



## Introduction

The Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners are happy to be able to provide this online version of a river guide to the Columbia River between Canal Flats and Golden, BC, Canada. Accessible to everyone through our website, [www.cwsp.ca](http://www.cwsp.ca), we hope to make your river journey a pleasant and memorable experience. We offer here a few comments and recommendations to help you enjoy this incredible area in a manner that will not be harmful to the wildlife or to the magnificent ecosystem created by the Mighty Columbia River and its surrounding wetlands.

Internationally recognized as one of the last intact wetlands in North America, the river and surrounding sloughs provide a place for over 250 species of birds to rest, replenish and, in many cases, raise their young. It is important to recognize the importance of avoiding nesting and feeding areas from spring until July, even in non-motorized craft. Please make good use of binoculars when watching birds and other wildlife with their young. In addition, avoid gravel areas at the confluence of tributaries with the Columbia River as these are important spawning areas for fish.

While motorized craft is allowed in the main channels of the river, no motorized craft is allowed, by Federal law, in the wetlands adjacent to the river at any time during the year. While traversing the main channel of the river, boaters should make every effort to avoid creating a wake, especially during the spring nesting season. By travelling slowly and quietly, your experience of the area will be enhanced by more frequent wildlife sightings and you will be helping to insure that the habitat continues to remain healthy in a place where both man and animals can flourish. For your own safety, slower is always better since there are many areas where submerged pilings and snags and sand bars present hazards. As well, many slower moving boats, kayaks and canoes travel the river. Due to the meandering nature of the waterway, even moderate speeds can spell disaster as faster craft comes upon these slower travellers just around a bend.

Much of the land along the river is private property. Unless marked in green on the map designating National Wildlife areas, do not assume that river travellers are welcome to use the land bordering the river. Some land owners are considering providing camping and picnic areas for a small fee and we will add those sites to the Guide once they become available. There are some areas at take out points that are currently used for camping and picnics but most do not have toilet or trash disposal facilities. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO TAKE ALL OF YOUR TRASH AND GARBAGE WITH YOU.** There is no one who will pick up after you, so be a good citizen and leave nothing behind.

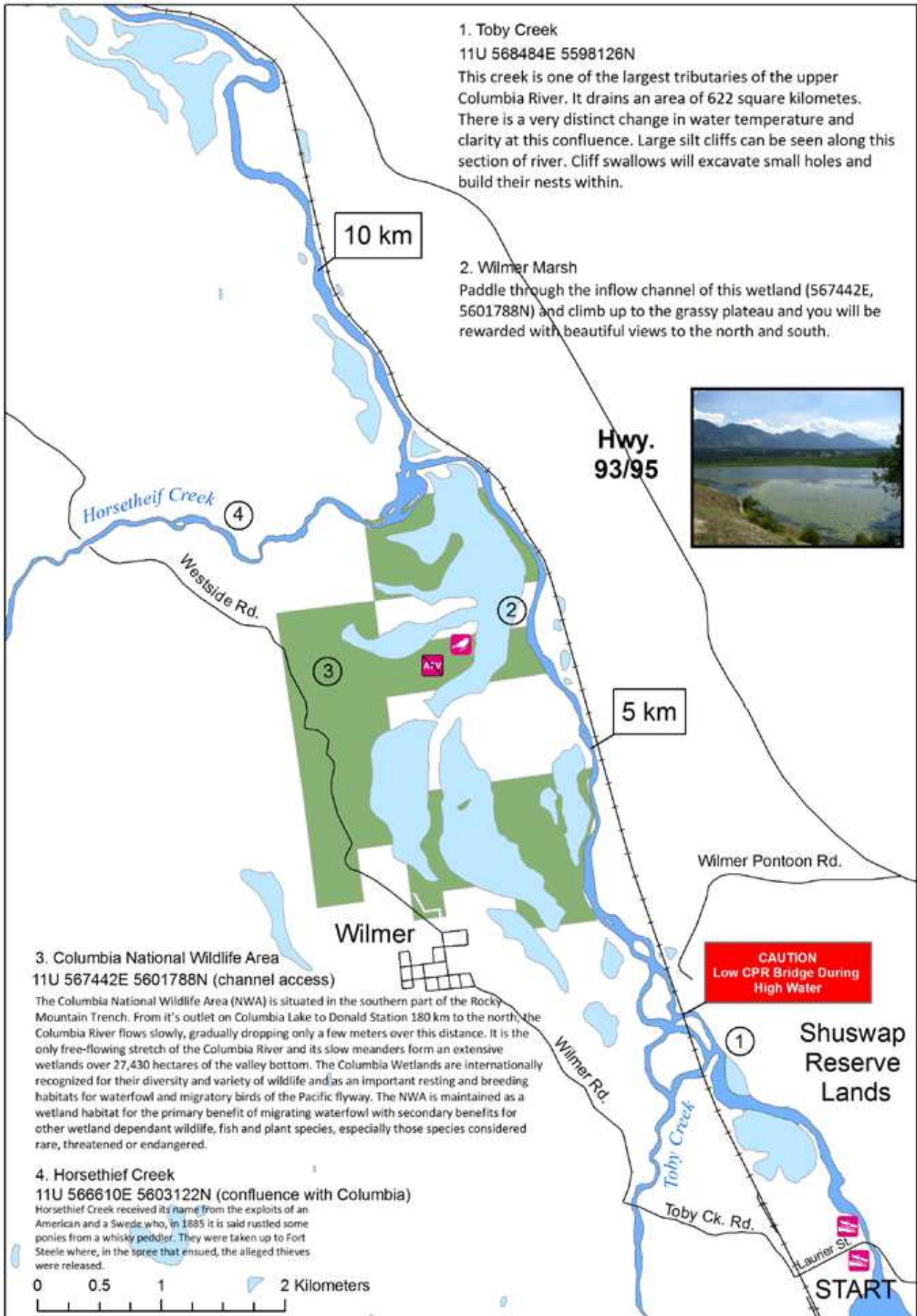
You will notice that the first section of the Guide, from Canal Flats to the north end of Windermere Lake, features pictures and text relating historic and wildlife information. The subsequent sections are more of a navigational guide featuring GSP coordinates to help identify the best routes. More information will be added to these maps at a later date. Thanks to Chris Carli for his work in supplying this information. Please feel free to print these maps as needed to help make your visit to the Columbia River a safe and enjoyable experience.



