

TURKEY RIVER WATER TRAIL

MAP & GUIDE



www.northeastiowarc.org/turkey



Designed in Northeast Iowa. 2010

Water Trail

The 98-mile Turkey River Water Trail begins on the Little Turkey River at Gouldsburg Park in Fayette County, merges with the larger Turkey River, and flows southeast through Fayette & Clayton counties toward the Mississippi River. The water trail features beautiful scenery and numerous historic landmarks.

Canoe Rental

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Gouldsburg Park | 563.426.5740 |
| Waucoma Campground | 563.776.7000 |
| Rollin' River Canoe & Tube Rental (W. Union) | 563.422.5531 or 563.380.3201 |
| Volga River State Recreation Area (Fayette) | 563.425.4161 |
| Double J Tube and Canoe Rental (Clermont) | 563.423.5144 or 563.426.5593 |
| Skip-A-Way Resort (Clermont) | 563.423.7338 or 563.380.0841 |
| Big Foot Canoe Rental (Monona) | 563.539.4272 |
| Turkey River Canoe Rental (Elkader) | 563.245.1559 or 800.250.2466 |

Safety

Safety is essential when enjoying the Turkey River. Each person must have a wearable life jacket in the boat. Dress properly for the trip by wearing sun block and sunglasses, comfortable fast drying clothing, a hat, and proper water shoes to guard your feet against rocks. While on the river, be sure to look ahead and avoid downed trees or large rocks in the river. Three dams exist on the Turkey River Water Trail. Their locations are clearly marked on the map. **The circulating current immediately below each dam is extremely dangerous.** When you see a DAM sign be ready to take out your canoe; DO NOT attempt to go over any dam.

LEGEND

- Turkey River Water Trail
- Access #32 Motor Mill Access
- Dam
- Volga River Access Point

- River Mile (Distance to Mississippi)
- Hiking, Biking, or Multi-use Trail
- Public Land
- Camping

Camping

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Backbone State Park | 563.924.2827 |
| Big Spring Trout Hatchery | 563.245.2446 |
| Bloody Run Country Park | 563.245.1516 |
| Clayton Hills Campground | 563.964.2236 |
| D & D Campground | 563.928.6464 |
| Deer Ridge Campground | 563.774.2067 |
| Deer Run Resort | 563.245.3337 |
| Dutton's Cave Campground | 563.426.5740 |
| Echo Valley State Park - Jensen's Trail | 563.426.5740 |
| Elkader City Park Campground | 563.245.2098 |
| Frieden Park | 563.245.1516 |
| Gilbertson Conservation Education Area | 563.426.5740 |
| Goeken Park | 563.425.3613 |
| Gouldsburg Park | 563.426.5740 |
| Guttenberg RV Park | 319.334.3802 |
| J and J Hideaway | 563.633.6795 |
| Joy Springs County Park | 563.245.1516 |
| Klock's Island Park | 563.425.4316 |
| Lakeside RV Park & Campgrounds | 563.252.4151 |
| Little Bit of Country RV Park | 563.933.2081 |
| Littleport Campground | 563.245.2536 |
| Maynard City Park & Campground | 563.637.2269 |
| Miner's Creek Cabins & Campground | 563.252.1838 |
| Motor Mill Access | 563.245.1516 |
| Oelwein City Park | 563.283.5440 |
| Paradise Valley | 563.873.9632 |
| Pikes Peak State Park | 563.873.2342 |
| River Valley Campground | 563.379.3963 |
| Skip-A-Way Park & Campground | 800.728.1167 |
| Spook Cave & Campground | 563.873.2144 |
| Sweet Dreams Campground | 563.928.7290 |
| Twin Bridges County Park | 563.427.5740 |
| Valley View Resort | 319.393.4825 |
| Volga River State Recreation Area | 563.425.4161 |
| Volga U Campgrounds | 563.767.3511 |
| Waucoma Campground | 563.776.7000 |

Cultural History

For generations the Turkey River, with its wooded bluffs, fertile lowlands and wild game populations has served as a cultural melting pot. Prehistoric archeological sites of the Archaic and Woodland Tribes exist on the Turkey River Valley; with the most notable being a group of woodland mounds at Turkey River Mounds State Preserve above the confluence of the Turkey and Mississippi Rivers. In the 1700s, the French Fur Trade brought many of the first Europeans to the area including people of Spanish and French decent. These settlers used the historic Native American tribes of the Ioway, Ho Chunk, Sauk and Meskwaki to trade with.

