

The best advice that Corps rangers give to help ensure a safe and enjoyable experience on the river include:

Always wear a lifejacket when in or around the water due to strong currents and sink holes.

Keep a safe distance from dams - at least 150 feet below a dam and 600 feet above a dam. This restriction applies to boaters year-round, because the owner or operator of any boat found inside a restricted area on the Mississippi River can be fined under federal regulations.

Boaters should carry a set of navigational charts on board.

Know how to swim and take a safe boating course.

A special note to boaters: Research shows that four hours of boating, exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare, and wind produces fatigue which makes you act as if you were legally intoxicated. If you combine alcohol consumption with this boating fatigue condition, it intensifies the effects and increases your risk of accidents. It's a fact that alcohol and water do not mix.



Photo by Mark Kane, Public Affairs

This is Your Last Chance Buddy! - Big, yellow blocks dangle on the ends of "last chance" ropes suspended from the Government Bridge located above Locks and Dam 15, Rock Island, Ill. These ropes could literally be a person's last resort before being swept into a dam. The yellow blocks are designed to catch the attention of a victim that may have suffered from a water mishap. These ropes are often suspended under the last bridges located upstream from each Mississippi dam.

Hey Huck, Where's Your Life Jacket?

During the spring and summer months the mighty Mississippi River draws people to its scenery, wildlife, and of course, its vast recreational opportunities. Be it fishing, water skiing, sunbathing, or navigating a watercraft, one thing is certain, the river can be a dangerous place if not treated with respect.

Because the Mississippi River is maintained for commercial navigation and used by millions as a recreational resource, the Corps is concerned about safety when recreating on the river. The lock and dam system that builds a stairway of water between St. Paul, Minn., and St. Louis, Mo., is one of those concerns.

These dams can become "drowning machines" for unsuspecting recreationists. Injury or death is imminent when the hydraulic action above the dams draws objects, boats and people in and holds them against the face of the dam's gates. Strong currents and unseen underlying structures throughout the river system can be hazardous as well.

Commercial towboats demand special attention when traveling the main channel. Water skiers, jet skiers, boaters, and intrepid swimmers should keep away from these large vessels realizing that if you are

in the water 1,000 feet in front of a moving towboat, you have less than one minute to get out of the way before being pulled under.

Corps park rangers help get the word out about water safety by offering educational programming to the public, providing boating safety classes, and conducting water patrol efforts throughout the recreation season.

The Mississippi River offers so much to recreation lovers. The overall experience can be a very positive one when people are aware of the power of water, and in particular, when they respect "The Mighty Mississippi River."

"Boaters are required to have their lights on between sunset and sunrise," said Dean Magee, District acting chief, Safety and Occupational Health Office.

For further information on boating safety or restricted areas, please contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers park rangers at the Mississippi River Visitor Center at telephone number (309) 794-5338.

On the Internet:

www.safeboatingcampaign.com

www.safeboatingcouncil.org

www.uscgboating.org





Cottonwood Island Habitat Project Dedicated By Mark Kane, Public Affairs

The recently completed Cottonwood Island Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project was dedicated July 5 at Clat Adams Bicentennial Park in Quincy, Ill.

Congressman Kenny Hulshof, 9th District Missouri, officially dedicated the project.

The Cottonwood Island Project is part of a joint effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Missouri Department of Conservation to improve the backwaters of our nation's waterways for productive resting, feeding and wintering wildlife habitat.

The project significantly improved an area important to migratory and nesting waterfowl, wading birds, fish, and other wetland-dwelling species.

Cottonwood Island is part of the Upper Mississippi River flyway, a major migration route for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The enhancements at Cottonwood Island are expected to benefit wildlife for years to come.

"An important and effective feature of this program involves the long-term monitoring of the river system," said Col. James Mudd, District Engineer. "Six field stations, staffed by state biologists conduct this monitoring. The long-term monitoring aspect of the program is managed by the Corps of Engineers and implemented by the U.S. Geological Survey.

"This Environmental Management Program is effective because of the unparalleled cooperation between the state and federal agencies participating in it," said Mudd. "Another reason for its success is the valuable support and input from various interest groups, local residents, small business owners, and university researchers. The contribution of these individuals is an important part of project planning and design."

Erosion and sedimentation are widely considered to be major causes of the river's most severe environmental problems. Sediment is continuously filling in the system's critical backwaters, side channels and wetlands. Suspended sediment decreases light penetration, which results in reduced aquatic and wetland plant growth. The erosion of islands and shorelines by wind and watercraft-generated waves causes additional erosion. The net result of erosion and sedimentation is the degradation or complete loss of important fish and wildlife habitats.

Environmental Management Program habitat projects, like the Cottonwood Island Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project, are designed to offset the negative impacts of erosion and sedimentation. This is done by protecting existing critical habitats, restoring backwaters, side channels and floodplain wetlands, and developing areas that mimic the natural system. Through the Environmental Management Program habitat diversity can be maintained and productivity increased.

The performance of each project is closely monitored so its effectiveness can be fully considered in the construction of future habitat protection and restoration projects.

The Cottonwood Island Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project is part of a multi-million dollar program between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Missouri Department of Conservation, and other state and federal agencies, to plan, design and build a variety of environmental enhancement projects to restore spawning and feeding habitats of fish and wildlife in backwaters and side channels of the upper Mississippi and Illinois rivers. 