



Photo by Joey Tichenor



Mississippi Park Connection strengthens the enduring connection between people and the Mississippi River by enriching the lives of all who experience our national park, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Park Connection supports the park's ongoing programs, including youth education, environmental stewardship, and community engagement.



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.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEWS

111 Kellogg Blvd E, Suite 105
Saint Paul, MN 55101

MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEWS

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

Spring-Summer 2017

WELCOME

We're Here For the Park!

Katie Nyberg, Executive Director, Mississippi Park Connection



Photo by Joey Tichenor

Spring is finally here, and we couldn't be more excited to share in the fun with you. With the Centennial behind us, and a new set of challenges and opportunities in front of us, Mississippi Park Connection remains committed to supporting our strongest partner, the National Park Service.

Much like the mighty river itself, external circumstances are continuously changing. But our mission of strengthening people's connections to the river remains unchanged. Every day we seek to inspire people of all backgrounds to discover, explore, and cherish the Mississippi River. We believe that by

helping others to develop their personal relationships with the river, we will cultivate dedicated advocates, stewards, and visitors of this national park.

Whether it's helping to staff visitor centers, raising money to support school scholarships, or planting trees with volunteers, Mississippi Park Connection is dedicated to bolstering the efforts of the National Park Service at a time when federal budgets for parks are shrinking.

We're here for our park, and we are fortunate to have the support of an engaged community, full of knowledgeable and passionate individuals. Join us in helping to support the places you love by attending an event, volunteering in the park, or becoming a member of Mississippi Park Connection.

NPS WORD

A 'Real' National Park

John Anfinson, Superintendent, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



Some years ago I attended a Saint Paul City Council meeting at which someone dismissed us as "a pretend national park." While harsh, at that time even people within the National Park Service questioned our purpose or need.

We have always been a real national park, but our growing visibility and importance are making that undeniable. During the NPS Centennial, we became one of the urban parks our Washington and Midwest Region offices counted on to engage the next generation of park visitors, supporters, and advocates.

Our growing visitation provides one of the best measures of our increasing importance. In 2015, we officially counted 112,349 visitors, placing us 25th among the Midwest Region's 60 parks. In 2016, our numbers jumped to 221,266, and we ranked 17th. This year, thanks to the renovated Mississippi River Visitor Center (MRVC), we will exceed 300,000 visitors. In 2015, 63,674 people visited the MRVC. We are on track to surpass 150,000 visitors this year. At 300,000 visitors, we will be the region's 14th most visited park.

Before too long, given growing attendance at Coldwater Spring and the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock, we have the potential to break into the top 10 and vie with the Badlands, Mount Rushmore and the Arch in St. Louis. Then, few will question our status as a real national park.

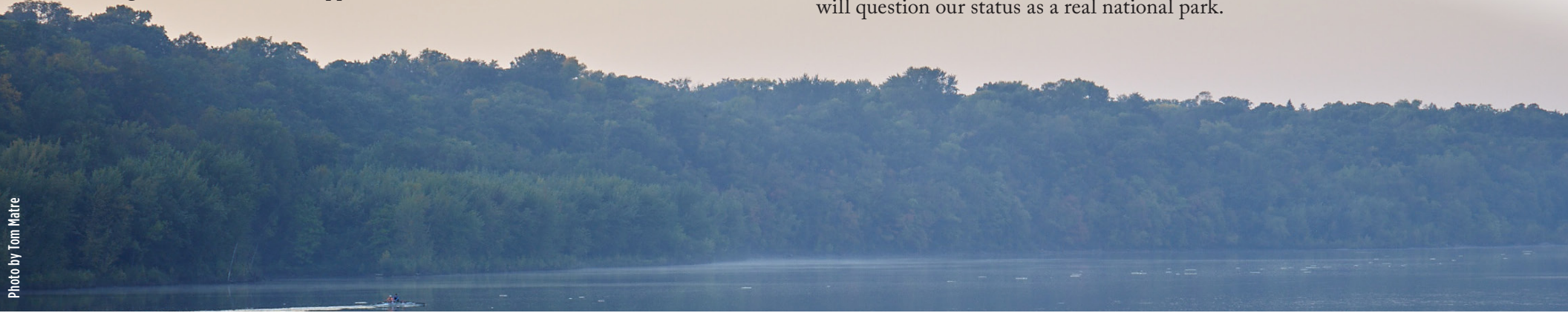


Photo by Tom Maitre

Mississippi River Paddle Share

Susan Overson, Landscape Architect and Park Planner,
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



Of all the cool projects we launched last year, Mississippi River Paddle Share was a particularly exciting development for our park. This self-service kayak sharing system allows users to rent kayaks and paddling equipment, similar to how you would rent a Nice Ride bike, and enjoy on-the-river experiences in Minneapolis. This year, we’re planning on reopening our existing stations in Minneapolis, as well as expanding the program to new locations along the river. Starting this summer, users will (hopefully) be able to experience Mississippi River Paddle Share in Saint Paul and Coon Rapids, as well as in Minneapolis.

