

# Quality water indoors. Quality water outdoors.

## It's up to all of us to keep Illinois' water clean and safe.

That's because the water you use for recreation is the same water that comes out of your tap. And the water that goes down your drain becomes the same water many animals call home. So, whether you're outside or inside, your water habits have impact.

### Conserving water at home

- Repair leaky faucets and running toilets right away. Leaks can waste as much as 50 gallons of water a day.
- Don't run the faucet when you are brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing dishes. This can waste 3-5 gallons every time you run the faucet.
- Install low-flow toilets to save 3-5 gallons per flush. Install water-saving showerheads. Outdated showerheads can waste 20 gallons of water a day.
- Don't run your dishwasher or washing machine unless they are full.
- Water your lawn or garden in the early morning or evening to avoid water loss due to evaporation.

### Controlling pollution at home

- Never dump oil, anti-freeze, paint or any other chemical or pollutant down the storm drain or sink. Take them to your local hazardous waste disposal site instead.
- Compost or recycle your yard waste and minimize your use of fertilizers and pesticides on your lawn and garden.
- Plant a rain garden on your property to minimize the amount of storm water runoff that leaves your property and washes down the storm drain.
- Don't flush expired and unused medicines down the toilet or pour them down the drain. Take them to your local hazardous waste disposal site instead.
- Use environmentally friendly household cleaners like phosphate-free detergent in your dishwasher.
- Properly maintain your septic tank and fix any car leaks right away.

## Minimizing your impact on the river

- Be considerate of fish, wildlife and other people. Never leave behind any trash or leftovers from your river trip or throw any trash in the river that could harm wildlife or ruin the view for the next visitor.
- Carry any water you need in reusable hard plastic water bottles. Most commercially bottled water comes from rivers, aquifers or even the tap, and the disposable water bottles are wasteful and frequently discarded improperly.
- If you pull over on a riverbank or sand bar, try to disturb as little wildlife habitat as possible. Travel on established trails and leave everything as you found it.
- Report unusual smelling water, discarded barrels that appear to be leaking or illegal dump sites to your nearest IEPA office.
- Retrieve any snagged or broken fishing equipment before leaving.
- Make sure you wash your boots and boat off before moving from one river to another to minimize the risk of transplanting unwanted species.

### Rock River



For more details on how to minimize your impacts when out on the river, visit Leave No Trace | [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org) |

# THE RIVER GUIDE







## Eleven Illinois rivers you'll love

Illinois has 87,000 miles of rivers and streams to fish, hike, paddle and explore. For more details about Illinois' rivers, the benefits they provide and how you can help protect them from pollution, visit our website at [www.prairieivers.org](http://www.prairieivers.org).

### 1 Chicago River – North Branch

No river in Illinois has undergone more dramatic change since the state was settled, but the Chicago River still offers many recreational opportunities, flowing through urban neighborhoods and winding, tree-covered corridors.

Biking and hiking trails line the river. The Cook County Forest Preserve system offers many river access points.

**For more information, call the Cook County Forest Preserve system at 1-(800)-870-3666, or visit the Friends of Chicago River website at [www.chicagoriver.org](http://www.chicagoriver.org).**

### 2 Des Plaines River

Several forest preserves along the upper reaches of the Des Plaines River in Lake County have developed canoe launch sites that make it easy to explore the nearly continuous greenway that extends from the Wisconsin border into the northern section of Cook County.

Several Illinois nature preserves lie along the banks of the lower Des Plaines between Columbia Woods Forest Preserve and the historic fur trading post of Isle a la Cache.

**For more information, call Lake County Forest Preserves at (847) 367-6640.**

### 3 Fox River

From Chain-O-Lakes State Park in McHenry and Lake counties to the high bluffs on the lower part of the river, the Fox River offers a variety of recreational opportunities and public access points.

**To learn more about the river, visit the Friends of the Fox website [www.friendsofthefox.org](http://www.friendsofthefox.org). This is a local group actively encouraging local governments to enact water quality protections in this rapidly urbanizing area. You can also call Chain-O-Lakes State Park at (847) 587-5512.**

### 4 Sangamon River

One of the longest rivers in the state, the Sangamon River winds slowly through flat farmland through Decatur and on to the Illinois River at Beardstown.

Public access points include four forest preserves between Mahomet and Monticello, where the river then flows through Allerton Park, a national natural landmark that Prairie Rivers Network saved from destruction. It is also accessible at Rock Springs Conservation Area near Decatur, Carpenter Park Nature Preserve in Springfield and historic New Salem near Petersburg.

