Route Description, Cottonwood River - Springfield to the confluence with the Minnesota River

R and L represent sides of the river facing downstream

62.8 (R) Juenemann carry-in access. County Road 2 bridge.
58.6 County Road 3 bridge.
56.6 (R) Springfield carry-in access.
55.9 County Road 5 bridge. Powerline crossing.
50.5 Highway 238 bridge.
45.2 County Road 7 bridge.
43.5 County Road 8 bridge. Bridge, Town of Leavenworth.
36.8 (L) Confluence with Sleepy Eye Creek.
34.6 280th Avenue bridge.
31.6 (L) State Highway 4 carry-in access and bridge. Klug Wildlife Management Area.
29.0 (L) Theeden’s carry-in access. 260th Avenue bridge. Town of Iberia.
23.5 (L) County Road 10 carry-in access and bridge. Cottonwood River Aquatic Management Area.
18.8 (L) County Road 11 carry-in access and bridge.
9.5 Powerline crossing.
6.5 County Road 13 bridge.
6.5 - 4 Flanreau State Park. Parking, fee camping, drinking water and toilets. Permit required for parking.
5.7 (L) Flanreau State Park. Watercraft campsite. Permit required for parking.
3.1 (L) Cottonwood Street carry-in access and bridge.
1.6 (L) Highway 15 bridge and carry-in access.
1.0 Railroad bridge.
0.0 Confluence with Minnesota River.

DON’T GET LOST!

Navigate with your phone! The Avenza Maps® app uses GPS location tracking, so you can stay found, even off the grid. After downloading the app and map, no internet or cell service is needed.

Search “MNDR” plus the park or trail name in the Avenza app store to download our free maps, or scan the code here to download.

END OF MAP 4

Continued on to Map 5 - Cambria to Henderson

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ABOUT THE WATER TRAIL

The Minnesota River begins to widen as it continues a southeastern path through the tallgrass prairie as the channel changes direction before reversing itself once again. On this stretch covered by floodplain trees and grassy areas a paddler will find some gneiss outcroppings and little for development except a few bridges and some farmsteads. Check out some of the smaller tributaries flowing into the Minnesota River like Birch Coulee Creek and Fort Ridgely Creek.

The canoeable portion of the Cottonwood River begins in the city of Springfield and ends 58 river miles later when it empties into the Minnesota River near New Ulm. Carved out some 10,000 years ago, the steep slopes are now saturated with maple, basswood, andhackberry trees, with oak and red cedar on the sunny side. There are no major rapids, which makes this a good river for beginning paddlers. Near the confluence with the Minnesota, the river flows through Flandrau State Park, which offers some great hiking and overnight stay opportunities.

TRIP PLANNING AND SAFETY

- Plan your trip with a map before you leave. Tell someone your plans, including put-in and take-out times.
- Travel with a companion or group.
- Most people paddle 2-3 river miles per hour.
- River levels can affect your speed and trip safety. Check conditions at mndnr.gov/river_levels.
- Don’t underestimate the power of wind and waves, especially on large lakes.
- Be cautious of obstacles in the river and avoid overhanging and dead trees.
- Bring clean drinking water and a waterproof container with a first aid kit, waterproof matches and extra clothes.
- Wear a life jacket at all times while on the water.
- Purchase a license for your non-motorized watercraft if it’s more than 10 feet in length. If you’re not from Minnesota, check your state’s watercraft license laws.

WATERCRAFT CAMPING

- Camp only in designated campsites, which are often available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Riverbed camping next to private property is not permitted.
- Stay off private property. Stop only at designated sites; much of the shoreland is private property.
- Be sanitary! Use designated toilet facilities or bury human waste away from the river.
- Follow the rules for firewood. State forests allow you to gather dead wood for a fire, but state parks do not.

RECOMMENDED DAY TRIP

Franklin City Park to Mack Lake Park
- Put-in location: River mile 179.7
- Take-out location: River mile 169.6
- Length: 10.1 river miles

This stretch is an easy, wading bit of river, surrounded by trees and rarely uninterrupted by roads or other man-made obstructions.

Franklin City Park has free primitive campsites that are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Mack Lake County Park is managed by Renville County and has great facilities for an overnight stay. Reservations required.

EXPLORE ON SHORE

Fort Ridgely State Park
- River mile near 164.7
- Camping (fee) a historic site, a mix of rolling hills, forests and prairies.
- mndnr.gov/fortridgely

Flandrau State Park
- Cottonwood River mile 6
- Beautiful, treed campsites (fee), hiking trails and a sand-bottomed, swimming pond.
- mndnr.gov/landau

Mack Lake Park
- River mile 169.7
- Camping (fee), toilet, drinking water, fishing pier, shelter, hiking trails and historic site.
- renvillecountymn.gov

PROTECT THE RIVER

Your experience on the river depends on a healthy environment. As you explore the beauty of this waterway, also do your best to protect it.

Protect Your Waters
- Before launching...before leaving
- Clean off aquatic plants and animals.
- Drain all water away from the landing.
- Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash.
- mndnr.gov/invasives/aquatic

Buffer Protection
- The Minnesota buffer law establishes new vegetation buffers along rivers, streams and ditches to help filter out chemicals and sediment before they reach waterways.
- mndnr.gov/buffers

PROTECT THE RIVER

The Minnesota buffer law establishes new vegetation buffers along rivers, streams and ditches to help filter out chemicals and sediment before they reach waterways.

mndnr.gov/buffers

More Information
- mndnr.gov/watertrails
- mndnr.gov/river_levels
- mndnr.gov/invasives/aquatic

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by contacting info.dnr@state.mn.us, 651-296-6157, or MN Relay 711.