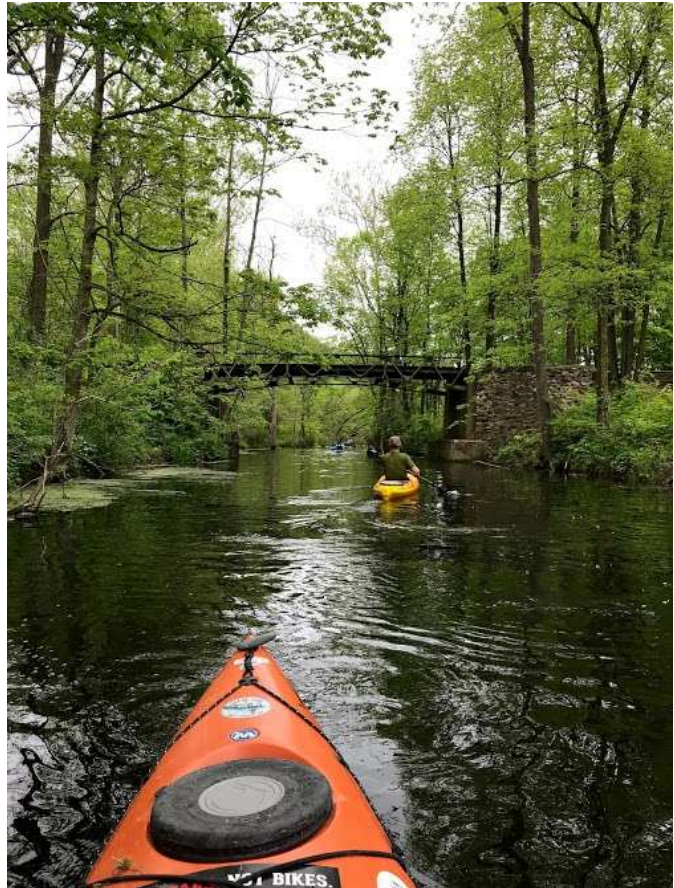


Getting Ready for Summer Paddle Trips

As we find ourselves adjusting to our new reality of social distancing and staying home, now is the perfect time to plan your summer paddle trips and clean your equipment. Will our summer be different? It's possible, but distancing in the outdoors can be done. Once summer arrives, we will all need outdoor therapy and there is nothing more relaxing than floating on the waterway.

Here are some helpful tips to help you prepare for your trips:

- Plan your put-in and take-out location. Answer the following questions:
 - Is the access site hand-carry or does it have a boat ramp?
 - Is there parking at the access site?
 - Are there restrooms at the access site?
 - What is the distance from the put-in to your take-out location?
 - What is the put-in and take-out location or are they one in the same?
 - Are there any hazards/obstacles along the way to be aware of?



There are resources readily available to help answer these questions. My personal favorite is the online interactive map developed by Northeast Indiana Water Trails.

Fun Fact: Northeast Indiana has 566 miles of flowing water. Let's paddle our way through this first, then we'll move to the rest of Indiana!

Go to neiwatertrails.com and look for the "Plan your trip" tab.

Browse the site for additional information.

Intimidated by the interactive map? No worries, this site includes recommended paddle trips.

You can also find information on the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website.

Go to <https://www.in.gov/dnr/outdoor/> and look for the “water trails” link.

If you are a paper and pencil type of person you can find printed waterway maps. Usually your local outfitter will have these on hand for a small printing cost. Local outfitters can also be your best resource to answer questions you might have about the water trail you plan to paddle.

- Please tell me about the access sites?
- Are there any hazards along the water trail?
- How long is the paddle?
- What is the water level like? What is normal level?
- What are some points of interest?
- Do you charge a fee to drop myself and vessel upstream?

Cleaning your equipment is something you can easily do at home during this pandemic. It will take your mind off of the current situation and you will be prepared and ready for the summer paddle season. Check out these cleaning tips:

- Locate a water source, garden hose, bucket, sponge and mild liquid soap.
- Remove everything that might have been stored in your kayak over winter.
- Spray the kayak down with water first.
- Then apply the mild soap from bow to stern. Don't forget about the inside of your cockpit and seat.
- Then rinse with water again.
 - My recommendation for a mild soap is Dawn dish soap. It works wonders! It works great for a bicycle cleaning agent for those of you that cycle, as well. For eco-friendly options Seventh, Dishmate, Ecover and Generation will also work.
- Do the same with your PFD (personal flotation device) and paddle. Please note: there are different guidelines to follow if the goal is disinfecting your equipment.

Take a deep breath and know that we will get back to normal. Don't forget nature is usually here when we need it the most. You can enjoy nature and paddling while social distancing. So plan now and get paddling when you are comfortable to do so!