

History

Between Nanih Waiya and the Gulf, the Pearl River Basin contains a wealth of historical and legendary tradition. Traces of civilization dating back to 400 B.C. have been found in the southern part of the river near Mulatto Bayou. While the lower Pearl abounds with romantic tales of riverboat pirates and bad men, legend proclaims the great spirit told the Choctaw Indians to make their home along the banks of the upper portion of what they called -- "Rock River".

European civilization came to this region in the 1600's with the Spanish and French explorers. The French explorer d'Iberville re-named the river "Pearl" after he and his men discovered pearls at the mouth of the stream in 1698. The French recognized the Pearl as a potentially important transportation route for settlers and in 1732 had the river explored and mapped. This helped open the entire basin to European settlers. The original survey is still preserved today in the French Archives in Paris.

One of these settlers was a French Canadian named Louis LeFleur who came to the Pearl River in 1792. LeFleur established a trading post in an area that would later become Mississippi's capital city, Jackson.

The river continued to attract settlers and in 1816 a group of territorial leaders met to draft a petition to allow Mississippi to join the Union. The site of the meeting, called the Pearl River Convention, was the John Ford Home, located south of Columbia near Sandy Hook. This pioneer home remains in its historical setting and has gained its rightful place in Mississippi history.

Mississippi was awarded statehood in 1817 and a search for a state capitol ensued. LeFleur's Trading Post was the most attractive site because of its central location, nearness to the Natchez Trace, and the availability to a navigable stream -- the Pearl River.

Before the river became a highway of commerce and transportation, it was a route into the wilderness. It opened the way for white settlers who moved in to cultivate the fertile bottom lands. With the onset of agricultural and commercial development, the Pearl served as a water highway to transport tremendous harvests of virgin pine and hardwood timber. Steamboats were common sights as far up river as Edinburg, bringing supplies to the settlers and returning with marketable cargo.



But hopes that the Pearl would become an important artery for commerce never materialized. The river was narrow and crooked and contained innumerable snags and tree trunks. Steamboats and keelboats were also limited to seasonal travel because of low water levels during the summer months. With insufficient interest and economic incentive to keep the channel clean and snagfree, railroads eventually brought an end to the steamboat era.

Today the river is once again the scene of much activity. In 1964, the Pearl River Basin Development District was created by the Mississippi State Legislature as a special fund agency that would oversee the balanced growth of the water resource potentials of the river.

The 15-county district spans all the way from Neshoba County in the north to Hancock County in the south. In the form of planned and completed projects, the Pearl River Basin Development District assures the economic growth of the Pearl River Basin in the areas of flood control, pollution abatement, water supply, navigation, soil conservation and recreation.

Topography

The Pearl River rises in the historic area of the Nanih Waiya Indian Mounds of Winston County where it is formed by the confluence of Nanaway and Tallahaga Creeks. It flows southwesterly through Neshoba, Leake, Scott and Rankin Counties, bringing with it the vast potential of an abundant water supply. Continuing through Mississippi's capital city of Jackson, the Pearl flows through Copiah, Simpson, Lawrence, Marion, Pearl River and Hancock Counties before it empties into the Gulf of Mexico through Lake Borgne and the Mississippi Sound.

The basin of the Pearl River contains seven million acres and drains an area of 8,760 square miles, draining all or parts of 23 counties in Mississippi and 3 parishes in Louisiana. It is the third largest drainage basin in the state, meandering approximately 430 miles through the south central portion of Mississippi and a small part of southeastern Louisiana. Over two trillion gallons of water pass along her banks each year.



The Yockanookany River and Lobutcha Creek are the principal headwater tributaries. The Strong River in the middle reach and the Bogue Chitto River in the lower reach are the only other large tributaries. Oxbow cutoff lakes occur occasionally in the bottoms of the upper and lower Pearl.

