



Little Sioux River in Dickinson County

Photo by Clay Smith

The Little Sioux River is an Iowa prairie stream. It begins its journey in the swampy area of southwestern Minnesota and flows for approximately 220 miles, emptying into the Missouri River almost midway between Sioux City and Omaha. The Little Sioux may not offer consistent paddling opportunities in Dickinson and Clay Counties, but it does flow by scenic prairie remnants and public areas. On its southwesterly course past Spencer, its flow increases as it is joined by the Ocheyedegan River. This is western Iowa's largest interior stream; the Little Sioux's watershed is nearly equal to the watersheds of the Wapsipicon and Maquoketa Rivers combined.

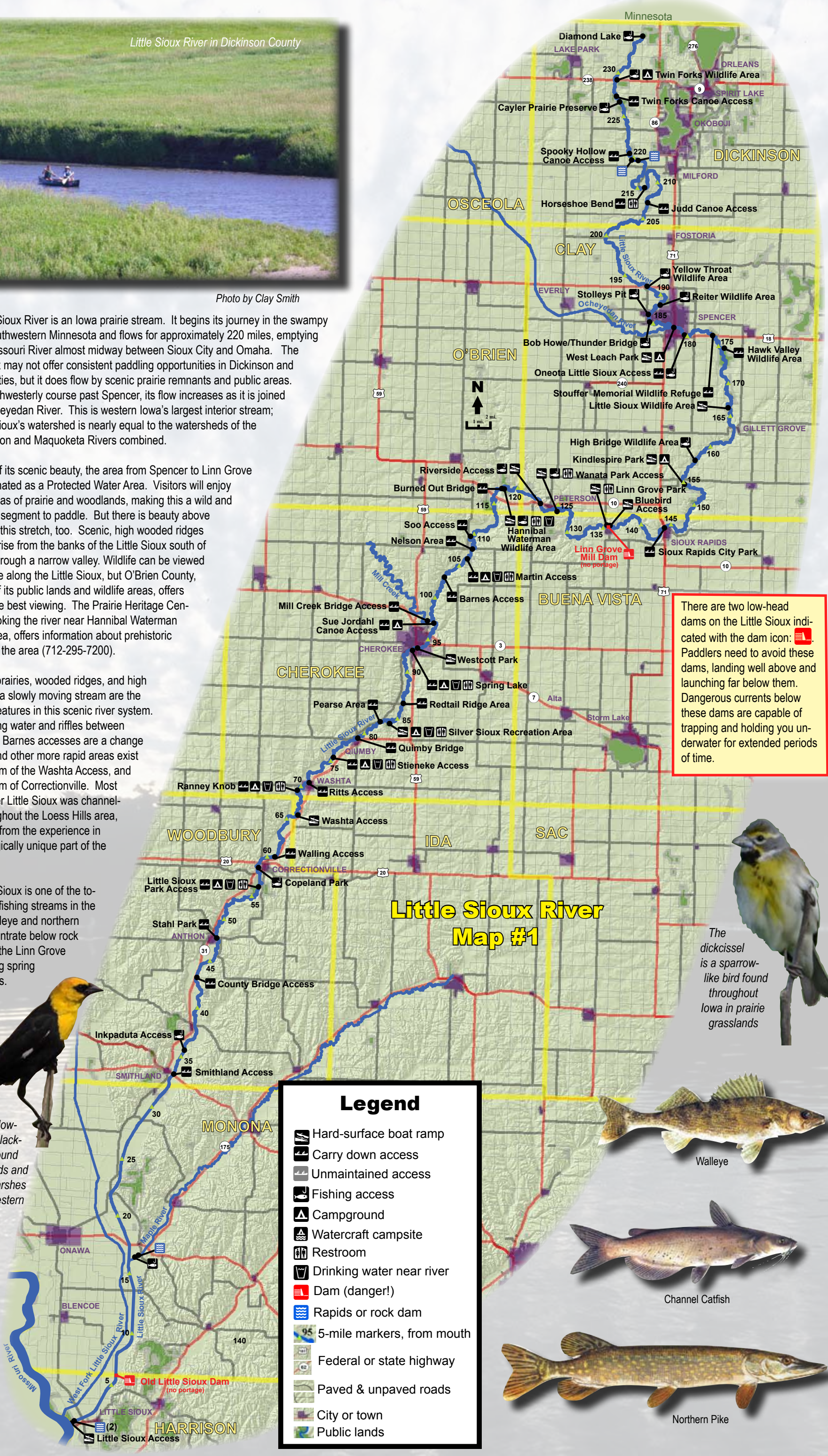
Because of its scenic beauty, the area from Spencer to Linn Grove was designated as a Protected Water Area. Visitors will enjoy remote areas of prairie and woodlands, making this a wild and interesting segment to paddle. But there is beauty above and below this stretch, too. Scenic, high wooded ridges and bluffs rise from the banks of the Little Sioux south of Spencer through a narrow valley. Wildlife can be viewed everywhere along the Little Sioux, but O'Brien County, because of its public lands and wildlife areas, offers some of the best viewing. The Prairie Heritage Center, overlooking the river near Hannibal Waterman Wildlife Area, offers information about prehistoric cultures of the area (712-295-7200).

