



"Current" News

Newsletter of the Missouri National Recreational River

Summer/Fall 2012

Inside this issue:

Why MNRR is a National Park, cont.	2
Turtle Surveys	2
River Steward Recognition	3
What's New in Interpretation and Education	4
Stakeholder Boat Tours	5
MNRR Water Trail	5
Stay on the Path	6
MNRR Property	6

Did you know:

- We recycled 998 pounds of paper, plastic, cardboard and more so far in 2012. You can help! Recycling bins are located at the Mulberry Bend boat ramp, Mulberry Bend Overlook, and Clay County Park. Please recycle and properly dispose of all trash!
- Best wishes to Gia Wagner, former Resource Chief at MNRR. Gia accepted a new position at Indiana Dune National Lakeshore in the summer of 2012.

Why MNRR is a National Park?

Throughout the sweltering summer our rangers at Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) often discovered that local citizens from the area were pleasantly surprised to find that there is a National Park in their backyard. Once we explain where the MNRR is located, the next question that often arises is "Why?". Specifically, why were these stretches of the river deemed worthy of a National Park designation? That is a very good question and this article is here to provide some answers.

Consider that there are four basic guidelines used to decide whether a place is worthy of National Park status. Let's look at these criteria and see which ones the MNRR meets.



The wide and "wild" Missouri River

1) Outstanding Example of a Specific Resource - The MNRR is an outstanding example of a large river ecosystem in the United States. It is definitely large, after all the Mighty Missouri drains one-sixth of the lower 48 United States. The MNRR stretches of river are outstanding because they have characteristics of the pre-development Missouri River, characteristics that do not exist elsewhere on the Missouri River. These include abundant braided channels, riparian lands, chutes, sloughs, sandbars, and fish and wildlife species.

2) Offers Outstanding Opportunities for scientific study; public use and enjoyment and outdoor recreation – an example for possible scientific study might include: research on the changes in the bed and bank of river since the closing of the dams in the 1950's. For instance, in many places the depth of the thalweg (main river channel) has doubled. The MNRR is an ideal location for scientific study and research.

One fine example of a superlative opportunity for outdoor recreation is paddling. Events such as the South Dakota Kayak Challenge take place every year. The Kayak Challenge tests endurance as paddlers traverse nearly the entire lower district of the MNRR and then beyond to Sioux City, a course of 72 river miles. Racers are given 30 hours to complete the course, but one gentleman covered that distance in just nine hours this past May, shaving an hour off the 2010 record.



Paddling the MNRR

Continued on page 2

Snappers, False Maps, Painteds, and Soft Shells

The Missouri National Recreational River is home to five unique species of turtles; smooth softshell turtle, false map turtle, spiny softshell turtle, snapping turtle, and the western painted turtle. Of these five species the false map turtle is listed as threatened in the state of South Dakota.

During the month of July the MNRR Resource Management staff assisted the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to survey amounts and types of the turtles in the park.

Specialized hoop nets were set approximately one mile apart for two separate 25 mile stretches of the MNRR. Each net was baited with cut-up common carp and checked the following day. Habitat information was collected at each site,



False Map turtles are a state threatened species in South Dakota.

including secchi disk depth, water depth and velocity, water temperature, sediment type, and a description of the site around the net.

Sampling on the 39-Mile District on the MNRR included traps from Sanctuary Island to Santee. After 64 consecutive trap nights the 39-mile reach of the Missouri River yielded; 41 false map turtles, 39 snapping turtles, 14 spiny softshelled turtles, 3 smooth softshelled turtles, and 1 painted turtle.



MNRR staff retrieving a false map turtle from a hoop net.

Sampling on the 59-Mile District of the MNRR extended from Clay County Park to Ponca State Park. This segment of river yielded; 49 false map turtles (7 recapture), 1 snapping turtle (1 recapture), 9 spiny softshell turtles, 7 smooth softshell turtles.

All turtles were PIT tagged in the left rear leg so recapture could be identified as the annual survey is replicated for years to come.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) also completed turtle surveys in the lower channelized river near Blair and Brownsville.

Data from 2012 will be compared to data collected by NGPC in 2005-2007.

Why MNRR is a National Park, continued.

From page 1

3) Interprets Nationally Significant themes about our nation's natural and/or cultural history- For instance, the history of westward expansion, both its benefits and drawbacks, are MNRR themes. Benefits include the Missouri being the ultimate thoroughfare to bring homesteaders to this region where they created one of the world's most abundant agricultural landscapes. A major negative though was the displacement of native peoples and their confinement on reservations.



MNRR has a rich natural and cultural history.

4) Has a high degree of integrity as a true, actual and relatively unspoiled example of a specific type of resource - the MNRR does not meet this standard. The dams have altered the natural flows of the river with corresponding effects upon the ecosystem.

Thus, the MNRR meets three of the four criteria used to determine whether a place is worthy of National Park status. Many National Park units that have been designated only meet one of these four criteria. As can be seen, we have a unique resource that runs through our communities, our collective histories and the landscape that surrounds us. Let us celebrate the unique nature of our National Park by continuing to educate ourselves and our fellow citizens as to the why we have a National Park in our midst!

