




Welcome to the Upper Iowa River, the most widely-recognized river in Iowa and one of the first in the nation to be nominated as a national Wild and Scenic River in the 1960s. Thanks largely to private landowners and organizations that own and care for it, the river corridor has retained its scenic and natural character and become a premier recreational river. You will share this river with local families, anglers, bird enthusiasts, campers, hikers and the wildlife that call this diverse corridor home. The river originates in LeRoy, Minnesota before meandering 136 miles to the Mississippi River near New Albion, Iowa. The river and corridor change along its length, going from a narrow and winding savanna river to a wider and more dynamic river flanked by dramatic vertical limestone palisades and forested bluffs.

Rules and Regulations: Below are guidelines that will be helpful when you paddle the Upper Iowa River. However, it is not a complete list of all paddling regulations and always be sure laws haven't changed. For more information, visit www.iowadnr.gov or contact the DNR Central Office in Des Moines at 515-725-8200.

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- Dams are Dangerous:* Dams come in many sizes but ALL dams are drowning machines no matter how small they look. Paddlers should portage around all dams and NEVER attempt to go over them.

Life Jackets Save Lives : Be ready for the unexpected and always wear your life jacket. This message brought to you by the National Safe Boating Council.

The map shows the Lodi River section of the American River. The route starts at Chester Access (River Mile 126.5) and ends at Lodi Mill Access (River Mile 118.4). The river flows from the top left towards the bottom right. Key landmarks include the Lodi Mill, Lodi Mill Take Out, and Lodi Mill Access. The map also shows the American River, various streets, and a table of mile markers and landmarks.

MILE	LANDMARK	PADDLE TIME
126.5	Chester Access	<div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> </div> <div>2-3 1/2 hrs</div>
124.8	Bridge on 25th St.	
122.5	Bridge on Mill Rd.	
121.4	Bridge on Mill Rd.	
119.5	Lodi Mill Take Out	
119.5	Lodi Mill	
119.4	DANGER! DANGEROUS LOWHEAD DAM	
119.4	Lodi Mill Access	
115.2	Bridge on Quail Ave	

SEGMENT ONE: CHESTER ACCESS TO LITDKILL TAKE OUT This peaceful, 7-mile stretch of the Upper Iowa River from Chester to Lime Springs is one to enjoy early in the paddling season following spring rains, as low water levels during summer and fall make passage difficult. Fallen trees or "snags" may block the entire river and require portage. The riparian zone in this segment alternates between prairie, wetland, and basswood-maple bottomland forest. One of the most well-known remnant native prairies in Iowa, Hayden Prairie, is five miles from the Chester Access and worth a day trip! The Litdike Pond was created in 1860, when Litdike and Milam were contracted to power the grist mill and generated a hydroelectricity for historic Lime Springs. Paddlers must take out before the dam. Litdike Mill still houses its original equipment and is one of the most intact historic grist mills in the nation.

BLUFFTON BLUFF ACCESS
River Mile: 74.9

BLUFFTON FIR STAND ACCESS
River Mile: 73.4

CASEY SPRINGS

MALANAPHY SPRINGS ACCESS
River Mile: 65.0

LOWELL'S BRIDGE ACCESS
River Mile: 62.8

CHATTAHOOCIE PARK ACCESS
River Mile: 58.9

DECORAH

TEN MILE CREEK

HUTCHINSONS FAMILY FARM

MALANAPHY SPRINGS

BLUFFTON

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DECORAH

TEN MILE CREEK

HUTCHINSONS FAMILY FARM


MALANAPHY SPRINGS

BLUFFTON

MILE	LANDMARK	PADDLE TIME
74.9	Bluffton Bluff Access	
73.5	Bridge on Bluffton Rd.	↓
73.4	Bluffton Fir Stand Access	30-45 min
72.9	Bridge on 244th Ave	↓
67.2	Bridge on Scenic River Rd.	↓
67.1	Hutchinsons Family Farm	↓
67.0	Casey Springs	↓
65.9	Malanaphy Springs	↓
65.0	Malanaphy Springs Access	3-4 hrs
64.3	Ten Mile Creek	↓
62.8	Lowell's Bridge Access	45-60 min
61.3	Bridge on Pole Line Rd.	↓
58.9	Chattahoochee Park Access	1-2 hrs
58.7	Bridge on Hwy 52	↓

