NTS - Water Trails

What is the Water Trails Program?

History

Creation of a Water Trail

Benefits to the Public

User Research

Management Issues

Future Plans
What is the Water Trails Program?

- Program administered by the MN DNR Division of Trails and Waterways
- 31 water trails state wide
  - Over 4,000 river miles
    - 155 miles on Lake Superior’s North Shore
- Find a water trail within an hour or two of almost anywhere in MN!
What is the Water Trails Program?
What is the Water Trails Program?

Fees – Canoe/Kayak

$10.50  Registration Fee
$5.00  Exotic Species Surcharge
$1.50  ELS Fee Per Transaction
$8.50  Filing Fee ($6.00 renewal)

$25.50  Total Cost for 3 Year
What is the Water Trails Program?

- 146,000 Registered canoes & 34,000 kayaks
  - Overall 5.5% growth from 2003-2007
  - Kayaking is one of the fastest growing recreational sports in MN.
    - Grew 68% from 2003-2007
- Approximately $500,000/year total revenue contributed to the Water Recreation Account.
What is the Water Trails Program?

Canoe Registration Growth Trends

- **Licensed Canoes**
- **5 Year Periods**

- **Registration Counts**
  - 1973: 60000
  - 1978: 100000
  - 1983: 120000
  - 1988: 140000
  - 1993: 160000
  - 1998: 160000
  - 2003: 160000
What is the Water Trails Program?

Kayak Registration Growth in Minnesota

Year
Licensed Kayaks
0 5000 10000 15000 20000 25000 30000 35000 40000
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“Rivers are roads which move, and which carry us whither we desire to go.”

Blaise Pascal
17th-century French Philosopher
History

- Canoe and Boating Route Program (M.S. 85.32):
  - To mark canoe and boating routes and provide recreational facilities on legislatively designated rivers (1963).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Legislation creates Canoe &amp; Boating Route Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Federal Wild and Scenic Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Registration/License Fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Minnesota Wild &amp; Scenic Rivers (6 designated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Legislation creates Lake Superior Water Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Largest state land acquisition – 22,500 acres along St. Louis River; 150 miles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>150-mile Lake Superior Water Trail completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Automated river level reporting gauges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bridge over Minnesota River 1978
Minnesota Historical Society Collection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Big Fork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Cannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cloquet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N. Fork Crow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crow Wing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kettle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Red Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Louis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>St. Croix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zumbro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Pine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Lake Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Pomme De Terre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Wantowan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whitewater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Chippewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Long Prairie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Red River of the North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Otter Tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sauk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>South Fork Crow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Redwood River</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History

Federal Wild & Scenic Rivers

- Est. 1968
- Managed by the National Park Service
- The St. Croix River is Minnesota’s only Federal Wild & Scenic River.
History
Minnesota Wild & Scenic Rivers

- Est. 1973
- 6 Rivers designated in 1973
- Requires a management plan
- Easement
  - Establishment
  - Monitoring
  - Enforcement
History

1993 Lake Superior Water Trail

- Volunteer driven initiative
- 155 Miles
- Completed in 2005
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Benefits to the Public

User Research

Management Issues

Future Plans
Creation of a Water Trail

Criteria

Water Trail Designation Criteria (DNR Policy)
• Potentially free of numerous snags & manmade obstacles
• River shore lands are suitable for campsite and rest area development
• Water quality is high enough to allow for body contact, etc.
• Minimum 5-mile reach
• Navigable at least 3 months of the year
Creation of a Water Trail

Process

• Local interest in increased recreation management
• Legislative action resulting in water trail designation
• DNR performs or contracts for map survey work

St. Louis River
Creation of a Water Trail

Process

- DNR seeks public input on recreation management opportunities
- DNR works with local units of government and private landowners to identify:
  - Access sites
  - Campsites
  - Portages
  - Safety concerns
Creation of a Water Trail

**Process**

- DNR performs or contracts for development and maintenance work
- DNR manages river level reporting system
- DNR develops or contracts for map development
- Maps are published

Lake Superior Access Development
NTS - Water Trails

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Benefits to the Public

Acquisition, development and maintenance of:

