

# Salmon Watch<sup>®</sup>

## CLACKAMAS RIVER/RIPPLEBROOK

Riverside Campground in Mt Hood National Forest

**Allow approximately 2 hours driving time from downtown Portland.**

### **DIRECTIONS:**

From Portland, take Interstate 205 South to Exit #12, Estacada/Mt. Hood, and turn right onto Highway 212/224. Proceed 3.2 miles through Clackamas to the Rock Creek junction, where 212/224 splits. Turn right onto Highway 224, following the signs to Estacada. Drive through Estacada and continue 26 miles toward the Ripplebrook Ranger Station. Continue past the Ranger Station to the Y in the road and turn right onto NF Road 46 following the signs for Detroit and Bagby Hot Springs. Go past Ripplebrook and Rainbow campgrounds. You will see a sign for Riverside Trailhead on the left.

### **If you're group does NOT have a key:**

The bus can park at the Riverside Trailhead parking area which is on the right directly across from the Riverside Trailhead sign. Trail passes, which are available from The Freshwater Trust office, are required at the trailhead. From the parking area, follow the trail by the sign post & take a left at trail #723 to hike down to the beach & to the overlook. The overlook has some safety issues for large groups, such as a sheer drop off to the river.

### **If you're group does have a key:**

Continue past the sign for Riverside Trailhead and NF Road 4645 for just over 1 mile on NF Road 46. Turn right into Riverside Campground (your group should make arrangements with the Ripplebrook Forest Service fish biologist for a key to the campground). There is a turn around in the campground for the bus & restrooms for the group. Follow the campground road to the loop near site #15 (additional restrooms are at the loop). Take the trailhead near site #15 and head downstream about a ¼ mile to a rocky beach and open area for your field trip stations.

**NOTE #1:** Teachers can arrange for a side trip to the North Fork Fish Trap located at the Faraday Diversion Dam, which is less than a mile out of Estacada. When in season, fish sorting can be viewed between 9:00 and 10:00 AM. You may be able to coordinate with your fish biologist to get a carcass from the dam to be used for the fish biology station at your site.

**NOTE #2:** The drive up the Clackamas River Highway gives students a great chance to understand the magnitude of the salmon's journey since they can view the river almost the entire way. They can see the three dams, the white water, the curves in the river and the lengthy distance of their migration. After the Three Lynx Dam, they can see the new road and large scale re-vegetation work done because of the 1996 Flood. These are all good opportunities for discussion about what affect these things have on fish. Just before the Ranger Station on the left side there are some wonderful wetlands, which can lead to a discussion about the influence of wetlands and side channels as refuge resting and rearing for fish.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Clackamas River Watershed drains more than 940 square miles, or 600,700 acres. For more than half its 83 mile length, the river flows through forested areas over rugged terrain. The lower reaches flow through agricultural areas and then densely developed areas.

The Clackamas River begins on the slopes of Olallie Butte, a High Cascade volcano. The river flows 82.7 miles from its headwaters (elevation 6,000 feet) to its confluence with the Willamette River near Gladstone and Oregon City (elevation 12 feet). The river has three major tributary streams, the North and Oak Grove Forks, and the Collawash River.

There are three dams on the river, beginning with River Mill Dam at river mile 23, which is considered to be the dividing line between the upper and lower river. Though all dams on the main stem have fish bypass facilities, there is high mortality rate associated with all of them, especially for juvenile fish during their downstream migration.

There are two salmon hatcheries on the river, at McIver State Park and on Eagle Creek, which produce both salmon and steelhead for the Clackamas and for other rivers in the Columbia system.

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED RESOURCE:** Available from Metro Regional Services for \$25: [The Clackamas River Watershed Atlas](#). Published in December 1997, this resource has everything you'd ever want to know about the Clackamas. Outstanding GIS maps, graphs, charts, etc. Call 797-1742 or visit [www.metro-region.org](http://www.metro-region.org) for more information. Pick one up from Metro's Data Resource Center at 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, OR 97232.

## **SALMON VIEWING:**

This is an excellent site for salmon viewing if the water levels are right and you are willing to walk a bit. From the campground and field station site, head downstream on the trail. You will head uphill near the road where you can begin looking for fish. There will also be another beach as you come down the trail on the other side of the hill. This can be a nice spot for lunch.

## **MACROINVERTEBRATES & WATER QUALITY**

This is an excellent site for aquatic macroinvertebrate sampling. The gravels at the first beach area should be clear of most salmon redds. Water testing can take place here as well.

## **NATURE HIKE/RIPARIAN STUDY**

The Riverside Trail, in both directions offers excellent diversity of plants and animals. This is a great place to explore, track and study.

## **MEDICAL FACILITIES IN THE AREA:**

The Ripplebrook Ranger Station does have an Emergency Unit that will respond to a 911 call. If you do not have a cell phone, have someone drive to the Ranger Station to have their medical team sent.