



**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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**MISSISSIPPI
RIVER NEWS**

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RIVER NEWS**

Fall / Winter 2020-21

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

The Stories We Tell

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

This summer, the Twin Cities became a flashpoint for a global uprising against the grossly inequitable treatment of Black Americans. The New York Times estimates that more people have participated in a Black Lives Matter protest this year than in any other protest movement in the history of our country.

Overnight, we were led to deeply examine the ways in which the same systems of inequality and oppression that we see on city streets can also exist on park trails. We turned inward to identify our own biases and exclusionary practices that have historically made people of color feel unwelcome and unsafe in the outdoors.

The mission of the National Park Service is to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. We hope that visitors will draw inspiration from their experiences in this river park. While many national park sites across the country tell the stories of the struggle for civil rights, women's equality, and the dispossession of land from Native Americans, we have been examining how our river stories are often centered on the legacies of white men, diminishing the significant history and contributions of Native Americans, people of color, and women in our community.

Part of incorporating anti-racism into our work is learning and telling a more complete and inclusive story of all people who are connected to and have impacted this land. When visitors can recognize themselves in a park program and in a park ranger's story, it affirms their experience and their place in the park. It contributes to their sense of belonging in a space, and that connection may inspire them to help protect it.



One of the strengths of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area is its location in the heart of an urban area. Unlike other national parks dispersed in remote areas around the country, the river park runs through the heart of our capital, connecting millions of people from Dayton and Ramsey to Hastings.

This year, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment by launching the Women of the Mississippi River project, a collection of mostly unacknowledged stories of women who have had great impact on the Mississippi River. Additionally, the return of Illuminate the Lock in partnership with All My Relations Arts and Northern Lights.mn will turn the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock into a highly visible platform for Indigenous narratives through modern artistic expression. Our recently developed distance learning programs are designed to aid teachers in engaging students with the river in the middle of a global pandemic.

We invite you to join us in this continual process of making our programs more accessible, the river more equitable, and the stories we tell more diverse, to create a park that is truly inclusive for all.



Illuminate The Lock Returns

Sarah Peters, Director, Northern Lights.mn
Tyra Payer, Projects Coordinator, Northern Lights.mn

Owámniyomni/Gakaabika is where the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam currently sits. Historically, this site was generally considered neutral territory between Anishinaabe and Dakota. Owámniyomni is “whirlpool” in the Dakota language. Gakaabika is “severed rock” in the Ojibwe language. It was and still is an important and sacred place.

This winter, Illuminate The Lock returns to the whirlpool below severed rock as a new art projection event featuring up-and-coming Indigenous artist Moira Villiard, with mentorship from seasoned multimedia maker Jonathan Thunder. The partnership project is a collaboration between Northern Lights.mn, All My Relations Arts (a program of Native American Community Development Institute), Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, and Mississippi Park Connection, with grant support from the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board.

A visitor observes art projected onto the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock wall at Illuminate The Lock in 2017, featuring artist Andrea Carlson's work, “The Uncompromising Hand.” This year's winter event will utilize similar technology to display brand new artistic concepts from artist Moira Villiard, with mentorship from Jonathan Thunder.



Moira Villiard is a self-taught, dynamic visual artist, Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwe direct descendent, and current Minnesota-based community organizer. She is proficient in a wide variety of artistic genres including portraiture, illustration, graphic and digital design, and murals. This is her first large-scale projection project.

“Art is a social process for me. So I’m most excited for the relational aspects of this project, like working with Jonathan Thunder as my official mentor[...] I’m also grateful to explore this platform and medium in a way that elevates Indigenous perspectives.”

Moira has worked as a curator and passionate arts educator, concentrating her efforts around issues of equity and justice including arts access for underrepresented voices and communities, creative placemaking, environmental sustainability, youth empowerment, and acknowledgement of Indigenous land, culture, and history.

Jonathan Thunder, Red Lake Ojibwe, will mentor Moira with his knowledge of projection and digital animation and illustration.

“The Mississippi has been a big part of my life since I can remember,” Jonathan said. “The lock and dam at St. Anthony has always been a destination for me during times of meditation and deep thought.”

Illuminate The Lock aligns with the annual AMRA Bring Her Home exhibition, a show of visual art by Indigenous artists addressing the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The theme for this year’s exhibition is Sacred Womxn of Resistance.

“We are pleased to have this opportunity to increase the awareness of the ongoing epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women,” said Angela Two Stars, director of All My Relations Arts. “This year’s exhibition shares a powerful message of resistance, and I am excited to see the commissioned art on such a visible platform.”

Ways to Get Involved

Fall and Winter Birding Tips From A Pro

Sharon Stiteler, Park Ranger, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

The key to excellent birding in the fall and winter is finding spots with open water. In September and well into late October, Coldwater Spring is great for native sparrows, thrushes, warblers, and vireos. The prairie plant seeds provide food for white-crowned sparrows, fox sparrows, and American tree sparrows. The wooded edges are better habitat for hermit thrushes and the occasional bluebird.

