

A STATE WATER TRAIL GUIDE TO THE CLOQUET RIVER

Route Description of the Cloquet River

NOTE: (R) and (L) represent right and left banks of the river when facing downstream.

The Cloquet River flows from Katherine Lake in central Lake County to its confluence with the St. Louis River. The uppermost 32 miles (from Katherine Lake to Indian Lake) are not regarded as canoeable because it is steep, dangerous, and rarely has enough flow for feasible paddling.

The first good access to the river is at Indian Lake Campground near Rollins. From there the river flows southwest through remote territory.

Indian Lake to Island Lake

Character: A variety of rapids makes the paddling in this remote stretch interesting.

Length: The 35-mile trip includes 1.5 miles across Island Lake to the take out.

Average run time: Two days.

Class: Approximately 10 Class I-II rapids.

Optimal Flow: Above 3.5 at CR 44.

Skill Level: Intermediate to Expert. Beginners should portage some rapids.

Hazards: A waterfall exists at the entrance to Island Lake during low water. Portaging is recommended.

Access: North on CR 44 from Rollins to access on Indian Lake.

RIVER MILE

71.8 Entrance to upper river at Indian Lake; water access, rest area, 25 site campground and drinking water.

71.1 Railroad trestle.

69.8 Carry in access, limited parking, no facilities, minimum maintenance road.

65.6 (L) Sharp right turn and a plunge down Camp G Rapids, a Class II drop. Run it toward the left or choose the 330 yd. portage on the left.

61.7 (R) Watercraft campsite.

61.5 (L) Bear Lake Road water access and watercraft campsite.

56.9 (L) Buzz Ryan Rapids, a Class I. Avoid the ledge on left, 165 yd. portage on left.

56.6 (R) Dry Foot Brown's Rapids, a Class II rapids, portage 400 yds. on right.

56.5 Bridge.

56.2 (L) Watercraft campsite.

56-55.8 Dana's Rapids, a steep, bouldery, Class II rapids. Portage 200 yds. on left.

48.4-48.1 Dr. Barney's Rapids, Class I-II, a long series of boulders. Portage is 1386 yds. on left or right.

48.3 (R) Cloquet River (S) water access and watercraft campsite.

48.2 (L) Rosalyn Kelly watercraft campsite

46.2 Confluence with the Little Cloquet River.

44.4-44 Cedar Rapids, Class II, run the ledge on the far right. Many boulders. Portage left, 880 yds.

- 42.5** Enter Alden Lake. Paddle south, west, and south again to enter river again.
- 42.1-42.6** Class I rapids, no established portage.
- 40.1 (R)** Dirty Nose watercraft campsite.
- 38.5-38.4** McCabe's Rapids, Class II. Portage left 100 yds. Rapids consists of three ledges, each about two feet high with offset chutes.
- 37.3** The historic Vermilion Trail, the first road to the Iron Range, crossed the river here.
- 37.0 (R)** White Sides Rapids, a difficult Class II. Steep and long, it has standing waves and boulders. Portage right 280 yds.
- 35.0** Minnesota Power (S) Landing And rest area. At the end of White Sides Rapids, the Cloquet River enters Island Lake Reservoir. A 15-foot cascade forms at the river mouth when the lake level is low. Scout carefully.

From the mouth of the river, paddle 1.5 miles across Island Lake to the Minnesota Power Hide-away boat landing on the north shore, or continue west across lake, passing under CR 4 to dam. Portage around dam.

- 33.5** Rest area.

Island Lake Dam to Highway 53

Character: Scenic country with good fishing for walleye, smallmouth bass, and some brown trout.

Length: 29 miles.

Average run time: 10-15 hours.

Class: Class I.

Optimal Flow: Above 1.4 at US 53.

Skill Level: Beginner to Intermediate.

Access: North on CR 4 from Duluth, then west on CR 48 to access road that leads to Island Lake Dam.

RIVER MILE

33.4 (L) Water access, Island Lake Reservoir.

33.0 (L) Abbot Road (E) access.

30-31 and 32.5 Several watercraft campsites.

28.7 (L) Island Lake Dam Site water access.

28.6 (L) Island Lake Dam, portage left. Rest area and carry in access. Portage 300 yds.

28.5 Class I rapids.

27.4 CR 48 bridge.

26.2 (L) Beaverhouse watercraft campsite.

25.7 (L) Salt Lick watercraft campsite.

