





LEWIS RIVER-VANCOUVER LAKE WATER TRAIL

PADDLING GUIDE



WWW.VANCLARKPARKS-REC.ORG

VANCOUVER-CLARK
PARKS &
Recreation



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OVERVIEW MAP SHOWING ALL ROUTES

The 32 river miles in this water trail include Vancouver Lake (more than 5 miles to circumnavigate), the full extent of Lake River (~11.5 miles), a section of the Columbia River along the west side of Bachelor Island (~4 miles), the Bachelor Island Slough and the confluences of the Lewis and Lake Rivers (2.6 miles), upriver on the East Fork of the Lewis River to La Center (~3.25 miles), and upriver on the North Fork of the Lewis River to Woodland (6.5 miles).





WELCOME

Welcome to your Lewis River-Vancouver Lake Water Trail! This guide provides information to make your paddling trip safer, more enjoyable and less harmful to our natural resources.

Located in southwest Washington, along the Columbia River, Clark County offers abundant ways to enjoy the great outdoors. The Lewis River-Vancouver Lake Water Trail features sites of historic significance, one National Wildlife Refuge (Ridgefield), two state wildlife areas (Shillapoo and Two Forks), a state park (Paradise Point) and hundreds of acres of other public and private conservation lands allowing ample opportunities for wildlife viewing.

Water trails help to identify appropriate routes along existing stretches of river and shorelines that allow small water craft such as canoes, kayaks, rafts and stand-up paddleboards access to recreational, scenic and cultural resources. This guide provides information about publicly-accessible areas and offers helpful hints about safety and river etiquette.

This water trail guide is intended to enhance recreational opportunities for paddlers of all abilities by providing river mileage, waterway conditions and trip planning details.

Maps are also available on the Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation website **www.cityofvancouver.us/parks-recreation/parks_trails/trails/watertrail.asp** and the guide is also available on the Lower Columbia Estuary partnership website: **www.estuarypartnership.org**.

Enjoy the view from the water!

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Lewis River-Vancouver Lake Water Trail covers much of the western boundaries of Clark County, Washington; touches the southern edge of Cowlitz County in Woodland, Washington; and reaches into the borders of La Center, Ridgefield and Vancouver.

This guide is oriented from north to south, traveling from the North Fork of the Lewis River in Woodland to the southern shore of Vancouver Lake in Vancouver, Washington. Be aware that river currents are strongly influenced by both wind and tidal conditions, and can combine to negate the strength of the river current.

Existing public boat ramps or shore launch sites are located in a number of places. This water trail extends along the North Fork of the Lewis River from the informal shore launch beside the bridge crossing at Hayes Road in Woodland and the East Fork Lewis River from launch sites at the City of La Center Bridge to the south end of Vancouver Lake where an unpaved boat launch allows access from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) lands at the end of La Frambois Road in Vancouver.

The maps are divided into eight sections containing over four river miles in each section and indicating river miles, paved boat ramps and shore launch sites. Shore launches have highly variable conditions in surfacing, distance to vehicle load/unload, parking, slopes and roughness, and amenities such as drinking water and restrooms, all of which may affect ease of accessibility and convenience.

Portions of the water trail are also available for boating and fishing. To avoid congestion at boat ramps, launch from the shore, when appropriate.

Before setting out, check tidal charts that influence direction of current on Lake River as this will affect paddling speed, effort needed and time to travel between launch sites.

www.tidespy.com

www.west-fly-fishing.com

PADDLING SAFETY

While waterways provide a variety of recreational opportunities, water currents, debris, side channels, weather and other factors can present risks. Plan ahead and be prepared to safely enjoy your paddling experience.

