

**WALLA WALLA
RIVER BASIN**

**MASTER PLAN
FOR ANGLER ACCESS AND
ASSOCIATED RECREATIONAL
USES**



**Oregon State Game Commission
Lands Division**



WALLA WALLA RIVER BASIN
Master Plan for Angler Access
and
Associated Recreational Uses

By

Oregon State Game Commission

Lands Section

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WALLA WALLA RIVER BASIN
Master Plan for Angler Access
and
Associated Recreational Uses

This report details a plan that we hope can be followed to solve the access problems of the Walla Walla River Basin. Too, we hope that all agencies that are interested in retaining existing water access as well as providing additional facilities, whether they be municipal, county or state, will all join in a cooperative effort to carry out this plan in an orderly manner. It is probable that Land and Water Conservation Funds will be available on a 50-50 matching basis. In order to acquire these funds, it will be necessary to apply through the Oregon State Highway Department.

The Walla Walla River Basin is located in northeastern Oregon. It is bounded on the south and west by the Umatilla River basin, on the east by the Blue Mountains and on the north by the state of Washington. The basin covers an area of approximately 486 square miles and contains a total of 1,063 miles of stream. Of the total miles of stream, 76 miles are perennial and 987 miles are intermittent. The principal tributaries of the Oregon portion of the Walla Walla River are Mill, Cottonwood, Dry and Couse Creeks, and its North and South Forks.

Since approximately 43 percent of the basin is in croplands and the climate is temperate and semiarid, large quantities of water are diverted from the river system each year to meet the agricultural needs. As a result, nearly all the available water is consumed, leaving only minute flows, for fish life in the river and its tributaries, below the confluence of the North and South Forks. The South Fork has adequate flows throughout the year;

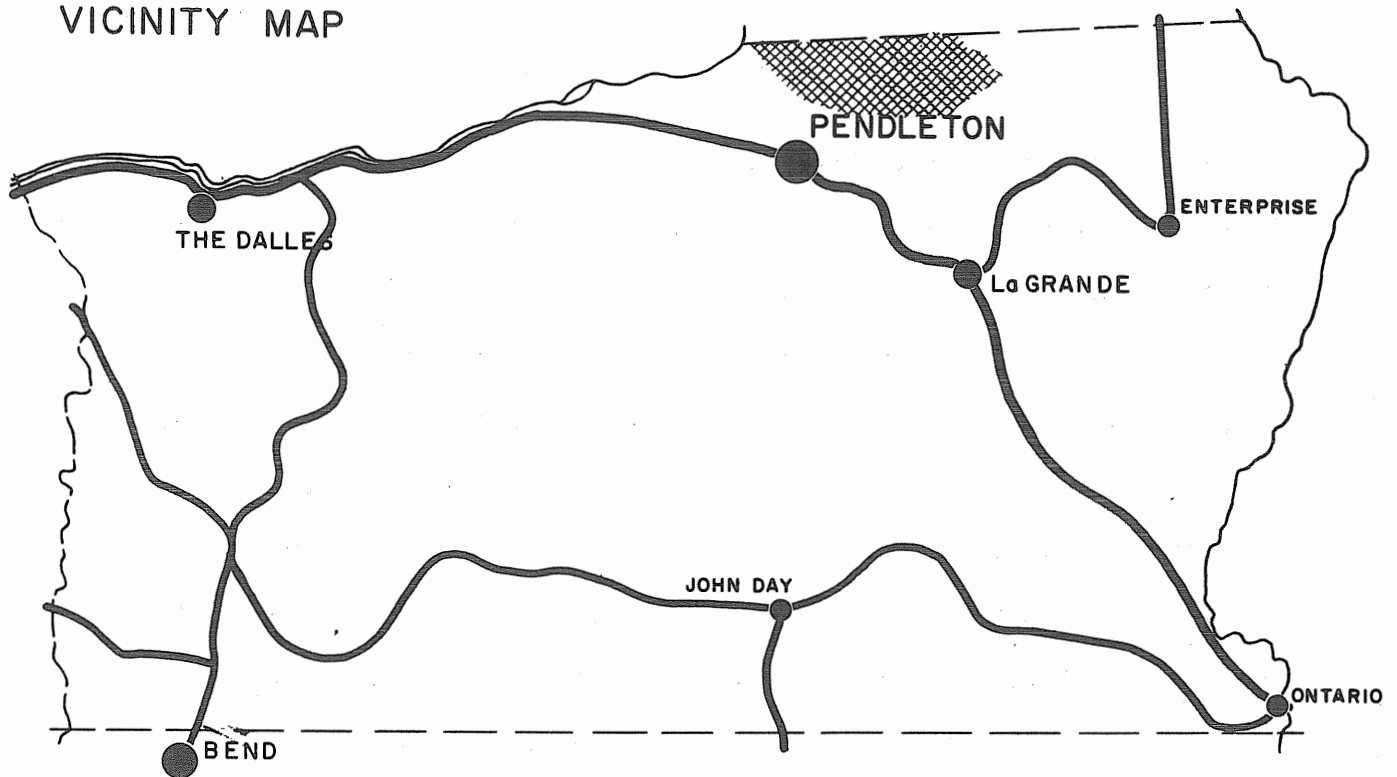
however, the North Fork experiences low flows and warm-water temperatures by midsummer.

