

Canoe (Can You) Paddle the Red? Minnesota Canoe and Boating Route Designation of the Red River

Bob Backman
River Keepers



River Keepers

- 💧 Mission: To advocate sustainable use of the Red River of the North in the Fargo-Moorhead area
- 💧 Non-profit organization founded in 1990
- 💧 Two full-time employees



River Keepers Activities

- 💧 Water quality
- 💧 Dam safety
- 💧 Water festival
- 💧 Tour boat/canoe rental
- 💧 Project development



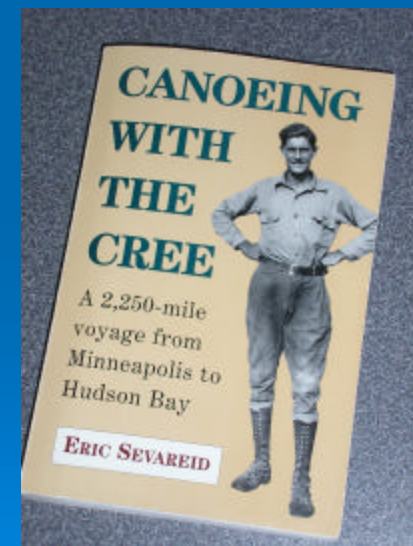
Red River

- 💧 549 miles (394 in U.S.)
- 💧 Excellent fisheries
- 💧 Limited access
- 💧 Border/international river
- 💧 Slow moving, 3mph
- 💧 No flow is rare
- 💧 10-30 foot depth
- 💧 100-500 feet wide
- 💧 Currently limited recreational use
- 💧 Muddy banks



Historical Canoeing Use

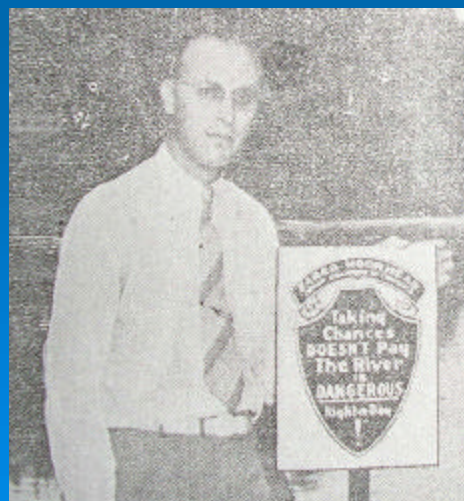
- 🔹 Dommer's Boat House
- 🔹 Eric Sevareid's *Canoeing with the Cree*



Recreational Use Impairments

Attitude

- ◆ Jaycees posted 250 signs warning, “The river is dangerous” in 1945
- ◆ Fire Chief and park district warns “river too dangerous to allow safe recreation”. Wanted to ban canoeing on Red in 1985