Paddle Checklist

- ☐ Prepare a float plan **www.floatplancentral.org**. Inform others of your trip and expected return time.
- ☐ Wear a properly-fitted personal flotation device (PFD) with a whistle. Youth 12 years or younger are required to wear a PFD by state statute.
- ☐ Do not paddle alone.
- ☐ Learn about your route in advance, especially potential hazards and emergency access.
- ☐ Know the weather forecast. If you experience sudden temperature drops, increasing and volatile winds or darkening clouds, get off the water.
- ☐ Review tidal charts ahead of time. High water conditions can leave launch sites underwater without access. Low water conditions during summer and low tide can require portaging (walking/carrying).
- ☐ Don't depend on your cell phone. Long stretches of the water trail have no cell phone coverage.
- ☐ Dress for variable weather conditions, including air and water temperature.
- ☐ Examine launch/landing areas carefully to note water depths, uneven surfaces, currents and hazards.
- ☐ Carry food and water adequate for your trip length.
- ☐ Maintain distance between your boat and objects in the water, including motor boats, which may cause waves that could capsize a canoe or kayak.
- ☐ Position your boat perpendicular to an approaching wake.
- ☐ Be able to effectively steer and propel your boat.
- ☐ Never float or paddle over a fallen tree or other obstruction.
- ☐ Carry proper safety and first aid equipment.
- ☐ Learn how to self-rescue in the event of capsize.
- ☐ Research and plan ahead to be prepared.

ETIQUETTE

Appropriate, low-impact use of the water trail is the responsibility of all who use this natural resource and will ensure these waterways stay beautiful and healthy.

On your travels, be considerate of others. Give space to those who are fishing or hunting and don't use the boat ramp when launching or taking out during busy fishing seasons if other space is available.

Leave No Trace

When enjoying the Water Trail, respect sensitive habitats and do not alter your surroundings. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you found them. Secure trash to your boat so it does not blow into the water. Reserve restroom breaks for designated sites. Campsites and public lands along the trail have a range of amenities - study your maps for these locations. Where campfires are permitted, use designated fire rings. Take out what you brought in, including trash, if proper receptacles are unavailable. Make your best effort to leave the area as if people had not been there at all. Learn more at Leave No Trace www.wwta.org/Int/principles.asp.

Encountering Wildlife

Quietly view wildlife, giving a wide berth to the birds and animals you encounter. A small pair of binoculars can help you maintain a safe distance while viewing. Do not disturb stranded or wounded animals.

Respect Private Property

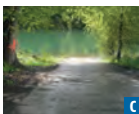
The river is open for recreation but lands along the shore may be private or restricted wildlife refuge lands. Respect private property and posted lands and do not trespass.

CREDIT RIDGEFIELD KAYAK



NORTH FORK LEWIS RIVER: WOODLAND SECTION

The North Fork Lewis River completes its final miles flowing south through Woodland before joining the East Fork to form the main stem of the river. Tidal influences from the Columbia River can extend upstream as far as mile 7 on the North Fork Lewis River. Paddlers should be cautious around the support structures of the Hayes Road and Interstate 5 bridges.



A HAYES ROAD BRIDGE SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public road
right-of-way

Signage: Not visible
from road

Launch: Steep slope, eroded

Parking: Right-of way,
gravel, 12 spaces

Restroom: None

Fees: None

C MARTIN WDFW BOAT RAMP

Ownership: Public, State

Signage: Not visible
from road

Launch: Paved ramp

Parking: Gravel lot,
50+ spaces

Restroom: Vault toilet

Fees: Discover Pass required
\$10/daily, \$30/annual

B PEKIN FERRY INLAND NAVIGATION BOAT RAMP

Ownership: Private

Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Boat ramp, no fee,
paved

Parking: Paved, 10+ spaces

Restroom: Portable toilet

Fees: Parking \$5/day or
\$125/annual

Amenities: Camping,
playground, swim beach

D PARADISE POINT STATE PARK SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public, State

Signage: Not visible
from road

Launch: Gravel

Parking: Gravel lot

Restroom: Vault toilet

Fees: Discover Pass required
\$10/daily or \$30/annual

Amenities: Campground,
picnicking, showers,
disk golf



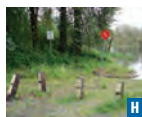
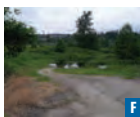
NORTH FORK LEWIS RIVER: WOODLAND SECTION

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

EAST FORK LEWIS RIVER: LA CENTER SECTION

This stretch of the lower East Fork Lewis River flows through state and county conservation lands. From La Center, the natural shoreline dominates the landscape until the intrusion of the Interstate 5 bridge that looms above the Paradise Point State Park shore launch. Just beyond the bridge, the Two Forks Wildlife Area provides more wildlife watching opportunities before the East Fork joins with the North Fork to become the Lewis River for its last 3.5 miles to the Columbia River.

