



ADAIR & MADISON COUNTY, IOWA

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the efforts of the following

agencies and organizations;

Madison County Covered Bridge Preservation Association

WELCOME

to the Middle River Water Trail.

landforms creating a moderately challenging paddle with occasional chutes and ledges that can be navigated with moderate effort. Water levels are most enjoyable for paddling in spring, early summer and fall.

The Middle River has its origin in south-central Guthrie County. However, the

navigable section of Middle River begins in east-central Adair County near

easterly through a mixture of lazy country side of croplands and pasture,

rolling forested hills and limestone bluffs. It twists and turns through these

Middle River Forest County Park. Middle River is a scenic stream that flows

Along with the natural beauty found along Middle River, there are also a few man-made attractions that add to the scenery and water-trail experience. Spanning the river is two of Madison County's famous "Bridges of Madison

County", Roseman Covered Bridge and Holliwell Covered Bridge. Paddlers must also portage around the historic "ford" at Pammel Park that was built in the early 1900's, and while making this portage one can also catch a glimpse of the "Harmon Tunnel" originally constructed in 1858.

Middle River Water Trail begins at Middle River Forest County Park in Adair County and currently ends at the historic Holliwell Covered Bridge located approximately 3 ½ miles SE of Winterset, covering a distance of just over 45 miles. Enjoy your exploration of Middle River!



CULTURAL HISTORY Rivers have historically been the

magnet of all human activity, especially our earliest civilizations and pioneers. River corridors provided the rich habitats for thousands of species of plants and animals. The rivers were the transportation corridors for exploration and our historical westward migration. Rivers provided the water, food and shelter for our earliest inhabitants, adventuresome explorers and eventual homesteaders. Over time, these transportation needs changed from simple exploration to a necessary mode of travel to move thousands of people as well as tons of commodities. Our rivers also evolved into providing sources of power.

Today, rivers are still important for these same reasons plus they provide all of us with recreational opportunities. Through the

enjoyment of modern day recreational uses on our rivers, we need to keep in mind the historical importance of our rivers and continue to protect those features that tell a story of our past and serve as rich reminders to us to be good stewards of such a vital resource.

Historically, we tend to focus on objects and structures. But it is the people, who were our earliest settlers, who define our historic culture. The people came for the rich soil they called the Hoosier Prairie, and the abundant streams. There were forests along these streams of sugar maple, black walnut and towering cotton woods. Buffalo. elk and deer roamed the woods and prairie. There was lumber and stone for building. Prairie Rivers like the Middle River are living representatives of the resources that provided for the life we now

One of the richest historical and cultural aspects along Middle River are the Covered Bridges of Madison County. The Holliwell Bridge (1880) and Roseman Bridge (1883) were two of the first covered bridges built in Madison County and they stand stoic today in their original locations. These remaining covered bridges paint a story of pioneer people who took what they had and did the most with it. These structures are a tribute to a generation of pioneers who left a land better



than they found it and leaves to

FISH WILDLIFE

There are numerous fish species found in Middle River. The most abundant game fish are Channel Catfish and Flathead Catfish. Other game fish found in Middle River, but less abundant are Walleye and Bluegill. Channel Catfish and Flathead Catfish can be caught in abundance throughout the length of Middle River, however, from early May through June a significant concentration of Channel Catfish and very large Flathead Catfish are found in the section of river directly below the ford at Pammel Park.

Wildlife Viewing

Wildlife in and along the Middle River is abundant. During early spring many raptors such as the Red-Tailed Hawk and the Broad-Winged Hawks can be viewed soaring over the river valley busily tending nests in large trees that over-hang the river. Keep an eye out for Bald-Eagles as they become more common residents of this area. During mid to late spring, waterfowl begin migrating through with many sightings of Wood Ducks, Teal and Canada Geese - please don't disturb their shore-line nests. During the summer common bird species that you will see are the blue bird, bank swallow, great blue heron, green heron, king

fisher, barred owl, great-horned owl, woodpeckers, cardinal, wild turkey and of course the high soaring turkey vultures.

Some species of mammals that you may see are the beaver, muskrat, raccoon, opossum, whitetail deer, coyote, fox, bobcat, badger, ground hog, skunk, fox squirrel, bats, mink, weasels and many other small rodents.

The river is also home to several species of freshwater clams, crayfish, snails, frogs, toads, snakes and turtles. The most common reptile sighting would be the soft-shell turtle – often seen scurrying back into water ahead of you as you round a bend in the river.