## Section 1

### Athalmere Bridge to Radium Hot Springs

If you have started your river journey at any of the points south of Lake Windermere, this take out area at the north end of the lake (marked as "start" on the section 1 map) will give you the opportunity to access a convenience store and restaurant within walking distance. The clay bluffs on the east side of the channel have been home to owls on occasion. Refer to the map for other points of interest. Allowing time to explore some of these areas is worthwhile.



**1. Toby Creek**  
 11U 568484E 5598126N  
 This creek is one of the largest tributaries of the upper Columbia River. It drains an area of 622 square kilometres. There is a very distinct change in water temperature and clarity at this confluence. Large silt cliffs can be seen along this section of river. Cliff swallows will excavate small holes and build their nests within.

**2. Wilmer Marsh**  
 Paddle through the inflow channel of this wetland (567442E, 5601788N) and climb up to the grassy plateau and you will be rewarded with beautiful views to the north and south.



**3. Columbia National Wildlife Area**  
 11U 567442E 5601788N (channel access)  
 The Columbia National Wildlife Area (NWA) is situated in the southern part of the Rocky Mountain Trench. From its outlet on Columbia Lake to Donald Station 180 km to the north, the Columbia River flows slowly, gradually dropping only a few meters over this distance. It is the only free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River and its slow meanders form an extensive wetlands over 27,430 hectares of the valley bottom. The Columbia Wetlands are internationally recognized for their diversity and variety of wildlife and as an important resting and breeding habitats for waterfowl and migratory birds of the Pacific flyway. The NWA is maintained as a wetland habitat for the primary benefit of migrating waterfowl with secondary benefits for other wetland dependant wildlife, fish and plant species, especially those species considered rare, threatened or endangered.

**4. Horsethief Creek**  
 11U 566610E 5603122N (confluence with Columbia)  
 Horsethief Creek received its name from the exploits of an American and a Swede who, in 1885 it is said rustled some ponies from a whisky peddler. They were taken up to Fort Steele where, in the spree that ensued, the alleged thieves were released.

0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers

**CAUTION**  
 Low CPR Bridge During High Water

**Shuswap Reserve Lands**

**START**



## Section 2

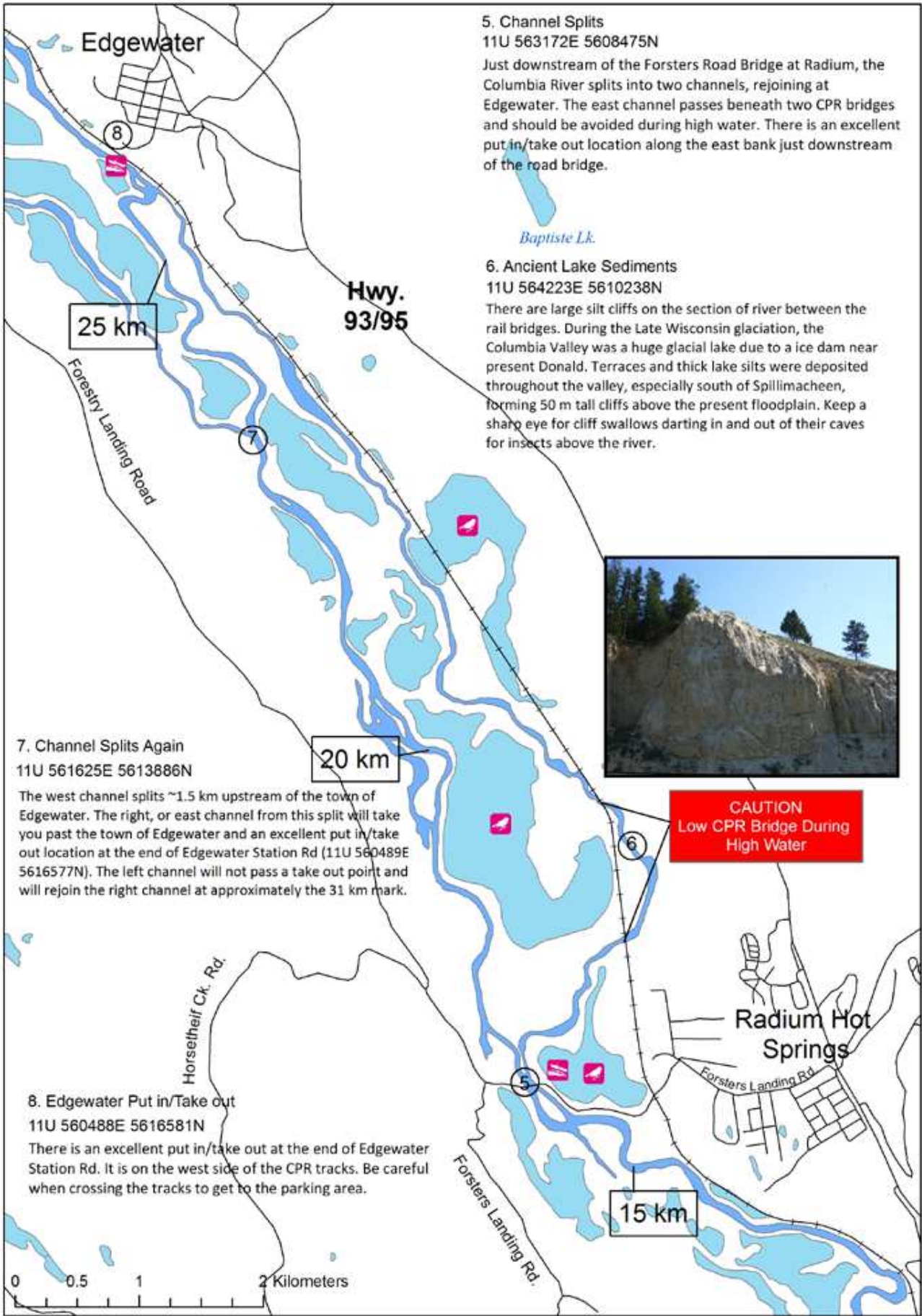
### Radium Hot Springs to Edgewater

The Village of Radium Hot Springs offers many amenities including hotels, restaurants, golf courses, a Visitor's Center, fuel stations and of course the hot springs. You will need to arrange for shuttle service if you plan to take out here and enjoy the village. The village is very pedestrian friendly and the Sinclair Creek Trail is a very easy and worthwhile side trip. Kootenay National Park borders the town and there are numerous trails and spectacular scenery within the park. During the summer months on the grounds of the Visitors Center there is a street market every Friday from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. offering everything from local produce to one of a kind hand made jewelry. Local musicians provide live music Fridays and Saturdays from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Ask the staff at the Radium Visitor's Center about a possible camping spot halfway between Radium Hot Springs and Edgewater known as Thompson's Landing. This area is part of the Wildlife Management Area so it is not private lands and it is an historical stopping point on the River.

