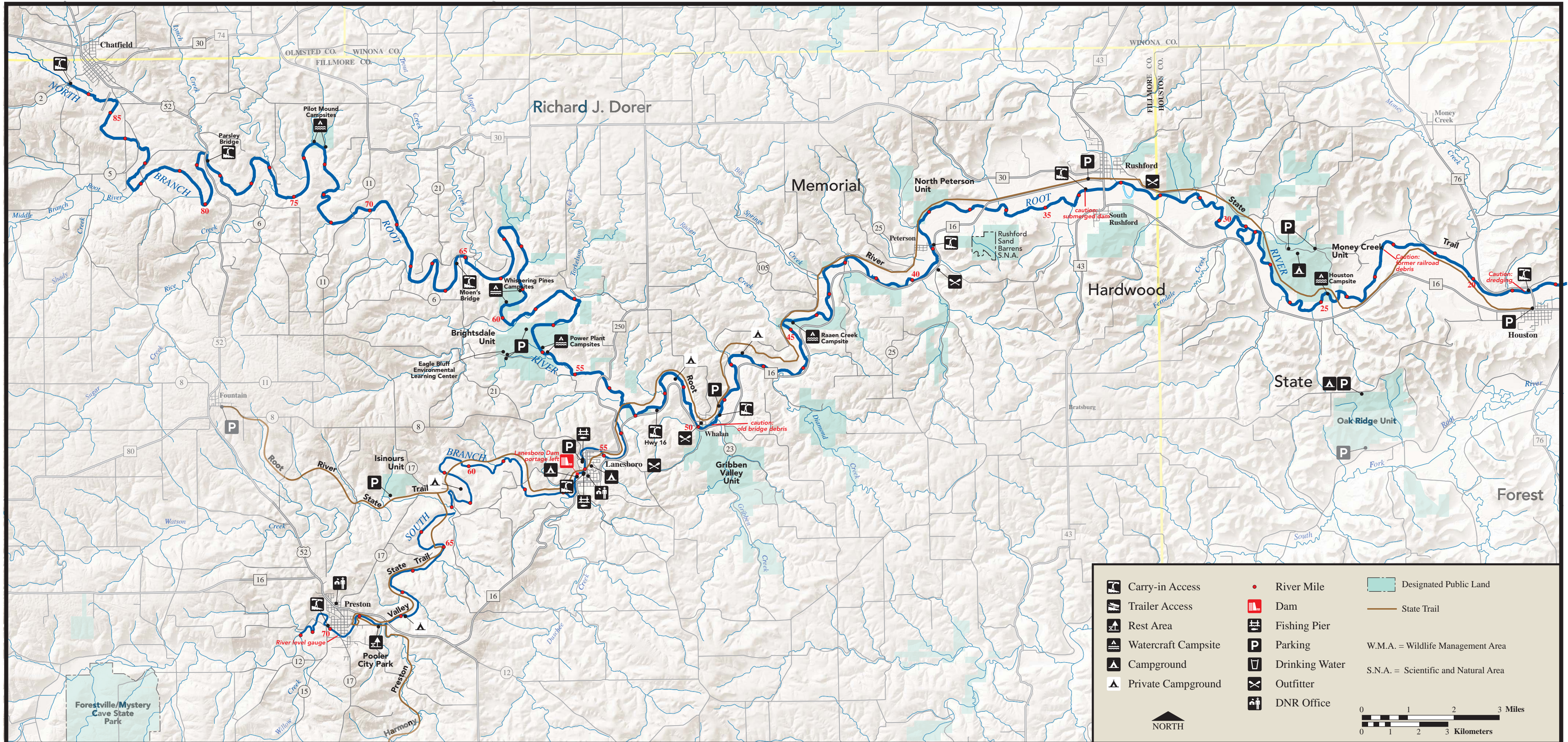


# A STATE WATER TRAIL GUIDE TO THE ROOT RIVER



## Route Description of the Root River

### South Branch of the Root River Miles

Note: (R) and (L) refer to right and left sides of the river when facing downstream.

- 70.1 County Highway 12 bridge.
- 70.1 (L) Preston Access, carry-in landing; the first access on the South Branch. This portion of the South Branch through river mile 70.0 is a designated trout stream. City of Preston
- 69.7 County Highway 17 bridge. River level gauge on bridge support. A river level reading of 28.5 means good canoeing.
- 69.3 County Highway 12 bridge.
- 68.4 (R) Pooler City Park. Local fishing spot with picnic tables. Has limited access to the River. Confluence with Camp Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 67.9 Private campground.
- 64.7 Harmony Preston Valley State Trail bridge.
- 63.4 Harmony Preston Valley State Trail bridge.
- 63.0 (L) Confluence with Watson Creek.
- 62.3 Bridge.
- 61.7 Private campground.
- 61.1 Root River State Trail bridge.
- 60.2 Root River State Trail bridge.
- 58.1 Ox Trail Road bridge.
- 57.1 (R) Confluence with Duschee Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 56.8 (R) City of Lanesboro.

56.2 (R) Carry-in access above dam.

56.1 Lanesboro Dam - portage on left. Carry-in access on right in city campground. Built in 1868, it provided water to three grist mills. The dam formed a large lake behind it which was used for recreation until poor land management and erosion filled in the lake. The area is now home to the Lost Lake State Game Refuge. The dam was converted to a hydroelectric plant at the turn of the century and is still operating today.

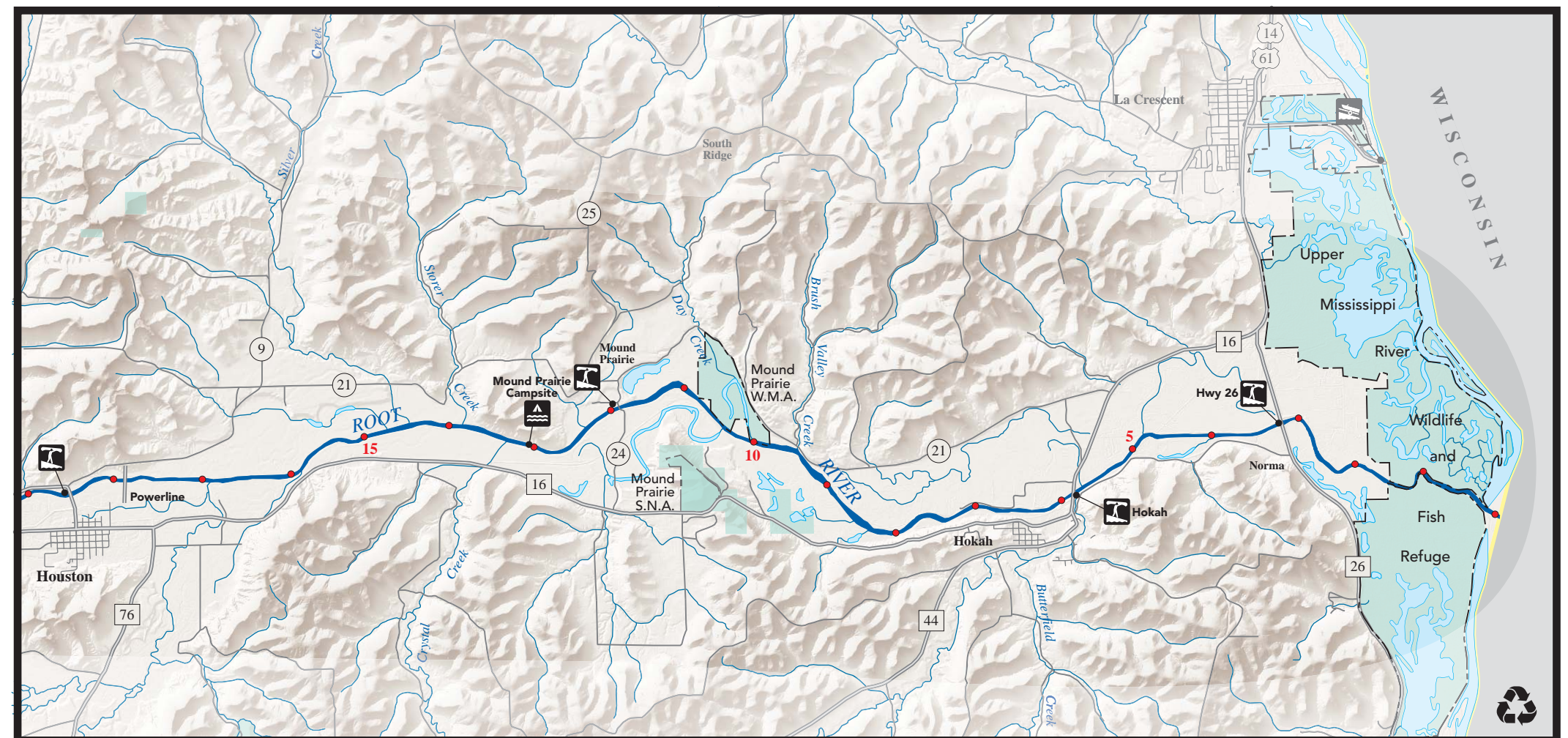
- 56.0 Lanesboro carry-in access (R) Shorefishing platform below dam.
- 55.9 Root River State Trail bridge.
- 55.8 County Highway 8 bridge and pier fishing.
- 55.7 Walkway trestle bridge.
- 55.2 County Highway 250 bridge.
- 55.0 Root River State Trail bridge.
- 55.0 Outfitter off river, south of Hwy 16.
- 53.2 Confluence with the Root River.