Here’s how it works: go to paddleshare.org to reserve a boat at your desired location, sign a waiver,

and receive a reservation code to open the kayak equipment lockers. When you arrive, punch in your reservation code to unlock your locker, equipped with a kayak, life vest and paddle. Then just get on the water, and start your adventure. A map of each stretch is on the boat.

Mississippi River Paddle Share allows a generous window of time for your paddle, so be sure to take your time and enjoy the ride. You can scope out a heron rookery, stop by Stormwater Park at the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, or grab a bite to eat from a riverside restaurant. Wherever your river trip takes you, just be safe and have fun!

The Job of My Dreams

Jim Ford, Education Specialist,
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

I joined the National Park Service in January of 2016 as an Education Specialist. Before landing the job of my dreams, I taught high school biology for eight years. I found I communicated best with students in non-traditional classroom settings, and this inclination led me to teach in places like a marine biology institute on Catalina Island, California, the inner city of Chicago, and finally a juvenile detention center here in Minnesota.

As an Education Specialist for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, I work with partner organizations and school districts to develop and implement educational programming on the river. My primary responsibility is leading our Mississippi River Fellows program in partnership with Mississippi Park Connection and Wilderness Inquiry. This program provides urban youth with meaningful experiences on the river by paddling 10-person voyageur canoes through the heart of our park. The educational programming we conduct on the river is aligned with state standards and illuminates the historical, cultural, and environmental resources of our park, but I think



the real victory is just getting them out there! The data show that young people are spending more time with technology and less time outside. Our trips reintroduce young people to the natural world and the river that sustains them in hopes that they grow into responsible stewards of their watershed.

Our trips help contextualize the student’s sense of place in the Twin Cities, in the nation, and on this planet. They leave our river trips feeling that this river, this park, is a safe place to recreate and learn, right in their own backyard. One of my newfound mentors in the Park Service, Dave Wiggins, said it best, “We aim for their hearts, to affect their heads, so that they reach out their hands.” See you on the river!

SUPPORT YOUR PARK

Planting Seeds for the Next Generation

By Anna Waugh, Development Coordinator,
Mississippi Park Connection



Members support young people discovering the river for the first time, restore critical wildlife habitat, and support our community’s curiosity in the Mississippi River through great public programs, visitor centers, and events.

Members enrich the life of the river and the lives of all who experience this national park.

Last year, our members and donors supported field trips for more than 15,000 young people to experience the Mississippi River with a national park ranger. For many of these kids, it was their first time seeing the river, even though they live right here in the Twin Cities where the river is never far away. The scholarships, made possible by members, have opened worlds of discovery.

Members are leading efforts to build a more resilient floodplain forest by supporting our reforestation efforts on the Mississippi River’s floodplain as we face the emerging threat of Emerald Ash Borer.

Becoming a member or renewing your membership gives you access to great benefits, like our exclusive birding pontoon rides and discount tickets to River City Revue and special paddling events. Begin your Mississippi River adventure today, and support the national park you love!

FEATURED SITE

Grey Cloud Dunes SNA

Alora K. Jones, Marketing and Communications Associate,
Mississippi Park Connection

Be sure to visit Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific Natural Area (SNA) during the spring or summer season. This remarkable area in Cottage Grove encompasses a rare type of prairie ecosystem with rising sand dunes sculpted by southwestern winds, some cresting as high as 20 feet. You can see distinct plant communities, even prairie skinks and uncommon blue racers, and of course beautiful views of the Mississippi River.

Visitors will find Grey Cloud Dunes SNA to be a great spot for hiking, birding, wildlife watching, and nature photography – so don’t forget to bring your binoculars and camera. Scientific Natural Areas are designated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and differ from state parks and trails in that they are largely left undisturbed to protect our state’s biological diversity and to prevent the destruction of important ecosystems.

