

## Welcome to the Columbia Slough

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 waterways encompassing remnants of the historic floodplain 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

A 19 mile long “head to mouth” trip is possible via the mainstem. However, two levees, culverted road crossings and a water level sewer 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 are low in July, August, and September.

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

### For Information

- Local tide info: NOAA 503-325-4341
- Columbia Slough Watershed Council, 503- 281-1132, [www.columbiaslough.org](http://www.columbiaslough.org)  
*Eyes on the Slough* volunteer paddler monitoring program, events, classes, workshops
- Friends of Smith and Bybee Lakes, 503-249-0482 [www.smithandbybeelakes.org](http://www.smithandbybeelakes.org)
- To report spills, 503-823-7180
- Environmental Services, City of Portland, 503-823-7740, [www.portlandonline.com/bes](http://www.portlandonline.com/bes)

### 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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### 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 obstructions such as aquatic plants, downed trees, thick clumps of macrophytes and algae mats.
- All waterways can contain pollutants. Wash your hands after contact.
- In 2000 Environmental Services completed the Columbia Slough Big Pipe that eliminates 99% of the combined sewage that once overflowed to the slough during rainstorms. Now only very intense storms can cause occasional combined overflows into the Lower Slough.



### 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 eagle.
- **Mammals:** Includes beaver, otter and nutria. Although beavers are typically shy, they leave evidence of their work - downed trees. River otter inhabit most reaches. Nutria, which bear a strong resemblance to beaver, have a thin rat-like tail.
- **Fish:** 26 species of fish live in the slough. Migrating juvenile coho and chinook salmon use the Lower Slough as a refuge for resting and rearing. Carp and small mouth bass are common non-native fish.
- **Turtles:** Western painted turtles sunbathe on logs. Non-native red eared sliders are common.
- **Algae:** These small floating plants can form thick mats that are difficult to paddle through.
- **Macrophytes:** These tall rooted water plants grow densely (especially in the Middle Slough) and can be difficult to paddle through in the warm weather months.
- **Trees:** The City of Portland Revegetation Program and other partners have planted over 1.4 million native trees and shrubs along more than 40 miles of the Columbia Slough.
- **Stormwater Outfalls:** Stormwater from streets, parking lots and roofs reaches the slough through pipes. Some of these outfalls are visible along the banks.



Environmental Services, City of Portland  
503-823-7740

[www.portlandonline.com/bes](http://www.portlandonline.com/bes)