### North Branch of the Root River Miles

- 86.5 County Highway 2 bridge.
- 86.4 (L) Chatfield carry-in access. City of Chatfield.
- 86.0 (L) Confluence with Mill Creek.
- 85.3 Powerline crossing.
- 84.0 County Highway 5 bridge.
- 83.6 Township Road 484 bridge.
- 82.2 (R) Confluence with the Middle Branch of the Root River; beginning of the Root River.

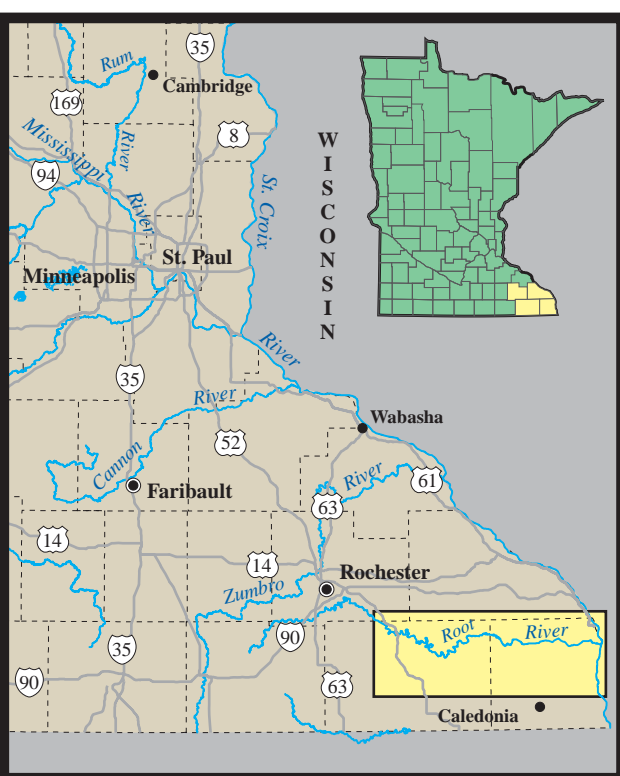
- 81.9 Township Road 259 bridge.
- 78.6 State Highway 52 bridge.
- 78.4 (R) Parsley Bridge carry-in access.
- 78.5 (L) Confluence with Lynch Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 75.4 (R) Confluence with Rice Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 73.6 (L) Pilot Mound Campsites. DNR facilities.
- 73.3 (L) Picnic tables and pit toilets in a wooded scenic setting.
- 70.5 County Highway 11 bridge.
- 68.8 (L) Confluence with Trout Run, a designated trout stream.
- 65.3 County Highway 21 bridge.
- 65.3 (R) Moen's Bridge carry-in access with toilet facility.
- 64.7 (L) Confluence with Money Creek.
- 61.0 (R) Whispering Pines Campsites with picnic tables to 60.3 and pit toilets.
- 59.7 (R) Brightsdale Management Unit. A DNR state forest area, it also serves as the site of the Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center which was established in 1980 to find new uses for forest resources, promote multiple use management for forest resources, conduct on-going demonstrations of uses and to promote public awareness on forest resource issues.

