



# Friends of the Middle River

## River Access Program

In 2018 Friends of the Middle River (FOMR) launched a program which guides members on how to gain access to put-in and take-out sites on private property along Middle River in Augusta County. Currently, Middle River has no access sites designated for public use— its riverbanks are all privately owned.

FOMR organized a network of private landowners (hosts) who are willing to allow authorized FOMR users (guests) onto their private land for river access. We call this the FOMR River Access Program (RAP). Participants sign up to get instructions on how to contact participating landowners and the vehicle placards necessary to park at the River.

Since these landowners are being so generous with their permissions, it is imperative that all FOMR guest users follow each landowner's preferences completely and communicate clearly and respectfully with landowners at all times. As you can imagine, if a landowner has a bad experience with an FOMR guest, they could deny future access for all of us.

Who owns the river? This is a complex legal question and the answer may vary in interpretation based on federal vs. state laws. Landowners own every bit of soil right up to the water's edge. In some cases, landowners might even own the bed of the stream. In Virginia, rivers that have been used for commercial navigation purposes are considered public for recreational purposes. In everyday understanding, swimming, boating, and fishing on the surface of the water is generally thought of as public.

## River Access Program

### Rules & Regulations

Please familiarize yourself with the following rules that all Authorized User Permit holders agree to follow:

1. Please **do not** give your Authorized User Permit or this booklet to other people outside your household. Instead, please refer them to FOMR to get their own permit(s). This is a safety issue. Your permits have **your** contact info on them. Landowners need to be able to know who is using their land at any time and be able to contact someone if a problem arises—like if someone does not come back for their vehicle. If a permit were loaned out, confusion about who may be in trouble on the River could occur.
2. When requesting permission from a landowner to access a site, please follow that landowner's instructions carefully. Different landowners have different preferences for how they want to be contacted by guests—for example, some want you to leave a voice message while others want you to wait until they call you back. **Under no circumstances should you visit any site for any reason without calling landowner in advance.**
3. Display your yellow "FOMR Authorized User" permit in your vehicle's windshield so that landowner or caretaker can see it easily. For example, if you park down by the River and their house is way up the hill, try to park and

display the card so the landowner can see it from their house and not have to walk all the way down to see whose vehicle is on their land.

4. Please leave everything at the access site as you find it **or better**. For example, pick up all trash, close gates and minimize damage to grass and vegetation as much as possible. Practice “Leave No Trace” principles.
5. Please pick vehicles up no later than 1/2 hour after sunset. There is no overnight parking on access sites without advance permission from the landowner.
6. For groups of more than 4 persons, please contact the landowner **well** in advance with the number in the group and how many vehicles will be parked on the landowner’s property.
7. All land along Middle River during your trip is private property, so please treat it with respect. If you get out of your boat and step onto someone’s property for any reason, please treat it as your own. “Leave No Trace” that you ever were there.
8. Observe, know and heed state fishing regulations.
9. Have appropriate safety equipment in your boat in case you are stopped by law enforcement.
10. Sound really carries over water, so use your quiet “River Voice” when on or near the water.
11. If an access site is wet, such as after a heavy rain, please do not drive on any grass there. Park on the gravel or wait to use the site when the grass has had a chance to dry out.

## Interested in becoming an Authorized User?

Send the following information to FOMR:

- Name
- Full Address
- Phone number
- Email address

Someone will call you to discuss the program, answer questions and then mail you the vehicle placards and landowner listings after you have connected with us by phone.

*FOMR is a Paddle America Club.  
We partner with the American Canoe Association  
for our recreational river activities.*



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MIDDLE  
RIVER

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