

# Three Island Crossing State Park

**Introduction:** The Snake River is the lifeblood of Southern Idaho. Irrigated farms stretch for miles along its banks. But in the mid-19th Century, it was a green ribbon of hope to migrants who would follow the Oregon Trail across the gray and dusty sagebrush plains on the way to their promised land. But occasionally their travels required crossing the Snake and Three Island Crossing was one of the most famous and difficult river crossings on the Oregon Trail. Three Island Crossing State Park offers a place where at least the river and its southern banks still resembles what it looked like way back when. The park commemorates the Oregon Trail in Idaho.

**Getting There:** Three Island Crossing State Park is adjacent to the town of Glens Ferry, Idaho. Take Interstate 84 either east bound or west bound to Glens Ferry. From the east bound direction, get off the interstate at the Glenn's Ferry exit (exit 120), North Bannock St. Turn right and proceed on North Bannock until you get to 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and turn left. Continue on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. into town until you get to Commercial Street and turn right. It is important to use Commercial Street as it is the only street in town that crosses the railroad tracks. Follow Commercial until it curves to the right and becomes West Madison Ave. Follow West Madison Ave. to the park entrance. From the west bound direction, get off the interstate at the Glenn's Ferry exit (exit 121) and turn left onto 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. Follow 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. into town and turn left on Commercial Street. Follow Commercial until it curves to the right and becomes West Madison Ave. Follow West Madison Ave. to the park entrance.

There is actually a segment of the park that is located on the south side of the Snake River. To get there, find your way to the Glenn's Ferry interstate exit (exit 121) on the east side of town. Just south of the exit interchange there is a Frontage Rd. that goes in an easterly direction. Go east on the Frontage Rd. until it goes under the railroad tracks. Then turn left on Pasadena Valley Rd. which will lead you over a bridge on the Snake River. Take your next right turn onto Rosevear Rd. Follow Rosevear Rd. for about 4 miles until you get to Slick Ranch Rd. Turn right on Slick Ranch Rd. and follow it to the park entrance which will be a right turn. This will lead you to an overlook with a great view of the Snake River, the three islands and the main park across the river.

## **Major Features:**

The Oregon Trail: More than 300,000 Americans migrated on the Oregon Trail system during a twenty year period, beginning in 1841. The trail started in Independence, Missouri and it crossed Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming and entered Idaho near the present town of Montpelier, Idaho. Although there are a few different routes for the trail through Idaho, the primary trail followed the south side of the Snake River until Three Island Crossing. It was here that the emigrants had to decide to either stay on the longer south side route or risk the crossing for the shorter route. The south side part of the park contains some segments of the trail in its approach to the river near the three islands. After the crossing, the trail enters the main part of the park in its southwest corner near the Oregon Trail History and Education Center.

The River and the Three Islands: The Snake River has its headwaters in Yellowstone National Park. The Snake River is 1,078 miles long and is the thirteenth longest river in the United States. Before it ends at its confluence with the Columbia, it is joined by many of the great rivers of Idaho. A great deal of its waters in its upper basin are diverted into canals that irrigate hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland. While it is sometimes almost diminished near Twin Falls, it is quickly replenished by the spectacular phenomenon of the Thousand Springs. The Snake River flows at an average of about 7,000 cubic feet per second past Three Island Crossing State Park. Some of the campsites in the Wagon Wheel campground have a great view of the river.

It has been said the name of the Snake River came from the name that neighboring tribes called the native Shoshone Indians. The Plains Indians to the east referred to these nomadic bands as the “snake.” In addition, the Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series indicates that the Blackfeet found Shoshone sticks with snake heads painted on them in 1784 which may have contributed to the term “snake.”

Just downstream from the main park area are the three islands for which the crossing is named. However, only two of the islands were historically used in the crossing. Strong currents, deep water, and hidden holes caused difficulties and drownings as the emigrants forded the Snake River here. The three islands and the approaches to the crossing can be seen from the Oregon Trail History and Education Center. However, the best possible view of the river and the three islands is from the overlook in the southern segment of the park that is on the southside of the river. While the three islands are a main feature and they are the source of the park’s name, they are not in the ownership or custody of the IDPR. Two of the Islands are owned by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the other is owned by the BLM.

The Park: Three Island Crossing State Park is classified by IDPR as a historic park. It has a total of 513 acres and it situated at an elevation of 2,484 feet. Every year about 112,000 visitors come here with about 81,000 for day use and 31,000 for camping. The park has a variety of recreational facilities available.

