

Coldwater Spring Unit Management Plan

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The National Park Service is preparing a plan for the Coldwater Spring portion of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

Park Background

In 1988, Congress established the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area to preserve, protect, and enhance the significant values of the water and lands of the Mississippi River corridor. The national park extends for 72 miles along the river, running through the heart of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area.



The Coldwater springhouse and reservoir surrounded by restored prairie. Credit: NPS.

Coldwater Spring Background

The 29-acre Coldwater Spring area sits on the bluff above the Mississippi River between Minnehaha Falls Regional Park in Minneapolis and Fort Snelling State Park (see map). It includes its namesake natural spring.

The Coldwater Spring area has a rich history. It has been used by and has held meaning for various peoples, beginning with Native Americans. Although many tribal communities may have used or traversed the area, some Dakota tribes have been closely associated with the area for generations. Coldwater Spring remains sacred to some today.

During the construction of nearby Fort Snelling, U.S. soldiers camped at Coldwater Spring, and the area around it became a small village important to traders, Native Americans, and settlers. As a result, it became the first European American settlement in Minnesota. Soldiers moved into the completed fort by 1825, and the spring continued to provide water for the U.S. Army into the 1920s.



The Coldwater Spring area and surrounding areas' management information. Credit: NPS.

The property was last home to the Bureau of Mines Twin Cities Research Center, whose buildings were built in the 1950s and 60s. Congress defunded the Bureau of Mines in 1996, and the abandoned buildings gradually fell into disrepair. The campus was transferred to the National Park Service (NPS) in 2010, with the mandate to remove the buildings, parking lots, road, and lawn areas and restore the site to park and open space. Since removing the Bureau of Mines infrastructure, the NPS has actively restored 13 acres of native prairie and oak savanna landscapes and daylighted a portion of Coldwater Creek that had run through a steel culvert.

The first prescribed burn, to promote prairie biodiversity, occurred in the spring of 2018. The improved habitat of the restored prairie and oak savanna has increased the diversity of insects, birds,

and wildlife. Thirty-seven bird species have been identified in the Coldwater Spring area. Bees and monarch butterflies are also abundant, as are many species of mammals, amphibians, and reptiles.

Plan Purpose

With the near completion of the landscape restoration of the former Bureau of Mines site, the NPS is beginning to identify future conditions and uses for the Coldwater Spring area. Adjacent land managers are interested in partnering with the NPS to ensure that management of their sites is coordinated as a part of the management of the Coldwater Spring area (see map). As a result, there is the possibility for the NPS to manage a total of 83 acres in the future.

The development of a Coldwater Spring Unit Management Plan will guide the NPS on how to best:

- accommodate visitor use;
- protect the site's resources;
- maintain respect for the sacred, historical, and cultural aspects of this place;
- recognize the important contributions of volunteers to the property's restoration; and
- strengthen a sense of connection to the Coldwater Spring area for all.

The plan will also address the deteriorating condition of the Coldwater springhouse and reservoir. Input will be collected from stakeholders and the public to inform the plan.

Timeline

Through its own restoration activities and through ongoing input from the public, NPS has been studying potential approaches to stewarding the Coldwater Spring area into the future. We plan to present ideas to the public in spring 2019. There will be opportunities to formally comment on that proposal then. In the meantime, if you have any questions or wish to discuss the future of the Coldwater Spring area, please contact us.

Contact Information

Stay in touch with the park, check for updates, public meeting notices, or get other information on the park's website at <https://www.nps.gov/miss>. See <https://www.nps.gov/miss/planyourvisit/coldwater.htm> for information specific to the Coldwater Spring area.

To be added to our contact list, or for more information, you may contact the project manager, Leigh Johnson, at leigh_johnson@nps.gov or 402-661-1740 or the park at miss_coldwater@nps.gov.



The now-removed Bureau of Mines administrative building and parking lot (top), and restored prairie in the same location today (bottom). Credits: NPS.

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