In the early 1900's, large runs of spring and fall chinook salmon and summer steelhead were reported within the basin. Since that time a number of factors, including depleted stream flows, warm summer temperatures, and diversion dams, have reduced these numbers to an estimated 1,000 steelhead and to a remnant run of spring chinook. Only the North Fork and South Fork are now suitable for anadromous fish production and regulations have set these areas aside for this purpose. The remainder of the system below Couse Creek has received extensive revetment work and is almost completely void of fish habitat. Steelhead angling occurs mainly in March while trout angling extends from April - October. The trout fishery is confined primarily to the upper river and its tributaries except for an early put-and-take fishery on the lower Walla Walla River. The trout angling is primarily on stocked rainbow, however, a few Dolly Varden and native rainbow are taken.

Access within the basin is considered adequate at the present time; however, recommendations have been made which would ensure future access throughout the basin. There are six sites included in this report.

The following area descriptions will describe these sites in detail.

VICINITY MAP



The Walla Walla River Basin is bounded on the south and west by the Umatilla River Basin, on the east by the Blue Mountains, and on the north by the state of Washington.

Interstate 80N and State Highway 11 connects the basin with the centers of population in western Oregon.

LOWER WALLA WALLA AREA

The Lower Walla Walla Area encompasses the section of the river between the confluence of the North and the South Forks and the state line. The area extends downstream through agricultural lands for approximately ten miles.

These lands require heavy water withdrawals from the river during the irrigation season which creates either an intermittent or completely dry channel. The lower seven miles of the streambed is also an area where extensive revetment work has been done for flood control. As a result the channel is wide and completely void of fish habitat. It is very doubtful that a year-round fishery will ever be established in this section of the river.

Plans are being made by the Bureau of Reclamation to develop a multi-purpose water resource project for the basin. Current plans call for a dam and a storage reservoir at the Joe West site, which is located just downstream from the forks of the river. The dam will be about 250 feet high and will not provide any means of fish passage; however, a hatchery will be constructed to mitigate the existing steelhead fishery. Even though releases of 22 cfs will be made from June through December and 32 cfs from January through May, there will be no minimum flow reserved for fish below the hatchery. The reservoir will cover approximately 1,020 surface acres, and will be 3.3 miles long. A maximum width of about 3/4 mile will provide about 11.5 miles of shoreline. Recreational benefits will be available at the reservoir. However, the number and type of facilities have not been determined.

Both anadromous and native fisheries are available within this section of the river. Steelhead angling occurs primarily in March while trout angling extends from April through October. The trout angling is primarily on

stocked rainbow; however, a few Dolly Varden are taken. In the early 1900's, large runs of spring and fall chinook salmon and summer steelhead trout were reported in the Walla Walla River System. Since that time a number of factors including depleted stream flows, warm summer flows and diversion dams have reduced these numbers drastically. The estimated steelhead population in the Oregon section of the river is now less than 1,000 fish and only a remnant run of spring chinook now exists.