A left turn after entering the park will take you to the two park campgrounds. At the first intersection of the campground road is a RV dump station on the left and a right turn leads into the Wagon Wheel campground that includes 42 campsites that all have water and electric hookups. There is also one camping cabin in this campground. An improved restroom (flush toilets, sinks, showers) is available here. The campground sits on top on a hill that overlooks the river and surrounding scenery. The campground is landscaped with lawns and mature shade trees.

The campground road continues down a small hill into the Trailside campground. This campground has 39 campsites that all have water and electric hookups. This campground has two camping cabins. An improved restroom (flush toilets, sinks, showers) is available here. This campground is great for groups because there are two group shelters available for gatherings. The campground has mature shade trees and has a more natural feeling to it.

There is a small day use area with a parking lot on the right near the park entrance. There are eight individual picnic tables situated on the lawn with shade trees here for day use. There is another RV dump station adjacent to this area.

The main park road leads down to the Oregon Trail History and Education Center and

the primary day use area. The Oregon Trail History and Education Center is the keynote facility in the park and represents Idaho's primary museum for interpreting the history of the Oregon trail. The center is admission-free and offers a self-guided tour that starts with an orientation video and walks you through the exhibits like a indoor trail. There are exhibits that tell the story of the Oregon Trail, the local Native Americans, the emigrants, and the local history of the Glens Ferry area. The exhibits are supplemented with interesting artifacts. There is also a visitor store that sells books, souvenirs, and supplies. Outside you can find an exhibit of an old wagon and you can actually stroll along in the remnants of one of the routes of the Oregon Trail. There are two parking lots here.

The park has a beautiful and large day use area at the end of the main park road. There are 21 individual picnic tables here and a group shelter. The area is landscaped with mature trees and lawns. There is an improved restroom (flush toilets, sinks, showers) available. There are five camping cabins that face the river. There are two parking lots here.

The segment of the park that is located on the south side of the Snake River encompasses the southern approaches of the Oregon Trail to the river. This southside property has a ½ mile gravel road leading to a small parking area that overlooks the three islands. The primary activity here is to view the river, the three islands, and the main part of the park from above. Also, the southside segment has several routes of the Oregon Trail that traverse the sagebrush covered slope that leads down to the river. These routes can be used by visitors as hiking trails.

**Geology:** There has been volcanic activity at numerous times in Idaho's past, up to as recently as a few thousand years ago. The remnants of shield volcanoes are abundant on the Snake River Plain. Increasing volcanic activity resulted in floods of basalt which poured out onto the Snake River plain. Occasionally, lava dammed streams and rivers, forming lakes. Sediments accumulated, filling the lakes. Then the dams overflowed. This action resulted in the creation of the Glenn's Ferry formation which is one of the more prominent geologic features at Three Island Crossing. The Glens Ferry Formation is a complex assemblage of lake and stream deposits inter-bedded with local lava flows of olivine basalt that occupies an area of several thousand square miles in the western Snake River Plain. The soils and rocks at Three Island Crossing State park are what are known as lacustrine sediments. They resulted from lakes that once covered the area that built up layers of clay, silt, and some beach sand. Some gravel and sand also washed in from seasonal streams.

At the end of the last Ice Age, Pleistocene lakes covered vast areas. The largest single lake to form was Lake Bonneville. Approximately 11,000 years ago, a rise in the ancient Lake Bonneville caused a natural dam near Preston, ID to break. A catastrophic flood 200 times the flow of the present Snake River, followed its path and continued for a least six weeks right through Three Island Crossing State Park.

### **Ecosystems and Plant Communities:**

The River: The Snake River at Three Island Crossing State Park was once an intact and pristine ecosystem with clear running waters with an abundance of salmon and other anadromous fish. That is probably how it was at the time the Oregon Trail emigrants were making their crossings. But today it exists as a very altered ecosystem suffering from the

abuses that result from running through a well settled area. Agricultural runoff from farms and ranches in the Snake River Plain and many other areas has severely hurt the ecology of the river throughout the 20th century. After the first irrigation dams on the river began operation in the first decade of the 20th century, much of the arable land in a strip a few miles wide along the Snake River was cultivated or turned to pasture, and agricultural return flows began to pollute the Snake. Runoff from feedlots and fish farms was drained into the river. Fertilizer, manure and other chemicals and pollutants washed into the river greatly increased the nutrient load, especially of phosphorus, fecal coliforms and nitrogen. During low water, algae blooms occur throughout the calm stretches of the river, depleting its oxygen supply. The once clear waters are now colored green and late in summer a great deal of algae and aquatic vegetation can be seen.