Because Grey Cloud Dunes is such a rare and delicate landscape, visitors are asked to tread lightly when hiking the area and to review the DNR’s regulations beforehand to help protect these ecologically valuable areas. SNAs do not have paved trails, restrooms, or drinking fountains, so do keep that in mind as you plan for your visit. Join us at Grey Cloud Dunes on May 13 for The Big Watch birding event, at a habitat restoration activity, or go exploring on your own anytime!



Make a Difference As a Volunteer

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



Photo by Linda Cullen

Public programs are a fundamental part of our effort to connect people to the river. We cannot accomplish even a fraction of that work without our volunteers. Their creativity, resourcefulness, and enduring commitment to the mission of the National Park Service embodies the essence of public service.

With their support, we can operate two visitor centers, facilitate increased outreach to our communities of color, exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair, and feed thousands of hungry cyclists during the Saint Paul Bike Classic. In 2016, volunteers helped us facilitate more than 250,000 interpretive and recreational visits. For perspective, that's more visits than 200 other National Park Service sites, including Voyageurs and Isle Royale National Parks.

The demand for visitor services continues to grow. For example, in 2017, we expect to reach 25,000 visitors in just four months at the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam. We cannot meet that challenge safely and professionally without additional volunteers.

This summer, help us connect these visitors coming from all over the country and the world to the Mississippi River. Share your national parks story and help us be the best version of ourselves through your versatility, resilience, and dependability.



To register your volunteer group or to register as an individual volunteer, contact Mary Hammes, Environmental Stewardship and Volunteer Manager: 651-291-9119, mhammes@parkconnection.org.

