

Mississippi River

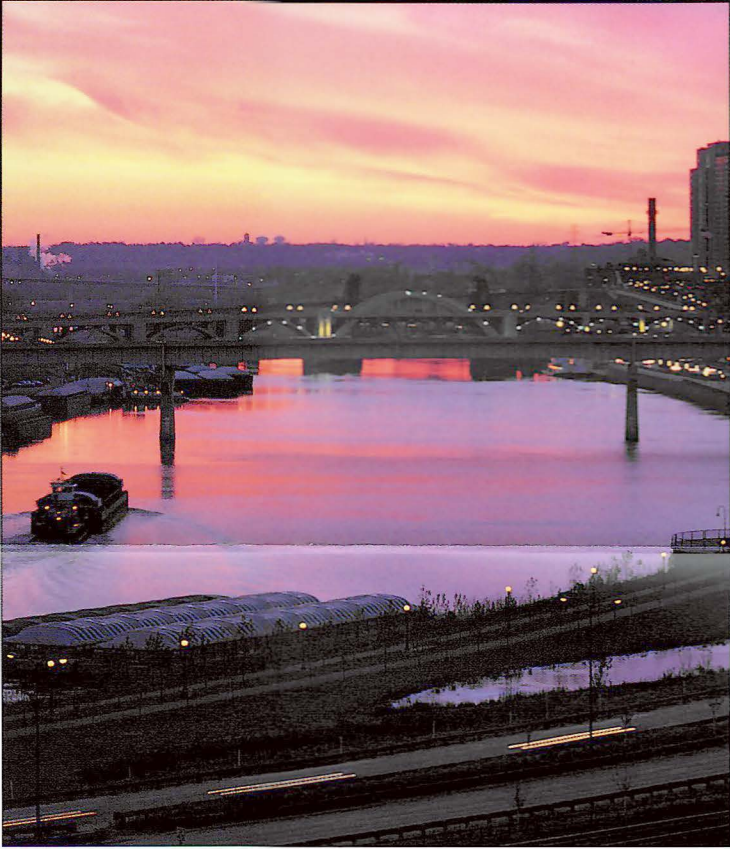
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
Minnesota

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



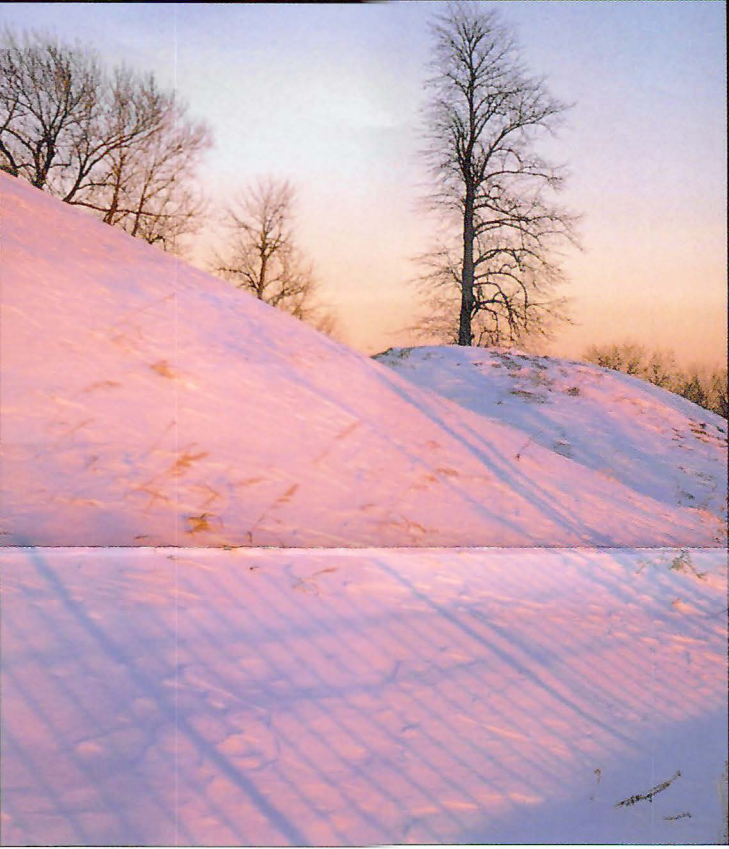
Buildings in downtown Minneapolis rise above brilliant fall foliage displayed by hardwoods along the Mississippi River.



