

A rock dam at the Bennett Access.



The Raccoon River in West Des Moines and Des Moines offers a tranquil greenbelt in the heart of Iowa's most urbanized area.

**The North Raccoon River**

is a mostly freeflowing river surrounded by rural areas in a wooded valley. It is known as a place of solitude and good fishing. At its upper navigable reaches in Sac County, the river flows through a heavily glaciated area with unique scenery. A dozen rock dams (also known as fishing riffles) can be navigated by experienced paddlers, but many will wish to portage them. One low-head dam at Adel must be portaged on the designated path. Clay bluffs, along with occasional rock outcroppings, can be observed at various points along the river. Near Van Meter, the North and South branches converge to form the Raccoon River. Commerce Ledges at Walnut Woods State Park forms rapids at moderate to high flows that can be challenging -- it can be portaged on the river right. Channel catfish can be caught at deeper pools, near log jams, and along cut banks.

Major fish species present: Channel catfish

Minor fish species present: Bullhead, smallmouth bass, flathead catfish, walleye



The North Raccoon's clay bluffs in Greene County.



Portaging at Adel.



Downstream of Adel on the North Raccoon

### Legend

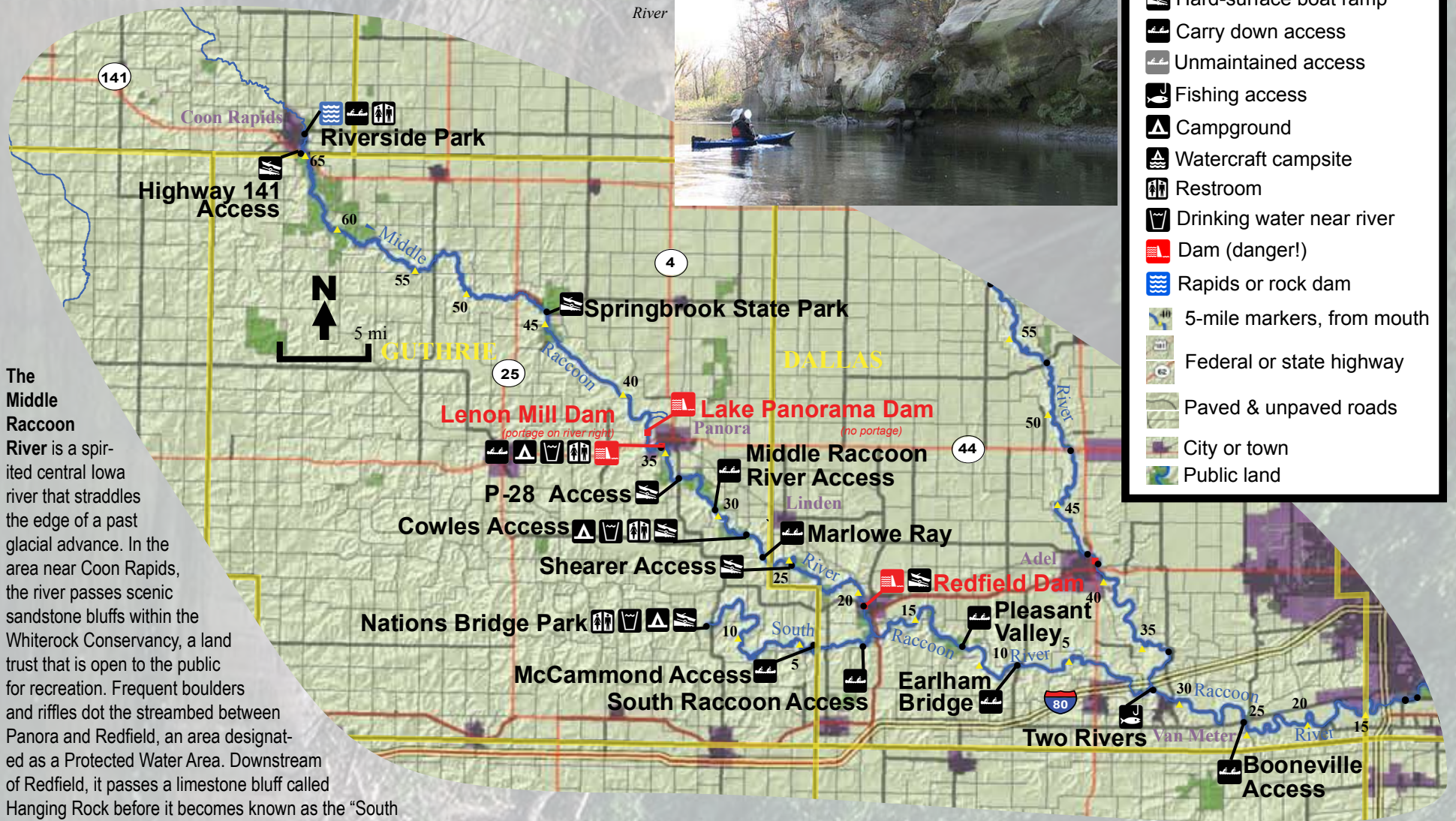
- Hard-surface boat ramp
- Carry down access
- Unmaintained access
- Fishing access
- Campground
- Watercraft campsite
- Restroom
- Drinking water near river
- Dam (danger!)
- Rapids or rock dam
- 5-mile markers, from mouth
- Federal or state highway
- Paved & unpaved roads
- City or town
- Public land



