



# Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2012-13 Annual Report July 2013



300 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Suite 101, Waite Park, MN 56387 • 651-341-4196 • [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

## **Mission**

The mission of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota is to promote, preserve and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. The Commission is organized and guided by Minnesota Statute 161.1419.

## **Quarterly Meetings of the Full Commission**

The MN-MRPC held four full Commission meetings between July 2012 and July 2013 – August 23, 2012; November 29, 2012; February 28, 2013 and May 23, 2013. Each meeting included updates from regional citizen Commissioners and state agencies. Work is carried out by the full Commission along with four work groups – Capital Improvement; Economic Development; Marketing; and Organization.

## **Projects & Activities**

### **Great River Road Corridor Management Planning and Implementation**

The Commission was awarded a 2011 National Scenic Byways Grant for Corridor Management Planning and Implementation. Required matching funds are being provided by the National Park Service. This project will develop a Corridor Management Plan to guide the work of Minnesota's Mississippi River Parkway Commission for the next 10 – 15 years. The project will also implement a current CMP key strategy - signing the Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT) statewide. Partners include the MN-MRPC, MnDOT, National Park Service, Minnesota Legislative Coordinating Commission, and Trust for Public Land. The Corridor Management Plan will include an inventory and map of GRR resources; confirmed Great River Road Storybook content and locations; route assessment and recommendations; visitor impressions and analysis of visitor needs; corridor development strategies; byway organization business plan; and communications/public relations plan. The MRT implementation portion of the project includes signage; community information kiosks, maps and electronic traveler information. This will be a multi-year project carried out in phases, with completion tentatively planned for June 2015. Activity during 2013 included Commission project review and discussion; Project Management Team meetings; definition of information to be included in GIS resource database; documentation of funding flow/matching funds; draft Request for Proposal for Corridor Management Planning services; MRT/USBR 45 signage discussions/planning; revised MRT sign plan; municipal agreements for signage in Bluffs Region (Phase I); purchasing of signs for Phase I; and redesign of the National Park Service Mississippi River Companion (with GRR and MRT mapping).

### **Great River Road Visual Resource Protection Plan Project**

A National Scenic Byways grant was received by the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) for this effort. The project will create a Visual Resource Protection Plan for the Metro Region of Minnesota's Great River Road that will serve as a prototype for protecting visual resources in the byway's six destination areas. During 2013, process development and beta testing of the viewpoint evaluation system took place, the public was invited to submit their favorite Mississippi views in the 72 mile corridor (on-line, by mail or in person), the top 50 views were identified and mapped, views were assessed by staff and volunteers during both leaf-off and leaf-on seasons, and a public meeting was held to provide information gathered to date and receive feedback. The final project report is now in development. It will include an overview of the project and methodology, data gathered, data applications, threat and opportunities, recommended infrastructure improvements, and recommendations for future use of the methodology in other areas. The report and plan will provide information for use as development and land management decisions are made. The process and results will be utilized in Corridor Management Planning for the full length of the Minnesota Great River Road. A project information sheet is attached.

## **Interpretive Panels**

Designs have been finalized for panels to be placed at New Albin, Itasca State Park, Bemidji, St. Cloud, and Mendota locations. Panels were fabricated and received during FY '13 for Mendota, St. Cloud and New Albin. The full project, to be completed in FY 2014, will result in an estimated 26 panels at six sites, utilizing stories from the Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Plan.

## **Historic Roadside Property Restorations**

Contracts were finalized and most work completed during FY 2013 on the final four (of twelve) restoration projects along the Great River Road. The four sites are - Sibley Pioneer Church Memorial; La Crescent Overlook, La Crescent State Entrance Marker, and Reno Springs Roadside Rest Area. A state appropriation provided funds for restoration of 12 sites on or eligible for the National Historic Register.

## **Road and Bridge Projects**

The new Lowry Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis has received numerous state and national awards for engineering, environmental excellence, and overall project quality. The new four-lane, 1,600 foot span bridge accommodates vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, rail and river traffic and relinks busy residential and business areas. The new Hastings Highway 61 Bridge is nearing completion. Work also continues on the I-90 bridge at Dresbach, Highway 43 bridge at Winona, and Highway 63 bridge at Red Wing.

## **Resource Protection - Silica Sand Mining**

Silica sand mining continues to be an important topic in the Mississippi Bluffs Region of southeastern Minnesota. Cities and counties have been considering moratoria, regulations and permits. The Minnesota Legislature passed a bill during the 2013 session directing the MN Environmental Quality Board to develop model standards and criteria for mining, transporting and processing silica sand, in consultation with local units of government; defining a technical assistance team to assist local units of government; and requiring completion of an environmental assessment worksheet for any new projects meeting or exceeding defined thresholds. MnDOT provided technical testimony and maps (attached) related to the Great River Road during legislative committee hearings. Commissioner Sheronne Mulry presented Great River Road information at a local Izaak Walton League Meeting in the region.

## **Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT)**

The MN-MRPC and MnDOT continue to partner on efforts to fully implement and promote the MRT. The MN-MRPC's Corridor Management Planning and Implementation grant and a matching National Park Service grant will provide MRT signage, information kiosks, maps and electronic information for travelers. Several organizations worked together during the year to clarify signage requirements and plans after the MRT was designated as United States Bicycle Route 45 in Minnesota. A series of meetings and conference calls took place involving MnDOT, MN-MRPC, NPS, FHWA, AASHTO, MRT Inc., and Adventure Cycling. Issues included maintaining the MRT's ten state branding and signage while also meeting requirements of U.S. Bicycle Route designation. Final sign plans were completed, municipal agreements were secured with local units of government, and MRT signs were ordered for Phase I of the project (Hastings to Iowa Border region to be installed summer 2013). The MN-MRPC, in support of bicycling in Minnesota, placed ads in the 2013-14 Minnesota Bicycling Guide and 2013 Minnesota Biking Map.

## **Great River Road 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

In celebration and recognition of the Great River Road's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the MN-MRPC requested and received a Governor's Proclamation (attached). The proclamation designated May as Great River Road month in Minnesota, in conjunction with National Tourism Week and the Governor's Fishing Opener which was hosted in Park Rapids and included a visit to Lake Itasca, source of the Mississippi. The Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planner was updated and reprinted featuring the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the cover (attached). Lapel pins were purchased for distribution at meetings and events. Explore Minnesota Tourism featured the Great River Road 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on their Group & Packaged Travel Planner (cover attached), American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace booklet cover, and Minnesota Explorer spring/summer newspaper insert. The MN-MRPC also served as a sponsor for the Minnesota ABA booth/booklet and highlighted the GRR 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and MN GRR interpretive centers. MN-MRPC and Explore Minnesota Tourism representatives staffed the Great River Road booth at the Great Race Kickoff/Back to the 50s Weekend at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. Events along the Minnesota Great River Road were submitted to the National MRPC for inclusion on the anniversary events website.