Hydroelectric dams that were installed downstream from Three Island Crossing blocked the passage of salmon and sturgeon traveling to and from the Pacific Ocean. The once abundant runs of these fish is now a thing of the past. However, the river remains home to about thirty-five native fish species such as white sturgeon, channel catfish, bullhead, crappie, largemouth bass, small mouth bass, mountain whitefish, and rainbow trout. The white sturgeon are a remnant population and some of the individuals that remain in this stretch of the river can be well over 100 years old. There are also four species that are endemic (found no where else) to the Snake: the relict sand roller, the shorthead sculpin, the maginated sculpin, and the Oregon chub. The more or less constant presence of white pelicans on the river is an indicator of abundant fish available.

Riparian: The heavy nutrient load in the river water actually produces some rather thick riparian growth. Bull rushes, cattails, willows, and cottonwood trees can be viewed. In some areas, the vegetation is so thick that it precludes access to the river shoreline. Before dams were built upstream from Three Island Crossing, the river level undoubtedly varied throughout the year and probably resulted in occasional flooding of the low lying areas. This periodic flooding would have supported a much larger riparian area than is present today and probably had naturally sustained a black cottonwood forest.

The Land: Three Island Crossing State Park is mostly within the Great Basin sagebrush steppe ecosystem. However, the main park area has been altered first by agriculture and later by the landscaping of the park. Plants found in the park include: black cottonwood, Russian olive, black locust, sage brush, rabbit brush, cheat grass, Russian thistle, and various grasses.

The keynote species is Russian olive. The Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) is a non-native tree or shrub that now grows very profusely throughout southern Idaho. It is a native to western and central Asia. It is very fast growing and can reach heights of 15 to 25 feet. Its stems, buds, and leaves have a dense covering of silvery to rusty scales. The highly aromatic flowers appear in early summer and are followed by clusters of fruit which resemble olives. The shrub can fix nitrogen in its roots, enabling it to grow on bare mineral substrates. They can flourish almost anywhere. The species was introduced into North America in the late 19th century, and subsequently escaped cultivation, because its fruits are relished by birds which disperse the seeds. Russian olive is considered to be an invasive species in many places in the United States because it thrives on poor soil, has low seedling mortality rates, matures in a few years, and out-competes wild native vegetation. It often invades riparian habitats

where over-story cottonwoods have died. But in many southern Idaho state parks, they have become a somewhat staple shade tree.

The segment on the southside of the river is a more intact ecosystem of Great Basin sagebrush steppe. This is characterized by the presence of sagebrush, bitter brush, rabbit brush, and grasses and is sometimes referred to as desert prairie. A fence around the park lands here prevents any wandering cattle from entering. This ecosystem is common in southern Idaho and is connected to the vast expanses of the “sagebrush sea” that stretches across the great basin area of Nevada, Utah, and southeastern Oregon.

### **Wildlife:**

Mammals: The mammals present in the park include: mule deer, fox, badger, and coyote.

Birds: The birds present in the park include: hawk, great horned owl, great blue heron, eagle, swan, grebe, white pelican, meadow lark, violet green swallow, waterfowl, and songbirds.

Fish: The fish in the park include: white sturgeon, channel catfish, crappie, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and rainbow trout.

The keynote species is the white sturgeon. The white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) is the largest freshwater fish in North America. It can reach lengths over 15 feet and weigh more than 1,000 pounds. It is one of eight sturgeon species found in North America. The white sturgeon has a slender, long body, head, and mouth. This fish has no scales; instead, it has large bony scutes that serve as a form of armor. The dorsal color of a white sturgeon is gray, pale olive, or gray-brown. The fins are a dusky, opaque gray. The underside is a clean white. It has four barbels, used for sensing food, near its large, toothless mouth. Sturgeons are classified as a bony fish, but actually are more cartilaginous than bony, their internal bone structure being more like a shark's. Sturgeon have changed very little since they first appeared over 175 million years ago, thus have the appearance of a very ancient fish. The white sturgeon lives on the bottom of slow-moving rivers, bays, and estuarine areas, including the brackish water at the mouths of large rivers. Other sturgeon spend most of their time in a marine environment, only coming into rivers to spawn. But the white sturgeon at Three Island Crossing are land-locked by dams and can no longer get to the marine environment. They are well-adapted to finding food drifting by with their excellent sense of smell and taste. During the spawning season, the white sturgeon moves to clean, fast-moving areas of rivers, such as just below rapids, with gravel or larger rocks along the bottom. White sturgeon can live to be over 100 years old. The rate of growth is dependent on water temperature. Typically, they reach six feet long around 25 years of age, showing that these fish do not grow as quickly as many other fish.

