



Paddling the  
Black River  
And its Tributaries  
Through  
Jackson County

For canoe, kayak, and tube rental vendors and information on local lodging:  
Black River Area Chamber of Commerce  
120 N. Water Street  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
715-284-4658  
www.blackrivercountry.net

For State Forest information:  
Wisconsin DNR—Black River State Forest  
910 Hwy. 54 East  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
715-284-1400  
http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/forestry/StateForests/SF-BlackRiver/

Real time flows for the Black River  
are available on-line at:  
http://waterdata.usgs.gov/WI/wis/current?type=flow

Jackson County Forestry and Parks  
W9790 Airport Rd.  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
715-284-8475  
www.co.jackson.wi.us/html/forestry/forestry.html

Brochure Paid for by  
Friends of the Black River  
P.O. Box 475  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
info\_fbr@yahoo.com



If you are interested in joining the Friends of the Black River or would like more information, please visit:  
[www.friendsoftheblackriver.org](http://www.friendsoftheblackriver.org)

If you enjoy the beauty of the Black River or if you're concerned about keeping the Black River watershed healthy, you may be interested in joining the Friends of the Black River group. This group is made up of citizens that have a strong interest and association with the river. Some recreate in the Black River and along its watershed while others own property along the river or its tributaries. Members are involved in different activities and programs including stream monitoring, river clean-up, community educational outreach and land preservation. The Friends of the Black River continually welcome new members and fresh ideas that support its mission: The Friends of the Black River is a citizen-led organization that works to foster a greater community appreciation and understanding of the Black River and promotes wise decision making when issues affect the health of the river and its watershed.



## Welcome

The Black River starts as a small stream flowing out of Black Lake in northern Taylor County. It flows for nearly 200 miles before emptying into the Mississippi River near La Crosse, Wisconsin.



Black River Watershed

The Black River flows through land with sandy, shallow soils and many wetlands. As the water filters through the wetlands, organic acids leach out of decaying wetland plants and other organic material, causing the black coloration of the river. The stained water isn't harmful, and actually limits the growth of noxious algae blooms or nuisance plants that can interfere with recreational activities.

### Stewardship

Stewardship is defined as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care". You can be a good steward when using the river by:

- Always taking a trash bag with you.
- Carrying out everything you carry in!
- Picking up trash other river users have carelessly left behind.
- Leaving the river cleaner than you found it!
- Learning about local burning regulations for camp fires and minimizing their impacts
- Packing in your own local firewood.
- Observing wildlife from a distance, and respecting their habitat.
- Controlling pets at all times, or leaving them at home.
- Being a good neighbor—don't trespass. The law has changed—sandbars in the river where it flows through private property are private property!

## Canoe Routes

For specific information on paddling routes please open this brochure to the center map.

### East Fork of the Black River

This part of the river is scenic but rocky with rapid flowing water. Canoeing is not recommended during low water periods usually found in mid to late summer. Campers are required to register at the East Fork State Campground.

### Lake Arbutus to Black River Falls

The upper stretch of this section has rapid flowing water with Class II and III rapids and some granite boulders, the lower section is scenic with Class I rapids.

### Black River Falls to North Bend

South of Black River Falls, the river is slower and wider with many sandbars and Class I rapids.

Follow these general guidelines:

- No gates to one gate open at the Black River Falls Dam = Safe
- Two gates open = Average/better skill required
- Three or more gates open = Canoeing not recommended due to debris

\* Flows are approximately 4,500 cfs per gate.

### Flows

The sandy and shallow soils and large watershed of the Black River contribute to the large fluctuations in its flows. Depending on precipitation, flows may exceed 20,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) while low flow conditions in drier months (August) may be less than 100 cfs. Recreational canoeists enjoy traveling on the river with flows from 200-3,000 cfs.

Real-time flows are available on line by visiting:  
<http://waterdata.usgs.gov>

Black River flow at Hatfield available at 1-888-493-7694 (HYDRO WI) updated 10 am.

