


Story City Rapids



photo by Diane Michaud Lowry

There are four low-head dams on the North and South Skunk rivers indicated with the dam icon: . Paddlers need to avoid these dams, landing well above and launching far below them. Dangerous currents below these dams are capable of trapping and holding you underwater for extended periods of time.

Skunk River Map #1



Great Blue Heron

The South Skunk River begins its 264 mile journey in northeastern Hamilton County, joins with the North Skunk in Keokuk County and empties into the Mississippi after forming the border between Des Moines and Lee counties. The river is narrow and has been channelized in several areas, but offers a variety of pleasant scenery as it makes its way toward the Mississippi.

The Skunk is shallow and narrow making navigation difficult above Story City. The Skunk River, however, offers good paddling between Ames and Story City where a recent low-head dam conversion into rock rapids offers exhilarating fun and also allows fish access to waters which were previously inaccessible. At Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, one can explore many miles of isolated oxbows where the original channel of the South Skunk River ran—wildlife is abundant!

From Mahaska County south, the Skunk, having escaped the earth-hungry dredging machines, follows a more serpentine course and widens as it receives the North Skunk in Keokuk County. Both the North Skunk and South Skunk flow through timbered ridges and agricultural lands. The northern reaches are productive for smallmouth bass and channel catfish, and the lower reaches offer flathead catfish, bullhead, carp, crappie, and sunfish. Snags offer great habitat for fish, but may be hazardous to paddlers. Proceed with caution and portage when necessary—remember to always respect private property.



Smallmouth Bass



Flathead Catfish



Green Heron















Killdeer



Skunk River near Oakland Mills

Skunk River Map #2

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



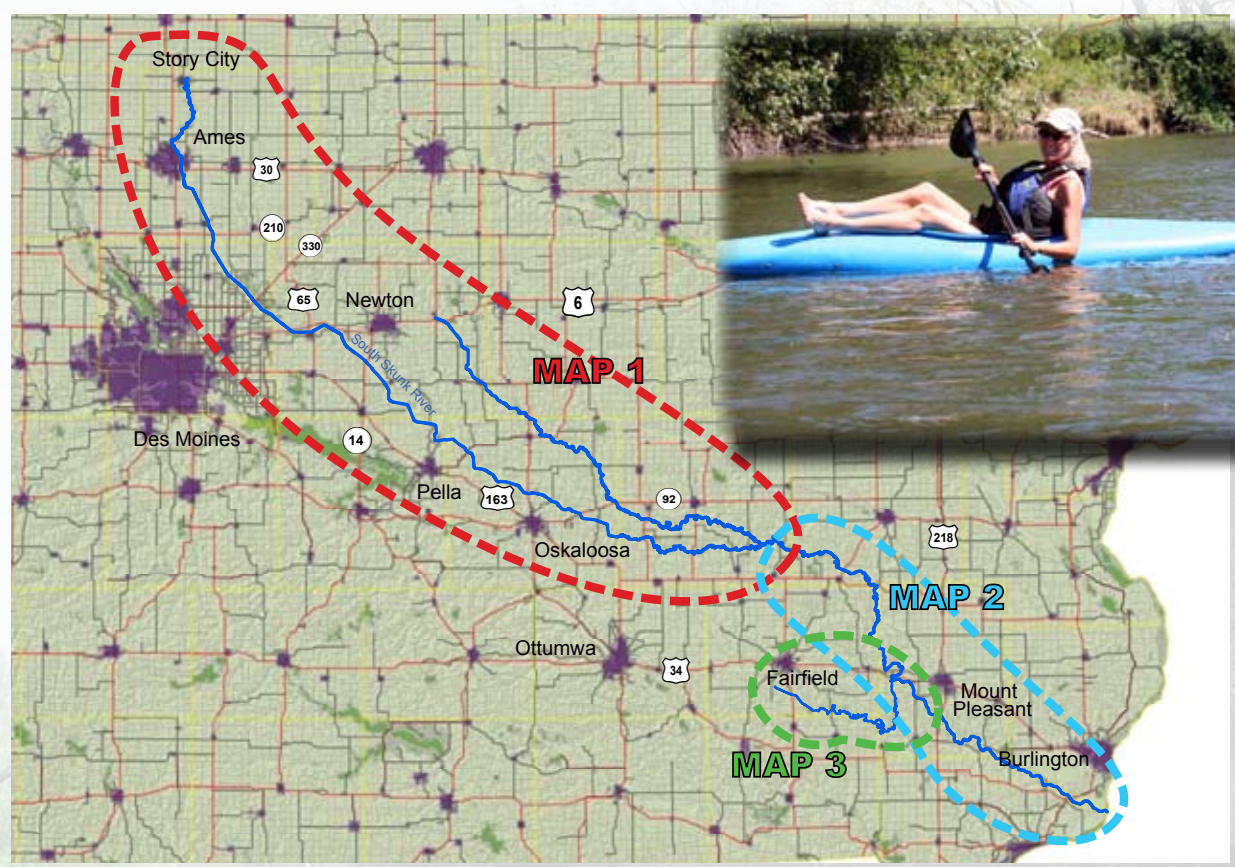
Big Cedar Creek Map #3

Big Cedar Creek is the Skunk River's second largest tributary. It rises in southeastern Mahaska County and flows for 76 miles, merging with the Skunk just below Rome. This remote stream offers paddlers adventure "far from the madding crowd." Few homes, highways, and towns interfere with the experience of tree-lined banks and limestone outcroppings. Averaging 60 feet wide, this creek is more like a small river. Its watershed is on a scale similar to the North Fork Maquoketa River. Though the river has a lot to offer, the water can become muddy due to runoff after heavy rains. This creek is for the adventurous looking for a challenge. While there are no dams on this stretch, steep banks and potential creek wide log jams require skills and abilities of experienced paddlers.



Upstream of Willow Rd Access

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



South Skunk River, North Skunk River and Big Cedar Creek



Big Cedar Creek

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!

Camping on sandbars is allowed on the Skunk River from the northern boundary of Jefferson County (at the SW edge of Coppock) to the Mississippi River. Land upstream of Coppock on the Skunk River, and all of Big Cedar Creek is privately owned – these waters are navigable, but you *must* respect private property.

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

Resources

Water trails and recent listing of canoe/kayak liveries
www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/