## **National MRPC**

The MN-MRPC was represented at both the 2012 Annual and 2103 Semi-Annual MRPC meetings. Carol Zoff presented information on MAP-21 at both meetings. Karl Samp was elected as MRPC Treasurer, and received the MRPC Distinguished Service Award.

## **Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative Annual Meeting**

The Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative 2013 Annual Meeting was held in St. Cloud, June 27 – 30. St. Cloud Mayor Dave Kleis hosted the meeting. MN-MRPC member Karl Samp represented the MRPC.

## **Hospitality Training Partnership**

The MN-MRPC and DNR are in planning stages to update Minnesota Great River Road regional map tablets, develop a hospitality training PowerPoint, and roll out hospitality training at state parks along or near the Mississippi River, for local tourism/hospitality staff. Implementation is currently scheduled for spring 2014.

## **New Great River Road Interpretive Center**

The Winona County History Center was designated as Minnesota's newest member of the Great River Road Network of Interpretive Centers. The center is located in historic downtown Winona, near the Mississippi. A variety of exhibits tell the unique stories of the area, including an award winning children's exhibit featuring a river steamboat pilot house. For details, visit [www.winona.history.org](http://www.winona.history.org).

## **Funding/Great River Road Investments**

The Minnesota Great River Road and its amenities are supported by several funding sources, including those managed by the MN-MRPC as listed below (state operating budget, FHWA and state grants) and those managed by related organizations (other scenic byways, partner organizations such as the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, State of Minnesota, etc.).

### **State Operating Budget**

The MN-MRPC operated with state funding at levels allowing the Commission to proceed with priorities. State operating funding for FY '13 was \$85,500 which included a base amount of \$63,000 along with carry-over from the previous fiscal year which allowed for special projects including the MN-GRR 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary map reprint.

### **Federal Highway Administration Grants**

- Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management Planning & Implementation (\$560,000) - Grant work began during 2013. MRT signs were purchased for Phase I of the statewide signage project (Hastings to Iowa Border).
- Minnesota Great River Road National Scenic Byway Marketing (\$43,000) – Most grant tasks have been completed. A hospitality training project is being developed in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. This is the last project to be implemented under the grant, with completion of the grant planned by June 2014.
- Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Panels, Phase 1 (\$50,000) - This project will place a series of interpretive signs in various Minnesota Great River Road destination areas. Panel designs have been finalized for remaining sites and panels were fabricated during FY '13 for three locations.

### **National Park Service Grant**

Great River Road Corridor Management Planning and Implementation (\$140,000) – Funds are local match for the National Scenic Byways Grant, and dedicated to specific tasks in the project that directly benefit the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

### **2012 National Scenic Byway Grants Funded**

Two projects along the Minnesota Great River Road were awarded 2012 National Scenic Byway Grants – Aitkin County, for a project to pave some of the last remaining gravel sections of the Great River Road; and Dakota County, to construct parking, trail connections, signage and restrooms near the Rock Island Swing Bridge.

### **Minnesota Transportation Alternatives Program**

MnDOT held regional meetings during the year to share information on MAP-21 and its impact on programs and funding sources, and to gather feedback on structure of the Transportation Alternatives Program moving forward. Options include funds being regionally administered through Area Transportation Partnerships, using a centralized approach for

the state, or some combination of both. The MN-MRPC passed a of support for allocation of Transportation Alternatives funds at the state level specifically for National Scenic Byways in the state due to statewide and national significance.

## **Local & Regional Activities and Amenity Development**

- **Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership** – The partnership held a Riverfront Vitality Summit in July 2012, with top priorities identified as riverfront parks and trails; private investment along the river; increasing riverside venues (restaurants, etc.). The Riverfront Partnership is also continuing its vitality indicators project, to measure impacts of investment along the Mississippi.
- **Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board** – A celebration was held to recognize recent renovations at Boom Island and B.F. Nelson Parks.
- **19<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Paul Great River Gathering** – This annual gathering of the community focusing on the Mississippi and City of St. Paul was held May 9 at St. Paul RiverCentre. Five members represented the MN-MRPC at the event and exhibit area.
- **MN DNR “Take Aim at Summer”** – Event held at DNR central region headquarters along the Mississippi River in St. Paul, focused on outdoor activities available within an urban area.
- **Mississippi National River and Recreation Area: Alternative Transportation Plan** – The goal of this plan is to increase visitation to national park without increasing congestion, via a multi-modal transportation system. An online transportation planning tool is nearing completion for travelers, which will provide information on Nice Ride bike stations, mass transit stops, river accesses, and more. On May 30, Nice Ride Minnesota, the National Park Service, MnDOT, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota, Hennepin County, and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board held a kick-off ride and rally to launch 24 new bike share stations along the Mississippi River and within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Funding for the 24 new stations along the river was made possible through an NPS grant to Nice Ride Minnesota through the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program administered by the FHWA.
- **National Water Trail Designation** – The 72 miles of river within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area was designated as the 2nd National Water Trail in the United States. The National Park Service is planning to submit an application to extend the designation to the full length of the Mississippi in Minnesota. A presentation was provided at the May 23 MN-MRPC quarterly meeting and the MN-MRPC has provided a letter of support.
- **Brainerd-Baxter Mississippi River Revitalization Project** – This group continues to work with the National Park Service’s Parks and Trails Program as they move forward with plans for the Brainerd-Baxter area, and plans to align efforts with the new Corridor Management Plan developed for the MN Great River Road. The City of Brainerd recently defined priorities and development of a River Walk is included.
- **St. Cloud Area** – “Mississippi Partners” was established in 2012 to champion implementation of the recently completed urban river plan by prioritizing, educating, marketing/promoting, advocating, and fundraising for future river initiatives. A new project website was launched in 2013 – [www.mississippipartners.org](http://www.mississippipartners.org).
- **Take a Day OFF\* (Outdoor Family Fun) on the Mississippi** - This annual event at Stearns County Mississippi River Park is organized by Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District, Minnesota DNR Benton County, St. Cloud State University and several other local partners. 1,300 people participated in the August 11, 2012 event. Free activities included fishing, river rides, archery, river education, nature hikes, kayaking, canoeing, kids games, native plantings, nature art, river shore landscaping, know your duck, and family picnics.
- **Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trail** – Trail usage grew from 15,000 in the first year to 25,000 in the second year.
- **New Trail Development** – Discussions are underway to create a bicycle trail along the Mississippi in the newly defined Mississippi Northwoods Heritage Complex (just outside Brainerd). The parcel includes 11 miles of Mississippi River frontage and the potential new trail would connect to existing trails in the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and City of Brainerd.
- **Milford Mine Memorial Park** – Crow Wing County is planning and seeking funding to create an interpretive/memorial park including boardwalk access at the site of the Milford Mine near Crosby. The site is about one mile from the Great River Road and marks the location of one of the worst mining accidents in state history. The MN-MRPC has passed a motion of support for this project.
- **Upper Mississippi Gatherings** – Mississippi Gathering 5 was held October 6, 2012, convened by the Initiative Foundation, Mississippi Headwaters Board and Trust for Public Land. The series of gatherings focuses on bringing together partners and initiatives along the first 400 miles of the river. MN-MRPC technical advisors Paul Labovitz and Carol Zoff were presenters on impactful river projects and the Corridor Management Planning project, and MN-MRPC member John Schaubach is a member of the planning team for the gatherings.

