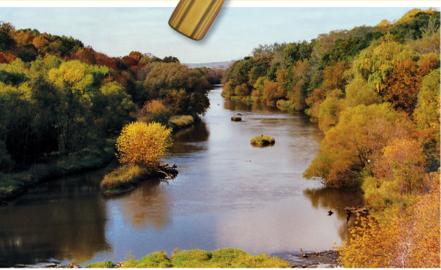


The Baraboo River and its watershed



Paddle the Baraboo



GUIDE & MAPS



Immature green heron

River facts

- The Baraboo is once again a free-flowing river. An effort began in the mid-1990s to restore the river through dam removal, culminating in October 2001 with removal of the Glenville Dam. It was then recognized nationally as the longest stretch of U.S. river restored through dam removal.
- The DNR's Priority Watershed Program was a key to river renewal. More than 500 participating landowners, especially farmers, installed conservation practices, reduced pollution and helped improve water quality.
- About 120 miles long, with a watershed area of 655 square miles, the Baraboo River begins in Monroe County near Kendall and ends at the Wisconsin River near Portage. It is the fourth largest tributary to the Wisconsin River.
- The river falls about 150 feet in elevation over its length, but one-third, or about 50 feet, occurs in the five-mile stretch through Baraboo. That portion was named the "Baraboo Rapids" by early inhabitants. Use of this term gradually disappeared after most of this stretch became "tamed" by dams, but it has now returned since the dams were removed and the rapids re-exposed.

Paddling Information

- The average annual flow is 383 cubic feet per second (cfs). Real-time daily flow downstream of Baraboo can be seen at: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wi/nwis/current/?type=flow> (select site number 05405000).
- Most land along the river is privately owned. Respect private property rights along the banks. No camping is allowed along the river, but public and private campgrounds are available nearby; contact the local Chamber of Commerce for more information.
- When parking along road shoulders, pull completely off the pavement.



Paddling the Baraboo River near Reedsburg.

A rebounding fishery

The Baraboo River fishery is recovering after removal of the last dams that impeded fish passage into the upstream waters. Native Americans praised the fishery, and local newspapers in the 1860s reported 30-pound northern pike, stringers full of bass and catfish and 100-pound sturgeon being caught.

At the same time however, the developing communities were building dams to provide power to meet the needs of an expanding population. The dams benefited the new residents but also had a negative impact on the rich Baraboo River fishery. The dams obstructed fish passage by limiting the movement into upstream cooler, shallower waters, their ideal spawning habitats. The impoundments behind the dams slowed water flows and deposited sediment on the gravel and rock riffles, the best habitat for fish to spawn.

By the 1990s these combined impacts had taken their toll. The Baraboo fishery had become dominated by carp, bullhead and suckers. Removal of the last dams along the river has reversed those impacts.

Almost immediately after removal of the last dam, fish started moving back upstream. Spring runoff events began to scour the accumulated sediment off of the gravel beds and rock riffles.

Reports of crappies, bluegills and channel catfish are now common. Northern and walleye pike are being caught again throughout the river. Smallmouth bass fishing along the rapids through the city of Baraboo is a regular occurrence. And a small step toward the ultimate recovery of the river is the occasional report of a sturgeon spawning along the shallows of the river in the springtime.

Healthy watersheds make healthy rivers

The quality of our lakes and rivers is a reflection of how we take care of our land. Waterfront property owners, inland residents, recreational users, agricultural producers and other businesses all play a role in maintaining and improving the water quality in our lakes and rivers.

