

Detailed account by Allen Palmer :

Helling Roaring Creek to Culver, HQ to Marsh Campground:

What a morning, I awoke and it was perfectly still. No wind at all. Skies were a bit cloudy but a thin layer. I started out for Hell Roaring Creek, planning to paddle down to the Culver bridge washout. Drove up to the point where Hell Roaring Creek crosses under the South Valley Rd only to see "Closure" signs posted by the USFWS. I hadn't noticed these signs when I was last up here during the snowstorm but perhaps I had overlooked them. Hard to say. There has been a bunch of road work right at this area, grading the north side of the road so that no one can pull off and park. No mention anywhere up there about why the closure or whether it is permanent. Electing to not take the risk of a ticket fine, I biked this muddy section instead. Anyone else planning to do this route take heed.

One more short section of the refuge to travel by human power was between the Marsh Campground at the lower end of the refuge and the Headquarters. A short ride with dry road made it an enjoyable run. Saw one moose off at a distance who wasn't interested in a man on a bicycle. Checked out the put-in for tomorrow's paddle. Red Rock River level is higher than when I was here last. Rain right now, Friday night, while I write this so roads will likely be muddy tomorrow. It should be my last piece of the route on Saturday, the dam just below the Marsh Campground to Lyons Bridge.

Culver's Bridge to Refuge Headquarter:

Still feeling a bit "short in the leg" after hiking into Browers the previous day, I still felt I had to keep the momentum going and complete more of the route through the refuge. I can't paddle the upper and lower lakes because of seasonal closures so biking from the "top end" to the "bottom end" around the closed water was the plan.

The weather looked spotty when I set out and sure enough some rain showers moved through. Not a downpour but did muddy up the roads a bit. Fortunately, not much traffic up here on the refuge during May. Skies cleared in the evening and looked promising for the morning. Saw a few pronghorn above the Upper Campground. Beavers had been hard at work at the Culver bridge washout, the point at which the refuge closure begins.

Lower Red Rock Lake to Lyon's Bridge:

This was the final push to complete the route from Brower's Spring to Three Forks. At least for me, it was a significant effort. 19 miles of bike shuttle from Lyons Bridge back to the dam at the lower end of Lower Red Rock Lake and then a day paddle over a twisty-turny river that doubles back on itself in many places. It makes one wonder how a river can turn in so many directions and come within feet of itself and not break through the shoreline.

There were times I almost beached my kayak and pulled it over the land to the downstream section. It was maddening at times to paddle for 10-20 minutes and only cover perhaps 50 feet in downstream distance but actually paddle twice or three times that in river distance. 13 miles of straight line road distance between the dam and Lyons Bridge took 8 hours of mostly solid paddling in a river with little current. Never was the site of my truck at the end so pleasing to the spirit. Only got tripped up by one strand of barbed-wire stretched across the river. Thought I could slide right under, grabbing it between the barbs and raising it up. Wrong! That wire was stretched so tight it didn't budge. Put me on my side, but fortunately the kayak was already past the wire and I could brace myself back to an upright position.

Northeast and then northerly winds were the order of the day, including scattered showers. I could see big downpours in the distance but none made it my direction. I got some benefit from the wind at times but also paid a heavy toll whenever the river changed course in a northerly direction, something the Red Rock River does in this section quite regularly.

Lot's of antelope along this section, some quite close. The wind masked my "stink" and noise. One group never even looked at me but were obviously alarmed that there was something unusual around. Never did get a picture due to the rain. Startled one mule deer buck who was asleep by the river. I came around a corner and saw it laying there in the grass. It suddenly raised its head with sleepy eyes and stared straight at me. I cannot imagine what it might have been thinking looking out at the river at this "thing" floating in

the water. It didn't take long though for it to stand and make a quick exit away from the river bank.

Many geese with babies around, quite a difference from two weeks ago. I'm always amazed how they so quickly bail out on the goslings when some "danger" approaches.

The Centennial Valley, though, is quite the scenic area and in spite of the hard paddling it still rewards the person who ventures out into its less visited areas.

Red Rock Lakes NWR Marsh Campground:

How could things change so quickly from one day to the next? Well above 7,000 feet in elevation they sure can, particularly when it's still May. I left Lima Reservoir and drove on in to the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. I planned to setup camp and paddle the Red Rock River down to the Lyons Bridge, doing the bike shuttle. Roads are a little rough in places, all dirt/gravel with mostly gravel, but as long as they stay dry they remain passable. A bit windy when I arrived at the campground so I squared off my tent off to a corner in the enclosure figuring the wind would continue to gust. Got my plans all made for the next day, gear was put in order, and then went to bed. Sometime during the night I heard some rain hitting the sides and top of the tent but towards morning the sound changed to something more like sand hitting the side.

I was leery of peering through the flap because I knew what I would see, yes, snow with a very low cloud ceiling. I guess my plans have now changed. No biking in this for sure. Now I had to decide whether to ride it out and hope that this is just a "morning affair" or should I bail and give this area a rest for a few days. It certainly will take that long for the roads to dry out. Ultimately concluded that this storm wasn't ending any time soon so I made the decision to do a little scouting up to Hell Roaring Canyon and what lies in between so that when I return the logistics part of the trip will already have been done, that being the mileages between points will be known. Got camp taken down fairly well without too much snow getting on things. Headed up to the Refuge headquarters, then the upper campground, and finally to the mouth of Hell Roaring Canyon. Decided today was not a good day for hiking into an area that was not already familiar. Of course, the snow was a good thing, the bears were probably all back inside their dens. Stopped by Elk River and

saw the refuge staff tending to their grayling fish trap that is monitoring the movement of spawning fish. Got to see a really nice fish being released after being tagged.

Proceeded on out of the park on some pretty nasty roads. Caked my truck in mud and gravel, which took about an hour to off this morning to get off but only got the worst. Headed on down to Dillon to get cleaned up and press on down the Beaverhead a bit more on Saturday.

Lyon's Bridge to Lima Dam: Reservoir

Moved camp to Lima Reservoir as I decided to head towards Brower's Spring. I had good access at the bridge on Lyons Road, which crosses the Red Rock River just upstream of the reservoir. A half a dozen curves of the river and you make entrance into the reservoir, at least at this water level. This reservoir is pretty shallow in many places so timing probably makes a big difference in what you get. Lot's of antelope of here in the valley, most stay quite a distance from the road. Saw one solitary cow elk as I drove up to the bridge that morning of departure. And then later encountered a quite curious coyote, who I don't think could figure out what I was. It ran away at first then followed me down the bank for a short time, finally running off when I took another picture.

A very pretty morning going down toward the dam. I had listened to a thunderstorm warning the day before and sure enough about 11:30am on it came. I pulled off the water for about 30 minutes to see what would happen but only one lightning strike and then things move off. Reached the dam, touched the rock, and then turned around. I thought I would make it back to the rig by the evening but the weather turned sour once again. I had planned for an overnight if needed, and conditions were deteriorating to the point where it was going to be needed. Wind picked up and thunder starting sounding so I started looking for some place grassy to camp and with some wind protection. Found a spot and barely got the tent up before rain and wind hit. So Lima Res. schooled me on thunderstorms and on the mud, the mud that never comes off once it sticks to something. I'm sure I'll see more of it as the weeks go by. Got up the next morning, loaded everying thing up, then had a nice tailwind about half way back. Drove on up to the lower Marsh Campground on the refuge afterwards and set up camp.

Lima Dam to the town of Lima:

Making my way back to Red Rock Lakes NWR involved taking care of business for the unfinished sections along the Red Rock River. I made good time in Dillon with laundry, fuel, and grocery shopping. Struck out with bike supplies. One would think that a college town, even a small college, would have a bike shop. Not to be. The one that was operating apparently has gone its way. So I make the gamble that I can make do with the bike supplies I have. I make my way south past waters I have already paddled. The upper Beaverhead is now open for fishing so there are many vehicles parked along the access points. I'm glad I don't have to paddle down through the collections of anglers. Even though the river was boney when I paddled, I at least had the water to my self.

Having plenty of time left in the day, I decided to change my plan of camping again at Clark Canyon for the night then resuming my trip on the Red Rock River below Lima Dam on Tuesday. Instead, I headed on up to Lima and the rest stop there to begin my yoyo bike ride up to the bridge below Lima Dam. It's actually a quite nice ride with great views, fresh snow on the surrounding mountains from the last weather system. Had me thinking about what impact all the recent moisture had on conditions around Browers. As I got to the bridge, I found that water conditions in the Red Rock River were not better. I had hoped with the recent rains that there would be increased flow, but not to be. It actually looked "drier" than a couple of weeks ago. So, a bit dejected, I turned back to town and enjoyed the scenery and appreciated the mostly dry dirt/rock road. In case anyone wants to connect to the Lima Dam road, just turn east at Harrison and Third in Lima.

After the stop in Lima, I headed up to the dam. There is a public access site below the dam I planned to camp at before completing the section from the dam down to the bridge. Rains started back up again in the evening and continued over night. This meant a bike ride down and back to the bridge probably wasn't going to be practical due to the road already being a muddy mess. So it was time to get out my hiking boots and do some walking. Not much problem finding my way with the low water. Saw one moose from a great distance away, several deer, and lots of birds. Fortunately, no cattle ranging in this stretch of the valley yet and there are only about four houses spread thinly along the way so its fairly isolated. Found where there is indeed some electrified fencing stretched around. I'm assuming it gets turned on when stock are turned out. It's a bit of a haul down and back due to the rocks and some swampy areas. Fortunately, the day stayed dry. I went up to the dam afterwards to see where I had ended my paddle on the reservoir and to look at the water release. The picture tells the story by the river is so low. I'm not sure

now they are routing the Lima Res. water into the irrigation canals, which are chuck full of water. There must be a pump/pipe system somewhere that I have missed.

Moving on to Browers next, finally!

Lima to Clark Canyon reservoir:

Due to low water in the Red Rock River, I stayed on terra firma for this stretch. Dragging a boat for over twenty miles didn't seem all that productive but still sticking to the human powered goal, peddling the stretch both ways.

Clark Canyon reservoir:

My 2015 journey down the Missouri River, to who knows where, had to begin somewhere in Montana, right? The Lonetree Campground at Clark Canyon Reservoir became the de facto location because it came with 3-sided shelters, water, easy reservoir access, and was about six miles from Interstate-15, which means less road noise. The best attribute of this camp is that it is free for a 14 day stay. No kidding. What a deal and for me, it provided a good location to explore the area as I attempt to use my human power to make it from Browers Spring to Wind at this spot, and for the reservoir for that matter, can be brisk. In fact, I tied my car-camping tent to the shelter to make sure it would still be there whenever I returned from going out. Fantastic views from the campground and an incredible diversity of birdlife at this end of the reservoir. I had the entire camp to myself for the 4 1/2 days I was there and can't remember a time when I heard such a variety of bird songs. Of course, there are zillions of geese but many other birds as well. Two Bald eagles were sitting out on the island which is sort of in the northwest part of the reservoir. This place likely becomes quite busy later in the year but for May, what a great base camp area. It did stay a bit cool while I was there, 22°F one morning and a shimmer of ice on my yellow boat. A brilliant full moon was a happening as I was there. Paddled down to the dam and back up to the mouth of the Red Rock river. Many carp in the shallows where the water is warmer and food is available. I saw what I took to be a burbot with a big "cyst" of some sort on its side which was keeping it mostly bouyant. Couldn't get a good enough look to figure out for sure what was the real problem.

