

About the parks

- Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park *becoming Mississippi Gateway Regional Park* is located on the Hennepin County side of the Mississippi River in the City of Brooklyn Park.
- The Brooklyn Park Environmental Nature Area is located west of West River Road, and includes a dog off-leash area, archery range, picnic shelter and trails.
- The Coon Rapids Dam spans the river at the park. Three Rivers Park District owns and operates the dam and a walkway above the dam that allows pedestrians, bicyclists and other trail users to cross the river.
- Anoka County Parks and Recreation owns and operates Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park on the Anoka County side of the river in the City of Coon Rapids. Anoka County's park is unaffected by this project.



The Changing Role of the Coon Rapids Dam

- Built in 1913 by Northern States Power Co. (NSP), the dam generated hydro power for 53 years. It was closed in 1966.
- In 1969, NSP gave the dam and 225 acres of surrounding land to the Park District to establish a regional park on the Mississippi River.
- In 2011, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$16 million in bond proceeds to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to rehabilitate the Coon Rapids Dam to serve as a barrier to aquatic invasive species, including invasive carp. The project's purpose is to protect the northern reaches of the Mississippi River and its watersheds from aquatic invasive species that could prove devastating to northern fisheries if left unchecked. Major repairs were made to the dam's spillway and new steel gates were installed; the project was completed in 2015.

[ThreeRiverParks.org/Mississippi Gateway](https://www.threeriverparks.org/mississippi-gateway)
[#MississippiGateway](https://twitter.com/MississippiGateway)



Mississippi Gateway Regional Park

A gateway for everyone to connect with the Mississippi River and its dynamic environment.

What is Mississippi Gateway?

Mississippi Gateway Regional Park is a partnership with Three Rivers Park District and the City of Brooklyn Park, combining Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park in Brooklyn Park and the Brooklyn Park Environmental Nature Area into one regional park. The park will be a year-round connection for all people to celebrate the Mississippi River, learn about nature and enjoy the outdoors.

The heart of the park is the Mississippi River. People connect to the river in different ways and for different reasons; some are in awe of its immense power, some are spiritually connected, some use the river for its fish, and others use the river as a means to relax and unwind.

Much of the river's shoreline in suburban Hennepin County is privately owned, making this publicly owned parkland critical to providing access and opportunities for everyone to experience the river.

The Plan for the Park

Three Rivers Park District and the City of Brooklyn Park worked together to complete a master plan that re-envisioned the park to better meet the needs of the public now and in the future.

Key features include:

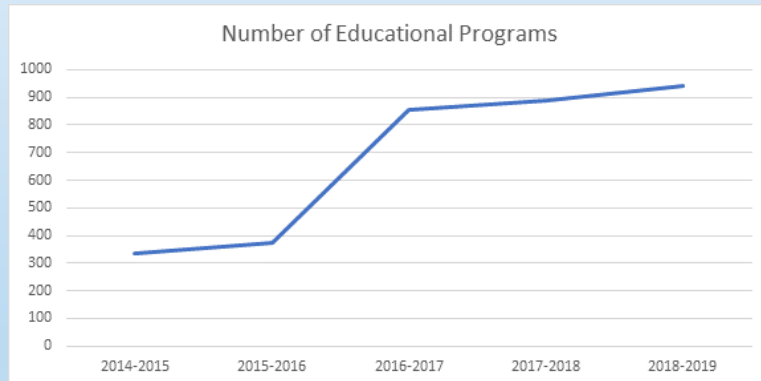
- A new Mississippi Gateway Center
- Nature's Highline elevated tree canopy walkway
- Nature play areas
- Mini-Mississippi play and education area
- Learning labs & nature interpretation nodes
- Improved trails

- Fishing
- Picnicking
- Non-motorized boat launch
- Archery
- Off-leash dog area
- Natural areas

Helping people discover the outdoors

Mississippi Gateway Regional Park will be one of the primary nature-based education and recreation centers in the Three Rivers Park District system. Programming focused on nature and recreation education helps connect people to the Mississippi River and the habitat that surrounds it.

To build awareness and excitement about nature and the river, staff significantly expanded the number of programs and summer camps offered at the park beginning in the 2015-16 school year; providing opportunities for kids to explore, learn about and experience the river. Over 19,000 people participate in programs each year at the park. The number of educational programs offered has tripled within four years — from roughly 300 in 2014-15 to more than 900 programs this year.



Investing in the future

With people fishing, picnicking, using the trails, and attending camps and public programs, the park is a hub of activity year-round; but the facilities no longer meet the needs of the public or park staff. The current Visitor Center was built many years ago as a trailhead building. Since that time, the demand from the community and schools has changed the function of the building from a trailhead to an education center. School groups are requesting an increase in the capacity for student programs; educators need a space to accommodate groups of 100+ students. The current building can only fit a group of 25 for educational programming. When a school group is in the building, public visitors cannot access the only visitor center space, as it serves as the classroom.

The new park project, which was developed with input from more than 30 community groups and 1,200 individuals, will position the park as the northern gateway to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area* and as a regional hub for recreation and outdoor education.

** The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area is a 72-mile "partnership park" designated by the National Park Service.*



Bringing the Park Experience into the Community

Park staff are also developing ways to bring nature education directly to the community through mobile programming and Three Rivers' Explorer Camp programs. This outreach programming helps connect people to nature and provides new opportunities for residents in surrounding communities.

The master plan has received national awards from the National Association of County Park and Recreation Professionals and the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals.