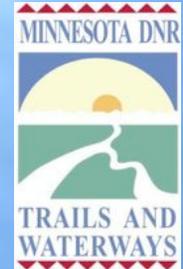




# Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



## Minnesota's Water Trail Program

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**Peter Hark**

**Trails and Waterways Division Field Operations Manager**

**[Peter.hark@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:Peter.hark@dnr.state.mn.us)**

**November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

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# NTS - Water Trails

## ✦ What is the Water Trails Program?

History

Creation of a Water Trail

Benefits to the Public

User Research

Management Issues

Future Plans





# What is the Water Trails Program?

- Program administered by the MN DNR Division of Trails and Waterways
- 31 water trails state wide
  - Over 4,000 river miles
    - 155 miles on Lake Superior's North Shore
- Find a water trail within an hour or two of almost anywhere in MN!





# What is the Water Trails Program?

## Fees – Canoe/Kayak

\$10.50 Registration Fee

\$5.00 Exotic Species Surcharge

\$1.50 ELS Fee Per Transaction

\$8.50 Filing Fee (\$6.00 renewal)

**\$25.50 Total Cost for 3 Year**



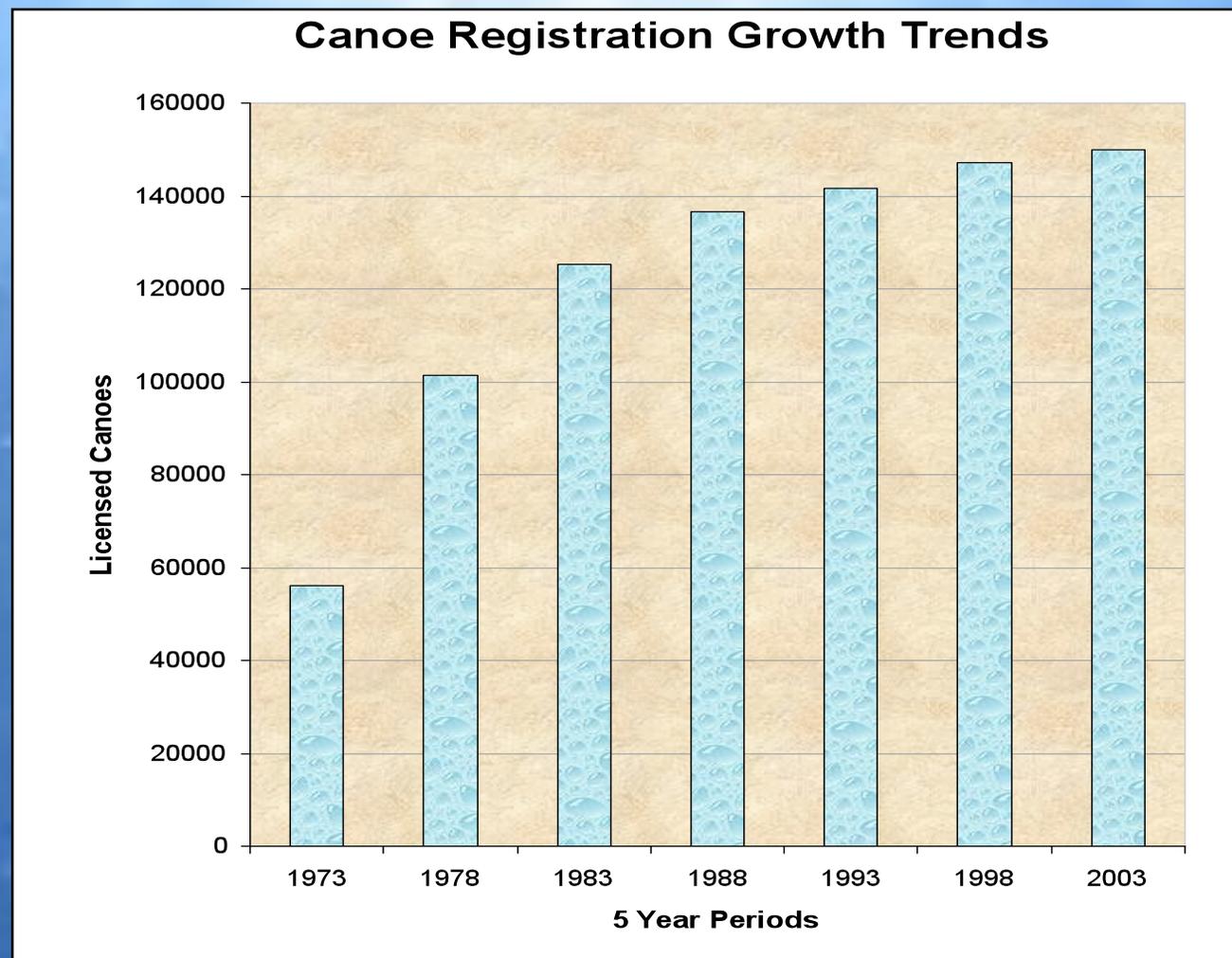


# What is the Water Trails Program?

- 146,000 Registered canoes & 34,000 kayaks
  - Overall 5.5% growth from 2003-2007
  - Kayaking is one of the fastest growing recreational sports in MN.
    - Grew 68% from 2003-2007
- Approximately \$500,000/year total revenue contributed to the Water Recreation Account.