At dusk a towboat moves up the Mississippi at St. Paul. The city was founded as a riverboat landing and later named the territorial capital in 1849.



Interpreters recreate frontier life at Historic Fort Snelling, located on the bluff above the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers.



Snow cloaks the six prehistoric burial mounds at Indian Mounds Park overlooking the river and the city of St. Paul.



Minnehaha was immortalized not only by poet Henry Longfellow but by this waterfall, creek, and regional park that bear the name in Minneapolis.

A Flowing Pageant of Life

From northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi River flows on, remembering the past, nurturing the present, and shaping the future. Fed by 250 tributaries in 31 states from the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians, the Mighty Mississippi ripples with stories of people and places reflecting major scenes in the great American pageant. The cast includes the Ojibwa and the Dakota, European explorers and fur traders, farmers and loggers, steamboaters and towboaters, factory workers and office clerks, teachers and engineers. In one way or another, directly or indirectly, their daily lives and the river have been intertwined.

In recognition of the river's historic and ongoing role in molding the national character, Congress in 1988 established the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. With Minneapolis and St. Paul at its center, this 72-mile stretch of the river encompasses a range of public places administered by state or local agencies and organizations. Together these sites interpret the natural, cultural, and economic history of the river corridor and offer a variety of recreational opportunities ranging from boating and fishing to hiking and birdwatching.

Minneapolis traces its roots to early European settlements at St. Anthony Falls. The falls powered the gristmills and sawmills that provided flour and lumber for the settlers. Historically St. Paul was the northernmost navigable point on the 2,350-mile-long river. Over the years the villages flourished and turned into major transportation hubs and commercial centers. Today the Mississippi provides drinking water and



Minnesota Historical Society
St. Anthony Falls, depicted here in an 1857 painting by Ferdinand Reichardt, is the only waterfall on the entire Mississippi and a spiritually significant site to American Indians.

hydropower for much of the metropolitan area, carries away treated wastewater, and continues to serve, as it has for thousands of years, as a transportation corridor.

A Center for Trade

Ancestors of today's American Indians began moving into the upper Mississippi Valley about 12,000 years ago after the last of the continental glaciers receded. They established intermittent and seasonal villages on terraces above the riverbanks and canoed the waterways to hunt, gather plants, and trade goods.

Spanish and French expeditions explored portions of the Mississippi River in the 1600s and 1700s. Some explorers, entering from the north, were looking for the river's mouth.

Others, entering from the south, were searching for its origin—and hoping to discover that the river provided a shortcut across the continent to the Far East.

Recognizing the vast natural riches of the region, the French (late 1600s-1763) and English (1763-early 1800s) established trading posts along the upper Mississippi River and such tributaries as the Minnesota and St. Croix rivers. Great quantities of beaver pelts and other furs were traded at the posts for cloth,



The Mississippi River (in blue with major tributaries) flows 2,350 miles from Minnesota's Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. Its drainage basin (light gray) is the world's third largest. The orange dot locates the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

metal tools, and other products. Early settlers sent home reports of the bountiful wilderness and of opportunities to create new lives for themselves and their children.

In the mid-1800s immigrants from Germany, Norway, Sweden, and other European nations and Americans from the East moved into the area. This forced the Dakota Indians to leave the Twin Cities area in 1854 for reservations along the Minnesota River. The settlers cleared forests, built homes, and constructed roads linking farms with the villages and river ports. In 1858 St. Paul counted more than 1,000 steamboat dockings. Powered by the river, Minneapolis became the flour milling capital of the nation from 1880 to 1930.

