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**U.S. Department of the Interior**

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## News Release

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### **The Natural Pulse of the River**

The flooding Mississippi River reminds us that a visit to our local National Park can be both inspiring and challenging.

“Flooding is a natural event on rivers and large rivers produce large floods,” said Paul Labovitz, Superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. “This is the first substantial flood on the Mississippi since 2001,” Labovitz said, “and it reminds us of the river’s power and the importance of keeping humans—and the things we build—out of harm’s way.”

The Mississippi crested at St. Paul this week, but the river may remain high for several weeks – especially considering spring floods here don’t usually peak until around mid-April.

“The floods of spring and the low water of late summer are all part of the natural pulse of a large river,” Labovitz commented. While photogenic, this spring’s flooding is just a routine part of the the river’s life and is important to its ecosystem health. Riverside parks are flooding and some roads are under water, but all are designed to be inundated and nothing of substance is being damaged along the Mississippi in the metro area.

Labovitz encouraged people in the Twin Cities area to get out and view the river in flood and witness its obvious power, but he said it is important to be cautious near the water. The river is carrying dead trees and other large debris, and is moving very swiftly. “The water is just few degrees above freezing right now, and is flowing at ten times its normal summer flow,” he said.

The river is flowing at nearly 100,000 cubic feet per second at St. Paul now, compared to around 5,000 cubic feet per second late last summer.

Near the river, people may notice that spring bird migrations have begun in earnest. The Mississippi River sees 40 percent of the migrating waterfowl in North America, and 60 percent of the migrating songbirds.



Labovitz noted that the Mississippi, impounded by dams for 80 years, becomes a natural river during spring flooding since the dams are all out of operation and the river flows freely. This is the one time of year when fish migrate upstream in large numbers, since the dams don't impede their travel. The Mississippi was once home to several species of migratory fish, but only a few remain and most of them rely on these flood events to move around on the river.

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