



Vermilion - Lorain Water Trail

...a paddler's map and guide to designated access along the Vermilion and Black Rivers and the Lake Erie Shoreline

A 27-mile Water Trail; Class I+ to II

The Vermilion - Lorain Water Trail provides a paddling experience that is unique to the State of Ohio, offering both river and open water travel along the lakeshore. The trail begins along the shale cliffs of the Vermilion River at the Vermilion River Reservation in Brownhelm Township. It winds along the river and exits into Lake Erie in Vermilion. It then follows the shoreline of Lake Erie, passing Lakeview Park and entering the mouth of the Black River near downtown Lorain. The trail passes the U.S. Steel Mill and ends at the Bur Oak Area of the Black River Reservation. In addition to paddling opportunities, this Ohio Water Trail also offers hiking and biking opportunities within the scenic Lorain County Metro Parks as well as historical and cultural opportunities such as the Inland Seas Maritime Museum, Lakeview Rose Garden, Black River Historical Society, and the Lorain Lighthouse.

Resources

- EMERGENCY NUMBER..... 911
- Lorain County Visitors Bureau 1-800-334-1673 www.visitloraincounty.com
- Lorain County Metro Parks 440-458-5121 www.metroparks.cc
- ODNR Watercraft (boating) 1-877-4BOATER..... ohiodnr.com/watercraft
- ODNR Wildlife (fishing, birding)..... 1-800-WILDLIFE ohiodnr.com/wildlife
- US Geological Survey (real-time water flow) waterdata.usgs.gov
- Leave No Trace 1-800-332-4100 www.lnt.org
(low-impact outdoor recreation)

Paddling Safety Checklist

- Canoe, kayak or raft
- Paddle
- Life jacket - keep it snug
- Whistle or sound signaling device
- Proper footwear (no flip flops or bare feet)
- Sunscreen, sunglasses and hat
- Water bottle
- Dry bag for dry clothing, cameras and cell phone
- First aid kit and throwbag
- White light (night time requirement)
- Visual Distress Signal (night time requirement)
- Visibility Aid/Device (mirror, radar reflector, VHF radio)

Stop the Spread of Aquatic Species

- Inspect your boat and equipment and remove any vegetation before leaving the area.
- Rinse your boat and equipment thoroughly to remove any aquatic organisms.
- Air dry your boat and equipment for as long as possible before boating on another waterway (five days is optimal).

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This guide was adapted from a printed map published in June 2009 by Lorain County Metroparks. The information contained in this publication is believed to be accurate. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources is not responsible for any inaccuracies. Interpretation and use of the map and its contents are the responsibility of the user.

NOTE: The geographic coordinates printed in the June 2009 edition of this publication were corrected in December 2009.



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Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Ted Strickland, Governor • Sean Logan, Director
2045 Morse Road • Columbus, Ohio 43229

Acknowledgements
Lorain County Metro Parks
Vermilion Port Authority
Main Street Vermilion
Lorain Port Authority
City of Vermilion
City of Lorain

LAKE ERIE BOATING: Check water conditions before paddling the lake, and be wary of boat traffic.

1 Mill Hollow/Vermilion River Reservation

Brownhelm Township
 51211 North Ridge Road, Vermilion 44089. Amenities are located at Mill Hollow and the Bacon Woods area. Distance to next site: 5.4 miles. Attractions at Mill Hollow include the Carriage Barn and Bacon House Museum. An outdoor amphitheater is located at Bacon Woods, which hosts a variety of entertainment during the warmer months. Paddling through this stretch is generally easy. Two hazards exist: a log jam approximately 1¼ miles from Mill Hollow, and the Route 2 Bridge abutments during periods of high water. Park closes at sunset.