Continued on reverse side



Root River

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Minnesota State Parks and Trails Regional Unit

1200 Warner Road  
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Online water trail information and maps can be found at [mndnr.gov/watertrails](http://mndnr.gov/watertrails)

DNR Information Center

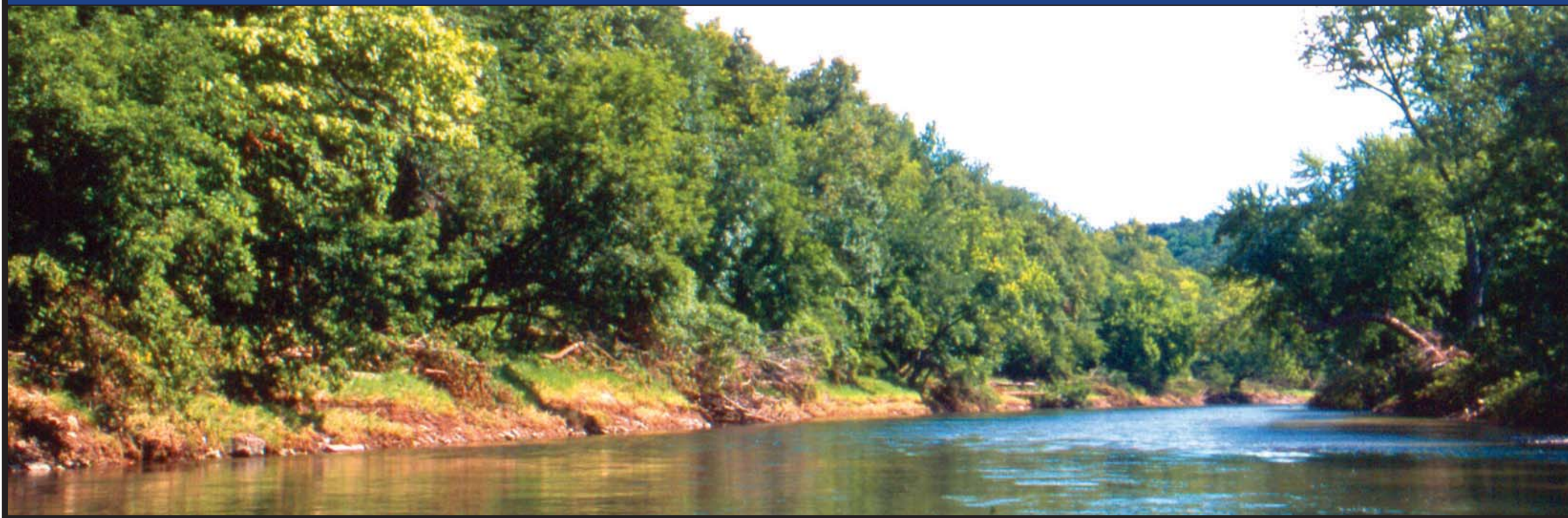
The DNR's Information Center is available to provide free publications of facilities and services as well as answers questions pertaining to DNR recreational opportunities in Minnesota.



500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040  
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A STATE WATER TRAIL GUIDE TO THE ROOT RIVER



The Root River

The Root River maintains a timelessness as it represents some of the finest scenic and historic qualities which characterize southeastern Minnesota. Formed of two branches in the west, the North and the Middle, the Root River winds past towering bluffs topped with oak and hickory. Joined above Whalan by the South Branch, a tributary which flows from Mystery Cave, the river continues its way past bluffs and outcrops until Rushford.