Geology

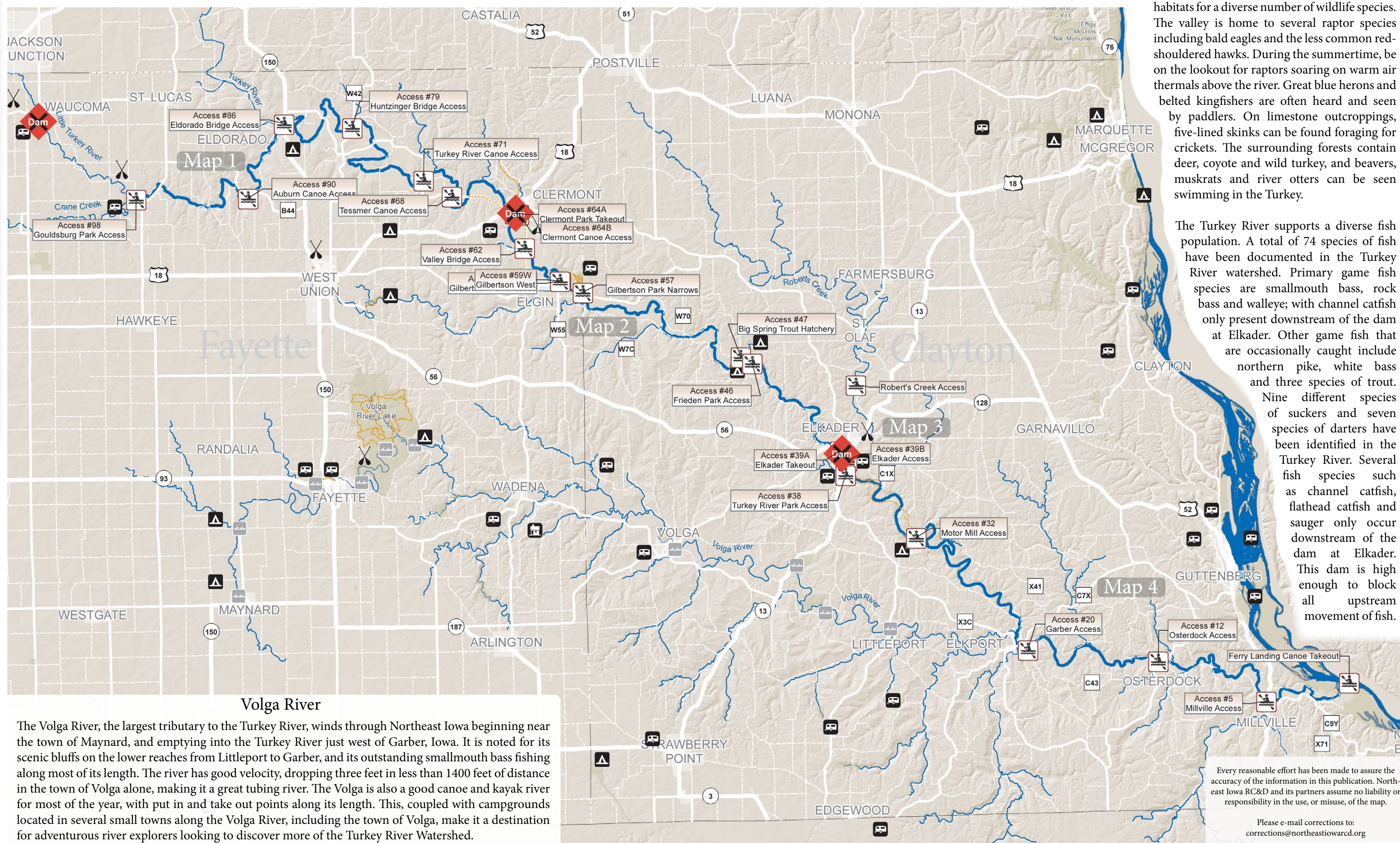
The scenic beauty of the Turkey River can be credited to the geological land form it flows through: the Paleozoic Plateau. This rugged landform contains four different rock formations ranging from 300-530 million years old. Along your route look for outcroppings of exposed bedrock most frequently found in the sedimentary forms of limestone, dolomite, or sandstone. These rocks are responsible for forming the picturesque cliffs, ledges, and bluffs commonly encountered along the Turkey.