Recreational Use Impairments

River Keepers response

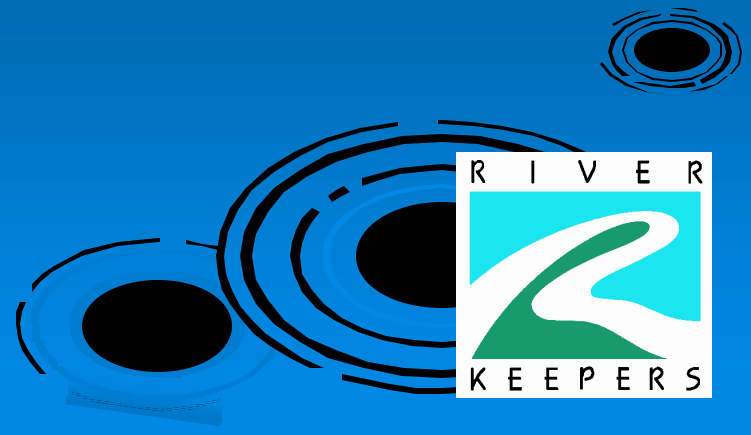
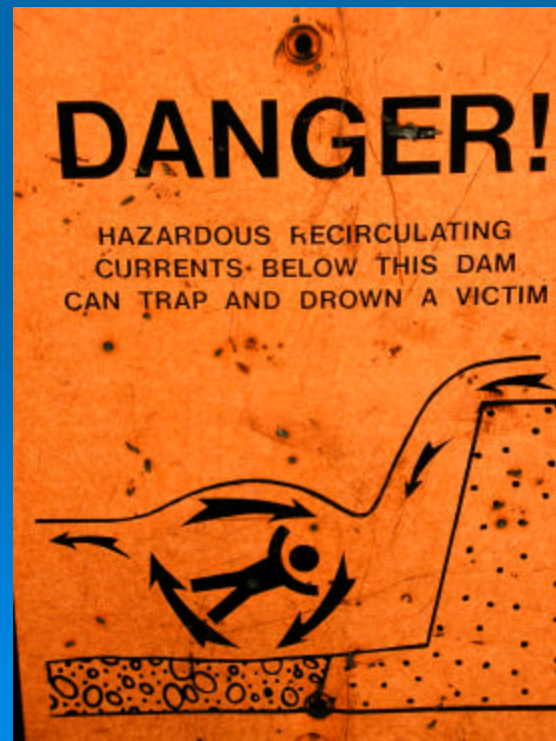
- ♦ youth water festival, safety education, canoeing/kayaking/fishing clinics, water quality monitoring/education, S.S. Ruby tour boat, canoe rental, riverfront walking tours, youth service projects



Recreational Use Impairments

Dams

- Low head dams killed over 20 people via hydraulic roller effect



Recreational Use Impairments

Response

Rock slope ways

- Midtown (1998)
- Kidder
- Riverside
- North Dam
- South Dam

Remaining dams

- Christine
- Hickson
- Drayton





Recreational Use Impairments

Limited access/camping

- 💧 Lack of infrastructure limits access



Recreational Use Impairments

Response

- ◆ More boat/canoe access
 - ◆ F-M - added 2 boat ramps
 - ◆ Abercrombie – added one boat ramp
 - ◆ Wolverton-working on a canoe access
 - ◆ GF-EGF- working on 3 boat ramps
 - ◆ Cass County/ND – canoe access site



Canoe Trail Needs

- 💧 Maps
- 💧 Signage
 - 💧 Interpretive
 - 💧 Informational
- 💧 Access
- 💧 Camp sites
- 💧 Outfitters
- 💧 Leadership
- 💧 Management



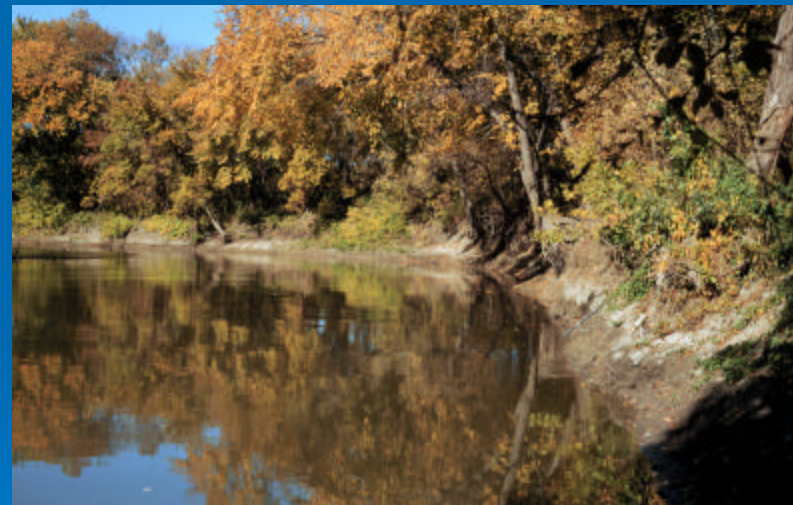
Designations & Identifications

- ◆ United States - National Wild and Scenic Rivers (through legislation)
- ◆ Canada - Heritage Rivers (through legislation)
- ◆ North Dakota - Canoeing Rivers (through state parks staff and study) and/or Little Missouri Scenic River Act (through legislation)
- ◆ Minnesota - Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers and/or Canoe and Boating Route (both through legislation)

