Our rivers and streams offer wonderful opportunities for recreation, from kayaking and canoeing to fishing and wildlife watching. But it’s important to learn how to enjoy them safely. Review the information on the reverse side to make sure your next outing on the Great Miami River is a safe and fun adventure.
Hazardous Flows

Water levels are monitored on rivers and streams, and paddlers should never boat on a stream with water this high. Water on the Great Miami River in downtown Dayton is an example.

Playing It Safe

Low Dam and Waterfalls

Low dams - like natural waterfalls - are deceptive. Calm and quiet water can be extremely dangerous. Low dams may range from a 25-foot drop to a mere 6-inch drop. Water flowing over the dam forms currents that trap objects and people. Bouldering and re-circulating current can trap you against the wall of the dam. If you are pulled into the water, there is no way to surface. This circulating current can cause severe injuries. The backwash current will pull you downstream of the dam. The Great Miami River has many, with several rows on its middle reaches.

Watercraft Laws and Boater Responsibility

All watercraft, including canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddling boards, jet skis, and inflatables, must be registered with Ohio DNR. United States Coast Guard approved (USCG) personal flotation devices (PFDs) are required for every boater. Children under the age of 12 are required to use properly fitted, USCG approved PFDs at all times while on a section of the Great Miami River having a depth less than 15 feet. It is illegal to operate any water sports - boats, canoes, kayaks, jet, etc. - under the influence of alcohol. It is also illegal to operate any watercraft, motor or non-motor, in general, or in any other area. Catalina Island #12 operating watercraft must be directly supervised by an adult and may not operate personal watercraft such as a jet ski.

Boating Etiquette

Boating etiquette is an important consideration. Consideration is vital when rowing a trip. The recommended minimum size is a 2-person boat. No one should paddle without proper training, as the depth, currents, and turbulence can be extremely dangerous. Do not start your row trip downstream from these dams without necessary precautions.

Floating Personal Devices/Life Vests

More than 80 percent of all boating fatalities occur because of lack of a personal flotation device (PFD) on the watercraft. Remind your group about the importance of wearing life jackets and the difference a life jacket can make.

Safety tips to follow

• Enter the location of all dams and waterfalls on the riverfront maps. Never attempt to boat over a dam or waterfall. Do not skid past these sites. Many dams have a depth around one or two and are safe, so watch for downstream of the dam. The Great Miami River has many, with several rows on its middle reaches.

• Leaves water levels in the rivers and streams throughout the state. Check local stream and rivers for warnings and current conditions.

• Watch for a smooth line connecting the banks. This may be the top of a low dam.

• Stick with experienced boaters and learn from them.

• Do not walk on the surrounding areas of turbulence and the dangerous areas of currents or dams.

• Look for concrete retention walls, which some dams have at each bank, making the dams easier to spot.

Cold Water Immersion

Sudden immersion in cold water can be deadly. The initial “cold shock” can cause severe respiratory distress, hyperventilation, hypoglycemia, shivering, and vasovagal syncope - all of which can result in drowning and death. Frigid water can cause sudden changes in blood pressure, loosing control, and reflexive behaviors that may also result in drowning. The body will then try to conserve heat by lowering core temperature. Core temperature is controlled by the body’s core temperature control center located in the hypothalamus. Shivering and the body’s core temperature can be regulating the body's core temperature can be regulated by the hypothalamus. Shivering may be regulated by the hypothalamus. Shivering may be regulated by the hypothalamus. Shivering may be regulated by the hypothalamus. Shivering may be regulated by the hypothalamus. Shivering may be regulated by the hypothalamus. Shivering may be regulated by the hypothalamus. Shivering may be regulated by the hypothalamus. 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