Fish & Wildlife

The Turkey River Valley provides varying habitats for a diverse number of wildlife species. The valley is home to several raptor species including bald eagles and the less common red-shouldered hawks. During the summertime, be on the lookout for raptors soaring on warm air thermals above the river. Great blue herons and belted kingfishers are often heard and seen by paddlers. On limestone outcroppings, five-lined skinks can be found foraging for crickets. The surrounding forests contain deer, coyote and wild turkey, and beavers, muskrats and river otters can be seen swimming in the Turkey.

The Turkey River supports a diverse fish population. A total of 74 species of fish have been documented in the Turkey River watershed. Primary game fish species are smallmouth bass, rock bass and walleye; with channel catfish only present downstream of the dam at Elkader. Other game fish that are occasionally caught include northern pike, white bass and three species of trout. Nine different species of suckers and seven species of darters have been identified in the Turkey River. Several fish species such as channel catfish, flathead catfish and sauger only occur downstream of the dam at Elkader. This dam is high enough to block all upstream movement of fish.



Guide Made Possible by:

- Iowa DNR River Programs**
www.iowadnr.gov/riverprograms/
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- Clayton County Conservation Board**
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- Fayette County Conservation Board**
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Volga River

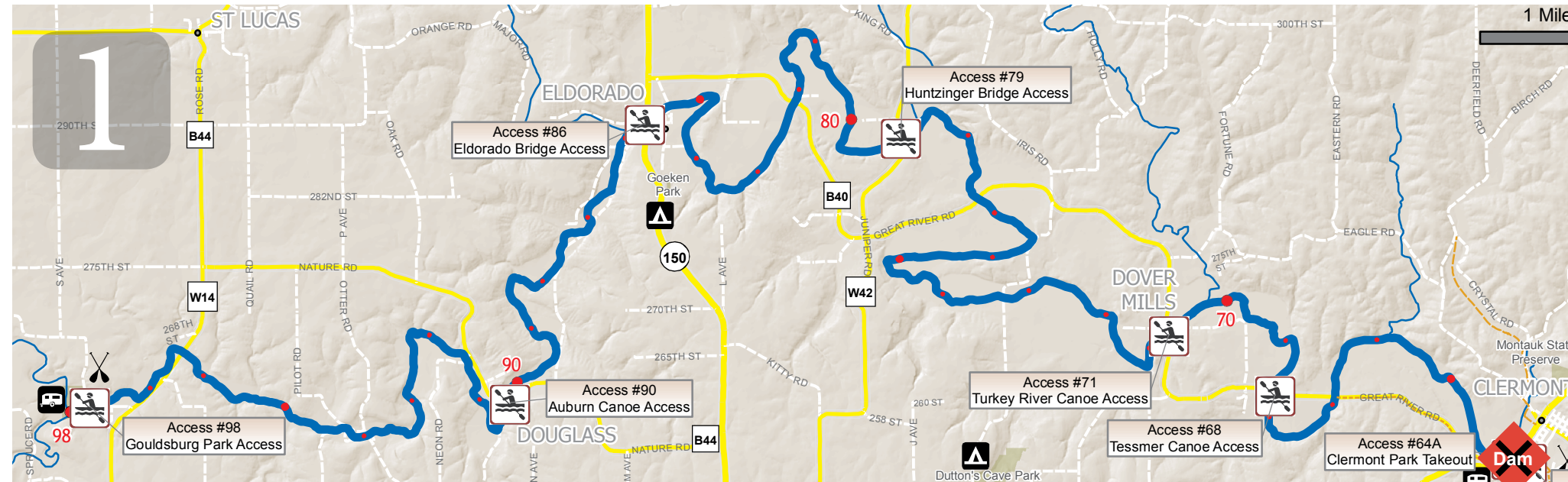
The Volga River, the largest tributary to the Turkey River, winds through Northeast Iowa beginning near the town of Maynard, and emptying into the Turkey River just west of Garber, Iowa. It is noted for its scenic bluffs on the lower reaches from Littleport to Garber, and its outstanding smallmouth bass fishing along most of its length. The river has good velocity, dropping three feet in less than 1400 feet of distance in the town of Volga alone, making it a great tubing river. The Volga is also a good canoe and kayak river for most of the year, with put in and take out points along its length. This, coupled with campgrounds located in several small towns along the Volga River, including the town of Volga, make it a destination for adventurous river explorers looking to discover more of the Turkey River Watershed.

