

Mississippi River Companion

A Guide to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

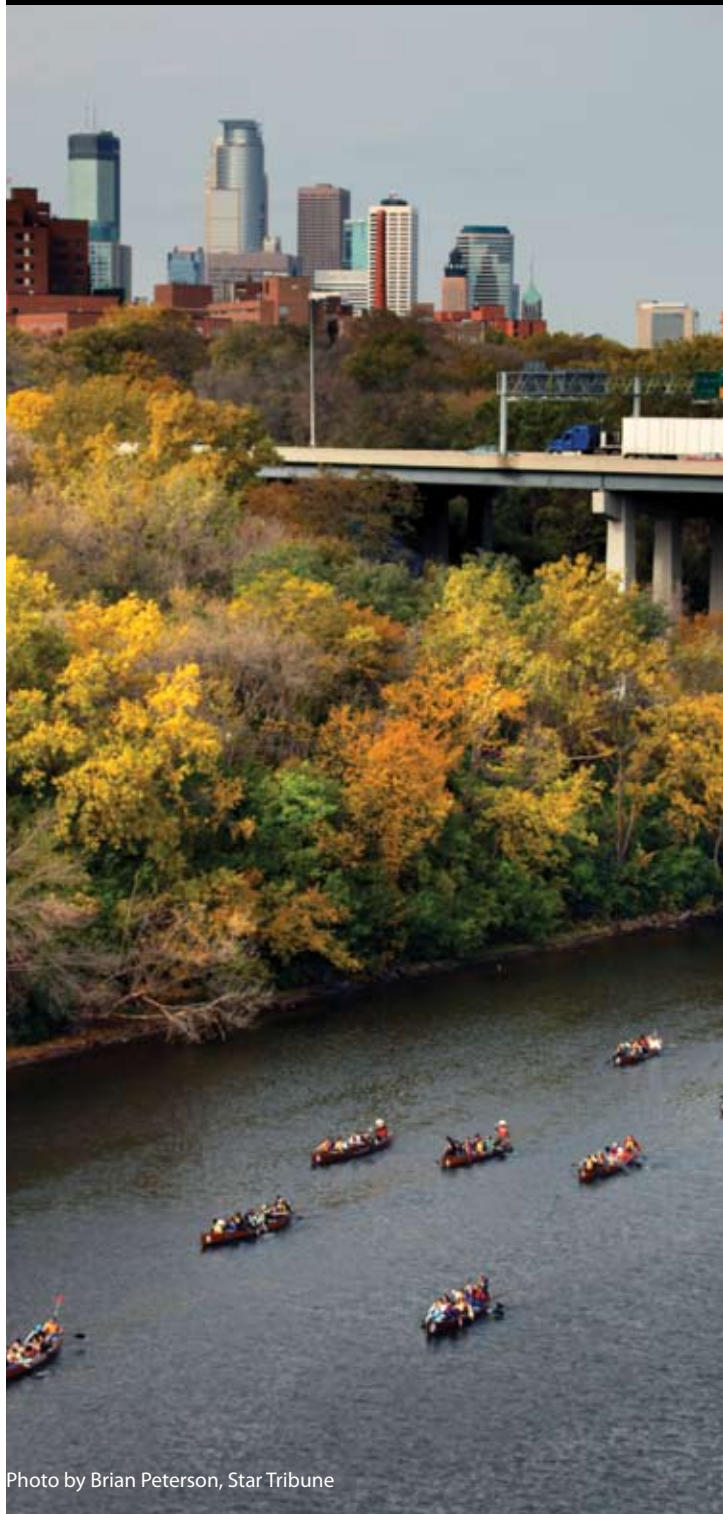


Photo by Brian Peterson, Star Tribune

The Mississippi River is one of the world's great rivers and the center of one of the most complex ecosystems on the planet. It's a critical migration corridor for millions of birds and essential to the ecological health of North America. The river is at the heart of what is America and, more than any other natural feature, is an unmistakable symbol of this nation.

The Mississippi River is 2,350 miles long, but it changes character more in our 72-mile stretch through the Twin Cities than in all of the rest of its length. It enters the northwest metro as a relatively small, northern river. After it crashes over its only waterfall, the river enters a deep and scenic gorge. Finally, it emerges in downtown St. Paul as the grown-up river of legend.

And the river is, after all, the very soul of the Twin Cities. It's why we're here.

In 1988, the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities was designated a national park: The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. The National Park Service owns very little of the 54,000 acres of land and water within this national park, but it plays a major role, with its many partners, in protecting the river's resources and connecting people to this great river.

The *Mississippi River Companion* is your guide to exploring this great national park. Whether you're a bicyclist, boater, walker, paddler, or history buff, you'll want to have this guide in hand when exploring this beautiful river. Use the *Companion* to find water trails, boat landings, marinas, bicycle and pedestrian trails, major landmarks, historical sites, parks, and natural areas along the Mississippi River. There are unlimited recreational opportunities in this unique urban wilderness area. Pick a place of interest, plan your route, then go Explore Your National Park!

Have a safe and enjoyable experience along the great Mississippi River.

Paul Labovitz, Superintendent

Boating Safety

Power boaters can improve their boating and safety skills by taking classes from the Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or other providers. Call BoatU.S. (1-800-336-BOAT or boatus.com/courseline) to find a course in your area.

Paddlers can improve their boating and safety skills by attending paddling classes, which are often available through sporting goods stores, schools, clubs, and associations.

Before you boat

- Check your gear. Make sure you have enough personal flotation devices and other required safety equipment.
- Check the weather for dangerous conditions and for dangerously high water.
- Tell someone where and when you will be boating, in case you need help.
- Always wear a life jacket.
- Bring a spare paddle or oars.
- Don't overload your boat.
- Do not operate a boat while intoxicated or overly tired.
- Watch out for barge tows and large boats. They take a long time to turn or stop, have big wakes, and they may not be able to see you. Give them a lot of room and take into consideration how the wind, current, and wakes are affecting you and the other boat.
- Stay away from "strainers" (submerged trees, rocks, or structures) and bridge abutments. They can capsize a boat or trap someone underwater in a current.
- If the weather makes boating unsafe, get to shore and shelter quickly.
- Whenever you move your boat from one body of water to another, thoroughly wash the hull and live well to remove hitchhiking invasive species, so they do not spread.

Bicycling Safety

Before you bike

- Check that your bike is working properly.
- Talk to children about bicycling safety and courtesy.

Always

- Ride within your ability.
- Wear an approved helmet.
- Use lights when riding in the dark.
- Keep your headphones in your pack until you get off your bike.
- Stop and look both ways before crossing a street, road, or railroad tracks on a trail. Stop and look both ways before entering a trail.
- Watch out for wet leaves, loose gravel, and other slippery or uneven surfaces.
- Bring water.
- Travel with a companion in secluded areas.

On streets and roads

Obey all traffic rules, and watch out for cars, trucks, and pedestrians.

On trails

- Keep to the right.
- Before you pass a walker or another biker, alert them and slow down.

Legend

-  **daymark**—navigation markers that include the river mile and usually a light. As with buoys, green marks the left bank when you travel upstream. The left bank is often called the "west bank," even where the river does not run north to south. Red marks the right bank, often called the "east bank."
-  **power line**—Lines do not pose a danger to boats, but they are helpful navigation landmarks.
-  **river mile marker**—a point on a map in the 9-foot channel used for navigation. They mark the distance from the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, near Alton, Ill., so the numbers increase as you travel upstream.
-  **river mile**—noting the location of a place on the map. In this example, river mile 849.3 on the west bank.
-  **underground line**—Do not use an anchor near an underground line.
-  **wing dam**—rock and brush structure built to focus the river current into the 9-foot channel. Called a closing dam where it blocks a channel or slough. It is often just below the water surface and can damage a boat's hull and propeller.

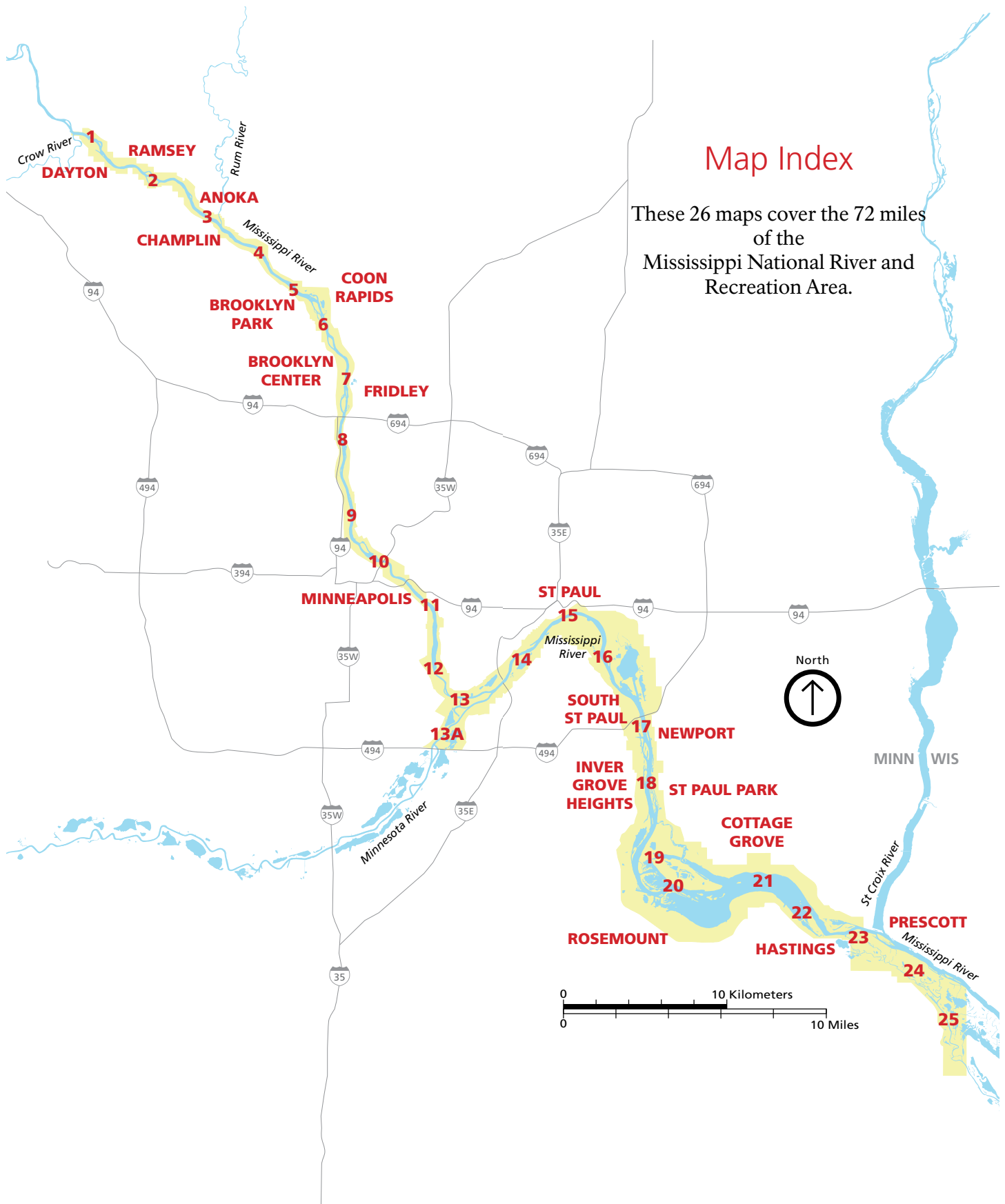
-  Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
-  public park
-  boat ramp
-  canoe landing
-  drinking water
-  marina
-  picnic area
-  parking
-  railroad tracks
-  stump field
-  direction of river flow
-  restrooms
-  visitor center

Trail Segments

-  separate bike and pedestrian paths
-  combined bike and pedestrian paths
-  on-road bike lane
-  on-road MRT
-  sidewalk only
-  unpaved trail
-  unpaved trail (no bicycles)

Organizations and Agencies

-  Army Corps of Engineers facility
-  Great River Road
-  Mississippi River Trail
-  National Park Service facility
-  Grand Rounds Scenic Byway



Map Index

These 26 maps cover the 72 miles
of the
Mississippi National River and
Recreation Area.

Introduction— Exploring the River

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area includes hundreds of miles of shoreline and trails, countless channels and islands, hundreds of species of wildlife, and remnants of thousands of years of human history. You could spend a lifetime exploring it without exhausting its possibilities.

Use the maps in this book to explore the park. If you bring a GPS device, you can use the river mile coordinates on the bottoms of the pages describing each map to find where you are.

Red and green buoys in the river mark the shipping channel, which appears in light blue on these maps. If you're traveling upstream, keep the red buoys on your right and the green buoys on your left to stay in the main channel. The popular way to remember this is, "Keep RED on your RIGHT when RETURNING from the sea."

Wing dams and closing dams outside of the main channel are a hazard to boaters, even paddlers during low water, so consult the maps.

Closing dams and wing dams were built from loose rocks and brush to direct the current into the shipping channel. You can often spot them, because the water above them may be a different texture and reflect the light differently than the surrounding water. Closing dams sometimes block the channels between islands or between islands and the shoreline. Buoys are often, but not always, positioned at the end of a wing dam.

A lock with a cable or chain is recommended, whether you're boating or biking.

Watch for changes when you're on the river—not just from the seasonal pulses, but also from changing human needs. Bridges are rebuilt. New trails are developed. Prairies are restored. New buildings are constructed. Bald eagles, which were rare once, have now returned. Otters and other mammals are returning to the urban river, as well as wild turkeys and other birds. Bring guide books and binoculars—you might be rewarded with a new sighting.

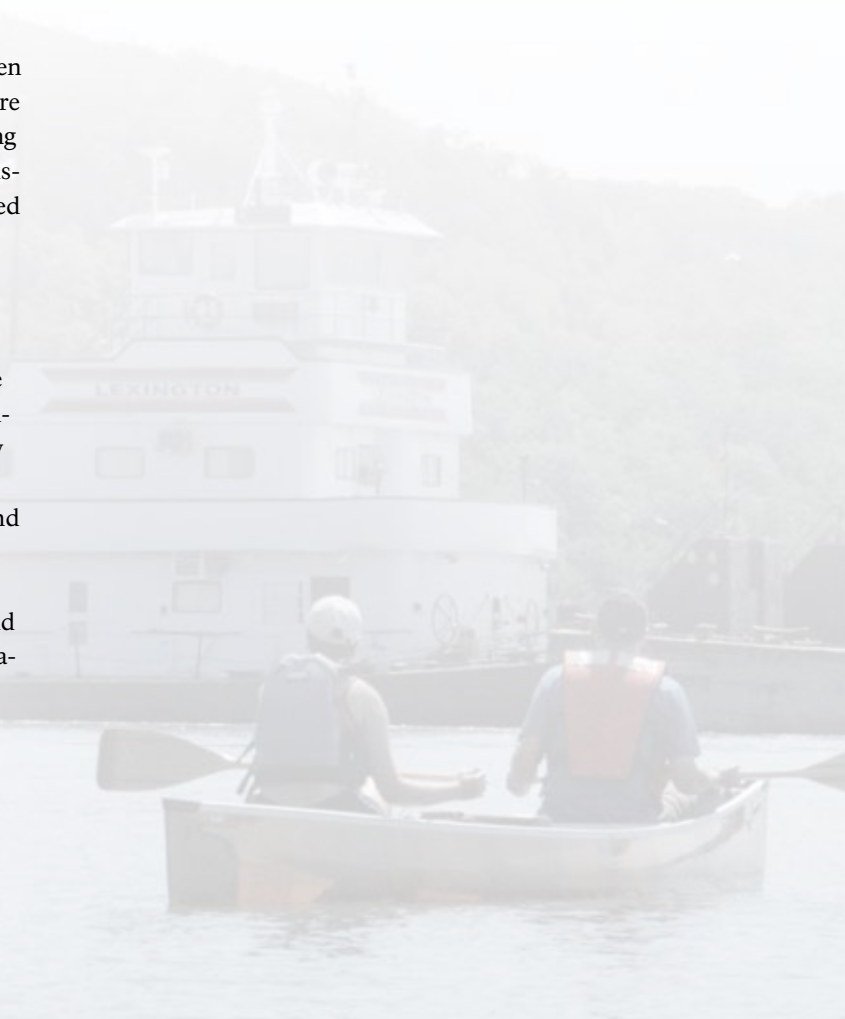
The National Park Service, communities, and nonprofit groups hold a variety of events on the river, including classes, festivals, and volunteer events. Check www.nps.gov/miss for additional information and updates.

