

# Safety Recommendations:

**Plan wisely:** Prior to your water activity closely examine the Chippewa River with the map below. It is recommended to follow the suggested route indicated in yellow.

**Pack a lifejacket:** Wear a properly fitted US Coast Guard Approved life jacket based on your weight and size.

**Weather awareness:** Be mindful of changing weather conditions prior to your water activity. Rainfall a few days prior can change the water flow and level to make more hazardous. Check with local weather media outlets prior to your trip.

**Dress appropriately:** Wear a quality suit, lifejacket, proper foot wear, sun glasses and bring along plenty of sun screen and water to enjoy your trip on the river.

**Follow route:** Be aware of hazards indicated below and follow the suggested route for the Chippewa River Water Trail. Please respect private property and use public landings only.

**Be courteous:** Be mindful and courteous to other users enjoying the Chippewa River Water Trail. Please give way to non-motorized water craft.

**Stewardship:** Be a steward of the river trail by placing your trash in boat launch site trash containers. Follow the leave no trace principles.

**Share with others:** Let a trusted relative or friend know of your water activity, to include your intended return time and location. In the event of an emergency, a friend can share this information with emergency services looking for you.

**Dam safety:** When near the Eau Claire Dam be aware of warning sirens. Warning sirens are sounded at Dells hydroelectric dam before spillway gates are opened to release high flows.

**Call 911:** In an emergency, call 911 and be prepared to share your location on the Chippewa River Water Trail. Minutes count in a medical and water emergency.



**1. Phoenix Manufacturing / Phoenix Park** (mile 58.2)

*Phoenix Manufacturing Company facilities. 1900*

**2. Gray Street Landing** (mile 57.8)

*Steamboat carrying immigrants between Durand and Eau Claire, 1868*

**3. Owen Park** (mile 57.7-57.2)

*Owen Park Bandshell, 1939*

**4. Water Street Bridge** (mile 57.2)

*Water Street Bridge collapse, February 10, 1945*

**5. Canal to Half Moon Lake** (mile 56.1)

*Logs in Half Moon Lake, 1900*

When a fire destroyed the Dewey Street manufacturing facility of Graham, White & Co. in 1875, the business owners decided to start fresh in a new location and under a new name. They bought land near the confluence of the Eau Claire and Chippewa Rivers, built a foundry and machine shop, and rebranded the business Phoenix Manufacturing Company. Best known for its steam-powered log haulers and other logging machinery, Phoenix Manufacturing anchored Eau Claire's industrial Chippewa River shoreline for decades until vacating the site in 1971. The city demolished the buildings in 1985 and, after years of cleanup, opened Phoenix Park in 2005 on the former industrial site. The park is now the heart of the Eau Claire community, hosting a farmer's market, concerts, and other events all summer.

Though it is unrecognizable today, the foot of Gray Street was once a bustling steamboat landing serving the city's east side. Before the first railroad reached Eau Claire in 1870, Chippewa River steamboats were people's primary means of transportation. Steamers brought immigrants and supplies and news from the wider world. The Gray Street Landing was also the site of important departures. On September 6, 1861, the Chippewa Valley's most famous resident, a bald eagle named Old Abe, boarded the steamer Stella Whipple alongside an entire company of soldiers. From Eau Claire, Old Abe and company steamed south to muster into the Union Army and fight in the Civil War. After 1870, railroads carried increasingly more people and goods. The region's lumber industry was also near its peak, and millions of board feet of floating logs made river travel treacherous, especially in spring. The Gray Street Landing closed in 1880. A historical marker, erected in 1927, commemorates both the former steamboat landing and Old Abe's embarkation.

John S. Owen married into the family of a wealthy Michigan lumberman and became one of Eau Claire's own great lumber barons after arriving in the city in 1873. Like many of the city's prominent businessmen, Owen was also a philanthropist. On the last day of 1913, he deeded to the city the land that became Owen Park. "Make the city beautiful," he wrote, "and it will attract people here to live." At first the site was a soggy, sandy bottomland—silt deposited on the inside bend of the river. During the 1910s and '20s, the land was built up with debris from street cleanings. The mayor appealed for "all forms of rubbish and waste, except garbage" to use as landfill. By the 1930s, the park became a community hotspot, especially after the completion of the Owen Park Bandshell, a Works Progress Administration project completed in 1938. The bandshell still draws big crowds, and the park still beautifies a full halfmile of the river's shoreline.

