



The Maquoketa River at Buzzard Ridge.



Watercraft campsite at Retz Wildlife Area.

The Maquoketa River is a popular and scenic river with relatively consistent flows and excellent fishing. In its headwaters, the Maquoketa is a coldwater trout stream containing a trout fishery upstream of the lake at Backbone State Park. A number of watercraft campsites are available offering downriver paddlers opportunities for multiple days on the river. Downstream of the dam at Backbone, it transitions into a walleye-smallmouth bass fishery. The area from the Mon-Maq Dam to Pictured Rocks Park is one of the most heavily paddled sections of river in Iowa. The areas in the vicinity of the Canton Canoe Access are also well known for their remarkable bluffs and wild setting. Anywhere downstream of the Mon-Maq Dam is a "big river" species fishery, including sturgeon, sauger, flathead catfish, and drum.

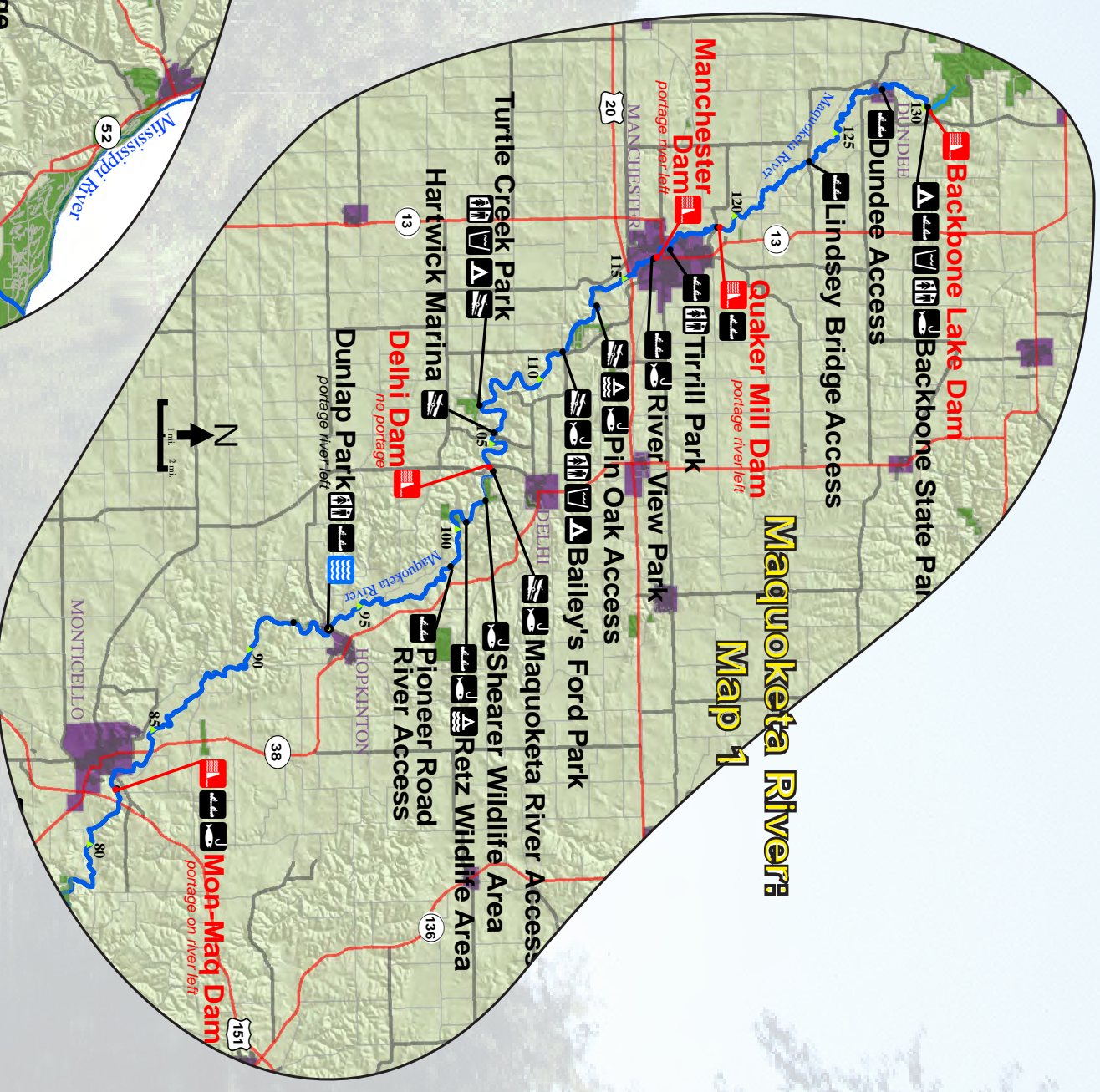
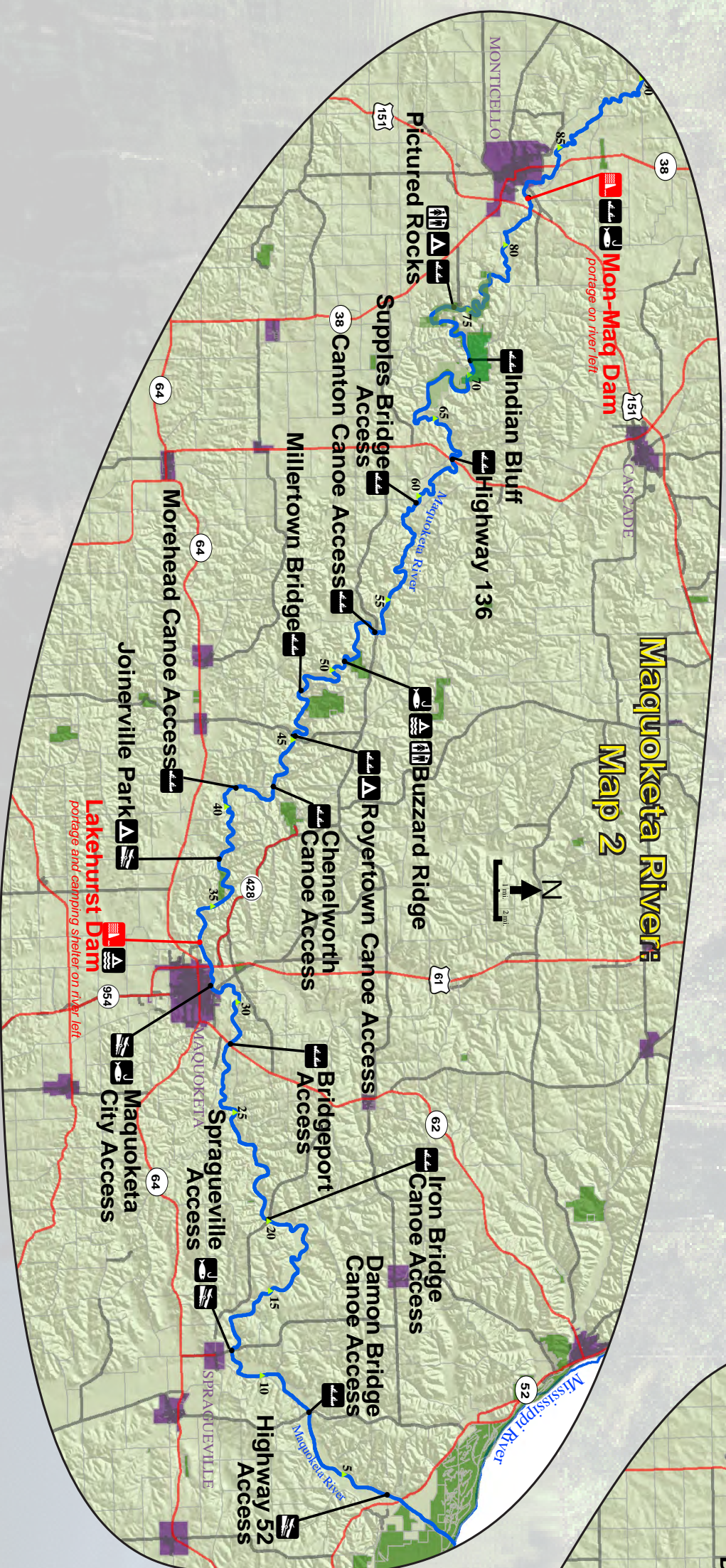
Note that there is no portage to get around the Delhi Dam, and that the section of river above it is primarily flanked by private residences along the still waters of Lake Delhi. This area requires a vehicle shuttle from Turtle Creek Park to the Maquoketa River access downstream of the dam.