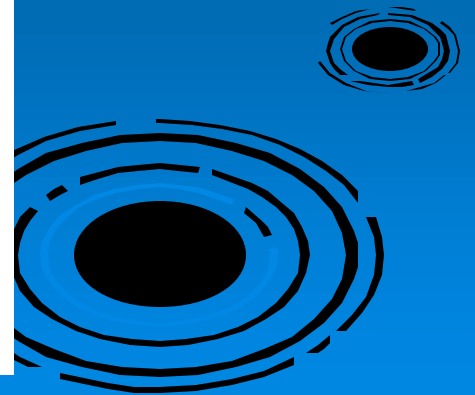
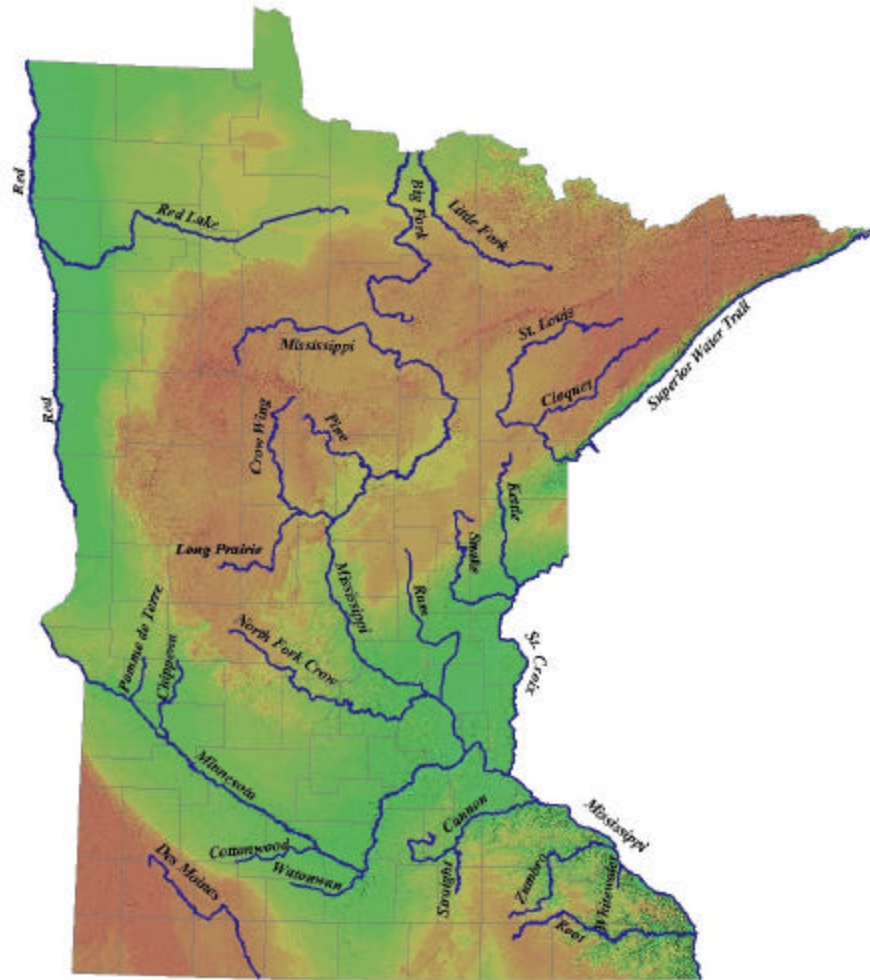


