

Webpage excerpt from: <https://prairierivers.org/dynergy-vermilion-middle-fork>

## MIDDLE FORK RIVER: WHAT IS AT RISK?

The Middle Fork of the Vermilion River is a unique and cherished resource. The river been was the first state-designated State Scenic River, and is the only nationally-designated Scenic River in the state of Illinois.



River otters swimming in the Middle Fork. Photo Credit: [David Hale](#)

In legislation, the Illinois General Assembly stated that it “recognizes the outstanding natural, scenic, recreational, ecological, historical and archaeological values of the middle fork of the Vermilion River in Vermilion County, Illinois, and deems the middle fork of the Vermilion River to be a natural resource of Statewide significance such that its natural and recreational values should be permanently preserved for the enjoyment of the people of the State of Illinois.”

The Middle Fork River Valley is home to 24 State threatened or endangered species, and supports a diverse and healthy population of 57 types of fish, 45 kinds of mammals, and 190 different birds. It’s common to see turtles, river otters, blue herons and bald eagles on a trip down the river.

The river system also provides the benefits of a strong recreation economy to Vermilion County. Kickapoo State Recreation Area, Kennekuk Cove County Park, and the Middle Fork State Fish and Wildlife Area stand as key destinations for local residents and visitors , enjoyed for canoeing, kayaking, wildlife viewing, photography, hunting, angling, hiking, and horseback riding.

According to a publication of the University of Illinois Springfield, [in 2009 Kickapoo State Recreation Area, alone, hosted 1,458,491 visitors](#). Kickapoo Landing alone puts over 10,000 people on the Middle Fork River in canoes, kayaks and tubes each year.

It is clear that the unstable and polluting Dynegy ash pits are putting this unique resource at risk. As the state of Illinois recognized in its Corridor Management Plan, it must “work toward abatement of activities within the river area which are degrading water quality.”