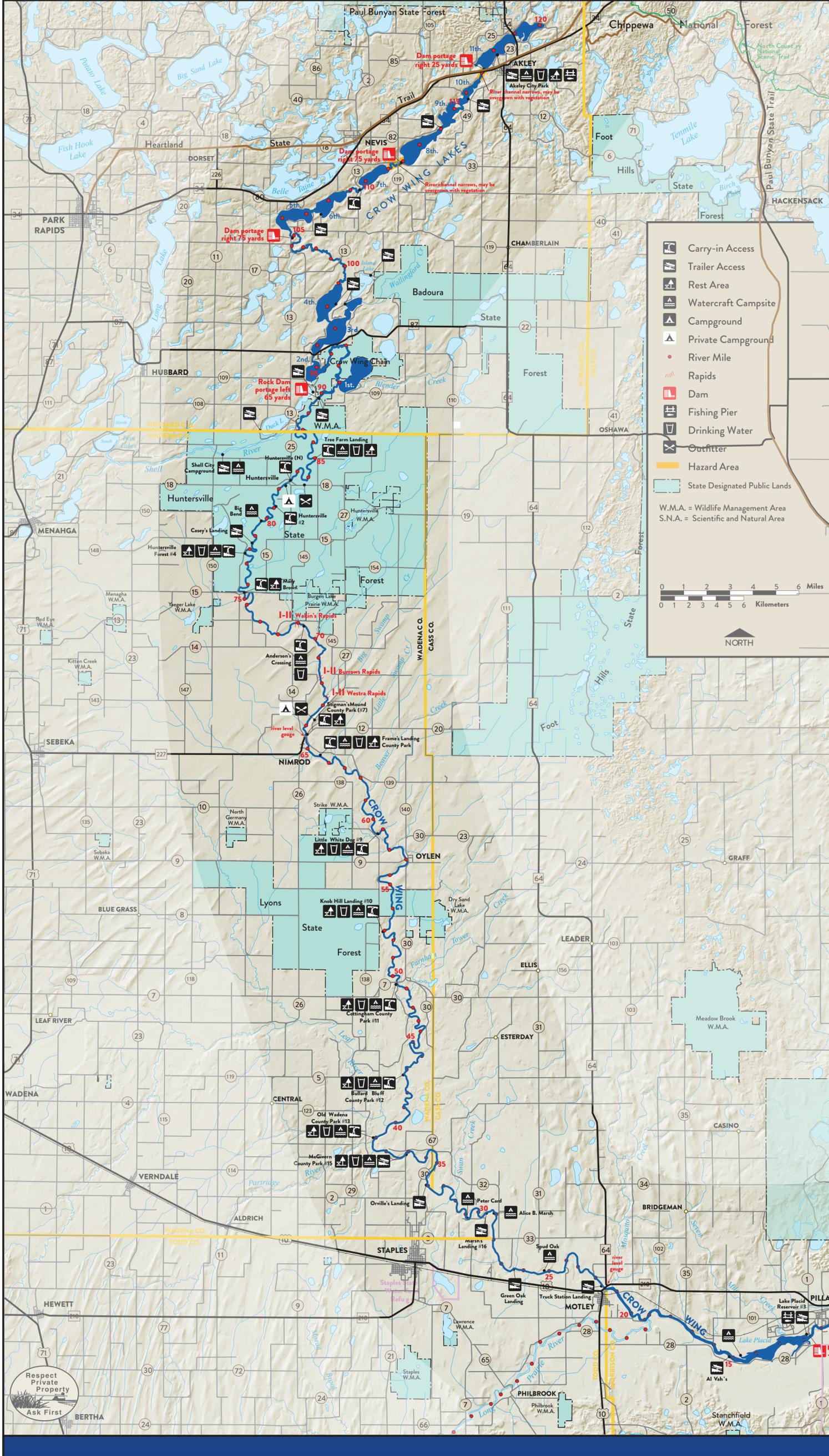


# A STATE WATER TRAIL GUIDE TO THE CROW WING RIVER



## Route Description of the Crow Wing River

NOTE: (R) and (L) represent right and left banks of the river when facing downstream.