Eau Claire is known as a city of bridges. Seventeen bridges within city limits connect neighborhoods across the Chippewa and Eau Claire rivers, carrying pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and trains. But it wasn't always so. In fact, the city originally formed as three distinct villages, each separated from the others by the two rivers. Water Street developed as the "Main Street" of West Eau Claire. The first bridge linking Water Street to the city's east side was built in 1880 but washed out in the epic flood of September 1884 along with all but one of the other bridges. A second bridge stood from 1884 to 1914, when a concrete arch bridge replaced it. The third bridge made frontpage news in 1945 when riverbed erosion around one of the piers caused a section of the bridge to collapse. Motorists were able to get off the bridge, but within a few weeks nearly the entire span had fallen into the river. The bridge you're passing under is the fifth Water Street Bridge, a new structure replacing the one built in 1947 after the collapse.

As you work your way to the right bank of the river to disembark at Hobbs Boat Landing, you are following a path taken more than a century ago by tens of thousands of logs. In 1857, several pioneering lumbermen dug a 1200-foot long canal to (re)connect the Chippewa River to Half Moon Lake. They constructed a pocket boom just offshore of the modern Hobbs Landing to capture the logs and funnel them into the new canal. It was difficult, however, to keep the logs so far to the right in the channel—many floated on downstream—so a long fin boom was built across the width of the river. A fin, or sheer, boom is an adjustable boom that can be closed to catch logs or opened to allow the passage of steamboats and other water traffic. Fin booms were invented on the Chippewa River during the 1850s. The importance of the cutoff canal in Eau Claire's history cannot be overstated. Use of Half Moon Lake as a huge natural storage pond was key to making Eau Claire the region's most productive "Sawdust City." By 1867, nine different lumber companies operated mills adjacent to the lake.