- **St. Cloud Riverbluffs Park** – MN-MRPC member Karl Samp attended the July 2012 ribbon cutting/dedication of this new park along the Mississippi featuring a boat landing and trails.
- **Historic Barn Preservation** – A group is working to promote and preserve the McDougall Barn site south of Little Falls, built in 1877 and listed on the National Historic Register. Karl Samp has served as MN-MRPC liaison.
- **Fort Snelling Upper Post Development** – The Minnesota DNR is partnering with Hennepin County on a project to reuse/develop barracks and other buildings in the “upper post” of Fort Snelling.

## **Membership**

The MN-MRPC is organized by state statute to include:

(2) Members of the House of Representatives

(2) Members of the Senate

(5) Members of State Agencies - (1) appointed by each: DNR, Mn/DOT, Historical Society, Agriculture & Tourism

(5) Regional Members – (1) from each of the Great River Road regions established by statute

(1) Member-At-Large – appointed by the other 14

New members welcomed over the past year: Scott Bradley, Minnesota Department of Transportation Appointee and Representative Mike Benson. Thank you to outgoing Commissioners Frank Pafko, Representative Branden Petersen and Jim Lucachick.

**This report is respectfully submitted on July 25, 2013.**

**Rep. Sheldon Johnson, MN-MRPC Chair**

# Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Visual Resource Viewshed Analysis

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## About the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)

This 54,000-acre park was established by Congress in 1988 encompasses 72 miles along the Mississippi River and surrounding landscape running through the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metro area. The National Park Service owns very little of the land, and works in partnership with 25 local governments, several state agencies and numerous organizations to preserve and enhance the scenic, recreational, historical, cultural, natural, and scientific values of the area, and ensure that commercial uses are consistent with the protection of these globally significant values.

Opportunities for historic, recreational, and scenic touring are plentiful within the MNRRA, which includes segments of three popular recreation corridors:

- **The Great River Road National Scenic Byway** travels for 575 miles through the heart of Minnesota before continuing south through nine more states to the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippi flows through six distinct regions in Minnesota, each offering unique river experiences and landscapes. Highlighted by the MNRRA, the Metro Mississippi region runs from Elk River to Hastings through Minneapolis/St. Paul. For more information, visit [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com).
- **The Mississippi River Trail** is Minnesota's first state scenic bikeway and provides opportunities tailored for bicyclists of all types and ages to follow America's great

river. Minnesota's portion of the ten-state bikeway starts at the river's source in Itasca State Park and often follows the Great River Road. It also offers a more intimate river experience, winding over 600 miles along the river and its various tributaries to the Iowa border. For more information, visit <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt/>.

- **The Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway** is also a Minnesota State Scenic Byway. Two of its seven districts, the Downtown Riverfront and Mississippi River, are within the MNRRA. In addition to creek and river views, Grand Rounds offers a wealth of interpretive sites and information centers as well as hiking, biking, skiing and driving paths. For more information, visit [www.minneapolisparcs.org/grandrounds](http://www.minneapolisparcs.org/grandrounds).

## About the Visual Resource Protection Plan

Scenic views are some of the most highly valued resources in the MNRRA. These views are threatened by increasing pressures from land uses associated with urban development. The National Park Service, in partnership with the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, is developing a plan to preserve, protect, and enhance views along the Mississippi River and surrounding area.

**For more information about this project, please contact:**

Susan Overson, Landscape Architect/Park Planner  
651.293.8436  
[susan\\_overson@nps.gov](mailto:susan_overson@nps.gov)



# Tell us about your favorite scenic viewpoints in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



We are collecting public input on scenic viewpoints from Dayton/Ramsey to the north and Hastings/Prescott to the south. Please take a few minutes to let us know about your favorite views and the places that are important to you. We are trying to collect information about how often you visit the viewpoint, how long you stay there, how you reach the area, and why you feel it is scenic. Please use a separate form for each viewpoint you would like to comment on.

**Responses will be collected until February 22nd, 2013.**

You can also attach a photograph (recent or historic) of your favorite view.

**We encourage you to provide input online at  
[mymississippiview.crowdmap.com](http://mymississippiview.crowdmap.com)**

If not responding online, please e-mail the form to [susan\\_overson@nps.gov](mailto:susan_overson@nps.gov) or send it by mail to:

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MISS)  
Attn: Susan Overson  
111 Kellogg Blvd. E, Suite 105 • St. Paul, MN 55101

We would love to hear from you! Please use the space below to share any comments you may have about your favorite viewpoint in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

Zip Code (required):

### *Optional Information*

Name

Mailing Address

Email

I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities for the Visual Resource Protection Plan.

**Thank you for your participation!**



## Senate Energy & Environment Committee

### Potential Silica Sand Industry Impact Testimony

- Local byway partners and the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission have requested MnDOT bring to your attention the **Great River Road National Scenic Byway**, which runs through the region of increasing silica sand industry activity, and to suggest frameworks to help permitting authorities assess potential impacts from silica sand industry development.
- 2013 marks the 75th year of Great River Road, a ten-state road network that celebrates the Mississippi River through a wide variety of opportunities for river exploration by residents and tourists alike. In 1938 Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes envisioned the Great River Road as a means to celebrate America's largest river, restoring it from an increasingly industrial paradigm to that of a parkway.
- Since that time local, state and Federal investment have developed facilities along the river valley that attract residents and tourists. Many of these are shown on the map titled "*Potential Resources and Impact Areas for the Silica Sand Industry.*" The map does not reflect analysis, although GIS mapping of these and other agency data could serve as a tool for impact analysis related to the byway in the permitting process to identify potential impacts of silica sand development and options to avoid, minimize or mitigate them.
- A framework for assessing impacts of the silica sand industry could include the Federal Highway Administration's national scenic byway intrinsic qualities: **archaeological, natural, cultural, recreational, scenic, and historic.**
- The **Mississippi River Trail, MnDOT's first state bikeway**, was established by Minn. Stat. 160.266 last session and shown on the map as a red dash. This route combines Mississippi exploration, active living and a new tourism product that adds value to existing roads and trails. This year MnDOT will install route signage.
- The map identifies transportation investments that have preserved scenic views, with significant scenic easements shown in yellow. Small wonder that last year a Huffington Post poll named Wisconsin's' GRR **America's prettiest drive.**
- Assessing the cumulative impact of landscape change resulting from silica sand, CAPX2020 and wind farms on the Great River Road's scenic quality is a concern of the Commission. All three are occurring along this scenic route in the absence of coordinated permitting.