### RIVER MILE:

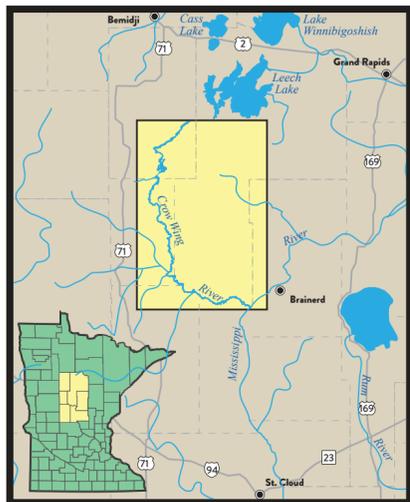
- 119.0** 11th Crow Wing Lake is divided by Hwy. 64. Mostly lake paddling to the south end of 5th Crow Wing Lake.
- 118.0** Akeley City Park trailer access, campground, drinking water and rest area. The lake can also be accessed at the Akeley City Park.
- 117.2 (L)** Dam, portage left 25 yards around a small dam where the lake joins the Crow Wing River. River channel is narrow, may be overgrown with vegetation between lakes.
- 117.0** Foot Bridge Portage. The river flows under the Heartland State Trail trestle, then through a culvert under Hwy. 34 into a marshy area.
- 115.8** Trailer access on 10th Crow Wing Lake.
- 114.1** Trailer access between 8th and 9th Crow Wing Lakes.
- 111.9 (R)** Dam, portage right 75 yards over Hubbard County Road 33 (use caution crossing the road). River channel is narrow in this next stretch and may be overgrown with vegetation after June. It may be impassable, or contain heavy vegetation. Scout before paddling.
- 109.5** Hubbard County Road 13 River paddling along this stretch. Carry-in access located on river left at Hubbard County Road 13.
- 107.6** Trailer access on south shore of 6th Crow Wing Lake.
- 105.1** Dam, portage right 75 yards over Nevis Township Road 28 (use caution crossing the road). Primarily lake paddling to this point. Please respect private property at this point.
- 105.0** "Wilderness" Section. River paddling downstream from the dam. The next 5 miles of river paddling are in a beautiful wilderness setting, with only a few riverfront cabins.
- 100.6 (L)** Hubbard County Road 13.
- 98.2** Public accesses located on the west bank of 3rd and east bank of the 4th Crow Wing Lakes, off Hubbard County Road 13.
- 95.6** Paddle under bridge at Hwy. 87. Intermittent river and lake, paddling to next portage.
- 89.7 (L)** Trailer access in Crow Wing W.M.A. at County Road 109, under bridge, Rock dam/portage. Experienced paddlers may scout first, then pass through. Others should portage left 65 yards over Hubbard County Road 109 (use caution crossing the road). 1 mile downstream from the 1st Crow Wing Lake.
- 88.2 (R)** Confluence of the Shell River from the west.
- 86.8** Hubbard and Wadena County line.
- 85.0 (L)** Tree Farm Landing, carry-in access, rest area, primitive campsites, drinking water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 82.6 (L)** Wadena County Road 18 bridge, Huntersville (N) carry-in access, town of Huntersville.
- 81.1 (R)** Huntersville #2 carry-in access.
- 79.8 (R)** Big Bend watercraft campsites.
- 78.7 (R)** Casey's Landing trailer access.
- 77.7 (R)** Huntersville #4 carry-in access, drinking water, rest area, watercraft campsite.
- 75.3 (R)** Mary Brown Rest Area, carry-in access, County Road 15 bridge.
- 71.0** Walkin's Rapids, Class I, may go to Class II at high river levels.
- 70.8 (R)** Anderson's Crossing, carry-in access, primitive campsites, water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 68.3** Burrows Rapids, Class I.