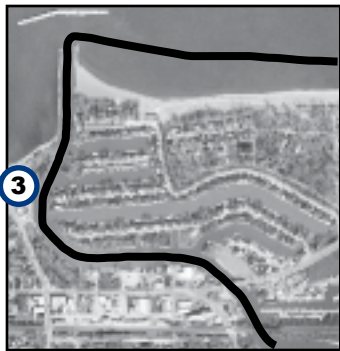
2 South Street Boat Launch

City of Vermilion
 777 River Road, Vermilion 44089. On the west side of the Vermilion River next to the Water Pollution Control Center. \$4 to launch and \$2 to park. Two ramps, one holding dock, and a car top/canoe launching area. Contact the Dock Master at 440-967-7087. Distance to next site: 0.9 miles. Paddling is generally easy through this stretch, with many marinas and boat docks located along the way. Many food and entertainment options are nearby in downtown Vermilion.

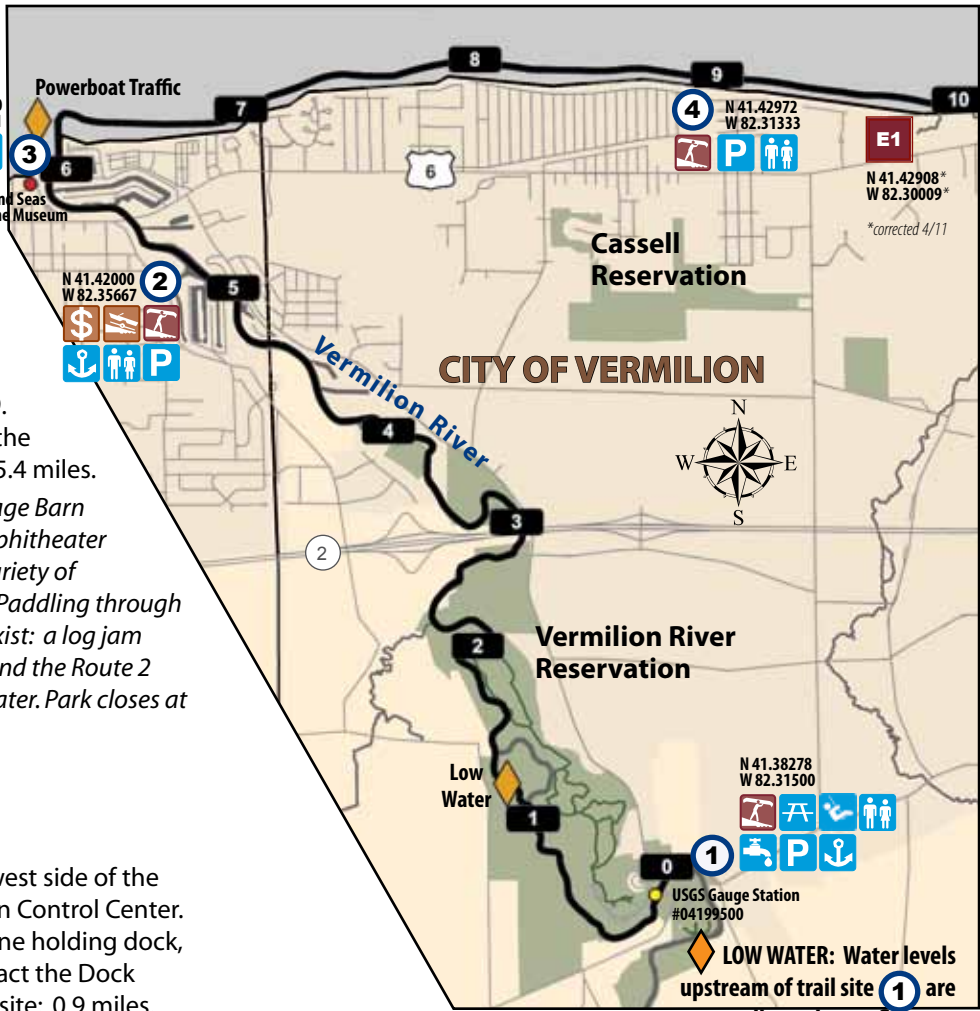
3 Main Street Beach

City of Vermilion
 480 Main Street, Vermilion OH 44089. At the end of Main Street on the west side of the Vermilion River. Street parking is available on Main Street; carry-in access for canoes and kayaks is on the beach. Distance to next site: 2.6 miles.