For More  
Information

Contact:

Carol Zoff  
Environmental Stewardship  
651-366-4705  
carol.zoff@state.mn.us

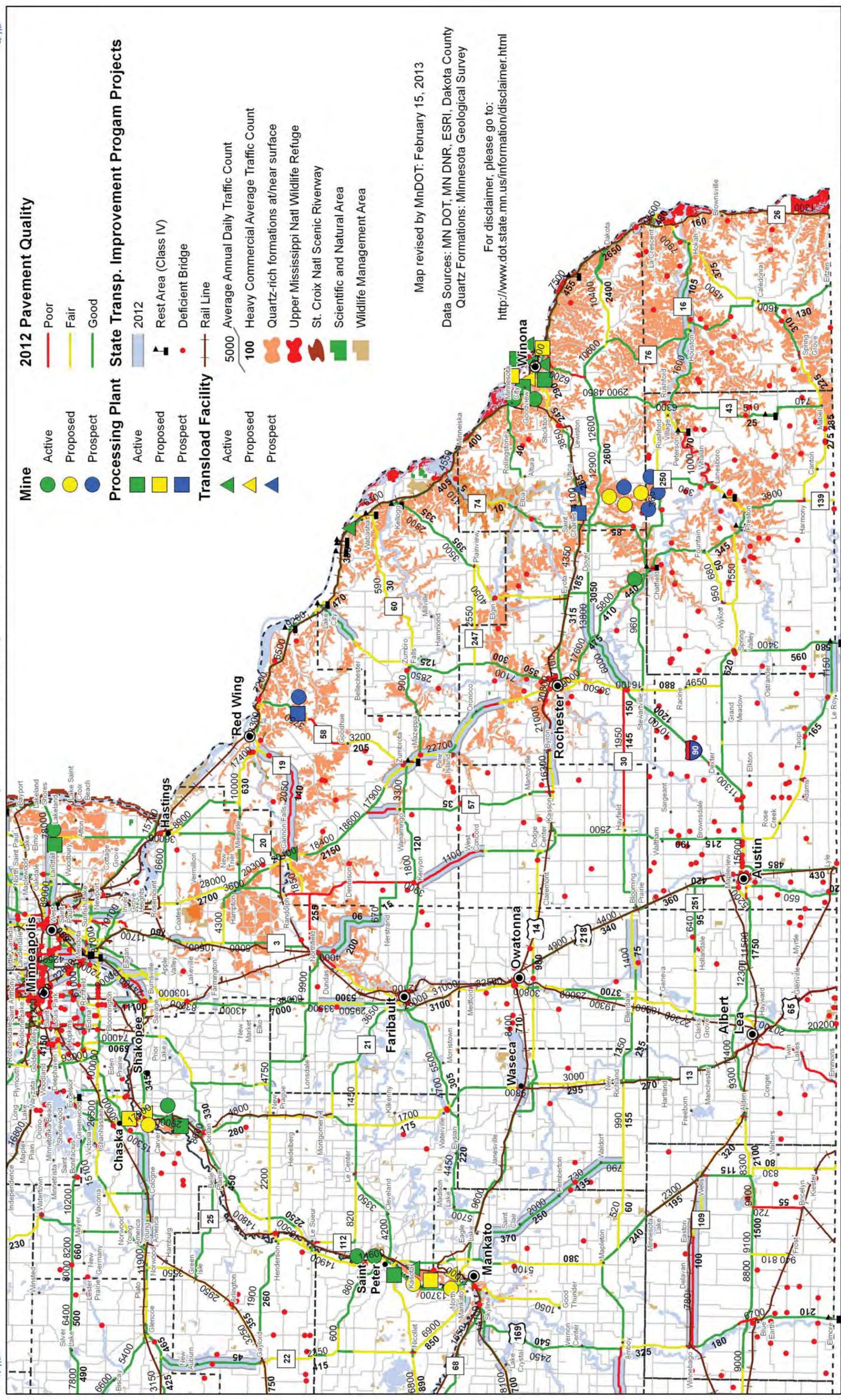
*Your Destination... Our Priority*





# Transportation Assets and Traffic Levels

Minnesota Department of Transportation



### 2012 Pavement Quality

- Poor
- Fair
- Good

### Mine

- Active
- Proposed
- Prospect

### Processing Plant State Transp. Improvement Program Projects

- Active
- Proposed
- Prospect

### Transload Facility

- ▲ Active
- ▲ Proposed
- ▲ Prospect

- 2012
- ▲ Rest Area (Class IV)
- Deficient Bridge
- Rail Line
- 5000 Average Annual Daily Traffic Count
- 100 Heavy Commercial Average Traffic Count
- Quartz-rich formations at/near surface
- Upper Mississippi Natl Wildlife Refuge
- St. Croix Natl Scenic Riverway
- Scientific and Natural Area
- Wildlife Management Area

Map revised by MnDOT: February 15, 2013

Data Sources: MN DOT, MN DNR, ESRI, Dakota County  
 Quartz Formations: Minnesota Geological Survey

For disclaimer, please go to:  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/information/disclaimer.html>

