

The Columbia Slough, the first tributary to the Willamette River, is a ribbon of green in our urban area. The Slough is a complex of 60 miles of waterway that encompasses remnants of the historic flood plain of the Columbia River. Today, levees prevent flooding of most of these bottomlands during high water periods and much of the area is heavily developed. The Slough mainstem begins at Fairview Lake and meanders west for 19 miles to Kelley Point Park and the Willamette River.

Paddling the Columbia Slough

The Columbia Slough provides safe flatwater paddling appreciated by paddlers of all skill levels. The Slough is easily navigable by canoe and kayak. Motorized craft are not appropriate and their use in the Smith and Bybee Wetlands Wildlife area is not allowed.

An 18 mile long “head-to-mouth” trip is possible via the mainstem. However, 2 levees, culverted road crossings, and a water-level pipe add challenges to a full-length trip. Daily tides downstream of River Mile 8.5 mean a well-timed trip allows paddling with the current. Water levels may be low in July, August, and September.

Most of the Columbia Slough riparian area is private property. **Please do not trespass and remember to take your garbage with you.**

Safety Tips

The Columbia Slough is a flat, slow moving body of water. However, please be prepared when paddling and follow these simple rules:

- Wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device.
- Don’t paddle under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Don’t paddle alone. Advise others of your plans.
- Bring a whistle or signal device.
- Be aware of weather, tides and time of day.
- Wear appropriate clothing including footwear and hats.
- Bring food and water. Paddling can be hard work.
- Avoid downed trees, macrophytes and algae mats.

- Stormwater can contain pollutants. Wash your hands after water contact.
- Sewage: Environmental Services built the Big Pipe to eliminate 99% of the combined sewage that once overflowed to the Slough during rainstorms. Now only very intense rain storms can cause occasional combined sewer overflows (CSOs) into the Lower Slough.

Estimated Paddling Time (in hours)

Mainstem

Slough Headwaters to 16550 NE Airport Way	1
16550 NE Airport Way to 143rd Street Levee	1
143rd Street Levee to 11198 NE Simpson	1
11198 NE Simpson to Whitaker Slough mouth	1 1/2
Whitaker Slough mouth to 1880 NE Elrod Levee	1
1880 NE Elrod Levee to 9363 N Columbia Blvd	2 1/2
9363 N Columbia Blvd to North Slough mouth	1
North Slough mouth to Kelley Point Park	1
Slough Headwaters to Kelley Point Park	9 +

Whitaker Slough

Whitaker Ponds to NE 63rd Street	1/2
Whitaker Ponds to Whitaker Slough mouth	1/2

Buffalo Slough

Buffalo Slough mouth to 33rd	1/4
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North Slough

North Slough mouth to Smith/Bybee Wetlands	1/2
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More Information

- Local tide info: 503-261-9246, NOAA 503-325-4341
- Columbia Slough Watershed Council, 503- 281-1132, www.columbiaslough.org
- *Eyes on the Slough* volunteer paddler monitoring program, 503-249-0482
- Friends of Smith and Bybee Lakes, 503-249-0482 www.smithandbybeelakes.org
- To report spills, 503-823-7180
- Environmental Services, City of Portland, 503-823-7740, www.cleanrivers-pdx.org

What will you see?

