



2015: YEAR OF FISHING
Make this the year to
drop a line in the
Mighty Mississippi

How do you encourage people to experience the Mississippi River in new ways? You make it easier. And you make a year of it.

There was the 2012 Summer of Paddling, 2013's Year of Biking, 2014's Year of Geotourism and now the 2015 Year of Fishing. The Mississippi River Connections Collaborative is continuing its annual focus on promoting recreational activities along the Mississippi River corridor.



The collaborative consists of a formal partnership between the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mississippi River Trail Inc. and Mississippi River Parkway Commission and active collaboration with agencies like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It has this year come together to develop, host and make it easy to find information about fishing-related events along the Mississippi River. The goal: introduce or renew a passion for fishing or maybe just connect people to the river, encourage stewardship and share lessons on river safety.

The year's fishing goals differ slightly from past events, says Kim Rea, recreation manager at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' St. Louis District Rivers Project Office, a collaborative partner. Change: The Summer of Paddling was held as paddling on the river was increasing and trails were being developed to meet the increased need. 2012 was also the year that the Department of Interior launched the National Water Trail Program. Fishing, on the other hand, has experienced a slight decline in participation, especially among young people.

"Traditional sports like fishing, hunting, camping are not getting passed down as readily as they used to be in past generations," she said. "Also, a lot of messages can be shared from a conservation standpoint. You have the opportunity to educate about invasive species, the environment and water safety. Fishing is the hook that captures visitor attention and gives us the opportunity to get them engaged with the river."

There's already been a large family-focused ice fishing festival on the upper river. Others on the site include a Youth Fishing Day in Anada, Mo., a family fishing fair in Grafton, Ill. Events will for the most part be free and provide equipment and instruction. Down the road, watch for a year of birding, a year of hiking and other activities on a list some 20 ideas and growing, says Rory Robinson, an outdoor recreation planner with the National Park Service. In the meantime, go toss in a line.

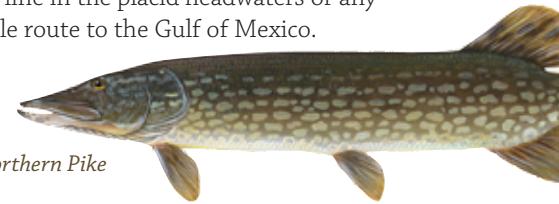
"I have every reason to believe this year will be very similar to the first go-around," he said, "that there'll be 300 to 400 events and new signature events, from the source of the river to its mouth." —K.S.

Find the events:
mr-cc.org



FISHING THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI 200 species, and counting

Variety is the hallmark of Mississippi River fishing. That's true, whether you're dipping a line in the placid headwaters or anywhere along its 2,320-mile route to the Gulf of Mexico.

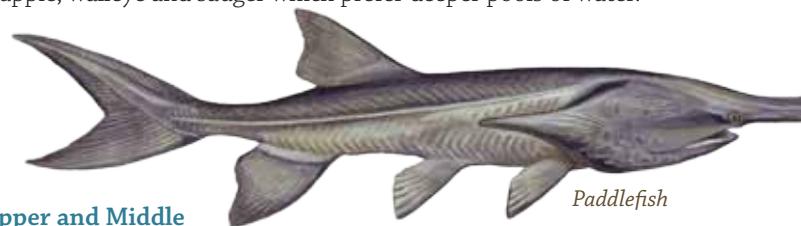


Northern Pike

Upper

Lake Itasca, where the river begins, is a true fisherman's lake; no motorboats are allowed. On the east leg of the three-legged lake, look for northern pike and bass. Where the three arms meet, fish for walleye. But as on other parts of the river, other species are present: rainbow trout, crappie and bullhead. If youngsters are along, they should use worms—almost a guarantee to catch the pumpkinseed sunfish, a 6- to 8-inch-long fish.

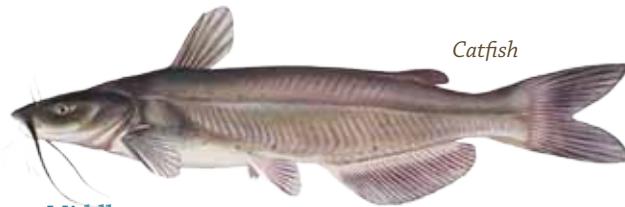
On the mainstem of the Mississippi, a good place to try the sport is the Clements Fishing Barge (CLEMENTSFISHING.COM), located just below Lock and Dam 8 near Genoa, Wisconsin. The adjacent Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge boasts more than 130 species of fish including the common bluegill, crappie, walleye and sauger which prefer deeper pools of water.



Paddlefish

Upper and Middle

While navigation locks and dams can create potentially tricky fishing conditions (always observe posted warnings), they offer interesting opportunities, too. Late spring brings great fishing for walleye, sauger and paddlefish just below the locks and dams; predator fish concentrate because of the easy meals trapped here. Wing dams and jetties are also favored locations for fishing experts for the way walleye, sauger, catfish, white bass and freshwater drum inhabit them for food and shelter.



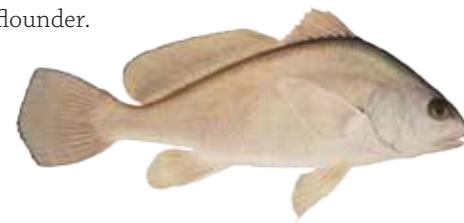
Catfish

Middle

Catfish rule here. Two fishermen landed a record 130-pounder here in 2010. (Skipjack herring heads are said to be the preferable bait). Fishing from banks in backwaters is a good way to catch bullhead in shallow waters off the middle section of the Mississippi; those fishing from boats can expect to haul in carp. Some fishing meccas include the Jefferson Barracks Side Channel, just south of the U.S. Hwy. 50 bridge or about 11 miles south of St. Louis' Gateway Arch; the Fort Chartres side channel; and the town of Commerce, Missouri, on the east side of Burnham Island.

Lower

Check the interactive map of fishing ramps on the sites of many state wildlife and fisheries departments or that of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC.ORG) has also compiled a comprehensive guide for fishing the lower river, highlighting best locations by species including crappie, bluegill, catfish, common carp, freshwater drum, largemouth bass, white bass and striped bass. Launch from Venice, Louisiana, near river's end, to find freshwater fish like bass—or saltwater fish like redfish, speckled trout and flounder.



Freshwater Drum