

Rock River Water Trail Section I

Oregon to Dixon to Sterling-Rock Falls Section 35 Miles (Ogle, Lee and Whiteside counties)

The next river section through three counties is 35 miles in length along scenic wilderness and rural landscape, with the first 22 miles of the section suitable for the novice paddler. Just over 4 miles downstream of the Oregon Dam is beautiful Castle Rock State Park. Castle Rock is a large sedimentary rock outcropping that is a landmark for river travelers. The park has complete facilities for paddlers at a developed access site near the northern boundary. Less than 2 miles downstream is a primitive camping area of the park that is accessible only from the river. The end of the first segment is at Grand Detour, a charming community built on a bend of the river. The historic community is the site of the blacksmith shop of John Deere, who invented the first self-cleaning plow for farmers. Just to the east is the Nachusa Grasslands, a 3,000-acre prairie remnant conservancy. The next segment includes easy paddling through rural landscape with beautiful rock bluffs and ends at Lowell Park on the northern outskirts of Dixon. During his high school years in Dixon, Ronald Reagan was a lifeguard at Lowell Park.

The third segment on river right passes Meadows Park, which is available as an alternate rest stop. Take out for the Dixon Dam is best at Fellows Street Boat Ramp as portage infrastructure at the dam is difficult to access and re-enter. A state historical marker commemorating Abraham Lincoln's army service during the Black Hawk War is on the north shore of the river near the Galena Avenue Bridge. Two parks downstream of the dam have boat ramps for easy access to the river. The landscape to Sterling and Rock Falls is primarily rural with river islands and a few areas of development. The distance between Custer Street Boat Dock in Dixon and the next access site at Oppold Marina in Sterling is over 9 miles, so the skill level for the last segment is recreational. A rest stop or take out could be made at Sauk Valley Community College on river right at river mile 80. A widening of the river upstream of the Upper Sterling-Rock Falls Dam is known as Sinnissippi Lake. Portages of the Upper Dam are available on river right at Martin's Landing and at the boat ramp on river left at Arduini Boat Launch near the Hennepin Feeder Canal.

	Length of Segment	Segment Skill Level	Segment Type	Access Sites
Oregon to Grand Detour	10 miles	Gateway	Wilderness	4
To Lowell Park, Dixon	8 miles	Gateway	Rural	1
To Dixon Dam	4 miles	Gateway	Rural	2
To Upper Sterling/RF Dam	13 miles	Recreational	Rural	8