The trails along Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge are another prime birding spot. Their bird feeders can provide fun views of fox sparrows, sharp-shinned hawks, and even the pileated woodpecker. The trails are also host to many warblers and native sparrows. If you can find mudflats, you might see shorebirds nearby. Sometimes a winter wren will spend the winter around the Bass Ponds trail.



The Mississippi River is a major migratory corridor and many areas within our park are great for songbirds including these regional parks: Hidden Falls, Mississippi Gateway, and North Mississippi. If you are interested in big birds like bald eagles and wild turkeys, then Pike Island is the spot for you. Also, keep an eye and ear open for the resident barred owls hooting near the parking lots.

Once the temperatures seriously drop and the river starts to freeze, Point Douglas Park in Hastings is a popular birding spot. The confluence of the St. Croix River and the Mississippi River attracts birders all winter searching for bald eagles, trumpeter swans, common mergansers, and common goldeneyes. If you're lucky, sometimes rarities show up like a harlequin duck or glaucous gull. If you have a spotting scope, bring it along and be ready for some biting wind off of the open water.





PARTICIPATE

Explore the park through a wide range of public events, virtual programming, and visitor centers that put you in touch with the history, culture, and ecology of the Mississippi River.

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.

parkconnection.org/volunteer

Graphic designed by Yana Cherepashenskaya

Women of the Mississippi River

Kristy Ornelas, AmeriCorps VISTA member, Mississippi Park Connection

National parks around the country are celebrating the centennial anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment by highlighting women’s influence on national parks. Our contribution to this commemorative year is the Women of the Mississippi River project; a collection of stories of historical and contemporary women who had great impact on the Mississippi River in Minnesota.

These narratives add to our collective knowledge about women who have influenced specifically the Twin Cities stretch of the Mississippi River over time. They are especially important when discussing women’s history in the United States because their narratives are often ignored and many lack acknowledgement for their accomplishments.

A century ago, some of the first women to cast their votes in the United States did so in South St. Paul—an important milestone in Minnesota history. However, the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment did not mean victory for all. After years of activism, it was mostly White women who gained access to the vote after the Nineteenth Amendment.

When the amendment was adopted in August of 1920, Indigenous and African-American, in addition to other minority women, had several years of battle ahead of them before they could cast a vote. Not only did discrimination and racism disenfranchise minority

Harriet Scott Robinson



Eva McDonald Valesh



Mary Hannah Gibbs Logan



Reiko Weston



Sharon Sayles Belton



Ramona Kitto Stately

women, physical violence in some states further hindered them once they obtained the right to vote.

The Magnuson Act of 1943 granted citizenship to Chinese people in the United States, allowing them the right to vote. In 1957, 37 years after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, Utah became the last state to remove “state statutes preventing Native Americans from voting.” In theory, the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 made voting an equitable practice among United States citizens—in reality, voter suppression continues to this day.

As we mark this centennial anniversary, we recognize that adding narratives from non-white women is especially important. The Women of the Mississippi River project aims to celebrate the voices of women and recognize their struggles and successes in protecting the Mississippi River. The narratives included in this project represent only a small sample of the incredible people who helped shape the Twin Cities Mississippi River corridor into what it is today.

We hope you read their stories and find an inspiration to connect with this water, this air, and this land that is the life source for all of us who live in the Twin Cities—and across the great American Midwest. A special thanks to the dozens of volunteers who researched, interviewed when possible, and wrote these stories. The Women of the Mississippi River project would not be possible without them. Here’s to the Women of the Mississippi River!

Photo credit: Harriet Scott (Mrs. Dred Scott), 1857, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN; Eva McDonald Valesh, 1885, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN; Mary Gibbs, 1903, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN; Reiko Weston image sourced from: Tanaka, Kimmy, and Jonathan Moore, “Fuji-Ya, Second to None: Reiko Weston’s Role in Reconnecting Minneapolis and the Mississippi River.” Minnesota History 66.3 (2018): 98-111; Sharon Sayles Belton courtesy of herself; Ramona Kitto Stately courtesy of herself.

Stepping Up to the Challenge

David Kappelhoff, Education Coordinator, Mississippi Park Connection

When the pandemic began limiting in-person education earlier this year, our park education team had an opportunity to pivot in a new direction to provide opportunities for distance learning.

First we surveyed teachers in and around the Twin Cities to see what they needed. Teachers were looking for distance learning tools in the form of slide decks, pre-recorded videos, interactive lessons, and digital tools like websites, and were specifically in need of content related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), including ecosystems, water, and environmental science activities. We knew our strongest path forward was to continue collaborating with park partners and teachers to transform existing programs into distance learning content.

The transformation of our most popular field trip, Big River Journey, to a distance learning program was an instant success. In its first two months, the site had already served about 7,000 users—most from the Twin Cities metro area—but also attracting

Thanks to the support of the National Park Foundation and Union Pacific Railroad and an existing partnership with Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education (CGEE), we were able to pivot the park's Big River Journey field trip, pictured here, to a distance learning website by the end of April.



a broad audience from around the nation and other parts of the world. The site will continue to be a valuable resource well beyond the pandemic. Supplementing the in-park program, the website can give students a feel for what they will experience live on the Mississippi River prior to their field trips.

