

The mission of Mississippi Park Connection is to strengthen the enduring connection between people and the Mississippi River and build community support for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. The connection supports the park's environmental stewardship and education programs, including outdoor recreation, education, and volunteerism.



In 1988, a national park was created in Minnesota to preserve, protect, and enhance the significant values of the waters and land of the Mississippi River corridor.

Known as the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the park extends for 72 miles along the river, running through the heart of the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metro area.

Printed on Minnesota-milled, chlorine-free recycled and recyclable paper with 10% postconsumer material.

Photo by Linda Cullen



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Saint Paul, MN 55101

MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEWS

Spring-
Summer 2016

Newsletter of Mississippi Park Connection & the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

WELCOME

Celebrating the Summer of a Century

By Katie Nyberg, Executive Director, Mississippi Park Connection



Photo by Eric Haugen

It is a pleasure to work with the National Park Service to mark its Centennial. Our mission of connecting people to the river and to this national park is a perfect match with the Centennial Find Your Park campaign.

To celebrate the Centennial of the National Park Service and to kickstart some important initiatives for our community, we announced a \$1-million fundraising campaign for 2016. One of the projects we are most looking forward to is the renovation of the park's visitor center in the Science Museum of Minnesota. We need to close the center for a

time this summer but invite you to visit in September to see the new exhibits.

I invite you to be part of the Centennial by attending an event, volunteering for the park or becoming a member!

I also invite you to celebrate the Centennial by joining one of our many community events along the river. Did you miss out on our Winter 4PLAY event at Fort Snelling State Park last January? Join us on July 30 for Summer 4PLAY! This community day of play, sponsored by Greater MSP and the Knight Foundation, brings together art, recreation, music, and people to celebrate all four seasons in Minnesota.

Keep up to date on all of our Centennial activities by visiting parkconnection.org/nps-centennial or by following us on social media.

I hope to see you out in the park!

NPS WORD

National Park Service Centennial

By John Anfinson, Superintendent, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

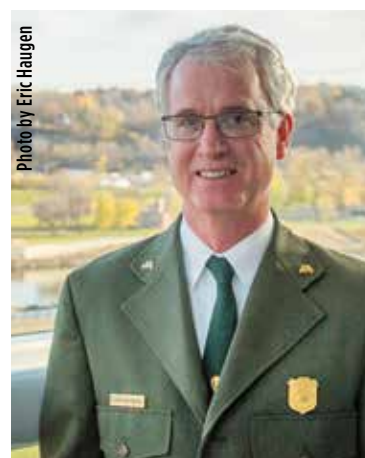


Photo by Eric Haugen

The National Park Service's Centennial year is well under way, and with Mississippi Park Connection, we are actively pursuing the NPS Centennial goal of connecting with and creating the next generation of park visitors, supporters and advocates. As a national park flowing through an urban setting, we are in a perfect position to reach a diverse audience through our programs and activities.

We are partnering with Outdoor Afro on activities in our corridor with the help of its new Minneapolis leader (and Park Connection staff member), Alora. We are expanding our relationship with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa to bring on ten American Indian youth and two crew leaders this summer to help with restoration at Coldwater Spring and other sites.

I am also delighted by the number of organizations that are celebrating the Centennial with their own projects and events. A number of artists, including Thomas Paquette and *Project Art for Nature* artists, have created works of art inspired by the river and national parks. Make sure to check out the events calendar to find details for these engaging partner events.

Won't you join us this summer in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area? Learn more and find events at parkconnection.org and nps.gov/miss.



National Park Service Centennial Day at the Minnesota State Fair

By Jodi Petrich, Centennial Coordinator, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



The annual Minnesota State Fair is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region, attracting nearly 1.8 million guests annually. Join us on Monday, August 29 for the first-ever National Park Service Day, when you can visit all of Minnesota's national parks in one day at the Great Minnesota Get-Together.

Under the umbrella of the Centennial Find Your Park campaign, Carousel Park (outside the Grandstand) will be filled with hands-on activity stations hosted by the parks, friends groups and

partners that educate, entertain and inspire attendees to get to know and to treasure Minnesota's national parks.