The Pearl is a winding, slow-moving river. The further south you travel, the wider it becomes. In almost every bend you find a large sand bar. Sycamore and willow trees line the banks along with stands of mixed hardwood, loblolly and shortleaf pine, oak, hickory and gum. From spring through mid-fall, hundreds of species of wild flowers display their seasonal colors throughout the wooded areas. Deer, beaver, rabbits, squirrel, opossum, racoon and foxes can be seen along the banks by the river traveler. The river contains an abundance of small and large mouth bass, catfish, gar, bream and crappie.

Long cherished by local residents for its scenic quality and unblemished beauty, the Pearl provides the opportunity to travel outdoors, fish, float, camp and observe the terrain, foliage and wildlife.



Pearl River Boatway

A pleasure boatway stretching from Neshoba County to the Gulf Coast was created by the Pearl River Basin Development District in 1968. To date, 17 water parks have been constructed along the Pearl and her main tributaries, all connected by a common road -- the river.

Whether you come to spend a day of fun fishing and picnicking, or a weekend camping and boating, Pearl River Boatway water parks offer outdoor adventure for the entire family.

Boatramps are the main attraction at each park. These concrete ramps make launching an easy task for large, as well as small boats.

Fishing is enjoyed year-round along all reaches of the Pearl. Bass, bream, channel catfish and white perch create a challenge for both casual and serious fishermen. Don't worry if you do not own a boat. Several parks have piers which extend out into the water and provide plenty of room for everyone wishing to wet a hook.

Picnic areas are nestled along the banks of the river, creating a serene atmosphere for an old-fashioned style picnic. Concrete tables with adjacent hibachi grills add to the pleasure of outdoor cooking.

Playgrounds with modern equipment are located near each picnic area. Comfort stations are also centrally located for the convenience of picnickers, as well as campers.

FLOATING THE PEARL RIVER BOATWAY

...Float peacefully downstream and take time to observe the natural beauty of native plants and wildlife found along the river banks....

...Paddle through swift current and over small whitewater rapids if you prefer fast moving action....

...Fish year-round for fresh water catfish, bass, bream and crappie....

A wide choice of outdoor adventure awaits canoeing and float fishing enthusiasts on the Pearl, Strong, Bogue Chitto, Jourdan, and Yockanookany Rivers. Float trips can be tailored to fit anyone's schedule, as each river lends itself to outings of a few hours, as well as to extensive camping trips. The boatway parks have been strategically located for overnight camping or rest stops along the way.

Float maps, depicting free float times, river depths, mileage between points and seasonal stage variations have been published by the District. The maps cover the Pearl River from Highway 80 in Jackson, all the way south to Monticello; the Strong River; and one section of the Bogue Chitto River from Johnston Station to the Mississippi State Line. These maps are free to the public and may be obtained by writing or calling the Pearl River Basin Development District.

Canoe Rental and Shuttle Service

White water canoes are available for rent at Lake Lincoln, Bogue Chitto and D'Lo Water Parks. John boats are available at Lake Lincoln only.

The rental fee includes life jackets, paddles and a put-in -- take-out service operated by park personnel. Please note that the lessee is responsible for all equipment at the rate of current market retail prices.

Tubing is also a popular pastime on Mississippi's slow-moving streams. Inner tubes may be rented at Bogue Chitto Water Park, with shuttle service included in the rental fee.

Reservations should be made in advance for both individual and group rentals.



When Canoeing or Fishing Remember the Following

- **Fishing license** -- all fishermen must have a resident or non-resident Mississippi Fishing License
- **Life jackets** -- all boats must carry approved emergency flotation devices for each individual
- **Boating safety** -- have a safe boat, carry a first-aid kit and exercise caution on fast flowing stretches of water
- **Know how to swim** -- learn life-saving skills that will save your life, as well as others
- **No swimming** -- is allowed near boat ramps
- **No diving** -- is allowed from river banks or rope swings
- **Stay out of water during storms**