Clark Canyon Reservoir Dam to Barretts Diversion dam to Dillon:

Given the low water conditions on the Red Rock River, I decided to head on down the Beaverhead River toward Dillon. At least there I could float my boat and paddle. Just below the Clark Canyon Dam there is a campground which provided a perfect place to do my bike shuttle. I set up a tent, stuffed my paddling gear inside, locked my sit-on-top to a picnic table, then drove down to Barretts diversion dam, my take out point, then cycled back up to the dam, locked my bike to the same table, then paddled down the river. Worked great! That's the general method I will be using until I get to Three Forks and so far I have been able to work out manageable shuttle/paddle distances. Nice variety of wildlife on this upper part of the Beaverhead. Unfortunately, I didn't have the camera at the ready and the critters moved off before I got a shot. But the list includes 1 moose, 2 whitetail deer, several osprey, and 4 beaver. Who would have thought, beaver on the Beaverhead. Saw many trout in the water, spooked as I went over them. No fishing in this part until the third week of May so no one else on the water. It's got to be a traffic jam when the season begins.

The next day I completed the distance to Dillon by putting in at Barretts and paddling to the diversion dam just upriver of the KOA. Still fun but a bit slower moving and located out more in the ranch lands. Very windy and did ground out about half a dozen times. When I was done and retrieving my bike at Barretts, I talked to the guy there who lives there and surprised him by saying that I paddled all the way "into town". More wildlife along this stretch too. Whitetail deer everywhere (I stopped counting after 3 dozen). Saw a large heron rookery and what I believe were sandhill cranes, but there must be a bird expert out there who can say for sure. I first saw only the top of their heads just above the bank because they were standing back from shore a bit of distance. Hilarious as it may sound, the first thing I thought was "Australian Emu's". I took a few photos and watched as one seemed to be performing some sort of courting dance. Saw a few more beaver and 2 bald eagles.

A bit cool in the morning as I shuttled my bike up to Barretts, around 34°F.

Dillon to Beaverhead Rock:

The Beaverhead River IS THE BOSS! It sure made me feel that way after two days of low water and a driving wind that, I swear, blew so hard it made the river flow upstream and left the trout flopping on the gravel, easy pickings for a fresh fish dinner. Really, that hard! I launched from the Dillon KOA, a convenient place as it worked out as it is right on the river. Day 1 was to paddle the stretch down to Beaverhead Rock, I think around 26 river miles. The first three hours of the day were quite nice with no wind and comfortable temperature. Once again, heaps and heaps of whitetail deer in the thickets that line the river. Some obstacles along the way but at this low flow level they aren't much of a hazard. I had to portage one diversion dam that at higher flow I probably could have run but it didn't take more than 5 minutes to pull around. Finally got a picture of a beaver. Saw what I thought was an immature bald eagle squatting on the river bank. It didn't flush when I approached and I didn't see an issue such as ensnarement. While there is fence wire and other stuff around, the river is pretty clean of plastics, at least from my view of it. I remained at a distance and kept going so that I didn't put any more stress on it. Could have been eating on something or just got

tired. Perhaps it was a new eviction. The wind kicked in about 11:30 and never relented, straight out of the north. At every turn of the river I could see the wind shear and the straight aways just meant crawling across the water with my paddle trying to get to the next turn. You hate the twisting and turning of the river when its calm, but it sure is nice to have it for the respite it provides from the wind. Finally sited Beaverhead Rock. It may have seemed close but with all the curves in the river it still took a very long to finally reach the bridge where Hwy 41 crosses the river. 7 1/2 hours slugging away. Tomorrow was only slightly better as I made my way to Twin Bridges.

