



**TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND™**

Minnesota's Rivers

Study after study links access to nature with human health and happiness. While just being in nature heals us, we know when we get outside our senses come alive, our stresses slip away, and we are refreshed. Land ownership that closes gates, development that wipes out forests, and a rapidly changing climate put such access and its multitude of benefits at risk.

The crisp, clear blue rivers are among Minnesota's most precious natural resources. They provide fresh drinking water, along with habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife—and they are favored places for rest, retreat, and recreation for millions of Minnesotans. We work with communities from Lake Itasca to the Twin Cities to the Wisconsin border to protect these rivers, lands surrounding them, and access points where everyone can get to and enjoy the water.

Protecting and Expanding Access to Rivers

CANNON RIVER WATERSHED

Large swaths of the Cannon River Watershed have been lost to unsustainable development, leaving less than one-quarter of the landscape as prairie, forest, or wetland. The precious lands and water access that remain include rivers brimming with fish, prairies, wetlands, and forests. They are home to rare native plants, and are—of course—stunning in their own right. We focus our efforts in the watershed on establishing more access to the river and protecting habits that keep Minnesota resilient to climate change. Building upon the existing beautiful Cannon River Turtle Preserve Scientific and Natural Area—adjacent to the 20-mile Cannon Valley Trail—we were able to permanently conserve another 214 acres, securing it for generations to come.

METRO BIG RIVERS

The Mississippi, Minnesota, and St. Croix rivers and their tributaries not only benefit the migrating and resident flora and fauna, but also the 3 million residents of the Twin Cities metro area. We are working to permanently safeguard these critical environments ensuring the function and diversity of these native ecosystems, beautifying the built environment, while providing close-to-home access to natural places for Twin Cities residents, connecting communities, protecting water quality, and making the Twin Cities more resilient to severe weather driven by climate change. Through a multitude of projects, we have protected over 5,000 acres of land across the Metro Big Rivers and their tributaries—and are only just beginning. One project ahead of us is the 1,820 acre Keystone Woods Wildlife Management Area project in Washington County, which will be the largest Metro Big River land acquisition in our history.

MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS

Countless high-quality habitats and tremendous recreational opportunities exist along the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River. Despite being home to fish and migratory waterfowl and drawing hunting, fishing, birding, boating, and hiking enthusiasts from all over, much of the land along this stretch of the river remains threatened by development. With our partners, we are working with landowners and communities to protect sensitive shorelines throughout the headwaters region, including those along reservoirs and tributaries while creating new recreational opportunities for the public. This work will preserve natural habitats, help keep the river free of pollution, and ensure enthusiastic recreationalists will have access to this natural playground. The LaSalle Lake State Recreation Area is a stunning example of our work in this geography.

SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS

Less than 5 percent of the distinctive Driftless Area of southeast Minnesota is protected and open for public use. However, the area is brimming with recreational potential, home to forests, wildlife, prairies threaded by wandering trout streams, and the Mississippi, Root, Whitewater, Zumbro, and Cannon rivers. But with little public accessibility to this

wondrous place, many miss out on the joys and benefits of the outdoors. We're working to change that, creating and expanding conservation areas in the blufflands that protect important habitats and improve access to recreation across this singular region. We've made this possible already in the Yucatan Wildlife Management Area and Choice Wildlife Management Area, where we've preserved 840 acres and 600 acres of land respectively.

ST. CROIX WATERSHED

Towering cliffs of igneous rock, Silver Maple trees, osprey, salamanders, grouse, Karner blue butterflies. These are all treasures you might observe along the St. Croix River. Though the federal Wild and Scenic River designation protects a small sliver of land on the river, 75 percent of the watershed remains in private ownership. Fragmentation and detrimental land development remain a very real possibility. Before we lose these lands, we're working hard to conserve them. In service of this mission, we've protected and later expanded both the Chengwatana State Forest and the Crystal Spring Scientific and Natural Area, securing access to an adventure camp for children, a scenic waterfall, steep cliffs, kayaking, and panoramic views of the St. Croix River. We've also established the 72-acre Lawrence Creek Scientific and Natural Area, safeguarding rare resources of scientific and educational value.

At stake is our region's drinking water, access to the joys of being in nature, clean air, and unique and special ecosystems. Minnesota's rivers and lands that surround them provide us all of these benefits and more—but it's at risk, which is why we're focused on ensuring they live on for everyone to experience.



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