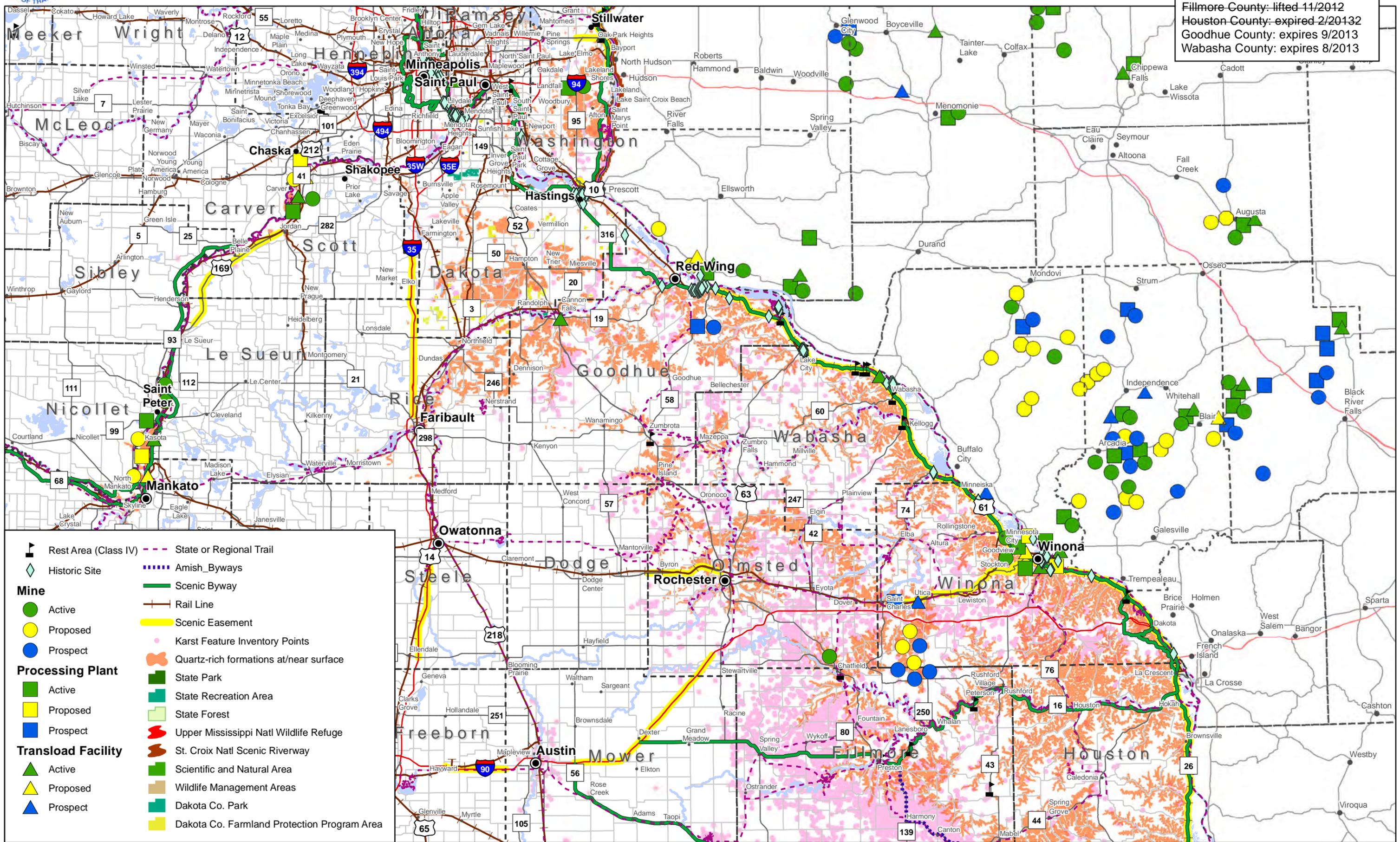




# Potential Resources and Impact Areas for the Silica Sand Industry

Minnesota Department of Transportation

**Moratoria:**  
 City of Winona: expires 3/20/2013  
 City of Redwing: expired 10/28/2012  
 Fillmore County: lifted 11/2012  
 Houston County: expired 2/2013  
 Goodhue County: expires 9/2013  
 Wabasha County: expires 8/2013



	Rest Area (Class IV)		State or Regional Trail
	Historic Site		Amish Byways
<b>Mine</b>			Scenic Byway
	Active		Rail Line
	Proposed		Scenic Easement
	Prospect		Karst Feature Inventory Points
<b>Processing Plant</b>			Quartz-rich formations at/near surface
	Active		State Park
	Proposed		State Recreation Area
	Prospect		State Forest
<b>Transload Facility</b>			Upper Mississippi Natl Wildlife Refuge
	Active		St. Croix Natl Scenic Riverway
	Proposed		Scientific and Natural Area
	Prospect		Wildlife Management Areas
			Dakota Co. Park
			Dakota Co. Farmland Protection Program Area





## STATE of MINNESOTA

- WHEREAS: The Great River Road was created in 1938 to highlight the nearly 3,000 mile, ten-state journey of the Mississippi River from its headwaters at Lake Itasca in Minnesota, to its mouth at the Gulf of Mexico; and
- WHEREAS: The Great River Road is a National Scenic Byway, drawing visitors from across the nation and the world to its unique cultural, recreational, and scenic attractions; and
- WHEREAS: As home of the headwaters of the Mississippi River, the State of Minnesota has 575 miles of Great River Road, spanning 21 counties, the longest stretch of any of the Great River Road states; and
- WHEREAS: The Mississippi River states—Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin—are celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great River Road throughout the year 2013.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, MARK DAYTON, Governor of Minnesota, do hereby proclaim the month of May 2013, as:

# GREAT RIVER ROAD MONTH

in the State of Minnesota.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Minnesota to be affixed at the State Capitol this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of May.

  
GOVERNOR



SECRETARY OF STATE



# explore Minnesota's Great River Road



**LEGEND**

**Great River Road Destination Areas:**

- Mississippi Headwaters
- Mississippi Northwoods
- Mississippi Crossings
- Scenic Mississippi
- Metro Mississippi
- Mississippi Bluffs

**94** Interstate highway

**10** U.S. highway

**23** State highway

**33** County state aid highway

■ State park

■ National forest

◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Center



For more Great River Road travel information, contact:

**EXPLORE Minnesota**  
 .COM

**MINNESOTA MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION**  
 300 33rd Avenue South - Suite 101  
 Waite Park, MN 56387  
 Phone: 651-341-4196  
 Minnesota Great River Road:  
[www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)  
 10-State Great River Road:  
[www.ExperienceMississippiRiver.com](http://www.ExperienceMississippiRiver.com)

**EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM**  
 Phone: 888-868-7476 or  
[www.ExploreMinnesota.com](http://www.ExploreMinnesota.com)

**AMERICA'S BYWAYS**  
 NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS  
[www.Byways.org](http://www.Byways.org)

## The Great River Road... National Scenic Byway of the Mississippi River

The Great River Road in Minnesota travels 575 miles beside the legendary Mississippi River. It is a network of roadways that offers a bounty of river experience, from the pristine Mississippi headwaters in Itasca State Park through lush forest and the central lakes region, rich farmland and the metro bustle of the Twin Cities, to the awe-inspiring bluffs of Minnesota's southeastern border.

unique geological features throughout the 11 Great River Road State Parks and numerous scenic areas that border its route. We invite you to visit an interpretive center or historic site to learn about the history and ecology of the state and the role of the mighty river. Stop to take a hike on a woodland trail, paddle down river in a steamboat or canoe, or catch breathtaking views from the Mississippi bluffs, all the while partaking in one of America's favorite pastimes: The Pleasure Drive.

Nature lovers will find ample opportunity to view wildlife along the byway and



For its cultural, historic, recreational and scenic qualities, the Great River Road in Minnesota has been designated a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration - a river and its road to be treasured, explored, experienced, enjoyed!