There are special opportunities for getting young people of all abilities on the river. Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures is an outdoor canoe program focused on getting Twin Cities youth on the Mississippi River. It is a partner program between Wilderness Inquiry, the Mississippi River Fund and the National Park Service.

The National Park Service owns nine Mississippi River islands and the Coldwater Unit (Map 12) in the national park. The rules affecting the use of these areas can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/miss/parkmgmt/lawsandpolicies.htm>. These rules do not affect activity on private property, on city, county or state park land, or on federal land managed by other agencies.

Accessibility

Most facilities in the national park generally meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards. However, some areas may not be appropriate for wheelchairs. Because of the varied character of these facilities, it is best to contact specific sites about your visit.



Crow River

River mile 879 to 877

1

This shallow, winding stretch of the Mississippi is designated a Minnesota Wild and Scenic River. It holds abundant wildlife and not much development—you could easily imagine that you are 100 miles farther north. During times of low water you may have to drag your canoe over an occasional gravel bar.

The **Crow River** (879.6 W) is popular with paddlers, especially the North Fork, which is also a Minnesota Wild & Scenic River.

Originally an early American Indian trail modified by settlers, **Dayton River Road** is part of the Mississippi River Trail and Great River Road Scenic Byway. The road doesn't have much of a shoulder or much traffic. The nearest bridge crossing is about four miles upriver.

Dayton Port Wayside Rest Area (878.6 E) has plenty of big shade trees and scenic picnic sites with views across the river to Goodin Island.

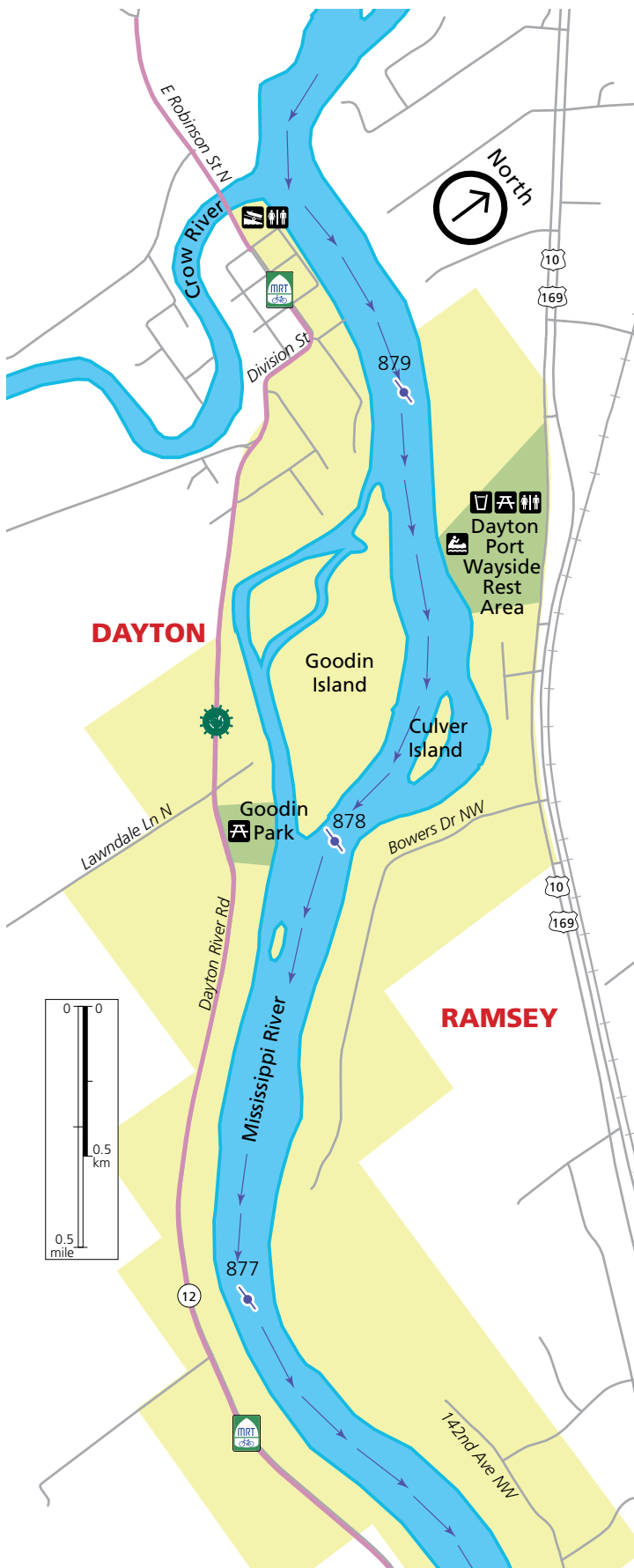
During most of the 19th century, the Red River Oxcart Trail linked St. Paul with settlements in Manitoba, Canada. Highway 10 and the nearby railroad tracks generally follow the route of this historic trail along the river.

Goodin Park (878.0 W) has picnic tables, grills, and a short walking trail through a typical floodplain forest.



River scene between the Crow River and Mississippi Point Park. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
879	N 45.245280	W 93.511099
878	N 45.235588	W 93.497436
877	N 45.225306	W 93.483919



Cloquet Island

River mile 876 to 874

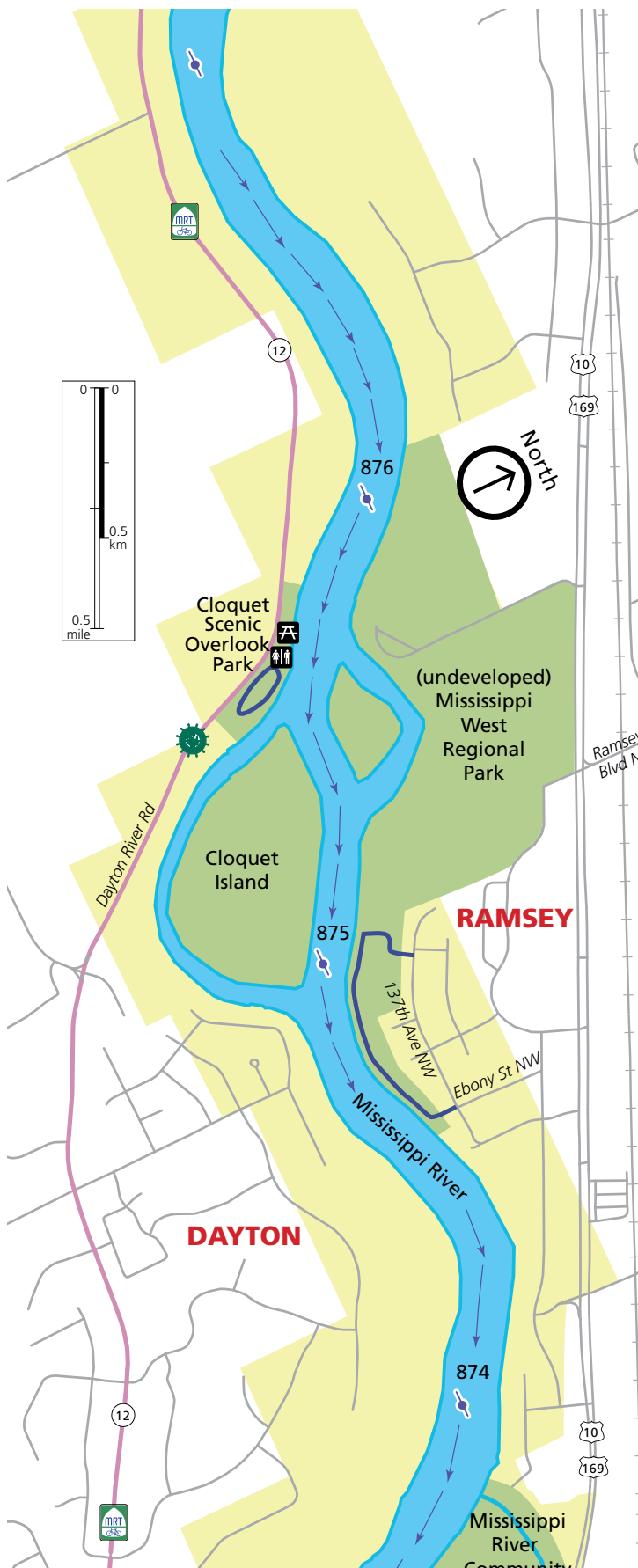
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This quiet, winding reach of river is lined with big trees, undeveloped islands, and scattered homes. It is not uncommon to find bald eagles watching from the trees or soft-shelled turtles sunning themselves on logs and driftwood in the backwater areas around the islands. Remnants of the area's original hardwood forest and prairie vegetation can also be seen along the river. In many ways, this stretch of river feels more like the Upper St. Croix, a national scenic riverway, than the semi-suburban Mississippi.

Public access along this stretch can be found at **Cloquet Scenic Overlook Park** (875.5 W) and on a short stretch of trail in **Ramsey** (875 E). The park is on Dayton River Road on the bluffs above Cloquet Island and the Mississippi River.



Bald eagle perched in a cottonwood tree. (NPS)



River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
876	N 45.224420	W 93.464029
875	N 45.217261	W 93.446878
874	N 45.215399	W 93.427325

Anoka & Champlin

3

River mile 873 to 871

There are numerous parks in this reach. **Mississippi River Community Park** (873.5 E) has a short trail system. **Peninsula Point Two Rivers Park** has nice amenities and good access to the river. During low water there are many rocks and sandbars.

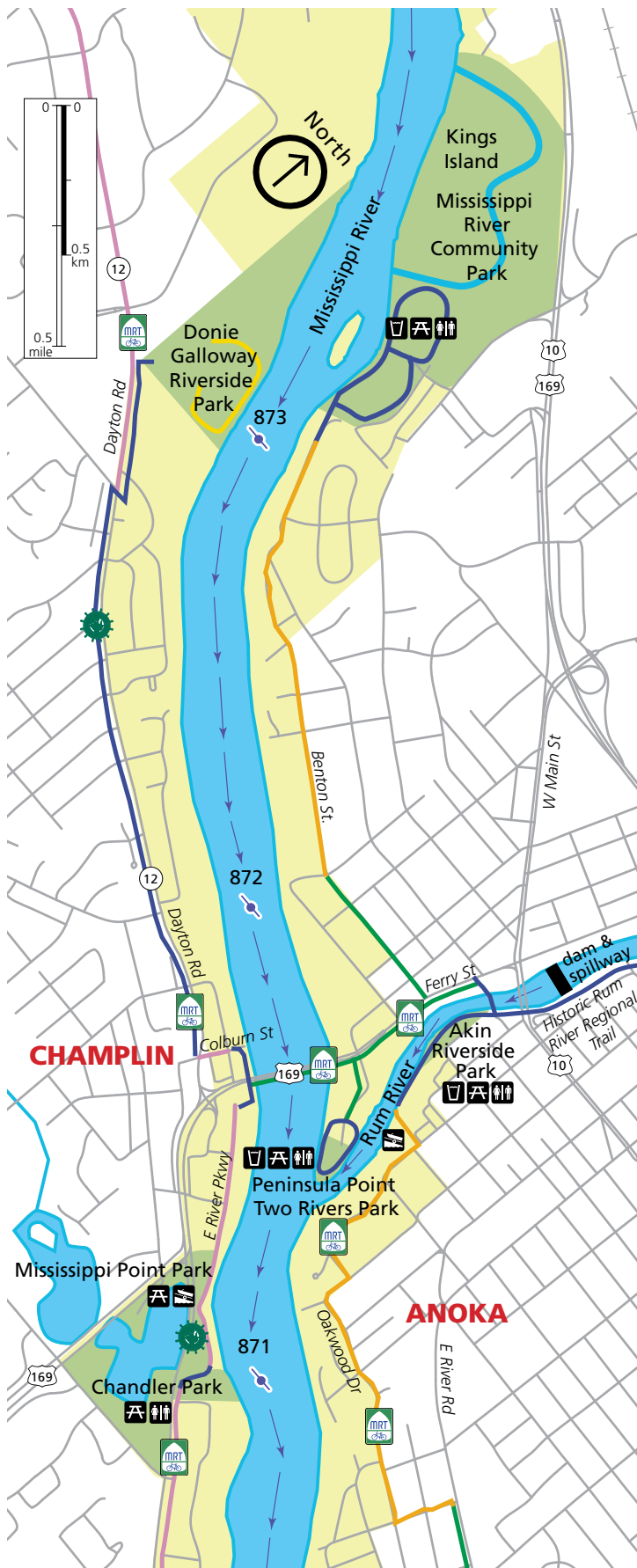
The **Highway 169 (Ferry Street) Bridge** (871.6) is remarkably graceful-looking from the water. It is a very busy bridge, with good access for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The **Mississippi River Trail** follows paved trails on the west side of the river, then follows mostly residential streets downriver. On the east side of the river, the trail crosses the **Rum River** in Anoka over a pedestrian/bike bridge a block before Main Street, then follows residential streets to East **Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park**.

The **Historic Rum River Regional Trail** intersects with the Mississippi River Trail in Anoka. The Rum River was used by many early European explorers, and later carried logs to the Mississippi River. The Rum River spillway is a good fishing spot and wheelchair accessible.