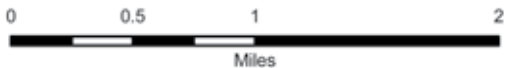
This beautiful beach near downtown Vermilion is a great place to begin your journey or stop and rest to enjoy the view of Lake Erie. Many food and entertainment options are found in downtown Vermilion, including the Maritime Museum near the beach. This active port has many powerboats entering and exiting the mouth of the river.



Mouth of the Vermilion River showing breakwall



LOW WATER: Water levels upstream of trail site 1 are usually too low to float.



- 1** Water Trail Site
- E1** Emergency Pull-out
- 1** River Mile Marker
- ◇** Hazard
- Point of Interest
- USGS Gauge Station
- 🚤** Boat Ramp
- 🚣** Carry-In Launch
- 💰** Launch Fee Required
- 🚣** Dock
- 🚰** Drinking Water
- 🍽️** Concession/Food
- 🚻** Restrooms
- 🏕️** Picnic Area
- 🏥** Hospital
- P** Parking
- 🎡** Playground

4 Showse Park

City of Vermilion
 3325 Edgewater Drive, Vermilion OH 44089. Distance to Lakeview Park: 6.5 miles. Distance to emergency pull-out: 0.7 miles.

E1 Vermilion Shores Emergency Pull-out

205 Pebble Shore Avenue, Vermilion 44089. Private. To be used in case of emergency only. Distance from Showse Park: 0.7 miles. Distance to Lakeview Park: 6.1 miles. Distance to next emergency pull-out: 2.6 miles.

E2 and **E3** are Emergency Pull-outs. No access is available, as they are privately owned.

E2 Beaver Park Marina

6101 West Erie Avenue, Lorain 44052. Emergencies only. A hospital is located at the corner of Kolbe Road and State Route 6. Powerboat traffic can be heavy in the area; use caution. Distance to next emergency pull-out is 2.2 miles; distance to Lakeview Park: 3.5 miles.

E3 Anchor Lodge

3756 West Erie Avenue, Lorain 44052. Emergencies only. Distance to next site: 1.3 miles.

5 Lakeview Park

 Lorain County Metro Parks

1800 Erie Avenue, Lorain 44052. A variety of attractions: beach access with volleyball nets, a bathhouse with changing rooms, the Rose Café (in the upper level of the bathhouse), and the Rose Garden. Distance to next site: 1.7 miles.

Lakeview Park has been a historical part of the City of Lorain since the early 1900s and remains a very active and heavily visited park. Lakeview Park is a great location to enjoy the Lorain County Port Authority's 4th of July fireworks show. This section of the water trail is open water. Be aware that the mouth of the Black River is an active port – there are many powerboats as well as large shipping vessels. Please keep a safe distance from shipping vessels and be aware of any powerboats in your vicinity.

6 Lakeside Landing Park

 Lorain Port Authority

301 Lakeside Avenue, Lorain 44052. Carry-in access to Lake Erie and the Black River. This park offers a scenic view and is a good resting area with beach access and park benches. Distance to next site: 1.5 miles.