23.6 (R) Inlet to Hunter Lake.

22.6 (L) Twin Pines watercraft campsite.

21.8 (R) Pinchery watercraft campsite

21.4 (R) Side Lake.

21.0 (L) Confluence with Beaver River.

20.5 (L) Bachelor Road water access.

20.4 Railroad trestle.

19.7 County Road 15 bridge.

18.5 (L) M.C.C. watercraft campsite.

18.0 (R) Confluence with Us-Kab-Wan-Ka River.

18-17.6 Class I rapids. No established portage.

- 17.9** Abandoned railroad bed.
- 17.3 (L)** Old Mule watercraft campsite.
- 16.6 (R)** Three Island watercraft campsite.
- 15.9-15.3** Class I rapids.
- 13.4** Power line crossing.
- 11.9-9.4** Series of Class I rapids.
- 11.0 (R)** Confluence with Chicken Creek.
- 10.7** Power line crossing.
- 10.4 (R)** Confluence with Hellwig Creek.
- 10.2** US Highway 53 bridges. A rest area with toilets on river right, between bridges.
- 10.2 (R)** Carry in access.

Highway 53 to St. Louis River

Character: Also a scenic stretch with good fishing. Class I-II rapids become numerous close to the St. Louis River.

Length: 11 miles.

Average run time: 5 hours.

Class: Class I with a Class II stretch near the St. Louis River.

Optimal Flow: Above 1.4 at US 53.

Skill Level: Beginner to Intermediate.

Access: North on US 53 from Duluth, parking in Rest Area at the intersection of US 53 and MN 33.

RIVER MILE

9.0 Class I rapids.

7.7-7.0 Class I rapids.

7.0 CR 8 bridge.

6.8 (L) Confluence with Chalberg Creek.

5.2 (L) Confluence with Beartrap Creek.