> When you pass through Pammel Park make sure to stop and do some wildlife watching, as Pammel Park is part of the central-lowa Makoke Birding Trail.

The Adair and Madison County region escaped the most recent glaciations of approximately 12,000 to 15,000 years ago and is thus part of the Southern Iowa Drift Plain. The visual appearance of this region is prominently dominated by the rolling hills made up of layers of loess and glacial till which are shaped and supported by thick layers of limestone and shale formed millions of years ago during the era when a vast area of the Midwest was part of the Carboniferous Sea.

The rolling terrain became further defined and accentuated by the many beautiful meandering river valleys (Grand River, North River, Middle River, Jones Creek and Clanton Creek) that transect Adair and Madison County. The geology of this

region becomes most striking when canoeing our rivers. Dispersed primarily through the central region of Madison County, majestic limestone walls and cliffs, with intermixed layers of shale, greet river users, with the most prominent high cliffs found along Middle River just above Pammel Park

Close inspection of limestone base layers immediately adjacent to the river banks reveal fossilized aquatic organisms from the carboniferous sea era. Clam shells, and rocks containing fascinating animal and aquatic plant fossils can be found on most of the river's many sand & rock bars.

Fusulinids fossils (looks like embedded in limestone & Mollusk Shell fossil

a DNR

Iowa DNR Water Trails Program

Madison County River Alliance

Adair County Conservation Board

Madison County Conservation Board



Madison County 15-462-3536



CONTACT INFORMATION EMERGENCY

Adair County Sheriff 641-743-2148

Madison County Sheriff Department 515-462-3575

Madison County 515-462-5100

nadisoncountyparks.org Madison County Ambulance Service 515-462-2253 911 - Emergency

HISTORICAL FEATURES in Pammel State Park (1930)

• The Harmon Tunnel, originally constructed in 1858 as a small conduit to detour water to power a mill on the east side of the limestone backbone, was eventually enlarged to allow vehicle traffic and became the first and only highway tunnel in Iowa in 1925.

•The Middle River Ford, the only means of providing access to the west side of Pammel Park at this location, was built in the 1920's.

•The Pammel Park Lodge was built by the State in the 1920's and was constructed from the native rock and timber found on the park property.

•The Backbone Shelter, located north of the campground area, sits atop the limestone backbone ridge that runs the length of Pammel Park. This shelter, along with much of the existing trail system, was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's.

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Holliwell Covered Bridge Access (#50):

This is the last developed access on the Middle River Water Trail. The river below Holliwell is very navigable and remains highly meandered. Paddlers should be aware that access to Middle River below this point is limited to bridge crossings which can be difficult to negotiate due to steepbanked slopes and dense vegetation.

Roseman Covered Bridge Access (#71) to Pammel

snags between the Highway 169 bridge and the Middle River County Park access. The next access is approximately 10 miles downstream at Middle River County Park, which is located on the south edge of Winterset.

meandered

timbered

course through

open country

side. Expect

to encounter

fallen trees/

numerous

Holliwell Covered Bridge Access (#50):

The river remains fairly shaded with a lot of timber edge and the gradient begins to flatten out, but remains challenging due to a higher degree of meandering. Expect to find more downed trees and snags in this final section. The final access on the Water Trail is approximately 4 river miles downstream



KEEP YOUR RIVERS CLEAN

Always carry a trash bag (mesh bag works better than plastic) in your canoe. Practice carry-in/carry-out with all the items that you bring with you. In addition to your a "water-trail" version of "leave-no-trace" by picking up any litter that you see along your route. If you pick up an old tire(s), place such in the parking area of your exit access. The Madison County River Alliance will collect the tires and pay for the recycling fee.



ladison County River Alliance

NON-MEANDERED STREAMS. FENCES, THE LAW & YOUR CANOE

Middle River is classified as a non-meandered stream. Paddler's rights using non-meandered streams are limited. The State owns the water, but does not own the riverbed. This allows paddlers to use the stream by floating. Trespass technically occurs when the individual steps out of the craft onto the streambed, sand bars, either bank or adjacent fields. Seek permission ahead of time if you know of a spot where you desire to camp, hike or hunt. Fences are legal across such streams and rivers. Most of the time the water has removed the fence or it is constructed in a manner that you can slip underneath the wire. Portage if necessary, but do not harm or remove the fence.