- 67.4 (L)** Big Swamp Creek enters from east; outfitter.
- 67.3** Westra Rapids Class I, may go to Class II at high river levels, outfitter.
- 65.5** MN Hwy. 227 bridge, painted river gauge on bridge pier.
- 65.5 (R)** Stigman's Mound County Park, rest area and carry-in access, Town of Nimrod, Cat River enters from west.
- 64.4 (L)** Frame's Landing County Park, carry-in access, primitive campsites, drinking water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 59.3 (R)** Little White Dog County Park, #9 carry-in access, rest area, primitive campsites, water, camping fee, Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 57.0** Town of Oylen, Wadena County Road 9 bridge.
- 53.0 (R)** Knob Hill County Park, #10 carry-in access, rest area, primitive campsites, water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 49.5** Wadena County Road 7 bridge.
- 49.4 (R)** Cottingham County Park, #11 carry-in access, rest area, primitive campsites, water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 48.8 (L)** Farnham Creek enters from east.
- 42.8 (R)** Bullard Bluff County Park, #12 carry-in access, rest area, primitive campsites, drinking water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 39.7 (R)** Leaf River enters from west.
- 38.9 (R)** Old Wadena County Park, #13 carry-in access, rest area, primitive campsites, drinking water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. admin., Partridge River enters from west.
- 37.2 (R)** McGivern County Park, #15 trailer access, rest area, primitive campsites, drinking water, camping (fee), Wadena Co. administered.\*
- 35.6** Wadena County Road 30 bridge.
- 34.1 (R)** Orville's Landing trailer access.
- 30.8 (L)** Peter Card watercraft campsite.
- 29.5 (R)** Marsh's Landing #16 trailer access.
- 29.1 (R)** Alice B. Marsh watercraft campsite.
- 28.0** Wadena County Road 34 bridge.
- 26.4 (R)** Green Oak Landing trailer access.
- 25.2 (L)** Spud Oak watercraft campsite.
- 21.6 (R)** Truck Station Landing trailer access. MN Hwy. 210 bridge, painted river gauge on bridge pier.
- 20.9** Railroad trestle.
- 19.2 (R)** Long Prairie River enters from south.
- 15.4 (R)** Al-Vah's Landing trailer access. Start of Lake Placid Reservoir.
- 14.8 (L)** Watercraft campsite, no fee, Minnesota Power Administered.
- 11.8 (L)** Lake Placid Reservoir Landing #3 trailer access.
- 11.7** Pillager Dam, portage right - 125 yards, Minnesota Power administered.
- 11.7** Fishing pier below dam.
- 10.9** Morrison County Road 1 bridge.
- 9.4-0.0 (R)** Camp Ripley Military Reservation (south) bank.
- 7.0 (L)** Wilder Landing #2 trailer access and fishing pier. Start of Sylvan Reservoir.
- 5.2 (L)** Fisherman's Bridge Landing #4 trailer access and fishing pier. Gull River enters from north.
- 4.0** Sylvan Dam, portage left, 200 yards, Minnesota Power admin.
- 3.9 (L)** Fisherman's Bank Landing trailer access and fishing pier.
- 0.0** Crow Wing River enters Mississippi River at Crow Wing State Park.