Remnant prairies, wooded ridges, and high bluffs with a slowly moving stream are the common features in this scenic river system. Fast-moving water and riffles between Martin and Barnes accesses are a change of pace, and other more rapid areas exist downstream of the Washta Access, and downstream of Correctionville. Most of the lower Little Sioux was channelized throughout the Loess Hills area, detracting from the experience in this geologically unique part of the state.

The Little Sioux is one of the top-notch catfishing streams in the state. Walleye and northern pike concentrate below rock riffles and the Linn Grove Dam during spring movements.



The yellow-headed blackbird is found in wetlands and prairie marshes of northwestern Iowa



There are two low-head dams on the Little Sioux indicated with the dam icon: [dam icon]. Paddlers need to avoid these dams, landing well above and launching far below them. Dangerous currents below these dams are capable of trapping and holding you underwater for extended periods of time.



The dickcissel is a sparrow-like bird found throughout Iowa in prairie grasslands

### Legend

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



Walleye



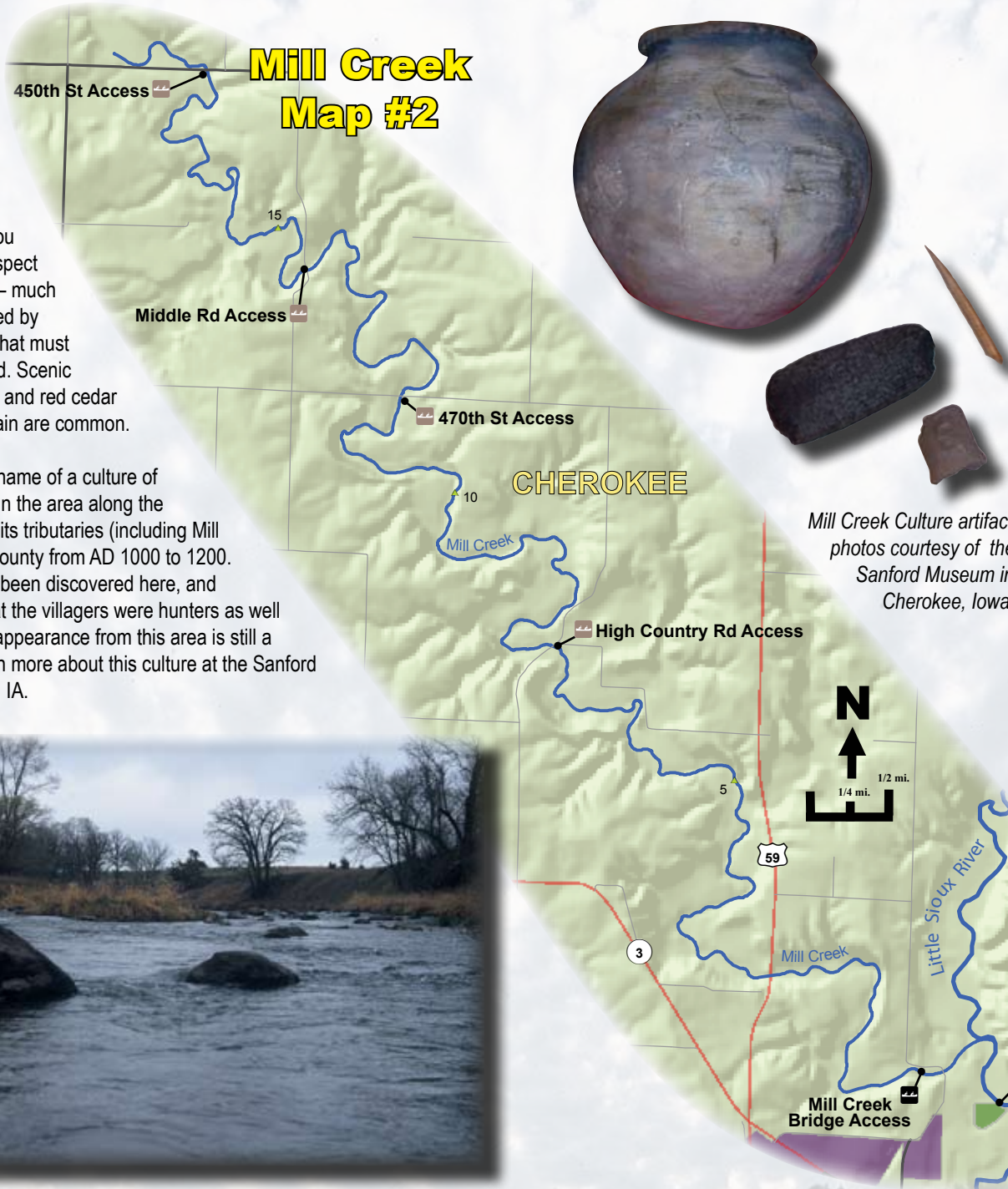
Channel Catfish



Northern Pike