Under the present conditions, access is considered adequate within this area. Dikes along the river between McCoy Bridge and Couse Creek (see map) provide appropriate access and there is no opposition from landowners on the remainder of the river. Two sites, however, have been recommended to ensure future access if the need should occur. The following evaluation sheets describe these sites more fully.

WATER ACCESS SITE EVALUATION

Walla Walla River System Site No. 1
Lower Walla Walla Area Priority C
Name McCoy Site

Location Downstream from McCoy Bridge, West Bank
T 6 N, R 35 E, Sec. 24 River Mile 39.25 County Umatilla
Ownership: Public _____
Private X Tax Lot No. 6N 35 24D - 1100, 1200
Number of owners 2

DESCRIPTION

Land type Flat - valley
Cover type Deciduous tree and shrubs with grass understory
Road access Private, Condition Poor, dirt
Good - spring & winter
Flows Fluctuate seasonally Water quality Poor - during low flow
Present stage of development None

ANGLER NEEDS

Acquisition: 4 Acres, 1/2 mile of frontage
Type of conveyance Purchase or easement

Development:

Boat ramp: Type _____ Number of lanes _____
Toilets X Trails _____ Roads Need improved
Parking area X; For 20 cars or _____ car-trailer units

This site will provide a bank angling area for steelhead and trout.

AREA Lower Walla Walla

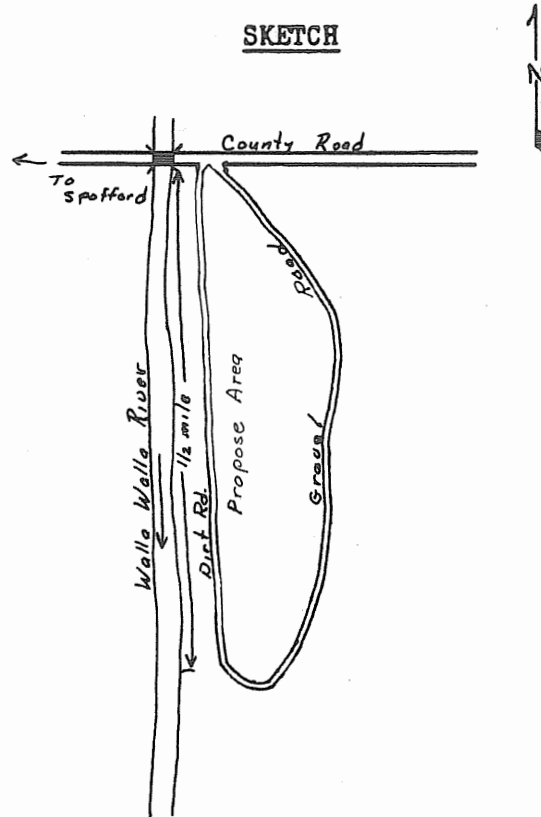
SITE # 1

FISHERY: The main fishery is on steelhead; however, a few trout are taken.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Heavy				
Medium	St			St
Light	Tr	Tr	Tr	

(Sa - Salmon, St - Steelhead, Tr - Trout, Sg - Sturgeon, Ww - Warm Water Fishes)

SKETCH



Seasons (Check)

RECREATION
(Check)

- Boating, motor
- Boating, non-motor
- Camping, tent
- Camping, trailer
- Fishing, boat
- Fishing, shore
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting, big game
- Hunting, upland game
- Hunting, waterfowl
- Nature study
- Picnicking
- Sightseeing
- Skin and scuba diving
- Swimming
- Water skiing

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	

OTHER

Safety Problems:

Group Facilities:

REMARKS This site is close to Milton-Freewater and could be developed into a recreation area. There is good access off the county road at McCoy Bridge.