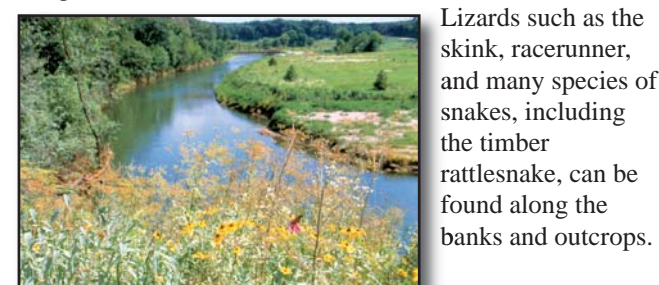
There the river straightens as the valley broadens considerably. The scenery then settles into a gentle plain of pastureland and mixed cottonwood and maple with wooded rolling hills visible in the distance.

The Root River has a gentle to moderate flow with some riffles at various stretches. From Chatfield to the Mississippi River the river falls 310 feet for an average drop of 3.4 feet per mile. River levels peak in mid-March and once again in early June. Water levels also vary substantially with rainfall. Though the watershed has many spring-fed, clear water tributaries, including the South Branch, the Root River is somewhat cloudy due to erosive soil types in the watershed.

The Root River's superlative scenery and characteristics make it suitable for many types of recreation. Family canoe day trips are very popular. Those more adventurous can take advantage of the canoe campsites for overnight trips. Several towns along the Root River also offer historic sites, services and hospitality to river users (see Towns along the River). Other pastime favorites along the river are bird watching, nature observation, bicycling along the Root River State Trail, and fishing (see River Life).

River Life

**Wildlife** - Natural life along the Root River is as diverse as anywhere in the state. Wooded shores harbor mammals such as white-tailed deer, gray fox, red fox, coyote, raccoon, woodchucks, squirrels, weasels, and badgers. River otter and beaver can be found in the water.



Lizards such as the skink, racerunner, and many species of snakes, including the timber rattlesnake, can be found along the banks and outcrops.

Fish - There

are many species inhabiting the river including smallmouth bass, channel catfish, rock bass, sunfish, crappies, and rough fish. Most of these can be found in the active stretches or pooled areas of the river.

Brown trout can be found in the clearer and colder spring-fed streams, as well as the South Branch. All anglers fishing in designated trout waters are required to have a current trout stamp.

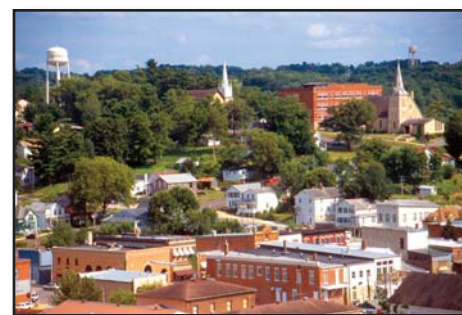
**Birds** - These inhabitants constitute some of the more spectacular river life and can be seen in abundance. The Root River supports over 40 species of birds. While floating, it is quite common to see blue herons, egrets, and wood ducks moving about the river's edge. One might also see wild turkey foraging on the shore or cliff swallows building vase-shaped mud nests on bridge overhead.

**Raptors** - Whether perched high in a tree or soaring majestically above the valley, these magnificent birds of prey provide a visual bounty for those using the Root River.

Towns Along the River

Nestled among the natural setting, vestiges of culture, past and present, come together in the form of towns. The towns were linked by the Southern Minnesota Railroad, completed in 1870, which was used to carry milled products such as flour and lumber to markets throughout the Midwest. The railroad grade is now the Root River State Trail. These towns represent the development of the valley and offer the visitor a pleasing focus on rural and small town Minnesota as well as a taste of the past.

**Preston** - Settled in 1853 along the South Branch, this community was active in milling. Today the town is the county seat of Fillmore County. It offers a canoe launch, picnic area, campground, lodging, grocery store, and restaurant and connection to the Harmony-Preston Valley Trail.