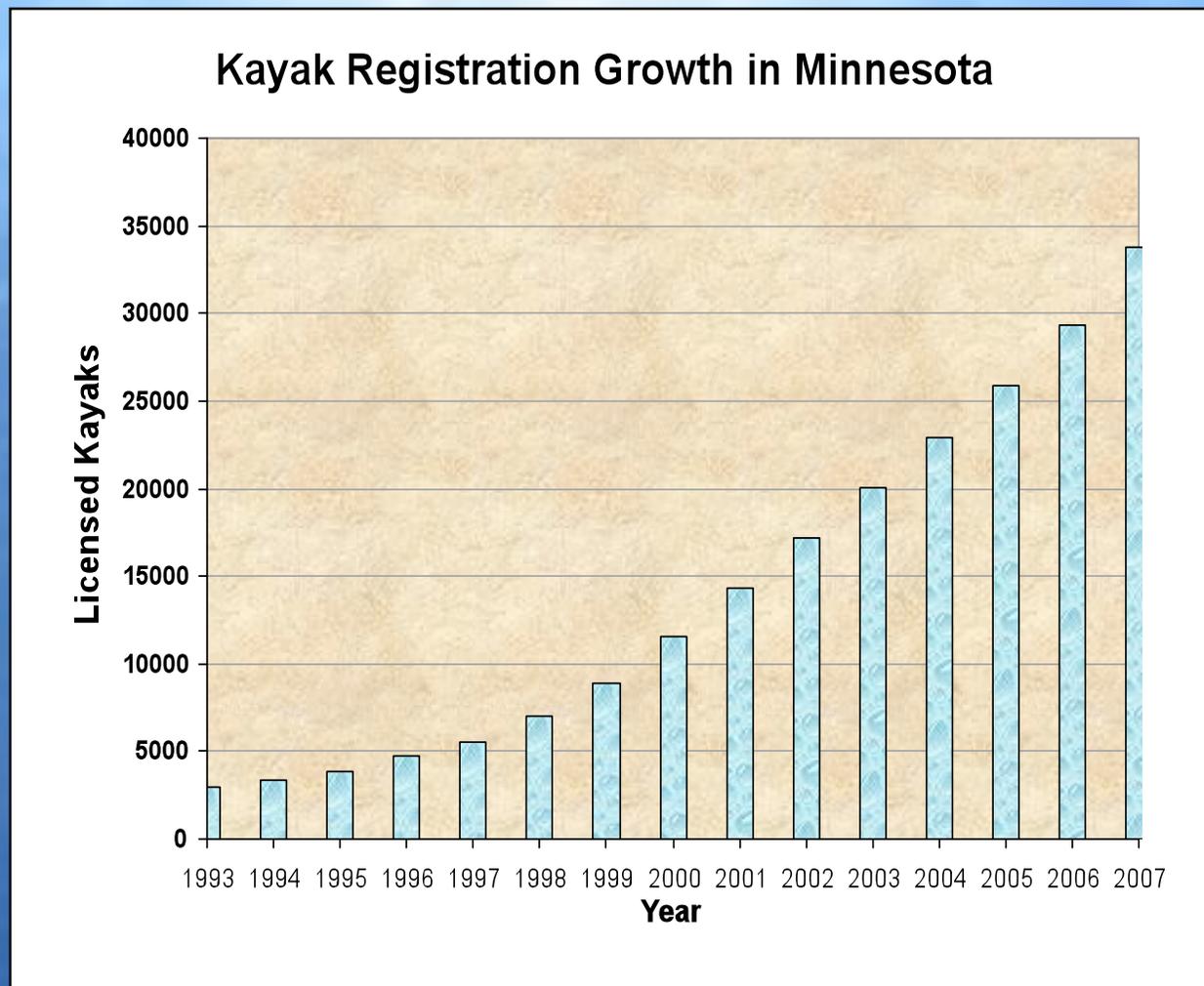


# What is the Water Trails Program?





# What is the Water Trails Program?



# NTS - Water Trails

## What is the Water Trails Program?

### ✦ History

#### Creation of a Water Trail

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# History

“Rivers are roads which move, and which carry us whither we desire to go.”

Blaise Pascal

17<sup>th</sup>-century French Philosopher



Photos from Minnesota Historical Society Collection





# History

- Canoe and Boating Route Program (M.S. 85.32):
  - To mark canoe and boating routes and provide recreational facilities on legislatively designated rivers (1963).