WATER ACCESS SITE EVALUATION

Walla Walla System Site No. 2
Lower Walla Walla Area Priority A
Name Upper McEwen Area

Location Between McEwen Bridge and the forks, South Bank
T 5 N, R 36 E, Sec. 20, 21, 22 River Mile 46.25 to 48 County Umatilla

Ownership: Public _____
Private X Tax Lot No. 5 N 36 22 - 600, 400
5 N 36 21 - 1000, 101, 200, 300, 400
Number of owners 8 5 N 36 20 - 100

DESCRIPTION

Land type Narrow valley
Cover type Orchard and farm land
Road access County, Condition Good paved
Flows Fluctuate seasonally Water quality Good
Present stage of development None

ANGLER NEEDS

Acquisition: _____ Acres, 1.0 mile of frontage
Type of conveyance Easement

Development:

Boat ramp: Type _____ Number of lanes _____
Toilets _____ Trails X Roads _____
Parking area X; For 20 cars or _____ car-trailer units

This site would provide angler access wherever easements can be provided in
the estimated 1.75 miles of fishable water.

AREA Lower Walla Walla

SITE # 2

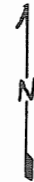
FISHERY: Fishery is on stocked rainbow, with some Dolly Varden and steelhead.

Steelhead angling is open up to the forks.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Heavy				
Medium	Tr	Tr	Tr	
Light	St			St

(Sa - Salmon, St - Steelhead, Tr - Trout, Sg - Sturgeon, Ww - Warm Water Fishes)

SKETCH

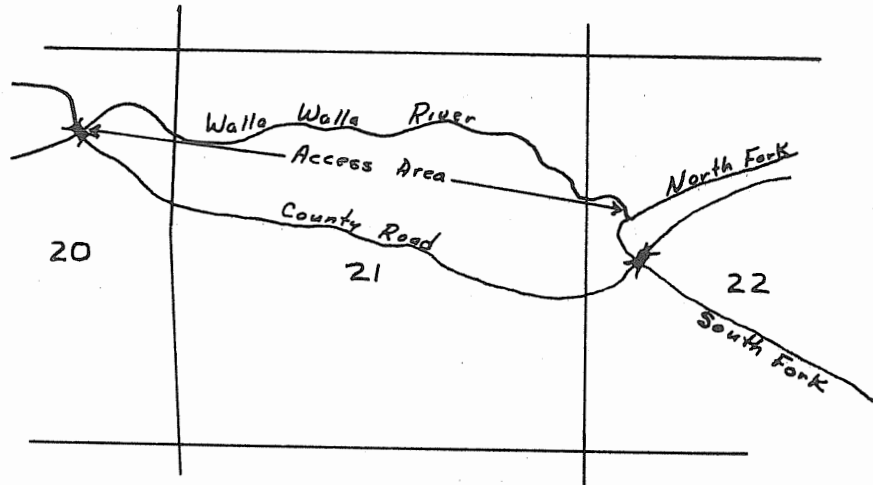


Seasons (Check)

RECREATION
(Check)

- Boating, motor
- Boating, non-motor
- Camping, tent
- Camping, trailer
- Fishing, boat
- Fishing, shore
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting, big game
- Hunting, upland game
- Hunting, waterfowl
- Nature study
- Picnicking
- Sightseeing
- Skin and scuba diving
- Swimming
- Water skiing

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
	X	X	X	X



OTHER

Safety Problems:

Group Facilities:

REMARKS

The river is located north of the road and access is restricted to foot travel only. This is a popular angling area and receives moderate use.

NORTH FORK AREA

The North Fork Area originates in the Blue Mountains and extends 19 miles downstream to its confluence with the South Fork. The upper 15 miles of channel flows through a moderately steep canyon which eventually broadens out into the lower agricultural lands. The lower four miles of the channel is wide and shallow, while the upper channel is narrow and has relatively few pool areas.

The North Fork fishery consists primarily of stocked rainbow trout which are liberated during the early portion of fishing season. Both Dolly Varden trout and steelhead are also present in the stream; however, the steelhead are not available for the creel. The river with its abundant gravel areas plays an important part in the basin's steelhead production. By mid-summer the flows in the lower section of river become low and the water temperatures rise which makes the stream unattractive to anglers. However, if and when the Joe West Dam is constructed a good trout fishery should be available throughout the season.