With numerous access sites, coordinating paddling trips as a one-way shuttle is relatively easy. A leisurely winter paddle trip from La Center to Pekin Ferry should take about 1.25 hours.



E LA CENTER SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Gravel, shore access

Parking: Gravel, 4 spaces
Paved at La Center Bottoms

Restroom: At La Center Bottoms

Fees: None

F POLLOCK ROAD SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Gravel, shore access

Parking: None, gravel right-of-way

Restroom: None

Fees: None

G PEKIN FERRY INLAND NAVIGATION BOAT RAMP

Ownership: Private

Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Boat ramp, paved

Parking: Paved, 10+ spaces

Restroom: Portable toilet

Fees: Parking \$5/day or \$125/annual

Amenities: Camping, playground, swim beach

H CD HALE ROAD SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public road right-of-way

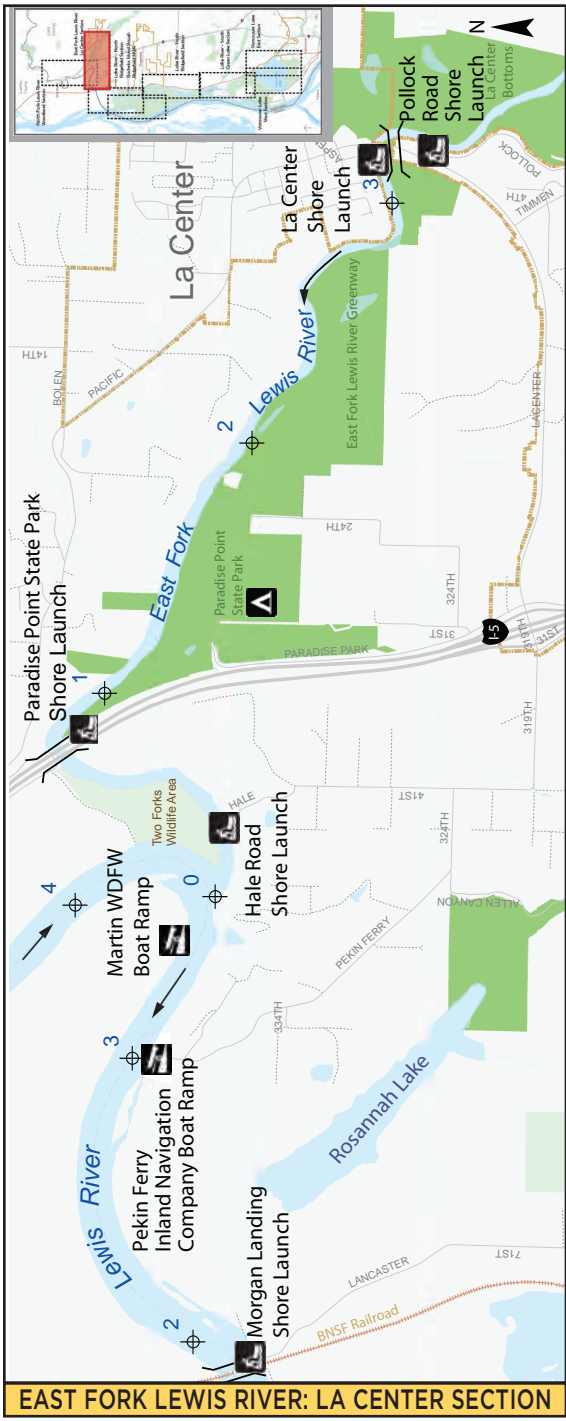
Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Gravel shoreline, rough surface

Parking: Gravel, limited space

Restroom: None

Fees: None



EAST FORK LEWIS RIVER: LA CENTER SECTION



LAKE RIVER: NORTH RIDGEFIELD SECTION

The confluences of the Lewis River and Lake River with the Columbia have strong currents and tidal changes that should keep paddlers alert and close to the shore. Watch for submerged pilings and sandbars. Since Morgan Landing shore launch has no parking, this unimproved access to the Lewis River should be used only as a drop-off or pick-up location.

