



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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DNR offers safety tips for paddlers on Beaver Creek in Johnston

Paddlers using the newly opened access point on Beaver Creek in Johnston are advised to be aware of all conditions – including water levels, flow rates, recent floods, and upstream firearm trainings at Camp Dodge– that can affect the on-water experience.

“Beaver Creek is a lovely stream to float through Johnston, but there are a few things everyone needs to know going into the Labor Day weekend,” said Nate Hoogeveen, Iowa DNR’s River Programs Coordinator. “While the access is constructed and open, not all of the improvements have been completed to designate Beaver Creek as a state water trail.”

Iowa DNR offers the following safety tips to paddlers:

Check flow rates. Iowa DNR’s minimum recommended flow for Beaver Creek is 50 cubic feet per second for a pleasant trip. Would-be paddlers can look up current flow conditions at <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/ia/nwis/current/?type=flow> and scroll down to the Beaver Creek near Grimes, IA gage.

Be aware of logjams or potential for logjams. Paddlers have reported encountering a logjam. The City of Johnston hired a crew to cut through all the logjams this spring, and another crew has cut a logjam this past week after another flood. However, paddlers are advised that rain events and flooding in the area can and will cause additional logjams. When paddlers encounter logjams, they are strongly advised to use caution approaching and dealing with them.

“Paddlers on any stream need to be aware of natural pile-ups of trees in rivers, or what we call ‘strainers,’ and that streams regularly cause new logs to fall in or move around,” said Hoogeveen. “At higher flows, they can be dangerous and you might need skills to avoid them. At lower flows like now, they can force you to drag your kayak over or around them.”

Plan your exit. The nearest downstream public access from the new access at 70th Avenue in Johnston is at Prospect Park in Des Moines, which commits paddlers to a 9.9 mile journey. At minimum recommended flows, kayakers and canoeists would need to plan five to six hours to take out safely before sundown. The distance is not appropriate for inner tubes.

The City of Johnston plans to build several new accesses on Beaver Creek, the next of which will be at Lew Clarkson Park.

Avoid Camp Dodge. The segment of Beaver Creek between State Highway 141 and the new access should be avoided because it flows through Camp Dodge, a restricted area where live-ammunition training exercises are regularly conducted. The restricted area ends at the 70th Avenue Bridge.

“It’s very unsafe to float on the creek that flows through Camp Dodge due to the nature of the firearms trainings taking place,” Hoogeveen said. “We are working with Camp Dodge staff to minimize conflicts with the water trail being developed downstream of the property.”

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