River Steward Recognition

All Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) stakeholders and river users have the opportunity to be a river steward, or someone who cares for and improves the qualities of the Missouri River. Stewardship can be as simple as leaving no trace of your visit and cleaning up trash, to a landowner making river-conscious decisions about their river-front property.

MNRR's goal and mandate is to preserve and protect 98 miles of the Missouri River, 20 miles of the Niobrara River, and 8 miles of Verdigre Creek. However, less than 1% of the park boundary is owned and operated by the park. Stewardship of these 126 river miles and adjacent lands must be a cooperative effort between national park staff and river stakeholders.

Many MNRR stakeholders are model river stewards and the park would like to recognize those who are preserving and protecting the many "outstandingly remarkable" values of the Missouri National Recreational River.

In this issue we highlight the 12 landowners of Sandbar Ridge near Brooky Bottom, northeast of Wynot, NE. These landowners came together, discussed their situation and then consulted with managers of the MNRR. The landowners wanted to stabilize the river bank to prevent further loss of their property, but also wanted to retain the scenic qualities of the national park.

In order to accomplish both tasks, a strong core of rock rap was covered with native fieldstone where the river usually flows and then the upper area was covered with soil and then sown with native grass seed. The



Looking upstream, note the white trailer with brown trim.

landowners sloped the bank and utilized this material for their soil cover. The Sandbar Ridge landowners created a visually pleasing yet functional stream bank, as can be seen from the before-and-after photographs. The current bank is no longer vertical, but sloped for greater and safer access the river. Due to Sandbar Ridge's hard work and investment, the national park is better for all river users and stakeholders.

The Sandbar Ridge landowners can take pride in their restoration effort and MNRR would like to recognize them as outstanding river stewards!

Do you know a river steward? Contact the park office to nominate them to be recognized in our next newsletter!



Looking downstream, note the white trailer with brown trim.



Looking at the bank, note the white trailer with brown trim.

What's New in Interpretation and Education

During the summer of 2012 the MNRR Division of Interpretation put into practice a number of new initiatives to build awareness of the park. A major problem for MNRR has been a lack of awareness that there is a national park along the Missouri River corridor in southeastern South Dakota – northeastern Nebraska. The majority of citizens who live in and around the corridor are not aware of the National Park designation for these stretches of the Wild and Scenic Missouri River. Even if they know about the park, our rangers are often confused with other local, state and federal land management employees. Furthermore, without a dedicated visitor center the park does not have a main point of contact with visitors. With this in mind, park staff initiated a major outreach effort during the spring and summer of 2012 using a variety of techniques and services to educate the public.



MNRR Headquarters in Yankton, SD

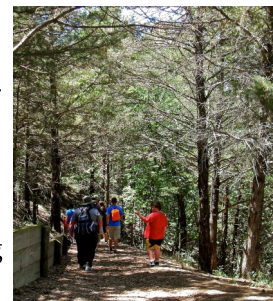
Among the most notable of these efforts:

- A partnership with the City of Yankton to staff the Dakota Territorial Capital replica building on weekdays and offer ranger guided tours of the MNRR from the Meridian Bridge. These tours focused on the river ecosystem and how that had shaped the people and landscape of this region. Tours were offered three times a day, at 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. By mid-summer MNRR rangers were doing multiple tours on many days despite the record setting heat.
- A series of special events that took place on multiple weekends throughout the summer included a Water Safety Day (done with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), MNRR Get Outdoors Day, MNRR Junior Rangers at the Yankton 4th of July Fireworks Celebration, and MNRR Families on the River Day. These events included a broad range of activities to introduce visitors to the natural river and the diverse array of recreational possibilities available to the adventurous.

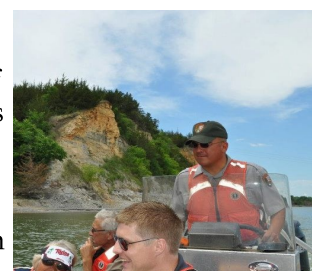


Meeting visitors at the Meridian Bridge

- For the second consecutive year the MNRR Teacher Ranger Teacher (TRT) program did summer reading programs at schools and libraries for youth in communities stretching all along the park corridor. Three TRT's held 15 programs for over 300 students, where they learned about the river's role in the natural and cultural history of the area.
- Another first was a series of ranger guided canoe trips in partnership with the Missouri River Institute at the University of South Dakota. These tours were done by reservation and took place along one of the wilder stretches of the river, from Myron Grove to Mulberry Bend on the 59 mile district of the park. Ranger Joe Delvaux led participants to stops such as Goat Island, and the Gunderson backwater, providing interpretation about such subjects as endangered species, the astonishing comeback of the bald eagle and traces of steamboat wrecks along the Mighty Mo.
- Finally, MNRR staff took representatives from the Discover Bon Homme County Tourism Group and Southeast South Dakota Tourism on boat trips on the 39 mile district of the MNRR. These tours familiarized tourism officials with the MNRR and the diverse recreational opportunities available to park visitors.