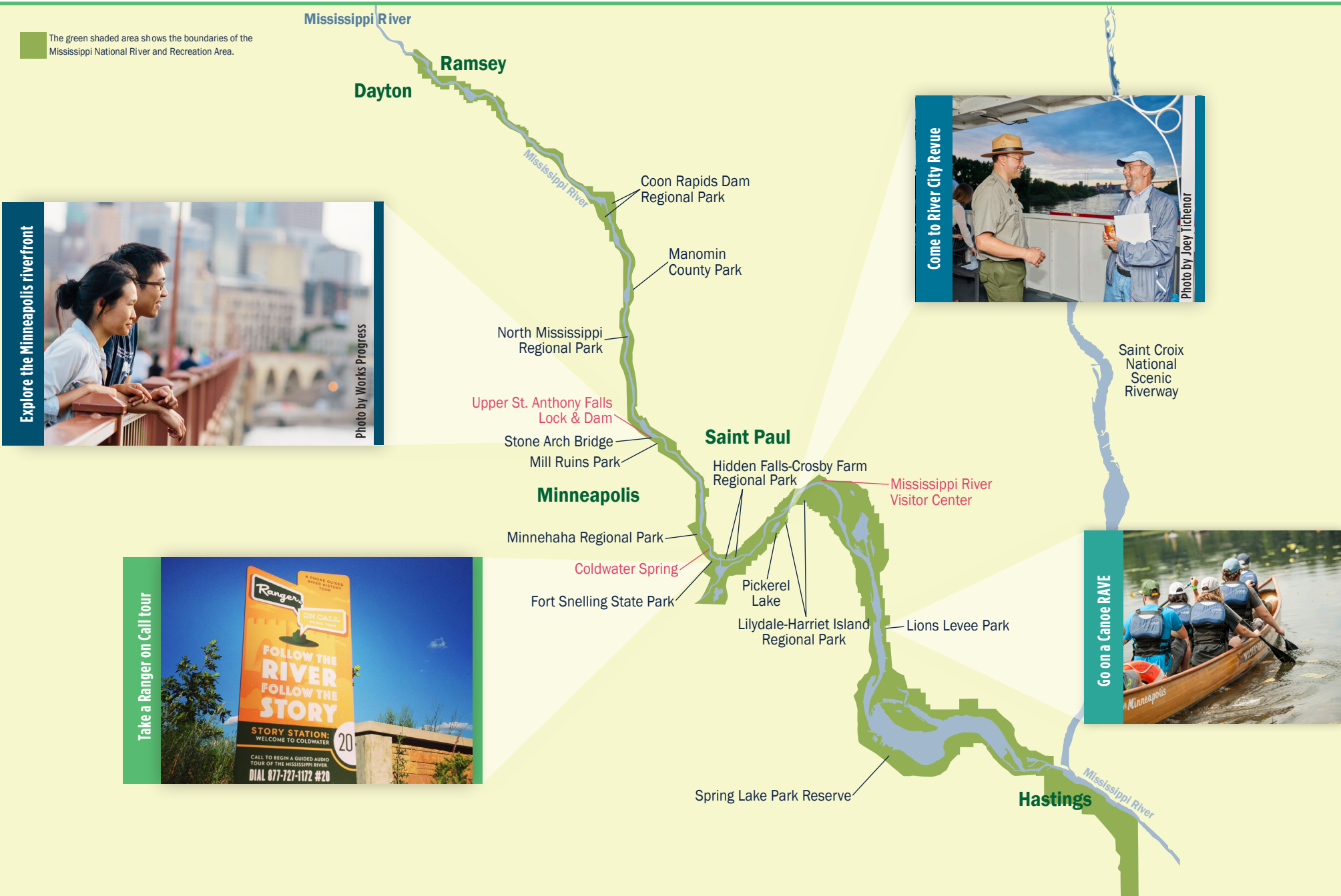
Volunteer Voices Paul Eaves

**Coldwater Crew Leader,
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area**

Almost 20 years ago, I was part of a land occupation to protect four sacred oaks. When the chainsaws came and finally cut the oaks down, I clearly heard the trees say, "It's about the spring." Those tree spoken words began my relationship with Coldwater Spring. At that time, the spring and its lands exuded a beautiful wildness hidden behind fences and decaying buildings. I felt the magic of the spring and visited it weekly, creating a labyrinth, leaving offerings, and saying prayers to honor the spring. It was and continues to be a sacred space for me and many others.



My connection with Coldwater Spring evolved into my volunteer work with the National Park Service. Since the buildings came down, I have attended National Public Lands Days, Tuesday and Thursday work crews, and other habitat restoration events. I have participated in activities such as planting and watering trees, removing invasive buckthorn, and sowing prairie seeds in communion with other wondrous volunteers. Each time I volunteer at Coldwater Spring, I experience my work as a prayer, an act of devotion to the spring and the lands surrounding it. It is also a great way to get a vigorous workout outdoors in a beautiful place. Most important to me, it is an opportunity to create an enchanting, vibrant prairie oak savanna that is a gift to future generations.



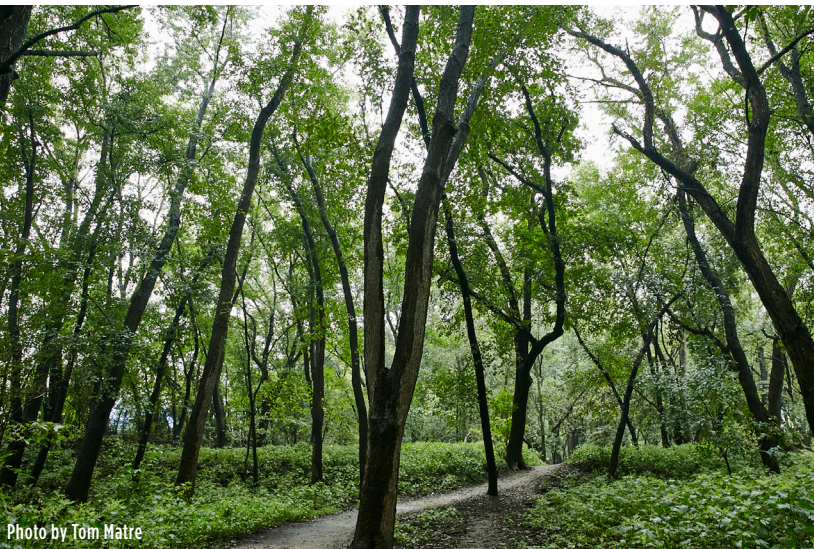
MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL RIVER & RECREATION AREA

Explore the river near you or join us for an upcoming program at one of these featured sites. Stop by the Mississippi River Visitor Center in downtown Saint Paul, or the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam in downtown Minneapolis, to chat with a national park ranger and learn more about this park.

Building Resilience in the Floodplain Forest

Daniel Wattenhofer, Urban Forestry Specialist and Greencorps Member, Mississippi Park Connection

Ash trees are one of Minnesota’s most abundant natural resources. Approximately 1 billion ash trees can be found across Minnesota, which is more than any other state in the U.S. Within Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, ash trees are present from the floodplain to the oak savanna. It is because our ash trees can be found in such numbers across the park that we are under threat from Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). There is a nearly 99% mortality rate of ash to EAB, and EAB is projected to exponentially increase in the state of Minnesota in coming years.