There are a number of simple steps you can take to protect the river or lake in your watershed:

- **Properly dispose of garbage while on the river.** It can be easy to lose track of your garbage if you tip your canoe. Please keep all garbage secured in your boat so you can dispose of it when you return home.
- **Properly dispose of household hazardous waste.** Do not pour old oil or pesticides in the ditch or wash paintbrushes at the end of your driveway. Storm sewers connect directly to our rivers and lakes. To learn more about how to dispose of household hazardous waste, contact your Land Conservation Department.
- **Direct downspouts onto your lawn or landscaping, not onto hard surfaces.** Allowing water to soak in rather than run off your property filters out pollutants and replenishes our groundwater.
- **Manage your lawn to reduce pollution.** Keep grass clippings on the lawn, not on roads or sidewalks. Decomposing nutrients then bond to the soil rather than flowing down storm sewers. Reduce fertilizer and pesticide applications to minimize runoff pollution. Use no-phosphorus fertilizers to reduce the availability of this water pollutant.
- **Plant native trees and shrubs.** A recent Wisconsin study found that lawns created much more runoff than wooded areas. As a consequence the runoff from lawns carried eight times more phosphorus to the river than the runoff from similar sized wooded areas.

For additional information about the Baraboo River region, including shuttle services, restaurants and lodging, contact the following Chambers of Commerce:

Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce
 PO Box 442
 600 W Chestnut St
 Baraboo, WI 53913
 1-800-BARABOO (227-2266)
 Email: events@baraboo.com
 Website: www.baraboo.com

Reedsburg Area Chamber of Commerce
 240 Railroad Street
 PO Box 142
 Reedsburg, WI 53959
 (608) 524-2850 or 1-800-844-3507
 Email: reedsbrg@rucls.net
 Website: www.reedsburg.org

"Paddle the Baraboo" map provided by Sauk County with support from:

- City of Baraboo, City of Reedsburg
 - Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Reedsburg Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Baraboo River Canoe Club
- Created by:
- University of Wisconsin—Extension
 - Sauk County University of Wisconsin—Extension
 - Sauk County Conservation, Planning & Zoning



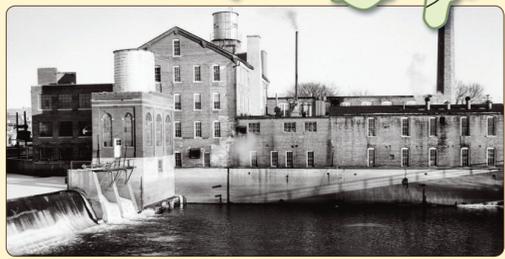
Natural and human history

The river tumbles out of the hill-and-valley country of un-glaciated Wisconsin northwest of Reedsburg before flowing lazily through glacial lake Reedsburg and the Baraboo Valley. At Baraboo, the river breaks through the terminal moraine and spills rapidly through the city. Before the last glacier it may have turned south here and flowed through what is now Devil's Lake. The last glaciation forced the channel to its present mouth at the Wisconsin river near Portage.

At its confluence with the Wisconsin River, one story goes, there was a French trader and trapper who in the eighteenth century had a trading post called Baribeau, after himself, and the river came to be referred as such. There are other theories on the origin of the river's name, but the truth may be lost in time.

The Baraboo has always lured people to its shores. The effigy mound-builders chose the riverbanks and surrounding hills for many of their mounds, and later indigenous peoples settled along the river in villages, often near these mounds.

The search for food, fuel and water also spurred white settlers to settle first along the river. Every village along the river owes its start to the water power that fueled early commerce. As many as 11 dams powered saw, grist and textile mills and eventually generated power for street lights and other electrical needs. The last remaining dam was removed in October 2001.



Reedsburg Woolen Mill.



Confluence of the Baraboo River and Narrows Creek in Rock Springs.



Historic view of the pedestrian bridge to Effinger Park in Baraboo.



Native American encampment in Babbs Woods near Reedsburg, 1889.