The village of Edgewater offers a convenience store, golf course and RV park. It is a short hike (1 kilometer) to the village from the take out point.

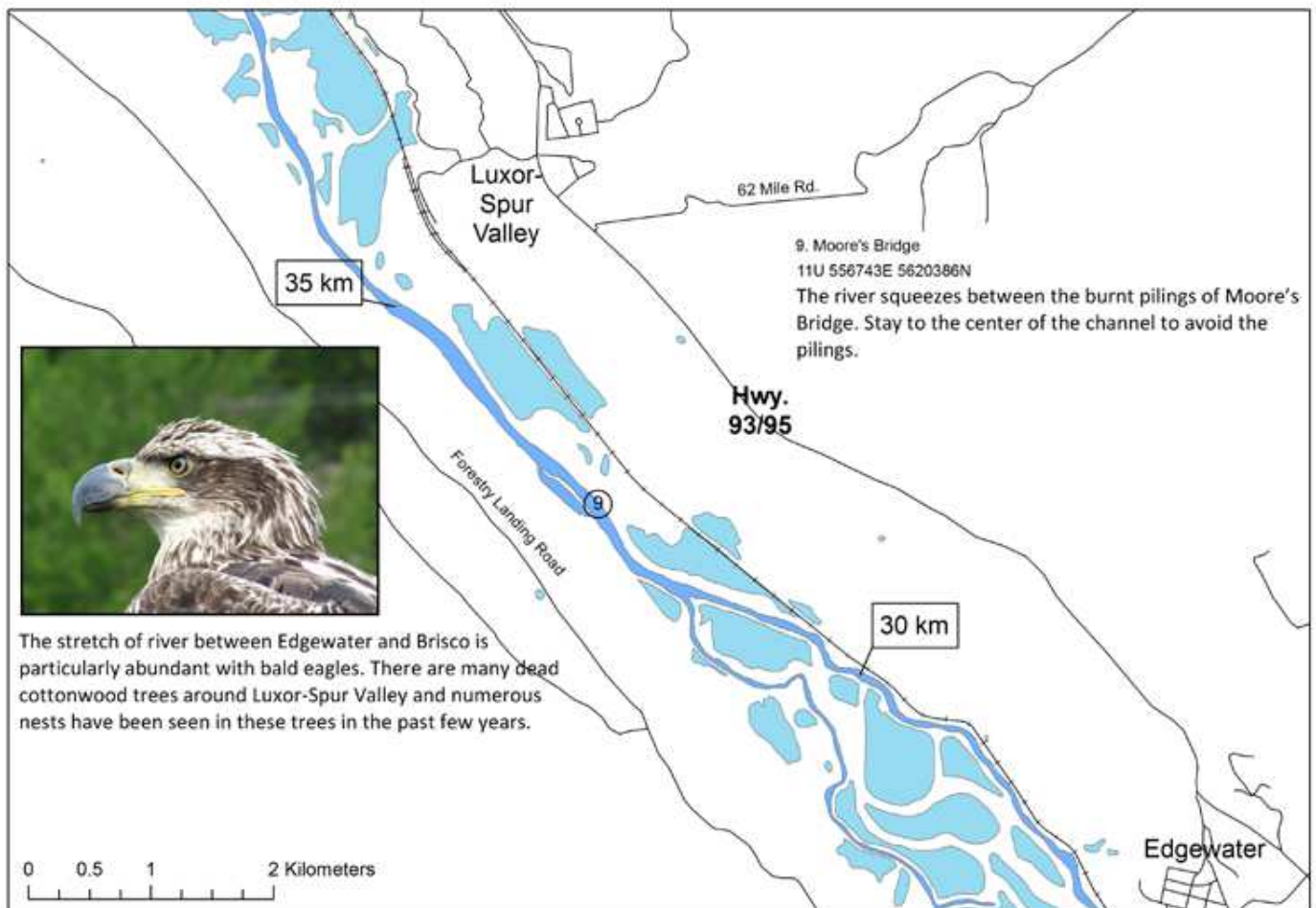






## Sections 3 and 4 Edgewater to Brisco

The section offers a great paddle and spectacular scenery with lots of wildlife viewing possibilities, but no good camping areas. The village of Brisco does offer a general store and cabins, both of which would require shuttle service. The general store has been in continuous operation since 1911 and literally has a little bit of everything including a post office, fuel, liquor outlet, fishing gear and all the things you would expect of a general store.

