

Paddling Safety

General Caution

Rivers, by their very nature, present risks to those traveling them. Currents, channels, and levels of the Willamette can change dramatically with the seasons. In general, the stretch depicted on this map is largely moving water (with the exception of the rapids on the Middle Fork and Mainstem Willamette in Eugene), meaning it has a steady current that should be respected. Keep a distance from rocks, snags, and other “strainers” like tree stumps and branches. Beginning paddlers should be wary of outside bends of the river, where the current is much faster and strainers (such as fallen trees extending from the bank) are often found.

A strainer is a stationary object in the river that can stop you and your craft. The river current can exert incredible force against stationary objects—potentially damaging you and your craft. Never try to swim below such an obstacle if you end up out of your boat! You always want to climb up and over an obstacle, if at all possible.



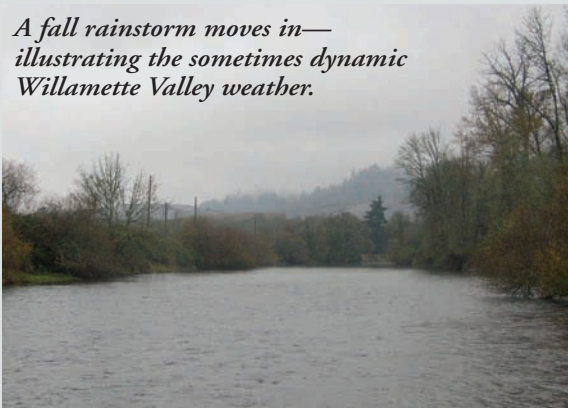
Backwater near Blue Ruin Island

Gear Checklist

Always wear a life jacket with a whistle. In Oregon, children 12 and younger are required by law to wear life jackets when in boats that are underway. Dress for cold water; even though it can be warm outside, the water can be deceptively cold. Wear polypropylene and fleece and avoid cotton. Consider taking the following:

- Hat with brim
- Sunglasses
- Extra paddle
- Pump (for kayaks)
- Snacks
- First aid kit
- Extra clothes
- Map and this guide
- Dry bags
- Flashlight
- Extra ropes
- Matches in waterproof container
- Safety whistle
- Sunscreen
- Flotation devices
- PLENTY OF DRINKING WATER

*A fall rainstorm moves in—
illustrating the sometimes dynamic
Willamette Valley weather.*



Before You Go

Check the weather. Choose a trip and distance in relation to your experience and fitness. Check river flow at <http://kayak.physics.orst.edu/~tpw/kayaking/display.cgi/Oregon.html>. Know your course, your capabilities, your limits, and plan well.