Encampment photo at right by D.D. Sizer; all other historic photos courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society

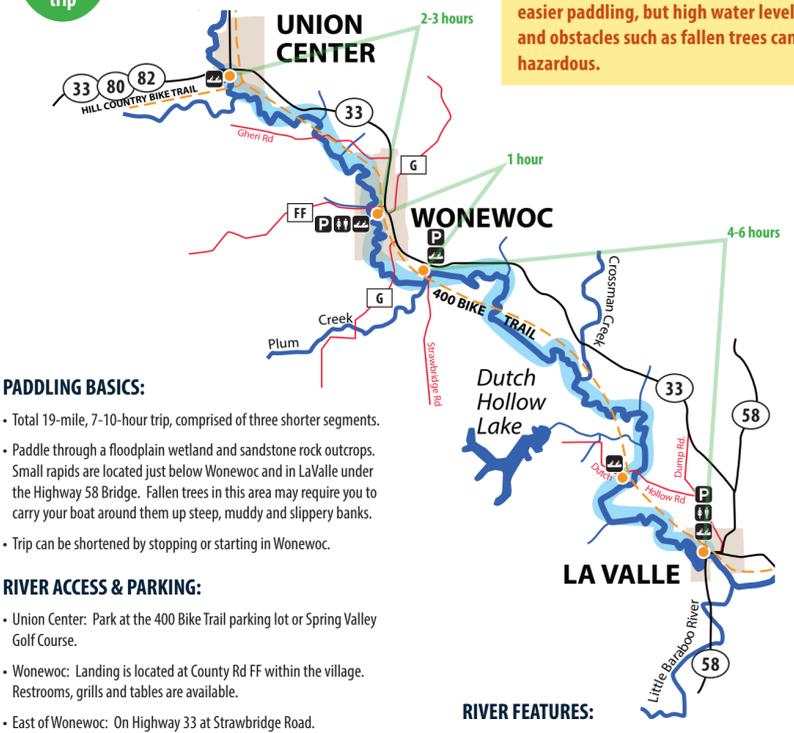


For questions or comments regarding the map, please contact the Sauk County University of Wisconsin—Extension office at (608) 355-3250 during regular business hours.

TOTAL LENGTH:
19 miles,
7-10-hour
trip

Union Center to LaValle

Paddling times for all river segments are estimates which can vary, depending on river conditions and paddlers' abilities. All segments are rated for small rapids or easier paddling, but high water levels and obstacles such as fallen trees can be hazardous.