Akin Riverside Park. (NPS)



River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
873	N 45.203093	W 93.416843
872	N 45.193844	W 93.401768
871	N 45.184907	W 93.386039

Mississippi Point Park

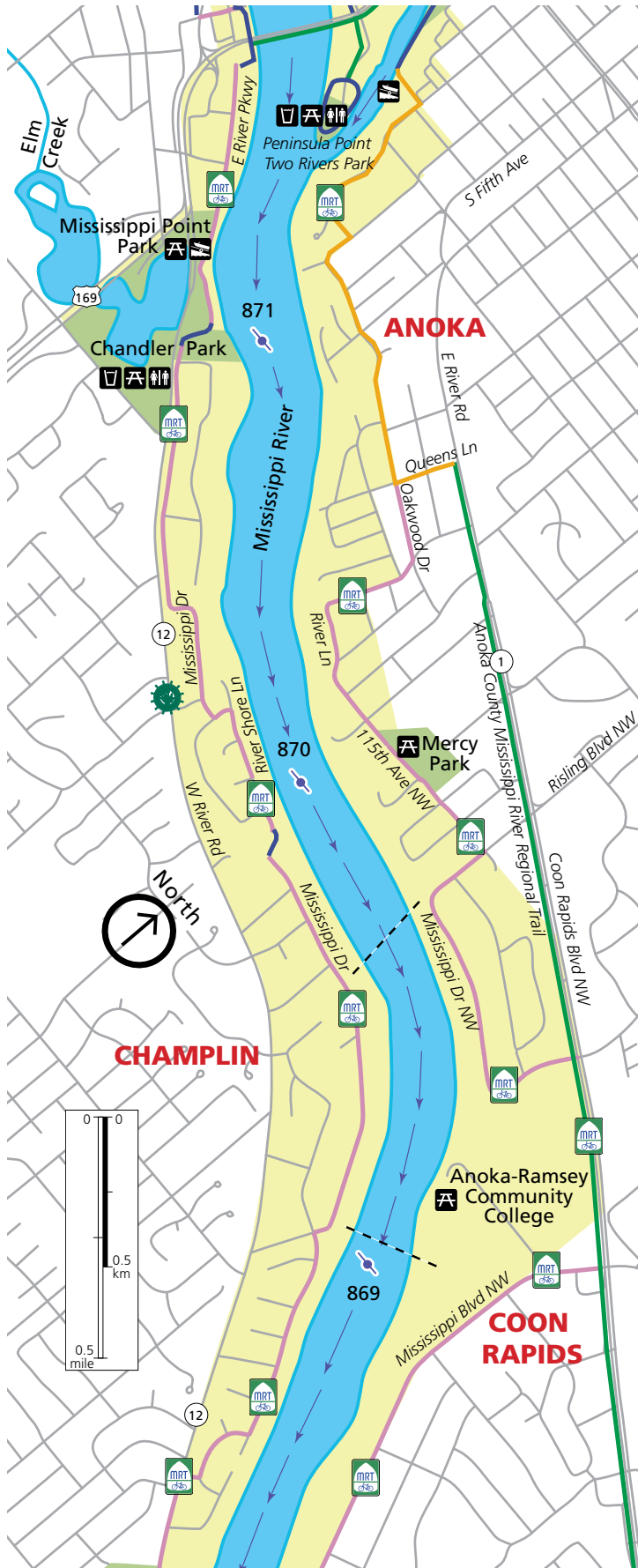
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River mile 871 to 869

The **Coon Rapids Dam** raises the water level in this stretch, which makes it popular with power boaters and waterskiers. The shoreline has a very suburban look.

The **Mississippi River Trail** follows mostly residential streets on both sides of the river.

Elm Creek enters the Mississippi River at **Mississippi Point Park** (871.3 W). The creek's watershed drains 83,000 acres in northern Hennepin County.



River scene between Anoka and Coon Rapids. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
871	N 45.184907	W 93.386039
870	N 45.177248	W 93.370595
869	N 45.169465	W 93.353077

Coon Rapids Dam

5

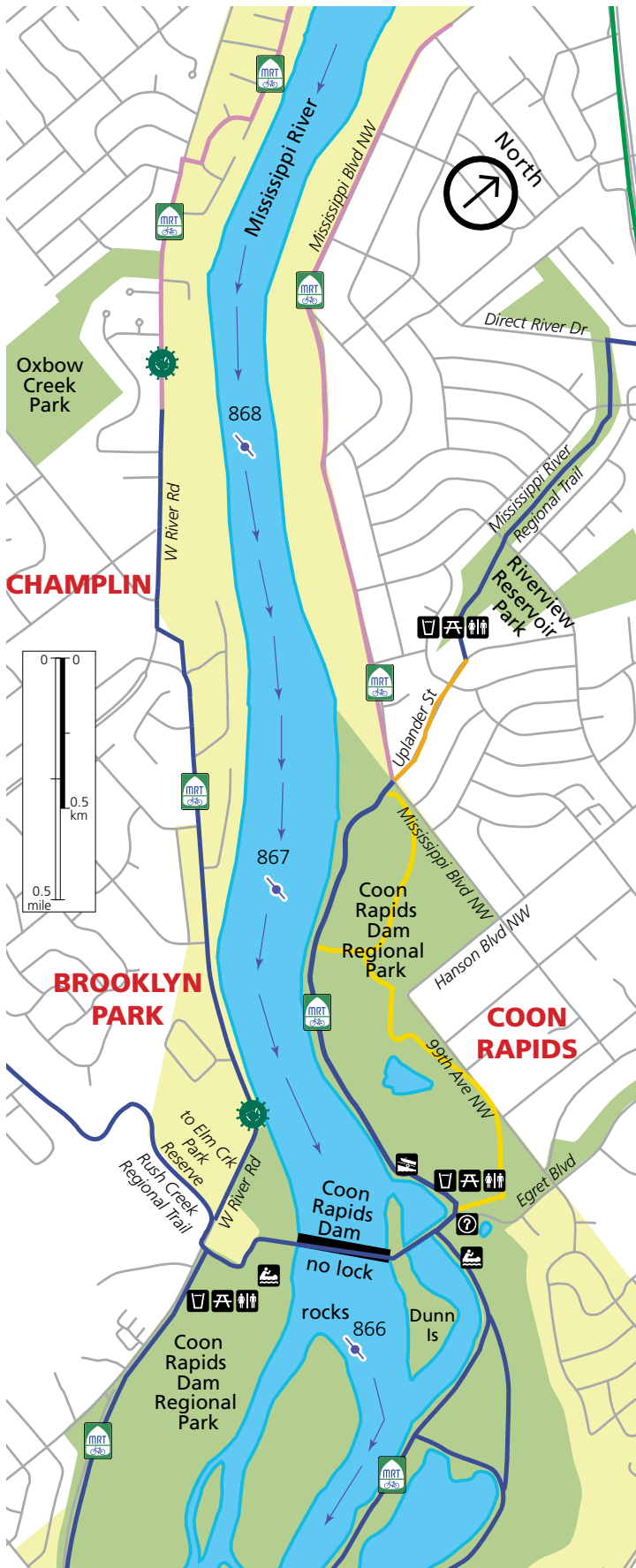
River mile 868 to 866

Suburbia gives way to green space as you enter **Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park** (865 to 867.7), which extends along both sides of the river. Traveling upriver, this is the first dam on the Mississippi that does not have a lock. Paddlers can portage around the east side of the dam.

The park on the east side of the river has a good trail system. Both sides have a visitor center with exhibits. The pedestrian/bike bridge on top of the dam provides scenic views upriver and of the rapids downriver and connects the two parks.

The **Rush Creek Regional Trail** begins at the west Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park and runs 7 miles west to Elm Creek Park Reserve.

The **Mississippi River Regional Trail** begins in the east Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park and follows a scenic, well-marked route downriver for 11 miles to Minneapolis. On the west side the Mississippi River Trail follows West River Road.



Coon Rapids Dam. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
868	N 45.156947	W 93.340331
867	N 45.149113	W 93.325095
866	N 45.142035	W 93.308021

Banfill Island

River mile 866 to 864

6

Below the dam the river returns to a more natural state, with minor rapids, wooded shorelines, and abundant wildlife. **Cenaiko Lake** in Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park is a designated trout lake that is stocked annually.

Below the **Richard P. Braun (Highway 610) Bridge** (865), suburban development near the river is tucked behind high, wooded banks. Keep an eye out for turkeys and other wildlife near the roads and trails.

The **Mississippi River Trail** on the east side of the river passes through woods near the Highway 610 Bridge, then follows wooded residential streets, often with a good view of the river.

The **Mississippi River Trail** on the west side of the river follows a paved trail next to West River Road, usually a couple of blocks from the river.

The National Park Service and Anoka County are working together on several restoration projects in this stretch of river.



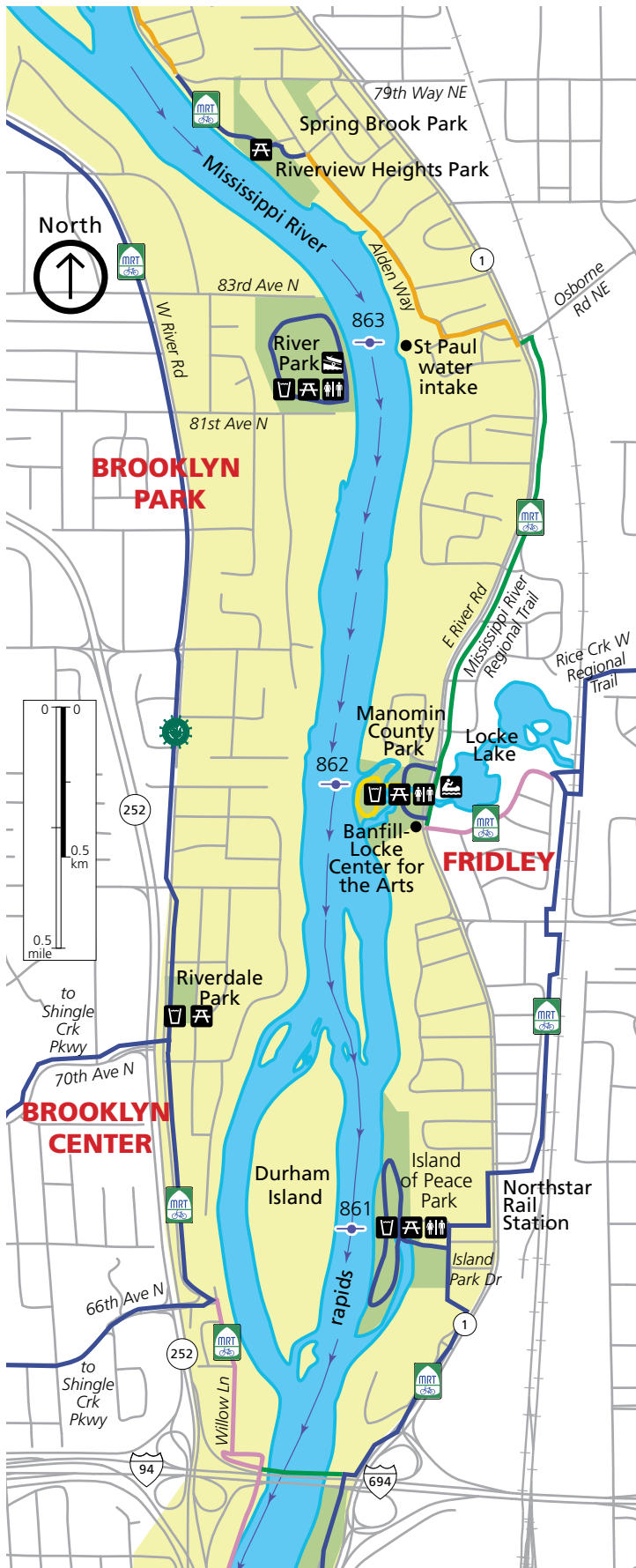
Cenaiko Lake Prairie Restoration. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
866	N 45.142035	W 93.308021
865	N 45.128696	W 93.298551
864	N 45.115025	W 93.290434

Durham Island

River mile 863 to 861

7



On the water, enjoy the view of the tree-lined shore as you negotiate a few minor rapids and see lots of wildlife. A stately white building on the east side of the river across from **River Park** (863 W) takes water from the Mississippi for the St. Paul water system.

The **Mississippi River Regional Trail** passes through or by a number of parks on the east bank, including **Riverview Heights Park** (863.5 E), **Manomin County Park** (862 E) and **Island of Peace Park** (861 E). It also follows a railroad corridor for a stretch and passes a **Northstar Commuter Rail station**. You can see the downtown Minneapolis skyline from here.

Rice Creek flows into the Mississippi River at Manomin County Park. Rice Creek is also a canoe route that starts in Lino Lakes, Minnesota.

The **Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts**, in Manomin County Park, is a community arts center that operates a gallery and hosts a variety of arts events in a historic Greek Revival house overlooking the river.

The **Mississippi River Trail** on the west side of the river follows West River Road. River Park has access to the river and walking trails through a restored prairie.



Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
863	N 45.103591	W 93.278623
862	N 45.090290	W 93.280008
861	N 45.076914	W 93.279277

Riverfront Regional Park

8

River mile 860 to 857

The river changes below the I-694 Bridge (860.4): it's wider and straighter, and the view of the downtown Minneapolis skyline downstream is stunning. The river's last rapids are little more than riffles in this reach.

Most of the shoreline in this stretch is parkland and trails. The **Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park** (859 to 860.5 E) includes a boat ramp, picnic areas, and the **Riedel Farm Estate**, a farmhouse built in the 1880s and now used for special events.

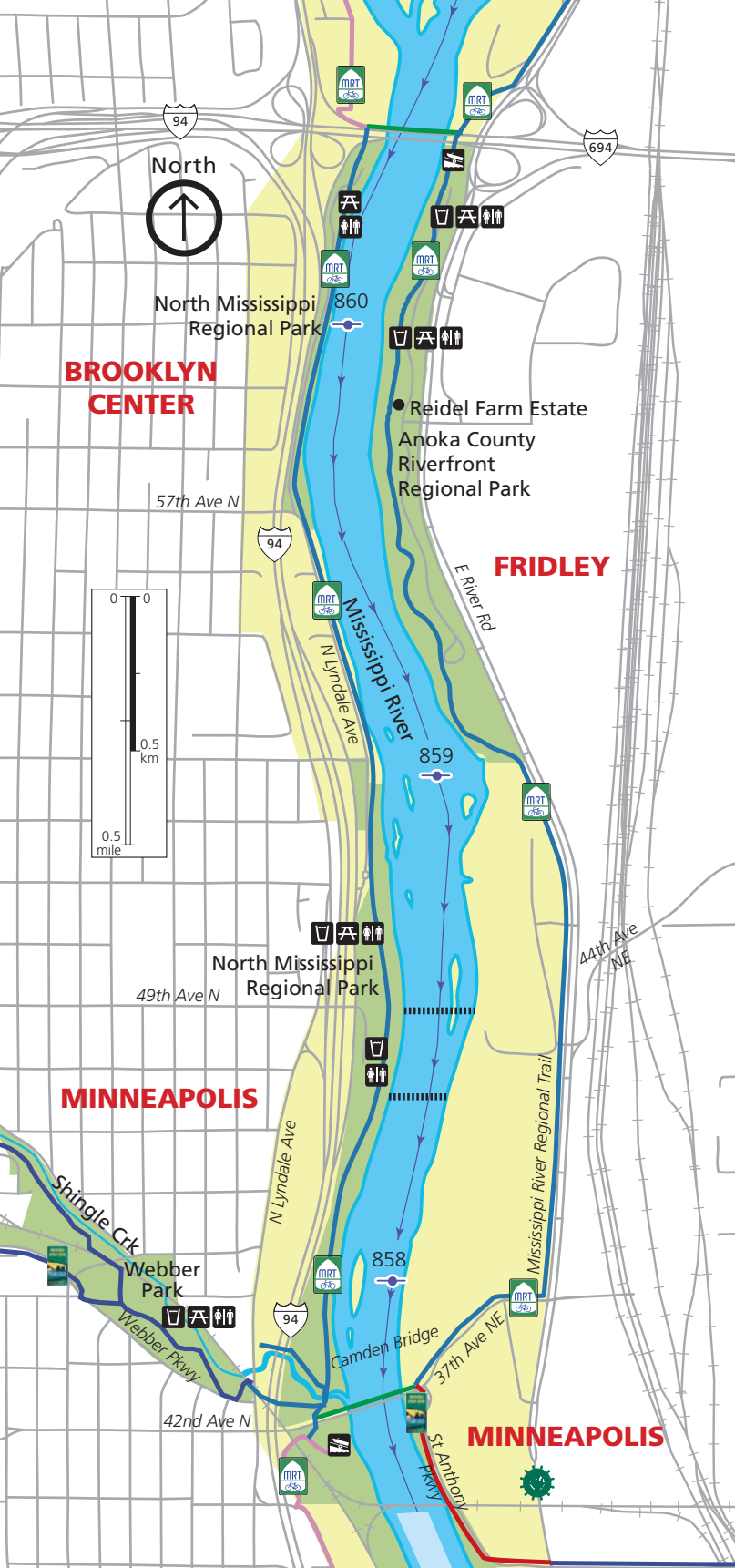
Along the west bank, **North Mississippi Regional Park** (858 to 860.5 W) occupies almost the entire shoreline. The Carl W. Kroening Visitor Center offers a variety of programs. The trails link to Shingle Creek Parkway and Victory Memorial Parkway near the Camden Bridge.