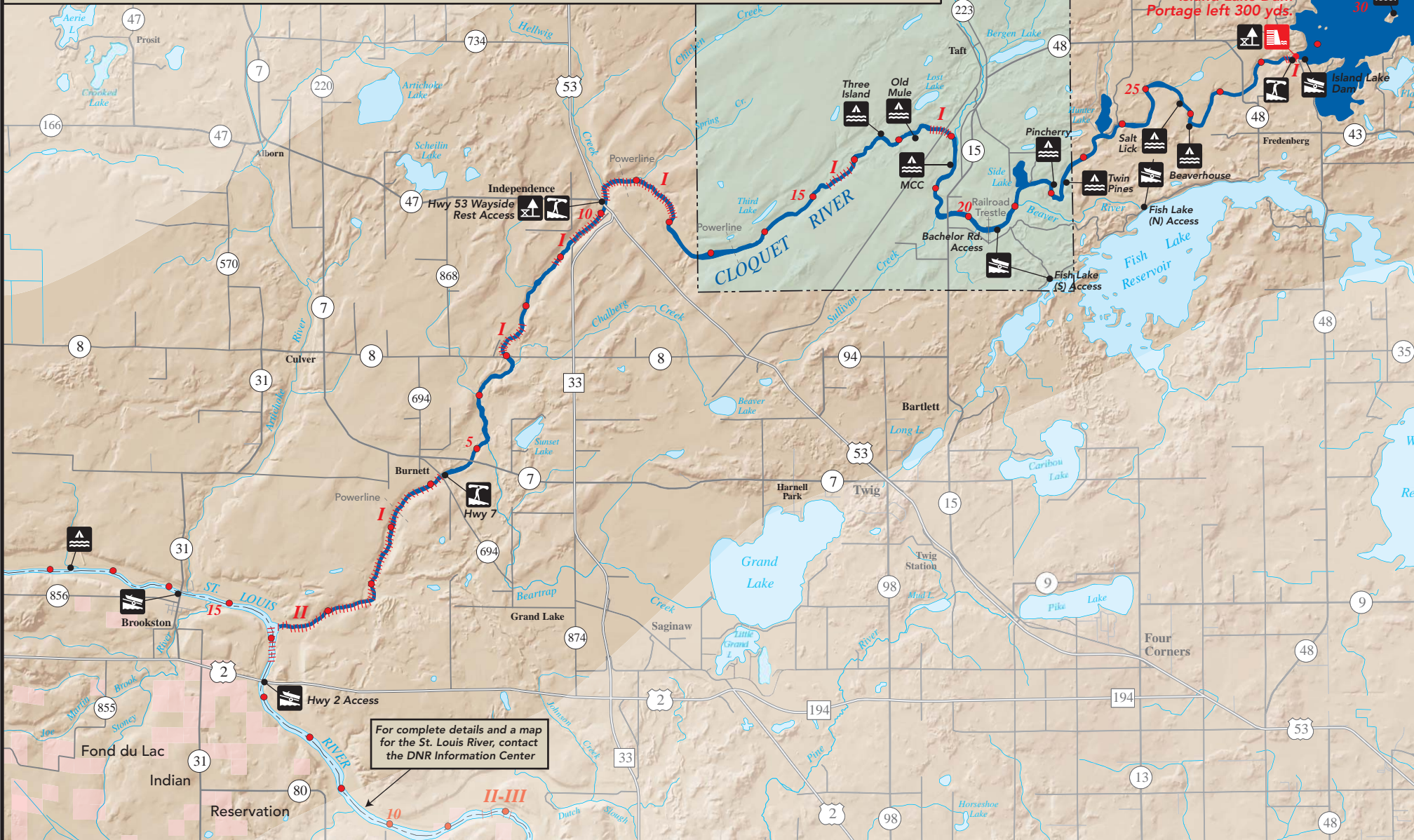
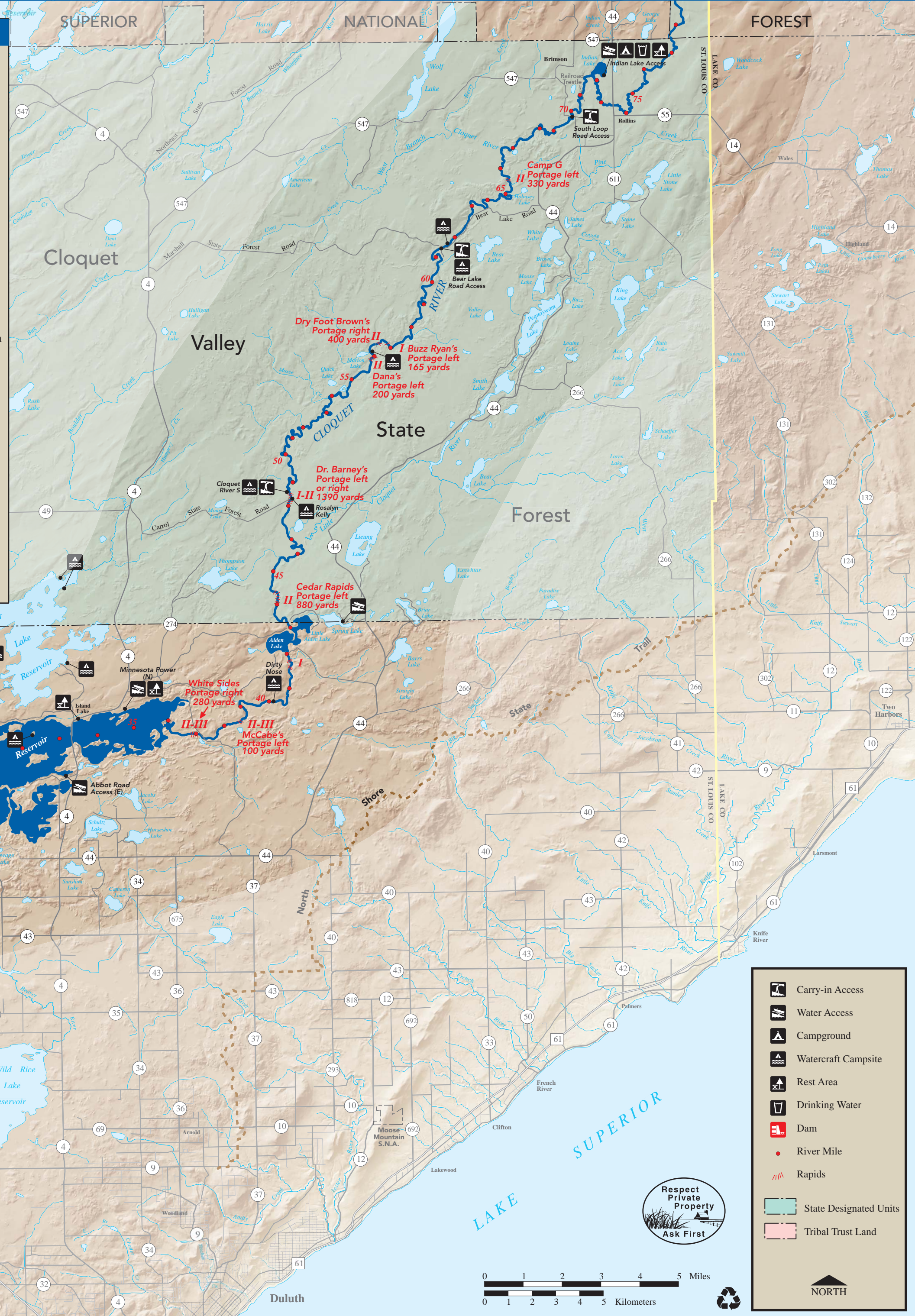
4.8 CR 7 bridge and carry in access (L).