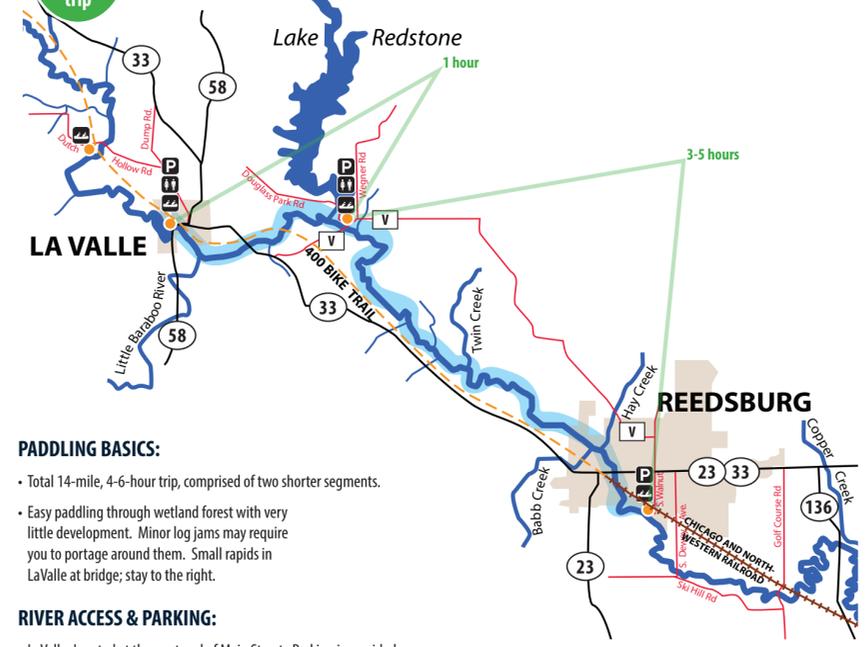


- PADDLING BASICS:**
- Total 19-mile, 7-10-hour trip, comprised of three shorter segments.
 - Paddle through a floodplain wetland and sandstone rock outcrops. Small rapids are located just below Wonevoc and in LaValle under the Highway 58 Bridge. Fallen trees in this area may require you to carry your boat around them up steep, muddy and slippery banks.
 - Trip can be shortened by stopping or starting in Wonevoc.
- RIVER ACCESS & PARKING:**
- Union Center: Park at the 400 Bike Trail parking lot or Spring Valley Golf Course.
 - Wonevoc: Landing is located at County Rd FF within the village. Restrooms, grills and tables are available.
 - East of Wonevoc: On Highway 33 at Strawbridge Road. Park at 400 Bike Trail parking lot.
 - LaValle: Landing is at the west end of Main Street. Restrooms across street at trailhead of the 400 Bike Trail.

- RIVER FEATURES:**
- Third Castle, a 300-foot rock outcrop located just outside of Wonevoc.
 - Opportunities for combination canoe/bicycle trips.

TOTAL LENGTH:
14 miles,
4-6-hour
trip

LaValle to Reedsburg



- PADDLING BASICS:**
- Total 14-mile, 4-6-hour trip, comprised of two shorter segments.
 - Easy paddling through wetland forest with very little development. Minor log jams may require you to portage around them. Small rapids in LaValle at bridge; stay to the right.
- RIVER ACCESS & PARKING:**
- LaValle: Located at the west end of Main Street. Parking is provided. Restrooms across street at trailhead of the 400 Bike Trail.
 - Douglas Park: Located off of Douglas Road near Redstone County Park. Park at landing. Restrooms available at County Park.
 - Reedsburg: Located off South Walnut Street south of the railroad tracks. Watch for sign and turn right through the alley past the Public Works garage. Park at the landing. No restrooms.

- RIVER FEATURES:**
- The river parallels the 400 Bike Trail from LaValle to Reedsburg. The trail provides an excellent bicycle shuttle route.
 - This stretch of the river is a bald eagle nesting area.

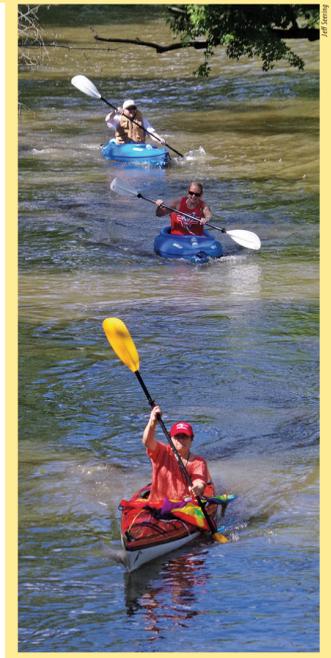
TOTAL LENGTH:
14 miles,
8-10-hour
trip

Reedsburg to Rock Springs



- PADDLING BASICS:**
- Total 14-mile, 8-10-hour trip, with no shorter segments.
 - Numerous log jams make this trip difficult and will require you to carry your boat around steep, muddy and slippery banks.
- RIVER ACCESS & PARKING:**
- Reedsburg: Located off South Walnut Street south of the railroad tracks. Watch for sign and turn right through the alley past the Public Works garage. Park at the landing. No restrooms.
 - Rock Springs: The landing and parking are located off Cty Rd DD just south of Hwy 136 Bridge in Rock Springs. Restrooms are located across the street in the park.

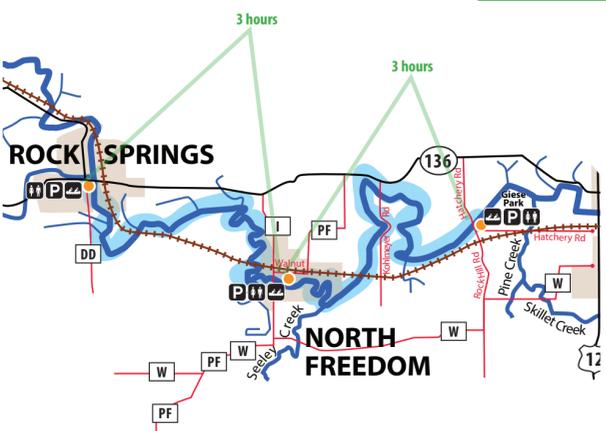
- RIVER FEATURES:**
- Paddle below beautiful rock outcroppings near Reedsburg and Rock Springs.
 - River passes under several 1890s vintage railroad bridges.
 - Passes through Ableman's Gorge State Natural Area just upstream of Rock Springs.