## Become A Friend On & Off the River

### Fishing

Warm water rivers like the Black River tend to have a diverse fish community. Over 20 species of fish inhabit the Black River including the following game fish:

- Walleye
- Smallmouth Bass
- Northern Pike
- Muskellunge
- Catfish



The river also contains non-game species such as Common Carp, White Sucker, Longnose and Shortnose Gar, and Quillback Carpsuckers. Panfish do not prefer flowing water so species like Bluegill, Black Crappie, and Pumpkinseeds are found mostly in impounded areas like the Black River Flowage and Lake Arbutus.

For information on fishing season and limits look for signs at the landing, or contact the Wisconsin DNR.

### For Your Safety:

- Bring:
  - A wearable personal floatation device (life jacket) for each person (it's the law!).
  - Sun protection
  - First aid kit
  - Snacks and drinking water
  - Shoes to wear in the river
  - A wet/dry suit when kayaking in coldwater temperatures
- Tell someone your plans
- Pay attention to hazardous weather and the river conditions (snags, overhangs, rocks)
- Boil all river water and use approved tablets or filters before drinking



## Black River Landings #1-10

	Miles (approx.)
Dam-1 (West Hatfield Dam to Hatfield Powerhouse) .....	4 miles (1 hr.)
1-2 (Powerhouse to Halls Creek Landing) .....	4 miles (1 hr.)
2-3 (Halls Creek to Black River Falls - exit above dam (Holmgreen Landing)).....	6 miles (2-3 hr.)
4-5 (South 3rd St. [Cormican Landing] to Perry Creek State Park) .....	2 miles (1/2-1 hr.)
5-6 (Perry Creek Park to Mason's Landing) .....	1.5 miles (1/2-1 hr.)
6-7 (Mason's Landing to State Forest Canoe campsite near Hawk Island).....	1 mile (1/2 hr.)
7-8 (State Forest Canoe Campsite near Hawk Island to the David Hansen Memorial Landing at Irving).....	6.5 miles (2-3 hr.)
8-9 (Irving to Melrose Hwy 108 Bridge) .....	12 miles (3-4 hr.)
9-10 (Melrose Hwy 108 Bridge to North Bend HWY VV).....	12 miles (3-4 hr.)

## Lake Arbutus to Black River Falls

Put in at the foot of the West Hatfield Dam near junction of Cty. E and K. From the dam to Powerhouse is a 4 mile paddle with two class III rapids and many class II rapids. The Hatfield power canal makes a quiet flat water paddle from the railroad trestle into several wooded backwaters. It is a 4 mile run with two class III rapids from Powerhouse to the Halls Creek Landing. After this the Black river has only a few class I rapids.

## Black River Falls to North Bend

Put in at the South 3rd Street (Cormican) Landing in Black River Falls. It is a short 2-mile stretch to Perry Creek Park and 1.5 miles further is Mason's State Landing.

The State Forest Canoe Campsite on Hawk Island is just 1 mile downstream opposite bank from Mason's Landing. Camping at this site is free of charge but campers are limited to a one-night stay. From the State Forest Canoe Campsite downstream, it is 6.5 miles to the David Hansen Memorial Landing at Irving. From Irving it is 12 miles to the Highway 108 Bridge in Melrose.

Lastly, the flat water canoe trip from Melrose to North Bend is 12 miles.