Cities and towns grew in size, and suburban communities emerged as the population and transportation systems, such as roads, rose rapidly through the 20th century. Water quality declined. Wildlife habitat shrank with the disappearance of woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands. Increasingly individuals and officials became concerned and started setting aside local, regional, state, and federal parks, refuges, recreational areas, and historic sites—some of today's partners in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.



Minnesota Office of Tourism
Ranger-led riverboat trips and other programs on the Mississippi River are offered by the National Park Service and its partners.

Partners in Protecting Your River

The 72 miles of the Mississippi River within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area flow through 25 communities ranging from the urban centers of Minneapolis and St. Paul to more rural areas such as Ravenna Township.

Only 35 of the 54,000 acres within the corridor are owned and managed by the National Park Service. Most of the acreage is under the jurisdiction of the 25 local governments or is managed by state or federal

agencies other than the National Park Service. Some of the lands are privately owned. Because of this mix, many agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals are engaged in activities to protect natural and cultural resources, to provide diverse recreational opportunities, and to contribute to a vital economy.

The National Park Service's role is to support these activities and provide leadership and coordination to achieve corridor-

wide goals. All of its programs and management activities are carried out through partnerships, many of them listed below.

The National Park Service provides matching funds for local projects such as habitat restoration, park development, trail construction, erosion control, and interpretive signage. Working with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the Longfellow Community Council, the National Park Service is helping to restore 10 acres

of rare mesic oak-savanna habitat in the Mississippi River Gorge. Volunteers participate in natural resource partnership projects such as removing invasive, nonnative plant and shrub species; controlling erosion; and planting native trees, shrubs, and other vegetation to protect bluffs.

The National Park Service is also helping develop new city parks along the river in Dayton and in Hastings and is working with many partners to provide educational

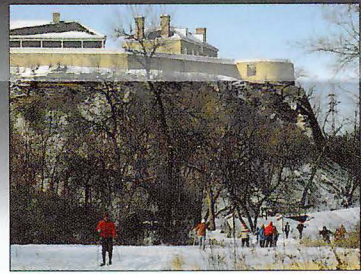
exhibits, interactive computer kiosks, and interpretive signage at several locations. The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area was a key founder of the Watershed Partners, an informal association of more than 40 organizations that educates citizens about protecting water quality.

Several partners have joined forces to develop and sponsor educational riverboat trips for the public and school groups. The

award-winning Big River Journey is a collaboration of federal and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and a riverboat excursion company that connects elementary students to the Mississippi River.

For information about partnership programs, contact the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area headquarters (see reverse side).

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Skiers traverse forested bottomlands along the Minnesota River at Fort Snelling State Park. Besides skiing, the park provides hiking and biking opportunities, plus programs and exhibits on the Dakota, geology, and life in its woodlands, marshes, and meadows.



St. Croix National Scenic Riverway offers more than 250 miles of river recreation along its namesake river and its major tributary, the Nam-e-kagon. Narrow and fast where it begins, the St. Croix becomes an expansive slow river where it meets the Mississippi.



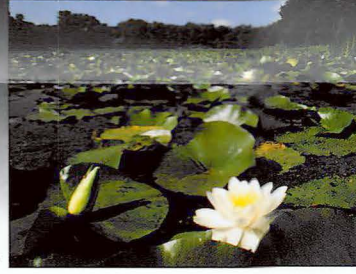
Visit Boom Island Park for spectacular views of the Minneapolis skyline from paved pedestrian and bicycle paths and from an excursion paddleboat. A boat launch and paths connect Boom Island to other parks providing opportunities for other river experiences.



Learn about Minnesota's oldest European-American settlement at Sibley House Historic Site in Mendota. Tour two 1830s limestone houses and listen to stories about Henry Hastings Sibley, Jean Baptiste Faribault, and the vast fur-trading center that stood at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers.



Harriet Island, in St. Paul's West Side, stages many summer events. From the docks, watch the activity on the river, launch your own boat, do some fishing, or take a tour on an excursion boat. The brick building shown across the river is the Science Museum of Minnesota, featuring the Mississippi River Visitor Center.