TOTAL LENGTH:
17 miles,
6-hour
trip

Rock Springs to Giese Park (wayside)

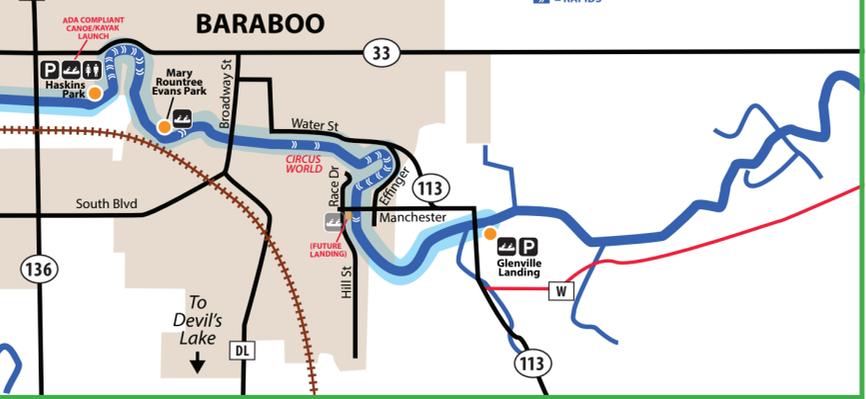
- PADDLING BASICS:**
- Total 17-mile, 6-hour trip, comprised of two shorter segments.
 - Easy paddling with gentle current. Minor log jams between Rock Springs and North Freedom may require portages.
 - North Freedom is the halfway point in this stretch.
- RIVER ACCESS & PARKING:**
- Rock Springs: The landing and parking are located off Cty Rd DD just south of Hwy 136 bridge in Rock Springs. Restrooms are located in park across from the landing.
 - North Freedom: Landing and parking available in North Freedom Park located south off of Walnut Street. Restrooms are located in the park.
 - Giese Park: Located 2 miles west of Hwy 12 on Hatchery Road. Parking is available at the park. A rustic outhouse is available.



- RIVER FEATURES:**
- Scenery is mix of lowland forest, wetlands, fields and pasture.
 - Some favorite quartzite rock outcroppings and bluffs rise from the riverbanks between Rock Springs and North Freedom.
 - Several interesting 1880s iron railroad bridges cross in this stretch.
 - Mid-Continent Railway Museum is located along the river in North Freedom.

