

# MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEWS

Spring / Summer 2020

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

## The River Creates Community

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

In times of joy and peace or sorrow and uncertainty, parks are an essential community space and resource. Just within the boundaries of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, we see people benefiting from outdoor spaces in a myriad of ways.

Parks serve as places to socialize, celebrate and connect. We come to the river to decompress, relax and rejuvenate, seeking the healing aspects of nature for our mental health and wellbeing. Hundreds of miles of walking, biking and boating trails winding through thousands of acres of prairie, forest and water form a massive outdoor gym and recreation area.

The unique composition of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area also brings together researchers, land managers and members of the public to form a river community devoted to strengthening the park's ecosystem in a changing climate.



The river encourages a rewilding of our own spirit, inspiring play and a sense of freedom. Walking through a forest or prairie provides a unique opportunity to explore and learn how the earth and all its inhabitants are interconnected. The river is integral to the stories of many cultures and communities both past and present that reconnect us to our place in the world.

Parks bring community back in balance by providing needed support. When we care for the river, we are caring for our community. As you explore the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area this summer, take a minute to pause and experience your senses in the outdoors. Breathe in, feel the earth, hear the wind, and immerse yourself in nature's wealth.



## New Paddle Share Adventures

Lauren DeGennaro, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Mississippi River Paddle Share is a self-serve kayak program that lets you rent a boat for up to three hours and paddle to a destination downriver. Its fifth season in operation brings new routes and ways to have an on-water experience in the park.

Paddle With a Ranger on Pickerel Lake is a new monthly program perfect for beginners or anyone looking for a more predictable paddle. The fully outfitted program at Lilydale Regional Park offers instruction for all abilities, with optional adaptive paddling equipment like supported hand adaptations or specialized outriggers for balance. The Pickerel Lake station is a great way to gain more kayaking experience before getting on the river.

The **Nature** route starts at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park in Anoka, where paddlers can walk across the first dam on the Mississippi River before setting out. The extended **Nature to City** route will satisfy adventurers seeking a longer paddle. The 8.4-mile paddle showcases the transition from towering trees and



serene wildlife habitat to industrial structures and the Minneapolis skyline. This route and the **City Plus** route pass a pit-stop dock just south of Lowry Avenue Bridge where paddlers can get out and visit one of several restaurants within walking distance. The shorter **City** route has extended reservations that give paddlers more time to explore the river and shorelines without adding distance.

**The Gorge** is a planned route that's in the works to run through the only gorge on the Mississippi River. Undeveloped steep bluffs line a deep channel carved out thousands of years ago by a cascading waterfall. This route feels calm and remote despite starting in the heart of the city.

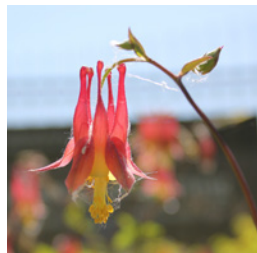
Visit the newly redesigned PaddleShare.org website, launching in May. You'll find trip planning resources, updates regarding construction and other events that might impact a route, and a simplified reservation experience. Paddle With a Ranger events will be listed online at [parkconnection.org/events](http://parkconnection.org/events).

# A Wild Cast of Characters

Jessica Nelson, Park Ranger  
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

From bluff prairies to the floodplain forest along the river, you can find a pop of color from a variety of blooming wildflowers in spring and summer if you take a moment to look closely.

As you wind through the trails underneath budding silver maples and cottonwoods in the spring, look down to see the vibrant white of bloodroot and the bright red of wild columbine (pictured). This colorful flower is a favorite of hummingbirds returning to Minnesota in the spring and bees as they become more active.



Yellowed grasses dominate the park's prairie landscapes, but an attentive observer can find many early blooms among last year's growth. The bright yellow hoary puccoon, electric purple spiderwort, and pink tubular blooms of large-flowered beardtongue are gems among the grasses.



