



MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEWS

Spring / Summer 2019

*The official newsletter of Mississippi Park Connection and
the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.*

Reenvisioning the River

Katie Nyberg, Executive Director, Mississippi Park Connection
John Anfinson, Superintendent, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Discover new ways to witness the continuous transformation of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area waterfront over the next few years.

Mississippi River Paddle Share puts you in the middle of the action above the water's surface. On the kayak route from North Mississippi Regional Park to Boom Island Park, an eastern cottonwood tree plot planted entirely by volunteers is visible on the west bank. The route also offers a front row view of the Upper Harbor Terminal project, which will impact one mile of waterfront. Just north of the Plymouth Bridge, you will float by the newly reconstructed Hall's Island that's now home to a diverse array of native vegetation, local wildlife and migrating birds.



Further downstream, the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam provides spectacular views of the falls and historical exhibits. During a guided tour, you can learn about the river's past, the closure of the lock, and the surrounding remnants of the Minneapolis mill industry.



In Saint Paul, more than a thousand trees have been planted so far by the Mississippi River Crew and volunteers at Crosby Farm Regional Park. Our Plant for the Future campaign is reforesting the floodplain landscape shift due to ash tree loss and climate change.

The Paddle Share route from Hidden Falls Regional Park to Harriet Island Regional Park passes by the proposed site for Saint Paul's River Learning Center. Outlined in the city's Great River Passage Plan, the center could become home to a new national park headquarters and serve as the local gateway to the Mississippi River.

There are so many ways to connect with your national park this summer. We hope to see you out on the river!

Coon Rapids Dam to North Mississippi Regional Park

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

Starting just below Coon Rapids Dam, this quiet, winding stretch of the Mississippi River is the most remote of the Paddle Share river routes.

Towering tree canopy drapes over the river banks, providing habitat for a growing population of bald eagles. In the backwaters surrounding the undeveloped islands that dot your route, you'll likely see spiny soft-shelled turtles sunning themselves on logs and driftwood. Keep an eye out for egrets, wild turkeys, turkey vultures, otter, geese, deer, and fox as you paddle downriver. Depending on the time of year, you



Photo by Bethany Birnie



may pass an active heron rookery and hear the raucous calls of its residents as they nest and raise their chicks.

You may also encounter dragonflies and other insect life landing to rest on your kayak as you relax and enjoy the natural outdoor show.

Meet Lyndon Torstenson

Lyndon Torstenson, Educational Partnerships Manager
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

The best classroom in America is the Mississippi River! It's fun, fascinating and meaningful. Teachers often tell me how kids who struggle in the classroom get engaged by outdoor river experiences.



Lyndon with students on Journey to the Falls.

Every time a kid gets turned on to the magic of nature, it is a favorite moment. I was introducing 120 kids to activities on a riverboat and talking about birds when an eagle—on cue—flew down and grabbed a fish out of the Mississippi just out the window! The resurgence of eagles is a sign of hope for the river. I see them almost every day now!

There is nothing more important to our future than our relationship with nature. It's essential that we understand and nurture that connection. In a world of trouble and challenge, there is perennial beauty to be found in wild nature. A viable future requires intact nature, beauty, and hope. Our park can deliver that to kids.

LYNDON'S PARK PICKS



Bird Watching:
Mississippi Gorge Regional
Park oak savanna



Canoe route:
Lions Levee Park to Spring
Lake Park near Hastings



Hiking:
Crosby Park and Pike Island

Biking:
The lovely loop through
Fort Snelling, Lilydale Park,
Crosby Park and Hidden
Falls

Spring Lake Park Reserve

Kyle Just, Park Ranger

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



Perhaps the most amazing views of the river can be found atop the tall bluffs at Spring Lake Park Reserve. During any season, you may see bald eagles and turkey vultures soaring overhead, or pelicans and cormorants floating silently below the bluffs.

More than three miles of nature trails wind through the park, perfect for hiking and snowshoeing. Nearly four miles of groomed classical cross-country ski trails line the bluff with a bird's-eye view of the Mississippi River. During the summer and fall seasons, we organize habitat restoration events at Spring Lake Park Reserve in partnership with Dakota County Parks. Volunteers improve native habitat by removing invasive species and planting wildflowers and trees.

From biking, hiking, and birdwatching to cross country skiing, archery, community garden plots and a stunning gathering center, there is something for everyone during every season at this hidden gem in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

VIPs: Volunteers In Parks

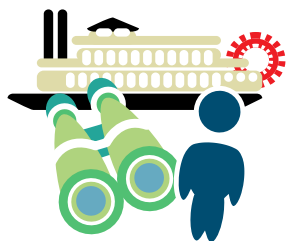
Andrew Marotz, Volunteer Coordinator, Mississippi Park Connection
Paula Swingley, Volunteer Coordinator, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



Our volunteer programs carry deep meaning and have a big impact on our broader vision to preserve and protect the park well into the future. Every planted tree and uprooted invader stems from the common goals of Mississippi Park Connection, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, and all of our amazing, dedicated volunteers. This collaborative approach bolsters effectiveness and boosts efficiency in our collective efforts.