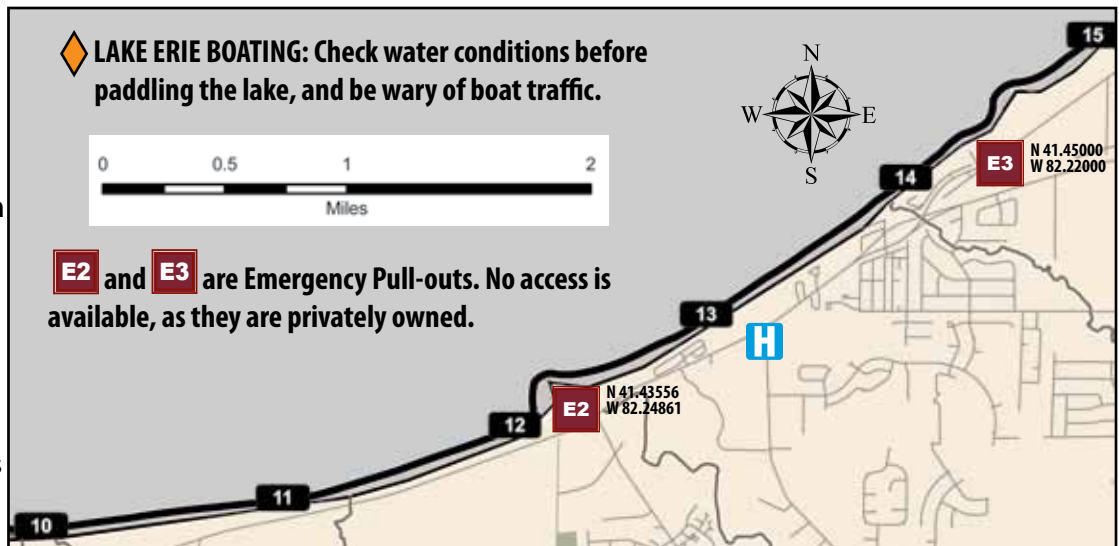
Lakeside Landing Park is a great location to enjoy the Lorain County Port Authority's 4th of July fireworks show. Please keep a safe distance from shipping vessels and be aware of any powerboats within your vicinity. As you travel to the next site, you will pass under the Route 6 Bridge (a lift bridge for larger ships) and the Henderson Drive Bridge.

7 Black River Wharf Boat Launch

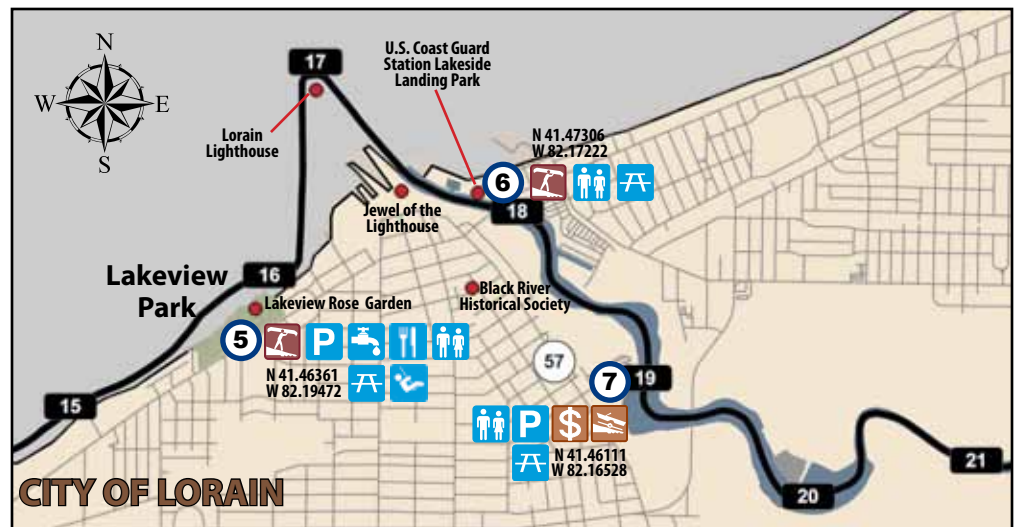
 Lorain Port Authority

355 Broadway Avenue, Lorain 44052. Operated by the Lorain Port Authority. Six launch ramps. \$2 to launch kayaks or canoes. Parking is free and there are picnic areas and restrooms available. Distance to next site: 3.7 miles.

The Black River is an active port which includes many powerboats as well as large shipping vessels. Precautions should be taken when navigating through this section to ensure safety. Please keep a safe distance from shipping vessels and be aware of any powerboats within your vicinity.



E2 and **E3** are Emergency Pull-outs. No access is available, as they are privately owned.



Mouth of the Lorain River, showing breakwalls

8 French Creek Reservation/Steel Mill Trail

   Lorain County Metro Parks

4060 Old Colorado Avenue, Sheffield Village OH 44054. French Creek Nature Center is nearby on Route 611, just east of East River Road. The Burrell House is also located nearby, on East River Road. Distance to next site: 4.4 miles.