4.2-1.0 Class I rapids.

4.2 Railroad trestle, CR 694 bridge.

3.2 Power line crossing.

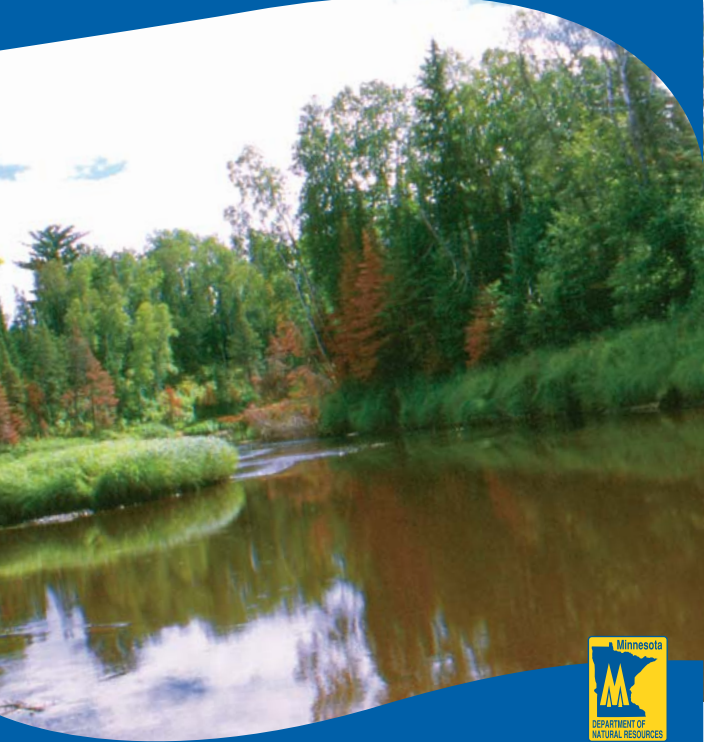
1.0-0.0 Class II rapids. River falls 20 feet in final mile to its confluence with the St. Louis River. The nearest takeout is below the Highway 2 bridge one mile from the mouth of the Cloquet, on river left. Class I - II Rapids just downstream from mouth of Cloquet.



For complete details and a map for the St. Louis River, contact the DNR Information Center

Respect Private Property
Ask First

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers



Minnesota State Parks and Trails
mndnr.gov/watertrails

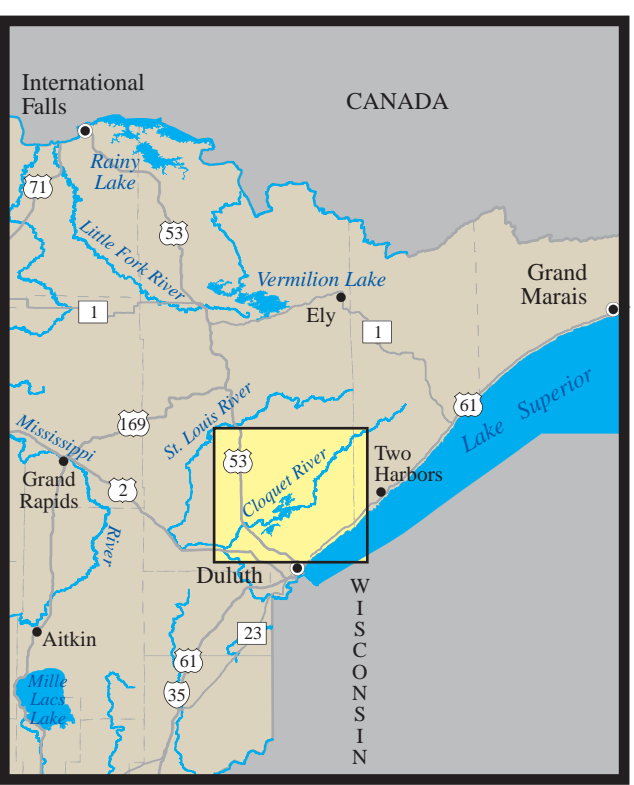
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LYNELLE HANSON

“...in that moment when you ease the canoe from the bank into the current, you sense you are a part of something very old and precious. It is a moment that should be guarded jealously and handed down with care.”