Most of the lands adjacent to the river are in private ownership, and at the present time the public is allowed to use some of these lands for angling; however, to ensure future use, easements from the landowners are recommended.

Easements are needed for a total of $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles of frontage with access routes to the river. This plan is general in that parcels of land should be provided whenever and wherever practical. In this area a road parallels the stream to the vicinity of Big Meadow Canyon, a distance of 10 miles of which only $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles is county maintained.

The remainder of the road is closed to motor vehicle travel primarily because of the hazardous fire conditions which occur during most of the

angling season. Parking facilities for 50 cars throughout the project area would appear to be adequate.

The following evaluation sheets describe this project in more detail.

WATER ACCESS SITE EVALUATION

Walla Walla River System Site No. 1
North Fork Area Priority B
Name Lower North Fork Area

Upstream from the fork to the end of
Location of the county road _____, North _____ Bank
5 N 37 E 19
T 5 N, R 36 E, Sec. 22,23,24 River Mile 0-3.5 County Umatilla

Ownership: Public _____
Private X Tax Lot No. Many
Number of owners _____

DESCRIPTION

Land type Narrow valley
Cover type Orchards and pasture
Road access County road, Condition Good
Flows Fluctuates seasonally Water quality Good - spring & winter
Poor - summer
Present stage of development None

ANGLER NEEDS

Acquisition: _____ Acres, 2.5 miles of frontage
Type of conveyance Easement

Development:

Boat ramp: Type _____ Number of lanes _____
Toilets _____ Trails X Roads _____
Parking area X; For 20 cars or _____ car-trailer units

This site would provide bank access to a 3.5 mile of stream wherever ease-
ments could be obtained.