The 50.1 miles of breathtaking **Grand Rounds Bike Trails** in Minneapolis takes you around lakes and creeks, through historic neighborhoods, past urban golf courses and expansive parks, and over and alongside the great Mississippi River (maps 8 to 12).



Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
860	N 45.063843	W 93.284389
859	N 45.050679	W 93.280657
858	N 45.035931	W 93.282420
857	N 45.021979	W 93.277695



Riverside Power Plant

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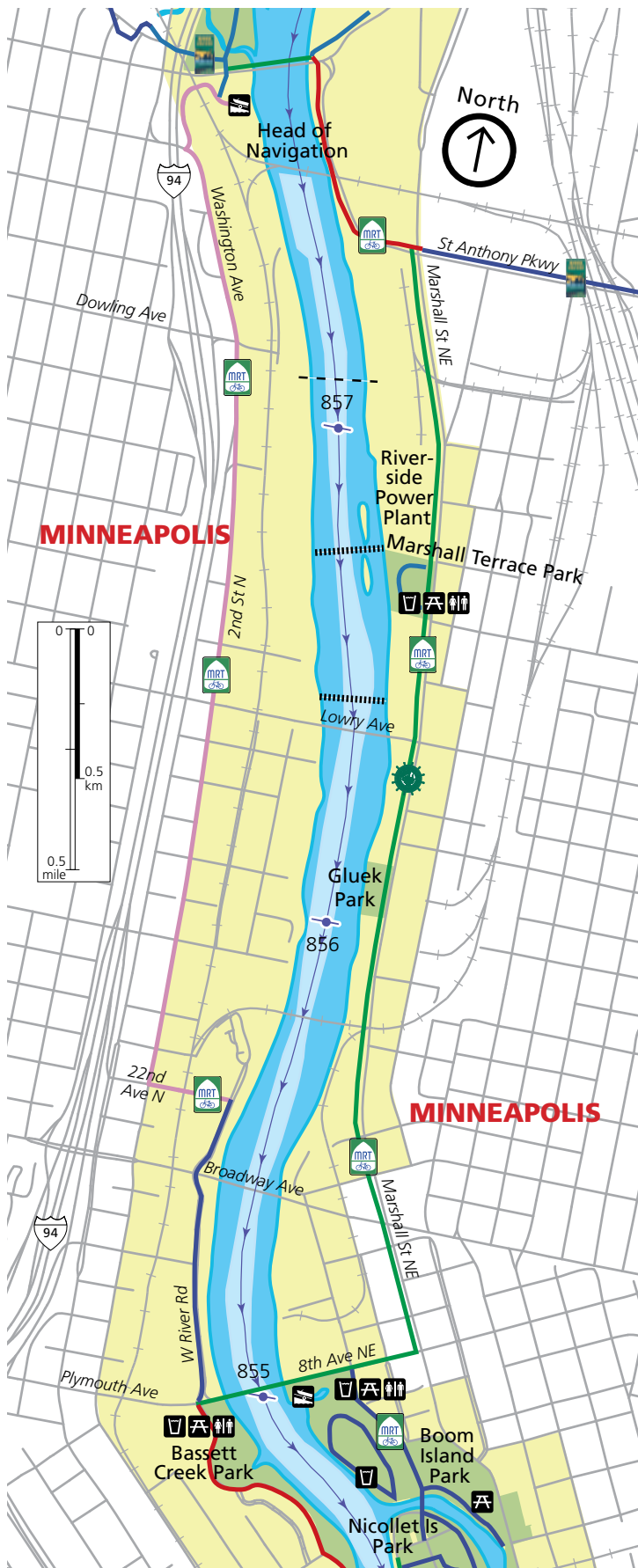
River mile 857 to 855

This is an industrialized reach of river, although much of that industry is dwindling and the land is gradually being converted to parks, trails, and housing.

The **Head of Navigation** (857.6), downriver from the Canadian Pacific railroad bridge, marks the point in the river at which the Army Corps of Engineers starts maintaining a minimum nine-foot-deep shipping channel. The system of 29 locks and dams is necessary to maintain the nine-foot channel to near St. Louis, where the natural river becomes deep enough to float loaded barges.

The trails on both sides follow increasingly urban streets until they pass the **Eighth Avenue (Plymouth Avenue) Bridge** (855), after which they follow trails, mostly through parks and parkways through downtown Minneapolis.

Running since 1911, the **Riverside Power Plant** was the oldest continuously operating coal-burning plant in the United States. It replaced a power plant that was destroyed in an explosion near St. Anthony Falls. It was built in 18 weeks using horse-drawn equipment. Xcel Energy converted the plant from coal to natural gas in 2009 as part of its efforts to cut emissions from coal-burning power plants in the Twin Cities. The conversion has substantially reduced the plant's sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, mercury, and particulate emissions. The plant's reduction of carbon dioxide emissions is equivalent to taking 600,000 cars off the road.



Riverside Power Plant. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
857	N 45.021979	W 93.277695
856	N 45.007302	W 93.274131
855	N 44.992895	W 93.272840

St. Anthony Falls

River mile 855 to 852

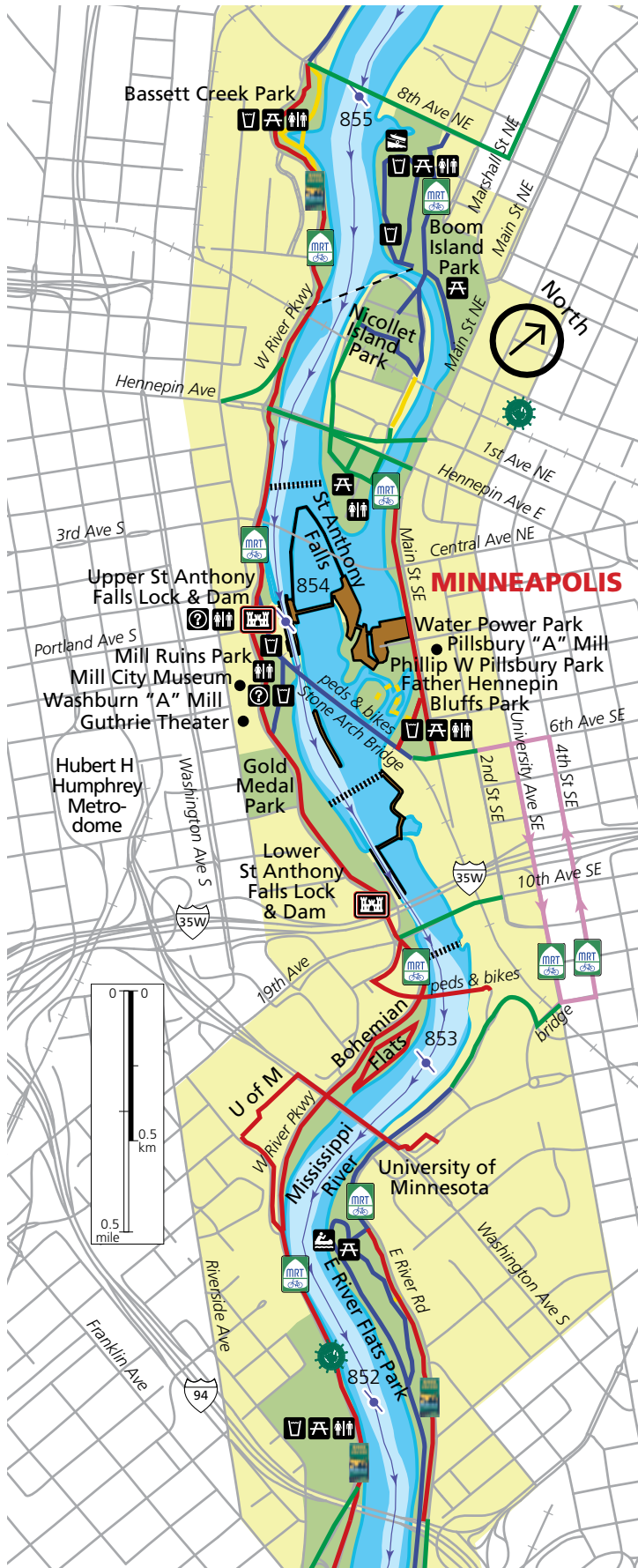
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More than a dozen bridges span this stretch of river, connecting numerous bike and pedestrian trails. Most are open to bicyclists. Several interesting footpaths stay closer to the river than the bike paths, such as along the west bank (854.8 W) across from **Boom Island Park** (no longer an island) and on the east bank (853.7 E) upstream from the **Stone Arch Bridge** (853.9).

In the mid-to-late 1800s, millers harnessed the power of **St. Anthony Falls** (854) to build a huge flour-milling industry along the river. The city of Minneapolis offers trolley tours of this historic district.

The car-free **Stone Arch Bridge** has a great view of the falls and the river, as does **Water Power Park**. The falls were rapidly eroding upstream until the Army Corps of Engineers stabilized them. The **Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam** raises and lowers boats 49 feet between the top and bottom of the falls. In its natural state, the foot of the falls was a rocky rapids, but the **Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam** (853.5) and **Lock and Dam 1** (847.6) hold water levels deep enough to maintain river shipping.

Boaters on this stretch should keep an eye out for dams, locks, bridge piers, commercial traffic, and a waterfall.



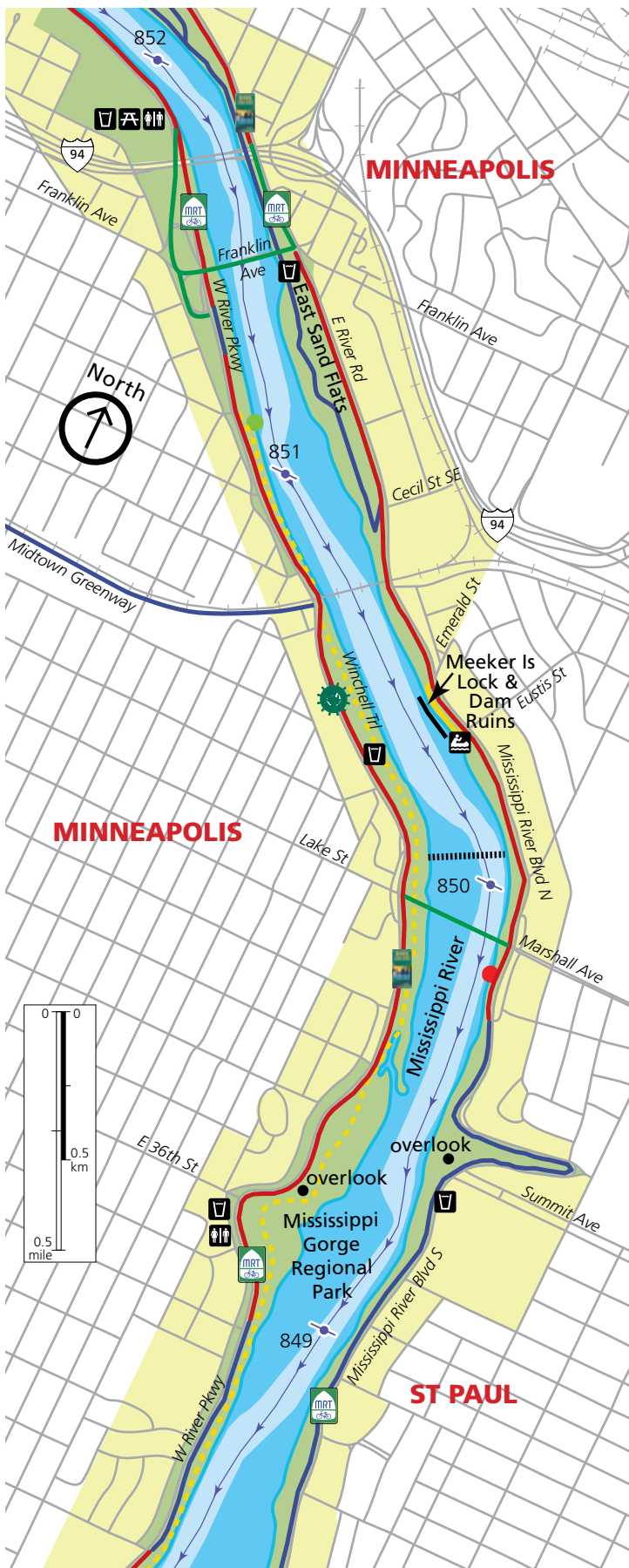
Mill Ruins Park and Mill City Museum. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
855	44.992895	-93.272840
854	44.981081	-93.257732
853	44.975824	-93.239553
852	44.968072	-93.229922

Meeker Island

River mile 851 to 849

11



From just below St. Anthony Falls to Fort Snelling (map 13) is the Mississippi River's only true gorge. Looking up at the rocky, wooded bluffs from the river, it's hard to imagine that you're in the geographic center of a metropolitan area with three million people. The bluffs are rocky and steep on both sides of the river.

Quiet, tree-lined streets parallel the bluffs on both sides, with bicycle and pedestrian trails between the streets and the bluffs. Many bicyclists use the bike lane on Mississippi River Boulevard rather than the trail. Numerous overlooks and park benches offer opportunities to relax and enjoy the views. At spots, there's good access to the river.

At the **Meeker Island Lock and Dam ruins** (850.2 E), you can see what's left of the first lock and dam on the river, built in 1907. On the downriver side a switchback trail (850.8 E) leads to the **East Sand Flats**. The trail continues upriver across a cantilevered structure under the I-94 Bridge to the **East River Flats** (852.2 E), on the University of Minnesota campus. There are spots along this stretch where a canoe or kayak could be easily pulled up onto the shore.

On the west side of the river, the pedestrian-only **Winchell Trail** follows the route of an old American Indian trail between the blufftop and the river. In places it is little more than a foot path, sometimes a steep one. The earthen trail on the upstream end of the trail cuts close to the edge, while on the downstream end the trail is paved and fenced away from the steep spots.

Access to the river on the west side can be found across from the Midtown Greenway trailhead and via stone steps near 34th St. A restored oak savanna near 36th St. is a popular place to explore.

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
851	N 44.958408	W 93.217305
850	N 44.949838	W 93.201743
849	N 44.935427	W 93.199922

Hidden Falls Regional Park

River mile 848 to 846

The deep river gorge disappears as the Mississippi approaches its confluence with the Minnesota River.