Hiking program with TRT's and students



Enjoying a boat tour on the 39-Mile District of MNRR.

All of the above efforts have led to increased recognition of the park. MNRR interpretative staff will continue in the coming months to search for innovative methods to educate the park's visitors and stakeholders on this spectacular resource. MNRR seeks input from the public on best ways to reach out to both visitors and stakeholders.

Stakeholder Boat Tours 2012

Missouri National Recreational River staff hosted 7 stakeholder boat tours in June of 2012. Three tours highlighted the 39-Mile District and four showcased the 59-Mile District. A total of 84 stakeholders, including landowners, congressional representatives, member of local government, and many others participated in the tours.



Stakeholders discuss issues on the 59-Mile District boat tour.

Stakeholders discussed the role of the National Park Service and Missouri National Recreational River, river issues including endangered species and water rights, and much more. Participants were provided an opportunity to experience the river from on the water, discuss issues with other stakeholders, and ask questions of the NPS staff.



Superintendent Steve Mietz and stakeholders on the 39-Mile boat tour.

The 39-Mile District tour began at Running Water, SD and continued upstream to the Sunshine Bottom boat ramp.

The 59-Mile District tour began at St. Helena boat ramp and continued to the Clay County boat ramp.

MNRR Water Trail Paddle Events

The MNRR Water Trail hosted three paddling events in the summer of 2012. Two smaller events in August were led by MNRR staff. Limited to 10 participants, these small floats allowed the group to stay together and stop along the way at specific points of interest. MNRR staff provide interpretation and answered any questions during the trip.

The annual large-group MNRR Water Trail paddling event in September was open to all and any paddlers. Despite a chilly morning, fifty-seven paddlers and one dog paddled from Riverside Park to Myron Grove. MNRR staff shared a brief introduction to the national park before the event. Photos from all events are available on the Missouri National Recreational River Water Trail Facebook page and website.



Paddlers leaving the Gunderson Backwater on a NPS led paddling event.

MNRR Water Trail



The Missouri National Recreational River Water Trail is a formal water trail along the Missouri River from Gavin's Point Dam near Yankton, SD, to Sioux City, IA. This water trail encompasses the entire 59-mile segment of the Missouri National Recreational River, as well as an additional 20 river miles from Ponca, NE to Sioux City, IA, for a total of 79 river miles. The 39-mile segment of the MNRR, from Fort Randall Dam to Running Water, South Dakota, as well as an additional 30 miles of Lewis and Clark Lake, will be included in 2012.

The website (www.mnrrwatertrail.org) includes information such as where to get in and out of the river, points of interest, plants and wildlife, and history along the river, suggests routes for half and full day excursions, provides maps, links to river conditions, and much more.

Each access point along the MNRR Water Trail has a trailhead sign, which includes maps, points of interest, and safety info.



Signs were installed at all MNRR Water Trail access points.

See the website for more information and "like" the trail on Facebook for the most up-to-date details and events.

Find the MNRR Water Trail on the web at www.mnrrwatertrail.org or "like" them on Facebook at "Missouri National Recreational River Water Trail".



MISSOURI NATIONAL RECREATIONAL RIVER

Phone: (605) 665-0209

We're on the Web!

www.nps.gov/mnrr

**Find us on Facebook,
Twitter, and YouTube!**

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Mail to:

Stay on the Path

Mulberry Bend Overlook, located on the Nebraska side of the Newcastle - Vermillion Bridge, is a great place to experience the sweeping view of the Missouri River and enjoy native plant species along a concrete path. Unfortunately, over the years there have been many volunteer paths created as a shortcut to get to the top of the overlook faster. When this happens, the native plants get trampled and all that is left is a dirt path, of which is unsightly and causes erosion. To fix this problem, National Park Rangers tilled the trampled ground, planted native prairie seed, and put in erosion control measures. Hopefully, if visitors stay off of these volunteer trails, the native seeds can establish and fill in the gaps.



Tilling the volunteer trails at the Mulberry Bend Overlook before re-seeding.



Erosion control fabric

The next time you are taking a visit to the Mulberry Bend Overlook, or any other park with improved trails, please stay on the trail. It prevents resource damage to the property and provides a more enjoyable landscape for other visitors.

MNRR Property

MNRR owns and manages two properties which are open for public use and enjoyment.

Bow Creek Recreation Area



Bow Creek Recreation Area is

found 4 miles NE of Wynot Nebraska on the Nebraska side of the Missouri river.

<http://www.nps.gov/mnrr/planyourvisit/bow-creek-recreation-area.htm>

Mulberry Bend Overlook



Mulberry Bend Overlook is located on

the Nebraska side of the Newcastle - Vermillion Bridge or about 6 miles SW of Vermillion on highway 19.

<http://www.nps.gov/mnrr/planyourvisit/mulberry-bend-overlook.htm>