## History

# Program Highlights

**1963**- Legislation creates Canoe & Boating Route Program

**2005** - 150-mile Lake Superior Water Trail completed.

**1968**- Federal Wild and Scenic Act

**2006** - Automated river level reporting gauges installed.

**1972** - Registration/License Fees

**1973** - Minnesota Wild & Scenic Rivers (6 designated)

**1993** – Legislation creates Lake Superior Water Trail

**1997** - Largest state land acquisition – 22,500 acres along St. Louis River;  
150 miles.



Bridge over Minnesota River 1978  
Minnesota Historical Society Collection



## History

# Designation

1963

- Big Fork
- Little Fork
- Minnesota
- St. Croix

1967

- Cannon
- Cloquet
- N. Fork Crow
- Crow Wing
- Des Moines
- Kettle
- Mississippi
- Red Lake
- Root
- Rum
- Snake
- St. Louis

1976

- Straight
- Zumbro

1983

- Pine

1993

- Lake Superior

1995

- Pomme De Terre

1996

- Wantowan
- Whitewater
- Cottonwood

2000

- Chippewa

2001

- Long Prairie
- Red River of the North

2006

- Otter Tail
- Sauk

2007

- South Fork Crow
- Redwood River





History

# Federal Wild & Scenic Rivers

- Est. 1968
- Managed by the National Park Service
- The St. Croix River is Minnesota's only Federal Wild & Scenic River.



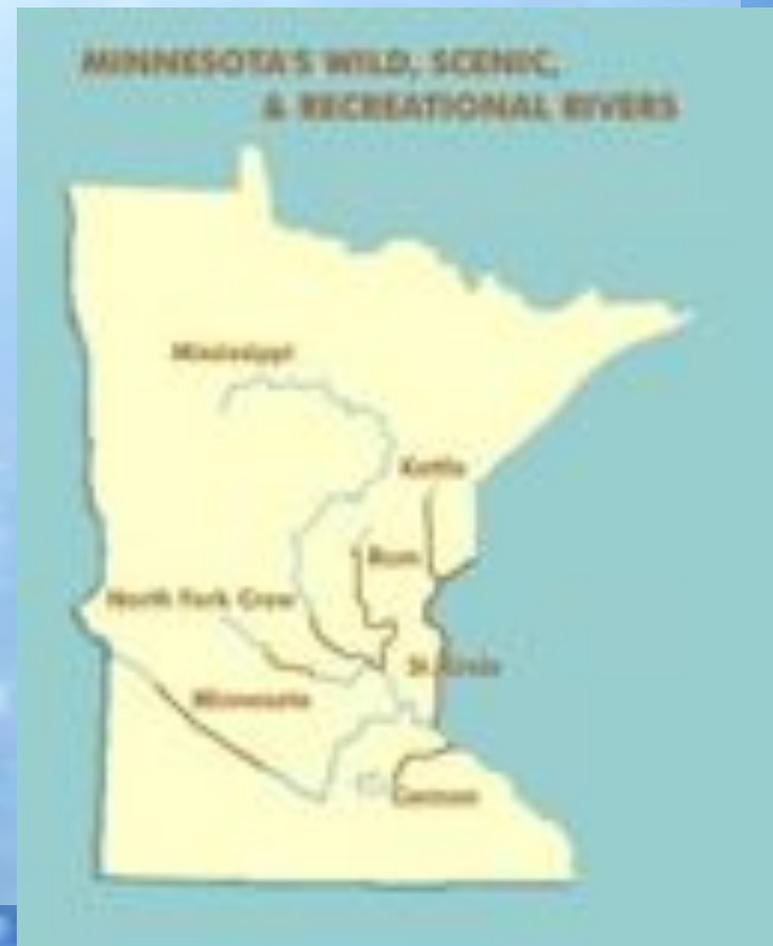
St. Croix River



## History

# Minnesota Wild & Scenic Rivers

- Est. 1973
- 6 Rivers designated in 1973
- Requires a management plan
- Easement
  - Establishment
  - Monitoring
  - Enforcement





