

## Tales of Water Trails: Watonwan River

Welcome to 'Tales of Water Trails' presented by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Our guests, Lynne and Bob Diebel, are experienced canoeists and kayakers who have paddled more than 2,400 miles of Minnesota water trails. They describe these routes for other travelers in their two books, *Paddling Northern Minnesota* and *Paddling Southern Minnesota*.

For this series of programs, the Diebels are sharing their insights about Minnesota's state water trails. The Minnesota DNR manages over 4,000 miles of water trails for canoeing and kayaking including the north shore of Lake Superior and dozens of rivers statewide.

Here are Lynne Diebel and Bob Diebel, talking about paddling on the Watonwan River.

Lynne:

The Watonwan – like the wildlife you'll see in abundance along this river, you'll be drawn to the green, lush, tree-lined Watonwan. This river is lined with oaks, walnuts and cedars. Wild roses and phlox grow on the banks. It's right in the middle of corn country, so it's a real surprise like many of the prairie rivers are, but it has a lot to offer. We liked the 14 and a half miles between County Road 32 and the fairgrounds at Garden City.

Bob:

This is a nice paddle, rather placid for most of its length. The very end of it goes through some rapids as you enter Garden City, and local paddlers like to paddle just that short stretch to get some kind of exciting paddling close to home.

Lynne:

The deadfalls are sometimes a problem, so you want to be able to manage your boat well enough to get around any potential surprises in the deadfall department. The riffles and class I rapids zip around some bridge abutments as well, so these are things to watch out for. It's just a short stretch of rapids, but it adds a spicy note to the end of the trip.

Bob:

This river could be called a twin to the Cottonwood River, with pretty similar characteristics. Some of the drawbacks of a river that goes through corn country are it sometimes can be kind of muddy, but there are times of the year when it runs clearer and there's not so much runoff from the fields.

Lynne:

Paddlers who enjoy the rapids will want to look for four to five feet on the USGS gauge. That's the level at which the waves are big enough to play on.

Bob:

So if you take a trip to southwestern Minnesota, this is a river worth considering. Good paddling.