

Big Cobb River Southern Minnesota Whitewater Paddling



Dates: June 9-10, 2018

Trip Leader: Vern Fish (vernfish@aol.com & 319-215-7830)

Location: Plan to be at Daly Park in Blue Earth County, Minnesota by noon on Saturday, June 9. For more information about the park go to the following website

<http://www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/Facilities/Facility/Details/Daly-Park--Campground-3>.

We will meet at the shelter house which is near the entrance of the park.

Paddle: We will eat lunch and then drive to the put in point off of County Road 16. Bring your own lunch. For more details on the Big Cobb check out page 20 of *Paddling Southern Minnesota*. I have attached the trip description and a map.

This river offers about six miles of almost continuous Class I and II whitewater. The whitewater runs are not technical and are a good introduction for someone wanting to learn how to run whitewater. It also has a very short shuttle (2 miles) which allows time to run this stretch of the river more than once in a day. Our plan is to run it once on Saturday. We can go back and run it again on Sunday or paddle a different river in the Mankato area.

Camping: We will camp at Daly Park. You should plan on bringing your own tent and camping gear. I plan to bring food and cook meals. However, you are welcome to eat on your own.

Canoes/Kayak: You must bring your own boat. Your boat will hit rocks which may cause dents or holes. If you have a spray skirt for your canoe, you should bring it.

Cost: There is no cost for the trip but there is a cost to camp.

Confirmation: If you plan to go, please confirm by emailing vernfish@aol.com by May 14, 2017.

BIG COBB RIVER 2

County Road 16 to County Road 16 on the Le Sueur River (6.4 miles)

Notorious among local rivers, this stretch of the Big Cobb is definitely a trip for experienced paddlers, with rapids that rate Class II at medium levels. In its rush to reach the Le Sueur, the Big Cobb races through sometimes-continuous rocky drops. (Note: Because they vary in intensity with the water level and are so numerous, these rapids are not marked on the map.) Deadfalls, like those that occasionally block the channel on Big Cobb I, are wedged against the outside of many bends. Members of the Mankato Paddling and Outings Club do cleanup and trimming every spring, so paddlers may not have to portage. However, the combination of fast current and strainers requires alert paddling and excellent maneuvering skills. On a swift river, strainers can be more dangerous than rapids.

This route's a great mix of fun rapids and dramatic scenery. The river valley burrows ever deeper into the glacial drift, and banks of sliced-away deposits tower over the river. Cedar trees grow on high sandy slopes and snapping turtles lurk in the pools.

For information on area **camping**, see Big Cobb River 1.

The 2.6-mile **shuttle route** runs north on County Road 16. The take-out is an official access on the Le Sueur River, on downstream left.

The **gradient** is 12.1 feet per mile.

A painted **water level gauge** is visible from the County Road 16 put-in. If the water level is in the middle of a numeral, that's the level; the dots are the .5 marks. Below 2 feet is too low. Over 4 feet, the mix of fast water, sharp curves, and strainers is dangerous.

Local kayakers say that the best level for playing on the rapids is between 3 and 4 feet.

On the USGS Web site, use readings from the river's tributary, the Little Cobb. To correlate the two readings: a USGS reading of 6.75 feet (170 cfs) on the Little Cobb is about the same as 2.5 feet on the County Road 16 painted gauge on the Big Cobb. Likewise, 9.31 feet (494 cfs) is about the same as 4 feet.

Put in at the County Road 16 bridge access on the Big Cobb, south of Mankato. (Note that the take-out is also on County Road 16, but on the Le Sueur River.) The well-used landing is on upstream right. About a half mile downstream, the Big Cobb runs through a fairly long stretch of Class I-II rapids, followed by a line of boulders across the river that you must dodge.

Beginning at mile 2.3, a half mile of nearly continuous rapids races past a log house on the right. After a short break, another long series of drops and pools begins. After another house on the right (mile 3.8) some nice limestone outcrops appear. Another long series of Class I-II rapids that begins at mile 4.4 rushes by several houses.

As the river approaches its confluence with the Le Sueur, the rapids diminish and huge pileups of dead trees litter the sandbars. The rapids end at the confluence (mile 5.8). The Le Sueur, 150 feet wide, is deeper and much quieter than the Big Cobb. At the County Road 16 bridge, **take out** on downstream left. Climb a long set of wooden steps to the parking area of the Le Sueur River Public Water Access.



A fast current, numerous challenging rapids, and high banks are typical of Big Cobb 2.