The range of white sturgeon includes the Pacific Northwest from southeast Alaska to central California. Historically, white sturgeon were abundant and ranged freely throughout the Columbia and Snake River basins as far upriver as Shoshone Falls. The harvesting of white sturgeon probably began in the late 1880's when demand for its eggs (caviar) ballooned on the east coast of the United States. During that era, the harvest of white sturgeon in the lower Columbia River increased to over one million pounds annually. This severely reduced white sturgeon populations. The construction of dams by Idaho Power Company along the

course of the middle Snake River has restricted white sturgeon to river reaches that do not provide the diversity of habitats necessary for successful reproduction and rearing. White sturgeon are currently segmented into nine reaches of the Snake River. Of the nine reaches, only two support viable populations characterized by self-sustaining natural recruitment. One of those reaches is Bliss Dam to C.J. Strike Reservoir which includes the part of the Snake River that flows past Three Island Crossing State Park. White sturgeon are well adapted to thrive in large, free-flowing riverine environments such as the Snake River in Idaho.

**Cultural History:** People have been living along the Snake River for at least 11,000 years. Early Native Americans that lived along the Snake River relied upon fish, especially salmon, that were very abundant in the Snake River. The introduction of the horse to the Snake River Plain around 1700 helped in establishing the Shoshone and Northern Paiute cultures. The Shoshone occupied the Snake River Plain both above and below Shoshone Falls. Lifestyles along the Snake River varied widely. Below Shoshone Falls, the economy centered on salmon, who often came up the river in enormous numbers. Salmon were the mainstay of most of the tribes below Shoshone Falls. Above the falls the Snake River Plain forms one of the only relatively easy paths across the main Rocky Mountains for many hundreds of miles, allowing Native Americans both east and west of the mountains to interact. As a result, the Shoshone centered on a trading economy. The trail of Chief Buffalo Horn, the Shoshone Indians, the Bannocks, and other Native American tribes was the link between the Indian Cultures of the Plains and the Midwest who hunted buffalo, and the ways of the Northwest tribes whose dietary staple was salmon and other fish. At the Three Islands, these cultures met. The Shoshone were known to many Great Plains tribes as the "Snakes".. Eventually, the Shoshone culture merged with that of the Paiute and Bannock tribes.

In spring and fall, salmon runs brought small family groups to the banks of the Snake River. Here, they set up important fishing camps at Three Island Crossing, Salmon Falls, and other sites. In midsummer, many men formed large hunting parties, while women gathered roots (especially camas), nuts, seeds, and berries. In winter, they moved down to warmer valleys, where they ate foods they had dried and stored the summer and fall.

At first, relations between emigrants and Indians of the Snake River were friendly. When provisions ran low, emigrants were eager to trade extra clothing for salmon. Native Americans served as interpreters and guides and shared their knowledge of edible plants. At Three Island Crossing, they often helped wagon trains cross the river, saving many greenhorns from drowning. The Native Americans knew where the channels and deep holes were from their salmon fishing experience.

In the late 1860s, the U.S. government started relocating Native Americans to reservations. In Idaho, the Northern Shoshones and Bannocks went to Fort Hall and the Western Shoshones and Northern Paiutes to Duck Valley.

In May 1878, the Bannocks discovered that some settlers' pigs had uprooted the camas plants. They fought with the settlers and formed a war party of about 200. Some headed west to recruit allies among Northern Paiutes of the Malheur Reservation. Others cut a swath through southern Idaho. In Glenns Ferry, they burnt down buildings, cut ferry cables and killed two men. On June 8, 1878, the Bannocks and Paiutes skirmished with the Silver City volunteers. Between July and September 1878, troops captured most of the remaining Indians and returned them to Fort Hall. By October 1878, the Bannock War was over.

