

South Fork River Paddling: Gaston County

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In May of 2009 the Catawba Lands Conservancy opened new canoe and kayak [access points](#) on the **South Fork of the Catawba river**. These **accesses** are just minutes away from the Mecklenburg/Gaston county lines off I-85 south of Charlotte near the town of Lowell.

Though not for first timers to go alone, the **South Fork** offers easy class I rapids that alone are not treacherous, but do command a good eye for navigating through the rocky geography of the river. In other words, **a nice paddle with a little "tooth"** (at around the 3.5 mile mark) for those with some experience.

When the water levels are high enough this should be nice and easy run but during dry summer months or times of drought, more rocks appear thus making it more of a challenge to navigate. Be sure to check [water levels](#) while you plan your trip. While looking at water levels check that they are also not too high. While walking the river side or paddling down river the debris line is apparent where recent major flooding has occurred.

The trip is approximately 5.5 miles long and takes about 2 hours from start to finish. Be sure to stay on the right (river right) through the fork in the river. This will take you to the take-out point before the dam. Keep your eyes open for the train trestle, and then the I-85 overpass. Just as you float under I-85 you will come up to the take out point, which can be a little tricky to take a canoe out and up the rocky ramp up to the parking lot where your second car or ride back to the drop-in is parked.

If conservation of the watershed or any of it's rivers are of any interest or you would like to become involved in helping to maintain it please check out the [Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation](#) website.

Of course as paddlers of the rivers, we do not have to contact anyone if we wish to help conserve the beauty of the area. Feel free to pick up a plastic bag, bottle, or any other trash along the way. It not only serves to beautify the area but also helps prevent wildlife from ultimately perishing from the trash.

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