Beaverhead Rock to Twin Bridges, Mt

Sunday morning brought a fresh coating of frost to everything. I packed everything up, planning to relocate further north and headed out. Dillon is quite a nice town. Traveled down to Twin Bridges to Jensen Park where I stashed my bike. This is a sweet little spot along the river that the town has provided. It even has a bike camp where cyclists can stay overnight and it includes a day cabin with toilet and shower, all on a donation basis. Very nice.

Departed by the Hwy 41 bridge and had a very nice morning of calm water that seemed to be moving along a bit faster than the river above the bridge. Not sure if more water was put into the river or maybe i'm becoming delusional and am manifesting a fake reality.

Finally got a couple of shots of the elusive whitetail's and saw another heron rookery. Occasional remant cars of an era decades ago. Always wondered if the chrome pieces on these cars were of any value. They look in good shape.

A few more things across the river to deal with. The rubber hose hanging down from a cable is a much more paddler friendly method for faking out cattle. I've read about the use of pvc pipe as well. Both provide an easy pass thru. Saw one very large beaver on the route. Just came off the bank like a rocket, straight at me. Not sure if it was just surprised or decided to run me off. I looked down in the crystal clear water and saw it lying there on the bottom directly under the boat. Quite large compared to the other beavers I have been seeing.

Wind kicked in about 11am this time but with not quite the same sustained intensity. Deeper water, a slightly faster flow, and a two mile shorter distance got me in to town in 6 1/2 hours, using the red-had water as a beacon. What a pleasant sight.

Now only a short run down to the confluence with the Big Hole River and on to the Jefferson.

Twin Bridges to Waterloo Diversion Dam on the Jefferson River:

So today, Wednesday May 13th, was the day to fill in the gap between Twin Bridges and the Waterloo Fishing Access Site. It still is a 16 mile road distance between the "top" and

"bottom" but the Silver Star FAS is about 6 miles south of Waterloo, providing a way to break up the bike shuttle length into two pieces.

I did Silver Star to Waterloo first, shoving off just behind two drift boats. Saw a moose just a short distance from town on a rocky flood plain covered in dense thicket. The moose is a fair piece from the river so I never really had a chance for a photo. One of the drift boats was between me and the moose and I was zinging along at a pretty good clip. The moose was already on alert so I just kept going. Quite a nice area as the river moves away from the highway. Several pelicans around and, of course, the requisite whitetails once the farmland returned to the shore scene. Everything is starting to green up nicely. The morning was still quite cloudy after last night's rain but the day turned out sunny for the most part and warm. The weather is not to last though with a forecast of several days of rain starting possibly on Friday. I may be finishing up at Three Forks on Friday, hopefully before the worse begins.

I regrouped after taking out at Waterloo, heading up to Twin Bridges to drop my boat and return to Silver Star. I've been lucky so far with my bike shuttles not encountering any stiff headwind. Not today. Had to grunt it out back to Twin Bridges but not too bad given the great wide shoulder that exists on this stretch of highway. Pushed off from Jensen Park and started for the confluence of the Big Hole River with the Beaverhead. It appears the diversion dam that was supposed to exist north of Twin Bridges is no longer there. It looks like there used to be one but it has since been removed. I reached the Big Hole, stopped for a moment to talk to two other boaters, then paddled on. Almost immediately after this point, I spot another moose. It doesn't spook so I ferry across the current to the shore and ground out, but remain in my boat. The moose and I look at each other for awhile, I take a couple of shots, then glance away for a moment. When I look back the moose is gone. It's a pretty dense thicket so I suspect it didn't go far.

I headed on down the river, now the Jefferson, at a much faster clip now that the Big Hole has contributed so much more water. Not a lot of new wildlife through this stretch, an osprey, deer, and some beaver just below Twin Bridges on the Beaverhead. Coming around the last curve into Silver Star, one gets a really nice view of the community. A bit of a long day because of picking up camp at Cardwell and moving down to Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park but I'll be in a better position for paddling the Jefferson below Cardwell and away from the I-90 road noise.