In addition to activity stations, the stage will be filled with music, storytelling, a trivia contest and games, a fashion show, and special appearances by National Park Service rangers, junior rangers and maybe even an animal or two. Attendees also will be able to collect special one-day-only stamps as part of the National Park Service passport program. Save the date and join us for this end-of-summer tradition!



SUPPORT YOUR PARK

Centennial Membership

By Anna Waugh, Development Coordinator, Mississippi Park Connection



Mississippi Park Connection is proud to join the National Park Service locally in its year-long Centennial celebration because we are eager to reintroduce—and in many cases, introduce—the Mississippi River's only national park to residents and visitors. Heading into the park with a national park ranger takes the anxiety out of trying a new experience and opens doors to finding new parks, stories, and trails to explore. Mississippi Park Connection's members support discovery on the river.

Take part in this once-in-a-lifetime celebration by becoming a Centennial member, or a member at any level. Centennial memberships support the new construction of exhibits at the Mississippi River Visitor Center and our \$1-million Centennial campaign. Centennial members donate \$100 during 2016 and receive a commemorative Centennial pin on top of our regular member benefits like pontoon boat rides and discounted tickets to paid events like River City Revue. We are so grateful for member support at any level, and membership starts at just \$35. Thank you for supporting the river.

Tangibles and Intangibles: Why I Love My Job

By Brian Valentine, Park Ranger, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



I became a park ranger in 2006 after serving in the Peace Corps as a forestry technician. My role in the park is to coordinate the delivery of public programs and special events, assist in training new staff and volunteers, manage our recreational and safety equipment, and analyze our visitation.

When I'm not at work, I enjoy biking, fishing, trap shooting, making cookies for my wife, baking bread with my three-year-old daughter, keeping toys out of my one-year-old son's mouth, and not tripping over our cat.

As a naturalized citizen, I believe that national parks are terrific resources to understand our country. They embody our aspirations and encapsulate our struggles. They give us the opportunity to experience America, not just read about it. They give us the opportunity to act on our ideas and inspire us to persevere. I believe that parks are a people-powered enterprise and their success

depends on our resourcefulness and fellowship.

To me, the Mississippi River is a dynamic place. It's a true microcosm of the National Park Service. It's historic. It's wild. It's urban. It's part of our national identity. It's yours. Use it to tell your story. See you on the river!

FEATURED SITE

Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam

By Dan Dressler, Park Ranger, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Starting this summer the National Park Service will be operating the visitor center at the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam. Located at the west end of the iconic Stone Arch Bridge, the visitor center overlooks St. Anthony Falls. Stop by to get a close-up look at the tallest lock on the entire Mississippi!

After Congress closed the lock to navigation last summer, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers asked if the park would manage its visitor center. Of course, we said yes. The partnership between the corps and the National Park Service will keep the lock and dam observation area open, provide tours of the lock, and open the restrooms to the public.

The visitor center will be open seven days a week from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm. Visitors will be welcome to visit the observation deck any time or take a scheduled formal tour.

For more information visit nps.gov/miss or call the Mississippi River Visitor Center at 651-293-0200.



RIVER VOLUNTEER

Summer is a Great Time to Learn Outside the Classroom!

By Mary Hammes, Environmental Stewardship & Volunteer Manager, Mississippi Park Connection; and Kathy Swenson, Park Ranger & Volunteer Coordinator, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

One of our favorite things about spring and summer is watching the park come alive in new ways. There is so much to explore in these warmer months: What kind of trees grow near the river? How do we know what mussels are in the river? How can I learn about birds or how to fish?

Such joyful curiosity comes naturally to youth when exploring the park. Tapping into this curiosity is a great way to engage our younger visitors and teach them about the river. There are many opportunities for volunteers to encourage and assist learners in our riparian classroom. Volunteers help kids learn how to navigate their way using a compass, how to fish for the first time, or understand the implications of climate change.