# History

## 1993 Lake Superior Water Trail

- Volunteer driven initiative
- 155 Miles
- Completed in 2005



# NTS - Water Trails

## What is the Water Trails Program?

### History

#### ✦ Creation of a Water Trail

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Creation of a Water Trail

# Criteria

## Water Trail Designation Criteria (DNR Policy)

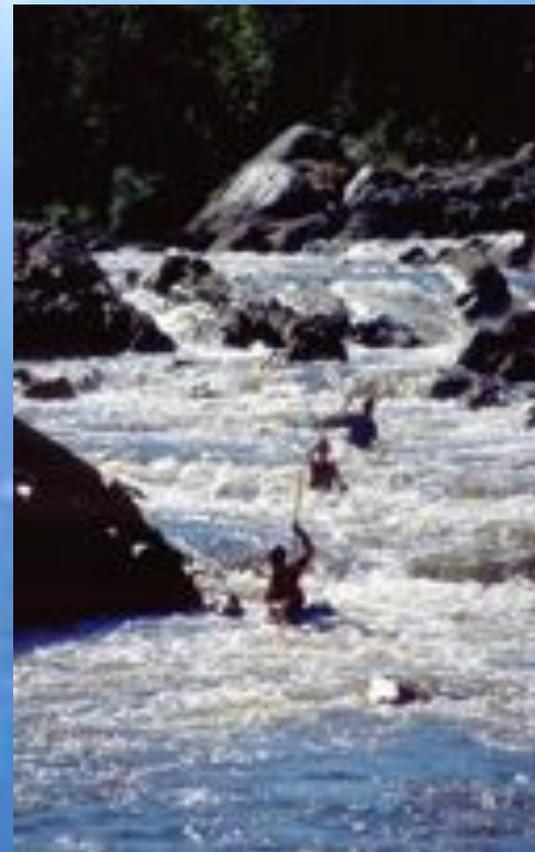
- Potentially free of numerous snags & manmade obstacles
- River shore lands are suitable for campsite and rest area development
- Water quality is high enough to allow for body contact, etc.
- Minimum 5-mile reach
- Navigable at least 3 months of the year



## Creation of a Water Trail

# Process

- Local interest in increased recreation management
- Legislative action resulting in water trail designation
- DNR performs or contracts for map survey work



St. Louis River



## Creation of a Water Trail

# Process

- DNR seeks public input on recreation management opportunities
- DNR works with local units of government and private landowners to identify:
  - Access sites
  - Campsites
  - Portages
  - Safety concerns





## Creation of a Water Trail

# Process

- DNR performs or contracts for development and maintenance work
- DNR manages river level reporting system
- DNR develops or contracts for map development
- Maps are published



Lake Superior Access Development

# NTS - Water Trails

## What is the Water Trails Program?

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### ★ Benefits to the Public

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# Benefits to the Public

**Acquisition,  
development and  
maintenance of:**

- Access sites
- Portages
- Campsites
- Rest Areas



St. Louis River

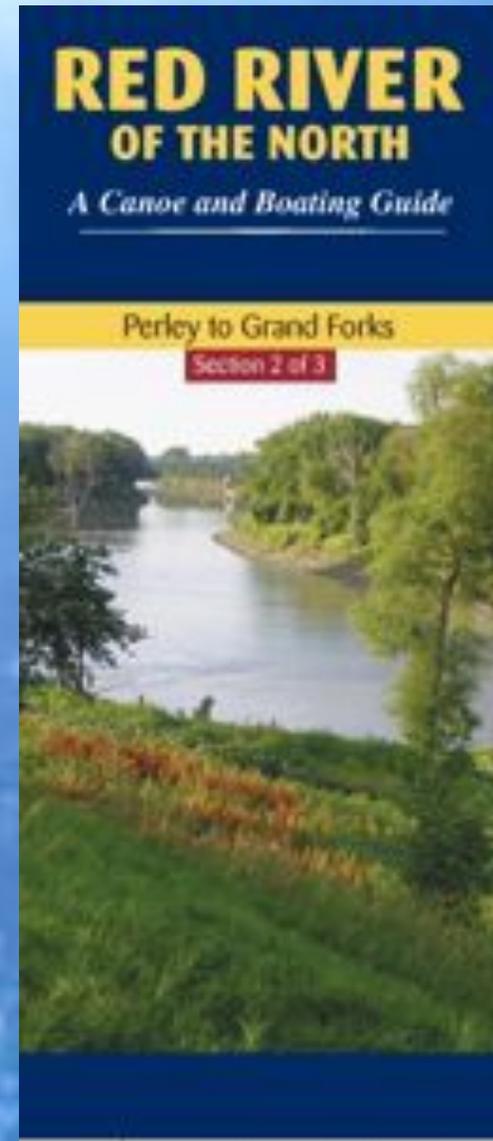
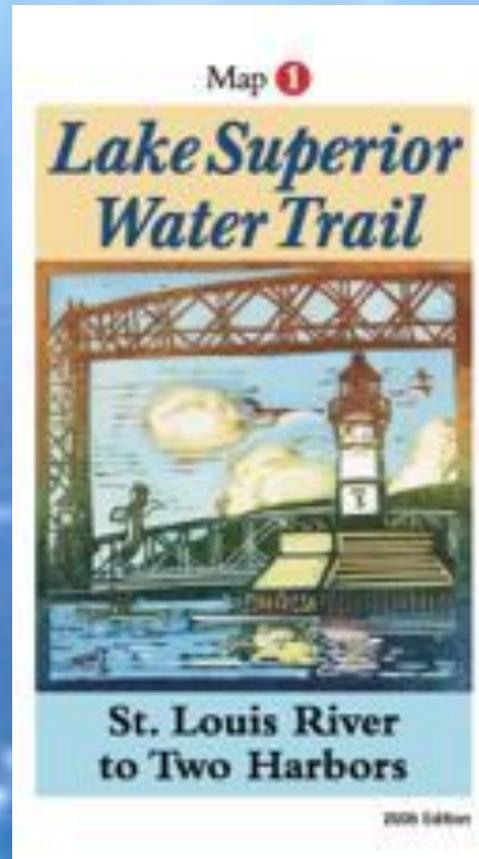
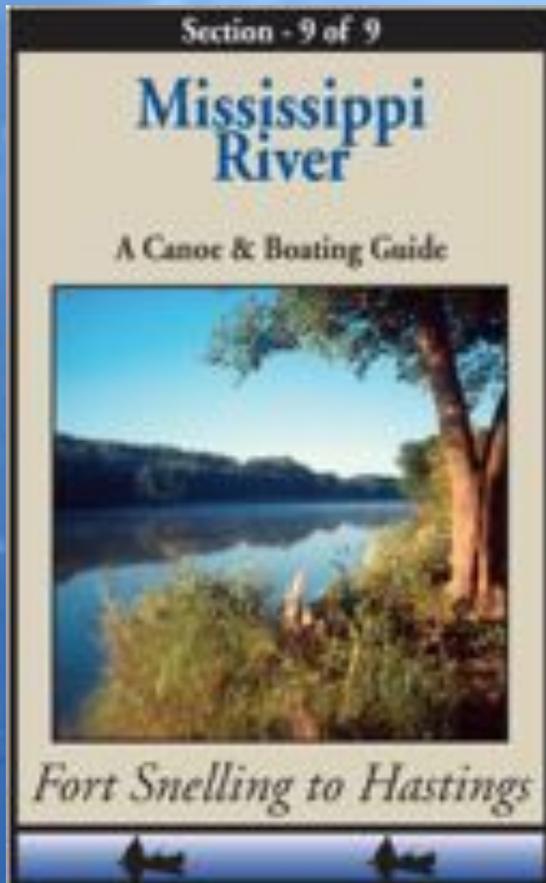


