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.

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 is harmless and actually limits the growth of 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!

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

Canoes Routes

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 delta

* 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 online by visiting: http://waterdata.usgs.gov.

Black River flow at Hatfield available at 1-888-403-7694 (HYDRO WI) updated 10 am.

For Your Safety:

- Bring:
  - A wearable personal flotation 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 wetsuit suit when kayaking in colder water temperatures
- Tell someone your plans
- Pay attention to hazardous weather and 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 powerhouse 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 scapy if no recent rain.

Morrison Creek –Cemetery Road to County K will take about 11/2 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 11/2-2 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.

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.