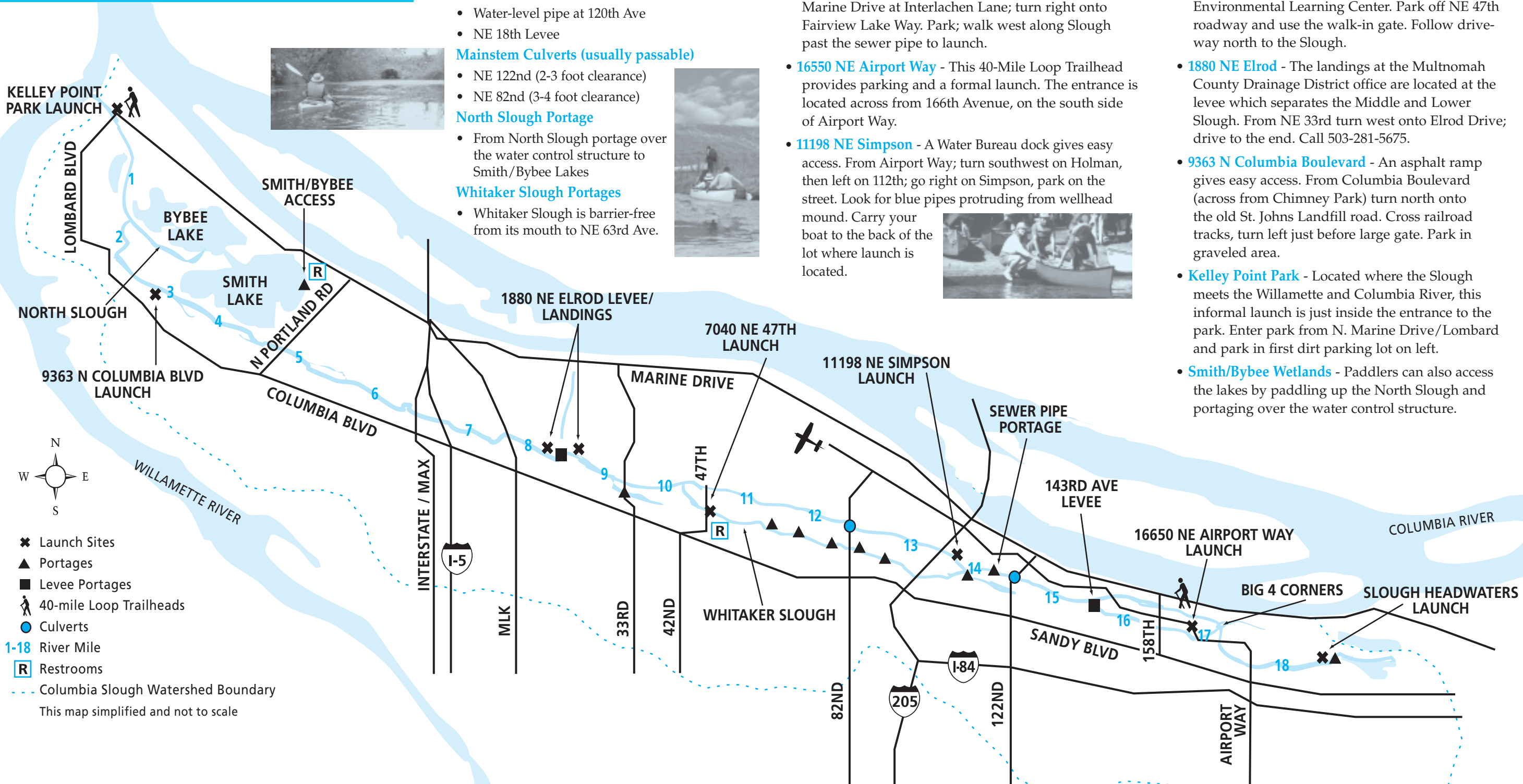
- **Birds:** There are more than 170 species of birds in the watershed including great blue heron, osprey, kingfisher, red-winged blackbird, killdeer and bald eagles.
- **Beaver and Nutria:** Although beavers are typically shy, they leave evidence of their work - downed trees. Nutria, which bear a strong resemblance to beaver, have a thin rat like tail.
- **Fish:** There are 26 species of fish in the Slough including carp and small mouth bass. The Lower Slough is a refuge habitat for salmon.
- **Turtles** Western painted turtles and western pond turtles sunbathe on logs.
- **Algae:** Small floating plants that form long filaments and can form thick mats that are difficult to paddle through.
- **Macrophytes:** Tall, rooted water plants that grow thickly and can be difficult to canoe through in the summer, primarily between 33rd and NE 110th.
- **Trees:** The City of Portland and other partners have planted over 1.3 million native trees and shrubs along the Slough for habitat restoration.
- **Stormwater Outfalls:** Rainwater from streets, parking lots and roofs reaches the Slough through pipes. Some of these outfalls are visible along the banks.



A Paddler's Access Guide
Columbia Slough



Columbia Slough



- ✕ Launch Sites
 - ▲ Portages
 - Levee Portages
 - 🚶 40-mile Loop Trailheads
 - Culverts
 - 1-18 River Mile
 - R Restrooms
 - - - Columbia Slough Watershed Boundary
- This map simplified and not to scale

Portages and Culverts ▲ ■ ●

Mainstem Portages

- NE 143rd Levee
- Water-level pipe at 120th Ave
- NE 18th Levee

Mainstem Culverts (usually passable)

- NE 122nd (2-3 foot clearance)
- NE 82nd (3-4 foot clearance)

North Slough Portage

- From North Slough portage over the water control structure to Smith/Bybee Lakes

Whitaker Slough Portages

- Whitaker Slough is barrier-free from its mouth to NE 63rd Ave.



Launch Sites ✕

- **Slough Headwaters** - This steep access is located just west of the mouth of Fairview Lake. Turn south from Marine Drive at Interlachen Lane; turn right onto Fairview Lake Way. Park; walk west along Slough past the sewer pipe to launch.
- **16550 NE Airport Way** - This 40-Mile Loop Trailhead provides parking and a formal launch. The entrance is located across from 166th Avenue, on the south side of Airport Way.
- **11198 NE Simpson** - A Water Bureau dock gives easy access. From Airport Way; turn southwest on Holman, then left on 112th; go right on Simpson, park on the street. Look for blue pipes protruding from wellhead mound. Carry your boat to the back of the lot where launch is located.

- **Whitaker Ponds (7040 NE 47th Avenue)** - Access is via an informal launch area north of the Environmental Learning Center. Park off NE 47th roadway and use the walk-in gate. Follow driveway north to the Slough.
- **1880 NE Elrod** - The landings at the Multnomah County Drainage District office are located at the levee which separates the Middle and Lower Slough. From NE 33rd turn west onto Elrod Drive; drive to the end. Call 503-281-5675.
- **9363 N Columbia Boulevard** - An asphalt ramp gives easy access. From Columbia Boulevard (across from Chimney Park) turn north onto the old St. Johns Landfill road. Cross railroad tracks, turn left just before large gate. Park in graveled area.
- **Kelley Point Park** - Located where the Slough meets the Willamette and Columbia River, this informal launch is just inside the entrance to the park. Enter park from N. Marine Drive/Lombard and park in first dirt parking lot on left.
- **Smith/Bybee Wetlands** - Paddlers can also access the lakes by paddling up the North Slough and portaging over the water control structure.