Waterloo to Mayflower and Sappington FAS on the Jefferson:

Bullwinkle is on the Jefferson! It definitely made the trip, seeing this fine moose not 15 minutes after launching at Parson's diversion dam (Waterloo). He was patient enough to put up with my paparazzi moment.

Weather outlook for today around Whitehall was for showers later on so I was up and doing my shuttle thing before 7am. This was another 16 mile bike shuttle but involved 10 miles on the highway running south towards Twin Bridges. So I've got my bright jacket on, flashing rear light, reflectors on my ankles and I'm wearing my helmet. All went well. I've noticed, at least in this area, if you get on the road before the mid-morning traffic it's not much of an issue. But I like to be on guard when people are whizzing by me at 70mph on a road with no shoulder and I'm riding the white line. I did have one dog encounter but it didn't result in an altercation. Not sure what it is about dogs and bikes, maybe it's just the chase.

Launched at Parson's diversion dam (Waterloo). With the Jefferson at today's volume you could run river left or the middle. Both were doable. There was wood in the left run but it didn't present a problem. Land on river right is private so if you arrive here from upriver, you might want to consider landing river left to scout. Lining a boat through on river left, however, isn't likely given the concrete wall that exists. So if you decide to not run it, it will more than likely involve paddling back up river, ferrying across to the other side, then working down river right to the bridge where you can get out and line through. I launched under the bridge with no problems and at the current flow it would have been doable to paddle upriver and ferry over. With a higher cfs it may be more difficult.

This is a pretty area, to say the least. A nice start in an area with thickets on the shore and clear water moving along briskly. And yes, wildlife are here. It wasn't 15 minutes and I looked over on river left to see the dark chocolate brown which I was sure was a moose. I whipped out my camera to take a shot but the current moved me along past where I thought it was. I stuck my camera up above my head at arms length and took a shot but didn't get anything other than vegetation. I thought for sure the animal spooked and now was long gone. But on a chance, I drifted down another 100 feet or so and pulled my boat up on to the bank. With my camera at the ready, I crept back up the river slowly, looking through the gaps in the thicket to see if maybe the moose had simply moved a bit away from the river. A couple of minutes of looking I was about to give up but I heard a sound to my left. I moved barely 10 feet upriver and looked around a tree and there this big boy was, staring straight at me. He didn't run, didn't even flinch. So I sat down on the sand and rock, took one quick shot in case he didn't like my tangerine colored dry suit, then watched him for a short bit. I'm not sure how far away I was, probably 150 feet but it seemed enough distance to not agitate him. He kept feeding while I was there, looking over my way every couple of mouthfuls. Took a few more shots then appreciated his patience and slowly moved back to my boat and went on down the river.

I saw one bald eagle in this section and several pelicans. Also, a large flock of yellow-headed blackbirds. Saw this variety of blackbird up at Clark Canyon Reservoir as well. Of course, more whitetail deer. Pulled over at one point to stretch my legs, take a walk back into the trees thinking I might spot another moose, but only whitetail's.

Continued on down the river knowing that Parrot Castle diversion dam was going to be coming up. A nice water stream comes off the cliff face just as the river makes a sharp left turn. The dam is a short distance after this. You can also look for the electrical wires with the big orange balls. They are almost directly above the dam. Staying river left seemed to be the option that provided the most choices. I drifted down into the diversion canal then beached my boat so that I could look over the water. It was runnable on the left, maybe so on the right. I've made notes on the pictures as to their orientation. Check other sources if you might be running this at a different water level.

A east-northeast wind came as predicted by the weather forecast, but the river moves along nicely so the effect is somewhat muted. Rain is drilling my tent right now so I'm glad I got my paddle done for the day earlier on. What a sweet stretch of river to paddle with many nice campsights given the lower water level. I took out at the Mayflower bridge. I paddled Mayflower to Cardwell yesterday after doing my scouting in the morning.