Mill Creek, when water levels are adequate, transports river users through numerous small rapids flowing over glacial stones. There is poor access, and you must make sure to respect private property here – much of the creek is bordered by pastures with fences that must be carefully negotiated. Scenic views of prairie ridges and red cedar groves on sloped terrain are common.

Mill Creek is also the name of a culture of inhabitants who lived in the area along the Little Sioux River and its tributaries (including Mill Creek) in Cherokee County from AD 1000 to 1200. Several villages have been discovered here, and evidence supports that the villagers were hunters as well as farmers. Their disappearance from this area is still a mystery. You can learn more about this culture at the Sanford Museum in Cherokee, IA.



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



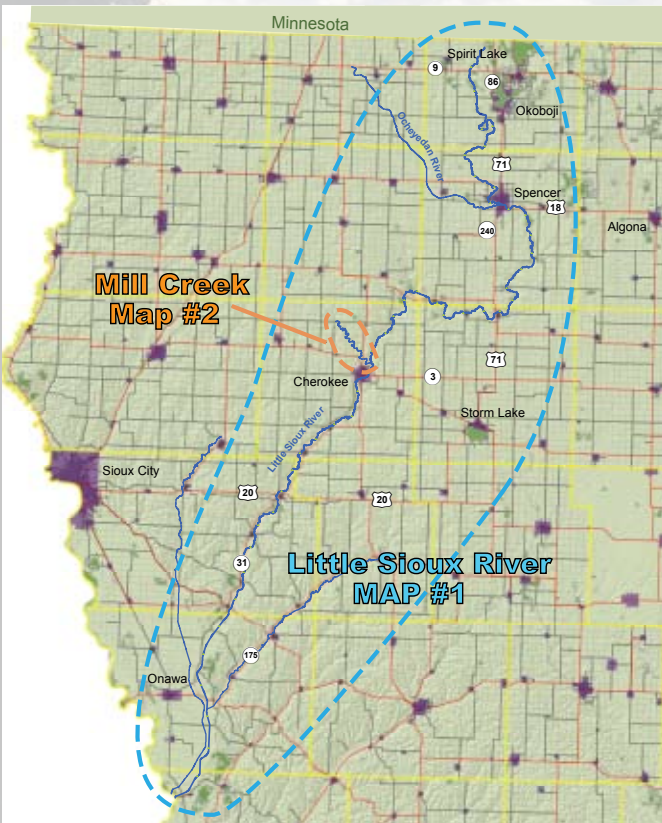
Mill Creek Culture artifact photos courtesy of the Sanford Museum in Cherokee, Iowa



Mill Creek



Great blue herons are routinely seen along rivers throughout the



Channel Catfish Caught on Little Sioux in Buena Vista County



Pearse Area on Little Sioux River

## Little Sioux River and Mill 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!

Land along the Little Sioux River and its tributaries, including Mill Creek, is 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)

Federal regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap. State law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to the Iowa DNR, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines, Iowa, 50319.

