

The Bighorn River

Ft. Smith to St. Xavier, Montana

Four pages showing the fifteen miles of prime trout fishing between Afterbay Dam and St. Xavier, Montana

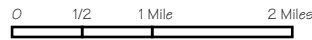
1 River miles are marked with these symbols

Page 1 — Overall View

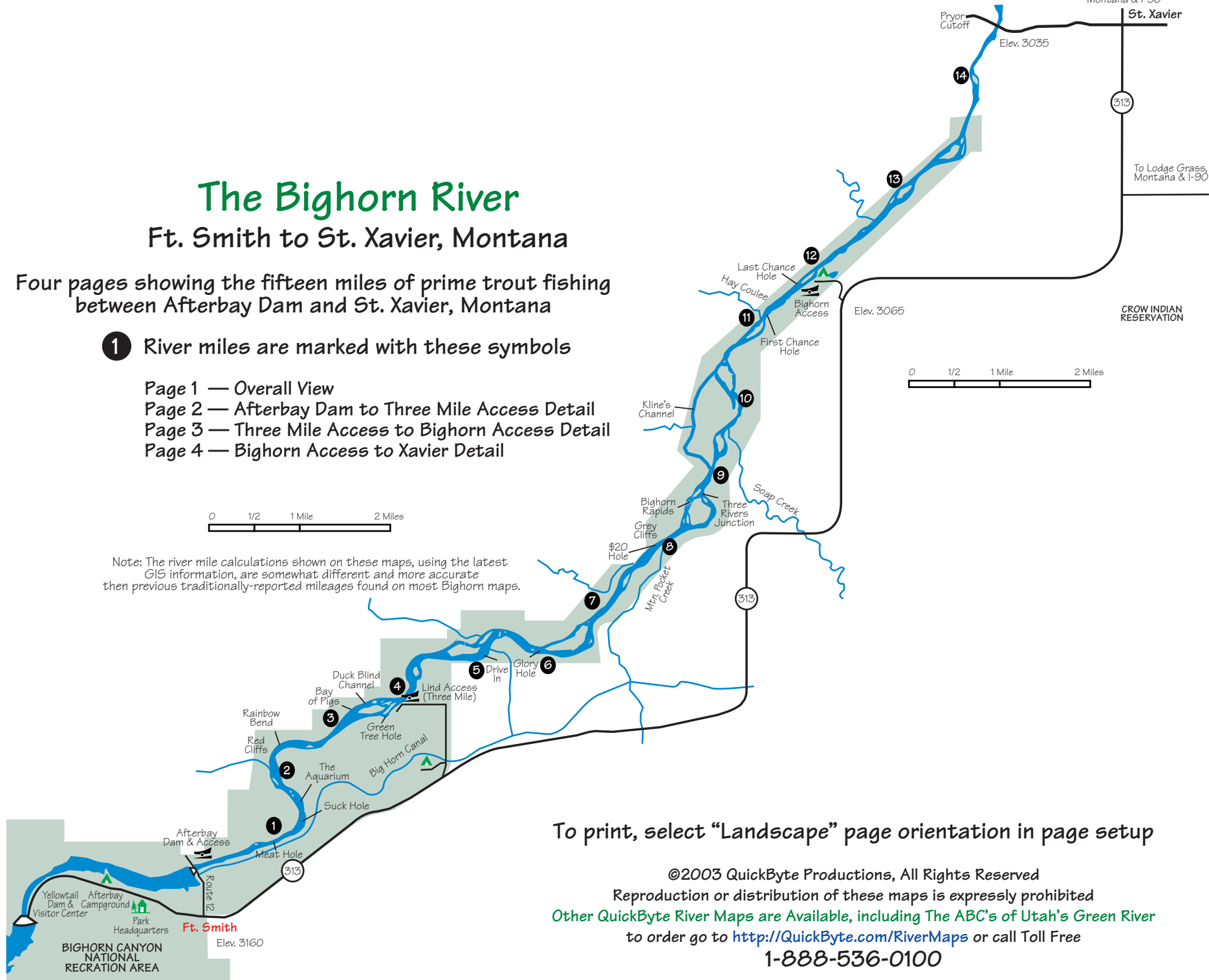
Page 2 — Afterbay Dam to Three Mile Access Detail

Page 3 — Three Mile Access to Bighorn Access Detail

Page 4 — Bighorn Access to Xavier Detail



Note: The river mile calculations shown on these maps, using the latest GIS information, are somewhat different and more accurate than previous traditionally-reported mileages found on most Bighorn maps.