French Creek Nature Center houses many programs and exhibits and has restrooms and a gift shop. The Burrell House is a historic homestead, dating back to when settlers first came to Sheffield. Paddling along this section of the water trail is fairly easy and begins to get away from the active boating channels. The U.S. Steel Lorain Pipe Mill can be seen from the river. Bridges to be aware of are the Steel Mill Trail foot bridge, an abandoned railway bridge, the 31st Street Bridge, the North Ridge Road Bridge, and the Bridgeway Trail crossings as you near Bur Oak. A log jam is located at an old rail road trestle. Low water levels can be problematic during dry spells. Park closes at sunset.

9 Black River Reservation - Bur Oak


















       Lorain County Metro Parks


6150 Ford Road, Elyria OH 44035

Bur Oak serves as an access point to the Bridgeway Trail, a scenic hiking and biking trail that travels along and over the Black River. This section of the water trail has a number of potential hazards depending on the water level. There are three bridges (31st Street, an old rail road trestle, and Rt. 254) with abutments to be wary of in fast water. Be aware of log jams – one near 31st Street and the other at the rail road trestle bridge. When the river is low, several portages will be required. Park closes at sunset.



LEGEND

-  Water Trail Site
-  Emergency Pullout
-  Mile Marker
-  Hazard
-  Point of Interest
-  USGS Gauge Station
-  Boat Ramp
-  Carry-In Launch
-  Launch Fee Required
-  Dock
-  Drinking Water
-  Concession/Food
-  Restrooms
-  Picnic Area
-  Hospital
-  Parking
-  Playground

 **LOW WATER:** Water levels upstream of trail site 9 may be low and require portage.

Outdoor Ethic

Plan ahead.

- Scout the area prior to boating it.
- Call local contacts to find out about current weather and wind conditions or events that may affect your trip. Parks close at sunset, plan accordingly.
- Check for river and lake condition warnings (i.e. wind, waves, fog, etc.) and flood information.

Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.

- Know the locations of all hazards. Be prepared to portage (carry your boat around) these hazards.
- Be prepared for any unknown event. Know how to get to roads if you must “walk out.” Know local emergency phone numbers and know where you are along the trail in case you need to request emergency assistance.
- Strong winds can create large, steep waves. Paddle directly into waves or at an angle.

Be aware of all Ohio boating laws as well as any local rules and ordinances.

- Be sure you have the required safety equipment onboard including a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved, lifejacket for each person.
- It is the responsibility of the paddler to stay out of the way of larger powerboats and ships or ensure these vessels are able to see your canoe or kayak.

Travel on durable surfaces — rock, gravel, and sand.

- Use existing, improved access sites.
- When using a natural river bank to launch your boat, minimize your impact by staying clear of vegetation or mud.
- Don't wander while portaging. Stay on the trail if there is one.

Dispose of waste properly — Pack it out.

- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Never throw cigarette butts, fishing line, bait containers or any other garbage into the water.
- Plastics are especially dangerous to wildlife. Baggies, six-pack rings, and other clear plastics float on the water — invisible hazards to fish, birds, and other wildlife.

Leave what you find.

- Appreciate artifacts and natural objects but leave them undisturbed.
- Avoid introducing non-native species, including live bait, by cleaning equipment between trips.

Respect wildlife.

- Observe from a distance; don't feed, follow or approach wildlife.
- Control pets or leave them at home.
- Stay clear of bald eagle nesting zones and sites.

Be considerate of other visitors.

- Avoid boisterous behavior. Let nature's sounds prevail.

Respect the privacy and rights of landowners.

- Although the access points highlighted in this guide are located on public property, most of the shoreline along the water trail is privately owned. Respect the privacy and rights of landowners by obtaining permission before entering any privately owned land.
- Many landowners enjoy the stream's peace and solitude from their property. Share the same courtesy that you would want. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is usually welcome.

Common Hazards

To have a safe trip, boaters must be aware of the various types of hazards encountered on any waterway. Learn to recognize these hazards and manage your risk appropriately.