AREA North Fork

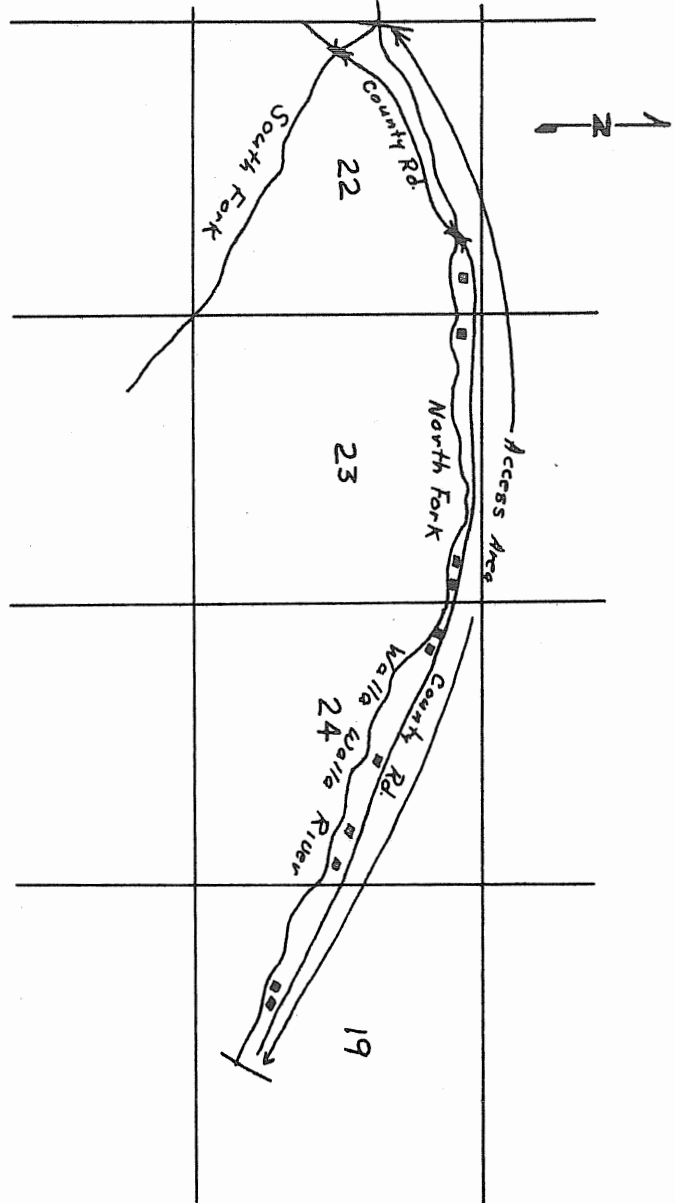
SITE # 1

FISHERY: The fishery is mainly on rainbow trout.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Heavy				
Medium				
Light	Tr	Tr	Tr	

(Sa - Salmon, St - Steelhead, Tr - Trout, Sg - Sturgeon, Ww - Warm Water Fishes)

SKETCH



Seasons (Check)

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
	X	X	X	

RECREATION
(Check)

- Boating, motor
- Boating, non-motor
- Camping, tent
- Camping, trailer
- Fishing, boat
- Fishing, shore
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting, big game
- Hunting, upland game
- Hunting, waterfowl
- Nature study
- Picnicking
- Sightseeing
- Skin and scuba diving
- Swimming
- Water skiing

OTHER

Safety Problems:

Group Facilities:

REMARKS Access to the fishable sections of this stream is somewhat limited because of the numerous ownerships. There are also small orchards along the river which are sometimes closed to trespass because of vandalism.

WATER ACCESS SITE EVALUATION

Walla Walla River System Site No. 2
North Fork Area Priority B
Name Upper North Fork Area

Location Upstream from end of county road to Forest Service boundary, North Bank
19, 29, 28, 27,
T 5 N, R 37 E, Sec. 22, 23, 24 River Mile 3.50 to 9.75 County Umatilla
Ownership: Public _____
Private X Tax Lot No. Many
Number of owners Many

DESCRIPTION

Land type Narrow valley
Cover type Mainly range land with both deciduous and coniferous trees
Road access County right-of-way, Condition Dirt
Good - spring & winter
Flows Fluctuates seasonally Water quality Poor - summer
Present stage of development None

ANGLER NEEDS

Acquisition: _____ Acres, 3.0 miles of frontage
Type of conveyance Easement

Development:

Boat ramp: Type _____ Number of lanes _____
Toilets _____ Trails X Roads X
Parking area X; For 30 cars or _____ car-trailer units

This site would provide access to 3.0 miles of water wherever possible as well as access to the national forest.

AREA North Fork

SITE # 2

FISHERY: The fishery is on trout. A minimal amount of angling occurs in this area because of the poor access.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Heavy				
Medium				
Light	Tr	Tr	Tr	

(Sa - Salmon, St - Steelhead, Tr - Trout, Sg - Sturgeon, Ww - Warm Water Fishes)

SKETCH

See fold-out map

Seasons (Check)

RECREATION
(Check)

- Boating, motor
- Boating, non-motor
- Camping, tent
- Camping, trailer
- Fishing, boat
- Fishing, shore
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting, big game
- Hunting, upland game
- Hunting, waterfowl
- Nature study
- Picnicking
- Sightseeing
- Skin and scuba diving
- Swimming
- Water skiing

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
	X	X	X	

OTHER

Safety Problems:

Group Facilities:

REMARKS A county road right-of-way extends through most of this area but is not being maintained. As a result, the local landowners have blocked the road and allow foot travel only. Their primary purpose for doing this was to protect the lands from fire. This area gets quite dry during the summer months and is hazardous when vehicles are allowed to enter.

SOUTH FORK AREA

The South Fork Area drains the western slopes of the Blue Mountains and flows approximately 26 miles in a northwesterly direction to where it joins with the North Fork. The upper 13 miles of river is in a deep canyon which has coniferous trees, and grasses covering its slopes. There are several summer homes and hunting cabins in the lower section of this canyon. The canyon becomes wider about eight miles above the mouth and the stream passes through numerous small pastures and orchards. Good year-round flows and cool summer water temperatures are characteristic of the stream.