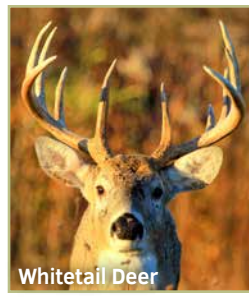
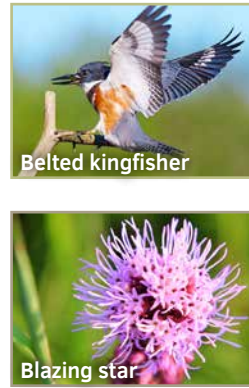
MILE	LANDMARK	PADDLE TIME
91.4	Kendallville Park Access	↓
91.4	Kendallville Park	
91.2	Hruska's Livory	
88.2	Bridge on W14	
87.3	Plymouth Rock	
87.4	Plymouth Rock Access	1-2 hrs
83.2	Bridge on Cattle Creek Rd.	↓
79.9	Coldwater Creek	
79.4	Chimney Rock	
78.7	Chimney Rock Park Access	
77.9	Chimney Rock Livory	↓
75.4	Bluffton Bluffs	
74.9	Bluffton Bluff Access	
74.8	Hruska's Bluffton Livory	↓
74.7	Randy's Bluffton Store	
74.1	Bluffton Fir Stand	
73.5	Bridge on Bluffton Rd.	
73.4	Pine Creek	
73.4	Bluffton Fir Stand Access	
72.9	Bridge on 244th Ave.	

SEGMENT TWO: KENDALLVILLE PARK ACCESS TO BLUFFTON FIR STAND ACCESS The natural beauty and geologic majesty of this part of the river make it a favorite for many. The river is flanked by wooded bluffs with native white pine, red cedar, maple, cottonwood, and a variety of hardwoods including oak, walnut, and cherry. If you are quiet, you may encounter wildlife, including white-tailed deer, bald eagles, western painted turtles, great horned owls, northern leopard frogs, smallmouth and rock bass, walleye, and trout. The float takes paddlers through lazy S-turns that meander back and forth across the narrow valley, past towering limestone bluffs, pillars, and palisades including Plymouth Rock, Chimney Rock, and the famous Bluffton Palisades. The limestone that makes up these majestic features is over 450 million years old and was deposited during the Ordovician Age. The Bluffton Palisades rise 280 feet and extend 1/2 mile in length, making up the entire view in some sections. Located just upstream of the Bluffton Fir Access, they are so frequently photographed that this bend in the river is referred to locally as "Calendar Corner." Just downstream from Bluffton is the Bluffton Fir Stand State Preserve, a 94-acre preserve that features a 140-foot limestone bluff and one of the largest populations of balsam fir in Iowa, a "boreal" tree species typically found in more northern climates. Over 340 native plants have been recorded in this preserve.



Kayaking river trips

Photos courtesy of Larry Reis



IVERSION BRIDGE ACCESS
River Mile: 24.5

IVERSION BOTTOMS ACCESS
River Mile: 26.1

CANOE CREEK ACCESS
River Mile: 35.8

SLIND MOUNDS STATE PRESERVE

UPPER IOWA RESORT & RENTAL

KUMPL ACCESS
River Mile: 15.1

WILD LANDING
River Mile: 11.2

LANDMARKS: Waterloo Creek WMA, Elephant Rock, English Branch WMA, Long Hollow, French Creek WMA, Pine Creek WMA, South Pine Creek WMA, Pleasure View Rd., Sattre Ridge Rd., Ellington Bridge Dr., Valley View Dr., Red Bud Dr., Iverson Bridge Dr., Bear Creek Dr., McLaughlin Dr., Iverson Bridge Rd., Upper Iowa River WMA, Pine Creek WMA, Slind Mounds State Preserve, French Creek WMA, Canoe Creek WMA.

TRAILS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

TABLE:

MILE	LANDMARK	PADDLE TIME	
35.8	Canoe Creek Access	↓	
35.7	Canoe Creek		
35.3	Slind Mounds State Preserve		
31.4	Bridge on Ellington Bridge Dr.		
26.1	Iverson Bottoms Access		3-5 hrs
25.6	Pine Creek	↓	
24.5	Iverson Bridge Access		30-45 min
18.7	Upper Iowa Resort & Rental		↓
18.4	Bridge on Hwy 18		
17.9	Bear Creek		
15.2	Elephant Rock		
15.1	Kumpl Access	3-4 1/2 hrs	
11.8	Clear Creek	↓	
11.2	Wild Landing Access		1-2 hrs
10.8	French Creek		