Hidden Falls Regional Park (845.4 to 847.4 E) includes tall cottonwoods in floodplain forests, which become common below the gorge. **Minnehaha Regional Park** (847 to 847.6 W) features a dramatic waterfall where Minnehaha Creek spills over a cliff, tumbling 53 feet into a gorge. The walking path along Minnehaha Creek is accessible from the park and the river. There is a pavilion with a seasonal restaurant near the falls.

Lock and Dam 1 (847.6) was built by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1917. In 1923, Ford Motor Company added a hydroelectric station to generate electricity for its assembly plant.

The Army Corps of Engineers operates an observation area on the west side, where you can watch boats lock through. The road to the lock and dam begins where West River Parkway becomes Godfrey Parkway, on the upriver side of the Ford Parkway Bridge.



Minnehaha Falls In Minnehaha Regional Park. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
848	N 44.921125	W 93.202517
847	N 44.907698	W 93.198435
846	N 44.896398	W 93.189096

Pike Island

River mile 846 to 844

13



In this stretch, the Mississippi swallows up the turbid waters of the Minnesota River. Downstream from **Pike Island** (844.8 W) you can sometimes distinguish the brown water coming from the Minnesota River until eventually the two rivers completely intermingle. Hundreds of acres of public lands and many miles of trails occupy the floodplain forest here, providing opportunities for viewing wildlife, hiking, biking, or for an urban river boating experience.

Historic Fort Snelling (845.5 W), once the seat of military power in the West, crowns the blufftop overlooking the confluence. Originally built in 1825, the restored fort is operated by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Pike Island is named after Lieutenant Zebulon Pike, who in 1805 purchased land from the Dakota for a U.S. fort on the bluff. The Dakota called it *Wita Tanka*. The island and much of the land near the fort and on the Minnesota River is part of **Fort Snelling State Park**. The island's pedestrian trail is popular with birders and wildlife watchers. The island's backwater channel can flow in either direction.

Trails and a road link **Hidden Falls Regional Park** (845.4 to 847.4 E) with **Crosby Farm Regional Park** (842.3 to 845.4 E). Crosby Farm Park's trails meander near two small backwater lakes and through floodplain forests.

The **Big Rivers Regional Trail** follows the west bank of the river through floodplain forests. It is one of the most scenic rail trails in the country and offers spectacular views of the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers.

Note that the river flows to the northeast here, so the east side (bank) is on the left side of the map and the west side (bank) is on the right.

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
846	N 44.896398	W 93.189096
845	N 44.893741	W 93.169215
844	N 44.897643	W 93.150983

Minnesota River

13A

River mile 845 to 844

Eleven thousand years ago glacial meltwater poured across southern Minnesota and carved a huge valley. Within it, today's Minnesota River appears small.

The Minnesota River (843.9 W) within Fort Snelling State Park contains many backwater lakes and wetlands. The 332-mile-long river begins at Big Stone Lake, on the Minnesota-South Dakota Border. The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge begins upriver from I-494.

The Sibley Trail connects the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to Fort Snelling State Park. Trails from the visitor center connect to Minnehaha Regional Park (map 12) and Big River Regional Trail.

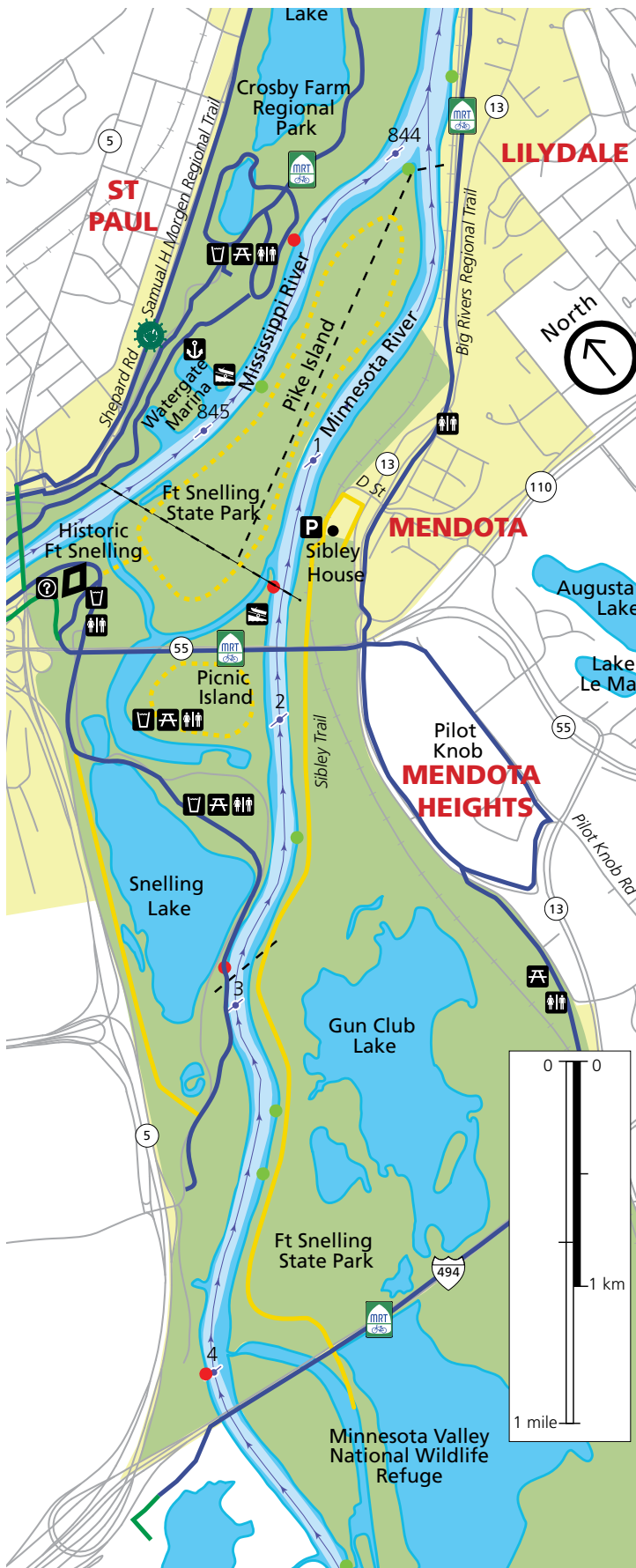
River pilots once used the high hill known as Pilot Knob (Minnesota river mile 2 W) as a landmark. The Dakota people buried their dead here.

The Big River Regional Trail connects with historic Pilot Knob, which is being restored to oak savanna.

Young Henry Sibley began building the Sibley House (Minnesota river mile 1.2 W) in 1838, after he came here to work as a regional manager for the American Fur Company. He later became the first governor of Minnesota. The Minnesota Historical Society gives tours of the house and other restored historic buildings on the site.

Note that the river flows to the northeast here, so the east side (bank) is on the left side of the map and the west side (bank) is on the right.

Note that this map is at a larger scale than most of the other maps.



Sibley House. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
845	N 44.893741	W 93.169215
844	N 44.897643	W 93.150983

Lilydale Park

River mile 843 to 841

The river here picks up speed a bit, and you’re more likely to encounter barge traffic than you were upriver. You can peek at blufftop neighborhoods, but the river valley is all undeveloped parkland that looks wild and natural from the water.

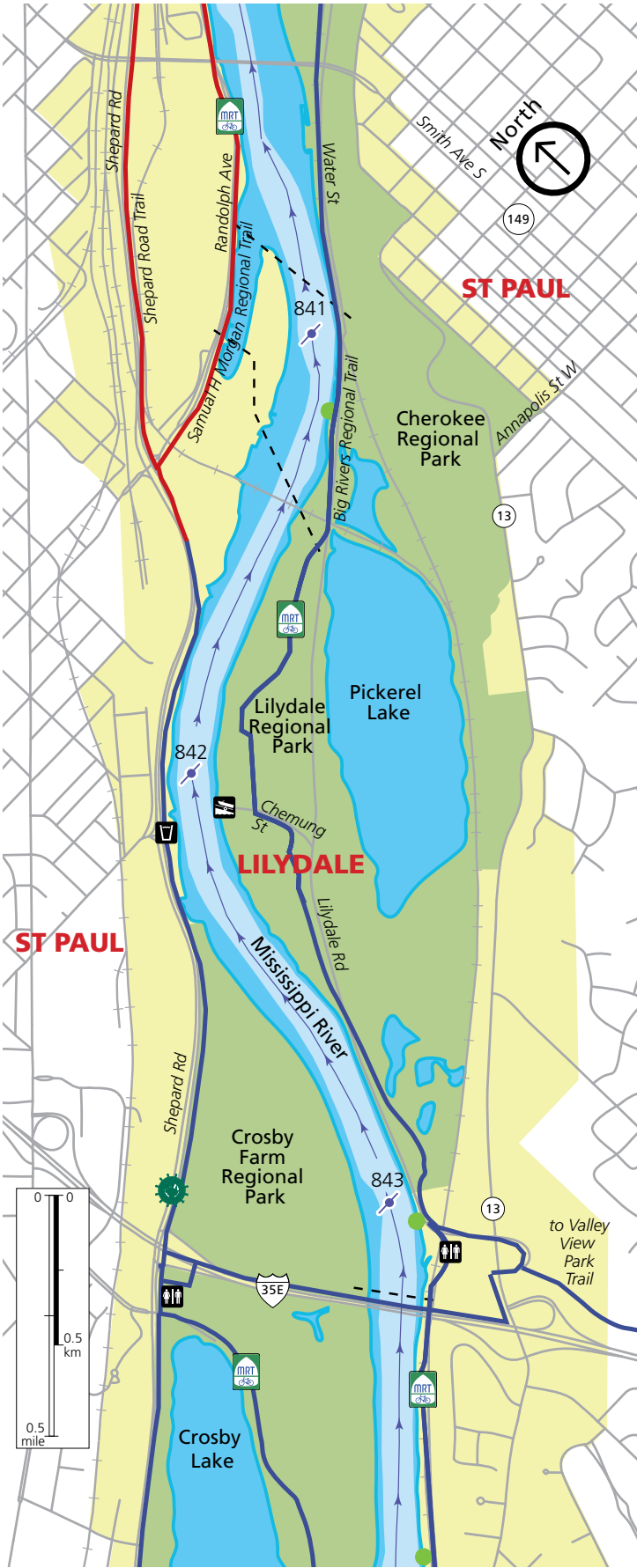
The **Big Rivers Regional Trail** connects **Lilydale Regional Park** (841.3 to 843 W) to **Harriet Island Regional Park** and downtown St. Paul (map 15).

Walking trails and benches provide great views of downtown St. Paul and the Cathedral of St. Paul from **Cherokee Regional Park** (840.5 to 841.3 W).

Trails in **Crosby Farm Regional Park** (842.3 to 845.4 E) follow the river, sandy beaches, floodplain forests, and a wetland.

St. Paul’s **Great River Park** aims to connect 17 miles of riverfront via parks, trails, and neighborhoods.

Note that the river flows to the northeast here, so the east side (bank) is on the left side of the map and the west side (bank) is on the right.



Pickerel Lake. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
843	N 44.906719	W 93.135846
842	N 44.919928	W 93.128351
841	N 44.926368	W 93.111285

Downtown St. Paul

15

River mile 840 to 837

Currents, tows, excursion boats, and bridge abutments require alert boating in the St. Paul downtown stretch of the river. This is where the Mississippi opens up into the broad valley it will occupy all the way to St. Louis.

Park rangers at the **Mississippi River Visitor Center** (839.7 E), located in the **Science Museum of Minnesota**, provide information and answer questions about this national park and other national parks. The visitor center also offers educational displays and literature. Phone 651-293-0200.

The historic **City House**, built in 1931, was once a municipal grain elevator.

Harriet Island Regional Park (839.5 to 840.5 W) offers excursion boat rides, a restored pavilion, trails, wide open spaces, and views of the river and downtown. The **St. Paul Yacht Club** marinas are at both ends of the park. The marina near the Wabasha Street Bridge has a public dock.

A vibrant downtown St. Paul sits on a bluff above the river. Paddlewheelers once lined the shore here. The park on the bluff downtown, along **East Kellogg Boulevard** (839.2 to 839.5 E), is a good spot to view the working river, **Raspberry Island** (839.5), the **Union Pacific Railroad lift bridge** (839.3), and the other bridges.

Separating downtown from historic **Dayton's Bluff** is a valley containing the **Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary**. **Indian Mounds Regional Park**, on the blufftop, contains large Hopewell mounds and offers a grand view up and down the river.

CAUTION: Cyclists should use caution at the intersection of Warner and Child's Road.

Note that the river flows to the northeast here, so the east side (bank) is on the left side of the map and the west side (bank) is on the right.



River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
840	N 44.937734	W 93.099948
839	N 44.945536	W 93.083299
838	N 44.945783	W 93.064381
837	N 44.935687	W 93.050495

See the next page
for the map
that goes with this narrative.

Beyond the airport and wastewater treatment plant is **Kaposia Landing** (834.8 to 835.7 W), an 85-acre park named after a Dakota village that was at this site.

Looking north from the river you can see the skyline of downtown St. Paul hanging above the river, but as you continue south, the city view disappears and gives way to natural floodplain forests, islands, backwaters, and some of the most diverse bird life found anywhere on the river. **Pigs Eye Scientific and Natural Area** (834 E) contains a large heron rookery and is closed during bird nesting season (spring/summer). This rookery is the Upper Midwest’s largest and most diverse colonial nesting site. In addition to great blue herons and great egrets, little blue herons, black-crowned and yellow-crowned night herons, and double-crested cormorants nest in this area.

Pigs Eye Lake is full of aquatic plants and waterfowl, and is a nice diversion from the main channel.

