

Salmon Watch®

WATERBOARD PARK SALMON WATCH SITE

DIRECTIONS:

Take state highway 126 west from Eugene/Springfield and follow along the McKenzie River. Several miles past the Leaburg Power Plant and the McKenzie Hatchery you will reach Leaburg Dam and Waterboard Park. You will have access to riparian areas at the park.

BACKGROUND:

Clear Lake serves as the headwaters of the McKenzie River. It is believed that the river's original headwaters were located several miles to the northeast, close to the Cascade crest. However, 3,000 years ago volcanic activity in the form of lava flows from Sand Mt. dammed the McKenzie and created the lake.

The McKenzie River is 89 miles long, and is followed for most of its length by highway 126. Major tributaries include the Smith River, Blue River, Mohawk River, and the South Fork of the McKenzie River. The McKenzie is home to several species of fish, including summer steelhead, spring Chinook, bull trout, and a native McKenzie rainbow trout also known as redbreast trout.

There are three major dams found on the McKenzie: the Carmen Dam, the Trail Bridge Dam, and the Leaburg Dam. At the Carmen Reservoir, water from the McKenzie River is collected and diverted 2 miles underground to Smith Reservoir, where it is then diverted to the Trail Bridge Reservoir power plant. Just downstream from the Trail Bridge Dam is an artificial spawning channel that was installed to allow passage for Chinook salmon. A dam was also constructed on the South Fork of the McKenzie in order to form Cougar Reservoir.

The McKenzie Fish Hatchery, located near the Leaburg Dam, raises both trout and salmon for release into the McKenzie River.

REFERENCES:

Fishing in Oregon, 8th Edition by Madelynne Diness Sheehan and Dan Casali. 1995. Flying Pencil Publications. Portland, Oregon.

"McKenzie River National Recreation Trail, Willamette National Forest", a brochure by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service. 1992. U.S. Government Printing Office.