The Watershed in the 1800s

When Jos Hinshelwood and Joe Brown and two other young soldiers canoed Minnehaha Creek in 1822, it took three days downstream from Ice Age glaciers, then three days back up through lush wetlands, tall hardwood forest and savanna (prairie dotted with fire-resistant bur oaks). The Dakota kept quiet about Lake Minnetonka and prevented further exploration for decades. Explore the history of the watershed at www.minnehahacreek.org.

As the area grew, small settlements became towns and eventually towns burgeoned into cities. Absorb, pollution-filtering wetlands disappeared, raising flood levels and causing the creek to dry up in midsummer. Buildings and pavement added runoff and pollution.

A healthy stream requires wise choices that balance human use with conservation and stewardship of natural resources.

The Watershed Today

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) provides many hanging stream, wetlands and wet prairie along the creek, sawing timber or modern cities took names from mills: Minnetonka Mill (settled) 1852, Minnetonka (former) Open Water, a PFD can save your life, even if you are on average six to nine hours to paddle from the headwaters at Gray’s Bay Dam on Lake Minnetonka to Minnehaha Falls in South Minneapolis. Refer to the Route Description and other information on this map as you plan your trip. Be aware of required portages and potential hazards. Along the way, watch for many natural features, from historical sites and native vegetation to wildlife and habitat. You can also see places where the creek needs improvement. Support local efforts to enhance this valuable urban resource whenever possible.

Minnehaha Creek

Canoeing the Creek

Minnehaha Creek is rated as a Class 1-5 stream with a variety of rapidly scattered among the sections. Water levels vary greatly with rain or flood. Higher water increases difficulty due to hazards such as low bridges, snags, and low hanging trees. Stream bed characteristics vary throughout and include gravel, sand, mud and rocky bedrocks. These features may present a challenge to beginning canoists. There are two required portages, including one dam. Creek width varies from hundreds of feet through open wetlands in the upper half to 15 feet in places in the lower half. The creek falls 40 feet from Gray’s Bay to Browndale Ave. (avg. 4.3 ft./mi.) and 76 feet from Browndale Ave. to the Longfellow Lagoon (avg. 76 ft./mi.). To check frequently updated conditions and advisories, visit the MCWD website at www.minnehahacreek.org. To report hazards or obstructions on the creek, call the MCWD at 952-471-0190.

Jump in! Get involved!

Protect your favorite creek experience — join Citizens for the Minnehaha Creek Corridor (CMCC) as we protect, improve, and restore 181 miles of this beautiful urban wilderness. We need your support, ideas, and energy to make this happen! Visit us now at www.minnehahacreek.org/citizens for events, information, and CMCC news.

Safety First

Always wear your Personal Flotation Device (PFD), no matter how small your boat is. A PFD is required for each person onboard. Remember: a PFD can save your life, even if you are an experienced swimmer. For more information about canoeing, contact the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources info Center at 866-692-6677 (outside metro), or 1-888-MINNDNR (inside metro), or online at www.dnr.state.mn.us.

Canoing/Kayak Rentals

- The City of Minneapolis (rental and shuttle service during some spring weekends) 1-952-939-8200 www.minneapoliskayaks.com
- Hoigaard’s (St. Louis Park) 952-929-1351 www.hoigaards.com
- Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board (Rentals at Lake Calhoun, Lake Harriet, and Lake Nokomis) 612-230-6400 www.minneapoliskayaks.org
- REI (Three Twin Cities locations) www.rei.com
- U of M Outdoor Rentals www.recreports.umn.edu/coa/rental.html

Water Levels and Hazards

Minnehaha Creek is 22 miles long. It takes on average six to nine hours to paddle from the headwaters at Gray’s Bay Dam on Lake Minnetonka to Minnehaha Falls in South Minneapolis. Refer to the Route Description and other information on this map as you plan your trip. Be aware of required portages and potential hazards. Along the way, watch for many natural features, from historical sites and native vegetation to wildlife and habitat. You can also see places where the creek needs improvement. Support local efforts to enhance this valuable urban resource whenever possible.
**Minnehaha Creek Canoe Route Map**

**Route Description**

Please be respectful of private property. Land only at designated sites described in this route description. Mileage figures refer to miles upstream from Minnehaha Falls. “Elev.” figures refer to elevation in feet above sea level.

1. **(Mile 20.5) Gray’s Bay Dam**
   - Minnetonka Mill Site

2. **(Mile 22.0) Jidana Park**
   - Parking. Parking lot.

3. **(Mile 21.0) Big Willow Park**

4. **(Mile 20.5) Burwell Park**

5. **(Mile 19.5) Burwell Park**
   - Parking. Picnic.

**Stevens built a 12-foot dam at this site in 1832, allowing boats from the ports of Wayzata and Excelsior to steam the first 2.5 miles of the creek and dock at this Minnetonka lumber mill (1852 – 1866) and furniture factory. Tour historic Burwell House built in 1883 by the owner of a flour mill on the site (1869 – 1884). The town of Minnetonka grew around the site, long known as Minnetonka Mills. Parking. Picnic. Restrooms. No dock.**

6. **(Mile 19.0) Big Willow Park**
   - Parking. Restrooms in park, away from creek.

7. **(Mile 18.8) St. Albans Mill Site**

8. **(Mile 17.5) Hopkins Crossroad**
   - Parking. Picnic.

9. **(Mile 16.5) Minnetonka Boulevard Bridge**
   - parking. Two small parking spaces. No dock.

10. **(Mile 14.8) Knollwood Target**
    - Parking. Picnic.

11. **(Mile 9.5) West 54th Street**

12. **(Mile 9.0) Pamela Park**

13. **(Mile 8.5) Lake Nokomis**

14. **(Mile 8.0) Longfellow Lagoon**

15. **(Mile 6.5) Lynn rhetorical Park**

16. **(Mile 5.5) Richfield Field Site**

17. **(Mile 5.0) Rice Lake**

18. **(Mile 5.0) Lake Harriet**

19. **(Mile 4.5) Rice Lake**

20. **(Mile 4.0) Public Landing**

21. **(Mile 3.5) Creekside Park**

22. **(Mile 3.0) Meadowbrook Golf Course**

23. **(Mile 2.5) Minnehaha Boulevard Bridge**

24. **(Mile 2.0) Lake Nokomis**

25. **(Mile 1.5) Lake Hiawatha**

26. **(Mile 1.0) Longfellow Lagoon**

27. **(Mile 0.5) Minnehaha Mill**

28. **(Mile 0.2) Minnehaha Park**

**Save Our Summers - Stop Zebra Mussel**

Zebra Mussels have been found in Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek. Without action, they will cover beaches with razor sharp shells and jeopardize fishing, boating and barefoot walks on the beach.

Because there are no environmentally safe methods to get rid of zebra mussels, it is crucial to boaters to prevent their spread. Boaters should wash their boats and other equipment with hot, high pressure water before entering new lakes and rivers.

Drown water from the boat, motor, live well, and bait buckets, and dump it on land. Do anything that touched water for at least five days before entering a new lake. It is illegal to transport a boat or trailer on public roads with zebra mussels or aquatic vegetation attached.

Establishing shoreline buffer zones of native plants – in place of turf grass – helps prevent erosion, preserves water quality and enhances habitat for wildlife.