One example is a partnership between the YMCA and the National Park Service called the Let's MOVE! Outside Initiative, which empowers youth to discover and create new outdoor opportunities for play, learning, and service. YMCA campers earn a junior ranger badge and experience firsthand the motto of "Explore, Learn, and Protect." Campers canoe on the Mississippi River, volunteer in a national park, and work with a park ranger!



Do you enjoy working with kids, especially outside? Do you want to spread your knowledge or enthusiasm for the Mississippi River? We are seeking volunteers to help bring the river to life for community youth in our education and recreational programs. Help us bring the classroom outdoors this summer!



Volunteer Voices Melissa Falldin

Crew Leader & Education Volunteer, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Like many of us, I love my job, but it involves a fair amount of time sitting in front of a computer throughout the day. Volunteering for the National Park Service allows me

the opportunity to unplug, get outside, and help others get back to nature themselves.

I grew up camping throughout the state and nation with my family, which grew into an appreciation for nature and our parks. I think our parks are the pride of our country—unique, fantastic places to enjoy, share and maintain for all. Mississippi National River and Recreation Area has provided me a convenient means to regularly give back to this system and these places. The park is distinctly in the heart of the Twin Cities, allowing for a great variety of volunteer opportunities working alongside expert NPS rangers and like-minded, dedicated volunteers. Often, I draw from my childhood experiences when working with the kids involved in the NPS programs. I remember my curiosity and awe. I feel a great sense of accomplishment knowing that I'm helping to bring those same feelings to the program participants.

In my work, I have been able to contribute to the restoration of prairie habitat, to help kids and adults learn about how the river affected the growth of our cities, and much more. Volunteering has allowed me to give back, to get out, to learn new things about the landscape that surrounds me, and to make new friends. Unplug! Come out to volunteer.



To register your volunteer group, contact Mary Hammes, Environmental Stewardship & Volunteer Manager: 651-291-9119, mhammes@parkconnection.org. To register as an individual volunteer, contact Kathy Swenson, Park Ranger & Volunteer Coordinator: 651-293-8424, kathleen_swenson@nps.gov.



MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL RIVER & RECREATION AREA

Explore the river near you or join us for an upcoming program at one of our featured sites. Stop by the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam Visitor Center to chat with a national park ranger and pick up a copy of the Mississippi River Companion, featuring detailed maps and information.

BioBlitz at Coldwater Spring

By Nancy Duncan, Natural Resource Program Manager, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

We usually hear the word “biodiversity” in regard to rainforests with their vast number of species. Yet the diversity of life in our own backyards is phenomenal. We take for granted clean water, fertile soil, and air to breathe, yet these are all the result of working ecosystems filled with species that perform these tasks.

From fall 2011 to fall 2012, the National Park Service demolished a dozen abandoned Bureau of Mines buildings at Coldwater Spring. Since then the National Park Service, Mississippi Park Connection, and hundreds of volunteers have been working to create a natural park. This year’s BioBlitz will inform us about changes in numbers and species of fish, fungi, insects, birds, and plants living within the 29 acres of Coldwater and surrounding parkland and riverfront. The baseline for this information came from our first BioBlitz on the property, which was held in spring 2013, shortly after demolition was completed.

BioBlitz is an intensive 24-hour sweeping scientific survey of biodiversity in which the public helps scientists find all the plants and animals at a specific location. Part contest, part festival, part educational event, and part scientific endeavor, BioBlitz brings together participants from across the state in a race against time.



Volunteers assist BioBlitz scientists using sonar detectors, bug lights, fish traps and live traps to count and chronicle the area’s flora and fauna. All ages and skill levels can take part to collect plants and insects and live-trap animals, which are identified before being released back into the wild. Come be part of a group of dedicated scientists and volunteers roaming the park, equipped with all kinds of gear, from binoculars and bird nets to small mammal traps and mushroom baskets.

The National Park Service, Mississippi Park Connection, and the Bell Museum of Natural History are all working together to organize this year’s BioBlitz on July 15 & 16 at Coldwater Spring.