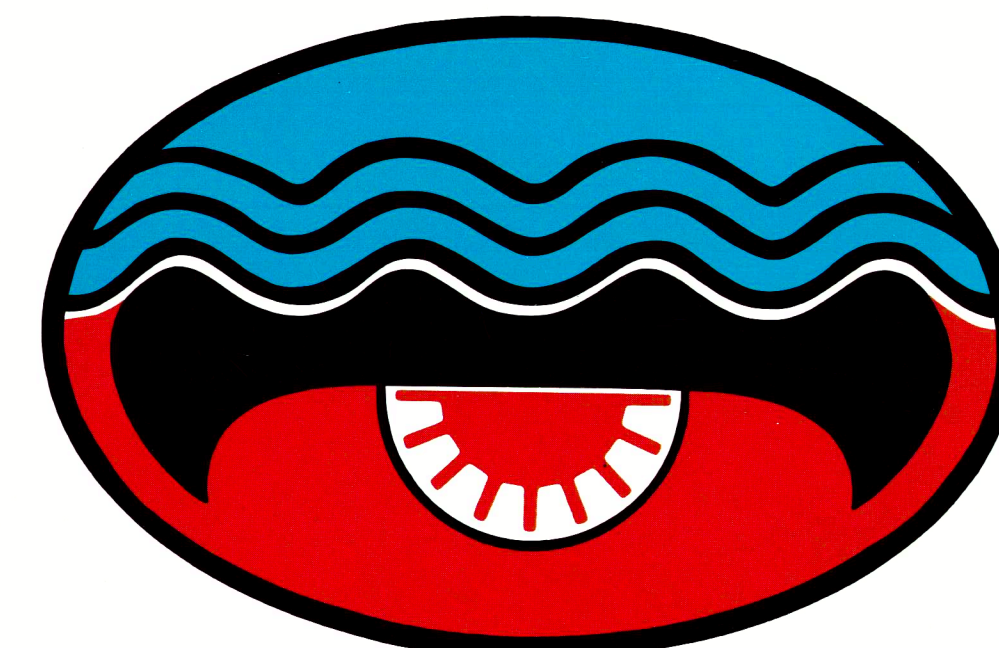
A fun-filled float trip can turn into tragedy if basic safety rules are not followed. Remember, you are responsible for your own safety and engage in these activities at your own risk. Please observe the rules!

