

The River Today

Today, the river is a reflection of its landscape. The wetlands have largely been drained and the prairies and big woods have been converted to row crop agriculture. With that conversion comes changes in water quality and impacts to plants and animals that live throughout the basin. Some progress has been made cleaning up the river and there are some encouraging signs. The job of cleaning up the river is much more challenging and complicated than many people realize.



Recreation & Tourism

Increasingly citizens are realizing the recreational opportunities that the basin offers: fishing, boating and paddling rivers and lakes, visiting state parks and exploring this richly diverse landscape.



Water quality

Many lakes, rivers and streams in the basin known to exceed water quality standards and are listed as "Impaired Waters" by MPCA. For 2008, there are 336 impairments listed in the Minnesota River Basin. The river is polluted to the extent that swimming is not recommended and anglers are warned to limit their consumption of fish taken from the river. On the other hand, long term statistical trend studies are showing some improvements in water quality, particularly in total suspended solids and total phosphorus.



Hawk Creek Watershed Project



Hawk Creek Watershed Project

CLEAN UP SOLUTIONS

ASK AN EXPERT
ABOUT THE MINNESOTA RIVER

Partnerships - Improvements

Many organizations are involved in the Minnesota River clean-up. Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts develop and implement local Water Management Plans. Counties are responsible for feedlots, septic systems, and planning and zoning. The Minnesota River Board provides policy and basin-wide program support. This joint powers board was created in 1995 to promote water quality improvement and management across 37 counties with land that drain into the Minnesota River. The Minnesota River Basin is divided into 13 major watersheds and nearly every one of the major watersheds in the basin has a watershed project working to monitor and improve water quality. These projects partner with local, state, and federal government along with private groups and citizens. Agencies provide regulation, education, and incentives to improve the river. Academic institutions conduct research and provide information. Non-governmental and citizen organizations engage the general public, help popularize and communicate scientific information, and catalyze public debate about the river (MPCA, 2007). Many land restoration projects have been implemented and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are being applied across the basin. A conservation highlight for the basin was the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) where more than 100,000 acres were secured into permanent conservation easements. People are working together across the basin to improve the health of the ecosystem for future generations.



“Ask an Expert about the Minnesota River” project profiles scientists and citizens answering questions about the health of the Minnesota River. More answers to questions about the Minnesota River can be found at: mrbdc.mnsu.edu/learn
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