Foot Entrapments

If your boat capsizes, do not attempt to stand or walk if you are in swift-moving water. You might slip and pin a foot between submerged rocks.

Once pinned, the force of the current can push your body under water and hold it there. Always keep your feet up, pointed downstream, and swim to calm water before standing.

Floods and Swift Water

Novice paddlers should never boat on streams when water is spilling out of the banks. High water causes hazards such as lowhead dams to become even more dangerous. Unseen obstacles such as floating logs or submerged trees may also threaten a boater. Flood levels are monitored throughout the state. Know the water conditions before you go.

waterdata.usgs.gov



Lowhead Dams and Waterfalls

Never attempt to boat over a dam or waterfall. Lowhead dams can range from a few inches to a couple of yards in height.



Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is the “silent killer” on recreational powerboats. It is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, deadly gas that is produced by gasoline engines. It collects within and around a boat. Never

swim or paddle near the back of a powerboat while the engine or generator is running.



Strainers

River obstructions that allow water to flow through but block or “strain” people and boats are known as strainers. Overhanging branches, downed trees, log jams, and flooded islands all are potential strainers. All strainers should be avoided, especially in swift water.



Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia

Sudden immersion in cold water can be deadly. The initial “cold shock” can cause immediate, involuntary gasping, hyperventilation, panic, and

vertigo — all of which can result in water inhalation and drowning. It can also cause sudden changes in blood pressure, heart rate, and heart rhythm that also may result in death. The longer you are immersed in cold water, the harder it is to control your body. Manual dexterity and coordination deteriorate rapidly, and within 30 minutes, hypothermia (cooling of the body’s core temperature) can begin. Loss of consciousness and death with or without drowning can result.

The best prevention for cold water immersion is to take all measures to avoid capsizing your boat. Keep your life jacket securely fastened to help keep your head above water if you fall overboard.

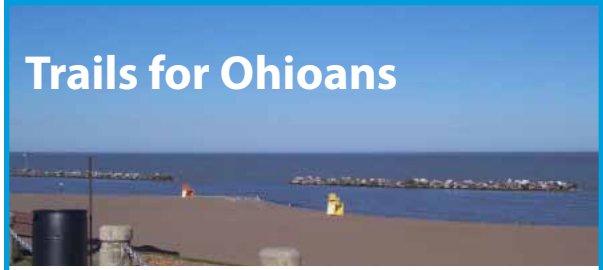
You don’t have to be submerged to succumb to hypothermia — wind chill, rain, and perspiration can contribute to the condition. Uncontrollable shivering, slurred speech and lack of coordination are early symptoms. To guard against hypothermia, dress in layers using materials that wick moisture away and retain heat, such as silk, polypropylene, fleece, and wool. Every boater should be able to recognize and know how to treat hypothermia.

Safety Tips



- Never boat alone.
- Wear a lifejacket at all times, particularly in moving water. By law, children under 10 must wear life jackets of an appropriate size.
- Dress for the water temperature. Bring an extra change of clothing with you in a waterproof bag. Pack your cell phone in this bag.
- Neoprene shoes or tennis shoes with woolen socks are recommended footwear.
- File a “float plan” with a reliable person, indicating where you are going and when you will leave and return. Remember to contact the person once you have returned safely.
- Do not overload or unevenly load your boat. Keep the weight in the boat centered from side to side and bow to stern. The lower and closer the load in the boat is to the boat’s centerline, the more stable it will be.
- Always maintain three points of contact (for example, two hands and one foot touching the boat) while moving around in the boat.
- Do not attempt to stand or walk in swift water.
- Be prepared to swim. If the water looks too hazardous to swim, then don’t boat on it!
- NEVER boat over lowhead dams.
- Portage (carry your boat around) any section of water about which you feel uncertain.
- If you capsize, hold on to your boat unless it presents a life-threatening situation. If floating in current, position yourself on the upstream side of the capsized boat.
- Carry plenty of drinking water.
- Avoid overexertion and guard against extreme weather conditions.