PEARL RIVER BOATWAY PARKS

1. **Burnside Lake Park** -- Neshoba County, five miles northeast of Philadelphia on Highway 15. On the Pearl River. 22 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, boat launching, oxbow lake, fishing piers, open-air pavilions, lighted ballfields, picnicking, playground, nature trail, suspension bridge, bathhouse, comfort station. For information call (601) 656-7621.
2. **Leake County Water Park** -- Leake County, eight miles north of Highway 25. Above the low head dam on the Ross Barnett Reservoir. Primitive camping, boat launching, oxbow lake, open-air pavilion, picnicking, comfort station. For information call (601) 654-9355.
3. **Coal Bluff Park** -- Scott County, four miles north of Highway 25. Below the low head dam on the Ross Barnett Reservoir. 48 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, boat launching, open-air pavilions, tennis courts, picnicking, playground, amphi-theatre, bathhouse, comfort stations. For information call (601) 654-7726.
4. **Riverside Park** -- Hinds County at the intersection of I-55 North and Lakeland Drive in Jackson. On the Pearl River. Nine-hole golf course, lighted tennis courts, picnicking, playground, nature trail, swimming pool, club house, amphi-theatre, comfort stations. For information call (601) 960-2402.
5. **D'Lo Water Park** -- Simpson County, two miles west of Mendenhall off Old Highway 49. On the Strong River at "The Rocks". Canoe rental with shuttle service, mapped float trips, 12 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, boat launching, lighted ballfields, picnicking, playground, nature trail, bathhouse, comfort station. For reservations call (601) 847-4310.
6. **Merit Water Park** -- Simpson County, off Highway 43 near Pinola. On Rials Creek at the "Merit Swimming Hole". Primitive camping, picnicking, nature trail, comfort station, suspension bridge. For information call (601) 847-4310.
7. **Lake Lincoln** -- Lincoln County, fifteen miles north of Brookhaven and six miles east of Wesson. On Bahala Creek. 69 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, boat launching, 550-acre lake, boat rental, fishing piers, sand beach, picnicking, open-air pavilion, nature trail, bathhouse, comfort stations. For information call (601) 643-5216.
8. **Vanilla Water Park** -- Lawrence County, ten miles north of Monticello on Highway 27. On the Pearl River. Primitive camping, boat launching, picnicking, comfort stations. For information call (601) 587-2711.
9. **Atwood Water Park** -- Lawrence County, two miles east of Monticello off Highway 84. On the Pearl River. 44 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, boat launching, lighted tennis courts, lighted ballfield, group pavilion, picnicking, playground, nature trail, bathhouse, comfort stations. For reservations call (601) 587-2711.
10. **Columbia Water Park** -- Marion County, off Highway 35 by-pass, two miles north of Columbia. On the Pearl River. Primitive camping, boat launching, group pavilion, open-air pavilion, lighted ballfield, picnicking, playground, comfort stations. For information call (601) 736-6385.
11. **Summit Water Park** -- Pike County, northeast of McComb off I-55 South in Summit. On the Bogue Chitto River. Primitive camping, boat launching, beach, picnicking. For information call (601) 684-2291.
12. **Bogue Chitto Water Park** -- Pike County, twelve miles east of McComb on Highway 98. On the Bogue Chitto River. 81 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, canoe rental with shuttle service, mapped float trips, boat launching, group pavilion, picnicking, nature trail, playground, bathhouse, comfort stations. For reservations call (601) 684-9568.
13. **Walker's Bridge Water Park** -- Walthall County, off Highway 48. On the Bogue Chitto River. Primitive camping, open-air pavilion, boat launching, picnicking, comfort stations. For information call (601) 876-2680.
14. **Holmes Water Park** -- Walthall County, off Highway 27 in Tylertown. On Magee's Creek. Primitive camping, lighted ballfields, boat launching, pavilion, picnicking, playground, nature trail, comfort station. For information call (601) 876-5712.
15. **Crossroads Water Park** -- Pearl River County, on Highway 26 at the Crossroads Community. On the Pearl River. Primitive camping, lighted ballfield, two open-air pavilions, boat launching, community building, picnicking, nature trail, comfort station. For information call (601) 772-9042.
16. **Walkiah Bluff Water Park** -- Pearl River County, four miles north of Picayune off Highway 43. On the Pearl River. 5 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, ballfield, boat launching, pavilion, picnicking, playground, comfort station. For information call (601) 798-3947.
17. **McLeod Water Park** -- Hancock County, off Texas Flatt Road in the Kiln Community. On the Jourdan River. 35 trailer sites with water and electricity, primitive camping, lighted ballfield, group pavilion, picnicking, playground, nature trail, boat launching, fishing piers, bathhouse, comfort station. For reservations call (601) 467-1894.



PEARL RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT



PEARL RIVER BOATWAY MAP

BEWARE AND OBSERVE THE RULES

No Trespassing!

As you travel the waters of any navigable river or stream in Mississippi it is important to know the laws regarding the rights of boaters.

Under Mississippi law, landowners own the banks of rivers and streams which pass through land in their private ownership. Although a landowner has no right to prevent boaters from traversing the waters, he does have a right to prevent boaters from leaving the stream and camping on his land.

Good judgment is advised when stopping along the river because you may be trespassing. Boaters planning trips should consult with local landowners or be aware of the location of public boat launches and campgrounds such as Pearl River Boatway Parks.

Park Rules

- Be extremely careful with campfires
- Place all garbage in the trash receptacles
- Observe the posted speed limit of 15 mph
- Do not cut small trees or shrubbery
- Firearms are not allowed -- no hunting
- Dogs are not allowed in the picnic area except on a leash
- Horseback riding is not allowed
- Skating and bicycling are prohibited on the multi-purpose courts

Thank you for your cooperation in abiding by these rules. We hope you enjoy your stay and visit our parks many times in the future.



For more information contact:
PEARL RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
2304 Riverside Drive -- P. O. Box 5332
Jackson, Mississippi 39216-1332
(601) 354-6301