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ILLINOIS

NATIONAL SCENIC RIVER



THE MIDDLE FORK RIVER
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

THE MIDDLE FORK RIVER

The Middle Fork River is Illinois' first State Scenic River, so designated in 1986 by Governor James R. Thompson. In 1989 the Middle Fork was also designated as a National Scenic River by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan. The Middle Fork is the first river in Illinois to be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. It is protected by State and federal law because of its outstanding scenic, recreational, ecological, and historical characteristics.

The Middle Fork River has eroded through deep glacial deposits, exposing steep valley slopes and high bluffs. This results in small springs on hillsides, and attracts swallows to nest in the bluffs. During a flood, the power of the river cuts new channels, moves boulders, and removes trees. Most of the area along the river is forested, and there are also several prairie sites. Three areas support plants and animals so rare that they are protected as State Nature Preserves. The Middle Fork River valley supports a great diversity of plants and animals including 57 types of fish, 45 different mammals, and 190 kinds of birds. Of this diverse wildlife, there are 24 species officially identified as State threatened or endangered species. Other special qualities of the Middle Fork River valley include unusual geologic formations, various historic sites, and over 8,400 acres of public parks.

HOW IS THIS SPECIAL RIVER PROTECTED?

The State law (Public Act 84-1257) and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act give permanent protection to a 17-mile segment of the river in Vermilion County. This protection includes land on both sides of the river. Conservation easements are held by the State on all land not already owned by the State. The Illinois Department of Conservation manages this protected river valley. The State Nature Preserves and State threatened or endangered species in the valley are also protected by other State laws and programs.

WHAT CAN YOU SEE IN THE MIDDLE FORK RIVER VALLEY?

There are miles of scenic river with high bluffs and sand bars, surrounded by trees harboring many animals. In the river, you may see mussels, turtles, ducks and other waterfowl, and sunfish, or bass. Along its banks you may see frogs, salamanders, or raccoons. In the

trees you may see or hear chickadees, bluebirds, woodpeckers, hawks, and many other birds. The many types of trees include oak, dogwood, walnut, redbud, and ash. On the trails near the river you may see orchids, ferns, prairie grasses, or wildflowers such as Indian paint brush, or brown-eyed susan. Nature abounds for you to enjoy along the Middle Fork River.

What can you do along the Middle Fork River?

There are a variety of recreational activities to choose from. Canoeing is popular. You can also enjoy the many other outdoor activities available to you in three large public parks.

Kickapoo State Park

This park, owned and operated by the Illinois Department of Conservation, contains over 2,800 acres, with several small lakes and ponds for fishing, boating, canoeing, and scuba diving. There are also two canoe access areas on the Middle Fork River. Boat and canoe rental and livery are available in the park. Only electric motors are allowed. For overnight visits, there are campgrounds for tents and trailers. A sanitary dump station and electrical hookups are available. In the winter, there is ice fishing, ice skating, and sledding.

Middle Fork State Fish and Wildlife Area

This 2,700 acre park, also owned and operated by the Department of Conservation, is used mostly for hunting and horseback riding. Hunting is permitted for deer, squirrel, pheasant, quail, woodcock, rabbit, raccoon, and opossum in season. There are 35 miles of equestrian trails that can also be used for hiking. There is also a non-electric campground for use by equestrians or other campers. In winter, trails are available for snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. The area includes two canoe access sites on the Middle Fork River. Footpaths also provide access to the river for fishing.

A bend of the river at Windfall Prairie Nature Preserve was named "Bales Bend" in memory of Robert B. Bales. This memorial honors his untiring efforts to preserve the Middle Fork River, and recognizes his appreciation for this river and this special spot on the river. Robert Bales was the founder of the Committee on the Middle Fork, an environmental group still working to preserve, protect, and enjoy the Middle Fork River.

KENNEKUK COUNTY PARK

This park contains about 3,500 acres, operated by the Vermilion County Conservation District. There is a swimming beach on Lake Mingo. The lake and several other ponds are also used for boating and fishing. Rental boats are available. Picnic shelters and playgrounds are provided, as well as hiking trails. In winter the park offers ice skating, ice fishing, and sledding. There is also one canoe access area provided on the Middle Fork River. Two historic buildings, a country church and a one-room school, are also located in the park.

CANOEING

The Middle Fork is a popular canoeing river. There are five canoe access areas along 14 miles of the Middle Fork River. There are additional canoe access areas further upstream. You can take a short canoe trip of a few hours, or make a weekend of it and camp overnight in park campgrounds. You can also canoe the lakes if you prefer. The canoe rental and livery makes it convenient to canoe, but you can also bring your own canoe if you register it in Illinois or your home state.

The scenic Middle Fork River with its sand and gravel bottom, boulders, high bluffs and varied wildlife will capture your attention as you canoe by. The sand bars provide good resting or picnic spots. The canoe access site at Bunker Hill Bridge provides a picnic area.

Of course, be sure to properly dispose of all trash in trash cans. Remember that camping is only allowed in campgrounds. Swimming is not authorized in the river. It is also a good idea to check water conditions before canoeing, since the Middle Fork can have high flows with swift currents after rains.

WHAT ABOUT THE TOWN OF DANVILLE?

Danville is a city of over 40,000 people, located about five minutes east of the Middle Fork River. There are many restaurants, several hotels and shopping areas available in Danville to enhance your visit to the Middle Fork River.

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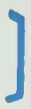
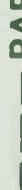






WHERE IS MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE?