SEGMENT FIVE: CANOE CREEK ACCESS TO WILD LANDING Access leaving the river towns behind, this remote section of the Upper Iowa River provides users with limited services but an abundance of wild landscapes and wildlife. The river valley steadily widens and increases in size on its way toward the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. It is lined with spectacular views of both grand, tree-covered bluffs as well as treeless goat prairies now carefully looked after for the unique habitat this once common ecosystem provides. This segment of the Upper Iowa River corridor provides explorers with a way to observe the vast array of plant, insect, mushroom, and bird species of Northeast Iowa. Anglers will find the fishing in this section to be particularly rewarding, as no dams impede fish wishing to migrate upriver from the Mississippi. Known historically as the Oneota River, the Upper Iowa River Corridor, especially in this area, was popular with early Native Americans, who built thriving villages adjacent to and overlooking the river. A detailed exploration of the history of the "Upper Iowa River & Its People" can be found in *Oneota Flow*, a popular book authored by David S. Faldut in 2009.

CHATTAHOOCHEE PARK ACCESS
River Mile: 58.9

DUNNING SPRINGS

OFF THE DRIFTLESS

PULPIT ROCK

WILL BAKER PARK ACCESS
River Mile: 57.7

TWIN SPRINGS

PALISADES PARK ACCESS
River Mile: 55.3

DECORAH RIVER TUBES

FREEPORT ACCESS
River Mile: 52.1

TROUT RUN PARK ACCESS
River Mile: 53.8

TROUT RUN

SIEWERS SPRING / DECORAH FISH HATCHERY

MILE	LANDMARK	PADDLE TIME
58.9	Chattahoochee Park Access	20-35 min
58.7	Bridge on Hwy 52	
58.0	Bridge on 5th Ave	
57.7	Will Baker Park Access	
57.7	Off the Driftless	
57.6	Pulpit Rock Campground	45-65 min
57.5	Twin Springs	
56.6	Bridge on College Dr.	
56.3	Dunning Springs	
55.4	Bridge on 5th St.	
55.3	Palisades Park Access	30-45 min
55.3	Decorah River Tubes	
53.8	Trout Run Park Access	
53.8	Trout Run	

SEGMENT FOUR: CHATTAHOOCHEE PARK ACCESS TO TROUT RUN PARK ACCESS Located in the heart of the Upper Iowa Watershed, Decorah (pop. 8,127), is the watershed's largest and most diverse community. The river segment through Decorah takes paddlers past or within walking distance of several natural features, including Pulpit Rock, Twin Springs, Decorah Prairie, Community Prairie & Butterfly Garden, Phelps Park Bluffs, Dunning Springs, Ice Cave State Preserve, and the Decorah Palisades. Dunning Springs Park is home to a 200-foot-long natural waterfall. Just 1/2 mile from Dunning Springs, Ice Cave State Preserve is recognized as one of the largest known "glaciers" (caves containing ice) in the Midwest. As the name suggests, this cave is known for its unusual deposits of ice that coat the inside of the cave well into summer. Decorah has many visitor amenities, including numerous retail shops, historic sites, dining opportunities, camping and lodging sites, over 500 acres of city parks, Luther College, and more than 30 miles of off-road and paved walking and bike trails along the The Trout Run Trail is a paved trail that hugs the Upper Iowa River before weaving its way through 11 miles of the Driftless Area in and around Decorah. Even though the river winds carries paddlers through the center of the city, the river abounds in wildlife, including great blue herons, belted kingfishers, minn, and white-tailed deer. Numerous songbirds inhabit the Decorah Prairie and the surrounding bluffs. The historic downtown is most easily accessed from the Will Baker Park or Palisades Park Access via the Trout Run Trail. Museums, including Vesterheim National Norwegian-American Museum and the Porter House Museum, offer fascinating cultural side trips.

UPPER IOWA RIVER SEGMENT MAP LEGEND

Canoe Access	WARNING: Dam	Campground	Coldwater Trout Stream
Upper Iowa River	Bridge with Upper Iowa River Mile	Livery/Outfitter	Cultural Heritage
Public Land/WMA	Upper Iowa River Mile	Geologic Feature	Decorah's 11 mile Trout Run Trail
Community Boundary		Waterfall or Spring	Paddle Time: Based on 2-3 mph

*Effort was made to assure the accuracy of information in this publication. Northeast Iowa RC&D and its partners assume no responsibility in its use.



