Welcome to
Running Water
Public Water Access

42° 48' 15" N  97° 58' 44" W

Running Water is midway in a rich delta ecosystem on the Missouri River that extends upstream to Verdel and downstream into the headwaters of Lewis & Clark Lake.

Sediment from the Niobrara River entering the Missouri River has contributed to the delta, creating ideal habitat for many species in the form of sandbars, islands, backwaters, wetlands and marshland.

Note: There are many channels through which to navigate in the delta, so it is easy to miss your destination. Emergency access points are limited on both sides of the Missouri in this reach. Please plan accordingly.

The eastern boundary of the Missouri National Recreational River 39-Mile District lies approximately 200 yards downriver from Running Water. The Water Trail, however, continues through Lewis & Clark Lake and the MNRR 39-Mile District to Sioux City.

The next 15 or so miles constitute a transition zone between the remnant of the free-flowing river and Lewis & Clark Lake impounded behind Gavins Point Dam. It is here that the formation of the Niobrara delta is most pronounced.

The many sinuous side channels in this area offer slow-moving water ideal for fish nurseries. These channels create small islands that support several amphibian and marsh bird populations.

The Bazile Creek State Wildlife Management Area, with some 4,500 acres of marsh, mixed woods and grasslands, borders the Missouri for some nine miles across from Running Water, providing a prime viewing area for wetland birds and other wildlife.

Niobrara State Park is located just west of the Missouri-Niobrara confluence. The park offers camping, hiking, a wide range of activities, and exceptional views of the Niobrara and Missouri Rivers, both part of the Missouri National Recreational River.

In 1986, an 80 million-year-old, 33 foot long mosasaur fossil was discovered in the Cretaceous deposits at Niobrara State Park.

The Lewis & Clark Expedition camped in this vicinity on September 3rd and 4th, 1804.

One mile west of this access, the Chief Standing Bear Memorial Bridge and Overlook now links Niobrara, Nebraska, to Running Water. The bridge replaces the Running Water crossing that was used by several ferries from the late 1800s through 1984.

Archaeological discoveries extend human habitation in the area back through the millennia. The predominant tribal peoples living in the area today include the Yankton Sioux (whose reservation ends at Chouteau Creek some twelve miles upriver on the north) and the Santee Sioux of Nebraska (whose reservation begins on the Nebraska side east of the Memorial Bridge and extends east along the river in much of this area). The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has a tribal headquarters in Niobrara.

The Ponca people had traditionally inhabited lands south of the Missouri in what would become northeast Nebraska, including the Niobrara-Missouri confluence. In 1877, the US government forced the Ponca, then led by Chief Standing Bear, to relocate to Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma, where many died from hunger and disease, including Standing Bear's son. In 1879, the chief and 90 Poncas set off to bury the boy on ancestral lands. Standing Bear was arrested, but used for the right to return.

In the landmark case Standing Bear v. Crook (1879), a federal court ruled in his favor, establishing a complex of legal rights for Native Americans.

The Isanti (Isanyant) or Santee Sioux are Dakota speakers, one of three linguistic divisions of the larger Sioux Nation. Following the Minnesota Santee uprising of 1862, many members of the Mowewakan ton and Wahpekute branches of the Santee Sioux were eventually moved to their present location in Knox County, Nebraska.

The Santee Sioux of Nebraska Reservation borders the Missouri River on the south and east for much of this portion of the Water Trail.

This was funded by a grant from the National Park Service. Please see the other side of this sign for information about the Missouri National Recreational River. Enjoy yourself and be safe!