### 5 Cache River

Visitors can experience a lost world of 1,000-year-old cypress trees while paddling a portion of the Lower Cache River at Cache River State Natural Area. Boardwalks also provide access to cypress-tupelo forested wetlands in several nature preserves such as Heron Pond.

**For more information, contact the Natural Area Visitors Center at (618) 634-9678 or Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge at (618) 634-2231.**

### 6 Kankakee River

Kankakee River State Park offers 4,000 acres of public land along 11 miles of river. The park is only a short drive south of the Chicago metro area for anglers, canoeists, hunters, campers, hikers, bicyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts.

The natural channel of the Kankakee River, listed on the Federal Clean Streams Register, is the focus of the park's popularity.

**Contact the park office at (815) 933-1383 for more information.**

### 7 Apple River

In this corner of Illinois that the glaciers missed, the Apple River Canyon State Park offers opportunities to hike along a riverbed cut through masses of limestone, dolomite and shale. The park is the primary public access point for this river that winds through the canyon toward its confluence with the Mississippi.

**For more information, contact Apple River Canyon State Park at (815) 745-3302.**

### 8 Vermilion River – Middle Fork

The only National Scenic River in Illinois, the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River runs 17 miles through state and county parks and wildlife areas that offer a wide range of recreational opportunities, including three Illinois Nature Preserves, a nationally designated archaeological complex and 35 miles of hiking and horseback-riding trails.

**For more information, call Kickapoo State Park at (217) 442-4915.**

### 9 Lusk Creek and Bay Creek

Two of the most beautiful river walks in Illinois are hidden in the Shawnee National Forest just south of Harrisburg. The scenic sandstone cliffs and clear water in Lusk Creek Canyon Nature Preserve lie in the middle of the Lusk Creek Wilderness area. Many other hiking trails originate the nearby Bell Smith Springs campground and Bay Creek Wilderness.

**Call the Lusk Creek Canyon Nature Preserve at (618) 658-2214 for more information.**

### 10 Mackinaw River

Flowing for 125 miles, the Mackinaw River has tree-lined corridors, wooded bluffs and an abundance of fish and wildlife, including smallmouth bass, mussels, river otters, herons and turtles.

Several state fish and wildlife areas and nature preserves, as well as property owned by the Nature Conservancy provide several access points to the river.

### 11 Illinois and Mississippi rivers

These two "great rivers" come together near Alton, where the Pere Marquette State Park and Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Area offer a variety of recreational opportunities. The park has a popular lodge, campground, and 12 miles of trails offering spectacular views of the Illinois River and its backwaters.

**Call the Pere Marquette State Park Visitors Center at (618) 786-3323 for programs ranging from the family fishing fair to eagle watching.**

## Canoe rentals and river access

### Upstate

Chicago River – North Branch  
Chicagoland Canoe Base  
(773) 777-1489

Fox River  
Freeman's Sports – Yorkville  
(630) 553-0515

Belle of the Rock  
Starved Rock park  
[www.belloftherock.com](http://www.belloftherock.com)  
(815) 434-9200

**For more details about access points and water trails for these and other rivers in Northeast Illinois, you can also visit the Openlands Project's Water Trails website at [www.openlands.org/watertrails.asp](http://www.openlands.org/watertrails.asp)**

### Downstate

Vermilion River – Middle Fork  
Kickapoo Landing  
[www.kickapoolanding.com](http://www.kickapoolanding.com)  
(217) 446-8399

Kankakee River  
Reed's Canoe Trips  
(815) 932-2663

Grafton Canoe & Kayak  
[www.graftoncanoeandkayak.com](http://www.graftoncanoeandkayak.com)  
(618) 786-2192

**For a more complete listing of outfitters and outdoor opportunities, visit our website at**

**[www.prairierivers.org](http://www.prairierivers.org)**







## Who We Are

Prairie Rivers Network is Illinois' statewide river conservation organization. It's our mission to protect the rivers and streams of Illinois and to promote the lasting health and beauty of watershed communities.

Since 1967, Prairie Rivers has worked with citizen groups to stop unneeded and environmentally costly water projects, to reduce the volume and toxicity of landfill waste, and to improve river habitats and water quality. We also provide information, sound science, and hands-on assistance to individuals and community groups throughout the state to help them become effective river conservation advocates.

Over the years, Prairie Rivers Network has been able to improve the quality of water for everyone in Illinois. We're passionate about saving Illinois' rivers and streams, not just for nature's sake, but for the sake of the entire state.

To learn more about our organization, outdoor recreation in Illinois, and ways you can help protect our waters, visit Prairie Rivers Network online at

[www.prairierivers.org](http://www.prairierivers.org)