As you navigate the Great River Road, look for the green pilot's wheel logo with the steamboat in the center. You'll see "National Route" and "State Alternate Route" signs along the byway. The national route takes you on the officially designated Federal Highway Administration journey. The state route is an alternate route along the river that will take you to places of interest... a bit off the beaten path. Way finding on this map is for the National Route only. Please use the Official State Highway Map of Minnesota or visit [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com) for more detailed directions.

## Catch the Sensation of each Destination



Six distinct regions - or destination areas - with unique travel experiences have been identified along the Minnesota Great River Road, "anchored" on either end by larger cities that offer a variety of lodging, dining, entertainment and transportation options. The "destination area" concept for the byway is designed to help travelers navigate shorter, more focused trips. For the adventurous traveler, with about a week to travel, the wonders of the entire byway await! Use the destination area descriptions that follow to create the Mississippi River experience that's just right for you. Enjoy the ride!

### Destination Area Tourism Contacts

- Mississippi Headwaters:**  
**ITASCA STATE PARK TO BEMIDJI**  
 Visit Bemidji  
 218-759-0164  
 877-250-5959  
[www.visitbemidji.com](http://www.visitbemidji.com)
- Mississippi Northwoods:**  
**BEMIDJI TO GRAND RAPIDS**  
 Visit Bemidji  
 218-759-0164  
 877-250-5959  
[www.visitbemidji.com](http://www.visitbemidji.com)  
 Cass Lake Chamber of Commerce  
 800-356-8615  
[www.casslake.com](http://www.casslake.com)  
 Visit Grand Rapids  
 218-335-2250  
 800-355-9740  
[www.visitgrandrapids.com](http://www.visitgrandrapids.com)  
 Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce  
 218-326-6619  
**Mississippi Crossings:**  
**GRAND RAPIDS TO LITTLE FALLS**  
 Visit Grand Rapids  
 218-326-6619  
 800-355-9740  
[www.visitgrandrapids.com](http://www.visitgrandrapids.com)  
 Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce  
 218-326-6619  
**Aitkin Chamber of Commerce**  
 218-927-2316  
 800-526-8342  
[www.aitkin.com](http://www.aitkin.com)  
 Cuyuna Lakes Chamber  
 (Bay Lake, Crosby, Cuyuna, Deerwood, Emily, Ironton, Riverton & Trommald)  
 218-546-8131  
[www.cuyunalakes.com](http://www.cuyunalakes.com)  
 Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce  
 218-829-2838  
 800-450-2838  
[www.explorebrainerdlakes.com](http://www.explorebrainerdlakes.com)  
 Little Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau  
 320-616-4959  
 800-325-5916  
[www.littlefallssm.com](http://www.littlefallssm.com)  
**Scenic Mississippi:**  
**LITTLE FALLS TO ELK RIVER**  
 Little Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau  
 320-616-4959  
 800-325-5916  
[www.littlefallssm.com](http://www.littlefallssm.com)  
 St. Cloud Area Convention & Visitors Bureau  
 320-251-4170  
 800-264-2940  
[www.granitecountry.com](http://www.granitecountry.com)  
 Monticello Chamber of Commerce  
 763-295-2700  
[www.monticellochamber.com](http://www.monticellochamber.com)
- Elk River Chamber of Commerce  
 763-441-3110  
[www.elkriverchamber.org](http://www.elkriverchamber.org)
- Metro Mississippi:**  
**ELK RIVER TO HASTINGS**  
 Elk River Chamber of Commerce  
 763-441-3110  
[www.elkriverchamber.org](http://www.elkriverchamber.org)  
 Minneapolis Northwest  
 763-566-7722  
 800-541-4364  
[www.minneapolisnorthwest.com](http://www.minneapolisnorthwest.com)  
 Meet Minneapolis  
 612-767-8000  
 888-676-MPLS  
[www.minneapolis.org](http://www.minneapolis.org)  
 Visit Saint Paul  
 651-265-4900  
 800-627-6101  
[www.visitstpaol.com](http://www.visitstpaol.com)  
 National Park Service - Mississippi National River & Recreation Area Visitor Center  
 651-293-0200  
[www.nps.gov/misr](http://www.nps.gov/misr)  
 Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau  
 651-437-6775  
 888-612-6122  
[www.hastingsmn.org](http://www.hastingsmn.org)  
**Mississippi Bluffs:**  
**HASTINGS TO IOWA BORDER**  
 Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau  
 651-437-6775  
 888-612-6122  
[www.hastingsmn.org](http://www.hastingsmn.org)  
 Mississippi Valley Partners (Red Wing to Winona)  
[www.mississippi-river.org](http://www.mississippi-river.org)  
 Red Wing Visitors & Convention Bureau  
 651-385-5934  
 800-498-3444  
[www.redwing.org](http://www.redwing.org)  
 Lake City Chamber of Commerce  
 877-525-3248  
[www.lakecitymn.org](http://www.lakecitymn.org)  
[www.lakecity.org/greatriver/](http://www.lakecity.org/greatriver/)  
 Wabasha-Kellogg Chamber & CVB  
 651-565-4158  
 800-565-4158  
[www.wabashamn.org](http://www.wabashamn.org)  
 Visit Winona  
 507-452-0125  
 800-657-4972  
[www.visitwinona.com](http://www.visitwinona.com)  
 La Crescent Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Information Center  
 507-895-2800  
 800-926-9480  
[www.lacrescentmn.com](http://www.lacrescentmn.com)

This map was produced by the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2013.



## Headwaters Mississippi



## Northwoods Mississippi

### Mississippi Headwaters Itasca State Park to Bemidji (Approx. 30 miles)

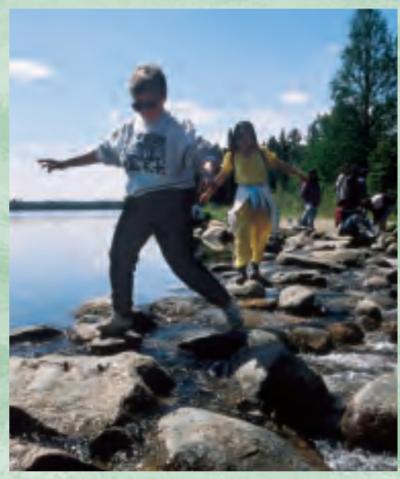
Come to leap the 15 stones that cross the humble source of the awesome Mississippi River, one of the world's greatest and longest waterways. Stay to experience the forested wonders of Itasca State Park—Minnesota's first, established in 1891 to conserve its giant pines from logging. Head north to Bemidji, "first city on the Mississippi," where you won't want to miss a photo opportunity with legendary Lumberjack Paul Bunyan and his faithful friend, Babe the Blue Ox. Home of Bemidji State University and the famous Concordia Language Villages, Bemidji also offers fine shopping, dining and theater. Lake Bemidji offers lovely views and recreation for all seasons.