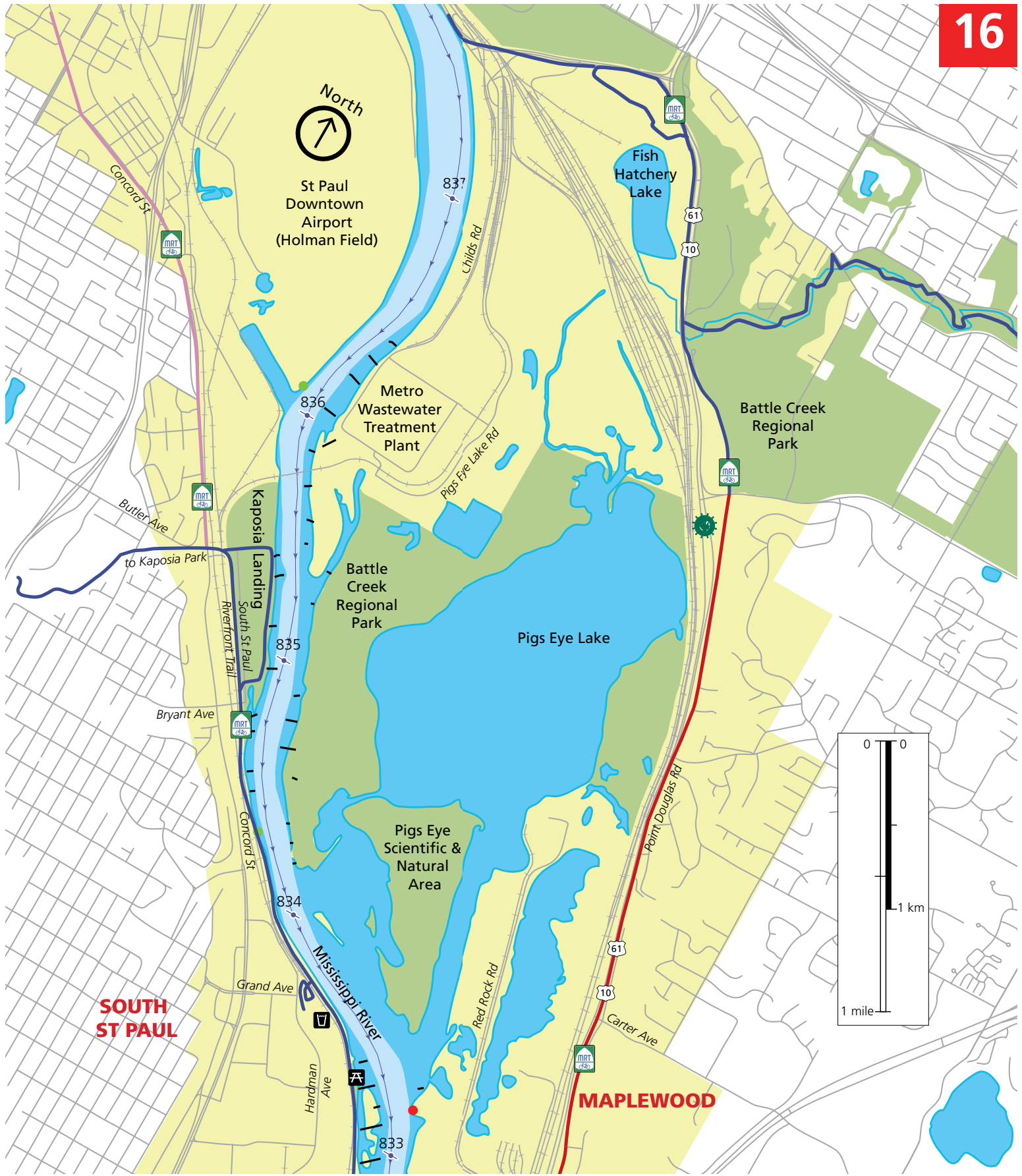
The Mississippi River Trail skirts the border of Battle Creek Regional Park then follows Point Douglas Road.

Note that this map is at a larger scale than most of the other maps.



Egret nests. (Great River Birding Trail)

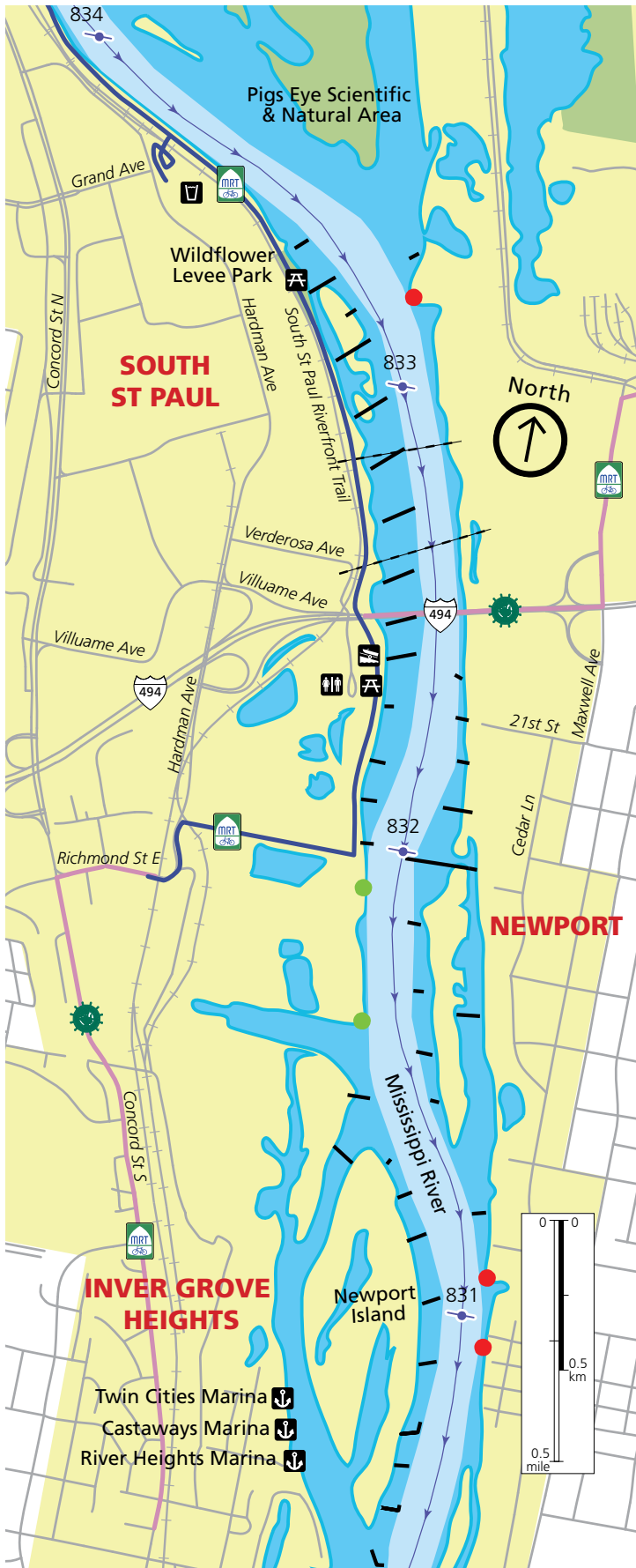
River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
837	N 44.935687	W 93.050495
836	N 44.921715	W 93.051860
835	N 44.909676	W 93.044166
834	N 44.898084	W 93.033990



South St. Paul

River mile 833 to 831

17



A levee and a recreational trail follow the river in South St. Paul, where stockyards once existed along the river upstream from the **Wakota (1-494) Bridge** (832.4). At one time South St. Paul was home to the largest stockyards in the world.

Below the Wakota Bridge the river turns natural again. This is a great place to watch for bald eagles, pelicans, and shorebirds.

After following the **South St. Paul Riverfront Trail** and the levee along the west side of the river, the **Mississippi River Trail** moves inland to follow Concord Street South.

On the east side of the river, the Mississippi River Trail follows Highway 61 to Cottage Grove, where it cuts southwest to follow Summit Avenue through St. Paul Park to Pullman Avenue (map 18).



South St. Paul Riverfront Trail. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
833	N 44.889473	W 93.018574
832	N 44.875740	W 93.014830
831	N 44.862358	W 93.008663

Inver Grove Heights

18

River mile 830 to 828

The large oil refinery (830.1 E) reminds us of the river's industrial importance, but much of this reach is wild. The double-decker **Rock Island Swing Bridge** (830.3), built in 1895, used to carry trains and cars across the river just upstream from the refinery. The bridge was closed in 1999, and all but the west approach was removed in 2009. The remaining section of the bridge is being converted into a recreational pier.

The many islands make for great backwater canoeing here. The channel along the east side of the river below **Lions Levee Park** (829.7 E) is very scenic. Watch for egrets, eagles, and evidence of beavers. Several protected marinas provide access to the main channel.

Riverside Park is being restored to native woodland and oak savanna and has nice walking trails.

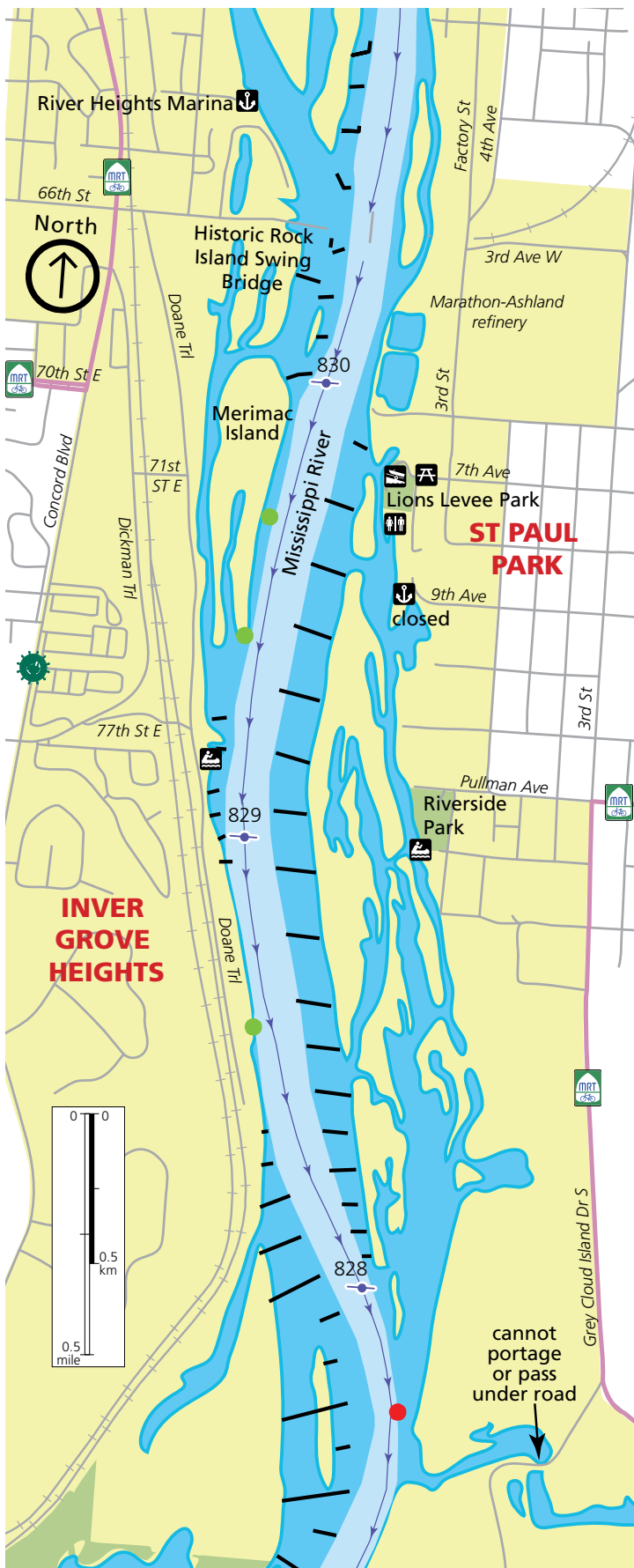
The west **Mississippi River Trail** follows 70th Street East to Argenta Trail, passes through Eagan and Rosemount, and enters south Hastings on 160th Street East.

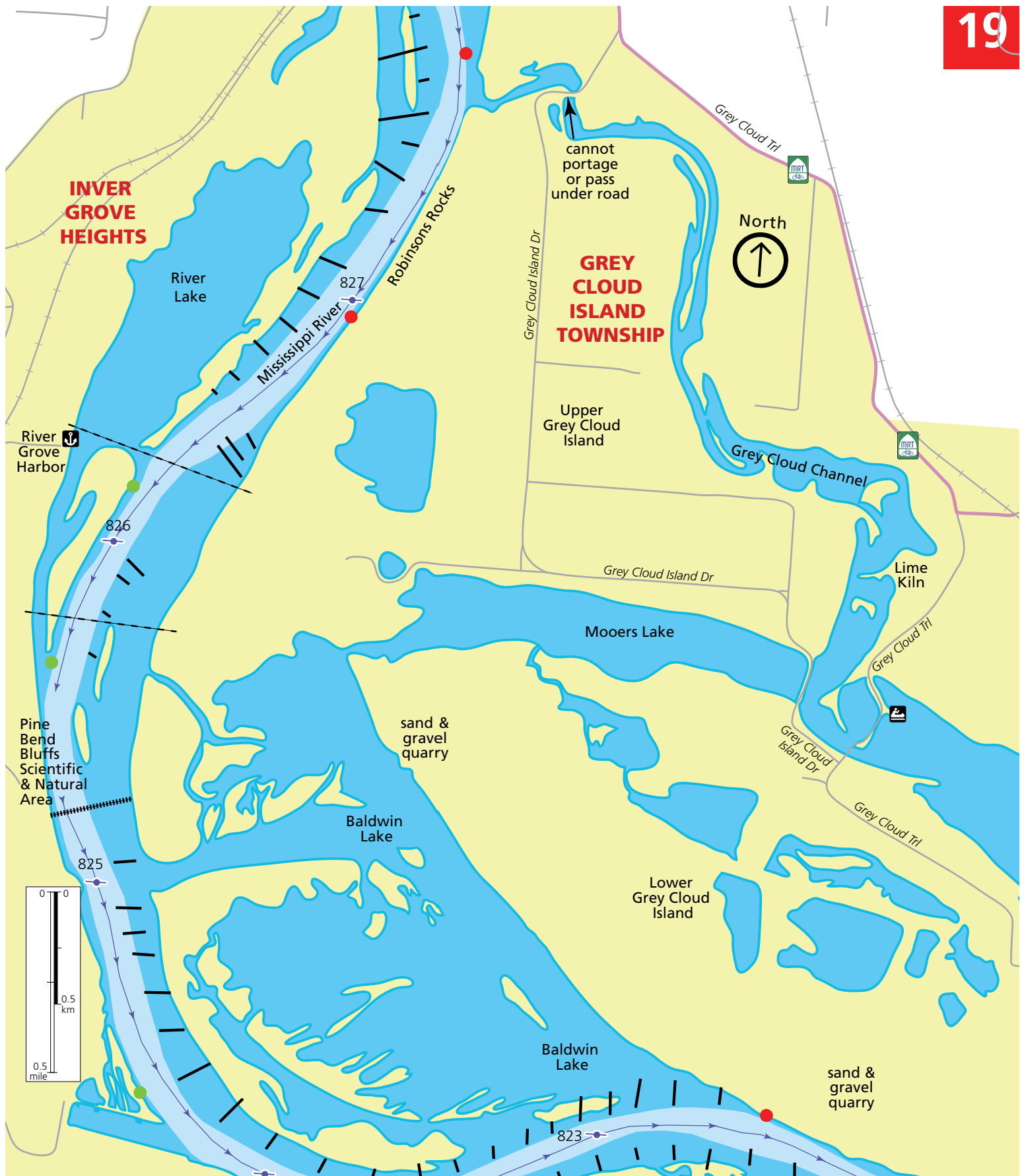
The east **Mississippi River Trail** passes through St. Paul Park on Summit Avenue before turning toward the river on Pullman Avenue.



The Rock Island Swing Bridge carried rail and vehicular traffic between Inver Grove Heights and St. Paul Park. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
830	N 44.848581	W 93.009966
829	N 44.834797	W 93.012378
828	N 44.821440	W 93.006419





Upper Grey Cloud Island

River mile 827 to 825

19

With towering bluffs in the background and complex backwaters to explore, this reach resembles areas a hundred miles downriver.

River Lake is a good place to watch white pelicans in the spring and fall.

The rocky bluffs along the shore of Upper Grey Cloud Island are named after Jane Muckle Robinson, who tended the navigation lights on this stretch of the river from 1885 to 1921.

Grey Cloud Channel (827.6 E) is an interesting backwater to explore. However, the channel does not connect Mooers Lake and the Mississippi River, because a road blocks the upper end of the channel. It cannot be portaged without trespassing on private land.

Visit Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area to get a great view of Upper and Lower Grey Cloud Island. Exit highways 52/55 on 117th St. E. Take 117th St. E. east to the service road. Follow the service road north to 111th St. E. Park and walk east on 111th St. E. to the end. Follow the path to the right.