Habitat restoration is part of our core mission and includes planting and managing new trees, removing invasive species, and collecting seeds. Our hands-on approach ensures that volunteers will produce visible results that provide both instant gratification and long-term success.



Another primary focus is to support youth in the Twin Cities, fostering relationships between kids and the outdoors by connecting them with the river. Educator volunteers help students draw connections between classroom visits and the real world, often joining in the fun on a field trip adventure. It's an experience they, and you, will remember far into the future!

Graphic design by
Yana Cherepashenskaya

Bike With A Ranger

Kyle Just, Park Ranger, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Come on out and Bike With a Ranger this summer! These bike programs are a family-friendly way to explore the Mississippi River led by a park ranger. Rides vary in length from one to nine miles and begin at various spectacular locations throughout the park. Imagine exploring the bluffs overlooking Spring Lake on the Mississippi River Trail in Hastings, or learning about the mill history of Minneapolis and the sheer power of Upper St. Anthony Falls by bike!

Each of our bike programs is meant to be non-strenuous and to incorporate timely breaks for historical talks and wildlife observation. On any given bike trip throughout the park's corridor, we may see bald eagles soaring overhead, beavers fastidiously working on their clever homes, or the ever elusive river otter sliding down the riverbank.

No matter your skill level or experience on a bicycle, we are confident that we will have the right route for you.



Plant For The Future

Mary Hammes, Environmental Stewardship and Volunteer Manager
Mississippi Park Connection



Volunteers at a public tree planting event, staking tree tubes in the forest at Burns Avenue Scenic Overlook.

As we prepare for the loss of 20–40 percent of canopy along the river due to the emerald ash borer, we need to make intentional choices about what kind of forest is best suited to grow in its place.

The loss of high density ash tree stands can trigger soil erosion, resulting in water quality issues and depleted habitat. The key to ensuring a healthy and diverse forest canopy is preventing woody and herbaceous invasive species like buckthorn or reed canary grass from taking over as ash deaths leave gaps in the park landscape.

While changes in the park pose very real risks, the situation is not hopeless! This year, Mississippi Park Connection partnered with Colorado State University, University of Minnesota, Saint Paul Natural Resources, and the Northern Institute for Applied Climate Science in a major collaborative effort to study the introduction of new tree species in to the park. The goal is to combat this loss with informed reforestation and management techniques that are better suited for the park's future.

This work was made possible by funds from the Wildlife Conservation Society's Climate Adaptation Fund and a Doris Duke Charitable Foundation grant.

Inspiring the Next Generation

Anna Waugh, Development & Communications Manager
Mississippi Park Connection

Last year, our park worked with more than 100 schools and more than 500 teachers to engage 26,000 students from the Twin Cities metropolitan area on the Mississippi River.

Fourth grade students saw bald eagles soar and searched

the riverbanks for otters using binoculars from the deck of a paddlewheel boat. Seventh graders became citizen scientists collecting data on the floodplain forest. Juniors and seniors in high school got an introduction to natural resource careers through the Mississippi River Crew, an after-school and weekend paid job to restore the woodlands and prairies of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.



Students on a Take Me to the River field trip. Photo by Bethany Birnie

The Mississippi River's future depends on young people in our community building cherished relationships with the outdoors, which is why I hope you'll help inspire the next generation of park visitors, stewards, and advocates.

Volunteer on a youth program this summer or next fall. Connect your child's school to a field trip. Donate to our Ticket to Ride Scholarship Fund or Plant for the Future Campaign. If I haven't inspired you to get involved, perhaps the words of a fourth grader will: "We are the Mississippi River walking around and dancing!" That just sounds like fun to me!

Ways to Get Involved



PARTICIPATE

The park offers a wide range of public programs such as birding, biking, boating, and outdoor activities that put you in touch with nature.



MEMBERSHIP

Gifts have a big impact on park programs. Annual memberships or periodic donations strengthen your commitment to preserve, protect and enjoy the Mississippi River.

LEVELS

\$1,000

St. Anthony Falls

\$500

Coldwater Spring

\$250

Minnehaha Falls

\$100

Harriet Island

\$60

Family

\$35

Individual



ACTIVATE

Volunteers of all kinds make our programs possible, plain and simple. Community ambassadors are also needed to engage with the public to increase awareness and support for the park.