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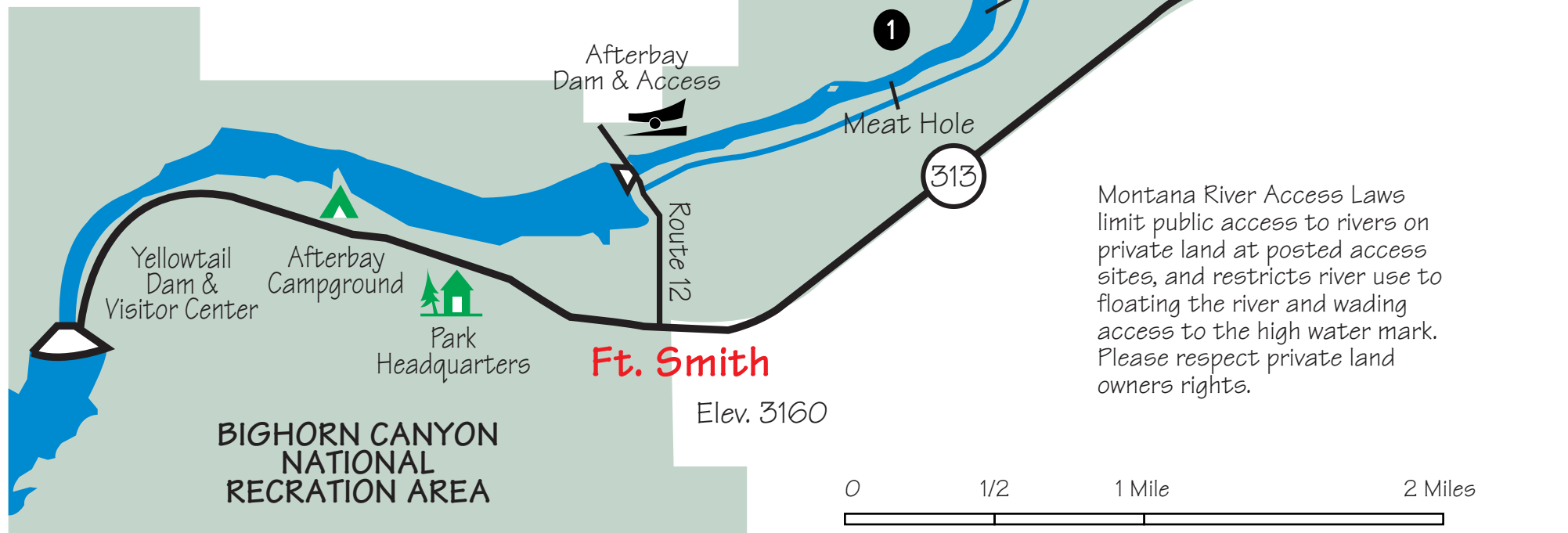
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Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area was established by an act of Congress on October 15, 1966, following the construction of the Yellowtail Dam by the Bureau of Reclamation. This dam, named after the famous Crow chairman Robert Yellowtail, harnessed the waters of the Bighorn River and turned this variable stream into a magnificent lake and a world class trout fishing stream below the dam.



Releases from Yellowtail Dam are captured in a second dam, named Afterbay Dam. This small 155 ft. high dam is called a re-regulation dam, and serves to smooth out the peaks and troughs in the river levels caused by daily fluctuations of flows through the turbines of Yellowtail Dam.

Adjacent to the Afterbay Lake is Afterbay Campground, which contains 29 sites which accommodate both RVs and tents year round. Each site is equipped with tables and BBQ pits/fire rings, bear-proof food storage containers, vault restrooms, a boat ramp, drinking water and RV dump station. No reservations, hook-ups or showers.



Before 1966, fishing guides hardly ever considered the Bighorn River, but the building of the Yellowtail Dam created an exceptional tail-water fishery. Today, many consider it the best trophy trout fishery in the lower forty-eight. It can get crowded. Even on an early spring day, there might be over 100 boats on the upper 12 miles of river a day.

In the fall many sportsmen come to the Bighorn to do a "Blast and Cast". That is, fishing for trophy trout and hunting pheasants from a drift boat or raft the same day. The many river islands contain good populations of ringnecks, and boaters and waders have rightful, legal access to these gems.

