



## Fox River is centerpiece of 2010 heritage paddle event

13-segment tour will cover 125 miles of waterway

By Michael King • Gannett Wisconsin Media • March 30, 2010

Jeff Mazanec wants to share his passion for what he considers to be the overlooked, under-appreciated beauty and history of Fox River.

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The Grand Chute resident came up with the concept of a series of kayak and canoe trips on the Fox River to promote awareness of the natural resource and appeal to some people who have never paddled or boated on the river.

The Fox River Heritage Paddle 2010 — a series of 13 trips covering 125 miles over nine weekends — will launch April 24 in Portage. Participants will glide through the area on July 31, starting at Rapide Croche near Wrightstown and ending at De Pere's Bomier Park. The series will finish Aug. 14 with the final leg from Bomier Park to the Green Bay Marina during the Baylake Bank Tall Ships Festival.

"We're calling it a 'Journey of Rediscovery,'" said Mazanec, a member of the organizing committee and president of the North East Wisconsin Paddlers Inc.

"Many of us cross over the Fox River on a regular basis but don't really appreciate its natural beauty and the tremendously rich history associated with the river," he said. "There's no more intimate way to gain that appreciation than one paddle stroke at a time."

More than three centuries have passed since Father Marquette and Louis Joliet traversed the Fox and Wisconsin rivers as a route from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and beyond for early settlers. Officials hope the event, along with the ongoing restoration of the historical system of Fox River locks, will draw attention to the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway project that is seeking designation as a national heritage area.

The trip segments, which avoid difficult or possibly unsafe portions of the river, range in length from 3.4 miles (Kaukauna to Wrightstown) to 15.7 miles (Marquette to Princeton). All segments will be open to the public and led by certified instructors.

"We are setting the trip up so that participants will not have to be experienced paddlers," Mazanec said.

He said some of the segments are relatively lengthy and may be tiring for people who haven't paddled much.

"We have excluded parts of the route that are on open water with stronger probability of heavy boat traffic, wind or waves," he said. "There shouldn't be any appreciable fast water, other than possibly some of the upper stretches in April if we have a wet month."

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"We will require that all participants wear their (life jackets) and will keep the group together as best we can while traveling."

A fee of \$10 per segment (paddlers younger than 16 accompanied by an adult are free) will be used to help cover expenses. Segment sponsorships are being sought to help defray costs.

Some opportunities exist to participate as a paddling passenger in the 28-foot Fox of the River Voyageur Canoe. Co-owner Glen Gorsuch said the Fox River events are "a great way to get folks out and enjoy parts of the river that they may have not seen before, and experience it with others that share the same interest, birders, plant life, wildlife and history."

Non-paddlers are invited to programs on local history or culture to be held at the conclusion of several segments.

The goal, Mazanec said, was to do a comprehensive look at the river "rather than paddling down the river or doing a river bank cleanup."

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