

McDonald's Ferry Visitor Information



The Bureau of Land Management Prineville District recently acquired 4,020 acres of property along the lower [John Day Wild and Scenic River](#). The property is located approximately 14 miles east of Wasco (see map below) and commonly referred to as McDonald's Ferry. The acquisition is key to expanding public recreation opportunities along the river. Opportunities will include boating access, camping, hiking, and interpretation of the Oregon National Historic Trail. The lands will also be managed to maintain and restore healthy rangelands and wildlife habitat. The BLM will be working on a management plan for these newly acquired lands. In the interim, the following guidance applies:

Are the newly acquired lands open to public access?

Yes. McDonald's Ferry Lane provides access to the John Day River and is open to motorized use. While the BLM develops a travel management plan, all other unimproved routes are open to non-motorized use only. All BLM-managed lands in the area are open to cross-country travel on foot or horseback; however, off-road mechanized and motorized use is not permitted. Buildings on the property are not open to the public. Please respect adjacent private property and only access public land.

Can I drive down to the river?

Yes. To access the river from Highway 97, take the exit for Highway 206 towards Wasco, OR. From Wasco, continue roughly one mile southeast on Highway 206 and turn east onto Klondike Road. Travel on Klondike Road for about eight miles where it will turn into McDonald's Ferry Lane. Continue another five miles to the river (see map to the right).

The roads down to McDonald's Ferry are open year-round.

What is the condition of the road?

McDonald's Ferry Lane is graveled and has a moderate grade dropping down to the John Day River. This is a narrow road in some places.

Will the area be open for hunting this season?

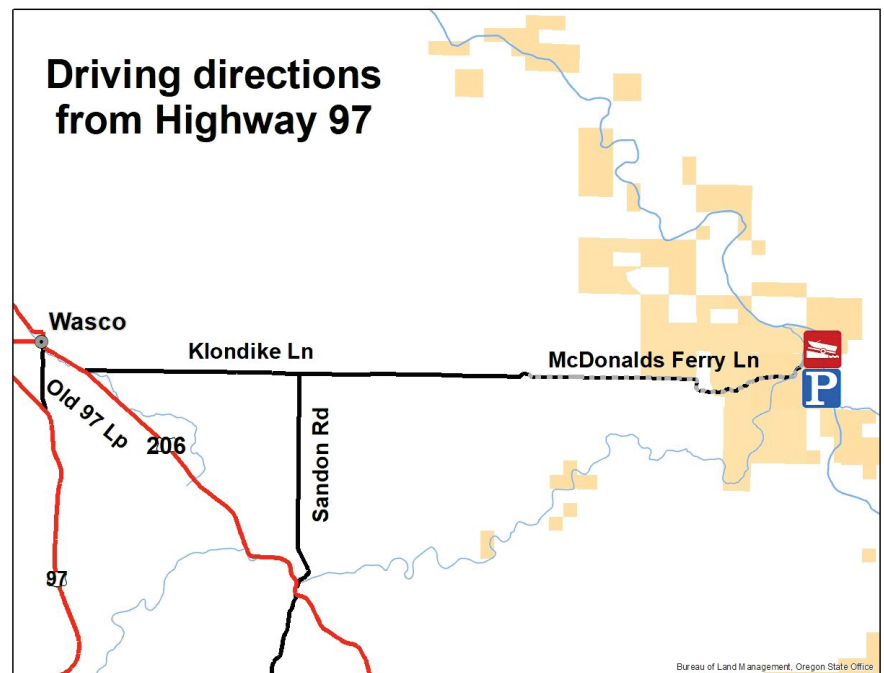
Yes. Public lands are open for legal hunting unless specifically closed and are subject to [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife hunting regulations](#). Shooting is not allowed in the John Day canyon from May 1 to August 31, unless legally hunting. For specific hunting regulations, information about tags, or to acquire registration, contact the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Can I park along the road to access areas on foot?

You can park along roads if there is enough space to get your vehicle fully off the roadway. Do not park in tall, dry vegetation that might present a fire hazard. Avoid parking in muddy areas.

Can I camp down by the river?

Dispersed camping is allowed and there is some space available in the field adjacent to the boat launch (see map on page 2). Be aware there is no potable water or campsite amenities. Please pack out all garbage and belongings and leave the area clean for others to enjoy.



Are there restrooms available at the launch?

A temporary porta-potty will be provided, as available, near the boat ramp. If unavailable, please follow [Leave No Trace principles](#). Bury all human waste 6-8 inches deep and 200 ft away from water, trails, and camps. Boaters on overnight trips are required to use a leak-proof, portable toilet system to remove solid waste from the river canyon. Disposing of Wag Bags in a porta-potty or vault toilet is prohibited. A list of [RV dump stations](#) and further information is available on our [John Day River website](#).

Are campfires allowed?

Within the Wild and Scenic River corridor (approx. 1/4 mile on either side of the river), campfires, smokers, barbecues, portable propane campfires, etc. are not allowed from June 1 to October 15 each year. White gas or propane stoves designed for cooking or lighting only are permitted during the fire closure. Campfires are allowed in a raised firepan only outside of the annual fire restrictions. General campfire restrictions apply outside of the river corridor; please follow basic campfire safety rules. Visit the [BLM fire information webpage](#) for current fire closures and restrictions.

Can I use the McDonald's Ferry boat ramp and is the ramp improved?

A primitive, unimproved boat ramp exists at the end of McDonald's Ferry Lane. Be aware of river current, mud, and vegetation as water levels fluctuate greatly. Scout the ramp first before backing a trailer. It may be necessary to carry your boat in muddy conditions to avoid getting stuck.

Is there parking and room for trailers at the McDonald's Ferry boat ramp site?

There is plenty of parking space available in the flat area adjacent to the launch site (see map to the right).

Do I need a permit to use the boat ramp?

An online John Day River day-use or overnight boater permit from [Recreation.gov](#) is required to boat between Service Creek and Tum-water Falls year-round. McDonald's Ferry is the last public take-out on the John Day River above Tumwater Falls.

Can I use a shuttle to move my vehicle?

See our [webpage](#) for a list of shuttle operators.

What if I want to be a hunting, fishing, or rafting guide on the John Day River?

Commercial operators need to have a Special Recreation Permit. Interested parties can contact the Prineville District at (541) 416-6700 for more information.

Can I ride a mountain bike or E-Bike, or use an Off-Highway Vehicle in this area?

Bicycles are allowed on all roads and trails year-round. You can ride OHVs or E-Bikes on roads designated as open to motorized use. No cross-country bike or OHV travel is allowed.

Can I provide input to the McDonald's Ferry Management Plan? Yes, requests to be on the mailing list can be made to cmryan@blm.gov

What if I have additional questions? Please contact the BLM Prineville District at (541) 416-6700.