Crosby Lake exemplifies backwater sanctuaries that are periodically rejuvenated by the flooding along the Mississippi River. The rising waters provide nutrients for plants, aquatic organisms, and birds. The lake is located within Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park near the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers.



Stone Arch Bridge is a National Engineering Landmark and part of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail. It offers pedestrians, bicyclists, and joggers magnificent views of the waterfalls. Waterpower from the falls made Minneapolis the nation's milling capital from 1880 to 1930.



The great blue heron is one of many bird species that might be seen in the 34-mile corridor of marshes, grasslands, and woodlands at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

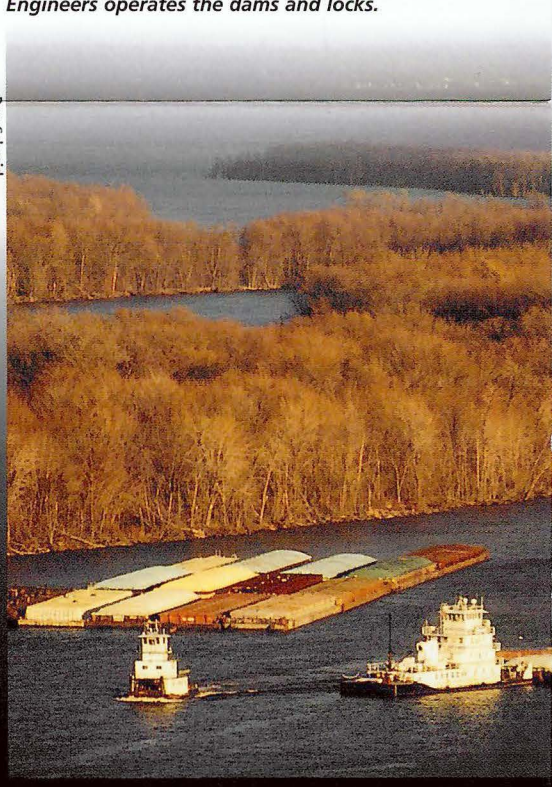
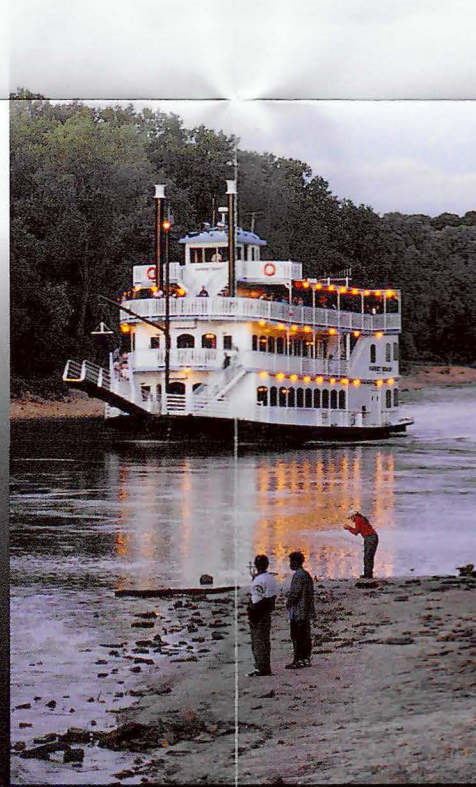
Trails along both sides of the Mississippi in the metropolitan area invite residents and visitors alike to spend some time outdoors hiking, biking, jogging, or just watching the traffic going back and forth on the riverway.

Parkways, overlooks, trails, and picnic areas provide spectacular views of the deep gorge from the east and west sides of the river at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. Hiking trails connect the bluffs to the water's edge.

Take a river excursion to sense the Mississippi's role in daily life in the Twin Cities. Sternwheelers and other boats depart from Boom Island in Minneapolis and Harriet Island in St. Paul.

At Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, people of all ages fish for carp at the dam or fish for trout in Cenoika Lake. A bridge connects hiking and biking trails on both sides of the river. Winter activities include cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Exhibits and educational programs focus on the river, wildlife, and history.