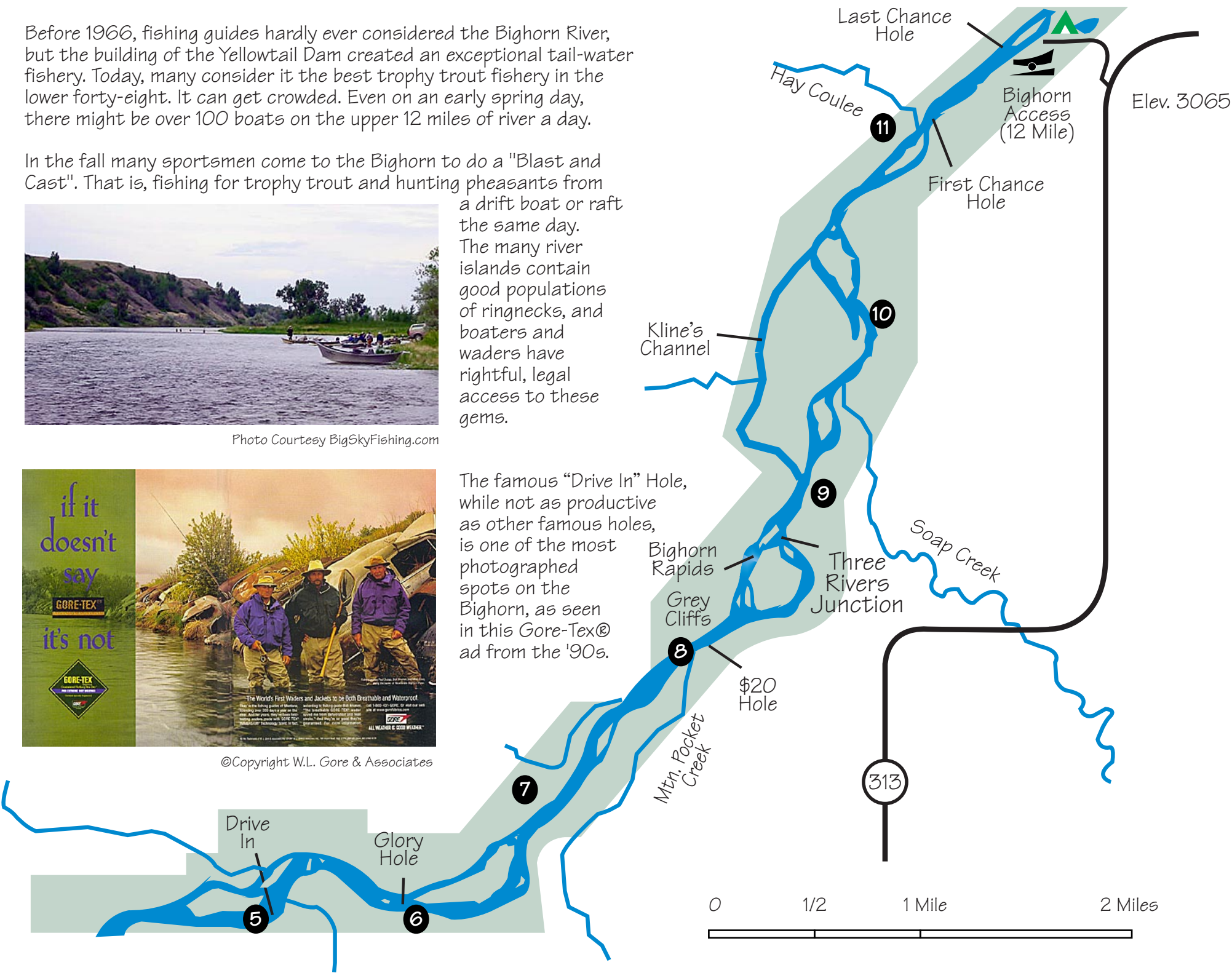


Photo Courtesy BigSkyFishing.com



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The famous "Drive In" Hole, while not as productive as other famous holes, is one of the most photographed spots on the Bighorn, as seen in this Gore-Tex® ad from the '90s.



This stretch of the river is not fished as much as between Afterbay and the 12 Mile Access, but does have good holes around the 13 mile island. This section of the river is more popular with duck and goose hunters, it seems.



Further downstream near Hardin, the annual Crow Fair takes place each August and is the largest Indian celebration in Montana. If you're here then plan on attending to experience and enjoy our cultural diversity first-handed.