Trails for Ohioans



Trails are an important component of Ohio’s outdoor recreation system. They come in various lengths, run through different environments, and accommodate a multitude of outdoor activities from hiking and biking to horseback riding and paddling. Trails are managed and maintained by a variety of groups including all levels of government and many trail organizations.

Recognizing the many benefits of a statewide trail system, and in an effort to increase awareness of the benefits of water trails, ODNR initiated the Ohio Water Trails program. The goal of this program is to promote awareness of public paddling opportunities by partnering with local communities to develop designated water trails.

By definition, a water trail, also known as a blue way, is a route along a river or across other bodies of water, such as a lake or bay, for people using small beachable hand-powered watercraft, such as kayaks, canoes, day sailors or row boats. Water trails are most often identified by the land facilities that support water travel. These include launch and landing sites (trailheads), campsites, rest areas, and other points of interest.

Water trail plans are initiated at the local level: communities, user groups, or park districts recommend existing sites for a proposed trail, and the Ohio Water Trails team evaluates the trail, working with local partners to ensure safe, suitable access. The goal is to designate trails across the state and produce publications such as this one that promote safe access and wise use.

Navigation Aids

Navigation aids such as buoys, signs, lights and beacons are designed to assist boaters by marking hazards and safe channels, helping determine location, controlling traffic, and protecting resources.

Regulatory Markers

Controlled Area



A circle is the most common symbol used on Ohio waterways and usually regulates operation in the area. The buoy or sign will indicate the nature of the controlled area such as No Wake, Idle Speed, Speed Limit, Ski Zone, Open Zone, Speed Zone, etc.



Information



A square is used on buoys or signs giving directions to facilities or other information about the area.



Boats Keep Out



A diamond shape with a cross means boats must keep out. A buoy or sign may show only the symbol or may also indicate Swim Area, Beach, Keep Out, No Boats, Closed Area, Dam, etc.



Danger



A diamond shape is used to mark a hazard to boaters. The buoy or sign may also indicate the nature of the hazard such as Rock, Stump, Shallow Area, Reef, Shoal, Dam, etc.