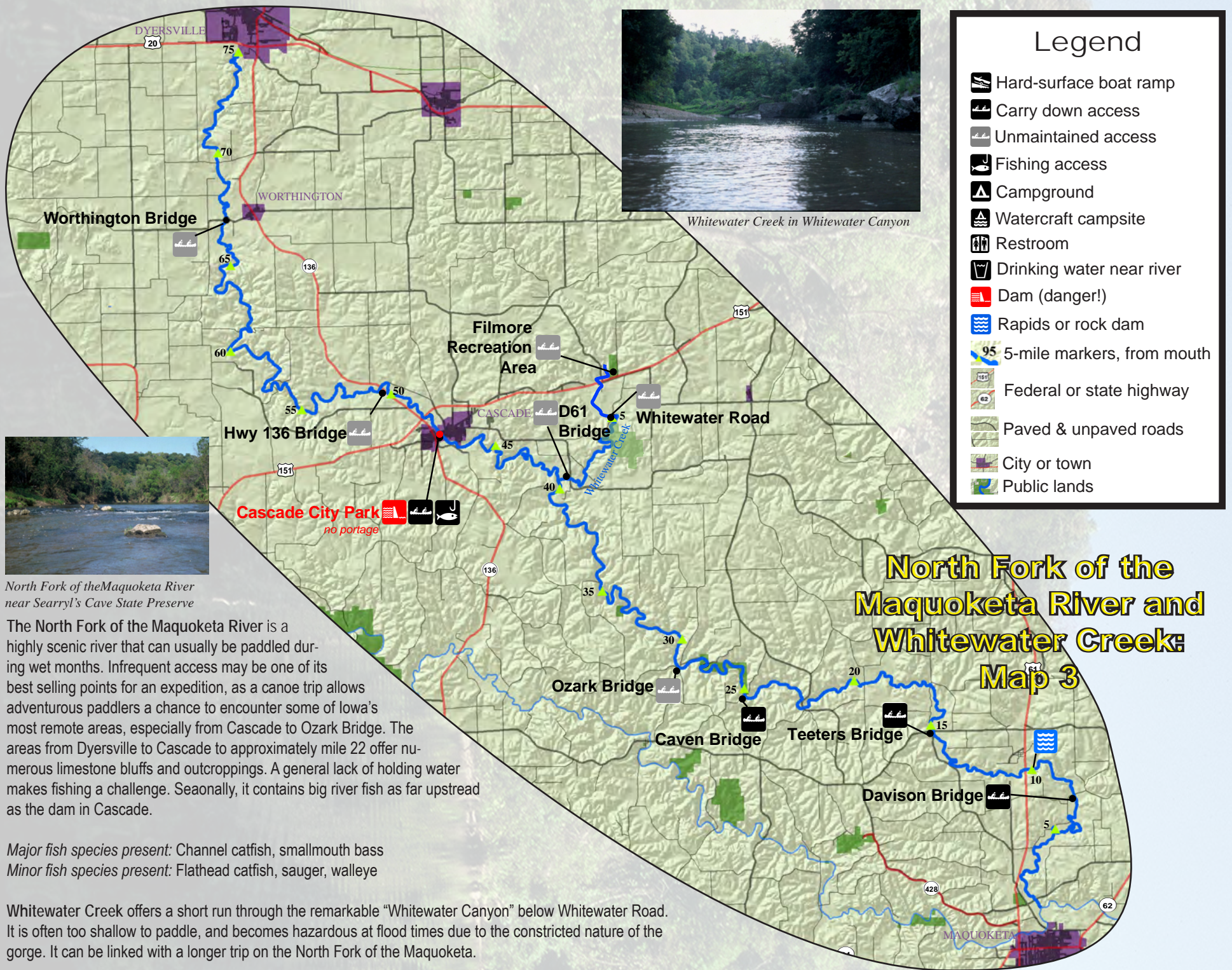
Major fish species present: Smallmouth bass, channel catfish, northern pike, walleye

Minor fish species present: Crappie, white bass

## Legend

- Hard-surface boat ramp
- Carry down access
- Unmaintained access
- Fishing access
- Campground
- Watercraft campsite
- Restroom
- Drinking water near river
- Dam (danger!)
- Rapids or rock dam
- 5-mile markers, from mouth
- Federal or state highway
- Paved & unpaved roads
- City or town
- Public lands