Rum River



Benefits to the Public

# Free Maps





# Benefits to the Public



**Upper St. Louis River Watershed**

The following is available in electronic format:

- UPSR Final & Watershed Easement Map**  
100 Ave. Highway 2  
Grand Rapids, MN 55743  
(828) 337-1000
- Water quality monitoring station information and maps are a part of **StreamHealthTracker**
- UPSR Assessment Report**  
www.dnr.state.mn.us/psd/psd/psd.htm  
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**Upper St. Louis River Watershed**

The Upper St. Louis River watershed is a 1,000-square-mile area that includes the Upper St. Louis River, the Upper St. Louis River watershed, and the Upper St. Louis River watershed. The Upper St. Louis River watershed is a 1,000-square-mile area that includes the Upper St. Louis River, the Upper St. Louis River watershed, and the Upper St. Louis River watershed.

**Fishing**

The Upper St. Louis River is a premier fishing destination. The Upper St. Louis River is a 1,000-square-mile area that includes the Upper St. Louis River, the Upper St. Louis River watershed, and the Upper St. Louis River watershed.

**Boating**

The Upper St. Louis River is a premier boating destination. The Upper St. Louis River is a 1,000-square-mile area that includes the Upper St. Louis River, the Upper St. Louis River watershed, and the Upper St. Louis River watershed.

**Planting in Lake River Trip**

The Upper St. Louis River is a premier planting destination. The Upper St. Louis River is a 1,000-square-mile area that includes the Upper St. Louis River, the Upper St. Louis River watershed, and the Upper St. Louis River watershed.

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Benefits to the Public

# Free Mans





Benefits to the Public

# Website





Benefits to the Public

# River Level Reports

Home > Waters > Climate > Water Levels > River Levels >

## River Level Report

### Kettle - 61 miles

Note: Most river level reports are derived from automatic gauges. Others are read manually by volunteers and are updated every Thursday by DNR, from early April through late October.

We advise that measurements in feet (i.e. 3.5') are distances to a fixed point of reference (i.e. the bottom of a bridge or other nearby benchmark). They are intended only as a relative measure of water stage, not as a measurement of water depth. We advise that river levels may change dramatically over a short period of time due to inclement weather conditions.

**River Section: Township 131 to County Road 52 - 18 miles**

	Gauge interpretation
1.0	Use extreme caution above 1.0'
	High above 4.0'
	Medium 3.0' to 4.0'
	Low 1.0' to 3.0'
	Uncertain below 2.0'

Gauge location: **RN 18.8 - CDAM 12 in Village of Kettle River (MN)**

Full requirements and notes: Measurement in feet required (1 foot 0, above 1.0)

**River Section: County Road 52 to Hwy 23 - 18 miles**



Benefits to the Public

# River Safety

- Safety signing
- Marking dams and other hazards
- Training for rescue and enforcement personnel on water rescue techniques.