View from Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
827	N 44.807816	W 93.009768
826	N 44.797302	W 93.021924
825	N 44.783585	W 93.021339

See previous page
for the map
that goes with this narrative.

Lower Grey Cloud Island

River mile 824 to 819

20

Baldwin Lake (822.5 to 825.5 E) provides excellent backwater paddling and birdwatching. Eagles are frequently seen fishing in the main channel and in the treetops.

Large volumes of sand and gravel are mined on Lower Grey Cloud Island (821 to 825 E). Most of it is shipped out on barges.

Spring Lake (815.2 to 823 W) is a broad and windswept backwater, but be careful—before Lock and Dam 2 was built, it was a flood-plain forest and those stumps are still there, just below the surface. Be careful when boating!

Lower Spring Lake Park Reserve (822 W) features a scenic overlook and picnic area at Schaars Bluff.

Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area (821 E) is a 220-acre preserve popular with birders and hikers.

The Mississippi River Trail route passes through Cottage Grove to Highway 61. Before it crosses the river to enter Hastings, one branch splits off to follow Highway 10 to Prescott, Wis.

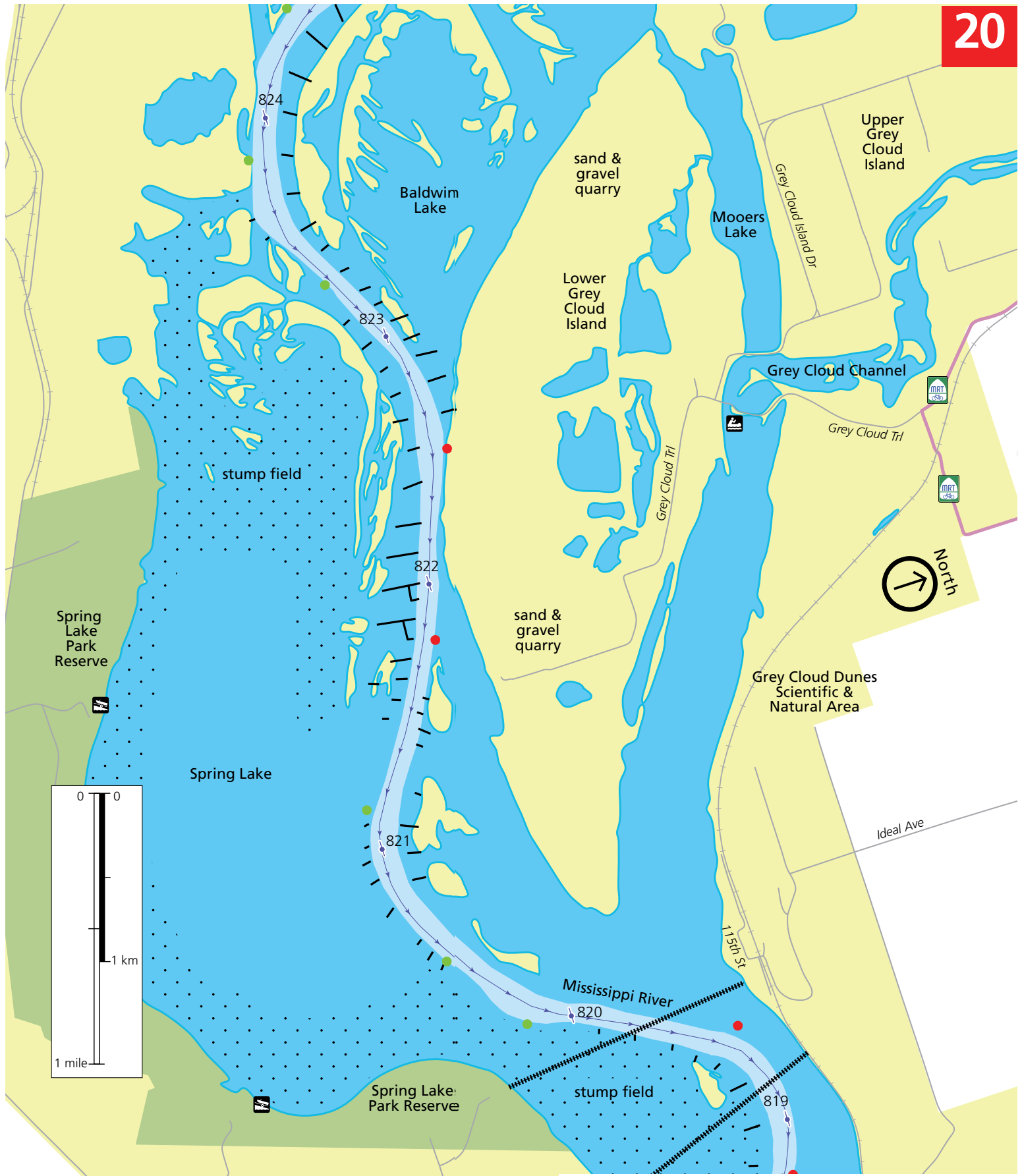
Note that this map is at a larger scale than most of the other maps.

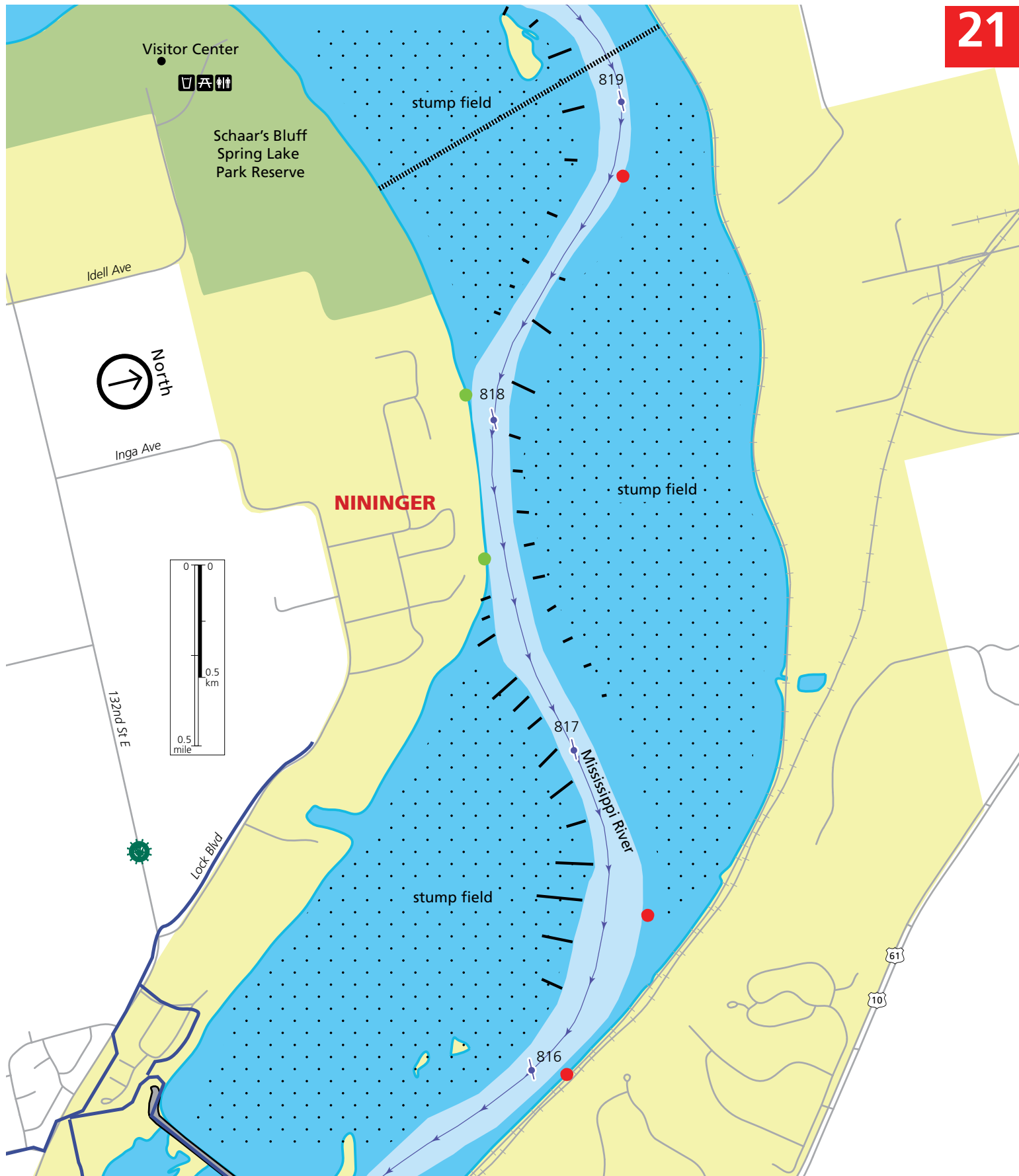


Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
824	N 44.772358	W 93.010858
823	N 44.774893	W 92.992392
822	N 44.772982	W 92.973654
821	N 44.766189	W 92.955739
820	N 44.772939	W 92.939452
819	N 44.782317	W 92.926990

See next page
for the map
that goes with this narrative.





Nininger

River mile 819 to 816

Towering bluffs drop straight into the river here, and the river itself is broad and often windy. Outside the channel, most of the river’s biodiversity has been lost and all that’s left is a vast, shallow lake, but fishing is still good. **Spring Lake** was named for the springs along the base of the bluffs along its south shore.

There are wonderful views of the river from **Schaars Bluff** in the **Spring Lake Park Reserve**.

Ignatius L. Donnelly, a popular author and political figure in the 19th century, tried to start a utopian community at **Nininger** (817.7 W) in 1857. The experiment failed. Now the only traces of the community are a few buildings and two interpretive signs.

This stretch of the river was dominated by bottomland forest before Lock and Dam 2 flooded them. The stumps remain, presenting an underwater hazard to boaters.



View from Schaars Bluff. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
819	N 44.782317	W 92.926990
818	N 44.774103	W 92.911267
817	N 44.774222	W 92.891985
816	N 44.769750	W 92.875079

See previous page
for the map
that goes with this narrative.

Hastings

River mile 816 to 813

Lock and Dam 2 (815.2) connects the high bluffs on either side of the river here. **Lake Rebecca** is a pretty backwater area maintained as a city park. Marinas dot the Hastings area. Hastings is a true river town and a popular boating and biking destination. Downstream of the lock and dam, note the extraordinary old **Canadian Pacific railroad lift bridge** (813.7).

A nice trail begins on the levee downtown and follows the river to **Lake Rebecca Park**, past the lock and dam, and up the hill to the ridge.

Hastings River Flats Park, between the river and Lake Rebecca, offers excellent prairie wildflower and waterfowl viewing.

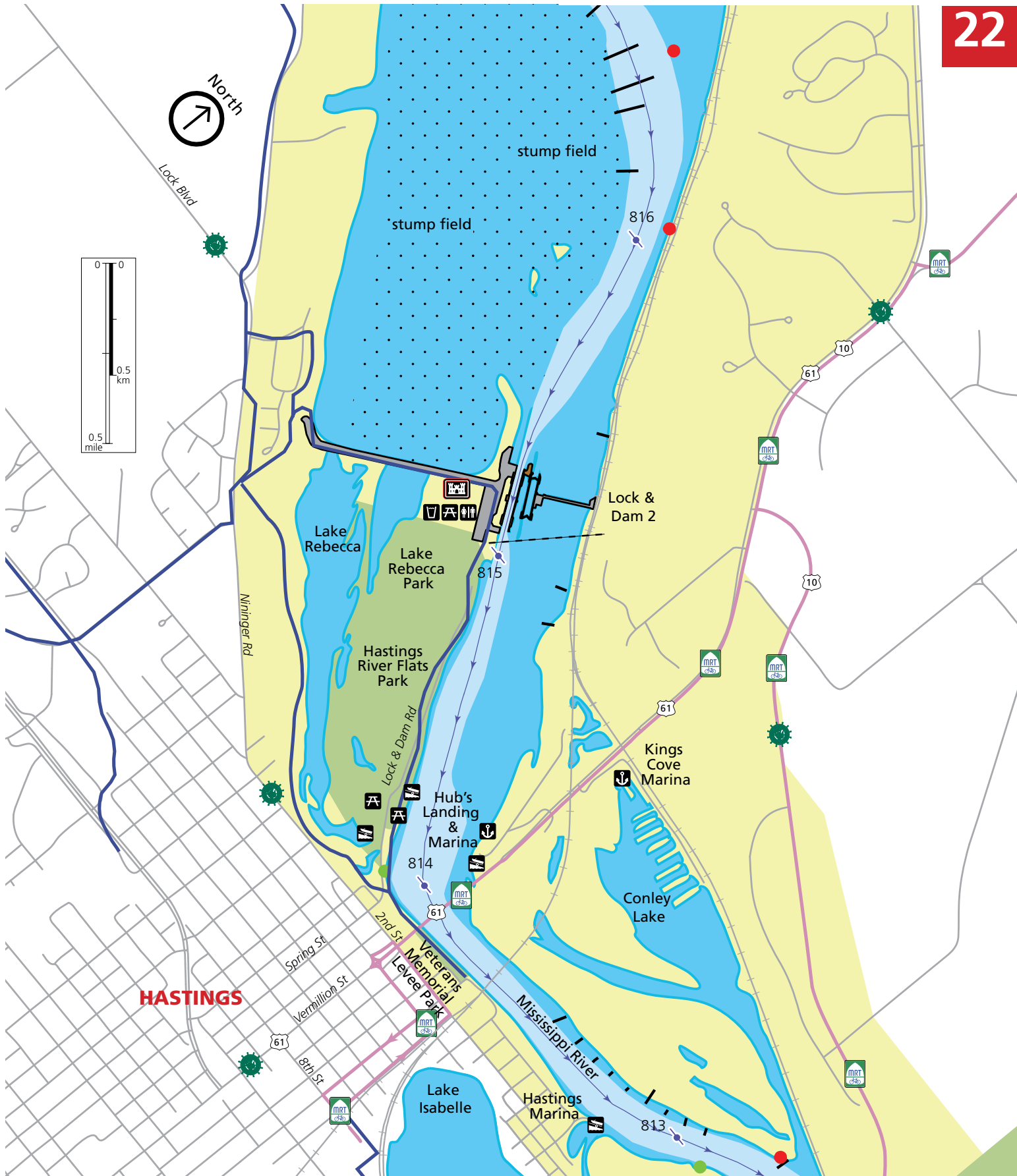
The **Mississippi River Trail** also connects to Hastings from the west on a trail along the south side of the Vermillion River (map 24).



The Hastings Riverfront Trail and Hastings River Flats Park offer trails and views of the river bluffs and migrating waterfowl. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
816	N 44.769750	W 92.875079
815	N 44.757442	W 92.866096
814	N 44.746770	W 92.854246
813	N 44.748286	W 92.834219

See next page
for the map
that goes with this narrative.