**Great River Road State Parks:**  
 Itasca State Park  
 Lake Bemidji State Park, Bemidji

**State Forests:**  
 Mississippi Headwaters State Forest  
 Paul Bunyan State Forest

**Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:**  
 Beltrami County History Center/James J. Hill Depot  
 Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center, Itasca State Park  
 ◆ Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center, Itasca State Park  
 Fireplace of States, Bemidji  
 Headwaters of the Mississippi River, Itasca State Park  
 ◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Center

**Destination Area Highlights:**  
 Antique Shopping  
 Bemidji Woolen Mills Factory  
 Camping  
 Downtown Art Walk, Bemidji  
 Historic Landmark Statue of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, Bemidji  
 Lake Country Scenic Byway, Park Rapids  
 Northern Continental Divide, Lake Julia (15 miles north of Bemidji)  
 Resort Vacationing & Fishing (400 fishing lakes within 25 mile radius of Bemidji)  
 Towering Pines at Preacher's Grove in Itasca State Park  
 Veteran's Memorial, Bemidji  
 Wilderness Drive - Scenic Driving, Biking or Hiking Path Within Itasca State Park  
 Wildlife Watching



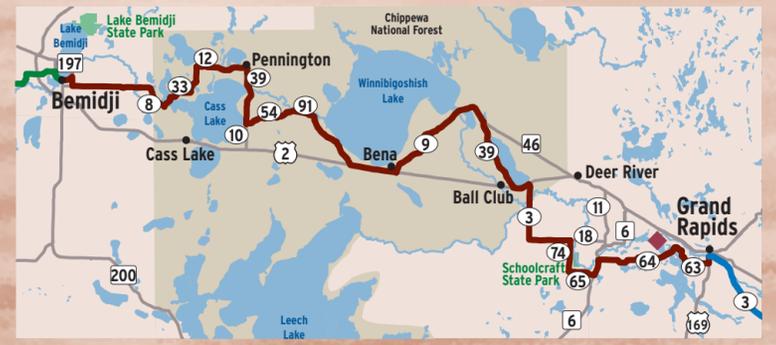
### Mississippi Northwoods Bemidji to Grand Rapids (Approx. 95 miles)

Three of Minnesota's largest lakes are located along this stretch of the Great River Road, Cass, Leech and Winnibigoshish. The Mississippi actually flows through the heart of Cass and Winnibigoshish and 666,000 acres of forest within the surrounding Chippewa National Forest. The Cass Lake Chain of Lakes was part of the Red Lake-Leech Lake Trail; a series of interconnected waterways used as a "water highway" by the Native Americans, trappers and traders. Come to enjoy the serenity of the forest wilderness, the awesome red pines, Native American lore and the call of the loon. Grand Rapids offers visitors lots of amenities, shopping and entertainment. Once a famous logging community, Grand Rapids also offers visitors the chance to relive history on the river at the Forest History Center—a national Great River Road Interpretive Center.

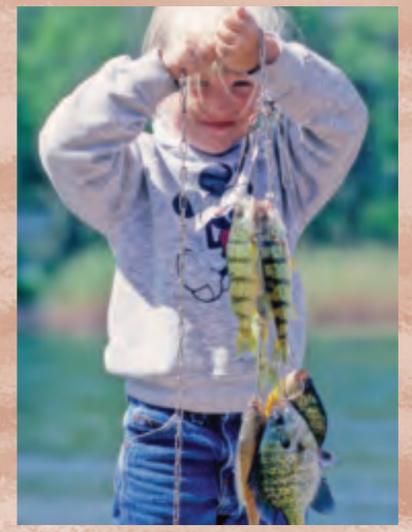
**Great River Road State Park:**  
 Schoolcraft State Park,  
 West of Grand Rapids

**National Forest:**  
 Chippewa National Forest

**Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:**  
 Cass Lake Museum, Cass Lake  
 ◆ Forest History Center, Grand Rapids  
 Lyle's Logging Camp, Cass Lake  
 White Oak Rendezvous, Deer River  
 ◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Center



**Destination Area Highlights:**  
 Art Galleries, Grand Rapids & surrounds  
 Biking Trails  
 Eagle Watching  
 Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway, Grand Rapids  
 Judy Garland Birthplace, Grand Rapids  
 Mississippi Melodie Showboat, Grand Rapids  
 Pow Wows, Leech Lake Indian Reservation  
 Resort Vacationing, Hunting and Fishing  
 Star Island, in Cass Lake  
 UPM, Blandin Paper Mill, Grand Rapids



For directions go to [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

For directions go to [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

# Crossings Mississippi

## Mississippi Crossings Grand Rapids to Little Falls

(Approx. 145 miles)

The Mississippi Crossings area of the Great River Road is named for its history as a crossways of transportation by river, rail and road; first for the voyageurs and fur traders, then the loggers, and today, for the thousands of vacationers that flock to this region each summer. The river was the main highway of the Native peoples of Minnesota and later served as a major transportation route for the booming fur trade and logging economies during the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, many of the 25 steamboat landings once located between Aitkin and Grand Rapids are water access and camping sites. Commerce in river transportation flourished in the early 1870s when access to the Mississippi was established by rail from Duluth. Both Aitkin and Brainerd served as Northern Pacific Railroad sites. Between Aitkin and Brainerd, just south of the Mississippi, lies the Cuyuna Iron Range, which produced over 100-million tons of high-manganese ore during WWI and WWII. From humble beginnings, area farmers, former loggers and railroad employees who owned good lake sites throughout the area in the early 1900s, created what was to become the booming lake resort communities of today. Providing good home-cooked meals and a piece of land to pitch a tent, these early "resorters" treated guests to a true wilderness experience. Today, visitors still enjoy the local hospitality, fishing, swimming, boating and now golfing, that are plentiful throughout this Great River Road destination area.