The Living River field trip emphasizes reaching 3rd and 4th grade classes from Title I schools, which is a critical audience for the park. Our River Educator team, a group of retired teachers who help facilitate our programs, was instrumental in the in-house development of Living River Online. The new program connects students to the river by helping them understand the relationship between floodplain forests and two important species—mussels and pike fish.

We knew from our initial conversations with teachers that connecting with the park virtually was important for student engagement. Park Ranger Brian Goodspeed and a team of education rangers, as well as River Educators and partners at Friends of the Mississippi River and the Minnesota DNR, will visit classrooms virtually throughout the fall and winter—with a focus on 3rd–6th graders. Now, a teacher can browse classroom-visit topics on Mississippi Park Connection's website, register, and have a ranger visit virtually within the week!

Virtual camps are yet another innovative program, developed in partnership with the park and Wilderness Inquiry. Mississippi River Explorers started as a virtual summer camp for 5th–8th grade, featuring games, crafts, and activities associated with the river park. The program will continue into the fall to offer a fun, social, and emotional learning experience while keeping kids safe.

Distance learning will never replace the wonder and awe of a national park visit, but it does afford the possibility of widening the audience, engaging students who may not be able to visit in person, and providing equitable virtual access to parks.

Fifty Years of Friendships

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

The 50th anniversary of the National Park Service Volunteers-In-Parks program has been a year that reaffirmed just how much park programs rely on volunteer support.

The physical absence of volunteers at the beginning of the pandemic reminded park staff of the valuable conversations and emotional support that come through friendships with our volunteers. We are so grateful for the kindness and smiles (even the virtual ones!) of our volunteers through this difficult summer. It has brought us so much joy to know that we are in this together.

Despite this year's challenges, volunteers continued to support the park by welcoming about 800 people to Winter Trails Day last January, planting 1,200 trees in research plots at Crosby Farm Regional Park during one of the heaviest weeks of our cities' civil unrest, and contributing stories to the Women of the Mississippi River project. We have held multiple public volunteer programs every week since the beginning of June, continuing important environmental restoration efforts throughout the national park.

Since October of last year, volunteers have contributed more than 6,700 hours to the park, which is valued at nearly \$199,000 worth of service and counting! We cannot thank our volunteers enough for

showing their courage and dedication during this historic year. We will continue working to provide volunteer opportunities that are safe yet effective, and that enrich both the park land and our spirits this season and beyond.



Finding My Path to the Outdoors

Haddy Bayo, Park Ranger, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

I started the path that led me to my current position a bit later than one would expect. I grew up in Gambia, where I spent most of my time outdoors. However, I lost that connection to nature when I was plopped in the middle of the Minnesota suburbs. It wasn't until I was 16 that I was able to reconnect with the outdoors through the Voyageurs National Park Teen Ambassador program. I discovered spaces I didn't even know existed and recreation activities I'd never tried, like camping and paddling. This experience reaffirmed my love of nature. Yet, I still didn't consider it as a career, perhaps due to the kinds of people I saw representing the field.

The following summer, I participated in a fellowship program through Mississippi Park Connection in partnership with the National Park Service, which made me realize I could pursue a career in the outdoors. Through these environmental education programs, I learned what kinds of jobs were available and gained confidence that I could do them.

Currently, I'm a junior at the University of Minnesota, pursuing a degree in Environmental Science Policy Management and French Studies. I'm also in my first year as a National Park Service ranger! Although this summer is a bit unconventional, I'm happy to be spending this time biking, paddling, and connecting with visitors in our beautiful river park. I especially have a fondness for working at St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam, as it reminds me of a wide-eyed Haddy who felt completely out of her element standing beside this huge waterfall just a few years ago. I'm so glad my path has led me to where I am today, and I look forward to where it takes me in the future.




DAYTON

RAMSEY



MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL RIVER AND RECREATION AREA

SITES ALONG THE RIVER

- 1 Mississippi Gateway Regional Park
- 2 Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park
- 3 River Park
- 4 Manomin County Park
- 5 North Mississippi Regional Park
- 6 Mississippi Watershed Management Org.
- 7 Boom Island Park
- 8 Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam Visitor Center open during summer months
- 9 Stone Arch Bridge
- 10 Mill Ruins Park
- 11 Bohemian Flats Park
- 12 Minnehaha Regional Park
- 13  Coldwater Spring
- 14 Historic Fort Snelling at Bdote
- 15 Fort Snelling State Park
- 16 Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 17 Pickerel Lake
- 18 Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park
- 19  Mississippi River Visitor Center Located at the Science Museum of Minnesota
- 20 Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary
- 21 Lions Levee Park
- 22 Pine Bend Bluffs SNA
- 23 Grey Cloud Dunes SNA
- 24 Spring Lake Park Reserve
- 25  Hastings Riverfront
- 26 Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center (WI)

ICONS

 Ranger On Call Stations
 Audio tours, www.rangeroncall.com



SAINT PAUL

MINNEAPOLIS

MINNESOTA RIVER

HASTINGS