TOTAL LENGTH:
8 miles,
3-hour
trip

Giese Park to Glenville Landing



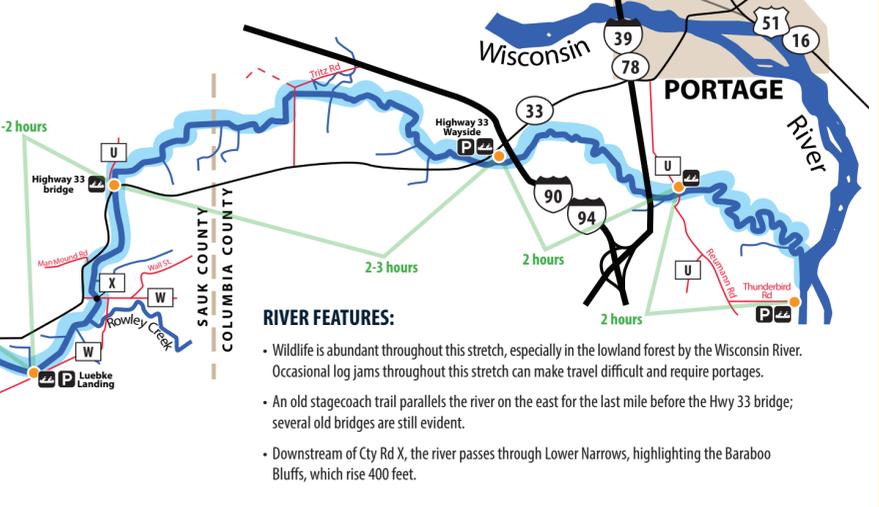
- PADDLING BASICS:**
- Total 8-mile, 2-3-hour trip, comprised of four shorter segments.
 - Paddle begins with gentle current, easy paddling. River turns sharply east at the vertical rise of the Baraboo Bluffs. A 50-foot elevation drop within the next 5 miles of river creates many riffle areas and some small rapids in high water. Water flow that is below 250 cfs can make passage difficult due to exposed rocks.
 - This section is generally free of any obstacles to navigation.
- RIVER ACCESS & PARKING:**
- Giese Park: Located 2 miles west of Hwy 12 on Hatchery Road. Parking is available at the park. A rustic outhouse is also available.
 - Numerous city parks along the river and a riverwalk provide public access, landings, restrooms, parking and picnic facilities.
 - Glenville Landing: Located off Hwy 113 at the southeast corner of Baraboo. Park at the landing. No restrooms.

- RIVER FEATURES:**
- Skillet Creek enters the Baraboo from the south draining a large area of the Baraboo Bluffs.
 - Exposed pre-Cambrian quartzite is the oldest rock formation visible in Wisconsin.
 - Circus World Museum in Baraboo commemorates the original winter headquarters of the Ringling Brothers Circus.
 - The last dams on the river were removed between 1996 and 2001 to improve water quality and restore fishery access to the river's upper reaches and feeder streams. Five dams were once located in this stretch and were used to generate power for Baraboo's early industrial development.

TOTAL LENGTH:
26 miles,
8-10-hour
trip

Glenville Landing to the Wisconsin River

- PADDLING BASICS:**
- Total 26-mile, 8-10-hour trip, comprised of five shorter segments.
 - Most traveled portions are from Glenville Landing to Luebke Landing and from Luebke to Hwy 33 bridge. All of these sections are less used and have poorer landings and access.
 - Travels through a hardwood forest with occasional riffle stretches.
 - Occasional fallen trees or log jams may require you to carry your canoe up steep, muddy and slippery banks.
 - Hwy 33 bridge to the Hwy 33 Wayside is through a channelized, straightened section of river through an intensive agricultural area.
 - Below the Hwy 33 Wayside the river flows through a mature floodplain forest. High water events provide a unique canoeing experience.



- RIVER ACCESS & PARKING:**
- Glenville Landing: Located off Hwy 113 at the southeast corner of the city of Baraboo. Parking is available at the landing. No restrooms.
 - Luebke Landing: 3 miles east of 113 on Cty Rd W. Parking is available at the site. No restrooms.
 - Hwy 33 Bridge, located on Hwy 33, 6 miles east of Baraboo. Difficult access because of riverbank rip-rap. Park along Cty Rd U. No restrooms.
 - Hwy 33 Wayside is located off Hwy 33 at the junction with I 90-94. Steep banks at launch site. Parking at wayside. No restrooms.
 - Cty Rd U bridge is located on Cty Rd U, 1.5 miles south of 33, west of Portage. Unimproved landing. Park along road. No restrooms.
 - Wisconsin River access near the mouth of the Baraboo is located at Thunderbird Road. Take Cty Rd U, south to Reumann Road, then east onto Thunderbird Road. Parking at landing. No restrooms.

- RIVER FEATURES:**
- Wildlife is abundant throughout this stretch, especially in the lowland forest by the Wisconsin River. Occasional log jams throughout this stretch can make travel difficult and require portages.
 - An old stagecoach trail parallels the river on the east for the last mile before the Hwy 33 bridge; several old bridges are still evident.
 - Downstream of Cty Rd X, the river passes through Lower Narrows, highlighting the Baraboo Bluffs, which rise 400 feet.