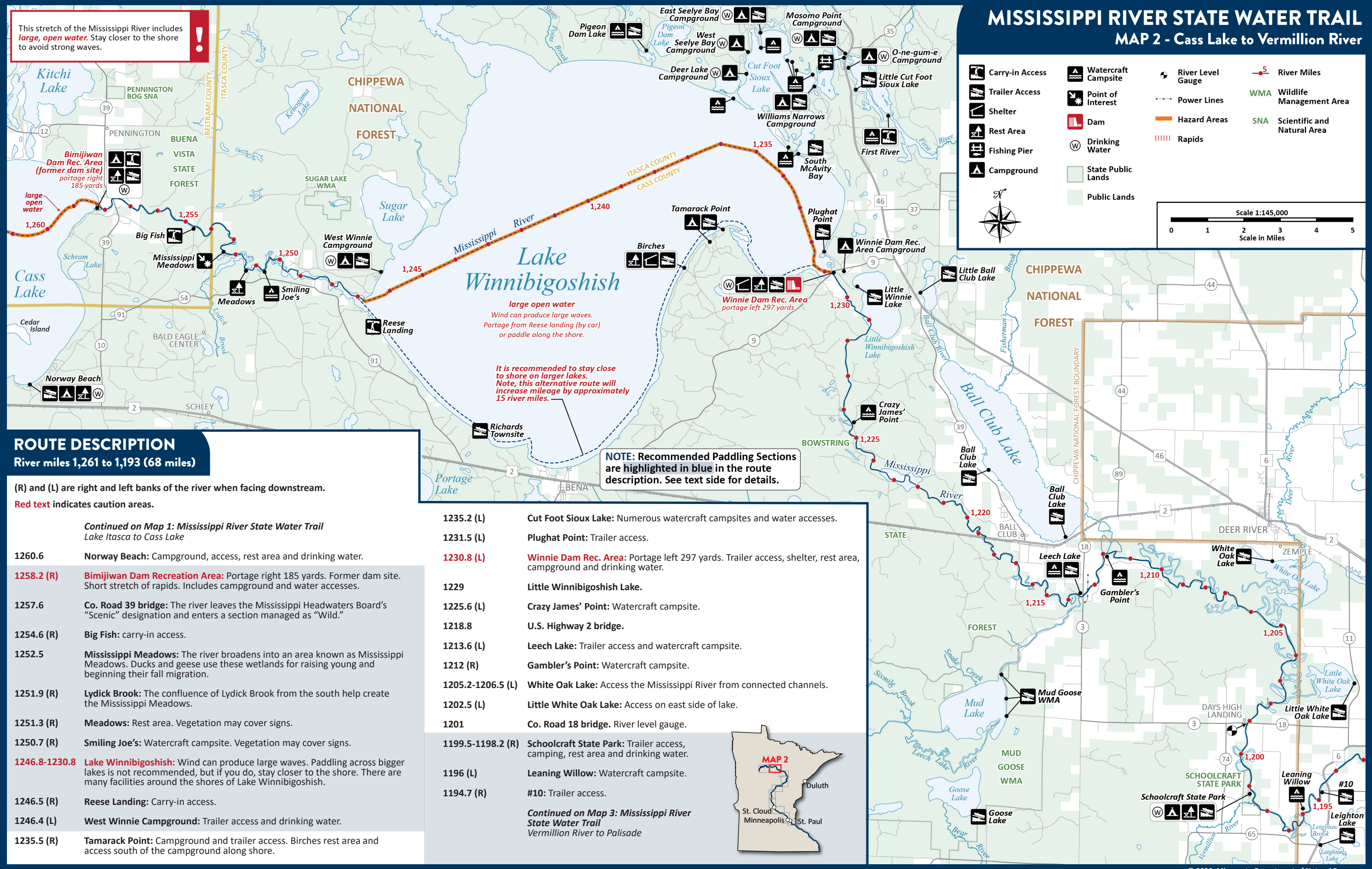


# MISSISSIPPI RIVER STATE WATER TRAIL

## MAP 2 - Cass Lake to Vermillion River

This stretch of the Mississippi River includes **large, open water**. Stay closer to the shore to avoid strong waves.



### ROUTE DESCRIPTION

River miles 1,261 to 1,193 (68 miles)

(R) and (L) are right and left banks of the river when facing downstream.

Red text indicates caution areas.

- Continued on Map 1: Mississippi River State Water Trail Lake Itasca to Cass Lake*
- 1260.6 Norway Beach: Campground, access, rest area and drinking water.
- 1258.2 (R) **Bimjiwan Dam Recreation Area:** Portage right 185 yards. Former dam site. Short stretch of rapids. Includes campground and water accesses.
- 1257.6 Co. Road 39 bridge: The river leaves the Mississippi Headwaters Board's "Scenic" designation and enters a section managed as "Wild."
- 1254.6 (R) Big Fish: carry-in access.
- 1252.5 Mississippi Meadows: The river broadens into an area known as Mississippi Meadows. Ducks and geese use these wetlands for raising young and beginning their fall migration.
- 1251.9 (R) Lydick Brook: The confluence of Lydick Brook from the south help create the Mississippi Meadows.
- 1251.3 (R) Meadows: Rest area. Vegetation may cover signs.
- 1250.7 (R) Smiling Joe's: Watercraft campsite. Vegetation may cover signs.
- 1246.8-1230.8 **Lake Winnibigoshish:** Wind can produce large waves. Paddling across bigger lakes is not recommended, but if you do, stay closer to the shore. There are many facilities around the shores of Lake Winnibigoshish.
- 1246.5 (R) Reese Landing: Carry-in access.
- 1246.4 (L) West Winnie Campground: Trailer access and drinking water.
- 1235.5 (R) Tamarack Point: Campground and trailer access. Birches rest area and access south of the campground along shore.