Every reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the information in this publication. Northeast Iowa RC&D and its partners assume no liability or responsibility in the use, or misuse, of the map.

Please e-mail corrections to: corrections@northeastiowarc.org

Gouldsburg[98] to Eldorado[86]

Gouldsburg Park is a multi-use recreational area marking the official put-in and beginning of your water trail journey down the Turkey River. Here, Crane Creek merges with the Little Turkey River and flows peacefully downstream for 12.2 miles before merging with the main stem of the Turkey River at Eldorado. A shorter 7.7 mile day trip can be made by taking out at the Auburn access. As you begin your voyage, large native oak trees sprawl over the left side of the river setting the tone for a diverse and unaltered tree lined river corridor. Shortly after drifting under the first concrete bridge the river provides extraordinary scenery for several miles. Large limestone boulders covered in moss and ferns line the bank. Above you, hardwood forests claim the bluffs with the white bark of aspen trees lightly scattered in. Smallmouth bass and native sucker species can be seen darting upstream in the frequently crystal clear river. Surprisingly abundant freshwater mussel beds (clams) can also be seen in this stretch, an indicator of a healthy aquatic community. Past the Auburn access the valley starts to widen. After joining the waters of the Turkey River you pass under the Highway 150 bridge and an access can be found shortly after the bridge on the right. The 5.7 feet per mile gradient of this stretch provides frequent riffles.



Clermont[64] to Elgin[59]

This 5 mile section of the Turkey River Water Trail meanders through one of the most popular segments of the river. Users will encounter some white water, unequalled scenery, and one of the best fisheries on the river. Clermont is known as "Brick City" and is the home of many historical sites, including the Montauk mansion. Those looking to camp can also enjoy the Skip-Away Campground and Resort. This private entity sports an RV park, restaurant and lounge, as well as tube and canoe rental. Clermont's business district provides restaurants, a convenience store, as well as antique, gift, and art shops. Floating downstream from Clermont you will come to the Valley Canoe Access. This launch is in the center of an expansive valley known as the Shin Bone Valley, named as it is home to the sacred burial grounds of many generations of Native Americans. From the Valley Canoe Access, continue downstream to the Gilbertson Conservation Education Area at Elgin, Iowa. Elgin, known as the "Little Switzerland of Iowa", is a beautiful city portraying its Swiss and Norwegian heritage. At Gilbertson Park you will find a plethora of activities and facilities. These include modern and primitive camping facilities, restrooms, trails, the Gilbertson Nature Center, historical museums, a petting zoo, and the internationally renowned Maize Maze.