The river is an important area for steelhead production and is the most important trout stream within the basin. The fishery consists mainly of stocked rainbow although both native rainbow and Dolly Varden trout enter the creel. Regulations established by the Oregon Game Commission have closed this section of the basin to steelhead angling.

This area represents one of the basin's most critical sections for angler access. In the past few years, the lower eight miles of stream have been closed to trespass which eliminated the fishery in the major portion of the basin. However, through agreements with the landowners, fishermen are now allowed to fish upon obtaining permission. Although permanent access is needed on this section, it is the general consensus, that an angling by permission program would be more practical. By allowing indiscriminate use, on selected areas, orchard vandalism would tend to increase and would create more problems than the access gained would warrant. All the adjoining lands are in small parcels and most of these are in orchards. A road extends an additional two miles upstream beyond the agricultural land to Elbow Creek. The access plan for this section of the stream recommends two recreational sites which

include one-half mile of bank access and 25 acres of land for camping and picnicking facilities. A short distance beyond the road, the stream enters into the public lands of the Umatilla National Forest, where good angler access is available throughout the remainder of the system.

The following evaluation sheets describe this project in more detail.

WATER ACCESS SITE EVALUATION

Walla Walla River System Site No. 1
South Fork Area Priority A
Name Camp Rotary

Location Just beyond county road, Southwest Bank
T 4 N, R 37 E, Sec. 10 River Mile 8.0 County Umatilla

Ownership: Public
Private X Tax Lot No. 4N - 37 - 10, Lot 3000 and 2500
Number of owners 1

DESCRIPTION

Land type Canyon with level area adjacent to river.
Cover type Both deciduous and coniferous trees with a grass understory
Road access Private, Condition Fair
Flows Fluctuates seasonally Water quality Good year-round
Present stage of development 3 tent frames, old cabin

ANGLER NEEDS

Acquisition: 20 Acres, 1/4 mile of frontage
Type of conveyance Purchase

Development:

Boat ramp: Type _____ Number of lanes _____
Toilets X Trails X Roads X
Parking area X; For 40 cars or _____ car-trailer units

This site would provide access to the river as well as a good recreation area.

AREA South Fork

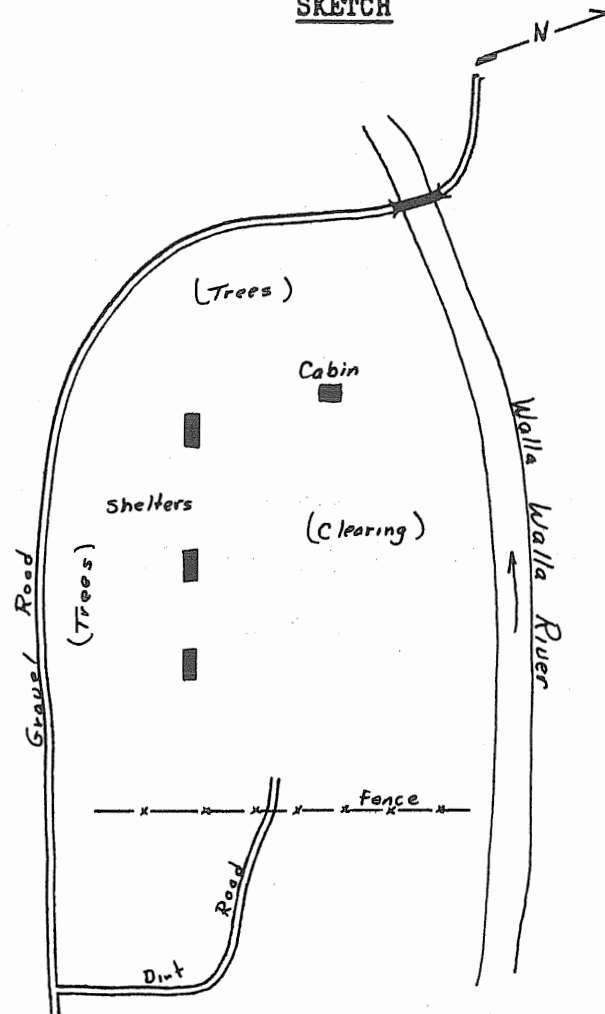
SITE # 1

FISHERY: The fishery is on both rainbow and Dolly Varden trout.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Heavy				
Medium	Tr	Tr	Tr	
Light				

