

GPFF - Lower Owyhee, 10-14 August, 2023 (Thu-Mon) - Fishmaster Rich Miller, (home email) rich@ski.org, (home phone) 510-525-8006. (Updated 11/27/2022).

RENDEZVOUS AND CAMPING

Thursday evening at the Owyhee Dam (Seasonal) Bridge that crosses the Owyhee and leads to the Owyhee Dam Park and the dam administrative office complex. Take the last turn off Owyhee Lake Road before the road climbs up to the top of the dam. There should be a sign to the bridge and park.

I actually plan to camp at the right bank informal campground (N43.6549292,W117.2541579) just downstream of the bridge, at the second dirt turn off Owyhee Lake Road below the turnoff to the bridge. There is a prominent aerial carriage cable crossing of the river at this place.

There are toilets and drinking water at the Dam Park. The park has 6 formal campsites but they are not reservable, and so unlikely to be available. A much bigger formal campground is located on the lake a number of miles above the dam, but I have not found it worth the extra driving. Motel accommodations are available downriver in some of the nearby towns, perhaps half an hour away.

The drive from Berkeley is 640 miles via Winnemucca (I-80 to US-95), with Google Maps estimating 10 hours driving. It always takes me more time. Take US-95 to Homedale, then left onto state 201, continuing through Adrian. Shortly beyond, 201 becomes Succor Creek Hwy. Turn left off the highway onto Overstreet Road. Overstreet goes straight west for a while, then starts curving and eventually crosses the Owyhee River. Just past the crossing, Overstreet T's with Owyhee Lake Road. Turn left (south) onto Owyhee Lake and follow it (about 15 miles) to the Dam Park turnoff.

Campground elevation is 2350'. Even though daytime air temperatures will often be in the 90's or 100's, the water remains very cold. Unless you wear waders you will not be able fish for very long.

GPFF strongly encourages carpooling. Email rich@ski.org to coordinate rides.

MAPS, BOOKS, ETC

Click for the [Google Map](#).



REPORTS AND ONLINE GUIDES

[Perfect Fly](#) has a river description and fishing report. Trout Outfitters in Boise has a [description](#) and a [hatch chart](#).

WATERS AND FLOWS

[Owyhee gauge height and flow](#) (measured just across from our campground). According to the Idaho Angler, flows below the dam average around 300 cfs in summer and 30 cfs in winter. In 2022, the averages were 150 and 20, respectively. These flow values corresponded to gauge heights of 1.8 feet and 0.8 feet.

FISH

Trout in the Owyhee tailwater are Rainbows and Browns. Historically, only Rainbows were native, but in the 1980's and 90's Browns were stocked. They did well, and have become resident. Stocking of browns has long since ended, and the regs changed to allow only catch and release, which has resulted in a good population of quite large fish. Until at least a few years ago Rainbows were stocked in early June at the Dam Park. Rainbows in the Owyhee may be taken.

HATCHES

In the summer, the main event on the Owyhee is the mid-afternoon PMD emergence. In a good year, this occurs daily and lasts for hours, with hundreds of duns on each square meter of surface in the prime glides. The fish just roll through these food bits with their mouths open. The local anglers like size 18 PMD imitations, tied in a modified comparadun style, with olive bodies and somewhat backward-pointing CDC wings. They use 6X tippet even for the 20" plus fish, so even with careful playing there are many break-offs.

In the mornings and evenings, the trout rise regularly in the glides and tailout flats to tiny midges. Fish imitations, again using 6X tippet. You might want to tie on the midge (even a dry one) as a dropper off a fly that you can see.

When no fish are rising, people often do moderately well indicator fishing with nymphs in the riffles and pool entries. You don't need to fish so deep that you keep catching weeds. In these conditions you might try swinging streamers as well.

OREGON FISHING LICENSE

Oregon state fishing licenses are available on line or at major retailers. The cost for an annual non-resident license is \$110, a 3 day license is \$60. The online method is preferred. However, in a pinch, you can go to the town of Nyssa, about 10 mi north of Adrian, where there is a tackle shop and two groceries that sell licenses. You do not need a Columbia River endorsement when fishing the Owyhee; in any case it is only required when fishing for Salmon, Steelhead, or Sturgeon.

TROUT REGULATIONS (special regs override general ones)

All waters: CLOSED to Bull Trout; other trout, minimum length 8"; only 1 trout over 20 inches in length may be taken per day; **hatchery salmon, steelhead, and trout are marked by removing their adipose fin.** Daylight fishing only.

Southeast Zone General

Lakes open all year, 5 per day, 3 daily limits in possession.

Streams open all year unless noted under exceptions, artificial flies and lures, again unless indicated in the exceptions. Rainbow trout over 20" are considered Steelhead. 2 per day, 3 daily limits in possession. However, NO LIMIT on size or number of Brook or Brown trout unless noted under exceptions.

Special Regulations (Exceptions)

Owyhee River, 5 rainbow trout per day 8" minimum length; catch-and-release for brown trout. Use of bait allowed.

BULL TROUT IDENTIFICATION

Bull trout, one of Oregon's native species, is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Harvest of bull trout is severely restricted in Oregon as part of conservation efforts to recover this species and rebuild the fishery. Many anglers have difficulty distinguishing between the native Bull trout and Brook trout, an introduced species in Oregon. Both Brook and Bull trout have light spots on a dark grey or olive-green background. However, Brook trout are distinguished by light colored worm-like markings on their back, dark wavy lines on the dorsal fin, and red on the paired fins. In general, Bull trout have a clear dorsal fin, although in some fish light marks may be seen, and no red on the paired fins.