**Local History:** Fur trappers Robert Stewart of the Astorians first traveled what would become the Oregon Trail in 1810. Missionary Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa traversed the trail in 1836 proving that wheeled wagons could make the journey. They made it to Three Island Crossing on August 13, 1836 and Narcissa wrote in her dairy: "...we rode as much as a half mile in crossing and against the current too, which made it hard for the horse, the water being up to their sides. Husband had considerable difficulty in crossing the cart. Both cart and mules were turned upside down in the river and entangled in the harness ..."

The first wagon train made it across in 1843. By 1848, thousands of emigrants had traveled the Oregon Trail. At Three Island Crossing the emigrants had to make a choice of either crossing the river to reach a shorter, easier route north of the Snake River, or they could stay on the dry, rough Oregon Trail South Alternate. About half the emigrants decided to attempt the treacherous crossing. Many diaries mention the loss of livestock, wagons and human lives at this. The crossing would be used by pioneers until 1869.

The crossing of the river required substantial preparation. Men stationed themselves on both banks, and pulled the wagons across with ropes, lashing several wagons together at a time. Sometimes, they roped three wagons abreast, to present a huge mass to counter the swift current. The men moved each group of wagons from the near bank to the first island, and then to the next island (most of those crossing did not traverse the third island), and then a little upstream to the north bank. Men rode horseback in the river alongside the wagons, to catch any items that drifted away. Because the wagon beds could be underwater by several inches, each wagon had to be packed carefully before it set out, and then unpacked and checked for dampness after making the ford. It could take three days to get an entire wagon company across the river. Even though the river was not extremely deep, the wagons could capsize, and livestock could drown. In 1845, men died at the crossing when a team of mules got tangled. The flat area on the north bank where the main park is today was probably a pleasant campsite after days and weeks of crossing sagebrush plains that were far from running water. But there was no time to rest because most guides had advised the emigrants they needed to make their crossing by August 21 or they might not make it through the Cascades before winter snowfalls began. So once they forded the Snake, they hurried on to Fort Boise.

Gustavus P. Glenn was a freight hauler with teams of oxen and horses moving needed goods along the Kelton-to-Boise section of the Oregon Trail. Gus' huge freight wagons were pulled in long trains with as many as twenty yoke of oxen per wagon. He moved along the Snake River Valley and the dusty desert in what became an almost continuous line of travelers. There were covered wagons, horseback riders, and stage coaches dropping off people and goods at places like Rye Grass, Bennetts Creek, Rattlesnake, Blacks Creek, and Boise. In 1869, Gus Glenn constructed a ferry about two miles upstream from Three Island Crossing. He did this not to transport emigrants, but to speed up his freight operations. In 1890, materials from Glenn's ferryboat were recycled to build the Rosevear ferry, which operated until a bridge crossing the river was built in about 1908.

Gus Glenn was from an upstanding Eastern family. He came west as a single man, referred to in some texts as a "rover boy." He came into Idaho at a time when white women were scarce and there were many single Native American women. In 1869 he married a Native American named Jenny Toms. Her loyalty to Gus is unquestioned. She stayed with him through many rough times and the couple had four sons and three daughters.

The Oregon Short Line Railroad was extended to Huntington, Oregon and crossed the

Snake River near Glens Ferry. By 1884, Glens Ferry had become an important rail hub. In 1886, on land given to the railroad by William and Nancy Stockton in 1883, a roundhouse, shops, depot, coal platform, ice house, store, and an office building were built. Glens Ferry had become a railroad town.

The Stocktons platted the original Glens Ferry townsite in 1888. It was not long until there was a second ferry across the Snake built by Joseph Rosevear and Ernest Eichholz. Two fires, in 1893 and 1897 destroyed most of the original townsite including the Stockton's hotel.

Charles Edward Corker was born in Illinois in 1853. He settled in Mountain Home around 1889. He acquired 123 acres of land in the area north of Madison Ave. in Glens Ferry that would someday be the Carmela Vineyards. He did this through a cash sale from the U.S. General Land Office in 1889. He made a claim for 106 acres of property that later would be the riverfront property of Three Island Crossing State Park under the Desert Land Act. The Desert Land Act required that he develop the land for agriculture primarily through building an irrigation system to support the crops. But unlike the Homestead Act there was no residency required. He proved up his claim and received patent to this land in 1897. While for the most part he resided in Mountain home, in 1910 he was living in Glens Ferry and his occupation was listed as real estate agent. Later, Charles Edward Crocker would become the office clerk for Senator William Borah. Charles Edward Crocker died in Boise in 1933.