Rich in wildlife and cultural history, osprey and bald eagles abound. Lewis and Clark campsite is about 1.9 miles downstream from Ridgefield Marina boat ramp on river right, directly across from entrance to Bachelor Slough. Due to heavy motorized boat traffic, paddlers should hug the shoreline and know how to handle boat wake and self-rescue in case of capsizes.

Note: Do not enter Gee Creek (just outside the mouth of Lake River); this is a protected wildlife habitat and borders private property. For more details, go to Friends of Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge.

www.ridgefieldfriends.org.

MORGAN LANDING SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Primitive, abrupt edge at end of pavement; difficult

Parking: Prohibited

Restroom: None

Fees: None

Notes:

- Morgan Street right-of-way, private property on both sides

DIVISION STREET/RIDGEFIELD SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Gravel ramp

Parking: Gravel, road shoulder, 10 spaces

Restroom: Portable toilet

Fees: Launch \$6/day or \$20 season pass; obtain permit at Mill St. boat ramp site

Notes:

- Access along Lake River on alignment of Division Street, west of Railroad Avenue
- Waterfront redevelopment in process, changes to access may occur

MILL STREET/RIDGEFIELD BOAT RAMP

Ownership: Public

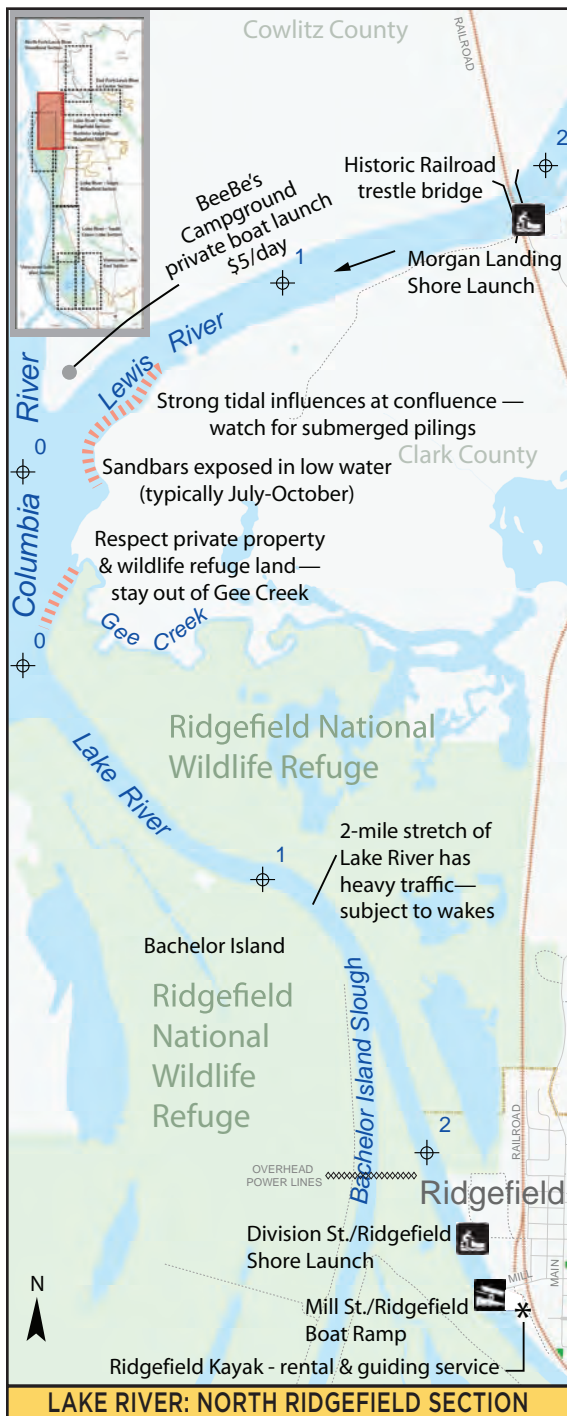
Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Boat ramp, paved

Parking: Paved, 20 spaces

Restroom: Flush toilet

Fees: Launch \$6/day or \$20 season pass



BACHELOR ISLAND SLOUGH/RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The paddle trip around Bachelor Island can be highly variable due to changing water levels and the dynamic nature of the Columbia River. The Columbia is an active shipping channel where paddlers should stay far from large vessels. Wildlife viewing is more successful along the shores.