Sappington to Williams Bridge on the Jefferson River.

This is a fairly short run that includes one diversion dam. The river flows through a cleft of rocks which I took some time to admire as I drifted along. The diversion dam occurs just as you enter this cleft. At the flow I encountered, river left and the center were both runnable but the center looked a bit bumpy and wet. It was easy to route off into the diversion canal and scout before committing. As Norm said, just listen for "the noise" and you will know when the dams are coming up. This section of the Jefferson stays away from the roads once it leaves Sappington bridge. After the cleft, it opens back up into farm/ranch land. More shoreline trees as Williams bridge draws near. I saw a few whitetail deer, pelicans, the ever present "honker", and more red-winged blackbirds. In just about an hour, I pulled in to Williams bridge, talked with a couple who were traveling in their camper van, and had some fun throwing a chew toy with their German Shepard.

Williams Bridge to Drouillard FAS on the Jefferson river, near the town of Three Forks, Mt

Just another fine day here in Three Forks, Montana. The sky is still cloudy, the temperature is now about 45°F, was about 41° this morning when I started my ride. The steady rain has at least stopped and only sprinkles of moisture for the most part. Wind picked up in the late morning and is a bit gusty right now. I was set on finishing this last segment of the Jefferson and now it is done. The two miles of dirt and gravel into Williams Bridge is a mess, to say the least. Not to be unexpected given the volume of rain over the past day. My bike was so dirty I simple dunked it into the river after riding in, there was little else to do. The ride on the "no shoulder" highway went quite well with only about six vehicles going by at 7:30am. I had figured Sunday mornings would be low volume at the beginning. One big rig going the other direction actually slowed down to limit

the spray. However, the passenger car decided to give me a "brush by" even though I was on the white line and the other lane of traffic was completely clear for several hundred feet. Oh well so goes highway riding.

As one might imagine, the Jefferson is big, dirty, and fast right now. A bit of wood floating around amidst the frothy and murky water. I stayed mostly dry during the paddle down to Drouillard but it was a bit cool, to say the least. The contrast in the clouds did provide interest landscapes. The sun even tried to claw a hole through the clouds at one point but it was quickly slapped back. I brought the camera out a few times but didn't find any willing wildlife to sit still. I did see one bald eagle, an osprey, and more deer. However, now I'm see some mule deer every once in awhile. Noone else out, imagine that!

Time to head back to Red Rock Lakes for some unfinished business, now that the Jefferson has joined the Missouri.

Drouillard to Headwater's State Park the start of the Missouri river proper:

I figured I had better get my "big boat" out on the Jefferson at least once before shoving off into the Missouri, at least to see how it will perform in the current river conditions. It's quite a difference in performance and response between the "little" 13 foot sit-on-top that I have been using and the much longer sea kayak. Throw in a pushy river and some adjustments in paddling technique are going to be required. The weather was still looking a bit threatening but I thought I had enough time to make the run down to the headwaters boat ramp and still make the bike shuttle back to Drouillard. It's a pretty run away from most roads, except for the crossing with the interstate, but once past that everything quiets out. The deer don't seem to mind the cars whizzing by. I saw 2 or 3 in the thickets within 100 feet of I-90. Lot's of swallows nesting in the dirt cliffs found in two bends of the river. The run actually took longer than I thought for the river meanders a bit until evidence of the park began to appear. Nice to be able to obtain the perspective from the water that Lewis and Clark might have had. Pulled into the boat ramp, locked by kayak to some cable and off I went hoping to beat the rain. There's a bike path most of the way back to Drouillard which makes the riding a bit more pleasurable and somewhat shorter than road distance, but not much.

Now just one more section for the Jefferson. As I am writing this, it is Saturday, May 16th, and it is raining. Been raining most of the night, heavy at times. Not just sprinkles but consistent rain. The precipitation is certainly needed in this area but....