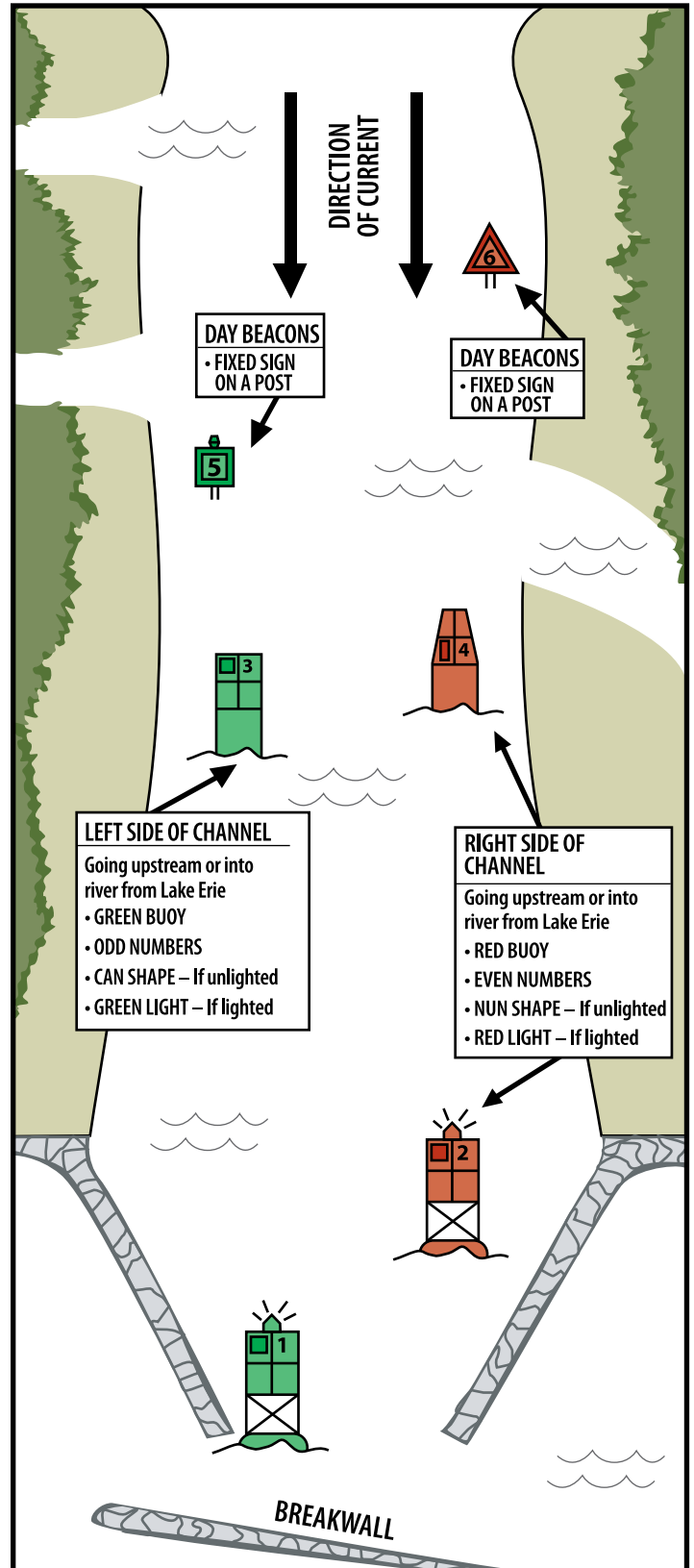
Risk of Collision

Each operator of a vessel must take all necessary action to avoid a collision. It must be done in ample time and taking into account any special circumstances due to weather, boat traffic, and limits of other boats. If there is any doubt of the risk – it shall be deemed to exist. Use sound to signal intention.

Rendering Assistance

The operator of a vessel is obligated to provide assistance that can be safely provided to any individual in danger. When assisting, help should never be provided in a manner that will injure or endanger anyone's life, including the rescuer.

Safety Tip: Give way to boats that are less maneuverable than your boat such as barges, tugs, commercial boats, sailboats and non-powered boats.



Fishing a Stream

If you haven't considered packing a fishing pole for your next float trip, maybe you should. Streams provide some of the best fishing in Ohio — if you know where to look. Fish hang out where they can eat, and where they can eat depends on the current.

Predatory fish (smallmouth bass, rock bass, and steelhead) feed where the current sweeps prey past them. Some fish seek shelter close to the current; they dart in to the current to feed and out of the current to rest. Other species of fish aren't built to fight the current and prefer deeper pools with slower-moving water.

Predatory fish wait in deeper water at the head of the pool (just below the riffles) or at the tail of the pool for prey to wash past them. Present your bait by casting upstream, either up into the riffles or near the swifter current at the tail of the pool, and allow the current to deliver it to fish waiting below.

Rocks, logs, and other obstructions in the pool provide places out of the current for fish to rest while they wait for prey to sweep past. Cast upstream of these rest areas, allowing the current to carry the bait past the fish. Retrieve as close to the obstruction as possible without snagging.

Panfish (sunfish, crappies) and bottom feeders (catfish, suckers, carp) prefer deeper pools where they don't have to fight the current. Target these species by fishing natural bait in the deepest area of pools. Steelhead also prefer deep pools near current in the fall and early winter, but can be found in shallow water in the spring.

Natural and artificial baits are effective for stream fishing, depending on the species of fish you are seeking. Bottom feeders prefer natural baits that are typical to the habitat. Crayfish, minnows, hellgrammites, and worms work anywhere in Ohio streams. Predators and sunfish strike natural and artificial bait with equal enthusiasm. Smaller is better for artificial baits. Small jigs, in-line spinners and crankbaits that match the color of prey found within the stream are good choices.

Smallmouth bass and steelhead are just a few of the predatory fish species in the Vermilion River. For specific information on fishing for these or other species, go to the Ohio Division of Wildlife's web page at ohiodnr.com/wildlife and navigate to the *Go Fish* section on the fishing page.

