



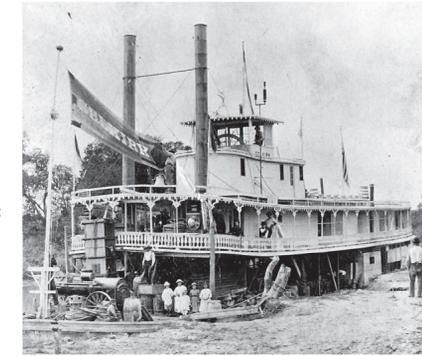
**Red River**  
Oslo to Pembina - Map 3 of 3

MINNESOTA  
**STATE PARKS  
AND TRAILS**  
ESTABLISHED 1891



David Lipp

**RED RIVER HISTORY**



Minnesota Historical Society

*Steamer Selkirk on the Red River.*

One of the world's flattest landscapes, the Red River Valley is located on the eastern edge of the Great Plains. By definition, the Red River Valley isn't a valley in the geologic sense. Instead, it is a remnant of glacial Lake Agassiz, the former floor of a massive, prehistoric lake.

**Glacial Waters Create a Lake**  
Geologists believe Lake Agassiz was formed when massive glaciers began to melt nearly 12,000 years ago. When Lake Agassiz, the most extensive body of water the North American continent ever saw, began slowly draining northward through Canada, and southeasterly toward Minnesota, the Red River of the North was created. The Red River of the North, or the "Rivière Rouge du Nord" as early French Canadian explorers christened it, was probably so-named because of its clay soils, muddy banks, and reddish-brown silt-filled waters.

**Early Residents**  
Nomadic cultures arrived soon after the retreat of the enormous glaciers, following the great herds of bison and caribou. Then, 2,000 years ago, Indians from the forests of Minnesota and Wisconsin began moving into the grassy areas of the Red River Basin. The early 1800s brought the first permanent European settlements to the banks of the Red River in present-day Manitoba. Throughout the century, European immigrants would continue to trickle

down from Canada and from the east, settling along the banks of the Red River in the United States.

**Early Commerce**  
The Hudson's Bay Company controlled commerce in this area for almost two centuries. Trading in bison and beaver hides, they used large canoes and boats to ship goods to Europe via Hudson Bay. The development of the Red River oxcart trail connected that trade route with the Mississippi River and other parts of the United States. As trade continued to flourish, so did the demand for more efficient means of transportation, and by 1859, Anson Northup, the man and his same-named steamboat, made their debut on the Red. The oxcart trail system was connected with the Hudson's Bay Company's steamboat landing near Georgetown and the two systems of land and water transportation were connected. Eventually, steamboats couldn't compete with the much faster and cheaper railroad which reached Moorhead in 1871. By the turn of the century, steamboats were all but extinct on the Red River of the North.

**Current Uses of the Red**  
Since the end of steamboat travel, the Red River of the North is a much quieter place. At its height, the river hosted public swimming areas, a 140-foot ski jump tower, and even a floating stage for outdoor concerts. Today, its tree-lined banks offer serenity often forgotten just steps away in the lively cities that lie alongside



Dave Lambeth

*Pileated Woodpeckers near the Turtle River.*

it. Currently the Red River is undergoing resurgence with new adjacent park facilities, a tour boat service, dam safety initiatives, and increasing recreational use.

**FLORA AND FAUNA**

The tree-lined banks and flowing water are almost an oddity in the vast flat prairie that surrounds the river corridor. Wildlife, plants, and fish rarely found just 10 miles away may be

abundant in the Red River environment. Fishing on the Red River Channel catfish and a diverse population of other fish provide abundant angling opportunities in the Red. Species such as northern pike, goldeye, carp, and a largely unfished population of trophy walleye lie within its waters. There is an international effort underway to reintroduce the lake sturgeon, which was decimated by overfishing and dams. It's the only fish species that doesn't have an open season on the Red.

**Wildlife and Plants Along the Red**

Birdwatchers will enjoy sighting bald eagles, wood ducks, great blue herons, Canada geese, pileated woodpeckers, hawks, and owls. Yellow warblers, redstarts, Baltimore orioles, and indigo buntings can provide a flash of color to the quiet canoeist. During seasonal migrations the corridor can be a noisy place

with bird sounds. Lower water levels expose holes in the banks used by "bank" beavers instead of their traditional huts. Other wildlife, such as raccoon, mink, squirrel, skunk, woodchuck, and occasionally bear and moose visit the banks of the Red. Some canoeists have reported seeing more than 100 white-tailed deer in a single day.

The distribution of plant species within the riparian forest is determined by their location within the flood plain. Look for willow, cottonwood, and box elder close to the water and oak, ash, and elm further up the bank. Over the years plant species have changed due to impacts from European settlement and Dutch elm disease.