RIVER ROUTES



Middle River Forest County Park Access (#**89**) to Schildberg Access (#**78**) Middle River Forest Park

Access (river left) is the Trail-head access to the watertrail. You should expect a moderately challenging paddle as you navigate through the natural beauty of limestone outcroppings, woodlands, abundant wildlife and numerous river bends and riffles. Schildberg Access is approximately 11 miles downstream.

Schildberg Access (#78) to Roseman Covered Bridge Access (#71)

This stretch of river travels through both timbered valleys and open pasture. A few chutes and riffles are scattered throughout this section, with a moderately challenging drop-off created by a ledge of shale which is located a few hundred yards upstream of the P-53 Bridge. Roseman Covered Bridge Access is approximately 7 river miles downstream.

portion of river in Madison County, featuring a myriad

of natural attractions, from majestic limestone bluffs and dense woodlands, to gently rolling grasslands. As the gradient suggests, you should expect a moderately challenging paddle as you drop down through numerous chutes and ledges. You will encounter more rock bluffs and longer fast-water chutes as you approach Pammel Park. The Pammel Park Ford Access is approximately 8 miles downstream. Be prepared to exit river-left for the short portage route around the Pammel Park Ford.

This section twists and turns through the most scenic



Park Ford Access (#63)

Pammel Park Ford Access (#63) to Middle River County Park Access (#54)

This section begins at the Pammel Park ford (accesses located on both sides of the river), makes an extended oxbow bend around the landmark limestone backbone ridge and re-enters Pammel Park briefly on the east side of Harmon Tunnel. Expect an easy to moderate paddle as you encounter a few rock riffles and chutes, but are mostly treated to a shaded

Middle River County Park Access (#54) to

and located on river left immediately adjacent to the northwest corner of Holliwell Covered Bridge.



__ Water Beetle _ Crayfish Clam (live & old shells)

WATER-TRAIL CHECKLIST

MAMMALS:

Bat

_ Woodchuck

Raccoon

Muskrat

Beaver

_ Mink

BIRDS:

_ River Otter

_ Wood Duck

Bald Eagle _ Hawks

Bank Swallow

Canada Goose

_ Green Heron

_ Owls

Carp

Walleye

Bluegill

Suckers

FISH:

Great Blue Heron

Fox Squirrel

_ White-Tailed Deer

Belted Kingfisher _ Dragon Fly _ Damsel Fly

_ Spider Web ___ Butterfly

OTHER:

__ Fossils ___ Animal Tracks Channel Catfish _ Early-American _ Flathead Catfish

Artifacts __ Old Pottery (chips & pieces)

_ Fossilized Bones

_ Minnows Please do not harm any of our wildlife or disturb their nest and dens.

SAFETY ON THE RIVER

Although Middle River is generally a safe and easy river to navigate, there are always safety precautions you need to practice:

• Wear a life jacket! Each person in your vessel is required to have at least one type of personal flotation device (Type I, II, III or IV). Remember, it doesn't work if vou don't wear it!

• Don't boat under the influence! For your safety, don't use alcohol or drugs on the water.

• Watch for hazards! On rivers, hazards like low-head dams, fences, snags, sweepers, rocks and bridge abutments may be present. Low-head dams can be killers. Avoid them!

The ford in Pammel Park is the only low-head dam type of obstacle found on Middle River and its location is shown on the water-trail map. When approaching the ford, watch for signs directing you to exit "river-left" so that you can safely portage around the ford and re-enter the river just downstream of the ford.

 While navigating the river, watch for rocks and logs just below the surface. The hidden obstacle is always a few feet upstream of the rippled water. Look for a "V"shaped current that marks the best water flow between

• Pay attention to the river bank. Sweepers or strainers are low hanging limbs or logs that extend out from the bank and over the river. These obstructions can capsize you and cause you to become entrapped, a common cause of river fatalities. Log jams/floating debris piles create the same life threatening hazards as sweepers/ strainers. Snags & debris hidden below the surface of the log-jam can entrap you. When approaching these obstacles, plan ahead – usually the inside bend of a river is the safest and shallowest course to avoid such hazards.

• Check on river conditions by contacting one of the County Conservation Boards. Know your paddling ability and use common sense when deciding when river levels are too hazardous. Never paddle when the river is quickly rising, or is at or near flood stage.

• Plan to get wet! You may capsize, so dress for the weather. Even at low-water levels, your feet will get wet. Wear proper foot wear to guard against sharp rocks and other objects.

 Bring a dry-bag! Use the dry-bag to store an extra set of clothes, flash light, and cell-phone – and make sure you tie your dry-bag securely to your vessel.

 Carry a spare paddle, and secure it to the vessel