

Drinking water access is one of the biggest topics when planning a trip down the Missouri river. There are a lot of agricultural pollutants in the river such as herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, insecticide and others which cannot be filtered out. Below are some comments from paddlers regarding this topic. They vary widely. Make sure you read the detailed Q&A section on this website, as there is more detailed descriptions of obtaining drinking water from some of our long distance paddlers.

[Scott Hite](#) I've paddled all of the Mississippi and all of the Missouri. I filtered water one time at Fort Peck Lake. Hot weather causes a lot more water consumption for me. It's absolutely necessary to have enough water and to have a real plan on keeping enough water.

Filtering water once you're past Fort Peck Lake will clog your filter very quickly. You'll see literally hundreds of thousands of cows along the Missouri. All that crap washes into the river along with pesticides, heavy metals and a whole lot of sediment. It's easier to carry fresh water. I filtered water once on Fort Peck Lake only because of delays due to weather.

[Scott Hite](#) And it's not a sin to carry some canned goods that contain water too. Constantly eating dehydrated food might make you think your boat is lighter, but running out of water makes your boat lighter too. On the Missouri, I'd eat a can of fruit almost every day and drank the juice too.

[Scott Hite](#) I ran out of water once on the Mississippi, and it was not fun. The stretch from Great Falls to Fort Peck Lake can be difficult if the wells at the campsites aren't safe. That happened in 2015 and was why I was filtering water on Fort Peck Lake.

[Warren Johnson](#) We never drank from the river, pretty ugly. But we never worried over eating deck foods and sandwiches with river-tainted hands. FYI: to filter water that ugly, get a LARGE pot/pan and boil unfiltered water over an open flame then let set undisturbed overnight. Filter from that pot in the morning.

[Jim Meade](#) Mud and silt aside, the real question is "Will ANY filter now on the market filter out all of the Agriculture Chemicals that run into the river. A good rule of thumb is AT LEAST a gallon of water per person per day. Maybe you should consider a canoe instead of a kayak just for its much bigger capacity.

[Jim Lyons](#) We just completed the Fort Benton to Kipp float. No water at Coal Banks but you can buy at the Virgelle Merc if a ride is available. Water at Kipp is suspect at best. Yellow, brown tint to it but no signs saying not to drink. Used it to wash off but definitively didn't consume.

[Tom Hammond](#) Filter - Best would be to coarse filter, distill, and micropore filter containing active charcoal. Not 100% and would have to guess how long to use the active charcoal will last. You spend along time to make clean water. Of course no guarantees the potable water is ok (ask people of Flint).

[John Rittel](#) The filters will make it safe, "as safe as the water in any of the cities that draw their water from the river" and half of Missouri gets their water from the Missouri river. Problem is the high silt content will clog the element in a filter pretty quick. Easy enough to just pick up water in the towns along the river.

[John F. Sullivan](#) I took a filter but never used it. It had a carbon filter which would remove most organic contaminants. I stopped where ever I could to fill my 3 - 2.5 gallon collapsible containers using groundwater from private and municipal well water systems along the way. I was covering about 30-40 miles per day and could go along way before resupply was needed. I almost ran out on Lake Sakawea when I was wind-bound for three days. I had to walk a few miles to find home where I could get water.

[John Rittel](#) No one along the river will refuse to give you a gallon or two of water, just saying.

[John Johnson](#) Here goes my 2 cents. I'm not much for too much fancy gear. The filter could be a good idea. I plan on using one as I go down the Little Missouri this year. Settle the water overnight and filter the top. I don't think 6 gal will get across the first 2 big lakes.

Storm lines are probably a good idea. I had 12 on my tent. I used pole barn spikes for tent pegs. They don't bend when you hit a rock. If the plastic breaks put a washer under the head. If I thought a big storm was coming I chopped some tent pegs out of cotton wood or willow branches. They wouldn't come out so I'd leave them.

[John Johnson](#) I used 13 gallons on Sakakwea, with one gallon being lake water. If the wind stays down, the lake clears up and it should filter fine. I intended my gal of lakewater to be used as "dish and cleaning water " and drank it by mistake. I couldn't tell it from the bottled water.

[Alyce Louise](#) we carried fresh water with us the whole expedition and only filtered from Fort Peck for 1 day when we ran out before getting to the Marina. It is upsetting that the water has been so polluted with run off from farms and there are just so many cows and they poop A LOT! You can't really filter out pesticides and I didn't want to chance getting sick. It gets really really really hot in the summer, so you may end up drinking more water than you expect, so having a bit extra is a good idea.

[Churchill Clark](#) Filters? If you're hydrating properly, you'll go through 1-2 gallons/day, between drinking and cooking. MUST hydrate!

Rod Wellington: I find the collapsible 2L Platypus water bottles are good for water storage. They roll up when not in use. I also carry 4L collapsible wine bladders, the same kind you find in wine boxes. A kayak shop in Vancouver sells these (new and unused) for \$3 each. They fold down to palm size when empty and are super lightweight. They are also quite durable when full. All the water I carried on the MO-MS was stored in either the wine bladders or the Platypus bottles or both. I think the most water I carried at one time was five gallons. That's a lot of weight, but I never ran out of drinking water. From Three Forks to the Gulf of Mexico, I used my Katadyn filter maybe three times. It saw much more use above Three Forks.

Diane Arnold: We carried 14 gallons water between us. Filter good only for emergency use.

[Brett Byers](#) The Missouri is mostly filterable from Three Forks until Great Falls. From there to Ft Peck it is filled with sediment and will destroy a filter. You will need to pack fresh water. Edit- depending on runoff this year, and flows released from the dams, the Missouri might be pretty muddy all the way from Three Forks down to Ft Peck. At least bring several replacement cartridges for your filter(s) and be prepared to improvise

[Amber Kimball](#) I'm the owner of Dakota Waters on Lake Sakawea in North Dakota. We offer free camping(a cabin if available), mail drops, showers and laundry to all through paddlers. If you stop through here and I'm cooking supper(which I usually am) you'll also be invited to a hot meal. We have a small convenience store as well and I make town trips almost weekly so if you need anything special picked up you may have forgotten I can

accommodate that as well! Hope to see you on the river and safe travels! PM me if you have any questions or need info.

[Tom Bailey](#) I'll second the use of the heavy clear jugs like those made for diamond tea. Between one of those and two dromedary bags I didn't need to filter water on my trip at all, and certainly not on the lower MO.