**Great River Road State Parks:**  
Charles A. Lindbergh State Park, Little Falls  
Crow Wing State Park, Brainerd  
Savanna Portage State Park, north of Palisade

**Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:**  
Croft Mine Historical Park, Crosby  
Crow Wing County Historical Society Museum, Brainerd  
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley  
Northern Pacific Depot, Aitkin

**Destination Area Highlights:**  
Antique Shopping  
Canoeing & Camping  
Community Theater  
Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area  
Cuyuna Lakes State Trail - Hiking & Biking  
Golfing  
Paul Bunyan National Scenic Byway  
Paul Bunyan State Trail - Hiking & Biking  
Resort Vacationing & Fishing Lakes  
Wildlife Watching & Birding

For directions go to [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

## Scenic Mississippi Little Falls to Elk River

(Approx. 90 miles)

The Scenic Mississippi Destination Area offers visitors an unspoiled river experience. Parks and gardens, complete with footbridges and fountains, dot the riverbanks and surrounding area in the region. Both Little Falls and St. Cloud boast historic main street districts, offering architectural beauty and a variety of shopping and dining experiences for travelers. Little Falls gained international fame as home to Charles Lindbergh, pilot of the first solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. As its name implies, Little Falls was once the location of a natural waterfall on the river. Today, visitors find both a serene and exciting experience as they watch the water pause at the gates of a dam—first built at the falls site in the mid-1800s—then force its way through the man-made chutes, bubbling and spraying as it tumbles to the bed of slate below. Home to many businesses and St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud offers travelers a wide range of amenities and entertainment including the riverside Clemens and Munsinger Gardens. Traveling onward to Elk River, the Mississippi winds through lush farm and open prairie land as it journeys through Monticello and into Elk River on the northwestern fringe of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.



**Great River Road State Parks:**  
Charles A. Lindbergh State Park, Little Falls  
Lake Maria State Park, Monticello

**Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:**  
Charles A. Lindbergh Home Site, Little Falls  
Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum, Little Falls  
Oliver H. Kelley Farm, Elk River  
The Stearns History Museum, St. Cloud

**Destination Area Highlights:**  
Antique & Craft Shopping  
Clemens & Munsinger Gardens, St. Cloud  
Hiking, Biking, Birding & Camping  
Minnesota Fishing Museum, Little Falls  
Mississippi River Dam, Little Falls  
River Fishing and Canoeing  
Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Zimmerman



For directions go to [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

# Metro Mississippi

## Metro Mississippi Elk River to Hastings

(Approx. 75 miles)

From the serene north woods, the Mississippi meanders its way into the heart of the buzzing metro area of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Here, amidst fine dining, an outstanding theater scene, museums of all varieties, and world-class shopping, 72 miles of Mississippi riverfront have been designated a National River and Recreation Area by the National Park Service, offering 54,000 acres of parks, open space and historic sites along the river. Visit this Great River Road destination area for a big-city experience, but also to be inspired by nature on the fringe of commerce. Learn how the Mississippi River played a role in the creation of this tale of two cities.



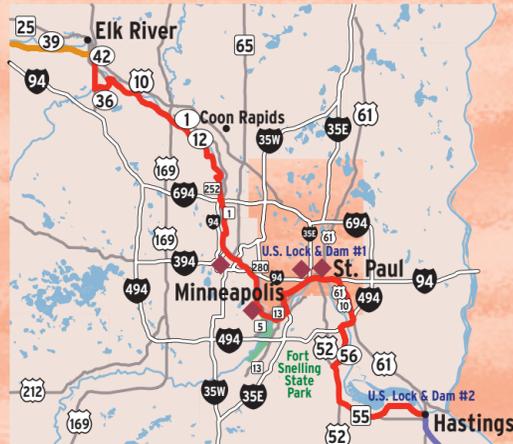
**Great River Road National Park:**  
Mississippi National River & Recreation Area

**Great River Road State Park:**  
Fort Snelling State Park, St. Paul

**Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:**  
Alexander Ramsey House, St. Paul  
Ard Godfrey House, Minneapolis  
Carl Kroening Interpretive Center, Minneapolis  
◆ Historic Fort Snelling, St. Paul  
James J. Hill House, St. Paul  
◆ Mill City Museum, Minneapolis Riverfront  
◆ Minnesota History Center, St. Paul  
◆ National Park Service - Mississippi National River & Recreation Area Visitor Center, St. Paul Riverfront  
Oliver H. Kelley Farm, Elk River  
◆ Science Museum of Minnesota Mississippi River Gallery, St. Paul Riverfront  
Sibley House, St. Paul  
St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail / Stone Arch Bridge, Minneapolis Riverfront  
◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Centers

**Destination Area Highlights:**  
Boom Island, Minneapolis Riverfront  
Cathedral of Saint Paul, St. Paul  
Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, Coon Rapids  
Downtown Shopping, Dining & Entertainment, Minneapolis & St. Paul  
Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis Riverfront  
Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, Minneapolis  
Harriet Island, St. Paul Riverfront

Mall of America, Bloomington  
Minnehaha Falls & The Longfellow House, Minneapolis  
Minnesota Lynx Basketball (WNBA), Minneapolis  
Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul  
Minnesota Timberwolves Basketball (NBA), Minneapolis  
Minnesota Twins Baseball (MLB), Minneapolis  
Minnesota Vikings Football (NFL), Minneapolis  
Minnesota Wild Hockey (NHL), St. Paul  
Mississippi Riverboat Excursions, Minneapolis & St. Paul  
Mounds Park, St. Paul  
St. Anthony Falls & U.S. Lock & Dam #1  
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis Riverfront



For directions go to [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

## Mississippi Bluffs Hastings to the Iowa Border

(Approx. 140 miles)

The Mississippi Bluffs destination area is dotted with charming river towns, replete with historic main streets and wonderful river vistas. Plan a delightful day trip or a relaxing long weekend. Come to shop for antiques, woolens, pottery and more. Come to picnic and enjoy a concert along the Mississippi. Come to experience the river by boat. Cozy up in a quaint bed & breakfast. Get out and enjoy the many recreational opportunities this region offers... fishing, boating, biking or hiking. Be amazed at the wildlife viewing, especially for birders. Take your pick of cities, or better yet visit them all.



**Great River Road State Parks:**  
Frontenac State Park, Frontenac  
Great River Bluffs State Park, south of Winona  
John A. Latsch State Park, north of Winona

**Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:**  
Bunnell House, Winona  
Goodhue County Museum, Red Wing  
Le Duc Historic Estate, Hastings  
◆ Minnesota Marine Art Museum, Winona  
◆ National Eagle Center, Wabasha  
Old Frontenac, Frontenac  
Pickwick Mill, Winona  
Polish Cultural Institute, Winona  
Wabasha County Museum, Reads Landing  
Watkins Heritage Museum, Winona  
◆ Winona County History Center, Winona  
◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Center

**Destination Area Highlights:**  
Apple Orchards, La Crescent  
Birding - Prominent Eagle Watching Area  
Faith, Hope & Charity Bluffs, between Wabasha & Winona  
Garvin Heights Park, Winona  
Historic Downtown Hastings  
Historic St. James Hotel, Red Wing  
Lake Pepin / Marina, Lake City  
Lark Toy Company, Kellogg  
Levee & Jaycee Parks, Hastings  
Levee Park & Milwaukee Depot, Red Wing  
Mississippi River Lock & Dam #2, upstream of Hastings



For directions go to [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

# Bluffs Mississippi

**INSIDE:** *Destinations* | *Travel Tips* | *Service Providers*

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