The Mississippi retains its long-standing reputation as a working river as towboats and barges transport raw materials and manufactured goods between the Twin Cities and St. Louis or New Orleans. Typical goods heading south include grain, coal, oil, and gravel. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates the dams and locks.



Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



River Parks - listed north to south; use www.nps.gov/miss/maps/ for website links

Peninsula Point Two Rivers Historical Park (Anoka County) 763-576-2980	<i>Exhibits, canoe launch, boat docks, fishing, self-guiding trail, playground, picnic area and shelter</i>
Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park (Three Rivers Park District) 763-424-8172	<i>Fees. Visitor center, programs, exhibits, boat and canoe launch, fishing, hiking, biking, recreation equipment rental, picnic area and shelter</i>
Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park 763-757-3920	<i>Fees. Visitor center, programs, exhibits, canoe launch, fishing, hiking, biking, snowshoe rental, picnic area and shelter</i> <i>Boat and canoe launch, fishing, hiking, biking, playground, picnic area and shelter</i>
North Mississippi Regional Park 612-661-4800	<i>Visitor center, programs, exhibits, boat and canoe launch, fishing, hiking, biking, cross-country ski trail, playground, wading pool, picnic shelter</i>
Boom Island/Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park/Mill Ruins Park 612-661-4800	<i>Boat and canoe launch, fishing, hiking, biking, self-guiding trail, playground, picnic area and shelter, archeology programs, walking tours. Padelford Packet Boat Co.: 651-227-1100; www.riverrides.com</i> <i>Fees. Interactive exhibits including Water Lab, eight-story Flour Tower ride, programs, and rooftop observation deck in a National Historic Landmark</i>
Mill City Museum 612-341-7555	<i>Hiking, biking, playground, picnic area and shelter</i>
Minnehaha Regional Park 612-661-4800	
Historic Fort Snelling 612-726-1171	<i>Fees. Visitor center, programs, exhibits, living history demonstrations</i>
Fort Snelling State Park 612-725-2389	<i>Fees. Visitor center, programs, exhibits, boat and canoe launch, fishing, hiking, self-guiding trail, biking, cross-country ski trail, playground, picnic area and shelter</i>
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge 952-854-5900	<i>Visitor center, programs, exhibits, wildlife viewing, hiking, fishing, hunting, tour biking, free snowshoe checkout</i>
Sibley House Historic Site 651-452-1596	<i>Fees. Visitor center, historic structures from fur trade era, interpretive programs and exhibits</i>
Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park 651-266-6400	<i>Programs, boat and canoe launch, fishing, hiking, self-guiding trail, biking, cross-country ski trail, picnic area and shelter</i>
Lilydale-Harriet Island-Cherokee Regional Park 651-266-6400	<i>Boat and canoe launch, fishing, hiking, biking, cross-country ski trail, picnic area and shelter. Padelford Packet Boat Co.: 651-227-1100; www.riverrides.com</i>
Mississippi River Visitor Center 651-293-0200	<i>Park rangers, programs, exhibits, and trip-planning stations help visitors learn about and explore the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the Mississippi River, and America's National Park Service destinations</i>
Science Museum of Minnesota 651-221-9444	<i>Fees. Mississippi River Gallery and Towboat Terrace featuring interactive exhibits, programs, Omni-theater, and 3D laser auditorium</i>
Indian Mounds Park 651-266-6400	<i>Exhibits, hiking, self-guiding trail, biking, picnic area and shelter</i>
Battle Creek Regional Park 651-748-2500	<i>Hiking, biking, playground, picnic area and shelter</i>
Spring Lake Park Reserve 651-438-4660	<i>Programs, hiking, cross-country ski trail, archery trail, playground, picnic area and shelter</i>
St. Croix National Scenic Riverway 715-483-3284, ext.638	<i>Visitor center, programs, exhibits, boat and canoe launch, canoe rental, fishing, hiking, swimming, cross-country ski trail, campground, group camp-site, picnic area and shelter</i>