VISITOR INFORMATION



Coldwater Spring

5601 Minnehaha Park Dr. South, Minneapolis MN 55111

- Observe wildlife that call this oak savanna prairie home
- Snap a selfie in front of our entry monument

- Learn about the history of this site via Ranger On Call



Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam

1 Portland Ave., Minneapolis MN 55454

- Learn more about locks and dams from an NPS ranger at the visitor center and observation deck
- Take a stroll across the Stone Arch Bridge

- Explore Mill Ruins Park and sign up to do habitat restoration with the Mill Ruins crew



Mississippi River Visitor Center*

120 Kellogg Blvd. West, Saint Paul MN 55102

- Become a junior ranger
- Get your NPS annual pass
- Learn about recreational opportunities like hiking, biking, kayaking and birding

*The Mississippi River Visitor Center will be closing from mid-June to late August.

MAY – OCTOBER 2016

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Visit parkconnection.org/events for event details and registration information.

- MAY 7** En Plein Air @ Coldwater Spring
- MAY 12** Moon Gazing Event @ Coldwater Spring *Members Only*
- MAY 21** Sneak Peek @ Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock *Members Only*
- MAY 28** Upper St. Anthony Falls Visitor Center Opening
- JUNE 4** Friendship Forest Planting
- JUNE 5-30** Project Art for Nature Exhibit in Prescott, WI
- JUNE 11** Get Outdoors Day @ Powderhorn Park
- JUNE 11** Thomas Paquette’s “America’s River” Exhibition @ Groveland Gallery
- JUNE 11** Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
- JUNE 11** Take a Kid Fishing @ Pickerel Lake
- JUNE 12** Take a Kid Fishing @ Thompson Lake
- JUNE 15** River City Revue @ Padelford Riverboats
- JUNE 22** Pontoon Trip @ Harriet Island *Members Only*
- JUNE 25** Canoe RAVE (River Action Volunteer Event)
- JULY 2** Bike With a Ranger @ Upper Post of Fort Snelling
- JULY 6** Pontoon Trip @ Harriet Island *Members Only*
- JULY 8** Canoe Ferry @ Boom Island
- JULY 9** Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
- JULY 13** Share the River Northeast @ MWMO
- JULY 15 & 16** BioBlitz @ Coldwater Spring
- JULY 22** Canoe Ferry @ Boom Island
- JULY 23** Flower Tour @ Coldwater Spring *Members Only*
- JULY 30** Summer 4PLAY @ Fort Snelling State Park
- JULY 27** Share the River Gorge
- JULY 27** Pontoon Trip @ Harriet Island *Members Only*
- JULY 28** Invasive Species Management @ Grey Cloud Dunes
- JULY 30** Bike with a Ranger @ Harriet Island
- AUGUST 6-28** Project Art for Nature Exhibit in St. Paul, MN
- AUGUST 13** Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
- AUGUST 17** Pontoon Trip @ Harriet Island *Members Only*
- AUGUST 25** Visit NPS @ State Fair (through September 5)
- AUGUST 25** National Park Service 100th Birthday!
- AUGUST 25** Visitor Center Grand Reopening @ Science Museum
- AUGUST 29** NPS Centennial Day @ State Fair
- SEPTEMBER 8** River City Revue @ Padelford Riverboats
- SEPTEMBER 10** Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
- SEPTEMBER 10** National Public Lands Month Celebration @ Riverfront Regional Park
- SEPTEMBER 13** Seed Collecting @ Grey Cloud Dunes
- SEPTEMBER 16** Pontoon Trip @ Harriet Island *Members Only*
- SEPTEMBER 17** National Public Lands Month Celebration @ Spring Lake Park Reserve
- SEPTEMBER 22** State of the River Report Event with Friends of the Mississippi River
- SEPTEMBER 24** National Public Lands Day @ Coldwater Spring
- SEPTEMBER 30** Pontoon Trip @ Harriet Island *Members Only*

Members receive free or discounted registration for most programs, including invitations to members-only events. Join today at parkconnection.org/membership. All events are subject to change.

CONTACT



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nps.gov/miss



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Connect with us:



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