Large stumps mark the site where huge cottonwoods towered over the Red. They were removed to decrease flooding caused by snag-created dams. Minnesota's second largest peach leaf willow tree is on the banks of the Red adjacent to the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead. Flowering vines and shrubs, including the prairie rose, provide seasonal color. Beyond the riparian forest are vast fields of cropland including corn, wheat, soybeans, and sugar beets.

**PLANNING A SAFE RIVER TRIP**

The average slope of the Red River is just one-half foot per mile, which makes the Red a slow-moving, easily navigable river. However, high winds have been known to create whitecaps. It features channel widths of less than 100 feet to more than 500 feet at its northern reaches. At bank-full conditions, average depths vary from 10 to 30 feet. Its flow can be widely fluctuating. Devastating floods may be associated with summer rain storms and spring thaw.

**Planning tips**

- Travel with a companion or group.
- Don't overestimate your capabilities. Most people paddle two to three river miles per hour.
- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD), which state law requires to be on board.
- Check weather forecasts and flow rates.
- Use a map, know your route, and tell someone of your plans.
- Bring a first aid kit and know how to use it.
- Dams may not be marked. Refer to this map for locations.
- Be prepared for limited access to drinking water, sanitary and trash disposal facilities.

**Access, Rest Areas and Camping Sites**

- Formal access sites are limited. Road right-of-ways adjacent to bridge crossing may be used for canoe access but overnight parking is rarely allowed.
- Spring and summer flooding or low water conditions may cause access sites to be unusable. Call ahead or check web sites for current conditions.
- Formal camping sites are limited adjacent to the river. They may be too far apart for certain trip lengths. Most riverfront property is privately



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*International border marker near Emerson, Manitoba.*

owned. Ask for permission before camping. Consult websites and state maps for other park locations.

**Boating Information**

- Be aware that this river touches two states. Each may have different regulations, especially regarding personal watercraft (jet skis).
- Avoid the spread of exotic aquatic species: [mndnr.gov/exotics](http://mndnr.gov/exotics)
- Minnesota requires all watercraft, including canoes and kayaks, to be registered in Minnesota or state of residence.
- Low water conditions may not be suitable for boating. Snags are common. Leave motors unlocked.
- Minimize wakes in developed areas and when passing canoes and boats.

**RED RIVER AREA RESOURCES**

MN DEPT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
888-646-6367 or [mndnr.gov](http://mndnr.gov)

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH  
701-328-6300 or [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov)

CITY OF DRAYTON, ND  
701-454-3590 or [draytonnd.com](http://draytonnd.com)

CITY OF PEMBINA, ND  
701-825-6819 or [cityofpembina.org](http://cityofpembina.org)

CITY OF OSLO, MN  
218-695-3841 or [wiktel.net/com/oslo](http://wiktel.net/com/oslo)

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
[nd.water.usgs.gov/canoeing](http://nd.water.usgs.gov/canoeing)

RIVER KEEPERS  
[riverkeepers.org](http://riverkeepers.org)

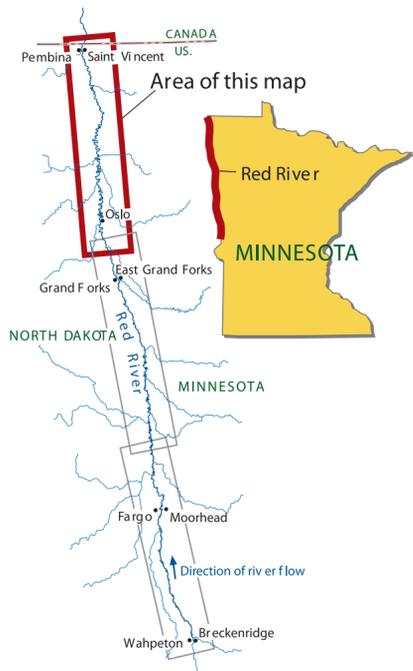
RIVERWATCH ONLINE  
[riverwatchonline.org](http://riverwatchonline.org)

**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 habitat for birds and wildlife.



Look for this symbol along the Water Trail



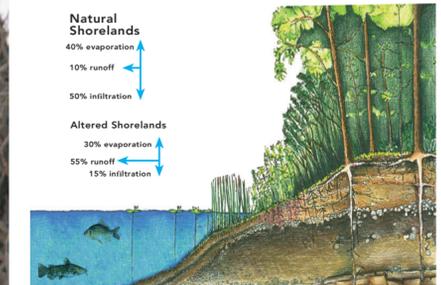
**DNR Information Center**  
The DNR Information Center provides free publications of facilities and services, and answers questions pertaining to DNR recreational opportunities in Minnesota.

500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4040  
651-296-6157 (Metro Area)  
1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free)  
[mndnr.gov/watertrails](http://mndnr.gov/watertrails)

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This information is available in alternative format upon request.

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Left to Right: Family fun on the Red River. First big catfish. Eagles nesting near East Grand Forks. (River Keepers, Rick St. Germain, Dave Lambeth)