South Fork of Smith River east of Hiouchi. Anyone may obtain current flow rates on the Internet at http://h2o.usgs.gov/realtime.html which provides information on northern California rivers. The monitoring site for the Smith River is 11532500. It will give flow rates and river stage (in feet) at the Jed Smith Gage. Consult Whitewater of the Smith River Watershed (a guide to whitewater recreation on

Smith River), the chart below, or call (707)457-3131 to interpret this information for the section of white water you wish to experience. Call the above number for flow conditions on specific runs as well.

# RIVER SAFETY

- In case of emergency call 9-1-1. The Sheriff's Office is responsible for organizing search and rescue operations. They may be reached at 9-1-1 or 464-4191.
- A Be aware of the remote nature of many sections of the river. Many of the runs on the Smith River pass through very steep terrain with no road access. Cellular telephones may not function properly. Boaters must realize that in an emergency, rescue efforts will be difficult.
- ▲ Monitor the river level starting several days before your trip to determine flow patterns. Remember, the Smith River is not controlled by dams and is subject to significant increases and decreases in flow rate. The river has been known to triple its flow rate in an eight-hour period.
- ▲ Monitor weather forecasts for the area (especially extended forecasts) to determine predicted precipitation patterns and projected snow levels.
- ▲ Call ahead for an update on road conditions if you are planning a trip on remote streams.
- ▲ Tell a responsible person where you are going, the number in your group, and when you expect to return so they can notify authorities if you are late. But be sure to let them know when you have returned.
- Allow ample time to travel to the put-in and get to the take-out before dark. Winter days are short. Average drive time to remote put-ins from Gasquet is 1.5 hours.
- Know your ability. Have a realistic appraisal of your skill level. Do not attempt to boat water beyond your ability. Just because someone has navigated a rapid or stream does not necessarily mean anyone can or should. If you are unsure of your skills, it is strongly recommended that you take the river trip with an experienced whitewater
- Always wear safety gear. Moving water can be dangerous. Always wear a whitewater helmet and a properly secured U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket designed for use in white water.
- When in Doubt Scout! Do not let the view from above fool you. Rapids are usually harder and steeper than they appear from the road or trail. When boating unfamiliar water, it is a good idea to scout blind turns in the river and rapids that are not completely visible from upstream. short portage is always better than a long swim.
- A Be prepared. Use equipment suited for the stream and in good condition. Always carry rescue equipment such as throw ropes, prussic loops, and carabineers. Carry boat repair material. When boating remote streams, include spare paddles or oars and bivouac items such as waterproof matches, food, and an emergency shelter.

- ▲ Never boat alone.
- ▲ Stay alert for unexpected obstacles: brush, fallen trees, trees spanning the stream, submerged wood, rock sieves, or anything else that allows water to flow through or by, but pins boats and boaters. Water pressure against anything trapped in this manner is overwhelming and can make rescue difficult or impossible.
- ▲ Cold water: Hypothermia can quickly diminish your strength along with your will and ability to save yourself. When boating in cold water, it is critical to wear proper insulating clothing along with a wet suit or a dry suit.
- ▲ High water: The power of the water and the difficulty of rescue increase tremendously as flow rate increases. Pools between rapids may disappear. Eddies may be very turbulent. Hydraulics are very strong. Floating debris may be an obstacle. Take extra precautions when boating streams at high flow.
- Low water: Pools remain deep, but rapids become steeper and shallower as water flow diminishes. Some rapids become unnavigable. Even though the power of the water may appear minimal, it remains constant. With little water to provide cushion on rocks, a swim may cause
- ▲ Whitewater boating is an "assumed risk" activity. You as a boater are responsible for your own actions and safety and for determining when and where to float.

# RIVER ETIQUETTE

- ▲ Be discreet when changing in/out of boating
- Be courteous to other visitors enjoying the river.
- ▲ When encountering an angler, gain their attention. Then let the angler determine the best side of the river for you to take to avoid their fishing line. If that's not possible, try to pass by along the far bank or whatever would cause the least disturbance.
- A Help keep the river as pristine as possible by keeping your impact minimal. Bury all human waste 6-8" deep and at least 100 feet from any water source. Pack out your toilet paper. Do all washing at least 100 feet from any water source.
- A Pack it in, pack it out! Never leave or bury your

# RIVER ACCESS

Refer to the Smith River National Recreation Area map for routes to specific river access spots shown below or contact the NRA Visitor Center. Also check road conditions and closure status with the Visitor Center prior to entering the back country. Some areas within the watershed are privately owned, with roads that are closed to public use. Most of these closed areas are posted by the owners; please respect their rights by not trespassing. Some river access areas are privately owned with public use historically allowed. Be appreciative of the use of these areas by keeping your presence and impact minimal.