(Sa - Salmon, St - Steelhead, Tr - Trout, Sg - Sturgeon, Wv - Warm Water Fishes)

SKETCH



Seasons (Check)

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
	X	X	X	
	X	X	X	
			X	
			X	
			X	
	X	X	X	
		X	X	

RECREATION
(Check)

- Boating, motor
- Boating, non-motor
- Camping, tent
- Camping, trailer
- Fishing, boat
- Fishing, shore
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting, big game
- Hunting, upland game
- Hunting, waterfowl
- Nature study
- Picnicking
- Sightseeing
- Skin and scuba diving
- Swimming
- Water skiing

OTHER

Safety Problems: Rattle snakes in the area.

Group Facilities:

REMARKS The site is a Rotary Club camp which is not being used at this time. It is located on the upper South Fork and would make an excellent recreation area.

WATER ACCESS SITE EVALUATION

Walla Walla River System Site No. 2
South Fork Area Priority A
Name Gauging Station Site

Location 1 mile below Elbow Creek, East Bank
T 4 N, R 37 E, Sec. 10, 15, 14 River Mile 8.5 to 8.75 County Umatilla
Ownership: Public U. S. Forest
Private X Tax Lot No. 4 N 37 - U.S. 2000, 2200, 17000
Number of owners 3

DESCRIPTION

Land type Canyon with level areas adjacent to the river
Cover type Both deciduous and coniferous trees
Road access Dirt, Condition Fair
Flows Stable Water quality Good
Present stage of development None

ANGLER NEEDS

Acquisition: 5 Acres, 1/4 mile of frontage
Type of conveyance Purchase

Development:

Boat ramp: Type _____ Number of lanes _____
Toilets X Trails X Roads X
Parking area X; For _____ cars or 40 car-trailer units

This site would provide access to a 1/4 mile of stream as well as provide an
excellent picnic and camping area.

AREA South Fork

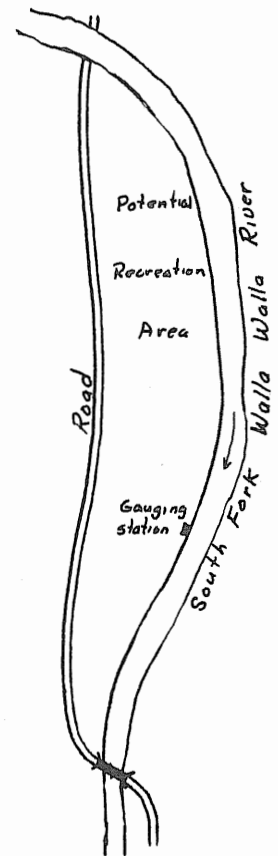
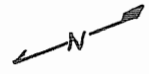
SITE # 2

FISHERY: The fishery is on both rainbow and Dolly Varden trout.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Heavy				
Medium	Tr	Tr	Tr	
Light				

(Sa - Salmon, St - Steelhead, Tr - Trout, Sg - Sturgeon, Ww - Warm Water Fishes)

SKETCH



Seasons (Check)

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
	X	X	X	
	X	X		X
	X	X	X	
			X	
	X	X	X	

RECREATION
(Check)

- Boating, motor
- Boating, non-motor
- Camping, tent
- Camping, trailer
- Fishing, boat
- Fishing, shore
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting, big game
- Hunting, upland game
- Hunting, waterfowl
- Nature study
- Picnicking
- Sightseeing
- Skin and scuba diving
- Swimming
- Water skiing

OTHER

Safety Problems: Rattle snakes in the area.

Group Facilities:

REMARKS This site is located in a narrow canyon and is an ideal location for a park development. The site would provide badly needed facilities for both anglers and hunters. A portion of this area is located on U. S. Forest Service land.