Dan Saltzman, Commissioner    Dean Marriott, Director

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## A Paddler's Access Guide

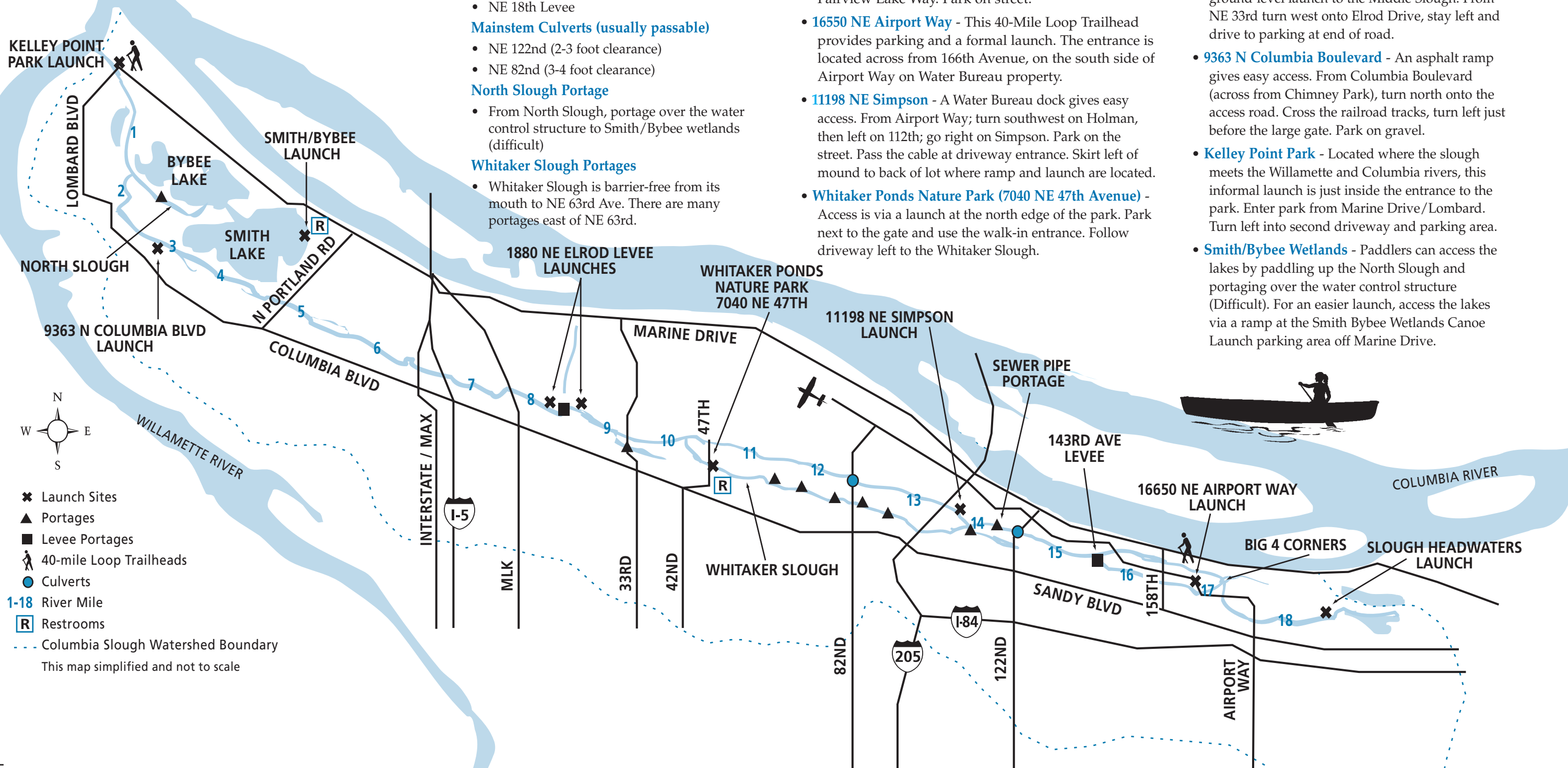
### COLUMBIA SLOUGH



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
CITY OF PORTLAND

working for clean rivers

# Columbia Slough



## Portages and Culverts ▲ ■ ●

### Mainstem Portages

- NE 143rd Levee
- Water-level pipe at NE 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 wetlands (difficult)

### Whitaker Slough Portages

- Whitaker Slough is barrier-free from its mouth to NE 63rd Ave. There are many portages east of NE 63rd.

## Launch Sites ✕

- **Slough Headwaters** - A steep informal 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 on street.
- **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 on Water Bureau property.
- **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. Pass the cable at driveway entrance. Skirt left of mound to back of lot where ramp and launch are located.
- **Whitaker Ponds Nature Park (7040 NE 47th Avenue)** - Access is via a launch at the north edge of the park. Park next to the gate and use the walk-in entrance. Follow driveway left to the Whitaker Slough.

- **1880 NE Elrod** - Two launches at the Multnomah County Drainage District office are located at the levee. Hike over the levee to Lower Slough or ground-level launch to the Middle Slough. From NE 33rd turn west onto Elrod Drive, stay left and drive to parking at end of road.
- **9363 N Columbia Boulevard** - An asphalt ramp gives easy access. From Columbia Boulevard (across from Chimney Park), turn north onto the access road. Cross the railroad tracks, turn left just before the large gate. Park on gravel.
- **Kelley Point Park** - Located where the slough meets the Willamette and Columbia rivers, this informal launch is just inside the entrance to the park. Enter park from Marine Drive/Lombard. Turn left into second driveway and parking area.
- **Smith/Bybee Wetlands** - Paddlers can access the lakes by paddling up the North Slough and portaging over the water control structure (Difficult). For an easier launch, access the lakes via a ramp at the Smith Bybee Wetlands Canoe Launch parking area off Marine Drive.

- ✕ 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