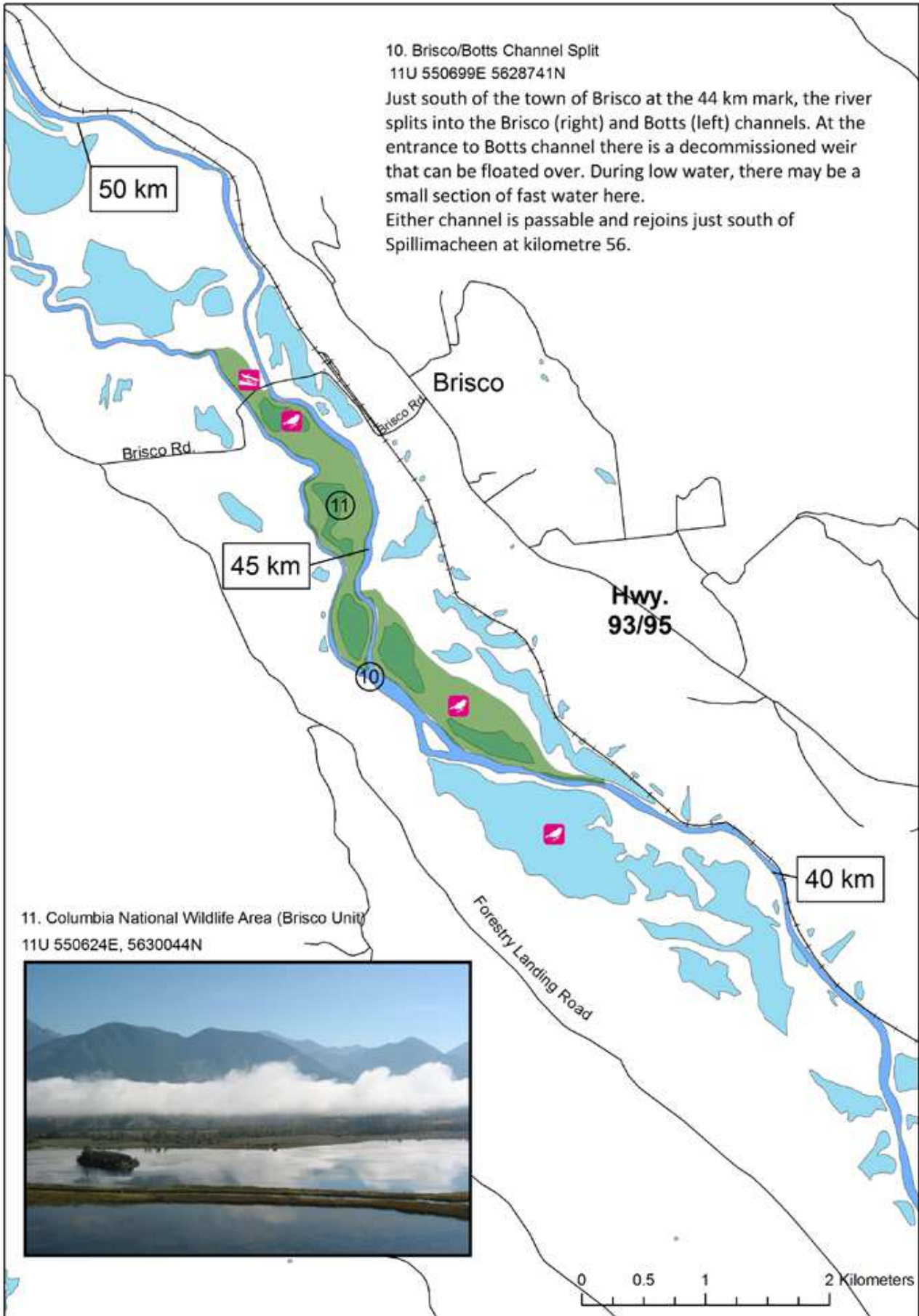


The stretch of river between Edgewater and Brisco is particularly abundant with bald eagles. There are many dead cottonwood trees around Luxor-Spur Valley and numerous nests have been seen in these trees in the past few years.



10. Brisco/Botts Channel Split  
11U 550699E 5628741N

Just south of the town of Brisco at the 44 km mark, the river splits into the Brisco (right) and Botts (left) channels. At the entrance to Botts channel there is a decommissioned weir that can be floated over. During low water, there may be a small section of fast water here. Either channel is passable and rejoins just south of Spillimacheen at kilometre 56.



11. Columbia National Wildlife Area (Brisco Unit)  
11U 550624E, 5630044N





## Section 5

### Brisco to Spillimacheen

At GSP location 50 degrees 51 feet North by 116 degrees 19 feet West:

Look for a faint trail on the right hand side (east) of the river. There is a primitive take out point here. There is a rest area with toilets and trash disposal a short walk away. Be careful crossing the railroad tracks. The rest area is north of the railroad crossing area. Camping is allowed here.

Spillimacheen Bridge:

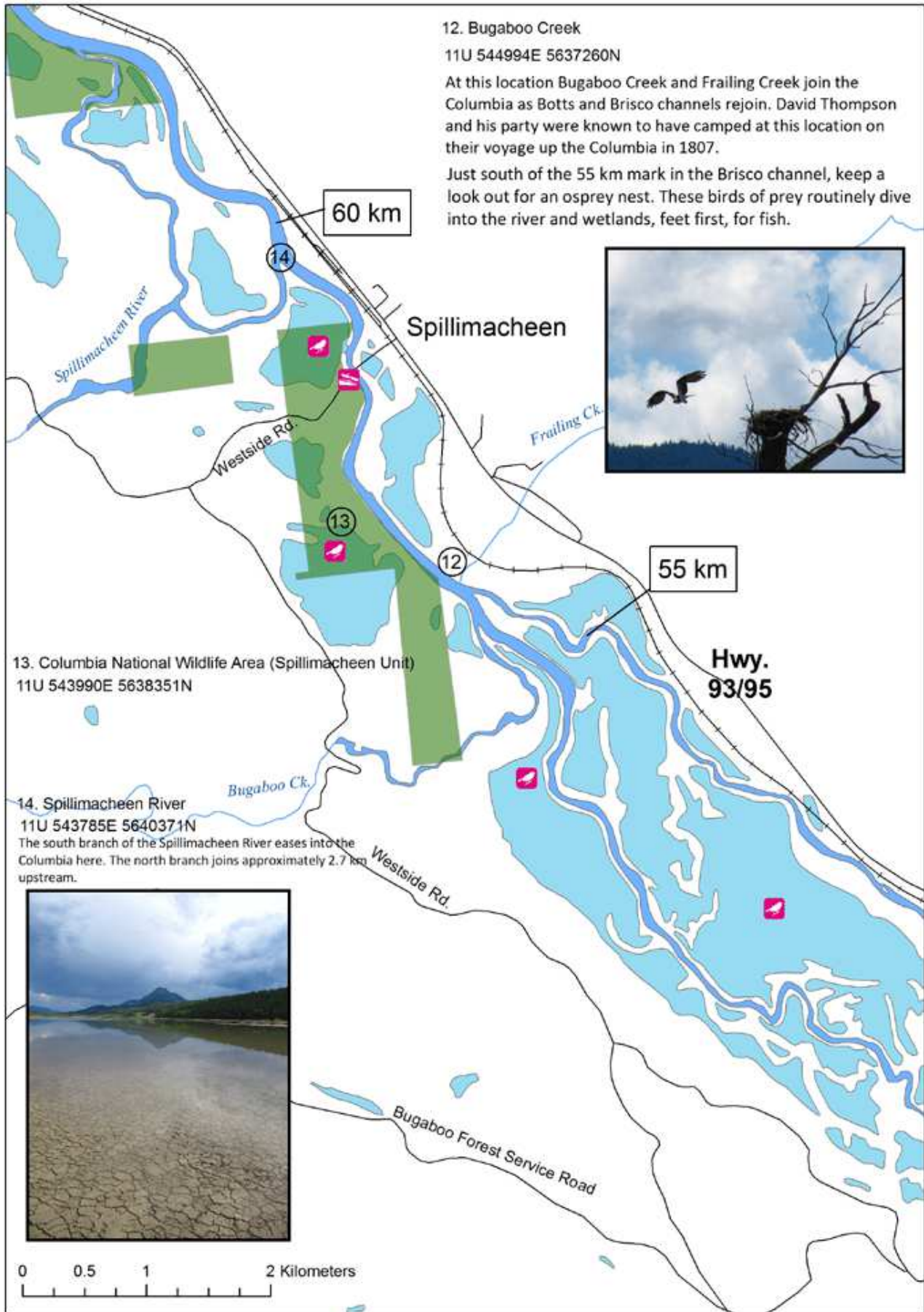
Just before crossing under the bridge, look for a small channel to the left (west). This will lead you a short distance to a take out point (canoes and kayaks only) alongside the old roadway. You will see an information kiosk. While there are no facilities here, some folks do camp here and there is room for parking support vehicles and there is good cell phone service here. Please take all trash with you when you leave. Just after the bridge you will see old pilings from the river-boat days on the left bank. There is a possible camping spot just up the bank. A short walk across the bridge will bring you to the village of Spillimacheen. There is a coffee shop and cabins located here. Alternately, you could continue on a short distance past the bridge and take out on the right (east) side of the river. This will put you onto CP Rail property so be careful crossing the tracks. It is not recommended you camp here as it can be very noisy. There is a short channel on the left just before the bend in the river. This is a possible camping spot as it is in the National Wildlife area. As always, take away all trash and garbage and watch your campfire closely.