Summer brings an entirely new cast of flowers to the stage. As you stop to breathe in the minty sweet fragrance of bergamot, you may spot several monarch butterflies dancing among the orange and pink flowers of butterfly weed and common milkweed. In wetter areas of the park, look for the white American lotus (pictured) and waterlilies that float on calmer sections of water.

The park truly puts on a great show of wildflowers in the spring and summer. Always follow local guidelines and never pick wildflowers. The most variety of flowers appear in sunny areas. See what new species respond and bloom after a good rain. And follow the insects—where there are insects, there will be flowers. Happy exploring!

# Ways to Get Involved



## PARTICIPATE

Explore the park through a wide range of public programs like birding, biking, boating, outdoor activities and art events that put you in touch with nature.

Join our monthly e-newsletter to learn what's happening in the park.



## SUPPORT

Gifts support youth education, environmental stewardship and community programs in the national park while strengthening your commitment to preserve, protect and enjoy the Mississippi River.

**\$1,000**

St. Anthony Falls Level

**\$60**

Family

**\$35**

Individual



## ACTIVATE

Volunteers of all kinds are a crucial component in park operations, educational programs and habitat restoration. Volunteering is a fun and rewarding way to connect to your community while providing a public connection to the river.

Check the calendar at [parkconnection.org/events](http://parkconnection.org/events)

## Resistance, Resilience and Transition

Mary Hammes, Environmental Stewardship and Volunteer Manager  
Mississippi Park Connection



This gap in the tree canopy at Crosby Farm Regional Park is a result of Emerald ash borer. Last summer, a growth of wild cucumber exploded here, making it nearly impossible for diverse understory to survive. Land managers and scientists from around the country are using areas like this as an opportunity to study forest management techniques.

This year, Mississippi Park Connection and the National Park Service are creating a teaching forest at Crosby Farm Regional Park for researchers, land managers and the public to learn best practices for climate change adaptation. This is part of a 20-year study of forest-management techniques to increase the park's ability to adapt to climate change. The work is a partnership with more than 30 land-managing agencies as well as a network of academic researchers from across the country.

We know all kinds of wildlife count on the river as a migratory flyway, nesting place and home for raising their young. That's why building resiliency into the floodplain forests is so important.

Several factors make habitat along the river highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Emerald ash borer, an invasive beetle, will wipe out hundreds of thousands of ash trees. Loss of these trees coupled with increased precipitation due to climate change will cause erosion of the floodplain and soft sandstone bluffland along the river corridor.

At the same time, gaps left in the tree canopy by the loss of ash at Crosby Farm Regional Park are an opportunity to study and plant new species of trees that will flourish in changing climate conditions. For example, oak trees that are currently more common to southern Minnesota will extend their habitat northward as climate conditions change. Other, new-to-us species like American sycamore might present our forests with pathways to surviving a future of uncertainty.

This year, Mississippi Park Connection will plant tree plots at Crosby Farm with one of three methods: resistance, resilience or transition. The project will demonstrate that adaptive future-thinking forestry is important to a healthy river and is a necessary addition to traditional restoration.

This work was made possible by the Wildlife Conservation Society through its Climate Adaptation Fund through a grant by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

**Resistance:** maintain relatively unchanged conditions over time. Remove non-native invasive plants to make room for native plants. Plant species that currently grow on site such as silver maple, hackberry, cottonwood and Dutch-elm resistant American elm.

**Resilience:** allow some change in current conditions, but encourage return to original conditions. Remove non-native invasive plants and shelterwood. Plant diverse native flood and drought-tolerant trees sourced from local growers, like swamp white oak and river birch.

**Transition:** implement changes to encourage ecosystems to adapt to new conditions. Plant tree species that are native to floodplains south of the park, like Iowa, Illinois and Missouri. Examples include sycamore, honey locust, sweet gum and northern catalpa.