- Access sites
- Portages
- Campsites
- Rest Areas
Benefits to the Public

Free Maps
Benefits to the Public

Free Maps
Benefits to the Public

Free Maps
Benefits to the Public

Website
Benefits to the Public

River Level Reports
Benefits to the Public

River Safety

- Safety signing
- Marking dams and other hazards
- Training for rescue and enforcement personnel on water rescue techniques.
Benefits to the Public

Snag/Obstruction Removal

MCC Water Trail Crew removing snags on Minnesota River
Photos courtesy MCC
Benefits to the Public

Enforcement
NTS - Water Trails

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User Research

- Survey of Sea Kayak Owners in Minnesota: *Kayaking the North Shore of Lake Superior* 2001
- Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey 2004
- Canoe/Kayak Survey 2005
User Research

What people want:
• Positive experience
• Accesses
• Maps
• River Level Reporting
• More trail opportunities!

Barriers to use:
• Time
• Shuttling
• Water Levels
• Fear of motorized craft
• Lack of knowledge regarding existing water trails
User Research

- Low satisfaction with number and maintenance of campsites
- Desire to keep shoreline undeveloped
Gender
47% Female
53% Male

User Research
Demographics Non-motorized boating

Age
21% 31% 39%

Gender
47% Female
53% Male

Info from 2004 Recreation Survey
Demographics

Non-motorized boating

Income

- $<30,000: 22%
- $30,000 - $39,000: 12%
- $40,000 - $49,000: 12%
- $50,000 - $74,000: 10%
- $75,000 - $99,000: 29%
- $100,000+: 15%

Info from 2004 Recreation Survey
NTS - Water Trails

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Future Plans
Management Issues

• New program / project management
• Community technical assistance
Management Issue

DNR Policy Development

Obstruction/Snag Relocation Policy

- Researched similar policies.
- Developed based on experience and available examples.
- Policy Content:
  - Purpose/goals of relocation (Ecological and user safety considerations)
  - Mandatory safety equipment and use
  - Training staff and volunteers
Management Issue

Hydropower

- Re-licensing
- Recreation
- Review

Snake River
Management Issue

Partnerships

Adopt-a-River

• Encourages stewardship by having volunteers adopt waterways and clean up litter and dump sites

• Majority of cleanup activity is on existing water trails
Management Issue

Partnerships

National Wild & Scenic Rivers

National Park Service

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
From the headwaters to Taylors Falls:
Managed by the National Park Service.

Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
Lower 52 miles of the St. Croix River along the Minnesota/Wisconsin border:
Managed cooperatively by the National Park Service, Minnesota DNR, and Wisconsin DNR.
Management Issue

Partnerships

MCC is a youth and young adult natural resources stewardship training program.

• Crews state-wide work on a variety of natural resource projects including:
  – Build campsites, accesses, portage trails
  – Invasive species removal/management
  – Prescribed burning

• Water Trails Crew:
  – Collects GPS data
  – Removes snags and obstructions

• Adopt-a-River Assistant assists with DNR’s Adopt-a-River Program.
Partnerships

Mississippi Headwaters Board

• Mission is to protect and preserve the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River
  – Created as an alternative to designation as a Wild and Scenic River
  – Joint powers board comprised of the first 8 counties on the Mississippi River
  – Achieves goals by cooperative land use planning
Management Issue

Partnerships

Minnesota Canoe Association
Lake Superior Water Trail Association
Inland Sea Kayakers
Minnesota Trails
Minnesota Waters
River Keepers
River Ramblers
River Management Society
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Future Plans
Future Plans

- Strengthen partnerships
- Increase public knowledge of program and resources - Outreach
- Improve user resources online
  - Downloadable GPS points
  - River level gages interpreted from a paddler's perspective
The End
Paddle Minnesota's Water Trails!

Minnesota's natural beauty can be best explored by its expansive network of rivers. Let the Minnesota DNR take you there with 38 canoe routes to explore.

Lake Superior: A spectacular environment for a sea kayaker to experience the world's largest freshwater lake. Enjoy all that Lake Superior has to offer, respect the lake and road lightly on her shores. Have a great time!

Find it on the web: www.dnr.state.mn.us/water_rec

Canoe routes
Kayak Trail
Maps
Public water accesses
Water level reports
Straight River - largest exposed rock in Rice County, Minnesota