- 1 **Harvest Farm Campground:** Facility with 60 campsites that rents canoes, kayaks, and tubes. 563-883-8562. 3690 318th Ave
- 2 **Hruska's Canoe Livery & Campground:** Offer canoe, kayak, and tube rental on Upper Iowa River. 563-547-4566. 3233 347th St
- 3 **Randy's Bluffton Store and Campground:** Camping with canoe and kayak rentals. 563-735-5738. 2619 W Ravine Rd
- 4 **Chimney Rock Canoe Rental and Campground:** Offer canoe, kayak, and tube rental. 877-787-2267. 3312 Chimney Rock Rd
- 5 **Hutchinson Family Farm Campground:** Offer canoe, kayak, and cabin rental. 563-382-3054. 2299 Scenic River Rd
- 6 **Off the Driftless :** Tube, canoe, and kayak rental. Open Thur-Sun 10am-4pm/M-W by app. 563-382-4641. 212 Pulpit Rock Rd
- 7 **Decorah River Tubes:** High quality inner-tubes (includes shuttle). 563-379-8823. 701 Winnesiek Ave
- 8 **Upper Iowa Resort & Rental:** Offering swimming, canoeing, cabin rentals, and fishing. 563-568-3263. 578 Lonning Dr

- 9 **Litdke Mill Park & Campground:** 30 site campground with fishing, canoeing, and playground. 563-547-3634. 3425 Oak Ave
- 10 **Kendallville Campground:** 28 site campground with canoeing and fishing access. 563-534-7145. 3480 K Park Rd
- 11 **Pulpit Rock Campground:** 136 site campground next to the river with opportunities to canoe. 563-382-9551. 505 Pulpit Rock Rd
- 12 **Lake Meyer Campground:** 160-acre campground, park, and nature center next to Lake Meyer. 563-534-7145. 2546 Lake Meyer Rd
- 13 **Sampson Springs Campground:** 50 AMP RV campsites in walking distance from Trout River. 563-382-4849. 2271 133rd Ave
- 14 **Big Joe's Little Campground:** 15 campsites & 3 cabins located near North & South Bear Creek. 563-497-3500. 351 Willow Dr
- 15 **Bear Creek Cabins & Campgrounds:** 20 campsites & 8 cabins along South Bear Creek. 563-546-7722. 3497 Highlandville Rd
- 16 **Red Barn Resort & Campground:** 125 RV campsites, trout stream and restaurant. 563-538-4956. 2609 Main St. Hwy 9
- 17 **R&S Fuel:** Convenience store and gas station located in downtown Chester. 563-565-2631. 304 Main St
- 18 **Seed Savers Exchange:** Visitor center, heirloom seed bank, and 8 miles of hiking trail. 563-382-5990. 3094 North Winn Rd
- 19 **Winnesiek County Visitors Center:** Information about events, lodging, and restaurants. 563-382-2023. 507 W Water St
- 20 **Winnesiek County Recorder's Office:** Location where canoe registrations may be purchased. 563-382-3486. 201 W Main St
- 21 **Decorah Fish Hatchery:** Trout rearing station and home of the "Decorah Eagles." FLA. 563-382-8324. 2321 Sievers Spring Rd
- 22 **Howard County Courthouse:** Location where canoe registrations may be purchased. 563-547-9211. 137 N Elm St
- 23 **Howard County Welcome Center:** Information about events, lodging, and restaurants. 563-547-3434. 101 2nd Ave SW



The Upper Iowa River supports cold and warm water fish species but three dams restrict fish movement and species prevalence. Smallmouth bass, walleye, trout, and non-game fish are abundant throughout the river. Trout are especially prevalent near the mouth of coldwater streams, and more than 30 of those streams make their way into the Upper Iowa River. Below the dams, sauger, sturgeon, northern pike, flathead and channel catfish, yellow perch, and white bass migrate up from the Mississippi River. Smallmouth bass and walleye prefer rocky or sandy substrate, especially in the deepest pools. Dead trees, boulders, and root balls provide fish habitat, but beware, they also create dangerous under currents. Local trout fishing maps and guides can be picked up locally or downloaded from northeastowarcd.org. The lowadnrg.gov fishing website provides information on fishing regulations, licenses, and weekly fishing reports. Connections with other local anglers can be made through the Iowa Coldwater Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, or the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association.