Benefits to the Public

# Snag/Obstruction Removal



**MCC Water Trail Crew removing snags on Minnesota River**

Photos courtesy MCC





Benefits to the Public

# Enforcement



# NTS - Water Trails

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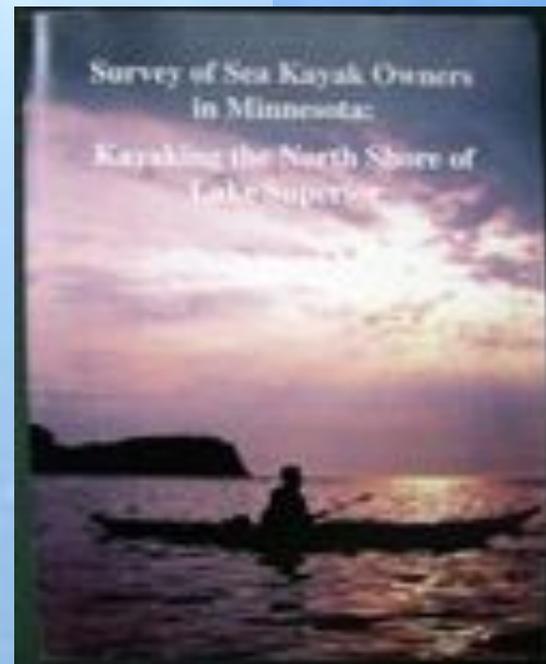
### Future Plans





# User Research

- Survey of Sea Kayak Owners in Minnesota:  
*Kayaking the North Shore of Lake Superior 2001*
- Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey 2004
- Canoe/Kayak Survey 2005





# User Research

## What people want:

- Positive experience
- Accesses
- Maps
- River Level Reporting
- More trail opportunities!

## Barriers to use:

- Time
- Shuttling
- Water Levels
- Fear of motorized craft
- Lack of knowledge regarding existing water trails



# User Research

- Low satisfaction with number and maintenance of campsites
- Desire to keep shoreline undeveloped

