

Iowa River Water Trail

Overview: The full expanse of the Iowa River Water Trail is a 72-mile stretch of river that starts in Iowa City and ends in Louisa County, where the Iowa River drains into the Mississippi River. The Iowa River Water Trail travels for 24 miles through Johnson County and passes three Johnson County Conservation (JCC) properties, Hills Access and Campground, Pechman Creek Delta, and River Junction Access and Campground. Both Hills Access and River Junction Access provide entry or take out points for the Iowa River Water Trail.

Water Trail Segments in Johnson County:

Sturgis Ferry Park to Hills Access (9.25 miles): The trail begins at Sturgis Ferry Park, in Iowa City. The park, managed by the City of Iowa City, consists of a boat ramp and parking. The first half of this stretch of the river takes paddlers past light industry and cabin-lined river banks. The latter half features longer stretches of bottomland forest lined banks. Hills Access and Campground, a JCC property, features a boat ramp, parking, electric and non-electric camping, water, restrooms, and a playground.

Hills Access to River Junction Access (9.8 miles): This trail segment stretches between Hills Access and another JCC property, River Junction Access and Campground. This section of the river is highly sinuous and expansive bottomland forest lines most of the eastern shoreline. Paddlers will pass Pechman Creek Delta in the last third of this segment. The Iowa River borders this JCC property for over 2 miles, though there is no river access here. River Junction Access and Campground is 1.5 miles downstream from Pechman and features a boat ramp, parking, non-electric camping, and restrooms.

River Junction Access to the Tri-County Bridge (6.5 miles): This trail segment runs through remote countryside and no dwellings are found along the shoreline through this section. Shorelines on both sides are mostly forested. The Tri-County Bridge sits at the boundary between Johnson, Louisa, and Washington Counties. There is no developed river access or parking here. The next developed access is 17 miles downriver at River Forks Access in Fredonia, IA.





Map above created by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). To see the full Iowa DNR Iowa River Water Trail brochure, along with other state Water Trail brochures, scan the QR code to the right.