Use care in seasons of high water not to unintentionally enter the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, a protected shoreline, and disturb the wildlife. During hunting season (October–January), this is a recommended paddle since waterfowl hunting is prohibited in the Slough. River otters have been seen along the shoreline and sandhill cranes can sometimes be seen and heard in later September and October.

From Ridgefield Marina, the Bachelor Island Loop may be paddled clockwise or counter-clockwise. The non-vegetated beach (exposed at low water) of Bachelor Island is administered by Washington Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) and open to the public; the Refuge portions are signed and closed to the public.

July–October: low tide/water may require portage between Bachelor Slough and the Columbia, and just beyond the bridge connecting the Refuge’s River “S” and Bachelor Island units.

*Bachelor Island Loop Duration: 5–6 hours (10 miles)
Best paddled in clockwise direction.*

DIVISION STREET/ RIDGEFIELD SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Gravel ramp

Parking: Gravel, road shoulder, 10 spaces

Restroom: Portable toilet

Fees: Launch \$6/day or \$20 season pass; obtain permit at Mill St. boat ramp site

Notes:

- Access along Lake River on alignment of Division Street, west of Railroad Avenue

- Waterfront redevelopment in process, changes to access may occur

MILL STREET/ RIDGEFIELD BOAT RAMP

Ownership: Public

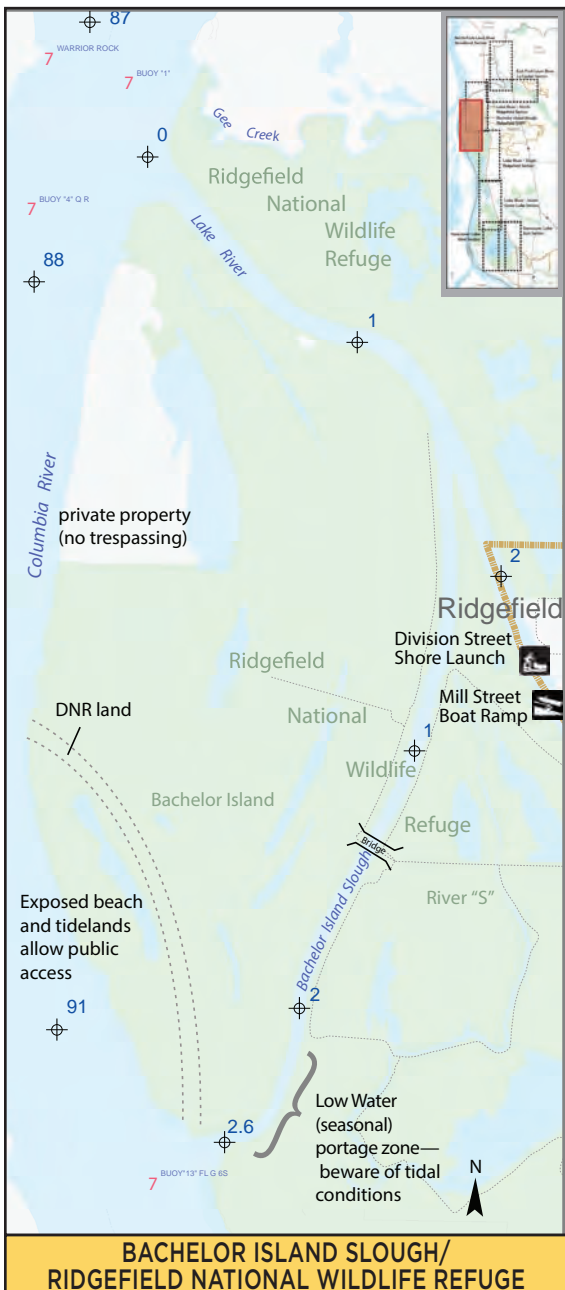
Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Boat ramp, paved