**North Raccoon River and Raccoon River Map 2**

# Middle Raccoon River and South Raccoon River Map

*Hanging Rock on the Middle Raccoon River*



### Legend

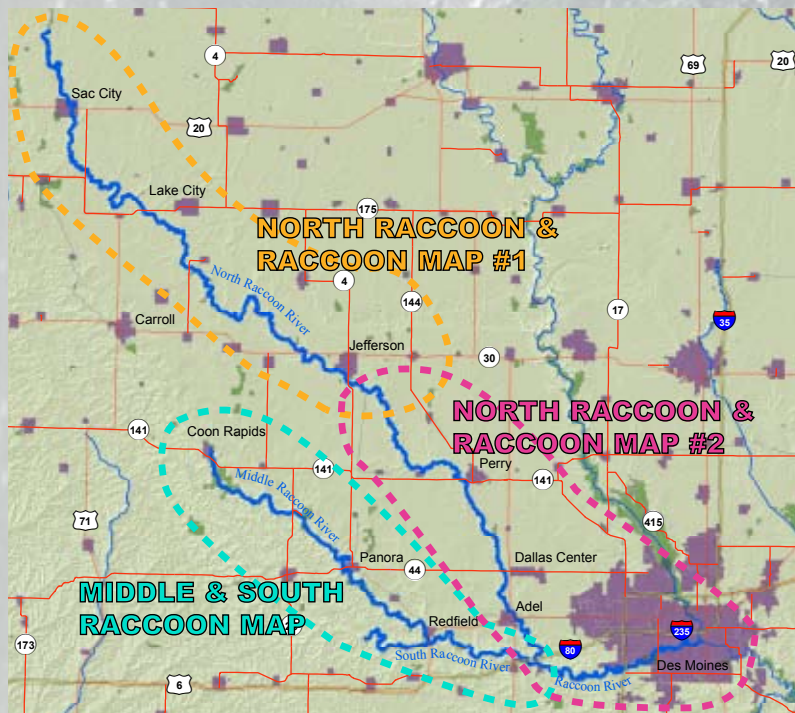
- Hard-surface boat ramp
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- City or town
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**The Middle Raccoon River** is a spirited central Iowa river that straddles the edge of a past glacial advance. In the area near Coon Rapids, the river passes scenic sandstone bluffs within the Whiterock Conservancy, a land trust that is open to the public for recreation. Frequent boulders and riffles dot the streambed between Panora and Redfield, an area designated as a Protected Water Area. Downstream of Redfield, it passes a limestone bluff called Hanging Rock before it becomes known as the "South Raccoon," where the smaller South Raccoon tributary enters. Smallmouth bass fishing is popular in the Protected Water Area segment, and catfishing is popular throughout. Due to private banks at Lake Panorama, there is no legal way to travel from Springbrook State Park to the Lenon Mill Dam access. The lake does settle out sediments, creating a relatively clear stream below Panora. Snags, mid-water boulders, and pools are good places to try your luck at angling.

**The South Raccoon River** is a small, riffly stream. In the section upstream of the confluence with the Middle Raccoon, the South Raccoon has suitable water levels for paddling only after moderate rains. Numerous sandstone outcroppings line its banks, and some areas feel wild and remote. Downstream of the confluence with the Middle Raccoon, the river passes additional rock outcroppings -- this beautiful section can be navigated for more of the paddling season.

*Major fish species present:* Channel catfish

*Minor fish species present:* Bullhead, smallmouth bass, flathead catfish, walleye, largemouth bass



*Snow-covered bluffs at the Whiterock Conservancy.*

## North Raccoon River, South Raccoon River, Middle Raccoon River, and Raccoon River



# Expedition & Fishing Guide

### Be safe out there!

#### Wear a life jacket!

They really do save lives. It won't work if you 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 dams, fences, snags, rocks, and bridge abutments may be present. Dams and snags in particular can be killers. Avoid them!

#### Plan to get wet!

You may capsize, so dress for the weather. When the water and/or weather get cold, warm-when-wet clothing and a wetsuit are needed.

### Stay legal!

Most land along these rivers is privately owned -- these waters are navigable and open to the public, but you *must* respect private property.

Littering is a crime -- pack out everything you bring in. Report littering or dumping by calling 888-NOLITTR.

Report environmental problems (fish kills, contaminants, etc.) to the Field Office serving the county you are in:

- Polk/Dallas: (515) 725-0268
- Guthrie/Greene/Carroll: (712) 243-1934
- Calhoun/Sac: (712) 262-4177

### Resources

See [www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/](http://www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/) for water trails information and our most recent listing of canoe/kayak liveries.

#### River gages

[waterdata.usgs.gov](http://waterdata.usgs.gov) or [www.rivergages.com](http://www.rivergages.com)

Federal regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap. State law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to the Iowa DNR, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines, Iowa, 50319.