mile

mile

15.3

0.9

6.1

4.1

3.9

15.9

6.5

5.3

6.1

9.9

5.6

3.4

12.5

Coastline

Road

---- Park Boundary

mmmmm State Boundary

Boat Launch

River Access

Private Lands - not all private land is mapped

National Forest Campground

National Recreation Area Visitor Center

seek current information regarding use

Remote River Access requiring 4-WD or walk-in;

4-5

2-3

2-3

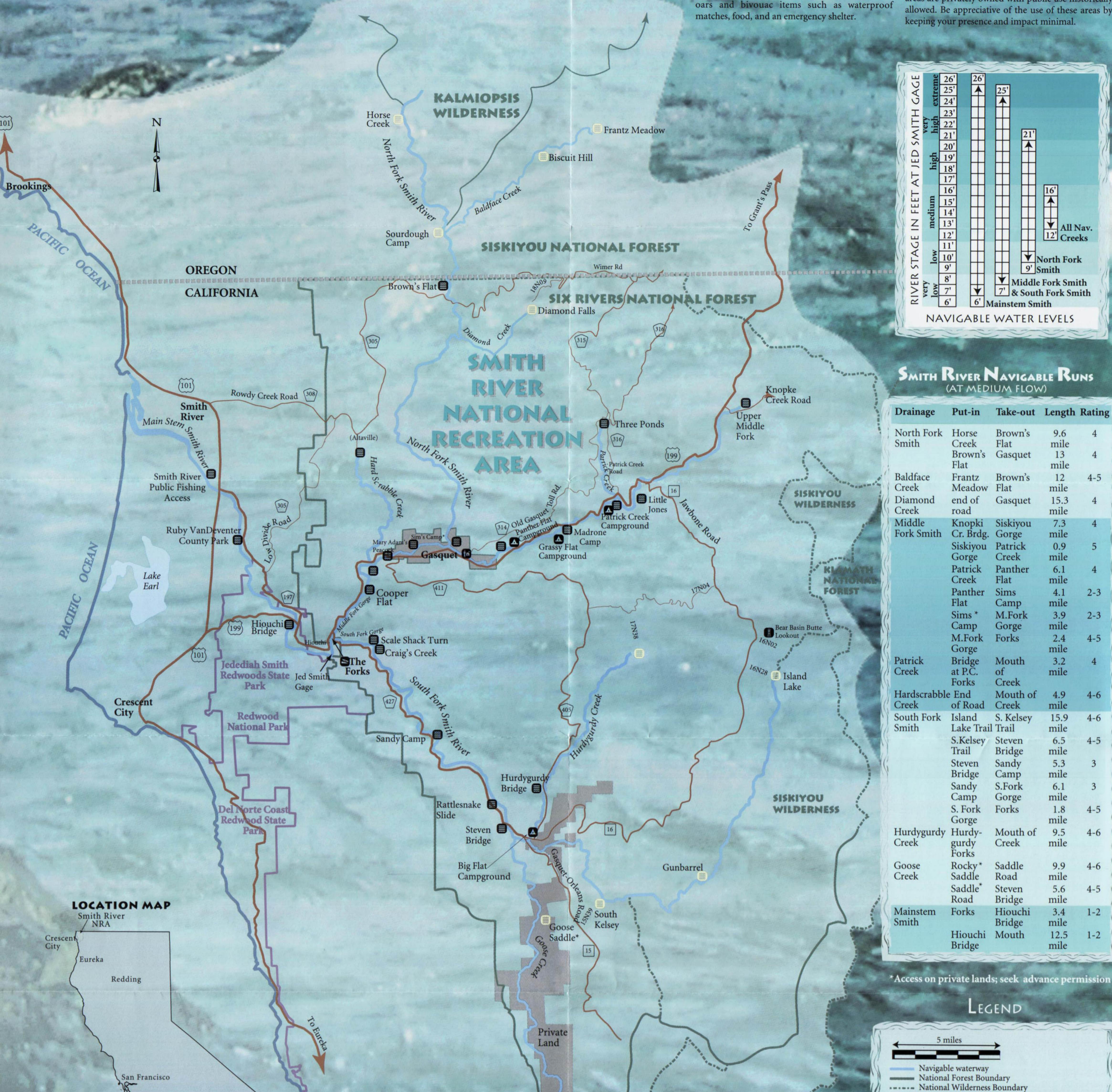
4-5

4-5

4-5

4-5

1-2



Rocky\*

Property Lines are based on the best available

guaranteed. In addition, these boundaries may be

information; however, accuracy cannot be

subject to change.

Saddle

SISKIYOU

WILDERNESS