

the mouth of the Applegate River downstream to the Lobster Creek Bridge is one of 208 river segments in the United States (totaling 12,708.8 miles of stream) designated as Wild and/or Scenic under the Congressional legislation of 1968 (as of 2015). It is under the management of the Bureau of Land Management and the U. S. Forest Service.^{4,5}

The Rogue River estuary is short and small (about 627 acres at mean high tide), but the river drainage ranks second in the size among coastal rivers—covering 3.3 million acres. Only the Columbia River is larger in surface area (166 million acres). The town of Gold Beach (originally called Ellensburg—named after Ellen Tichenor, the daughter of a sea captain who founded the nearby city of Port Orford) has promoted the development of ocean-going navigation: jetties, dikes and boat basins have extensively altered the lower estuary of the river. Originally the mouth of the river was virtually non-navigable, with controlling depth over the entrance bar between two feet in late summer to nine feet in winter.⁶

The jetties were completed in 1960 and a 13-foot channel was completed in 1961. Natural seasonal shoaling near the entrance continued to be a navigational problem soon after the project was completed. Shoaling is a natural phenomenon where tidal currents and river flows come together. Sand carried by the river and by the ocean currents will drop out of suspension when there is no turbulence to keep it suspended. These shoals will primarily build up during winter when the ocean is rough and the river is full. A breakwater dike was built in 1964, from the Highway 101 bridge tangent to the south jetty, to resolve the problem. It was designed to increase scouring by narrowing the river channel, thereby increasing the current. The original effort was abandoned due to the massive Christmas Day flooding in that year, but resumed in 1970 and was completed in 1972. Sadly, the shoaling remains a problem.

■ An early postcard showing bank fishermen casting for coho and Chinook salmon along the north side of the Rogue, opposite the town of Gold Beach. Note the hog line of boats anchored in seeming perfect formation. A “hog line” is merely several boats anchored next to each other in a line during the spring salmon run (spring Chinook are often referred to as “hogs” because they are generally larger than their fall-run cousins). The lines are generally anchored in the river in a two-to-six mile per hour current, allowing the river to work the lures. In the background is the Isaac Lee Patterson Highway 101 bridge. Photo courtesy of the Curry County Historical Society.