Parking: Paved, 20 spaces

Restroom: Flush toilet

Fees: Launch \$6/day or \$20 season pass



LAKE RIVER: SOUTH RIDGEFIELD SECTION

An 8.5 mile stretch of Lake River Ridgefield to Felida is quiet with little boat traffic. The best way to approach this paddle is to start at either Ridgefield or the Felida Moorage. Either launch location makes for a very long trip if you plan to go end-to-end. You may prefer to start at either end and paddle out-and-back. This section is heavily affected by tides and wind and can be a torturous trip against the tide and into the wind.

Less than a mile south of the Ridgefield Boat Launch, Lake River passes beneath the bridge connecting the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Unit “S” to the mainland. Herons, egrets and other waterfowl are frequent along this section of river. Watch for bald eagles, osprey and otters.



I DIVISION STREET/ RIDGEFIELD SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Gravel ramp

Parking: Gravel, road shoulder, 10 spaces

Restroom: Portable toilet

Fees: Launch \$6/day or \$20 season pass; obtain permit at Mill St. boat ramp site

Notes:

- Access along Lake River on alignment of Division Street, west of Railroad Avenue
- Waterfront redevelopment in process, changes to access may occur

J MILL STREET/ RIDGEFIELD BOAT RAMP

Ownership: Public

Signage: Visible from road

Launch: Boat ramp, paved

Parking: Paved, 20 spaces

Restroom: Flush toilet

Fees: Launch \$6/day or \$20 season pass

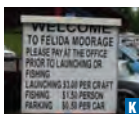


LAKE RIVER: SOUTH GREEN LAKE SECTION

Lake River, which connects Vancouver Lake to the Columbia River near Ridgefield, can flow in or out depending on tidal cycles and water levels in the lake relative to the Columbia River. Clark County Code restricts motorboat use on the lake to slow-no wake.

This private launch in a houseboat community was recently improved and lends itself wonderfully for kayak launching. You can paddle past the boathouses, going north to begin your journey up Lake River or head south to explore the shallow waters of Vancouver Lake.

Once you pass the boathouses, keep a sharp eye out for the mouth of Salmon Creek which, when the water is high enough, makes for a great side trip.



