

MISSISSIPPI RIVER STATE WATER TRAIL



MAP 2 - CASS LAKE TO VERMILLION RIVER



m MINNESOTA
STATE PARKS AND TRAILS

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.
- 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.
- 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: Knutson Dam Recreation Area
River mile **1,258.2**
- Take-out location: West Winnie Campground
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.

EXPLORE ON SHORE

Schoolcraft State Park

River mile **1,199.5**

The Vermillion River joins the Mississippi River here. Camping (fee required), public access and drinking water (no showers) are available at the park. Pull into the boat landing to hike a trail and explore. The park is named for Henry Rowe Schoolcraft who charted the headwaters of the Mississippi River with Anishinabe guide Ozawindib.

mndnr.gov/schoolcraft

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

CONTACTS

DNR INFORMATION CENTER

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

DNR REGION 1 HEADQUARTERS

Bemidji, MN 56601
(218) 308-2372

SCHOOLCRAFT STATE PARK

Deer River, MN 56636
(218) 328-8982
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

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

Search for outfitters at exploreminnesota.com

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