



River Guide 1: Borman Bridge to Fort Niobrara NWR

River Mile 0.0 to 4.8

Stream Gradient: 10 feet/mile

The Borman Bridge is the start (River Mile 0) of Niobrara National Scenic River. Refer to the Niobrara National Scenic River brochure and map to locate the sites below. The only portion of this reach open to boaters is 1.4 miles from Borman Bridge to the National Wildlife Refuge boundary.

Borman Bridge State Wildlife Management Area



Borman Bridge was built in 1916 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was renovated in 2001. On river right (the right bank when traveling downstream) is the **Borman Bridge State Wildlife Management Area**. This 160-acre area follows the right bank for about three quarters of a mile. Hunting (deer, turkey, dove, and rabbits), fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and primitive camping are allowed. Just upstream of Borman is the **Cowboy Trail & Northwestern Railroad Bridge**, built in 1910.

Boaters may access the river for take out, or for floating downstream as far as the **Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge** boundary (River Mile 1.4). **Beyond there the river is**

closed to boaters. Boaters must paddle back upstream, or portage or tow back along the south bank. Just south of Borman Bridge is a parking area where visitors can access a one-half mile long unmaintained two-track that ends at river's edge around the bend. Whitetail deer, turkeys, kingfishers and great-blue herons are commonly seen in summer. During the winter visitors might see Canada geese, common mergansers, common goldeneye, and bald eagles. During winter with sufficient snows, this path is a suitable for cross-country skiing.

Local residents frequent the river in this area to hike, hunt, fish, wade, or swim. Fall colors are especially spectacular along the river. The land on river left is privately owned.

Cornell Dam & Bridge



Further down river is the **Cornell Dam**. The Cornell hydroelectric power plant and dam were completed in 1916-17. The dam was built by Charles Cornell, an early settler who envisioned a hydroelectric plant on the Niobrara River to supply electricity and water to the citizens of Valentine. It was the first such dam in Nebraska. Cornell laid out the original town-site of Valentine, started a bank, and later became a state senator. Use of the

dam for electricity eventually ceased; it was abandoned in 1984 and will likely be removed someday. The area around the dam is off-limits to the public and is dangerous to boaters because of the sheer drop and keeper-hydraulics below. The Fort Niobrara Launch Site is located safely below the dam at Cornell Bridge. **Minnechaduzza Creek** flows into the river just upstream of the launch site.