K FELIDA MOORAGE BOAT RAMP/NW 122ND STREET

Ownership: Private

Signage: Not visible
from road

Launch: Boat ramp,
fee, paved

Parking: Gravel, 30 spaces

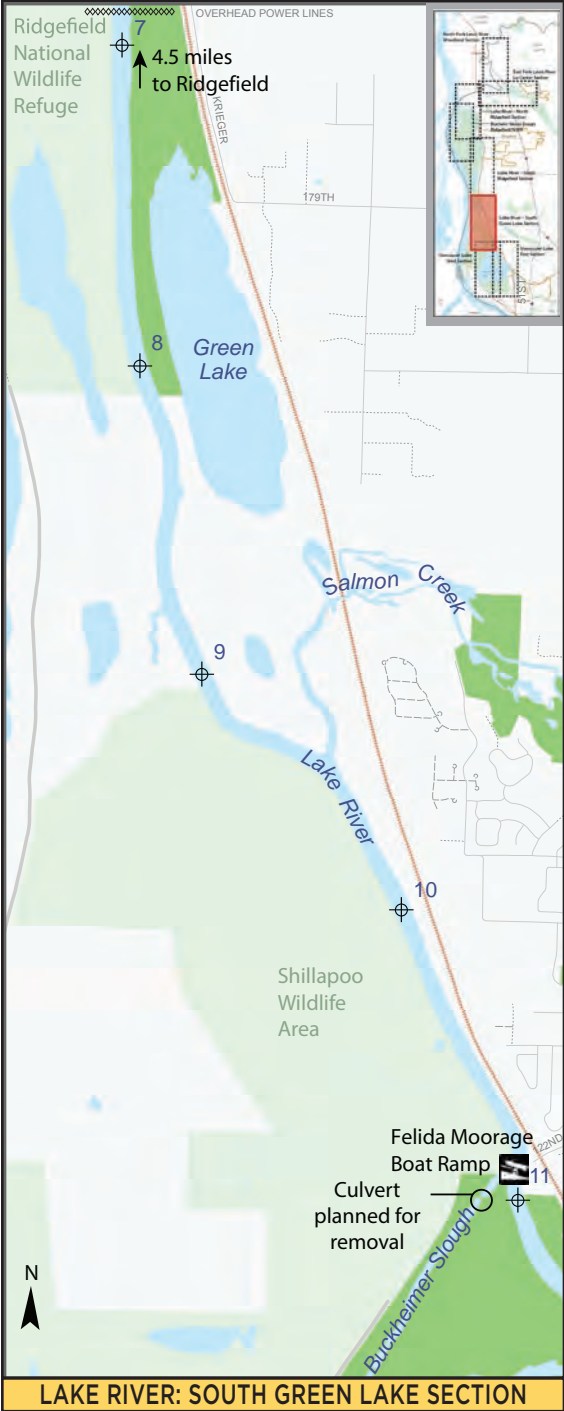
Restroom: Flush toilet

Fees: Parking \$.50/vehicle,
\$3/boat launch per person

Amenities: Camping
(tent and RV)

Note:

- Houseboat community
along Lake River just north
of Vancouver Lake



LAKE RIVER: SOUTH GREEN LAKE SECTION



VANCOUVER LAKE: WEST SECTION

Vancouver Lake, Clark County's largest natural lake, has a surface area of approximately 2,300 acres that varies with seasonal changes. Shoreline is seven miles and the lake's maximum width is two miles. Lake depth is three to 15 feet.

Paddling on the open water can be highly variable with weather conditions liable to change rather quickly. Paddling close to shore will add more visibility for potential bird watching and other wildlife encounters. Bald eagles are frequent visitors to the Lake.

Summer: Low water conditions in the Lake can lead to algae blooms, resulting in unsafe swimming conditions. Be aware of water quality conditions before enjoying recreational opportunities.

Vancouver Lake Park: A 234-acre day-use park on the southwest shore of Vancouver Lake is a great place to stage or rest as part of a paddle trip. Canoes and kayaks can be launched from the beach.

The WDFW boat launch is on the south shore of the Lake at the end of La Frambois Road.



L VANCOUVER LAKE PARK SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Shore, sand

Parking: Paved, fee, 50 spaces

Restroom: Flush toilet

Fees: Parking \$3/day/car, \$6/car/truck & trailer, \$8/bus, \$40 annual pass

Amenities: Sandy swim beach, shower

Note: "No boat access" sign is for motorized boats. Hand-carry non-motorized boats from vehicles in the parking area.



M VANCOUVER LAKE WDFW SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Unimproved boat ramp

Parking: Gravel

Restroom: None

Fees: Discover Pass \$30/yr or fishing/hunting license required

Notes:

- Southern end of Vancouver Lake, La Frambois Rd. leads through Shillapoo Wildlife Area to shallow waters of the Lake.
- Shore launch conditions vary with lake levels.

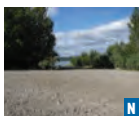


0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

VANCOUVER LAKE: EAST SECTION

Most of the land along the shores of Vancouver Lake is conserved for wildlife habitat, especially for migratory waterfowl. The city, county and partner agencies have helped restore extensive wetlands; portions of the lowlands are leased for farming.

The WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) property provides a launch at the end of La Frambois Road.



N VANCOUVER LAKE WDFW SHORE LAUNCH

Ownership: Public

Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Unimproved boat ramp

Parking: None

Restroom: None

Fees: Discover Pass \$30/yr or fishing/hunting license required

Notes:

- Southern end of Vancouver Lake, La Frambois Rd. leads through Shillapoo Wildlife Area to shallow waters of the Lake.
- Shore launch conditions vary with lake levels.