## When Work is an Adventure

Allison Holdhusen, Biological Science Technician  
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

I'll never forget the moment my childhood dream came true. Growing up in the Twin Cities, I spent many days biking and hiking to explore different spots along the river, often with a fishing pole in my backpack. I'd gaze longingly at the water's surface, ever curious of life below. Fast forward several years to my first dive in the Mississippi River, near Hidden Falls. As the park's pontoon floated past my favorite childhood fishing spot, I realized my dream of experiencing the river from underwater was about to become my reality.

With a degree in biology and botany, I navigated my first season as a bio-tech with the National Park Service in 2009 by canoe, kayak, snowshoe, motorboat and foot to survey plant communities in obscure places. My now full-time work coordinating wildlife surveys brings me in close contact with many river critters, including river otters, songbirds, coyotes, aquatic invertebrates and my personal favorite—native river mussels. Using scuba in my

Allie and her team discovered a new population of endangered spectaclecase mussels near Hudson, Wisc. in the St. Croix River in 2018. Photo by Aaron McFarlane



Teams from the National Park Service, Army Corps of Engineers and EcoAnalysts moved mussels out of the way of a channel improvement project in lower Pool 2 in 2018. Photo by Aaron McFarlane

work is a dream come true (big Jacques Cousteau fan here!) and I'm excited about my new leadership role as Program Dive Officer and Dive Examiner with the park's dive program.

Our dive work supports a multitude of inter-agency and partnership efforts to conserve, restore and monitor dwindling populations of native freshwater mussels. Mussels are important to river ecosystems because they filter water and also provide food for other aquatic creatures. They're good indicators of a river's health: mussels disappear when rivers are full of sewage, industrial waste and farm runoff. We also monitor water quality, invasive species and other aquatic resources in the Mississippi and Saint Croix Rivers, and in the wider Great Lakes Region.

I treasure introducing my son to the many wonders of the river and the outdoors. I feel a similar joy connecting the public to the river in new ways, like taking volunteers out to help with wildlife fieldwork, where every workday is like a new adventure. I feel honored to serve our community this way and am driven by a shared purpose to protect the river, the heart of our community, for future generations.

### Dive Into These River Reads

Expand your knowledge of the river park from the comfort of your home or in your favorite quiet reading spot in the park.

#### **“Wicked River” by Lee Sandlin**

This book still reigns as the best adventure read for river lovers a decade after being published. It’s a wild ride that transports the reader to a 19th-century Mississippi River, full of pirates, gamblers and poets. Readers will feel like they are witnessing first-hand some of the most dramatic events of the century, from the battle at Vicksburg to the sinking of the Sultana to the Great Natchez Tornado of 1840.

– Katie Nyberg, Executive Director, Mississippi Park Connection

#### **“Our Way or the Highway” by Mary Losure**

Mary Losure, an MPR reporter, introduces the activists, politicians and police who clashed over the proposed rerouting of Highway 55 in South Minneapolis in the late 1980s. Readers get a front-row seat to the ideals and ideas that flowed through the encampment, dubbed the “Minnehaha Free State”, amid the larger political and historical context in 1988. If you’ve ever pulled buckthorn, planted a tree, or admired the flow at Coldwater Spring, this book will help you understand a critical chapter of this park’s history.

– Anna Waugh, Development & Communications Manager, Mississippi Park Connection

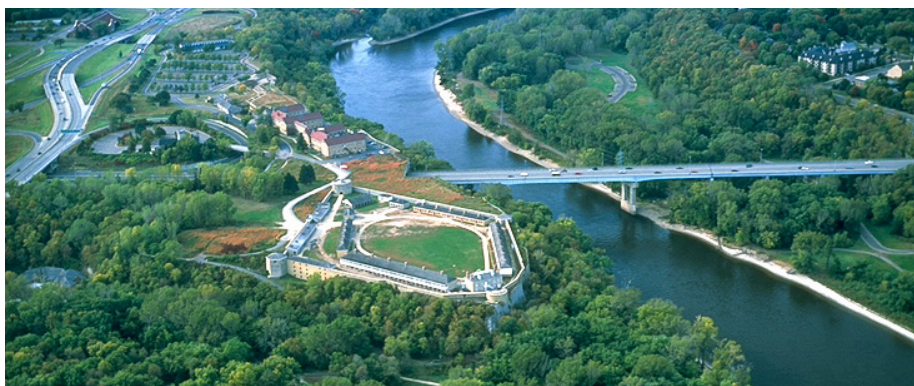
#### **“River Journey” by Clarence Jonk**