River Recreation Contacts

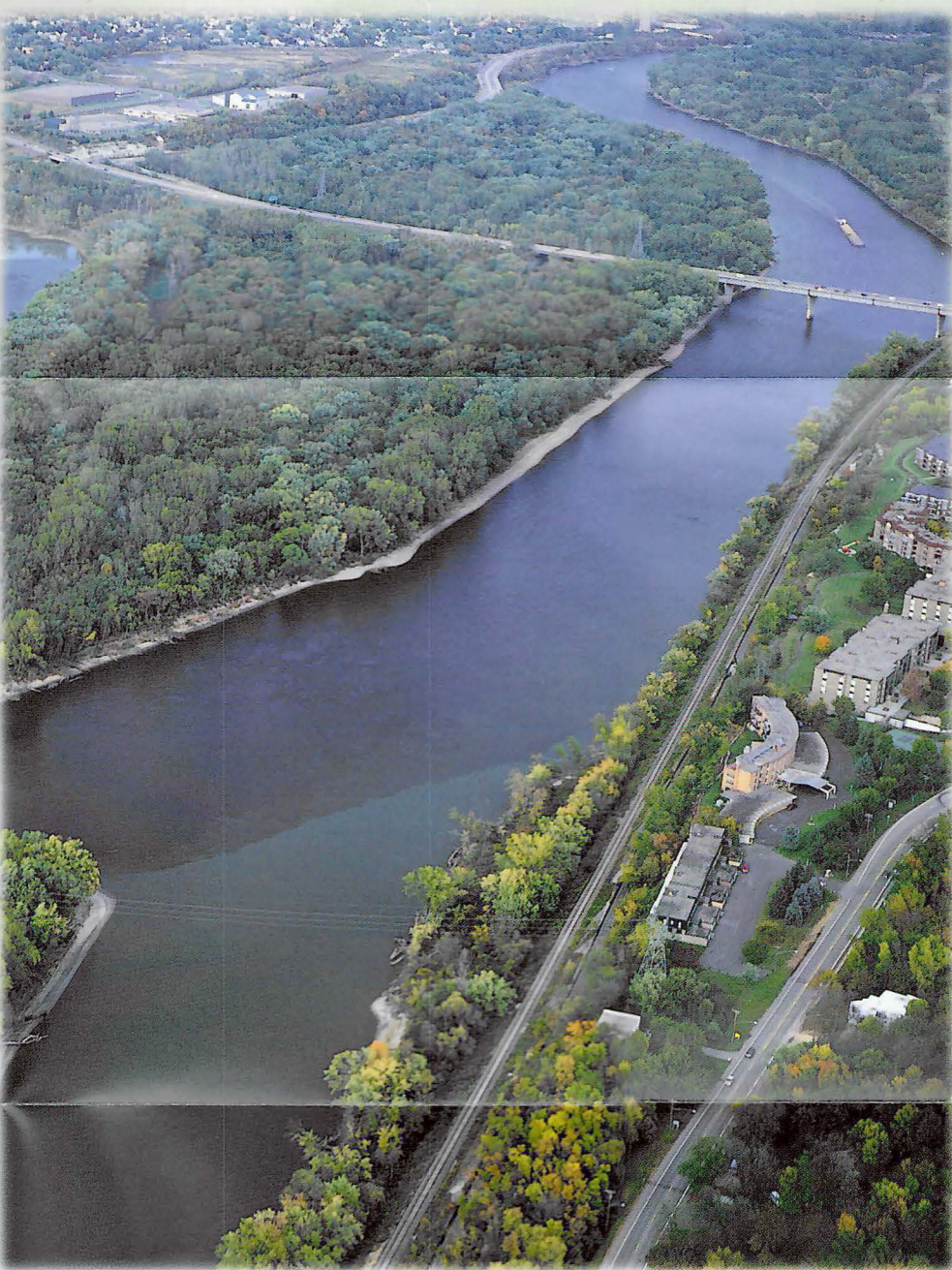
Boating and Canoeing All watercraft operated within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area must be licensed. Minnesota boating regulations apply. Conditions for boating and canoeing vary considerably throughout the river corridor. Downstream from mile 857.6, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains a nine-foot-deep navigational channel, and recreational boaters share the river with towboats pushing barges. The towboats turn slowly and throw large wakes. Stay clear and pass on the inside of bends. Towboats have the right-of-way. For a Minnesota Boating Guide, a Metro Rivers Guide, or Mississippi River Canoe Route Maps, contact:
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
651-296-6157 or 1-888-646-6367 (Minnesota only)
TDD 651-296-5484 or
TDD 1-800-657-3929 (Minnesota only)
www.dnr.state.mn.us
E-mail: www.info@dnr.state.mn.us