O FELIDA MOORAGE BOAT RAMP/NW 122ND STREET

Ownership: Private

Signage: Not visible from road

Launch: Boat ramp, fee, paved

Parking: Gravel, 30 spaces

Restroom: Flush toilet

Fees: Parking \$.50/vehicle, \$3/boat launch

Note:

- Houseboat community along Lake River just north of Vancouver Lake



GEAR CHECKLIST

Always wear a life jacket with a whistle. In Washington, children 12 years and younger are required by law to wear life jackets when in boats that are underway.

- ☐ Personal flotation device
- ☐ Extra paddle & leash
- ☐ Non-cotton clothes
- ☐ Drinking water/food
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Maps/compass/GPS
- ☐ Flashlight/headlamp/extra batteries
- ☐ Rope or bungee cords
- ☐ Bailer or bilge pump
- ☐ Pocket knife or multi-tool
- ☐ Sunscreen & lip balm
- ☐ Hat with brim
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Extra ropes
- ☐ Dry bags
- ☐ Matches/lighter in waterproof container
- ☐ Whistle
- ☐ Cell phone (coverage is often unreliable)
- ☐ Binoculars
- ☐ Emergency Blanket



RESOURCES

EMERGENCIES **Call 9-1-1**

RIVER FLOW/TIDAL INFORMATION

waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/rt

www.west-fly-fishing.com

Tide Predictions **www.saltwatertides.com**

Tides **www.tidespy.com**

PERSONAL FLOAT PLAN

www.wwta.org/Int/Float%20Plan.pdf

WEATHER

Local Weather **www.weather.yahoo.com**

Weather Radio All Hazards **www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr**

Recorded Weather Forecasts (NOAA) **503-261-9246**

Wind Report/Buoys **www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/buoys.php**

BOATER INFORMATION

American Canoe Association **www.americancanoe.org**

Washington Kayak Club **www.washingtonkayakclub.org**

Washington Water Trails Association **www.wwta.org**

Canoe & Kayak Resources **www.paddling.net**

Lower Columbia River Water Trail

www.columbiawatertrail.org

Boating Handbook

www.boat-ed.com/washington/handbook/index.html

U.S. Coast Guard **www.uscgboating.org**

OTHER

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

www.ridgefieldfriends.org

www.fws.gov/ridgefieldrefuges/complex/

INSTRUCTION/TOURS & RETAIL/RENTALS

Checklists, Classes and Videos – REI **www.rei.com**

Rentals & Guided Paddling Excursions

www.ridgefieldkayak.com

CAMPING

Pekin Ferry Inland Navigation Company **www.pekinferry.com**

Washington State Parks **www.parks.wa.gov**

(see Paradise Point State Park)

Felida Moorage **local.yahoo.com/info-22274862-**

felida-moorage-marine-service-vancouver

Overnight camping is not allowed at parks owned by Clark County.

CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Generous donations from the Parks Foundation of Clark County and Tidewater Barge Lines made development and printing of this guide possible. Thank you!



Partners with Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation Department and the National Park Service who contributed to the content for this water trail guide include: Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, Ridgefield Kayak, Parks Foundation of Clark County, Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Sierra Club Loo Wit Group, Pekin Ferry Inland Navigation Company and additional volunteers.

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) is a community assistance arm of the National Park Service. Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation received a RTCA technical assistance grant to help develop a plan for Clark County's first official water trail along 32 miles of waterways between Woodland and Vancouver Lake. This paddling guide is one outcome from the water trail plan.

Help support your waterways, parks and recreation areas with a donation to the Parks Foundation of Clark County. Go to **www.parksfoundation.us** for information.



NOTES

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue dashed lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



VANCOUVER-CLARK PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT (VCPRD)

415 W. 6th Street, P.O. Box 1995, Vancouver, WA 98668-1995

360-487-8320

www.vanclarkparks-rec.org

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE - PACIFIC WEST REGION

Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA-PNW)

360-816-6232

www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca

PARKS FOUNDATION OF CLARK COUNTY

415 W. 6th Street, P.O. Box 61424, Vancouver, WA 98666

360-487-8370

www.parksfoundation.us