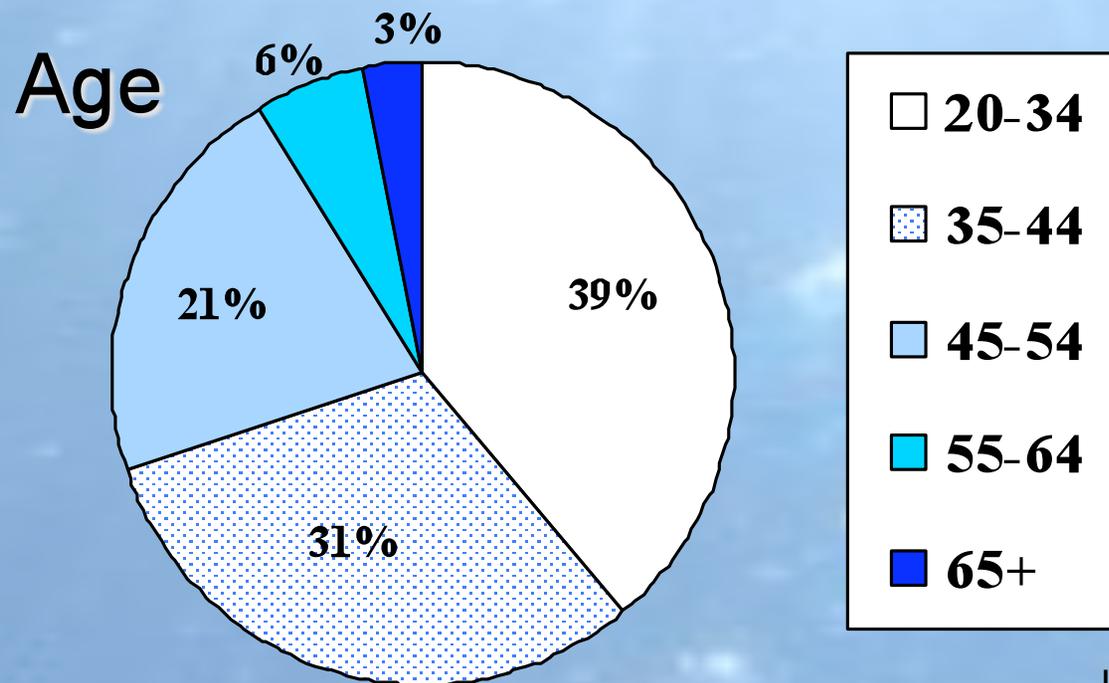


Root River



User Research

# Demographics Non-motorized boating



**Gender**  
47% Female  
53% Male

Info from 2004 Recreation Survey

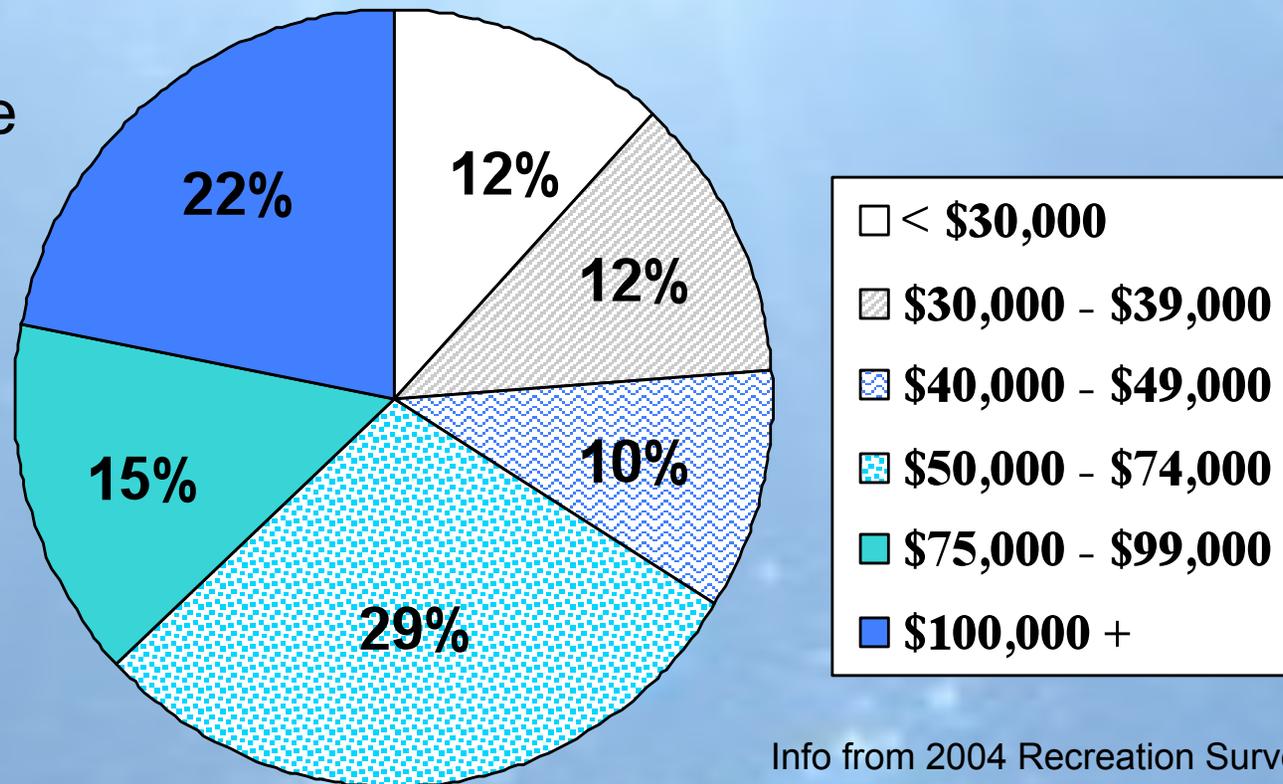




User Research

# Demographics Non-motorized boating

Income



Info from 2004 Recreation Survey



# NTS - Water Trails

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✦ Management Issues

Future Plans





# Management Issues

- New program / project management
- Community technical assistance





Management Issue

# DNR Policy Development

## Obstruction/Snag Relocation Policy

- Researched similar policies.
- Developed based on experience and available examples.
- Policy Content:
  - Purpose/goals of relocation (Ecological and user safety considerations)
  - Mandatory safety equipment and use
  - Training staff and volunteers





Management Issue

# Hydropower

- Re-licensing
- Recreation
- Review



Snake River



Management Issue

# Partnerships

## Adopt-a-River

- Encourages stewardship by having volunteers adopt waterways and clean up litter and dump sites
- Majority of cleanup activity is on existing water trails



Management Issue

# Partnerships

## National Wild & Scenic Rivers National Park Service

**St. Croix National Scenic Riverway**  
**From the headwaters to Taylors Falls:**  
Managed by the National Park Service.

### **Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway**

**Lower 52 miles of the St. Croix River  
along the Minnesota/Wisconsin border:**

Managed cooperatively by the National  
Park Service, Minnesota DNR, and Wisconsin  
DNR.



St. Croix



Management Issue

# Partnerships



**MCC is a youth and young adult natural resources stewardship training program.**

- Crews state-wide work on a variety of natural resource projects including:
  - Build campsites, accesses, portage trails
  - Invasive species removal/management
  - Prescribed burning
- Water Trails Crew:
  - Collects GPS data
  - Removes snags and obstructions
- Adopt-a-River Assistant assists with DNR's Adopt-a-River Program.



Management Issue

# Partnerships



## Mississippi Headwaters Board

- Mission is to protect and preserve the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River
  - Created as an alternative to designation as a Wild and Scenic River
  - Joint powers board comprised of the first 8 counties on the Mississippi River
  - Achieves goals by cooperative land use planning



