

\$1.00

Yaquina Bay

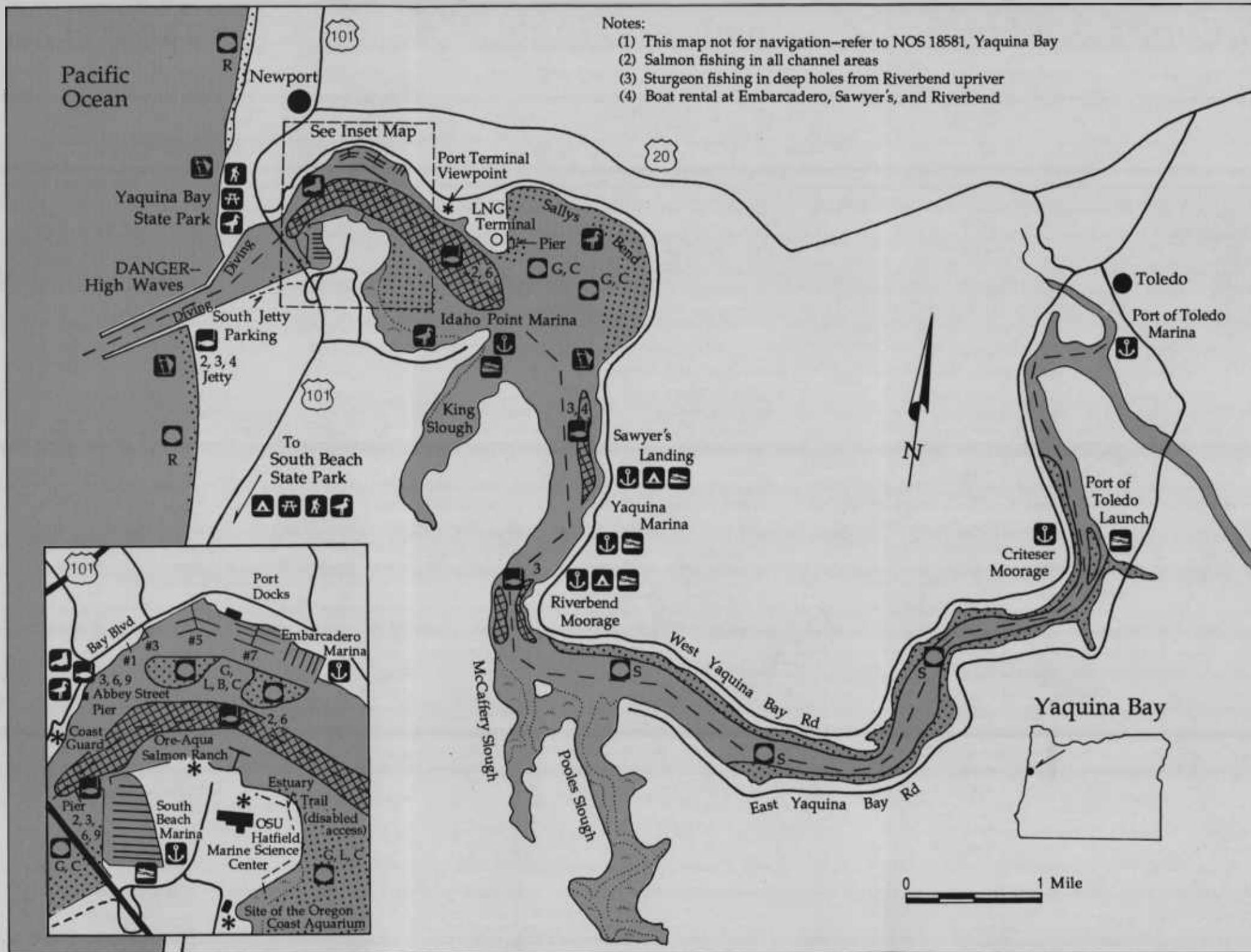
Estuary Public Access Guide



SG 84 • Reprinted January 1993



OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION SERVICE



Notes:
 (1) This map not for navigation—refer to NOS 18581, Yaquina Bay
 (2) Salmon fishing in all channel areas
 (3) Sturgeon fishing in deep holes from Riverbend upriver
 (4) Boat rental at Embarcadero, Sawyer's, and Riverbend

Legend

Note that this list of activities and species covers the entire Oregon coast. Some of them do not occur in this area—so they do not appear in the map at the left.

Fishing

(Boat access unless otherwise noted)

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Rockfish | 8 Smelt |
| 2 Salmon | 9 Herring |
| 3 Perch | 10 Striped bass |
| 4 Flounder | 11 Shad |
| 5 Searun cutthroat | 12 Steelhead |
| 6 Crab | 13 Sturgeon |
| 7 Bottomfish | |

Clamming

(Shore access unless otherwise noted)

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| G Gaper | S Softshell |
| L Littleneck | P Piddock |
| B Butter | R Razor |
| C Cockle | |

- Birding
- Wildlife areas
- Camping
- Picnicking
- Marina
- Boat launch
- Hiking, beachcombing
- Windsurfing
- Point of interest

Tidal Marshes

Tidal marshes are the grassy wetlands found along the shorelines and on low-lying islands in Yaquina Bay. Nourished by a mixture of fresh and salt waters that flow over them at high tide, tidal marshes are well-known for their high biological productivity and for their value as habitat for fishes, birds, and other wildlife.