Spillimacheen River:

Between the South and North forks confluence with the Columbia, look for a small creek entering on the right (east). If your craft is light enough, you can portage up this little creek to a take out point just before the railroad bridge. A gravel road is the access and runs north, parallel to the tracks for a short distance before entering the highway.

Just north of the South fork, there are sandy beaches during low water periods (early spring and mid fall). These are good camping spots, but there are no facilities so take all garbage with you and build your campfire on the sand well away from vegetation. There can be grass fires even this close to the river. Also watch for bear coming to the river at these spots to fish and drink.





12. Bugaboo Creek  
 11U 544994E 5637260N

At this location Bugaboo Creek and Frailing Creek join the Columbia as Botts and Brisco channels rejoin. David Thompson and his party were known to have camped at this location on their voyage up the Columbia in 1807.

Just south of the 55 km mark in the Brisco channel, keep a look out for an osprey nest. These birds of prey routinely dive into the river and wetlands, feet first, for fish.



13. Columbia National Wildlife Area (Spillimacheen Unit)  
 11U 543990E 5638351N

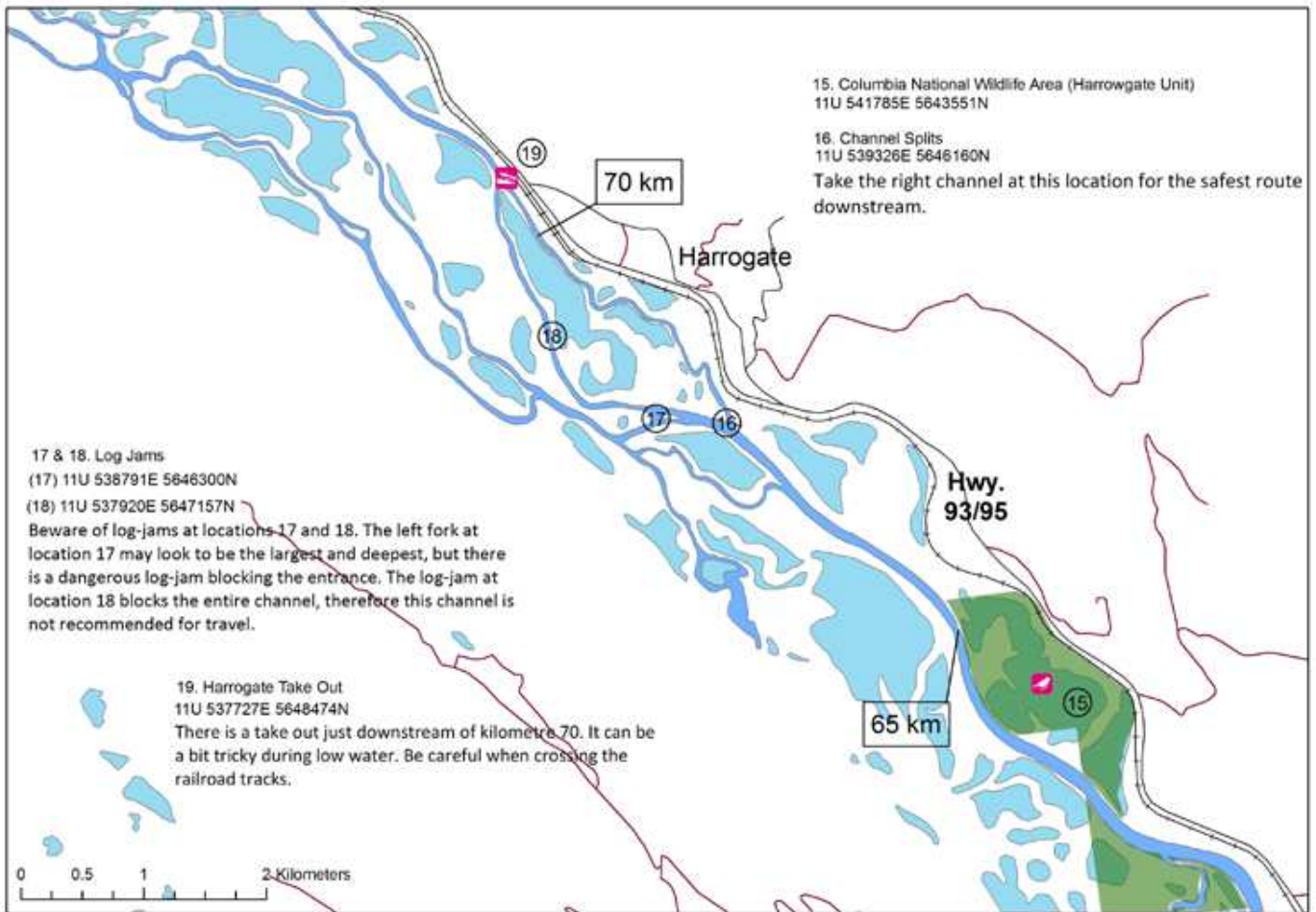
14. Spillimacheen River  
 11U 543785E 5640371N  
 The south branch of the Spillimacheen River eases into the Columbia here. The north branch joins approximately 2.7 km upstream.