By the early 1900s Glens Ferry was on the move. There was a new lumber yard, druggist, and butcher shop. In 1904 the King Hill tract was opened by an Act of Congress, and work was begun on an irrigation system that would draw water from the Malad River onto the fertile fields of the area. A water system and electric plant were built in 1905 and a steam boat named "Helen" began plying the waters of the Snake River that same year.

The part of Three Island Crossing State Park that is south of Madison Ave. near the main park entrance would remain property of the United States for several more decades. Lee White McAnulty acquired these 123 acres under the Desert Land Act in 1951. He like Crocker, would have had to develop an irrigation system on the property. McAnulty had come to Glens Ferry from Kansas before 1910. He died in Glens Ferry in 1960.

Every August from 1985 until 2009, the Glens Ferry community and the Duck Valley Indian Reservation had sponsored re-enactments of wagon crossings at Three Island Crossing. The event included living history presentations and an historic skills fair. This was a great annual event at the park, but due to a lack of horses and new riders and team drivers, the re-enactment is no longer conducted.

**Park History:** The main property for the park was purchased in 1969. The 320 acre property on the south side of the river was acquired from the BLM under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. An additional 100 acres of BLM land is managed by IDPR through a management agreement. The park opened in 1971 with a day use area, a picnic shelter and the 50 campsite Wagon Wheel Campground. Starting in the 1980s, the park had a herd of bison (buffalo) that were brought to the park from the National Bison Range. Later they received some longhorn cattle as a gift from the State of Oklahoma. For many years these animals were pastured at Three Island Crossing State Park for visitors to view. But sometime after 1989, this practice was discontinued and the pasture fencing was removed. The Trailside Campground was constructed in 1994. The Oregon Trail History and Education Center (visitor center) was completed in 2000. The eight camping cabins were added in 2004.



## Recreation Activities:

History Study: As the main purpose of the park is to commemorate this important site along the Oregon Trail, many visitors come here to study history. The primary place to do this is at the Oregon Trail History and Education Center (below). The park grounds also has an historic trail that follows the main route of the Oregon Trail. The route of the trail down to the river has markers to show the way. There is a Conestoga wagon replica on display along the trail. From the rivers edge, one can view the southside of the river and the approach of the Oregon Trail to the three islands just downstream. Between the visitor center and the main day use area, there is a replica of a wooden ferry like those used to once cross the river. One of the best places to get a good look at the history of the site is at the overlook on the southside of the river. From there you can view the southern approach of the Oregon

Trail, the river and the three islands from above and the main park property across the river. It provides an excellent perspective of what the emigrants would have viewed. The southside property is also criss-crossed with Oregon Trail routes where you can stroll along and experience “walking on the ruts” of hundreds of emigrant wagons.

Visitor Center (The Oregon Trail History and Education Center): There are historical interpretive programs and a fascinating admission-free interpretive center. This is Idaho’s premier interpretive center for commemorating the Oregon Trail. Your visit can start by watching a short video about the park and its history. Then walk the trail through the exhibits and view the artifacts. Then finish by browsing the gift shop for books and souvenirs. There are always staff members available to answer your questions and enhance your visit.

Camping: Camping is a very popular activity at this park. The park’s proximity to the river and its rich landscaped campgrounds provide an attractive setting that keep the campgrounds busy from March to November. Even in the heat of summer, camping here is popular. The park has a total of 81 campsites all with water and electrical hook-ups. There are also two group shelters available in the Trailside campground. There are eight camping cabins available. The campgrounds include improved restrooms with flush toilets, sinks, and showers.

Picnicking: The park has a beautiful day use area with mature shade trees and landscape lawns near the banks of the Snake River. There is a group shelter here and there are 21 individual picnic tables here. There are another 8 individual picnic tables located at the parking lot near the park entrance.

Fishing: Although the park is not well known for its fishing opportunities, it does provide

### Please Remember

- There is a \$5.00 per vehicle per day fee required for access to the park even if no one is collecting the fee at the entrance gate.
- Open fires are allowed only in the fire rings and grills.
- Motor vehicles must stay on established roadways.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times, and are not permitted in the buildings.
- The destruction or removal of any historical artifacts found in the park is prohibited.

access to the banks of the Snake River. The park does not have any docks or boat ramps. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game does operate a small parking area as a fishing access site adjacent to the southwest corner of the main park property. There is a gravel beach here that is suitable for hand launching small boats, canoes, and kayaks.