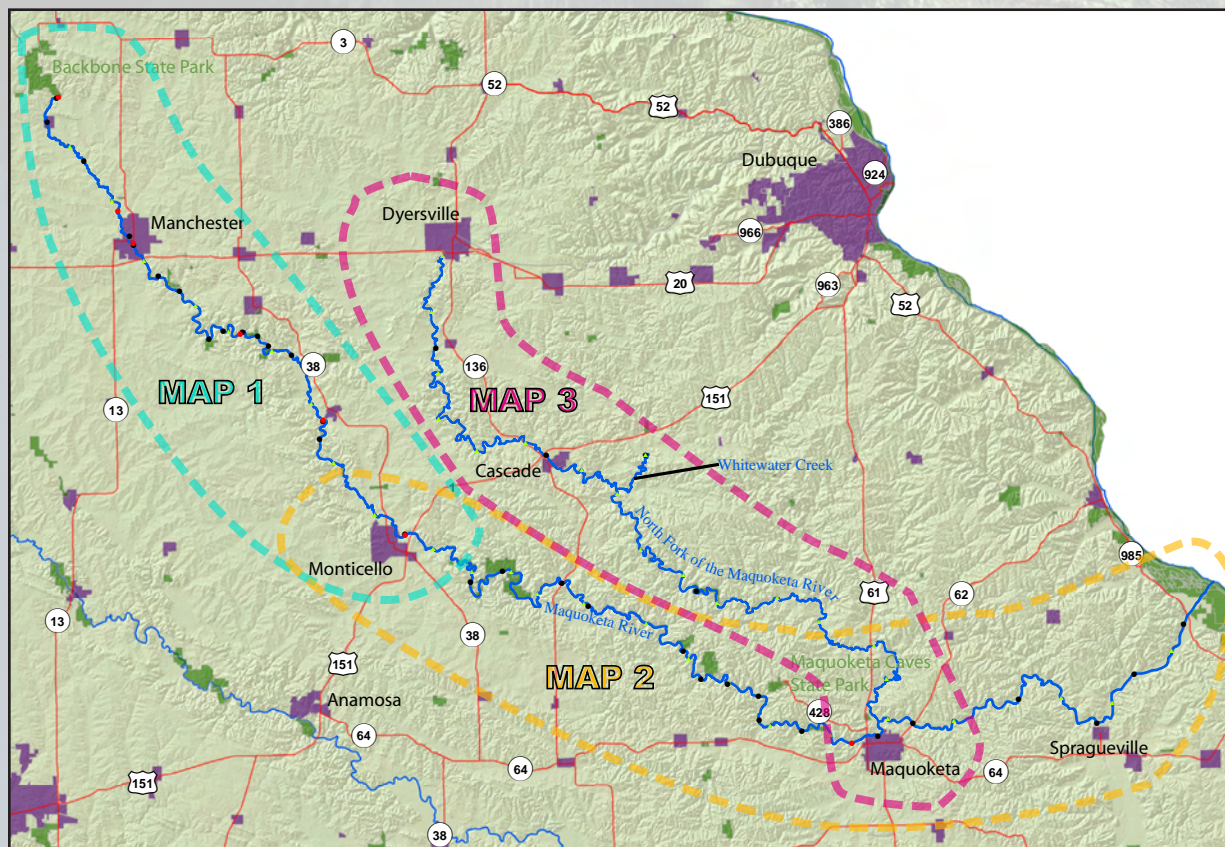
North Fork of the Maquoketa River near Searryl's Cave State Preserve

The North Fork of the Maquoketa River is a highly scenic river that can usually be paddled during wet months. Infrequent access may be one of its best selling points for an expedition, as a canoe trip allows adventurous paddlers a chance to encounter some of Iowa's most remote areas, especially from Cascade to Ozark Bridge. The areas from Dyersville to Cascade to approximately mile 22 offer numerous limestone bluffs and outcroppings. A general lack of holding water makes fishing a challenge. Seasonally, it contains big river fish as far upstread as the dam in Cascade.

Major fish species present: Channel catfish, smallmouth bass  
 Minor fish species present: Flathead catfish, sauger, walleye

Whitewater Creek offers a short run through the remarkable "Whitewater Canyon" below Whitewater Road. It is often too shallow to paddle, and becomes hazardous at flood times due to the constricted nature of the gorge. It can be linked with a longer trip on the North Fork of the Maquoketa.

## North Fork of the Maquoketa River and Whitewater Creek Map 3



## Maquoketa River, North Fork of the Maquoketa River, and Whitewater Creek



# Expedition & Fishing Guide

### Be safe out there!

Wear a life jacket!  
 They really do save lives. It won't work if you don't wear it.

### Don't boat under the influence

For your safety, don't use alcohol or drugs on the water.

### Watch for hazards

On rivers, hazards like dams, fences, snags, rocks, and bridge abutments may be present. Dams and snags in particular can be killers. Avoid them!

### Plan to get wet!

You may capsize, so dress for the weather. When the water and/or weather get cold, warm-when-wet clothing and a wetsuit are needed.

### Stay legal!

Camping on sandbars is allowed only downstream of the City of Maquoketa on the rivers in this guide. Most areas along the rivers upstream of Maquoketa are privately owned – these waters are navigable, but you *must* respect private property.

Littering is a crime – pack out everything you bring in. Report littering or dumping by calling 888-NOLITTR.

### Resources

Water trails and recent listing of canoe/kayak liveries  
[www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/](http://www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/)

River gages  
[waterdata.usgs.gov](http://waterdata.usgs.gov) or [www.rivergages.com](http://www.rivergages.com)