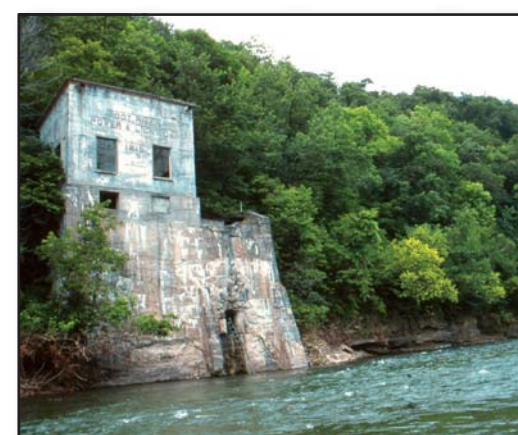


**Lanesboro** - Platted in 1868 along the South Branch as a railroad town, it flourished as a transportation and mill center. Today Lanesboro offers a historic downtown district. It also offers a campground, a picnic area, a bed and breakfast, a motel, grocery stores, restaurants, and an outfitter.

**Chatfield** - Settled in 1853 on the North Branch, it was a milling and transportation center. It offers a canoe launch, a picnic area, grocery stores, and restaurants and hotel.

**Whalan** - Platted in 1868 as a railroad town, it was once the tobacco center of Fillmore County.

**Peterson** - A railroad village founded in 1867, it was the former site of a mill. The Peterson Trout Farm, founded in 1871, is located a mile south of town (now operated by the Minnesota DNR). There is a canoe launch in town.



**Rushford** - Settled in 1854. It was a major railroad center and mill town. It offers a canoe launch, a motel, a picnic area, grocery stores, restaurants, and an outfitter.

**Houston** - Settled in 1852, it was a steamboat port and the center of railroad transportation. It offers a canoe launch, a motel, a campground, a picnic area, a grocery store and restaurants.

**Hokah** - Settled in 1851, it served as a mill site for railroad machine shops and was serviced by steamboats. It offers a park, grocery store, and restaurant.

Planning A Safe River Trip

A successful river trip is safe. To enjoy a safe journey, you should be prepared by doing the following:

- Get acquainted with your route. Plan your trip with a map before you depart and advise someone of your plans including planned departure and arrival times.
- Travel with a companion or group.
- Choose a distance that is comfortable for you, most people paddle two to three river miles per hour.
- Wear a U. S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device that state law requires be on board the boat for each person.
- Bring a first aid kit that includes waterproof matches.
- Bring an extra paddle in your canoe.
- Be cautious of river obstructions, such as overhanging and dead trees in the river.
- You must pack out all trash.
- Leave only footprints; take only photographs!

Water levels can speed you up or slow you down. You can get information about water levels from the regional DNR office, or check the DNR website, or the DNR Information Center.

Remember that much of the shorelands are privately owned. Respect and protect the water and shorelands.

Boating Information

- Register your watercraft. All watercraft more than 9 feet in length, including nonmotorized canoes and kayaks, must be registered in Minnesota or your state of residence.
- Not all areas of this water trail are suitable for motor use.

Rest Areas and Camping Sites

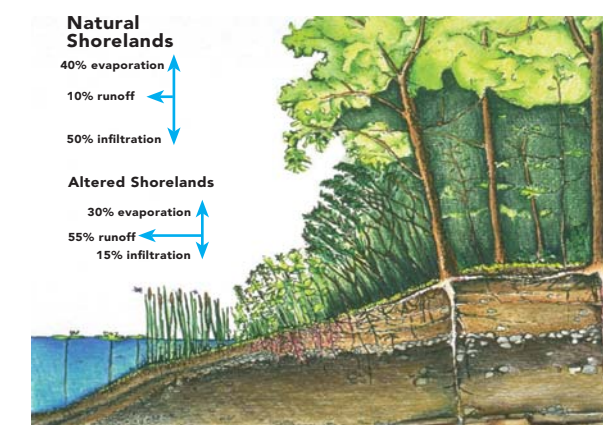
- Public rest areas are available along the route to rest, picnic and explore.
- Camp only in designated campsites, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis
- Bring drinking water. Drinking river water is not recommended, but if you do it must be treated.
- Respect private property. Stop only at designated sites; most of the shoreland is private property.
- Be sanitary! Use designated toilet facilities or bury human waste away from the river.