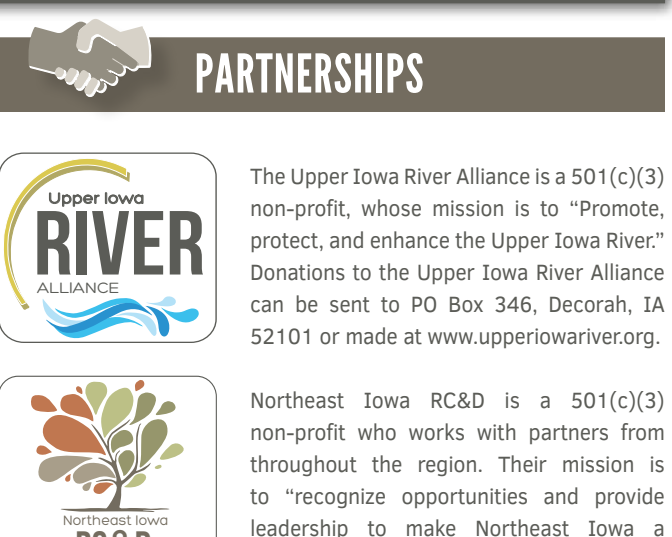
The woodlands, bluffs, habitat diversity, remoteness, and other natural characteristics of the river corridor make it a bird haven. It is part of the Mississippi River Flyway, near a Globally Important Birding Area, and connected to large, remote tracts of private and public forests, wetlands and prairies, wildlife management areas (WMAs), and other natural areas. Hundreds of species migrate through in the spring and many additional species nest along the river. A 2014 survey identified eight eagle nests visible from the river during full foliage. More would be visible if the leaves weren't blocking the view! During winter months, open sections of the river help birds and other wildlife find food to survive and thrive. The number of bird species reported in Iowa's Breeding Bird Atlas for areas near the river is noted on the map. Check out bba.iowabirds.org, iowadnrg.gov and iowaauddubon.org to learn more about local birding opportunities or get in touch with the local Iowa Ornithological Union, which offers information by county as well as GPS coordinates.



The Upper Iowa River Watershed boasts hundreds of springs and dozens of beautiful waterfalls, including the largest spring in Minnesota, Odessa Spring. Odessa and Malanaphy Springs are accessible from the river. Dunning Springs, Twin Springs and the second largest spring in Iowa, Sievers Spring are all nearby. Sievers Spring provides water for the fish hatchery in Decorah as well as one of the nation's most universally accessible trout streams, Trout Run. There are four man-made dams that create waterfalls of their own which although pretty, are extremely dangerous. Do not paddle over them or near them, from either above or below. Their undercurrents are drowning machines. All of the coldwater streams that flow into the river are fed by springs. Coldwater Creek, which emerges from the base of a 100-foot tall bluff is publicly accessible in the Coldwater Spring State Preserve one mile north of the river at the only natural entrance to Coldwater Cave, a National Landmark, and Iowa's longest cave.



Rising more than 250 feet from the river along several stretches, towering limestone bluffs, chimney rocks, rock outcroppings, cliffs, and entrenched meanders add interest to Upper Iowa River excursions. Watch for the most well-known landmarks: Plymouth Rock, Chimney Rock, Bluffton Palisades, Pulpit Rock, Phelps Park Bluffs, Decorah Palisades, Elephant Head Bluff, and Blackhawk Bluff. Many consider these majestic features to be the river's hallmark. Fossils are often identified within the limestone bedrock or in rocks lining the bottom of the river. Together, the sights above and below create a sense of isolation, a deep sense of history, and confirm that the river is in the Driftless Area, an ancient and unique Midwest landform bypassed by the last continental glacier. In the words of canoekayak.com, "Tucked away in an isolated corner of northeast Iowa is a cliff-lined gorge that the glaciers forgot to flatten: the Upper Iowa River valley." For more information about the geology of the Upper Iowa River Watershed, visit www.ihrciowa.edu/igs/publications/uploads/TIS-54.pdf



This Upper Iowa Canoe Guide was developed through the Upper Iowa River Alliance and designed by Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) with input from the Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau, Iowa DNR Wildlife Bureau, local landowners, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, local river owners, Decorah Park and Recreation and river users. This guide was made possible through generous contributions and grants from The Depot Outfit, Winnesiek County Community Foundation, Winnesiek County Conservation Board, Allamakee County Community Foundation, Howard County Community Foundation, Howard County Conservation Board, Winnesiek County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Allamakee County Economic Development & Tourism, Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) - Iowa Byways Sustainability Project / Driftless Area Scenic Byway and through the Iowa Tourism office.