**NOTE: Recommended Paddling Sections are highlighted in blue in the route description. See text side for details.**

- 1235.2 (L) Cut Foot Sioux Lake: Numerous watercraft campsites and water accesses.
- 1231.5 (L) Plughat Point: Trailer access.
- 1230.8 (L) **Winnie Dam Rec. Area:** Portage left 297 yards. Trailer access, shelter, rest area, campground and drinking water.
- 1229 Little Winnibigoshish Lake.
- 1225.6 (L) Crazy James' Point: Watercraft campsite.
- 1218.8 U.S. Highway 2 bridge.
- 1213.6 (L) Leech Lake: Trailer access and watercraft campsite.
- 1212 (R) Gambler's Point: Watercraft campsite.
- 1205.2-1206.5 (L) White Oak Lake: Access the Mississippi River from connected channels.
- 1202.5 (L) Little White Oak Lake: Access on east side of lake.
- 1201 Co. Road 18 bridge. River level gauge.
- 1199.5-1198.2 (R) Schoolcraft State Park: Trailer access, camping, rest area and drinking water.
- 1196 (L) Leaning Willow: Watercraft campsite.
- 1194.7 (R) #10: Trailer access.

*Continued on Map 3: Mississippi River State Water Trail Vermillion River to Palisade*



# MISSISSIPPI RIVER STATE WATER TRAIL



## MAP 2 - CASS LAKE TO VERMILLION RIVER



**m** DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## ABOUT THE WATER TRAIL

This section of the Mississippi River connects Cass Lake and Winnibigoshish Lake. These lakes have always been important to the Ojibwe people of northern Minnesota, and today lie within the boundaries of the Leech Lake Indian Reservation. These extensive public lands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service as the Chippewa National Forest.

This portion of the river is gentle enough for beginner paddlers. You'll find forested shorelines, pine-covered islands and eagles soaring overhead. The river's channel deepens below the Leech Lake River confluence and you'll see broad marshes on either side. Watch for oxbows once carved by the river and now filling with plant life.

Hazards in this section include dams and large, open water on Cass and Winnibigoshish lakes which can produce powerful waves. Paddling across these lakes is not recommended.



Find many options for launching along this section of the river.

## 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](http://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. State and national forests do allow dispersed camping. Be sure to check regulations before your trip.
- 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.
- Practice Leave No Trace principles when camping.
- Follow the rules for firewood. State forests allow you to gather dead wood for a fire, but state parks do not.

## RECOMMENDED DAY TRIP

### Cass Lake to Lake Winnibigoshish

- Put-in location: Bimijiwan Dam Rec. Area  
Carry-in or Trailer Access  
River mile **1,258.2**
- Take-out location: West Winnie Campground  
Trailer Access  
River mile **1,246.4**
- Length: **11.8** river miles

Follow the river's meandering path between the two big lakes. Halfway through your trip, the river broadens at the Mississippi Meadows. Watch for migrating waterfowl in the spring and fall. Paddle along a short section of the Lake Winnibigoshish shore to reach the takeout.

## RECOMMENDED PADDLING SECTIONS

**NOTE:** River conditions can change at any time. Be sure to check water levels before heading out.

**Recommended paddling sections are highlighted in blue in the route description.**

At typical water levels, these **Recommended Paddling Sections** offer:

- Enjoyable experience for all ages and abilities
- Fewer obstacles and woody obstructions
- Well-marked and maintained portages and public access facilities
- Variety of options for trip length and duration

[mndnr.gov/recommended-paddling](http://mndnr.gov/recommended-paddling)

## 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](http://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](http://mndnr.gov/buffers)

## CONTACTS

### DNR INFORMATION CENTER

500 Lafayette Rd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040  
(888) 646-6367  
[info.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:info.dnr@state.mn.us)

### STATE PARKS & TRAILS AREA OFFICE

3296 State Park Road NE  
Bemidji, MN 5661  
218-308-2372

### SCHOOLCRAFT STATE PARK

Deer River, MN 56636  
(218) 328-8982  
[mndnr.gov/schoolcraft](http://mndnr.gov/schoolcraft)

### U.S.D.A FOREST SERVICE CHIPPEWA NATIONAL FOREST

Cass Lake, MN 56633  
(218) 335-8600

## MEDICAL

### SANFORD MEDICAL CENTER

1300 Anne St. NW  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 751-5430

### GRAND ITASCA CLINIC & HOSPITAL

1601 Golf Course Rd.  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
(218) 326-3401

**IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911**

## More Information

[mndnr.gov/watertrails](http://mndnr.gov/watertrails)

- River level reporting
- River conditions reporting
- Interactive water trail map
- Recommended routes
- River rapids definitions
- Virtual tours

Search for outfitters at [exploreminnesota.com](http://exploreminnesota.com)

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

