The Milan Bridge was built as part of the Lac qui Parle Flood Control Project in 1938 and replaced in 2020. The extensive stone bridgeheads were restored in 2021.

**Lac qui Parle Flood Control Project**

The Lac qui Parle (LQP) Flood Control Project was built during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The workers were unemployed men hired under a federal jobs program called the Works Progress Administration or WPA.

The LQP Flood Control Project was one of the largest public works projects in Minnesota history. It was also the state’s largest flood control project in terms of cost, complexity, and geographic area.

Designed to reduce flooding along the Minnesota River, the Project extended for 60 miles from Odessa to Granite Falls. It covered 25,000 acres of land. Government partners included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the State of Minnesota, and others.

Most of the Project was built over eight years from 1933-1941. The work was interrupted by World War II and then completed after the war in the late 1940s and early 1950s.
Goals of the LQP Flood Control Project

- Reduce flooding in river cities like Montevideo and Mankato
- Conserve water during times of drought
- Create lakes, parks, and hunting grounds for public use
- Provide jobs and training to the unemployed

During the Great Depression of the 1930s the unemployment rate in the U.S. was nearly 25%. Like other “New Deal” government projects, the LQP Flood Control Project was designed to create jobs while at the same time building necessary public infrastructure.

At its peak in 1937, more than 1,000 men were working on the LQP Project. Many of the workers slept in wooden barracks in large work camps built near Lac qui Parle Dam and Marsh Lake Dam.
Accomplishments of the LQP Flood Control Project

- Built the Lac qui Parle Dam, Marsh Lake Dam, and several smaller dams, dikes, and canals
- Created two large reservoirs called Lac qui Parle Lake and Marsh Lake
- Made changes to the Minnesota, Pomme de Terre, Chippewa, and Lac qui Parle Rivers
- Rebuilt parts of two railroads and many roads and highways to lift them above flood stage
- Built scenic drives, bridges, and causeways
- Created hundreds of acres of park land – including Lac qui Parle State Park – with swimming beaches, picnic areas, campgrounds, and a historic site
- Preserved thousands of acres of land for public hunting and wildlife habitat
Places to Visit (see map below)

Dams and Reservoirs
The largest dam is the Lac qui Parle Dam, completed in 1941. It holds back the Minnesota River to create Lac qui Parle Lake. 17 miles to the north is Marsh Lake Dam, also completed in 1941, which creates Marsh Lake. The LQP Project also built two smaller dams, the Chippewa Control Works (1936) and Watson Sag Weir (1937), which divert high water from the Chippewa River into Lac qui Parle Lake to prevent floodwaters from reaching Montevideo and other cities.

Stone Bridgeheads, Staircases, and Riprap
WPA workers hand-placed thousands of square yards of granite “riprap” throughout the Project to protect ditches, banks, and shorelines. A good example is at the Milan Bridge on State Highway 40 which crosses Lac qui Parle Lake on a riprapped causeway. In 2021 the causeway’s stone staircases and the stonework at the ends of the bridge were restored. The waves proved too strong for the unmortared riprap and as a result there are areas of restored historic mortar and non-historic random mortar along the causeway.
Scenic Drives
The LQP Flood Control Project built scenic drives on the west and east shores of Lac qui Parle Lake. They are LQP County Road 33 and the south part of Chippewa County Road 32.

Parks
The Project built seven parks and recreation areas. Two of the parks have impressive timber and stone structures:

- Lac qui Parle State Park’s stone and timber buildings are located in the Lower Campground just west of Lac qui Parle Dam. They were completed in 1941.
- Watson State Scenic Wayside, now called Watson Lions Park, is located 3.75 miles east of Lac qui Parle Dam. Its stone and timber structures were completed in 1939.

At the Lac qui Parle Mission State Wayside, completed in 1942, the WPA built a replica of an 1830s church used by Christian missionaries living among the Dakota people.
One of the buildings in Lac qui Parle State Park’s Lower Campground. The stone craftsmanship is excellent.

Boats on the east shore of Lac qui Parle Lake. This photo was taken about 1945 at Milan Beach Resort at the east end of the Milan Bridge.

**Things to Know**

- The Lac qui Parle Dam raised the level of the Minnesota River about 8 feet to create Lac qui Parle Lake.
- The granite used in the Lac qui Parle Project was cut by hand. On some of the stones you can see the marks from the drills the workers used when they hand-split the rock.
- The WPA built a 45-foot-long model of the Flood Control Project that is on display in the Lower Campground in LQP State Park.
- On the west side of LQP County Road 33 there is a three-mile line of concrete fence posts. They were made and installed by the WPA workers in 1939 to mark the southwest boundary of the Flood Control Project.
- Dakota people (*Pejuhutazizi Oyate*) and their ancestors have been living near Lac qui Parle and elsewhere along the Upper Minnesota River for thousands of years.

To read more about the Lac qui Parle Flood Control Project, visit [www.dot.state.mn.us/culturalresources/studies.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/culturalresources/studies.html)
Lac qui Parle Flood Control Project - Places to Visit
Mille Lacs to Watson Segment

Map showing Lac qui Parle Lake (Minnesota River) with various points of interest marked, including:
- Milan Bridge and Causeway
- Watson Lions Park
- Watson Sag Weir
- LQP Mission Wayside
- LQP Dam & Recreation Area
- Lac Qui Parle State Park
- LQP State Park Lower Campground
- LQP State Park Upper Campground

Legend:
- Scaled distance: 0 to 1 mi.

Map cover:
- Lac qui Parle County
- Chippewa County