Management Issue

# Partnerships

Minnesota Canoe Association

Lake Superior Water Trail Association

Inland Sea Kayakers

Minnesota Trails

Minnesota Waters

River Keepers

River Ramblers

River Management Society



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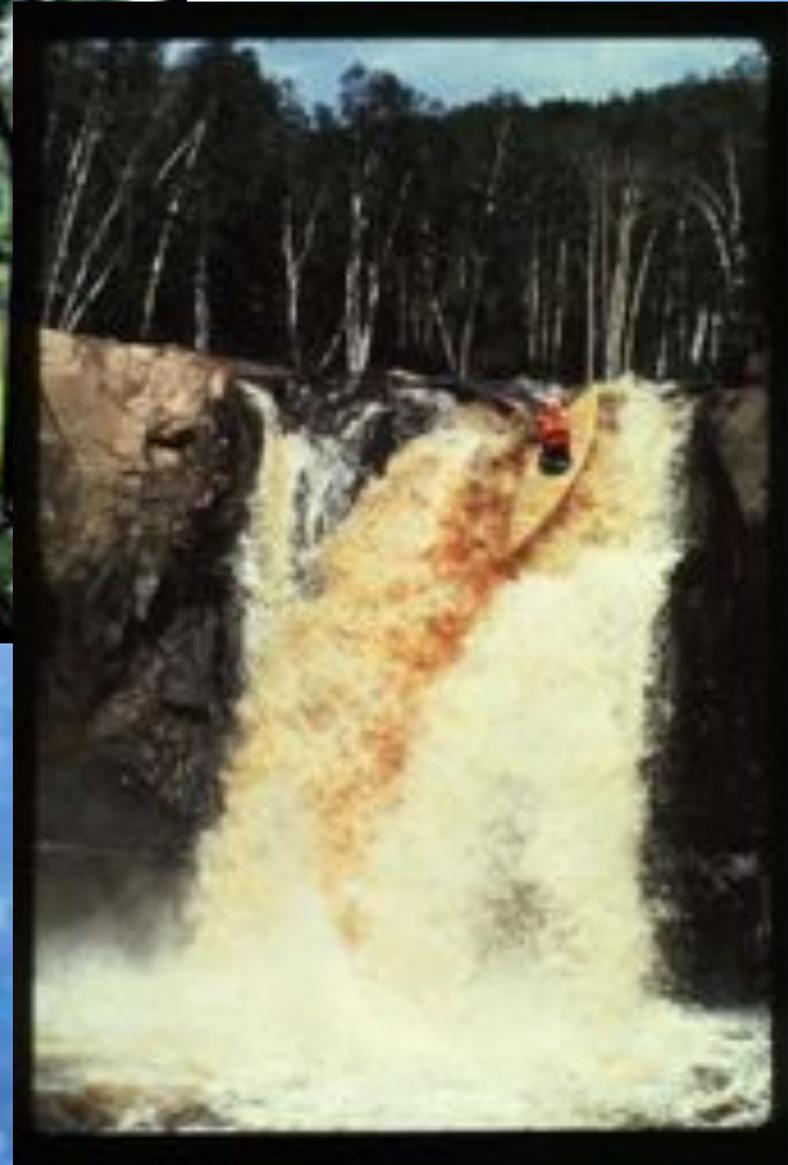
✦ Future Plans





# Future Plans

- Strengthen partnerships
- Increase public knowledge of program and resources - Outreach
- Improve user resources online
  - Downloadable GPS points
  - River level gages interpreted from a paddler's perspective



The  
End

# Paddle Minnesota's Water Trails!



Minnesota's natural beauty can be best explored by its expansive network of rivers. Let the Minnesota DNR take you there with 38 canoe routes to explore.



## LAKE SUPERIOR



## WATER TRAIL

Lake Superior is a spectacular environment for a one-of-a-kind experience. Enjoy all that Lake Superior has to offer, respect the lake and trail lightly in her shoes. Have a great time!



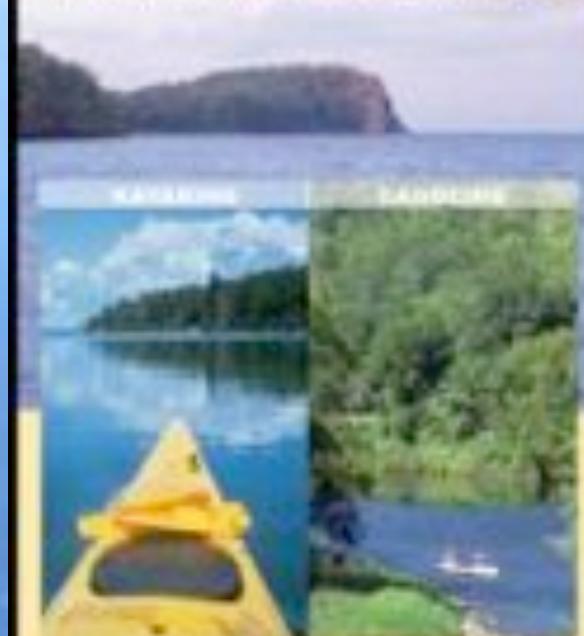
Download Lake Superior Water Trail maps online, print, purchase, or visit our website.



[www.dnr.state.mn.us/leisure/wtr](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/leisure/wtr)

## Find it on the web

[www.dnr.state.mn.us/water\\_rec](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/water_rec)



Canoe routes  
Kayak trail  
Maps

Public water accesses  
Water level reports





Straight River - largest exposed rock in Rice County, Minnesota