

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
111 E. Kellogg Blvd. Suite 105, Saint Paul, MN 55101

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Change is in the air! The weather is warming, birds are arriving and buds are about to burst! Volunteer to help students learn about these changes by volunteering with Climate Change Field, Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls field trips. These programs take up most of a weekday and have a wide variety of dates from which to choose. Along with weather changes come other changes for the park. Two rangers are moving on to other opportunities. Ranger Brian Valentine will begin work with another Federal agency at the end of April. Be sure to send him a note wishing him well. We'll sure miss him. I am also moving on, retiring the beginning of June. That means you'll still be hearing from me for a couple more months, I'm afraid! All joking aside, our departures will leave gaps at the park as the hiring freeze means our positions cannot be filled. We don't know if the hiring freeze will be temporary or not. Please be patient with us as we adjust in how we staff programs. Fortunately, you our volunteers are an awesome bunch and give us confidence in our ability to meet these and other challenges. You're the best!

April 13, 14, 20, 21, 26, and/or 27 - Climate Change Weather Station Assistant

April 13, 14, 20, 21, 26, and/or 27 - Climate Change Plant Assistant

April 22- Junior Ranger Day

Now- Sign-up for Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls has begun

April 26 or May 9, or 18, or 20- Canoemobile Mississippi River training

Otter survey

May 13- Big (Bird) Watch

Climate Change Field Trip Assistant at Weather Station (1-2 per day)

April 13, 14 - 9:30a- 2p

April 20, 21, 26, 27 - 9:00a-1:30p

Fort Snelling State Park, convening at Visitor Center

Climate Change Field Trip volunteers will assist NPS ranger at weather station activity site. Weather station VIP's will help students use monitoring equipment and record data.

Contact: Lyndon Torstenson, [651-293-8426](tel:651-293-8426) or lyndon_torstenson@nps.gov

Climate Change Field Trip Assistant -Invasive Plant Station (1-2 per day)

April 13, 14 - 9:30a- 2p

April 20, 21, 26, 27 - 9:00a-1:30p

Fort Snelling State Park, convening at Visitor Center

Climate Change Field Trip volunteers will assist Mississippi Park Connection staff at an invasive plant removal station. VIPs will help the students identify invasive garlic mustard and remove it!

Contact: Mary Hammes, mhammes@parkconnection.org

Junior Ranger Day Assistant Coordinator (1 volunteer needed)

Saturday, April 22nd

11am-3pm

Mississippi River Visitor Center (MRVC)

Help us introduce kids of all ages to the junior ranger program at our visitor center. A volunteer is needed to greet participants and orient them to the MRVC, explain how to get their badge using the learning stations, discuss their answers, and swear them in as junior rangers. Contact: Brian Valentine, brian_valentine@nps.gov.

Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls sign-up

Sign-up for stations begins March 28 at 1pm

Sign up on-line to help at stations on Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls. The field trips, for students in grades 3-6, consist of stations led by volunteers or staff from various organizations. Sign up for 1-3 shifts per field trip. Training is provided on the first volunteer day.

Big River Journey takes place May 1-5, 8-12, and 15-19- 8:30am-2pm each day
Volunteers help with stations about river geology, otters/ecosystems, macroinvertebrates, birds and urban watersheds.

Journey to the Falls takes place May 22-26, 30-31 and June 1- 8:30am-2pm
Volunteers help with a mock archaeological dig by digging "sites" in sand under the Stone Arch Bridge then seeding the sites with artifacts from the Mill Ruins Park excavation, Pillsbury A Mill, or items related to St. Anthony Falls' industrial past. Students uncover the sites to determine the site's theme with volunteers asking leading questions. Training materials e-mailed in advance.

Volunteers sign up on line for these positions. To receive sign-up access, contact Brian Goodspeed at brian_goodspeed@nps.gov or [651-293-8414](tel:651-293-8414) or Kathy Swenson at Kathleen_swenson@nps.gov or [651-293-8424](tel:651-293-8424).

Canoemobile Mississippi River Training

Wed, 4/26- 3pm, Tues, 5/9- 3pm, Thurs, 5/18-3pm, Sat, 5/20-9am (Choose one date)
East River Flats, Minneapolis

The National Park Service, Mississippi Park Connection, and Wilderness Inquiry partner to expose thousands of kids to the Mississippi River each year through our Canoemobile Mississippi River Program. Our Outdoor Activities Days are land-based programs that bring large groups of students to sites along the river. Most Outdoor Activities Days take place at Snelling Lake inside Fort Snelling State Park. Students rotate between four learning stations, two before lunch, and two after lunch. Station rotations may include water quality testing, macroinvertebrate netting, fishing, nature hike, fur trade game, or team building. Come join us for our staff training and learn how to facilitate each station. Volunteers will not be expected to take the lead on a station, but are encouraged to help with station set-up and take down, aid students during the rotation activity, answer student questions, and aid in trafficking between stations! Training will run about 2 hours. If interested please contact Ranger Jim Ford at jim_ford@nps.gov or [651.293.8454](tel:651.293.8454)

Metro Mississippi River Otter Survey

Join the [Minnesota Metro Otter Survey](http://www.inaturalist.org/projects/minnesota-metro-otter-survey) <<http://www.inaturalist.org/projects/minnesota-metro-otter-survey>> to share river otter sightings, tracks and sign throughout the park's Metro river corridor. NPS is partnering with the Minnesota [Wildlife Tracking Project](http://www.mntracking.org/) <<http://www.mntracking.org/>> to monitor river otter as a surrogate of a

healthy watershed and river ecosystem.

Contact allison_holdhusen@nps.gov or Jonathan Poppele (poppele@umn.edu) with any questions.

<http://ouroneacrefarm.com/river-otter-tracks-sign-basics/>

<http://www.bear-tracker.com/otter.html>

Big Watch

May 13, Sunrise – Sunset

Grey Cloud Dunes

We are seeking volunteers for the Big Watch. Volunteers can take part in the count circle to help tally all the birds we see and hear or if there's space, help go out on field trips to document birds around the SNA. If you do not have strong birding skills and would like to learn more about bird identification by sight and sound--this is an excellent way to enhance your birding skills! Birds possible include northern harrier, whip-poor-will, Henslow's sparrow, indigo buntings and so many warblers!

Volunteer Shifts:

6am - 11am - This will include helping to set up, taking turns at the greeting table and documenting birds. This is the best shift for warblers and Henslow's sparrow.

11am - 4pm - This will include taking turns at the greeting table and documenting birds. This is the best shift for indigo buntings, grasshopper sparrow and birds of prey.

4pm - 9pm - This will include taking turns at the greeting table, documenting birds and aiding with tear down at the end of the day. This is the best shift for possible woodcocks, whip-poor-will and owls.

If you can't do an entire shift still feel free to sign up. Contact Sharon

Stiteler, sharon_stiteler@nps.gov

[651-290-8485](tel:651-290-8485)

Mississippi Park Connection

Mississippi Park Connection is the charitable partner of Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Mississippi Park Connection is committed to preserving, protecting, and enjoying the Mississippi River, the national park that runs through the Twin Cities. Among many things, we work closely together (we even share office space) to operate our joint volunteer program. Learn more at <http://parkconnection.org/>