- Information about **Kennekuk County Park** is available from the Vermilion County Conservation District, Box 215, Danville, IL 61832, or by phone at (217) 442-1691.
- For information on **canoe or boat rentals** for the Middle Fork River or area lakes, contact Recreation Ventures, R.R. #2, Danville, IL 61832, or phone at (217) 443-4939.
- For specific information about **Kickapoo State Park** or Middle Fork River water conditions, contact the park office at (217) 442-4915.
- Information about the **Danville** area is available from the Danville Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau, P.O. Box 992, Danville, IL 61834, or phone at (217) 442-1887, or toll free at (800) 383-4386.
- Brochures for **Kickapoo State Park** and the **Middle Fork State Fish and Wildlife Area**, or information about Illinois fishing, boating, and hunting, or more copies of this brochure are available from:
**IL Department of Conservation
Public Information
524 South Second Street
Springfield, IL 62701-1787
(217) 782-7454**
- For information about **boat and canoe registration** in Illinois, call (217) 782-2138.
- For information on membership in **Kids For Conservation**, an Illinois club for kids that offers a newsletter and notice of special events, write to Kids For Conservation, IL Department of Conservation, 524 South Second Street, Springfield, IL 62701-1787.

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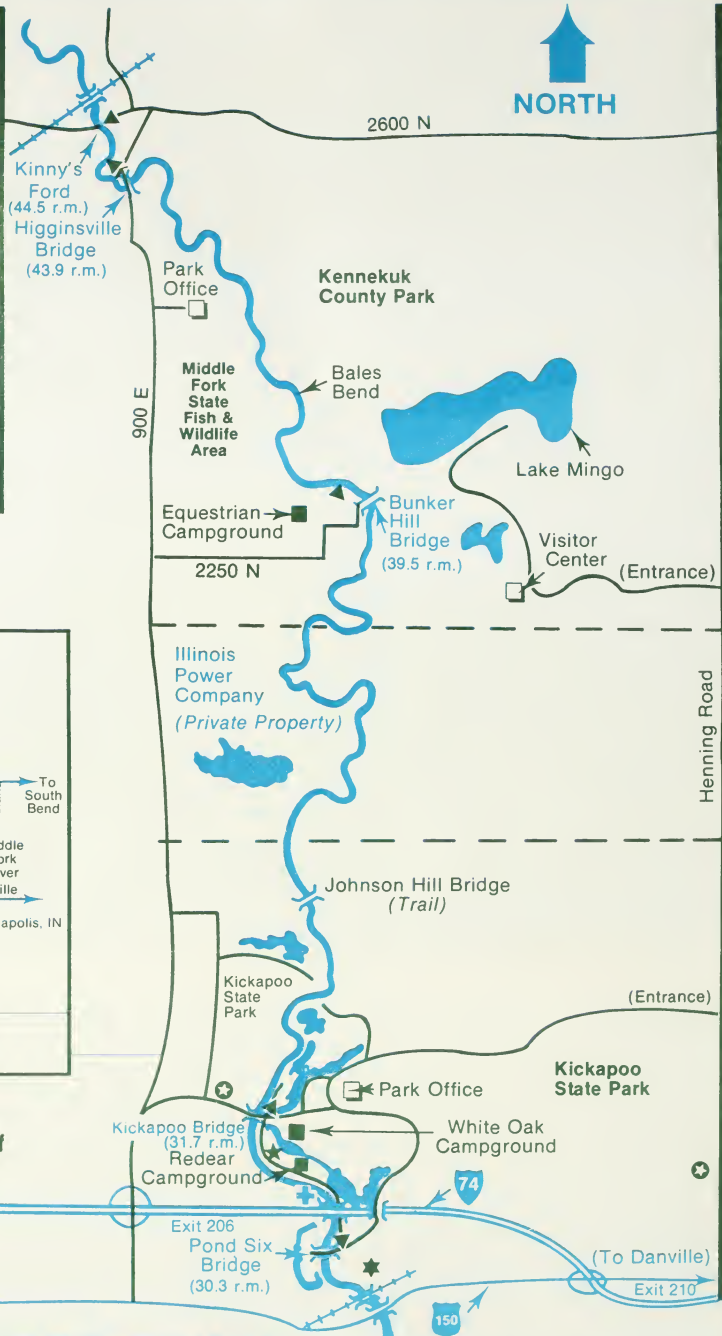
LEGEND

-  ROAD
-  RAILROAD
-  HIGHWAY
-  BRIDGE
-  PARK BOUNDARY
-  LAKE OR POND
-  CAMPGROUND
-  BAIT SHOP/GENERAL STORE
-  BOAT RENTAL CONCESSION
-  CANOE ACCESS AREA
-  COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS



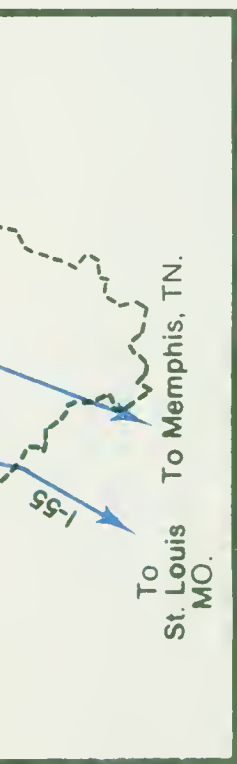
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- ★ BOAT RENTAL CONCESSION
- ▼ CANOE ACCESS AREA
- ★ COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
- VISITOR CENTER
- 44.5 RIVER MILES (r.m.)
- + REST AREA



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MIDDLE FORK RIVER



Illinois
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life and land together



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