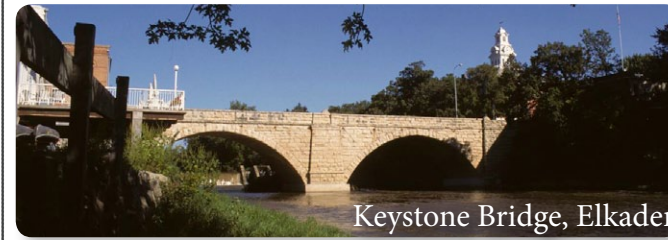


Eldorado[86] to Clermont[64]

Venture downstream from Eldorado on this particularly scenic stretch, you will encounter limestone bluffs and pine topped cliffs on your way past Huntzinger Canoe Access. Additional access points located along the 109-mile River Bluffs Scenic Byway include the Turkey River Canoe launch and the Tesser Canoe access. Just upstream from the City of Clermont, you will see warning signs as you approach the Clermont DAM. As your round the final bend before the dam, there will be a bluff on your right. **You must portage**, and takeout is on river-right at Clermont's River Park.

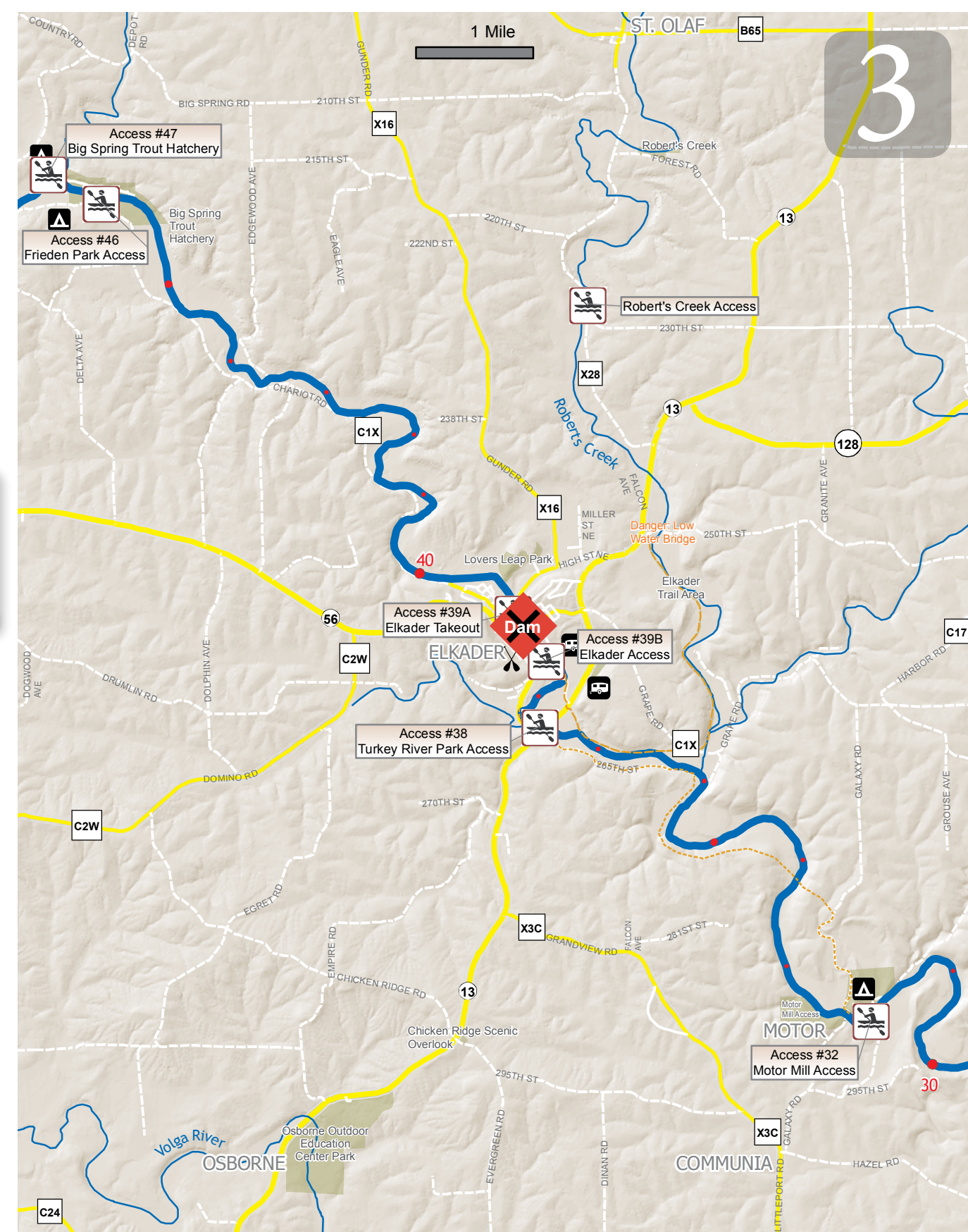
Big Spring[47] to Elkader[39]

