



2022 Summer River Recreation Report

Summary

Summer 2022 continued the return to pre-pandemic behavior among river users. Use of the river shuttle and rentals were up, nearing 2019 levels after no operations in 2020 and limited, reservation only, physically distanced operations in 2021. Annually, weather has a big influence on river recreation and unseasonably cool weather in June made a big impact on use that was down in comparison to last summer. BPRD also introduced enhanced communications support this season, with a new “how to float the river” video, and safety messages to discourage alcohol use, tethering together and bridge jumping.

Data on River Use

BPRD uses data from three trail counters at the Bend Whitewater Park to get an estimate for river use. Counters are located at the portage path upstream from the whitewater park, at the first drop in the river for the fish ladder and the “goat path” trail parallel to the river downstream of the Colorado Avenue Bridge.

Totals are based on combined data from the portage path, fish ladder and 27% of the goat trail. The 27% is the average number of users on the trail who are heading downstream to float through the whitewater park. The other 73% are heading upstream for another lap through the rapids.

For the 2022 river recreation season, trail counter data suggests that 226,583 river users passed through the Bend Whitewater Park. This is a 15% decrease from 2021. While river floating continues to be a very popular summer activity, it is strongly correlated to weather conditions, and June 2022 was unseasonably cool and resulted in a nearly 60% decrease from the prior year’s June total.

	Total	Comparison
June total	28,130	-58% from 2021
July Total	120,585	-2% from 2021
August Total	62,437	-7% from 2021
Season Total All River Users	226,583	-15% from 2021

Daily Average	2,208
Weekend Average	2,938
Weekday Average	1,920

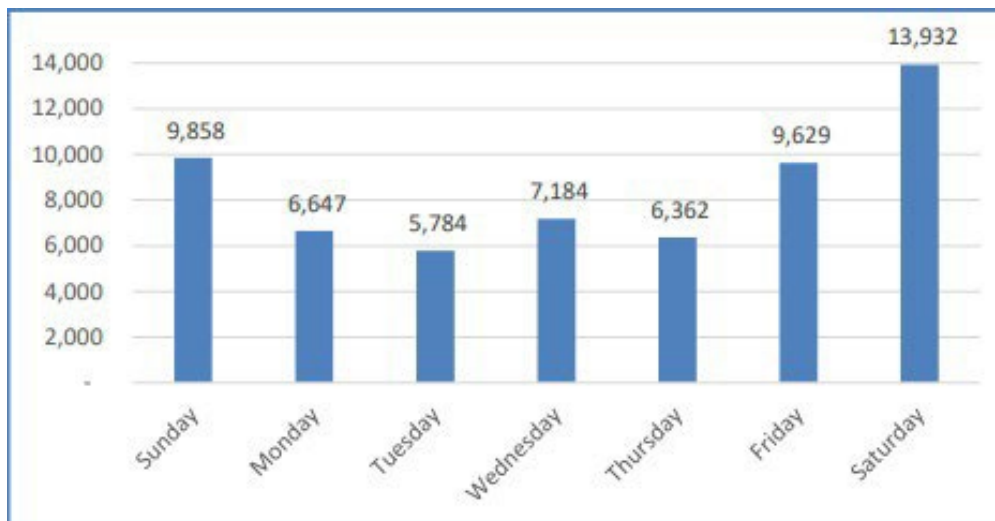
Top 3 days of 2022	
July 16	7561
July 30	7014
June 23	6064

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Ride the River Shuttle Service

Ride the River shuttle has experienced major growth in ridership since 2015 when service returned to seven days per week. Given some continued effects on tourism and travel from the pandemic, 2022 was a successful season. The Ride the River service carried 59,396 passengers during 80 days of operation, with an average of 743 passengers per day. According to Cascade East Transit (CET) calculations, every two Ride the River passengers would have otherwise shared one personal vehicle to float the Deschutes, then Ride the River helped keep 29,698 vehicles off the roads and out of Bend neighborhoods, thereby reducing traffic congestion and parking demand near the river.

Ride the River carries the most passengers during the mid-to-late afternoon, which is also typically the hottest part of the day. Ridership subsequently drops around 5 pm. Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays reported the highest number of passenger trips, while Tuesdays reported the smallest number of passenger trips.



CET staff posted schedules with departure times from Drake Park to simplify service information for floaters. Additional messages were posted on CET’s website to encourage floaters to enjoy the river earlier (11 am – 2 pm) or later in the day (4 pm – 7 pm) to avoid crowds and shuttle lines. Service information was posted on A-frames at each stop location and CET staff were present to provide support for riders at Riverbend Park and the Park & Float.

The season average temperature was 88 degrees and the average Air Quality Index was 27 ppm. These floating conditions—coupled with the loosening of COVID concerns and restrictions—contributed to a 15% increase in ridership compared to the 2021 season.

Rental Concession

Tumalo Creek Kayak & Canoe provided rental services at Park & Float and at Riverbend Park. There were 1,178 paddleboards and kayak rentals at Riverbend Park and 27,647 river tube rentals at Park & Float. That is a 16% increase compared to 2021. In addition, there were 638 complementary life jackets provided to non-renters, increasing safety among all river users.

The concessionaire partnership started several years ago to make durable craft and lifejackets available to river users. 2022 was the fourth year of a five-year contract with Tumalo Creek to provide the service.

Based on zip code data collected for river rentals, 38% of renters provided Oregon zip codes, followed by 26% of renters from California, and 17% of renters from Washington. The three Pacific Northwest states accounted for 81% of tube renters and the remaining 19% provided zip codes for areas of 40 other U.S. states.