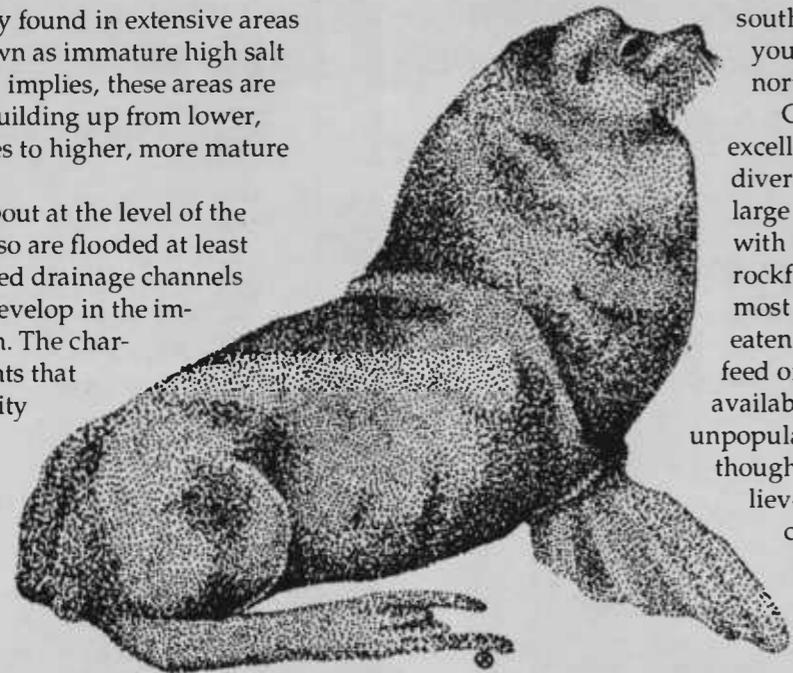
The unique plants that grow in these marshes are specially adapted to the twice-daily ebb and flood of tidal waters. Different tidal marsh plants grow in different locations, depending on the particular environmental conditions at a site. This means that there will be a variety of tidal marsh plant communities in this and most estuaries.

A plant community found in extensive areas of Yaquina Bay is known as immature high salt marsh. As "immature" implies, these areas are still in the process of building up from lower, less-developed marshes to higher, more mature ones.

They occur just about at the level of the average high tide and so are flooded at least once a day. Well-defined drainage channels are just beginning to develop in the immature high salt marsh. The characteristic group of plants that make up this community includes tufted hairgrass (shown here), salt grass, arrowgrass, pickleweed, and Lyngby's sedge.



Tufted hairgrass
(*Deschampsia caespitosa*)



California sea lion
(*Zalophus californianus*)

California Sea Lion

The raucous barking of "seals" often heard in Yaquina Bay comes not from seals, but from the California sea lion. Although closely related to seals, sea lions are different—they can rotate their hind flippers forward in order to walk on all fours.

Sea lions also have external ears, while the ears of seals are internal. One way to identify them from a distance is to remember that only sea lions float on their side in the bay with a flipper extended in the air.

Earlier in this century, populations of the California sea lion were reduced as they were killed for oil and for dog food. Since 1972, however, they have been protected under the Federal Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the species has once again become abundant.

Male California sea lions come north to use Yaquina Bay for feeding, and can be seen in the estuary from August to April. During May through July, the males migrate south to join the females for breeding on small coastal islands off Baja California.

Females remain in the south to give birth to their young while males return north again.

California sea lions are excellent swimmers and divers, and fishes form a large portion of their diet, with lampreys, herring, and rockfish being among the most common species eaten. Sea lions will also feed on salmon when it's available, which makes them unpopular with fishermen—although many scientists believe they do not significantly affect the sports or commercial catch.

Dungeness Crab

One of the favorite sport catches in Yaquina Bay and other Oregon estuaries is the Dungeness crab, the familiar local species seen in fish markets. While some of the crabs make their home in estuaries, others live in deeper water offshore and enter the bays to feed and molt, especially in early summer.

Some of these offshore dwellers range widely, sometimes traveling a mile a day. While in bays, the Dungeness crab frequents protected shallow pools, sand bottoms, and eelgrass beds. It also may hide beneath the surface of the sand with only antennae, eyes, and mouth protruding.

Crab is an opportunistic feeder, feeding on most fresh food items it encounters on the bottom, including some small clams.

In order to protect the ability of the population to reproduce, only males that are a certain minimum size may be kept by crabbers. Males can be identified by the narrow V-shaped abdominal flap on their underside—females have a wide U-shaped flap.



Dungeness crab
(*Cancer magister*)

Regulations on size, seasons, and bag limits are published and enforced by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife—check them before you go crabbing.

The Estuary

An estuary, or bay, is a partially enclosed coastal body of water, open to the ocean, where freshwater from the land mixes with saltwater from the sea. This simple meeting of fresh- and saltwater results in a highly complex and biologically productive environment for a variety of plants and animals.

These organisms have special adaptations that help them cope with the changing salt content and the ebb and flood of tidal waters.

People have used estuaries for thousands of years. Today, sport fishing, clamming, boating, and other forms of recreation are popular here. Estuaries are also important for shipping and marine industries, and as homes for our fishing fleets.

However, these uses are not always compatible with the natural environment. Space is limited in Oregon's estuaries, and competition for its use is keen.

Despite their small size, Oregon's estuaries are important and valuable. They are critical to hundreds of species of plants, birds, fish, clams, crabs, and other animals.



Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, O.E. Smith, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

The Extension/Sea Grant Program is supported in part by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials—without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability—as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.