ABOUT THE WATER TRAIL

In this section, the Mississippi River flows out of forest and wetlands and into a narrow valley surrounded by sandplains. Below the confluence with the Nokasippi River, the Mississippi flows through a flat valley bordered by hills. You’ll see vegetation along the shoreline and farmland beyond. Riffles are present at Pipe Island and downriver to the State Highway 115 bridge. These riffles are made by rock bars that create small standing waves. Navigating the riffles is difficult for even the smallest boat’s motor.

On the west side of the river, the Camp Ripley Military Reservation extends 18 miles downstream of the Crow Wing River confluence. The land is owned by the State of Minnesota and managed by the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs. Islands along the river corridor owned by Camp Ripley are open to public recreational use. Access to the Camp Ripley Training Center is not allowed from any point along the Mississippi or Crow Wing rivers.

Hazard include dams. Be aware of their locations and know where to portage.

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.
- Riverbed camping next to private property is not permitted.
- Follow the rules for firewood. State forests allow you to gather dead wood for a fire, but state parks do not.

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 shoreline is private property.
- Be sanitary! Use designated toilet facilities or bury human waste away from the river.
- River conditions reporting
- River level reporting

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.

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.

MAP 6 - BRAINERD TO LITTLE FALLS

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