0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers

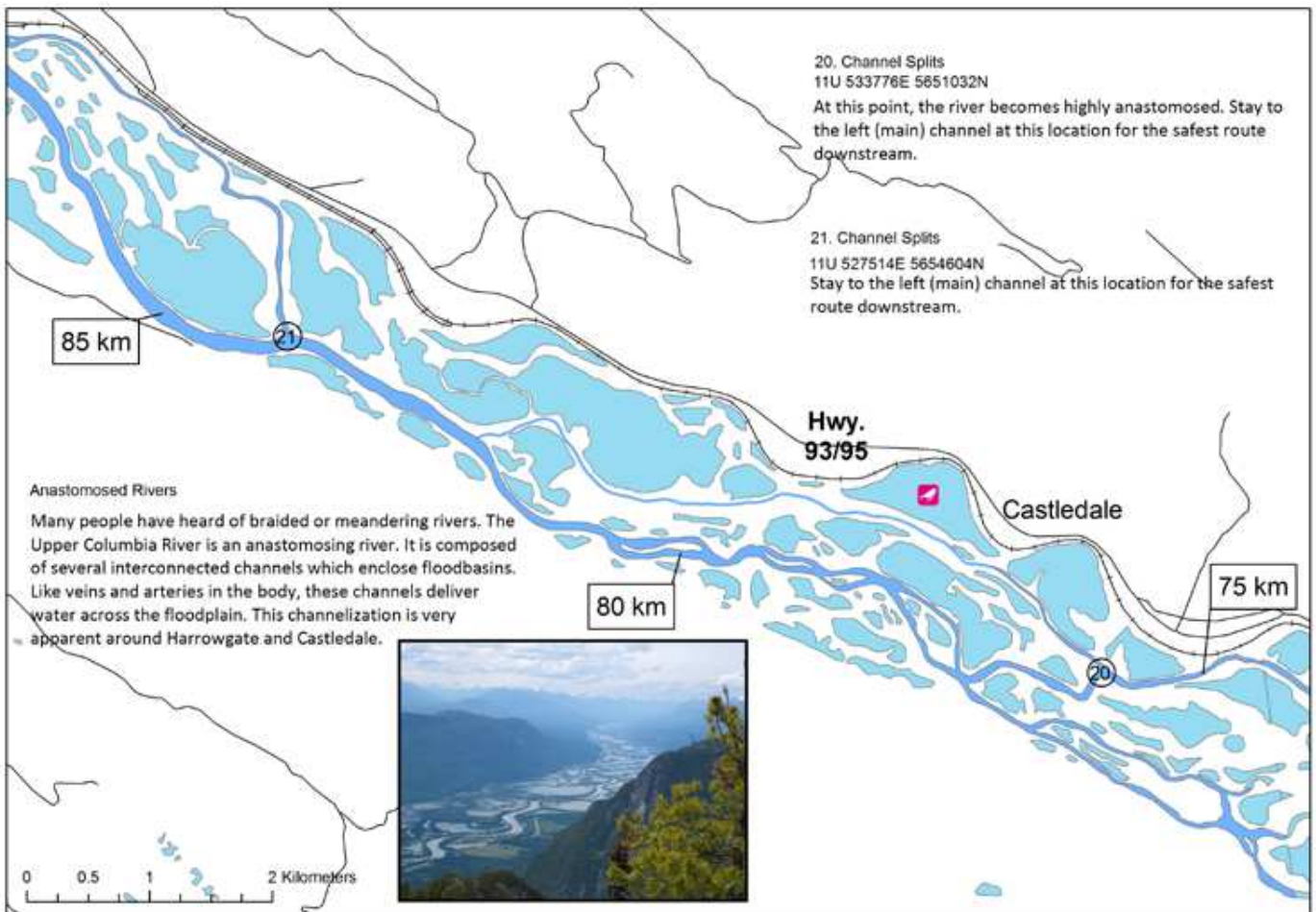


## Section 6





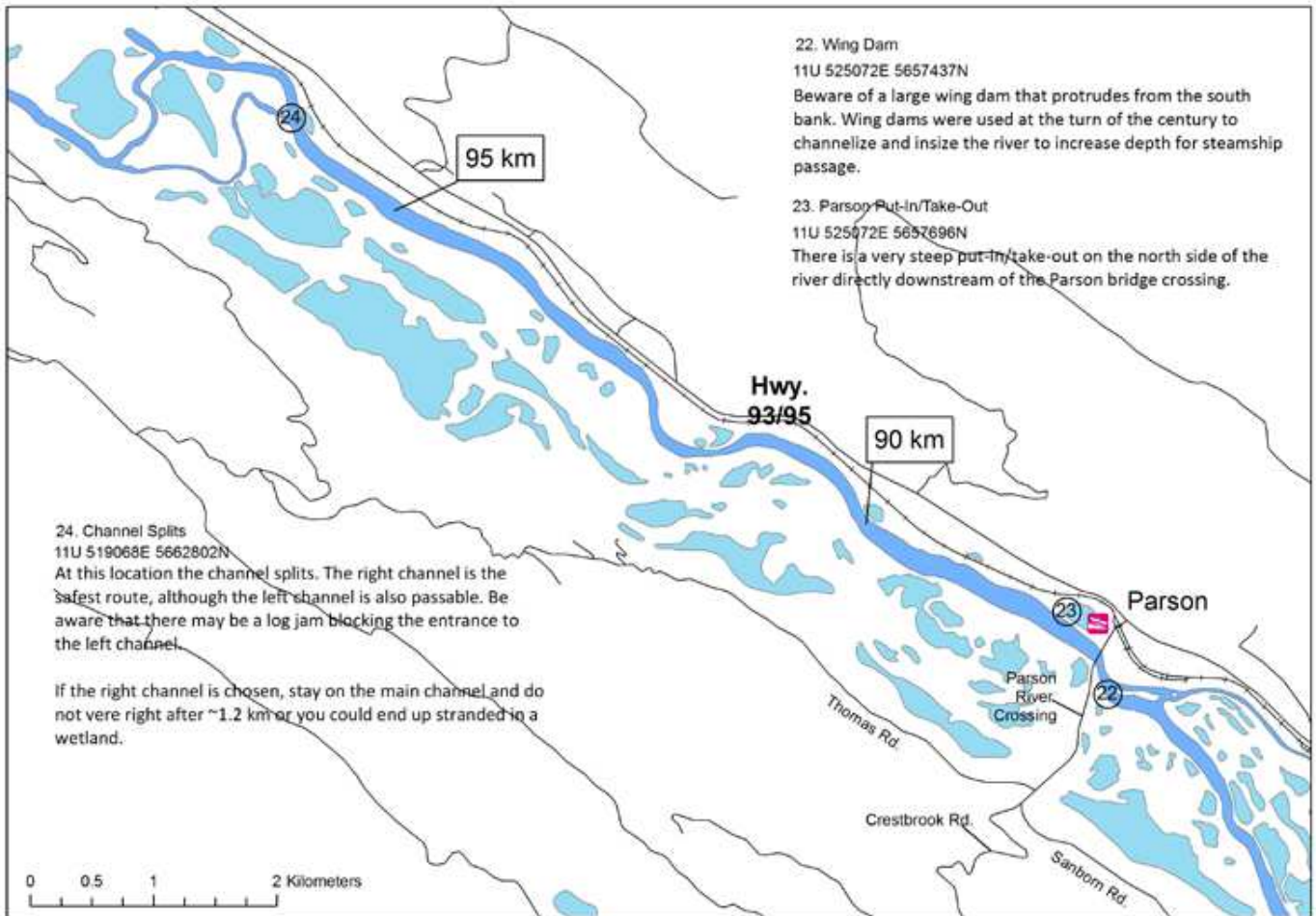
## Section 7







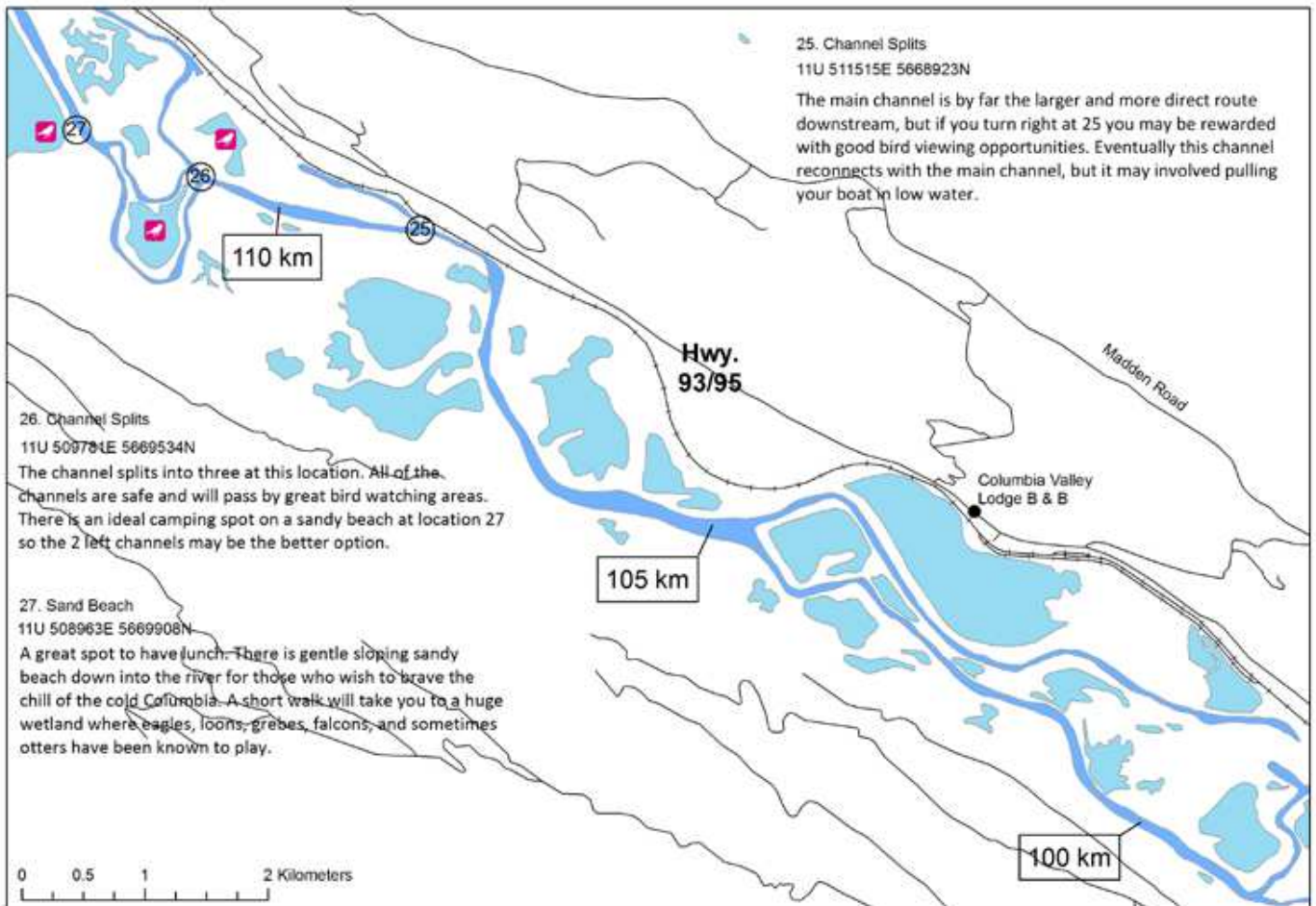
## Section 8

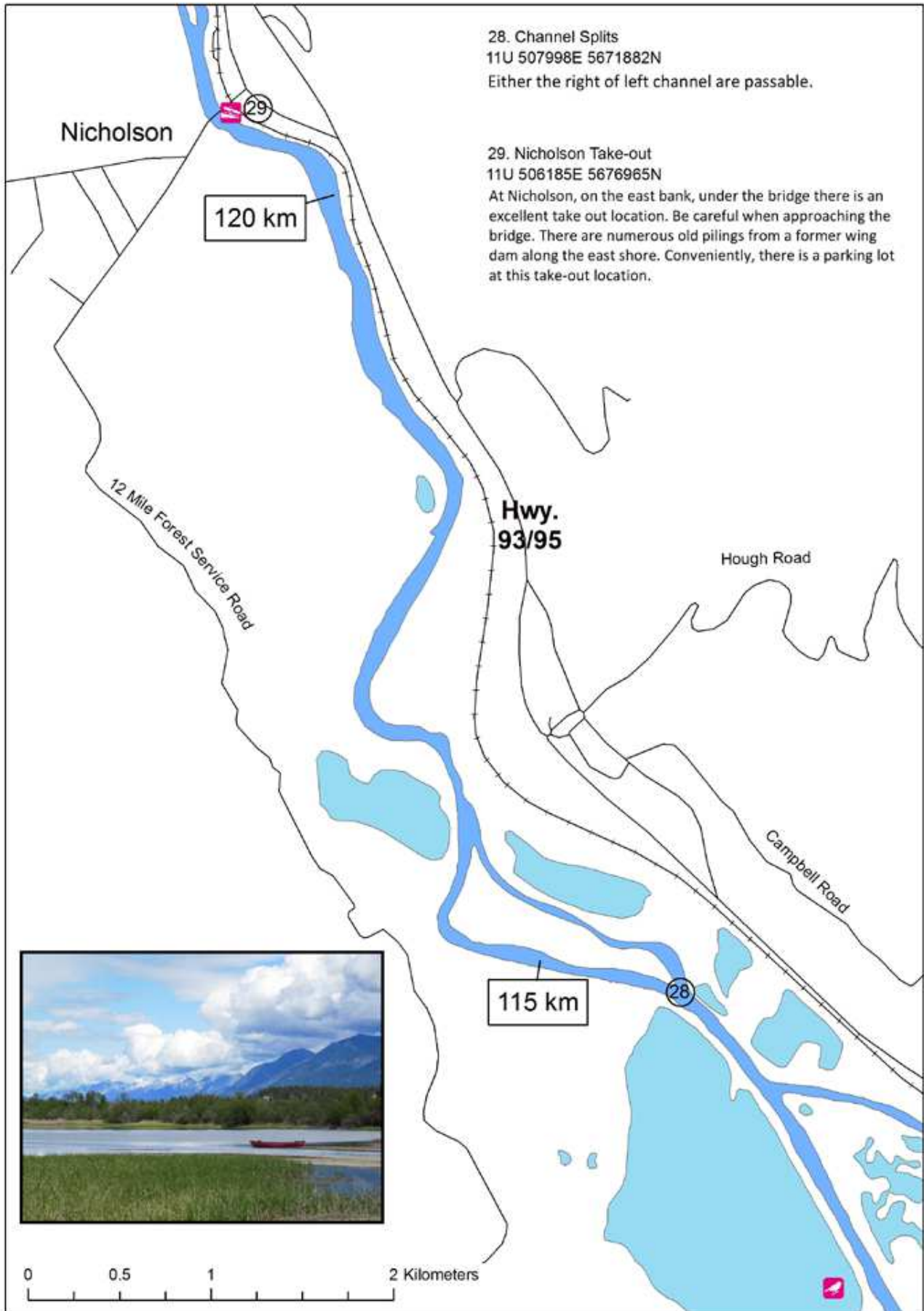


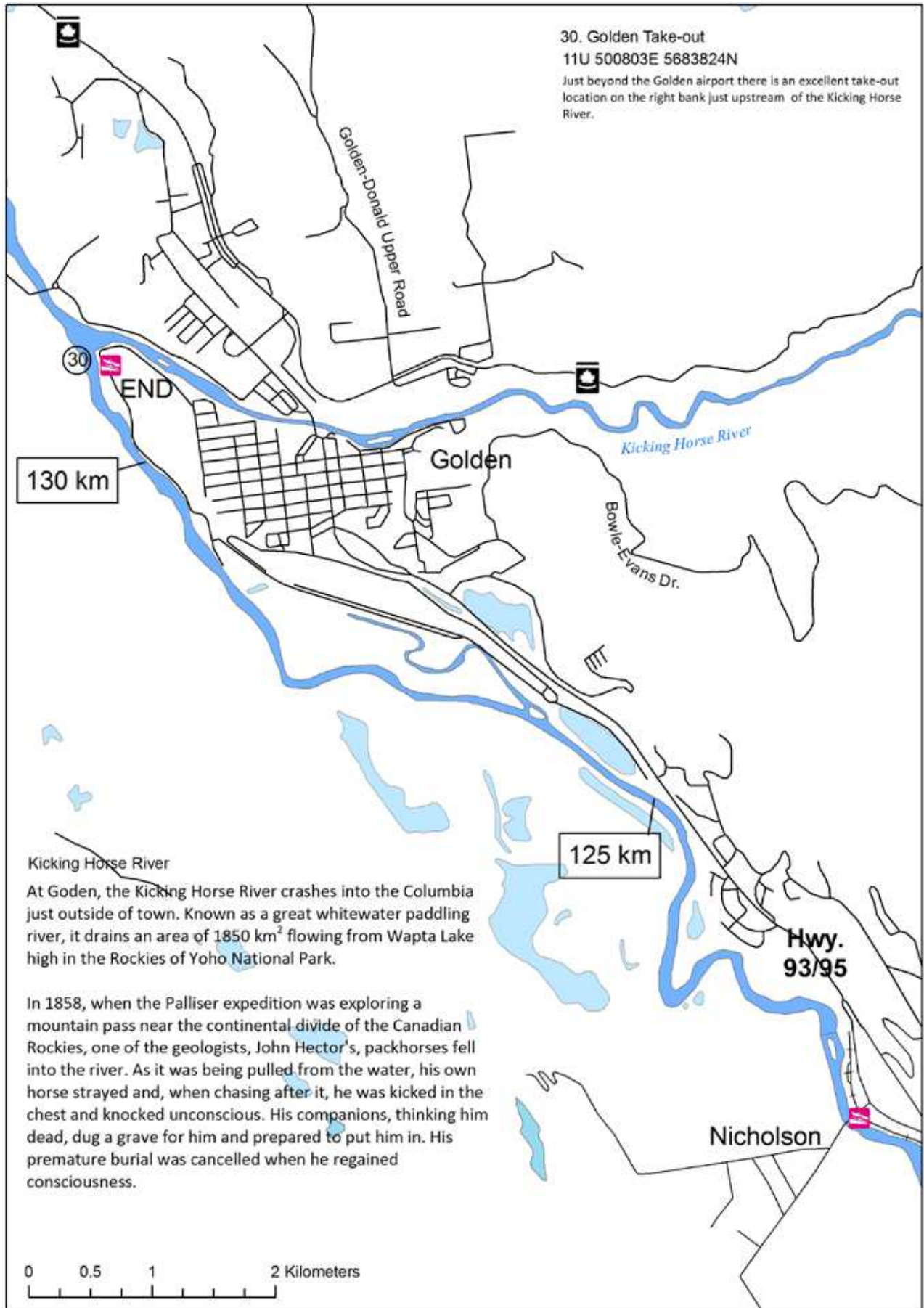




## Section 9







**Kicking Horse River**

At Golden, the Kicking Horse River crashes into the Columbia just outside of town. Known as a great whitewater paddling river, it drains an area of 1850 km<sup>2</sup> flowing from Wapta Lake high in the Rockies of Yoho National Park.

In 1858, when the Palliser expedition was exploring a mountain pass near the continental divide of the Canadian Rockies, one of the geologists, John Hector's, packhorses fell into the river. As it was being pulled from the water, his own horse strayed and, when chasing after it, he was kicked in the chest and knocked unconscious. His companions, thinking him dead, dug a grave for him and prepared to put him in. His premature burial was cancelled when he regained consciousness.