You will begin your journey at the largest spring in Iowa: Big Spring. Here, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources rears trout to catchable size and stocks them into 19 Northeast Iowa fishable streams. From Big Springs it is an enjoyable 7.6 mile voyage down river to Elkader. About one mile downstream on the right bank, a large bald eagle nest can be seen on the top of a cottonwood tree. Eagles can be found soaring on thermals above the bluffs as you paddle this stretch. Upon arriving in Elkader you will notice the large water tower, be prepared to portage on river-left. **DO NOT** pass the portage as the dam is located just downstream. River users will portage around a large dam, the historic Keystone Bridge and a second smaller dam Gradient: 3.9 feet/mile



Elkader[39] to Motor Mill[32]

This 6.5 mile scenic section of river is accessed in historic downtown Elkader. Elkader's eclectic shops and ethnic restaurants draw visitors from around the region. The Elkader Opera House hosts both local and national music and theatrical performances. Elkader also boasts extensive public and private campground facilities, dozens of bed and breakfasts, and multi-use land trails for water trail visitors who want to spend more time in the area. Cross under the Highway 13 bridge at Turkey River Park, and all remnants of town are left behind. The river stays reasonably straight until you paddle past a large spring fed stream called Robert's Creek. Robert's Creek provides a vital habitat for many spawning species of fish including smallmouth and redbreast. From the creek, the river meanders through a narrow valley with wooded bluffs. After floating through a set of enjoyable riffles, historic Motor Mill can be seen down river on your left. Ride the riffles past the mill and through the leftward bend, where takeout will be on river-left. Gradient: 3.4 feet/mile.



Elgin[59] to Big Spring Trout Hatchery[47]

This section of the Turkey River Water Trail passes through Gilbertson Park and enters Clayton County. This float of 11.9 miles features the meandering nature of the river and a landscape of bluffs, timbered shorelines, and the serenity of nature. The visitor will likely encounter bald eagles, whitetail deer, and maybe the occasional river otter. Exit on your left at Big Spring Trout Hatchery, or continue 1/2 mile to exit right at Frieden Park



Motor Mill[32] to Garber[20]

This remote 12.4 mile stretch may provide the best scenery of the Turkey River Water Trail. Your river retreat begins at the access just downriver from Motor Mill. Motor Mill operated from 1869 until 1883 when a large flood severely damaged the dam. After paddling past a farm, a veteran group of red cedars stand guard on a narrow limestone bluff. The timbered ridges on both sides of the river rise high and close together giving this stretch a remote canyon feel. On this section of the river you will float past numerous scenic 150-foot vistas, abundant wildlife, and 100 year old native white pines growing from limestone rocks. After three miles, Pine Creek enters on the river-left; paddle in a short way to view a spectacular rock bluff topped with native white pines. Seven miles downriver from Pine Creek, the Volga River enters the Turkey. After going under the Elkport-Garber bridge, you curve left and the takeout is just past the next bridge on the river-left. This section of the river has a total gradient of 3.4 feet per mile.