John C. Sawhill



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The Cloquet River



DEBORAH ROSE

The Cloquet River is a major tributary in the St. Louis River watershed. It is wonderfully wild, with nearly unbroken forested banks. Red and white pines, fir, spruce, aspen and birch make up the forests of the Cloquet Valley. Most of the river has been designated as primitive/remote. The Upper Cloquet above Island Lake Reservoir is managed to maintain and protect the semi-primitive recreation experience currently available there.

History

The streams and rivers of northern Minnesota are the result of glacial activity thousands of years ago. Because northern Minnesota rivers flow through bog areas, the water is often coffee-colored. This comes from the tannic acid in the bog plants.

During the past century, human activities such as logging and farming have caused changes to our waterways. Other human impacts are population growth, habitat fragmentation, introduction of non-native species, commercial and industrial use, and air and water pollution—all of which endanger native species.

Since the receding of the glaciers more than 10,000 years ago, humans have lived in and used the natural resources of the Cloquet River Valley. Artifacts of the Paleo-Indians have been collected and extensively studied. Thousands of pieces of stone, pottery and even some copper tools have been preserved at the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

The river was very important to the logging industry. It provided transportation for logs upstream to the lumber mills in Cloquet. The logging era lasted from 1878, when the first sawmill was built at Cloquet, until 1924, the year of the last drive on the Cloquet and St. Louis rivers.

St. Louis River Management Plan

The Cloquet River is part of the St. Louis River Management Plan. The plan is a citizen-led initiative of cooperation among local governments and agencies with the goal to protect the river system's natural beauty, environment and cleanliness by managing the area's development, land management, and recreation. The plan calls for a healthy forest composed of diverse, native plants. Preferred are forests of long-lived conifers and hardwoods. The plan does not allow motorized trails on the riverbank, nor structures in the riparian zone (an area 200 feet inland from the riverbank.) This is a minimal impact zone. Livestock are not allowed in the river.

Fishing

The Cloquet River has a diverse and excellent fish population. Northern pike, walleye and brook trout are abundant between Indian Lake and Island Lake. Smallmouth bass are plentiful below Island Lake. The DNR and the Fond du Lac Band are also working to reestablish the once thriving sturgeon population in the St. Louis watershed. If you catch one of these ancient fish, you are required to return it to the water immediately.

Because the river system has an excellent fish population, it is necessary to know the health hazards of eating these fish. Mercury contamination is a problem for the entire watershed. Keep the smaller fish for eating and release the larger, older fish that may contain a higher concentration of contamination. Women of child-bearing age and children should strictly adhere to guidelines set by the Minnesota Department of Health. Complete information is available by calling 651-215-5800.

Wildlife

The Cloquet River watershed is home to three species of turtles: painted, snapping and the rare wood turtle. Crucial for the survival of turtles is a safe nesting place. These species require a sandy, sun-warmed bank or sand bar elevated above water.

Although these areas appear ideal for picnics, damage could occur to the eggs and hatchlings if the nests are trampled on. The most important thing to remember about turtles, and other wildlife, is to leave them alone in their natural habitat.



Snapping Turtle SHANNON

Because of the forests and remoteness of the Cloquet River, paddlers might see beaver, timber wolves, bobcats, black bears, moose, otters, fishers, white-tailed deer, great blue herons and osprey; as well as other smaller birds and animals.

Recreation

Public ownership provides paddlers with excellent opportunities to enjoy this river. The riverbanks provide good berry picking, camping, hunting and fishing. Parts of the river provide safe recreation for all ages, and true wilderness experience awaits.



DEBORAH ROSE

Along with the pleasures of recreation, there are the responsibilities of caring for the river so that it will be protected for years to come. The St. Louis River Management Plan, developed by the St. Louis River Board,

demonstrates an obligation and responsibility to all organisms important to the river ecosystem.