Minnesota Canoe and Boating Route Designation

- 💧 3500 miles designated on 23 rivers
 - 💧 Mississippi 673 miles
 - 💧 Red River 394 miles
 - 💧 Straight River 30 miles



Minnesota Canoe and Boating Routes



Minnesota Statute 85.32

- ☉ Canoe and Boating Route Designation
- ☉ Authorizes Department of Natural Resource Commissioner to identify routes
- ☉ Mark points of interest, serious hazards
- ☉ Acquire access



Designation Criteria

- Canoeable at least three months of the year
- Accesses, current and potential
- Current uses compatible with canoeing and boating
- Scenic qualities
- Recreational demand
- Water quality
- Compatible with adjacent land use
- Proximity to population centers
- Water flow
- Capable of sustaining use without adverse impact
- Comments from the public and other agencies



Route to Designation

- 1998 - River Keepers convened meeting with purpose “create a canoe trail” (30 attendees)
- 1998 - National Park Service offers to assist – public meetings held
- 2000 - Several grants submitted and denied



Route to Designation

- 🔹 2000 - River Keepers Millennium Tour
 - 🔹 National Rivers Group Paddle
 - 🔹 Mail bag with Mayoral Proclamations
 - 🔹 Community celebrations
 - 🔹 Video produced
 - 🔹 TV, radio, journals, newspapers coverage

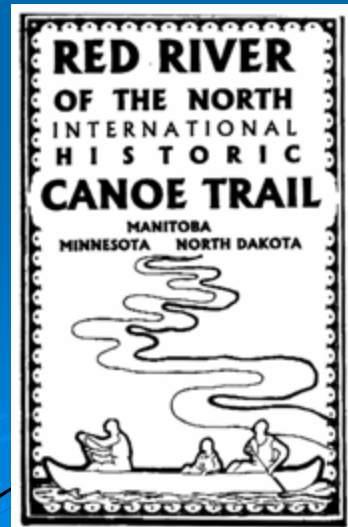


Route to Designation

- 2000 - Millennium Trail Designation by White House
- 2001 - Minnesota Legislature Canoe and Boating Route Designation with \$100,000 for Phase I mapping, signage, etc.

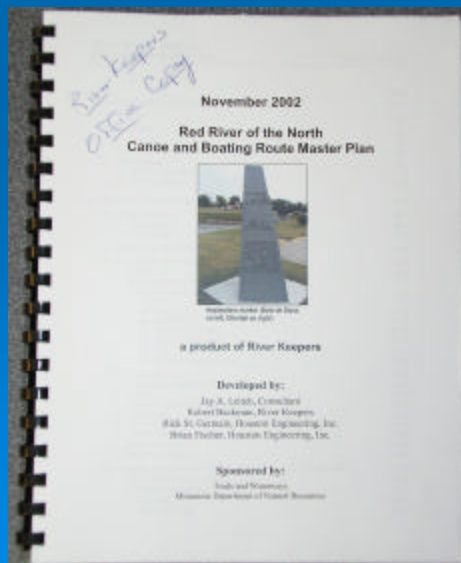


Millennium
Trails



Route to Designation

- 💧 2002 - River Keepers contracted to produce Master Plan
- 💧 2003 - River Keepers contracted to produce Phase I map, signage and kiosks



Future

- 🔹 Phase II and Phase III maps
- 🔹 More access/campgrounds/signage
- 🔹 Outfitters
- 🔹 Torch bearers



Summary

- 💧 Red River historically used for recreation
- 💧 Use declined, due in part to lowhead dams and official warnings
- 💧 Renewed vision for the Red River began in the 1990s
- 💧 Dams retrofitted



Summary

- 💧 1998, River Keepers/volunteers started process
- 💧 Funds sought
- 💧 Designation achieved
- 💧 Maps, signage, kiosks for Phase I produced
- 💧 Phase II and III maps, signage, access, and torch bearers needed