\*Wadena County Admin. sites = \$10.00/night/site/camping fee



# Crow Wing River

MINNESOTA  
STATE PARKS  
AND TRAILS  
ESTABLISHED 1891



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This information is available in alternative format upon request.

**Minnesota State Parks and Trails Regional Unit**  
1601 Minnesota Drive  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
218-828-2619

**Wadena County Parks Department**  
415 Jefferson St. S.  
Wadena, MN 56482  
218-631-7604

Online water trail information and maps can be found at [mndnr.gov/watertrails](http://mndnr.gov/watertrails)

## DNR Information Center

The DNR's Information Center is available to provide free publications of facilities and services as well as answers questions pertaining to DNR recreational opportunities in Minnesota.



500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040  
651-296-6157 Metro Area  
1-888-646-6367 MN Toll-Free

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

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# A STATE WATER TRAIL GUIDE TO THE CROW WING RIVER

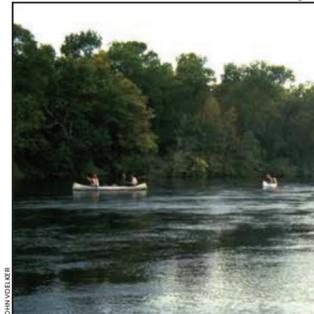


The Crow Wing's crystal waters cut a gentle path rarely interrupted by rapids.

## The Crow Wing River

Because of its low gradient, clear water, stable flow and numerous access points, the Crow Wing River is considered to be one of Minnesota's best family-oriented canoe routes.

Rising from a chain of 11 interconnected lakes near the towns of Nevis and Akeley in southern Hubbard County, the Crow Wing River flows southeast approximately 90 miles before joining the Mississippi River at Crow Wing State Park, just south of Brainerd. Over this 90-mile course, the river drops just slightly



more than 200 feet in elevation; a gradient of less than one-half foot per mile. The Crow Wing derives its name from the shape of the large island at its mouth, which early American Indians believed to be in the form of a raven's wing. Subsequent language translations by early European explorers lead to the name of "Crow Wing."

The Crow Wing River system exhibits a classic dendritic drainage pattern, with numerous smaller rivers and streams joining the main river stem along its course. Examples of these include the Leaf, Partridge and Long Prairie rivers. Some of the smaller tributaries, such as Farnham Creek, contain residual populations of brook trout in their headwaters.

One of the largest tributaries, the Shell River, enters the Crow Wing River from the west near Huntersville. Many times of the year, the outflow from the Shell River is actually greater than the flow of the Crow Wing itself. The Shell River, as well as the Long Prairie River, are also canoeable streams at higher water levels.

The deep sandy soils of the watershed, which act like a giant sponge, along with the low gradient and numerous tributaries feeding in allow the river to maintain a fairly constant water level through the seasons. Typically, the difference in elevation between the early season high level and the late summer low



levels is less than three feet. Even in a dry summer, the Crow Wing River usually remains canoeable, though canoeists will need to be on the lookout for sandbars.

The consistent flow and good water quality contribute to a stable fish population. Because of the mostly sandy bottom and a minimal number of deep pools, the predominant fish species present are white suckers and northern redhorse. Northern pike and a few largemouth bass can be found along weedy shoreline sections, while limited numbers of walleye are present in the deeper pools.

Generally, better fishing is found in the reservoirs above the Sylvan and Pillager dams. At these locations, the river is impounded by the hydroelectric stations operated by Minnesota Power. These impoundments, of about three miles long each, create lake-like environments, which are home to largemouth bass, panfish, northern pike and even a few walleyes. Both the Sylvan and Pillager dams require portages of approximately 125 yards each. Both portages are located on the river's right or south bank. The portage trails are maintained by Minnesota Power and are considered to be relatively easy.

The majority of the river corridor is quite undeveloped, especially in the upper sections north of the city of Staples. On these upper reaches, the shoreline is



heavily wooded, with forests of jack pine, red pine and oak on the higher elevations. The less elevated shorelines

feature a mixed deciduous forest of basswood, maple, willow and ash. Signs of human habitation, such as cabins and power line crossings are fairly infrequent. Along the lower 30 miles or so, the river becomes more civilized with agricultural land, homes, and road bridges becoming more common.

The diversity of vegetation along the river banks supports a wide variety of wildlife. Observant canoeists should be able to see white-tailed deer, muskrat, beaver, otter, raccoon and perhaps even black bear. The most common waterfowl are wood ducks and hooded mergansers, with some mallards also present. Wading birds, such as great blue herons and sandpipers are quite common. On occasion, bald eagles and ospreys might be observed. Various species of songbirds abound, especially during the spring and fall migration seasons.

