



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mississippi National River
and Recreation Area

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SCHOOL CHILDREN EMBARK ON “BIG RIVER JOURNEY”

The signs of spring are nearly here: wood ducks and red-winged blackbirds, marsh marigolds and daffodils, and the excited voices of thousands of Twin Cities youngsters climbing on board for another “Big River Journey” in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. The tenth year of this award-winning river education partnership program, coordinated by the National Park Service, begins Monday, May 1, at the Padelford Packet Boat Co. dock on Harriet Island, St. Paul, and runs for three weeks.

Big River Journey is a national award winning educational partnership providing science-based learning that supports river stewardship. The Mississippi River, its science, heritage and care are the subject of year-round learning experiences - in the classroom, in local communities and on the river itself. National Park Rangers, naturalists and other educators provide hands-on activities that take kids inside the river’s secret world of aquatic invertebrates, birds, forests, and rocks; and reveal insights to boats, pollution and the river’s history.

“Taking care of the river is a way to take care of ourselves,” Big River Journey students have said. “The river not only flows past us, it’s inside us too, because we drink it!”

Interactive learning stations are set up on three decks of the *Harriet Bishop* paddleboat (named for St. Paul’s first school teacher), including the boat’s pilot house where children learn the importance of math and science in river navigation. The Padelford Packet Boat Company joins Fort Snelling State Park, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Science Museum of Minnesota, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Minnesota Historical Society and Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux (Dakota) Community as program partners with the National Park Service. This year’s field trips for approximately 2,700 4th – 6th graders take place in the stretch



of river between Harriet Island in Saint Paul and Fort Snelling State Park. Eighteen of the 40 schools participating this spring received scholarships from the Mississippi River Fund.

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) is the unit of the National Park System that represents America's greatest river, and weaves together the heartland's natural and cultural heritage and economic vitality. One of 390 units in the National Park System, the MNRRA extends 72 miles south from the cities of Dayton and Ramsey, through Minneapolis and St. Paul, ending just south of Hastings. The National Park Service works with partners and local governments to care for the river's nationally significant resources found here, which include the Mississippi's only gorge and waterfall.

For further information about Big River Journey and the MNRRA, see the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/miss/index.html.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

PRESS/MEDIA ARE INVITED TO GO ON A BIG RIVER JOURNEY TRIP (MAY 1-4, 8-11, OR 15-18) BY CONTACTING THE PADELFOED PACKET BOAT CO. AT 651-227-1100.

Photo available