## Creeking

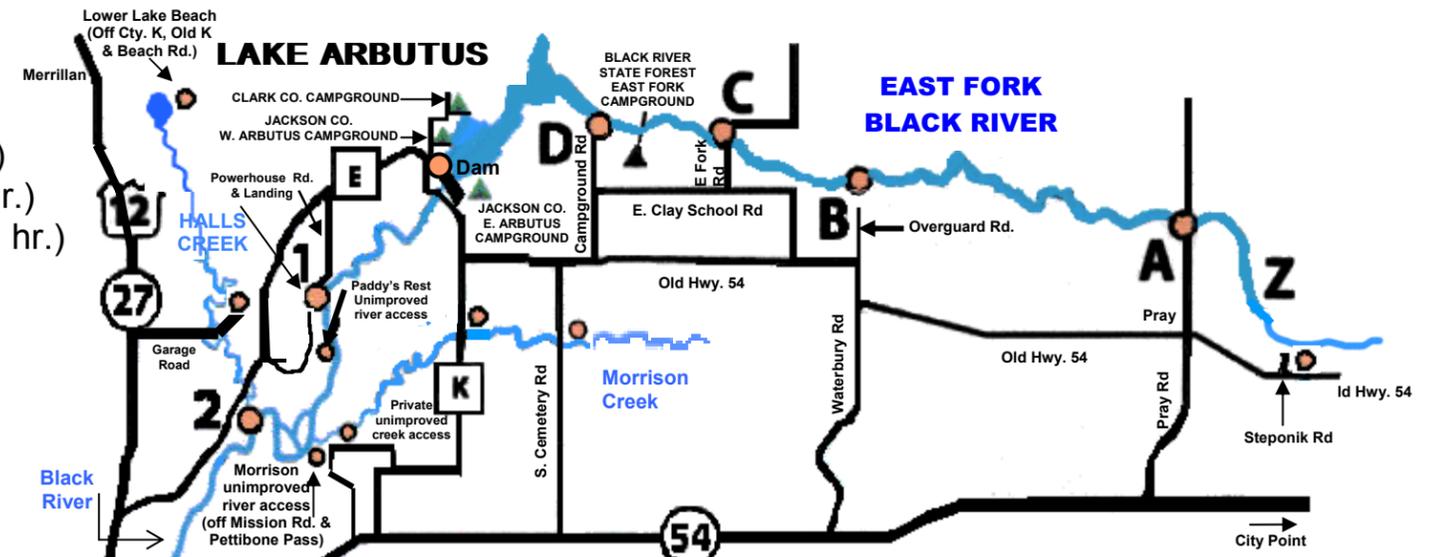
Some of the feeder streams running into the Black River are an excellent paddling option. Always be aware of down trees which can trap and pin you and your boat. Creek Flows can be very low and scrapey if no recent rain.

**Morrison Creek** – Cemetery Road to County K will take about 1½ hours. It is considered Class II, with one Class III near Oxbow State Park. County K to the Black River is approximately 2 hours.

**Halls Creek** – Lower lake to Garage Road, Class I-II takes 1½-2 hrs. From Garage Road Bridge to the landing on the Black River takes 2-3 hours to paddle through beautiful walled canyons with Class II-III rapids.

**Robinson Creek** – Beautiful, mostly Class I-II, with large pines. Class II-III rapids below Dodge Road. Portage 6 ft. Polly Falls, it is one-third of the way between Dodge Rd. & Hwy. 27. Several Class III ledges in the gorge just past Fall Hall Road.

## Miles (approx.)



## East Fork of the Black River Landings A-D

	Miles (approx.)
Z-A (Steponik Road to Pray Road) (Beware of low snowmobile bridge)	4 miles
A-B (Pray Road Access to Overguard Road)	6.5 miles
B-C (Overguard Road to East Fork Road)	1.5 miles
C-D (East Fork Road to East Fork Campground)	2 miles
D-Dam (East Fork Campground to Hatfield Dam)	1.5 miles

This part of the river is scenic but rocky with rapid flowing water. Canoeing is not recommended during low water periods usually found in mid to late summer. Canoeing from the Pray Road access to Overguard Road access is 6.5 miles with Class I rapids and mostly wooded, wild country. There are Class III rapids 1-2 miles upstream from Pray Road. Overguard Road to East Fork Road is only 1.5 miles with some Class II and III rapids depending on water levels. East Fork Road to East Fork Campground is 2 miles with some Class II rapids. Canoeing from Pray Road to the East Fork Campground takes approximately 7 hours. Canoeists interested in camping at the end of their trip are required to register at the East Fork State or East Arbutus campgrounds.

## Rapids Classification

**Class I** – Easy. Smooth water, light riffles; clear passages, occasional sand banks and gentle curves

**Class II** – Moderate. Medium-quick water; rapids with regular waves; clear and open passages between rocks and ledges. Maneuvering required. Best handled by intermediates who can maneuver canoes and read water.

**Class III** – Moderately difficult. Numerous high and irregular waves; rocks and eddies with passages clear but narrow and requiring experience to run. Visual inspection required if rapids are unknown. Open canoes without flotation bags will have difficulty.

- = Public Access
- ▲ = Public Campground