Trails: While the park has plenty of paths to walk on, they do not necessary meet what some would consider to be trails. In the main portion of the park, they consist of service routes that are maintained by the passage of utility vehicles used by park staff. Those paths not maintained by such use are somewhat overgrown with weeds and vegetation where they are not well discerned as paths. There is also a path that leads from the campground to the neighboring winery and vineyards. In the section of the park on the southside of the river, the “trails” consist of old roads and routes that are aligned with the historic routes of the Oregon Trail. It is estimated that there is about 6 miles of “trails” in the park.

Birding: The park is listed in the Idaho birding trail. There is good cover and habitat for a variety of species to be observed in the river, the riparian areas, the sagebrush steppe, and the landscaped areas.

**Resource Management Issues:** The park natural condition has been seriously altered by noxious and invasive species. Russian olive, puncture vine, rush skeleton weed, spotted knapweed, purple loosetrife, cheat grass and Russian thistle (tumbleweeds) are present. Russian olive has become more-or-less acceptable because it is somewhat ornamental and provides necessary shade. However, it often invades riparian habitats where overstory cottonwoods have died.

Unfortunately, the Glens Ferry sewage ponds are located immediately to the east of the Park, resulting in “un-historic” smells at certain times of the year.

The totality of the “historical area” would include the main portion of the park, the three islands, and the southside of the river from the river banks south to the Slick Ranch Rd. But this “historical area” is in a hodgepodge of ownership and control. Two of the three islands are owned by the IDFG. The IDFG also owns the small fishing access site adjacent to the southwest corner of the main portion of the park. One of the three islands (the northernmost) is owned by the BLM. A small semi-island in the southeast corner of the park is owned by the BLM. Then a major parcel of land between the south banks of the river and the parcel of land owned by the IDPR for the scenic overlook site is owned by the BLM. There has been mention of an agreement between the IDFG and the BLM for operating 100 acres of BLM land, but the identity of this 100 acres is not known. So the entire “historical area” is under a situation of “tri-management.” While the southside of the river and the islands are not generally suitable for development, they are important to protect as part of the “historic viewshed.” They more or less represent the view to the south that the Oregon Trail visitors would have seen over 150 years ago.

### **Suggestions for the Future:**

- Resurface all existing paved surfaces. The paved surfaces at the park are in poor condition and are in need of resurfacing.

- Make application under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act for the eventual acquisition of the BLM lands: (1) the semi-island at the southeast corner of the main portion of the park; (2) the northernmost island of the three islands; and (3) the major parcel of land between the south banks of the river and the parcel of land owned by the IDPR for the scenic overlook site on the southside of the river.
- Obtain a transfer of management over the IDFG lands consisting of the southernmost two islands of the three islands and the fishing access site adjacent to the southwest corner of the main portion of the park.
- Eliminate the dirt road that provides free access to the IDFG fishing access site adjacent to the southwest corner of the main portion of the park. In an environment where the state is being encourage to make park and recreation sites pay for themselves, it makes little sense to have a free use area so close to a park that charges an daily motor vehicle fee. Further, it is quite possible for park visitors to park in the small gravel lot at this site and then walk-in to the park and use its facilities without paying a fee.
- Connect the IDFG fishing access site by constructing a paved access road that comes from the main park access road and pave the small parking lot next to the river. In this way, access to the site must be obtained through the main entrance to the park.
- Develop two improved hand launch boat ramps in the park. One should be installed near the camping cabins in the main day use area. The other should be installed at the IDFG fishing access site. With these launch facilities, some water sports activities can be encouraged at the park. For example, canoes and kayaks could be launched at the upstream launch site and then visitors could paddle their craft along the southside of the river, around the three islands, and return to the fishing access site ramp. The visitors would also be able to land their craft on the southside to explore the Oregon Trail approaches.
- Once the semi-island in the southeast corner of the park is acquired from the BLM. Develop this area into a natural area with a “nature trail.”
- Once the BLM property on the south banks of the river are acquired, consider developing this site into an “environmental experience” campsite where youth groups and school groups can hike into the site and camp like the emigrants did.
- Attempt to get Three Island Crossing listed as a National Historic Landmark or at least on the list of National Historic Places.