This must-read adventure is one of my favorite accounts of a Mississippi River travel trip. A student at the University of Minnesota in 1933, Jonk hoped to escape the Great Depression and find inspiration for his poetry and prose on the Mississippi River. His boat, the Betsy-Nell, floated on eighty 55-gallon oil drums and was propelled by two model T engines. Jonk writes with a dramatic voice, and experienced a river that is difficult to imagine in 2020.

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

## Historic Fort Snelling

Dan Ott, Ph.D., Cultural Resource Program Manager  
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area








Perched above the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota River, Fort Snelling will be celebrating its bicentennial anniversary in 2020! One of Mississippi National River and Recreation Area's premier cultural resources reflecting both the heritage of the Dakota people and the history of the United States, this site offers a dynamic opportunity for visitors to discover the deep cultural, social, military and political history of the Upper Midwest.

Take a guided tour, view an exhibit, watch a demonstration, and engage in thought-provoking conversations that will spark connections between the past and your life today. Two-hundred years after the fort was founded in 1820, this summer the Minnesota Historical Society will begin breaking ground on a revitalization of the historic site, restoring the landscape around the site, removing the 1980s visitor center, and reactivating a 1905 calvary barracks as the site's new interpretive center.

Visitors can enhance their journey to the river by walking down the bluff trail into beautiful Fort Snelling State Park or up the Minnehaha Trail to see the ongoing restoration of Coldwater Spring!



## MAP LEGEND

-  Boundaries of the park (areas shaded green)
-  Mississippi River Paddle Share Station  
*Rent a kayak at [www.paddleshare.org](http://www.paddleshare.org)*
-  Mississippi River Visitor Center  
*Located at the Science Museum of Minnesota*
-  Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam  
*Visitor Center open during summer months*
-  Ranger On Call Station  
*Audio tours, [www.rangeroncall.com](http://www.rangeroncall.com)*

## SITES ALONG THE RIVER

- 1 Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park
- 2 Mississippi Gateway Regional Park
- 3 River Park
- 4 Manomin County Park
- 5 North Mississippi Regional Park
- 6 Mississippi Watershed Management Org.
- 7 Boom Island
- 8 Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam
- 9 Stone Arch Bridge
- 10 Mill Ruins Park
- 11 Bohemian Flats Park
- 12 Minnehaha Regional Park
- 13 Coldwater Spring
- 14 Fort Snelling State Park
- 15 Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 16 Pickerel Lake
- 17 Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park
- 18 Mississippi River Visitor Center
- 19 Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary
- 20 Lions Levee Park
- 21 Spring Lake Park Reserve
- 22 Hastings Riverfront



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National Park Service  
 Mississippi River Visitor Center  
 651-293-0200  
[nps.gov/miss](http://nps.gov/miss)

## CONNECT WITH US





## MISSISSIPPI PARK CONNECTION

*Discover your river*

Mississippi Park Connection is the official nonprofit partner to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. We seek to enrich the life of the river and the lives of all who experience the national park through youth education programs, environmental stewardship volunteerism, and outdoor community engagement events.



The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area is a 72-mile national park, binding together more than 85 state, regional and local parks from Coon Rapids to Hastings. The purpose of the 54,000-

acre river park, established by Congress in 1988, is to preserve, protect and enhance the significant values of the waters and land of the Mississippi River corridor.

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