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 shoreline habitat for birds and wildlife.



Continued from reverse side

- 57.9(L) Confluence with Torkelson Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 56.5(R) Abandoned Root River Power & Light powerhouse. This structure was one of the first major hydroelectric projects in the Root River Valley. Completed in 1914, its construction was unusual in that it was powered by the dam at river mile 62.0. The water was directed through the bluff behind the power plant via a tunnel. The diversion was necessary to increase the flow gradient enabling the water to reach sufficient force to power the generators.
- 56.1 & (L) Power Plant Campsites, DNR facilities with separate landings, picnic tables and pit toilets.
- 54.3 State Highway 250 bridge.
- 53.2 Root River State Trail bridge.
- 53.2(R) Confluence with South Branch of the Root River.
- 52.5(R) Highway 16 access. A DNR carry-in landing with pit toilet.
- 51.1(R) Private Campground.
- 50.1 County Highway 36 bridge.
- 50.1(L) City of Whalan.
- 49.9(R) Gribben Valley Management Unit. A DNR forest area. Outfitter located river left.
- 49.9 Old bridge abutments (debris).
- 49.4(R) Confluence with Gribben Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 49.3(L) City of Whalan carry-in access. Parking 500' away.
- 47.5(L) Private Campground.
- 46.4(R) Confluence with Diamond Creek.
- 44.8(L) Confluence with Raaen Creek.
- 44.6(R) Raaen Creek Campsite. A DNR facility which offers two sites, picnic tables and a pit toilet in a wooded, river bottom setting.
- 42.6 Confluence with Big Springs Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 42.0 Township road bridge.
- 39.0 Outfitter off river.
- 38.9(R) Peterson carry-in access and toilet facility.
- 38.9 County Highway 25 bridge.
- 38.9(L) City of Peterson.
- 38.0(L) North Peterson Management Unit. A DNR forest area.
- 33.9 Submerged dam. Use caution when navigating over this structure.
- 33.8(L) Rushford carry-in access.
- 33.4 State Highway 16 bridge.
- 33.4(L) City of Rushford.
- 33.1(L) Confluence with Rush Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 32.3 Outfitter off river.
- 29.7(R) Confluence with Ferndale Creek.
- 27.9(L) Money Creek Management Unit, a DNR forest area.
- 26.1(R) Confluence with Daley Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 24.8(L) Houston Campsite, a DNR facility which offers two sites and picnic tables.
- 22.5 Abandoned railway bridge abutments (debris).
- 20.4(L) Confluence with Money Creek.
- 18.8 Dredging operation for sand removal. Use caution when navigating through the area.
- 18.6 State Highway 76 bridge.
- 18.6(R) City of Houston.
- 18.7(L) Houston carry-in access.
- 17.9 Powerline crossing.
- 17.3 Township road bridge.
- 17.0(R) Confluence with South Fork of the Root River.
- 14.8(L) Confluence with Buell Creek.
- 14.6(L) Confluence with Silver Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 13.9(L) Confluence with Storer Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 13.4(R) Confluence with Crystal Creek.
- 13.1(L) Mound Prairie Campsite, which offers two sites, picnic tables and a pit toilet in pastured woodland setting.
- 11.9 County Highway 24 bridge.
- 12.0(R) Mound Prairie carry-in access.
- 10.4(R) Confluence with Mound Prairie Creek.
- 10.1(L) Confluence with Day Creek.
- 9.5(L) Confluence with Brush Valley Creek.
- 6.6(R) City of Hokah.
- 5.8(R) Hokah carry-in access. Confluence with Thompson Creek, a designated trout stream.
- 4.0 Abandoned Milwaukee Road Railway bridge.
- 3.2(L) Hwy 26 carry-in access. County Highway 26 bridge. Milwaukee Road Railway bridge.
- 0.0 Confluence with Mississippi River. Next available downstream access on the Minnesota side is at Brownsville. The next available upstream access on the Minnesota side is at La Cresent.