Planning a Safe River Trip

A successful river trip is a safe river trip. To enjoy the journey, acquaint yourself with the route. Choose a distance that is comfortable. Water levels can speed up or slow down a trip.

Because of the many steep, rocky stretches and small watershed area, medium to heavy stream flow are preferable for an enjoyable run. Stream flow is usually high during spring runoff and will usually fall throughout the summer. However, the river above Island Lake can rise quickly after heavy rains and can take 3 to 7 days to fall to normal flows.

In the upper river, above Island Lake, the river's rapids may be runnable only after heavy rains. In the lower river, the river level depends on releases from the Island Lake Dam. Minnesota Power is required to provide a minimum flow, if available, of 350 cubic feet per second in May and June, which provides good canoeing. During the rest of the summer, only 175 CFS is provided if it is available. This is enough to float down the rapids with some scraping and might involve some river walking. To get information about water levels, call Minnesota Power at 1-800-582-8529 for a recording of water levels or contact the regional DNR office, DNR website, or DNR Information Center (see cover flap for numbers and more information).

- Protect the water and shorelands. Remember that some of the shorelands are privately owned.

- Travel with a companion or group. Plan the trip with a map before departing and advise someone of the plans, including departure and arrival times.

- Most people paddle two to three river miles per hour.

- Bring a first-aid kit that includes waterproof matches.

- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device, which state law requires to be on board the craft.

- Bring an extra paddle.

- Beware of river obstructions, such as overhanging and dead trees in the river.

Rating White Water

Rivers and rapids are rated according to the International Scale of River Difficulty. Ratings are estimates based on observations at low or moderate water levels or on secondhand reports. The following three classes are found on the Cloquet River.



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CLASS I: Easy rapids with small waves and few obstructions.

CLASS II: Rapids with waves up to three feet high. Some maneuvering is required.

CLASS III: Difficult rapids with high, irregular waves capable of swamping an open canoe. Narrow chutes may require extensive maneuvering. Usually considered the limit for an experienced paddler in an open canoe.

* The following three classes are not found on the Cloquet River, they are here for your reference.

CLASS IV: Long, turbulent rapids with small high, irregular waves, constricted passages, and blind drops. Decked canoes and kayaks only; open canoes should be portaged.

CLASS V: Long, violent rapids with complex routes and steep drops or waterfalls. Hazards to life in the event of mishap. Runnable only by experts in decked boats.

CLASS VI: Cannot be attempted without great risk to life.

Boating Information

Register watercraft. All watercraft more than 9 feet in length, including nonmotorized canoes and kayaks, must be registered in Minnesota or state of residence.

Not all portions of this water trail are suitable for motor use.

Rest Areas and Camping Sites

- Public rest areas and campsites are available along the route to rest, picnic and explore.

- Designated campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

- Bring drinking water. It is only available at a limited number of sites. Drinking river water is not recommended; but if you do it must be treated.

- Respect private property. Stop only at designated sites or known public lands; much of the shoreland is private property.

- Be sanitary! Use designated toilet facilities or bury human waste away from the river.

- Pack out all trash.

- Leave only footprints; take only photographs!

Sustainable Ecosystems

Outdoor recreation is dependent on a healthy and attractive natural environment. Sustainable outdoor recreation enables people to enjoy the outdoors without negative impacts on the environment. Communities working together can improve water resources by promoting environmentally sensitive land-use practices along rivers and throughout watersheds. Natural shoreline buffers improve water quality by filtering out pollutants and sediments. Healthy and diverse native shoreline plant communities are attractive and provide important habitat for birds and wildlife.



Jack-in-the-pulpit flower HEATHER BRICSON

This information is available in alternative format upon request.

Minnesota State Parks and Trails Regional Park
1201 East Highway 2
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
(218) 999-7920

Online water trail information and maps can be found at mndnr.gov/watertrails

DNR Information Center
The DNR's Information Center is available to provide free publications of facilities and services as well as answers questions pertaining to DNR recreational opportunities in Minnesota.

The DNR Information Center
500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4040
651-296-6157 Metro Area
1-888-646-6367 MN Toll-Free
mndnr.gov

ADOPT A RIVER
You can make a difference by joining the DNR Adopt-a-River Program. Be a clean up volunteer for a portion of your favorite recreation area. Call the DNR Information Center for a brochure.

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