Biking and Hiking Trails for biking and hiking offer many opportunities to experience the different facets of the Mississippi River. For a detailed guide to trails along the river, contact the Mississippi River Visitor Center (see lower left).

Locks and Dams Four locks and dams are operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Recreational boats and canoes may lock through without charge. Visitors can watch watercraft lock through Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock from an enclosed viewing platform with educational panels and an interactive computer kiosk. Lock and Dam #1 and #2 have exterior overlooks and educational panels. For a copy of a brochure about using the lock and dam system or to buy a copy of Upper Mississippi River Navigational Charts, contact:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
651-290-5680
www.mvp.usace.army.mil/

Camping and Accommodations There are no campgrounds within the boundaries of Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, but there are campgrounds and other overnight accommodations available in the metropolitan area. Contact:
Minnesota Office of Tourism
651-296-5029 or 1-800-657-3700
www.exploreminnesota.com

Great River Road Scenic views of the river are provided throughout the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area along the Great River Road, a portion of which is included in the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway in Minneapolis. Contact:
Mississippi River Parkway Commission
763-212-2560
www.mississippiriverinfo.com
E-mail: info@mississippiriverinfo.com



The sediment-laden Minnesota River merges with the Mississippi River at Pike Island, shown at lower left. To the Dakota Indians, the confluence is a spiritually significant place known as "Madoce Cokaya Kin," or "Center of the Earth." The confluence also is the site of the first European settlement in Minnesota.

Other Information

Mississippi River Visitor Center-National Park Service This dynamic center in the lobby of the Science Museum of Minnesota features exhibits, programs, and trip-planning help for the park, Mississippi River, and entire National Park System. The Mississippi River Gallery in the museum's fee zone features a rooftop towboat and exhibits about industry, culture, and the ecology of the river. The visitor center and museum are located at 120 West Kellogg Boulevard in downtown St. Paul. Call 651-293-0200 or visit www.mississippirivervisitorcenter.org.

Federal Pass Program The National Parks Pass and Golden Eagle, Age, and Access passports can be obtained at the Mississippi River Visitor Center.

Visitor Centers Three cooperative visitor centers within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area are located at Fort Snelling State Park and on both sides of Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park. These visitor centers offer exhibits and programs interpreting the human and natural history related to the Mississippi River. (See the "River Parks" chart at left for phone numbers and information for these and other visitor centers and resource areas.)

National Park Passport Stamp Stamp your *Passport to Your National Parks* book with different stamps at the Mississippi River Visitor Center, Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, Fort Snelling State Park, Mill City Museum, and North Mississippi Regional Park.

Land Ownership Of nearly 54,000 acres in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, only 35 acres are owned by the National Park Service. Much of the land within the boundaries and along the riverbanks is privately owned. Please respect landowners and do not disturb them or their property.

Accessibility For information about facilities and services for persons with disabilities at many state and regional parks, ask at the visitor centers or visit www.wildernessinquiry.org/mnparks/centralmap.html.

Fees Some parks within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area charge entrance and other fees. (See the "River Parks" chart at left.)

Headquarters The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area headquarters is open Monday through Friday. Information services are limited. Contact the headquarters at:
111 East Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55101
651-290-4160
Fax: 651-290-3214
E-mail: miss_info@nps.gov
www.nps.gov/miss

Also visit the National Park Service website:
www.nps.gov