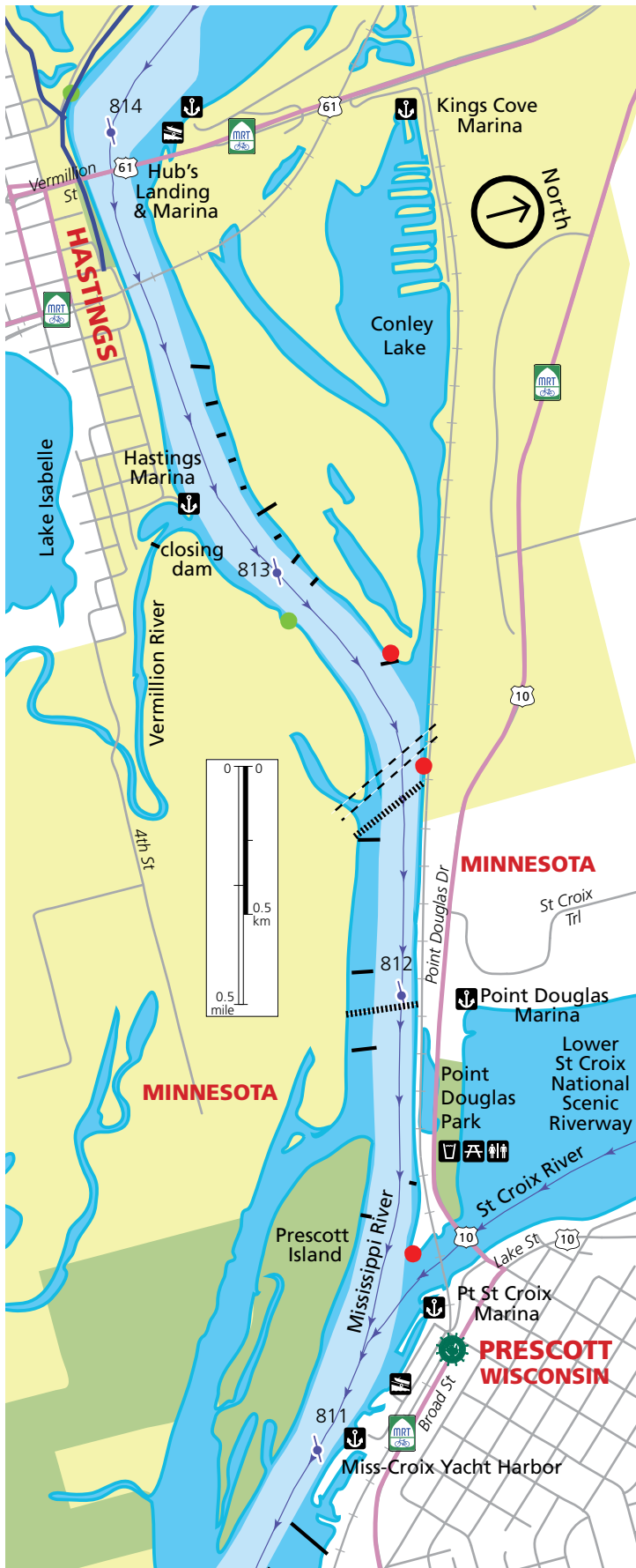
Prescott, Wis.

River mile 814 to 811

23

Just below Hastings the river valley opens up into a broad floodplain between towering wooded bluffs. The **St. Croix River** (811.5 E), itself a National Scenic Riverway administered by the National Park Service, enters the Mississippi at Prescott, Wis. Here, the great Mississippi for the first time forms the border between Minnesota and Wisconsin. Before the waters of the two rivers intermingle, you can often see the sediment-clouded waters of the Mississippi running side-by-side with the darker, clearer waters of the St. Croix. A great place to view this is from the overlook at the **Great River Road Visitor Center at Freedom Park** in Prescott (map 24).

Point Douglas Park is a popular swimming beach in summer.



Bald eagle. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
811	N 44.742724	W 92.797478
812	N 44.748705	W 92.815382
813	N 44.748286	W 92.834219
814	N 44.746770	W 92.854246

See next page
for the map
that goes with this narrative.

The Mississippi hugs the foot of the Wisconsin bluffs here, while the tiny Vermillion River runs along the base of the bluffs on the Minnesota side. Between them lies a vast floodplain forest with many wetlands, backwater areas, and old oxbow channels.

The Vermillion River is small in comparison to the Mississippi River, which is attractive to many paddlers. It is also popular with fishermen and birdwatchers. Check water levels before you go and beware of closing dams on the channels. They are dangerous in high water. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources maintains two boat launches.

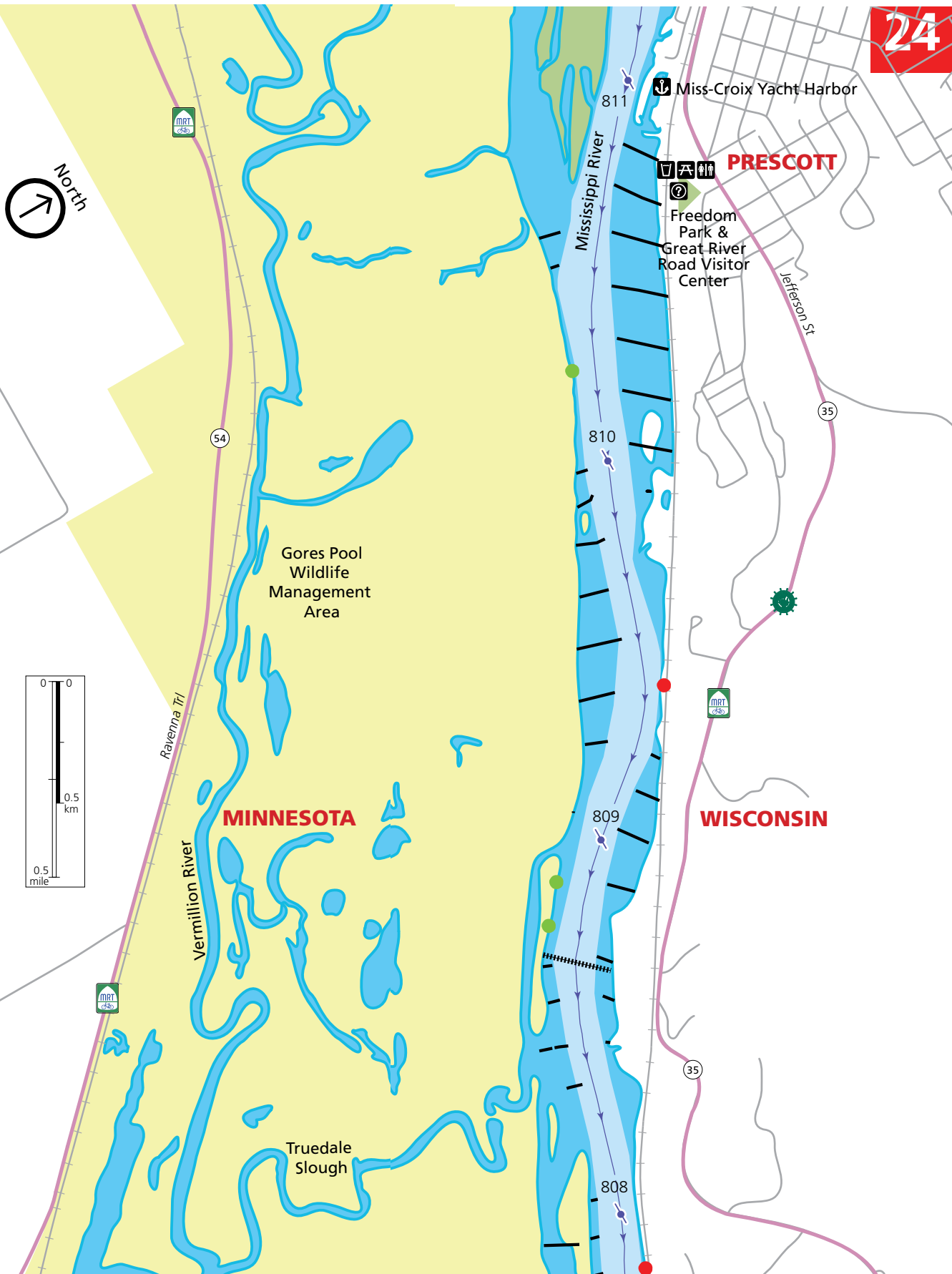
Ravenna Trail (Highway 54) and Wisconsin Highway 35 provide scenic rural stretches for driving and biking the MRT.

High above the Mississippi River in Prescott, Wis., is the **Great River Road Visitor Center**, which offers exhibits, information, and outstanding views of the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers.



Great River Road Visitor Center & Freedom Park. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
811	N 44.742724	W 92.797478
810	N 44.735012	W 92.780860
809	N 44.727756	W 92.763978
808	N 44.721435	W 92.746605



Vermillion River–South

25

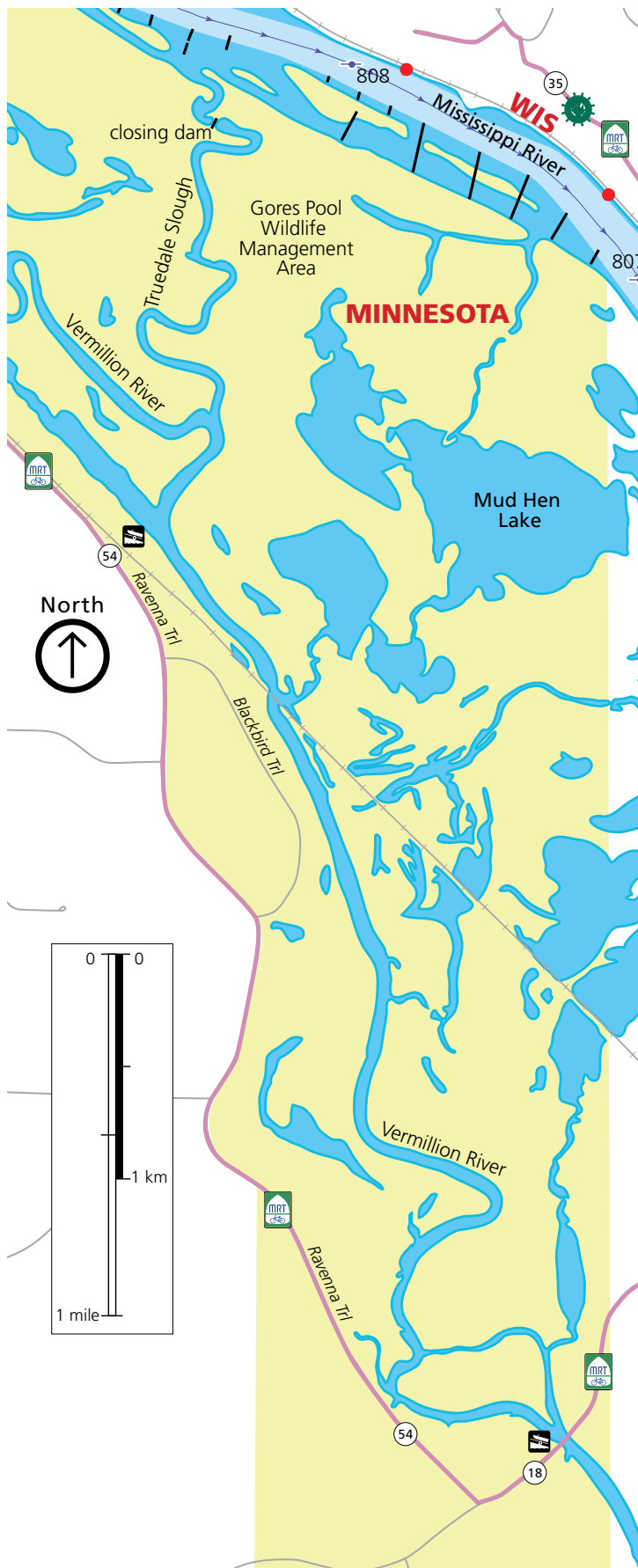
River mile 808 to 807

The Vermillion meanders through a tangle of forests, wetlands, sloughs, and streams. It enters the Mississippi (795.5 W) below Lock and Dam 3, just upriver from Red Wing, Minn.

Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area consists of 6,449 acres of floodplain forests and backwater marshes that are popular with birdwatchers and hunters.

The next boat landing on the Mississippi River downriver from Prescott, Wis., (811.2 E) is at **Diamond Bluff, Wis.**, (799.9 E).

Note that this map is at a larger scale than most of the other maps.



Vermillion River. (NPS)

River Mile	Latitude	Longitude
808	N 44.721435	W 92.746605
807	N 44.712732	W 92.730388

The best source of information about the Mississippi River corridor between Dayton/Ramsey and Hastings, Minn., is the national park via either its web site (nps.gov/miss) or its visitor center in the lobby of the Science Museum of Minnesota, in downtown St. Paul (651-293-0200).

The Visitor Center has educational displays, books, free literature, and other materials, as well as park rangers who will answer questions. Children of all ages enjoy the huge aerial photograph of the national park embedded in the floor.

The Mississippi River Field Guide, at the Friends of the Mississippi River web site (fieldguide.fmr.org/), has detailed information about the river within the national park.

The Metro Area Rivers Guide, published by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, includes boating tips and safety information, as well as maps of the Mississippi, St. Croix, and Minnesota rivers.

The Upper Mississippi River Navigation Charts, published by the Army Corps of Engineers, is the road map that towboat pilots and other commercial pilots use to navigate the river from the head of navigation to Cairo, Ill., on the Mississippi River, and the lower stretches of the Minnesota and St. Croix rivers.

Big River Magazine and its web site (BigRiverMagazine.com) covers the river from the Twin Cities to the Quad Cities. Its web site includes a map of river overlooks and links to government agencies and nonprofit organizations involved with the river.

Emergency: call 911

Army Corps of Engineers

locking through

www.mvp.usace.army.mil/docs/nav/locking.pdf and
www.lrp.usace.army.mil/pubs/celrpp_1130_1_10.pdf

navigation charts

www.mvp.usace.army.mil/navigation/default.asp?pageid=589

Grand Round Scenic Byways

www.minneapolisparcs.org/grandrounds

Great River Road/Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

www.experiencemississippiriver.com

Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

www.nps.gov/sacn

www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/wild_scenic/ws_rivers/stcroix_lower.html

Metropolitan Council - Regional parks and trail maps

www.metrocouncil.org/parks/map/parksmap.htm

Minnesota Canoe Association

www.canoe-kayak.org

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

canoe routes

www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/index.html

Minnesota Boating Guide

files.dnr.state.mn.us/rlp/regulations/boatwater/boatingguide.pdf

Mississippi Boating Guide (locking through)

files.dnr.state.mn.us/education_safety/safety/boatwater/miss_river_guide/mrg_boating_big_river.pdf

Minnesota Great River Road

www.mnmississippiriver.com/great-river-road.cfm

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/midwest/minnesotavalley

Mississippi River Fund

www.missriverfund.org/

Mississippi River Trail

www.mississippirivertrail.org/
www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail

www.mnhs.org/places/safhb/things_heritage

Trails and Open Space Partnership

www.nps.gov/partnerships/miss_tosp.htm

Twin Cities Bicycle Guide

bikeeverywhere.com

Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures

www.nps.gov/miss/uwca.htm

US Coast Guard, 612-725-1871 (boating safety)

www.uscgboating.org/

US Coast Guard Auxiliary (boating safety)

www.cgaux.org/

Check www.nps.gov/miss/index.htm and local community websites for additional information about parks, historic sites, and river access.

MISSISSIPPI River Fund

The Mississippi River Fund is the proud charitable partner of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Through generous gifts from the community, the fund provides crucial financial support for park programs that encourage community engagement and river stewardship. Since 2005, the fund has awarded more than \$1 million to projects such as habitat improvement for endangered species, protection of our cultural icons, and environmental education.

Visit missriverfund.org and show your support for the river!



The Mississippi River Fund supports a wide range of National Park programs, including Junior Ranger events. (MRF)