Most of the accesses and campsites found in the upper 50 miles of the Crow Wing River are provided through

the Wadena County Parks Department. While there is no charge to use any of the public access sites to the river, nominal camping fees are charged at the county-administered sites through a self-registration system. Refer to the Route Description for more detail.

Before the arrival of European explorers, the Dakota Indian controlled the Crow Wing region until the Ojibwe people began moving westward in the early 1700s. By the early 1800s, the Ojibwe had gained control of the lands west of the Mississippi River and north of the Crow Wing. Signs of this intertribal struggle, in the form of ancient rifle pits, are still visible today at Crow Wing State Park.

Fur traders entered the region in the 1700s. In 1792, the North West Company established the Wadena Trading Post at the mouth of the Partridge River, site of the present day Old Wadena County Park. There was considerable overland trade in the area by the 1800s. Allen Morrison, for whom Morrison County is named, established his trading post at the mouth of the Crow Wing in 1823. In 1851, the Crow Wing Chippewa Agency post was established at the mouth of the Gull River; it was in operation until 1869.

A large portion of this site was inundated by the reservoir when the Sylvan Dam was constructed in the early 1900s. The Crow Wing Otter Tail oxcart trail was established by the military in the 1850s. Portions of this old roadway can still be found within Crow Wing State Park, as well as various other locations along the Crow Wing River. One of the oldest wood-frame structures in Minnesota, the Beaulieu House, has been preserved at Crow Wing State Park.

As you enjoy the serenity of a calm summer evening, whether in your canoe or around the campfire, remember those who have been here before you and think of those who will come after you. Respect the river.



The 11th Crow Wing Lake is the uppermost of the Crow Wing chain of lakes located in southern Hubbard County and is about 115 river miles from its confluence with the Mississippi River at Crow Wing State Park. Because of its many campsites and undeveloped shores,

the Crow Wing River is one of the state's best "wilderness" routes for family canoeists.

The Crow Wing's crystal waters cut a gentle path rarely interrupted by rapids. Although the river is seldom more than three feet deep, it is nearly always deep enough for canoeing. And although the Crow Wing is easily accessible, much of it is flanked by thick forests with abundant wildlife.



## Planning A Safe River Trip

A successful river trip is safe. To enjoy a safe journey, you should be prepared by getting acquainted with your route. Choose a distance that is comfortable for you. Water levels can speed or slow you: get information about water levels from the regional DNR Parks and Trails office, or check the DNR website, or the DNR Information Center.

Protect the water and shorelands and leave nothing behind you except footprints. Remember that much of the shorelands are privately owned. Here's a checklist you should consider in planning your trip:

- Travel with a companion or group. Plan your trip with a map before you depart and advise someone of your plans including planned departure and arrival times.
- Most people paddle two to three river miles per hour.
- Bring a first aid kit that includes waterproof matches.
- Be cautious of river obstructions, such as overhanging and dead trees in the river.
- You must pack out all trash.
- Leave only footprints; take only photographs!

## Rest Areas and Camping Sites

- Public rest areas are available along the route to rest, picnic and explore.
- Camp only in designated campsites, which are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- Bring drinking water. It is only available at a limited number of rest areas. Drinking river water is not recommended, but if you do it must be treated.
- Respect 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.

## Boating Information

- Wear a U. S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device that state law requires be on board the craft.
- Bring an extra paddle.
- Not all portions of this water trail are suitable for motor use.
- Register your watercraft. All watercraft more than 9 feet in length, including nonmotorized canoes and kayaks, must be registered in Minnesota or your state of residence.



## Sustainable Ecosystems

Outdoor recreation is dependent on a healthy and attractive natural environment. Sustainable outdoor recreation enables people to enjoy the outdoors without negative impacts on the environment.

Communities working together can improve water resources by promoting environmentally sensitive land use practices along rivers and throughout watersheds.

Natural shoreline buffers improve water quality by filtering out pollutants and sediments. Healthy and diverse native shoreline plant communities are attractive and provide important shoreline habitat for birds and wildlife.