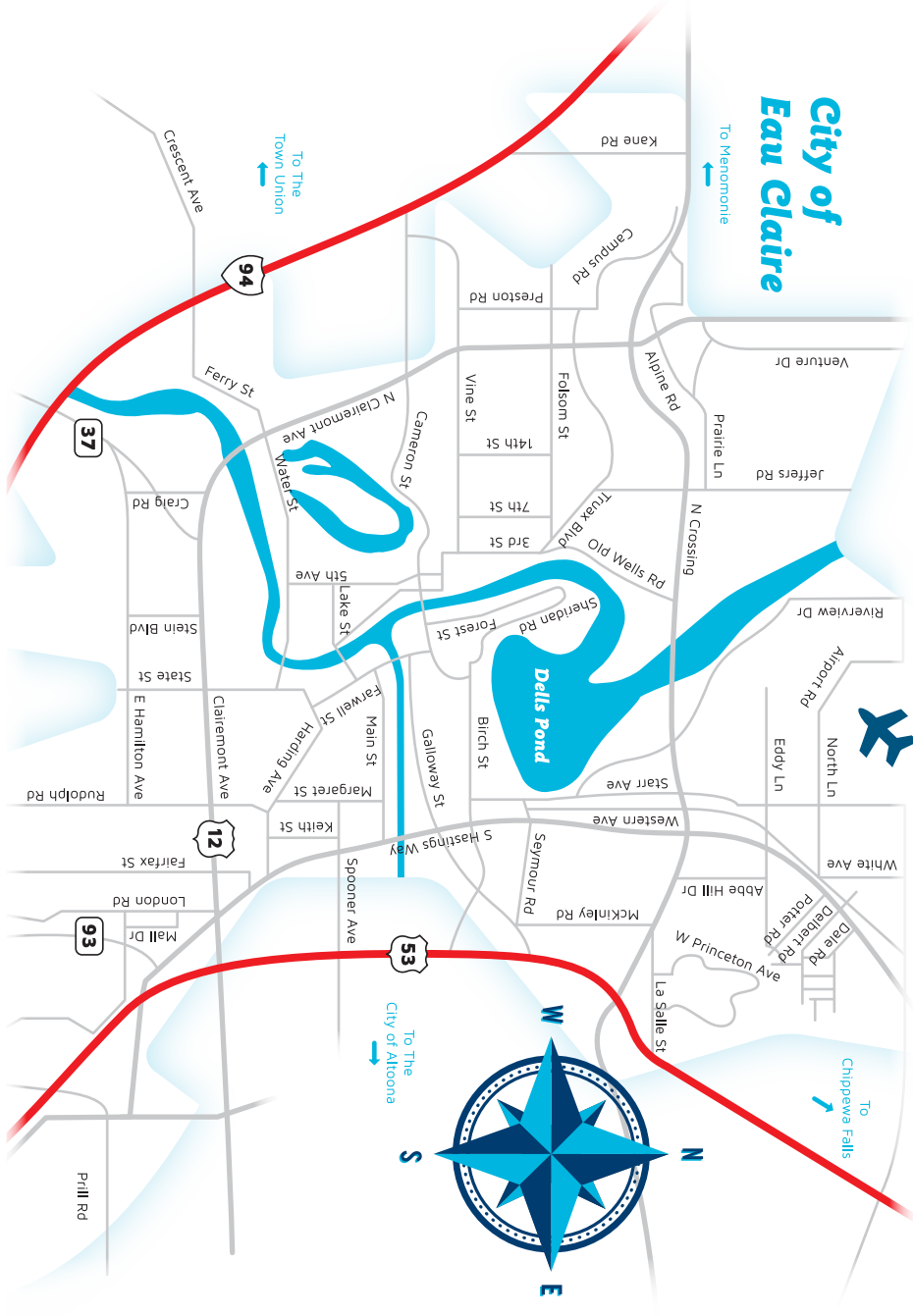


# Downtown Eau Claire

Downtown Eau Claire has an atmosphere of natural beauty, camaraderie and discovery inspired by its unique history. Several independent villages developed around the Eau Claire and Chippewa Rivers in the mid 1800s. The villages soon grew together, each becoming a neighborhood with its own distinctive commercial and residential patterns.

Today’s downtown is made up of four business districts that still reflect the character of the original neighborhoods. The city center includes the North and South Barstow Districts overlooking the confluence of the two rivers.

The Grand Avenue District sits comfortably on the Chippewa’s west bank. And just minutes downriver is the historic Water Street Business District. Each of these districts features a diverse mix of business, culture and arts, seamlessly introducing the past to the future. In downtown Eau Claire, experience serene views, an abundance of parks, community gardens, a farmers market, local shops and many one-of-a-kind pubs and restaurants. Life in the heart of Eau Claire is urban and modern, but the rivers—like the city’s unique history—are never more than a step away.



The Chippewa River Water Trail Project received technical support from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service and financial support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. Additional technical support was provided by the those agencies and organizations represented by the logos below.

Additional financial support provided by Debra Becker, State Farm Insurance, Eau Claire Community Parks Association Foundation, Inc., Mona Lisa's Restaurant, Red Flint Group, South Barstow Business Improvement District, UW - Eau Claire Foundation



# Chippewa River Water Trail



# The Chippewa River Water Trail

Eau Claire is proud of its river heritage. Our city encompasses the historically significant confluence where our namesake river merges with the Chippewa River to begin their combined 60-mile free flowing journey to the Mississippi River. From the fur trade to modern recreation, the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers have for centuries provided residents with many of life’s necessities: water, hydropower, jobs, transportation, a place for contemplation, and, yes, fun.

While floating on the river you’ll experience clean water that supports a complex aquatic ecosystem – several fish, mollusk, and plant

species are endangered - over its 183-mile length. You’ll also see historic reminders such as lumber-era pilings that remain in and along the river. These unique river resources rely on people like you to steward them so others may enjoy them.

This guide will help you navigate hazards safely, learn about our excellent rivers, and see Eau Claire from a whole new – watery - perspective. The Chippewa River Water Trail flows 2.7 miles through the heart of Eau Claire so get out your canoe, kayak, or “tube” and experience the beauty, history, and fun of our urban waterways.