Combined with the pressures of climate change, EAB, and other invasives, great strain is being put upon our forests here in the park. In a few years time, our forests could look dramatically different. But that certainly doesn’t mean that all hope is lost; here at Mississippi Park Connection, we’re working to identify vulnerable areas within the park and work to make sure they stay forested. By planting species that are native to parts of southern Minnesota, we are ensuring that the species we plant won’t be edged out of their habitat as a result of future climate change. Planting trees like Shagbark Hickory, Kentucky Coffeetree, and Northern Catalpa, which are more southern adapted species, will also serve to bolster the resilience of our floodplain forest and ensure that it will be around for future generations to enjoy.

There are many ways to help us build resilience in our forest. From simple things like watering trees and not transporting firewood, to helping to clear invasives that compete for resources with native plants, building resilience is a great way to get outside and help build a better, more healthy ecosystem, right in your backyard.

VISITOR INFORMATION



Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam

1 Portland Ave., Minneapolis MN 55401

- Take a tour of the lock wall with an NPS ranger
- Learn about locks, dams, and river navigation
- Catch great views of the falls from the observation deck



Coldwater Spring

5601 Minnehaha Park Dr. South, Minneapolis MN 55417

- Observe native plants and animals
- Get sworn in as a junior ranger at Second Saturdays
- Take a Ranger on Call walking tour



Mississippi River Visitor Center

120 Kellogg Blvd. West, Saint Paul MN 55102

- Learn about the park’s cultural and natural history
- Take a simulated canoe trip
- Send digital postcards to your friends

MAY — SEPTEMBER 2017



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

MAY 5	Tunnel Tour @ Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam <i>Member Event*</i>
MAY 13	The Big Watch @ Grey Cloud Dunes SNA
MAY 20	Take Aim at Summer @ DNR Office
MAY 27	Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam Visitor Center Opens
JUNE 1	Mississippi River Paddle Share Season Begins
JUNE 10	Get Outdoors Day @ Powderhorn Park
JUNE 10	Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
JUNE 11	Take a Kid Fishing @ Thompson County Park
JUNE 14	Pontoon Tour @ Harriet Island <i>Member Event*</i>
JUNE 17	Canoe RAVE @ River Park
JUNE 20	Bike with a Ranger @ Hastings Riverfront
JUNE 21	River City Revue @ Harriet Island*
JUNE 22	Pontoon Tour @ Harriet Island <i>Member Event*</i>
JUNE 23	Tunnel Tour @ Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam
JUNE 24	Bike with a Ranger @ Harriet Island
JUNE 28	Share the River Nordeast @ Stormwater Park
JULY 8	Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
JULY 13	Pontoon Tour @ Harriet Island <i>Member Event*</i>
JULY 15	Birds of the River Paddle w/ Wilderness Inquiry
JULY 18	Fish with a Ranger @ Hastings Riverfront
JULY 19	River City Revue @ Harriet Island*
JULY 20	Knapweed Pull @ Grey Cloud Dunes SNA
JULY 26	Share the River Gorge @ Minneapolis Riverfront
JULY 28	Pontoon Tour @ Harriet Island <i>Member Event*</i>
JULY 29	Canoe Paddle @ Vermillion River*
AUGUST 12	Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
AUGUST 15	Bike with a Ranger @ Hastings Riverfront
AUGUST 19	Canoe RAVE @ Lion’s Levee Park
AUGUST 19	Canoe Paddle @ Vermillion River*
AUGUST 22	Pontoon Tour @ Harriet Island <i>Member Event*</i>
AUGUST 24	Visit NPS @ MN State Fair (thru Labor Day)
SEPTEMBER 9	Second Saturday @ Coldwater Spring
SEPTEMBER 14	Seed Collecting @ Grey Cloud Dunes SNA
SEPTEMBER 15	Pontoon Tour @ Harriet Island <i>Member Event*</i>
SEPTEMBER 28	Pontoon Tour @ Harriet Island <i>Member Event*</i>
SEPTEMBER 30	National Public Lands Day @ Coldwater Spring

All events are subject to change. Check parkconnection.org/events for a complete list of upcoming events and additional details.

* Members receive discounted registration for paid programs and invitations to members-only events. Join today at parkconnection.org/membership.

CONTACT



National Park Service
Mississippi River
Visitor Center
651-293-0200
nps.gov/miss



Mississippi Park Connection
651-291-8164
info@parkconnection.org
parkconnection.org

Connect with us:



Want this bi-annual newsletter mailed to you? Contact info@parkconnection.org or call 651-291-8164.