



River Access Master Plan for the Red & Red Lake Rivers



2017

Cities of Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN

A guide for developing river access within the Greater Grand Forks city limits.

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River Access Master Plan for the Red & Red Lake Rivers

CITIES OF GRAND FORKS, ND AND EAST GRAND FORKS, MN

GREENWAY VISION STATEMENT

The Red and Red Lake Rivers Greenway will protect residents of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks from flooding, provide opportunities for economic growth, improve and restore ecological stability of the river corridor, link residents and tourists to four seasons of recreation and transportation facilities, provide linkage between the cities, preserve and promote the history and culture of the region through education, and improve the quality of life for future generations.

•Written by workshop participants (residents of Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN) and prepared by Greenways, Inc. and the US Army Corps of Engineers as part of the Greenway Plan of September 2001

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to create a guide for developing river access within the city limits of Greater Grand Forks. Increased river access benefits a wide variety of activities, including motorized and non-motorized watercraft, shore bank fishing, and nature watching.

This plan is not a binding document. It is meant to show potential river access development. Images used in this plan are conceptual to provide an understanding of the plan's direction. Specific projects will require review by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. This may include detailed studies of soil conditions, accessibility, cost and effect on flood control management.

“A water trail is a stretch of river or lake that is mapped and managed especially for canoeing, kayaking, boating and camping.”

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Special Thanks to the Greater Grand Forks Convention and Visitors Bureau for the river photos.

BACKGROUND



The Red and Red Lake Rivers provide many important resources for the Greater Grand Forks community. Both rivers are natural resources that provide recreational opportunities for boating, fishing, and scenic enjoyment throughout the year. They also serve as the water supply for both communities.

Activities on the Red and Red Lake Rivers have changed many times over the past 150 years. Both rivers were used as transportation links between Lake Winnipeg, Canada and the Mississippi River system as early as 1850. Steamboats hauling supplies and passengers were a regular site along the river until the early 1900's. Swimming in the river was also a popular activity from early 1900 until the completion of a municipal pool. The addition of two low-head dams created dangerous conditions for most activities on the river. The low-head dams were later replaced with rock rapid dams as part of the flood protection project. These dams eliminated concerns with the hazards created with the low-head dams. Several drownings in the Red River during the 1970's and 1980's prompted many citizens to turn their focus away from the river as a source of recreation. Both cities adopted ordinances prohibiting swimming in the river as a possible way to keep people out of the river. The swimming ban remains in effect.

The Red and Red Lake Rivers are susceptible to frequent flooding. The Red River flows north into Canada and eventually into Hudson Bay. Spring snow melt begins in the southern end of the river; forcing water upstream to the still-frozen northern region, where melting and runoff have yet to begin. The relatively flat terrain of the surrounding area allows floodwater to spread across wide sections of land. Heavy rains can cause daily fluctuations in river levels throughout the season.

The flood of 1997 brought many changes to Greater Grand Forks. A record-breaking flood crest invaded both cities and forced most residents to evacuate, leaving behind their homes, businesses and community. Residents returned to a community dismantled by floodwaters. Their firm resolve to rebuild a better community included using the rivers as assets instead of liabilities.

The devastating flood of 1997 prompted the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to propose a permanent flood protection system. This system included a greenway along the Red and Red Lake Rivers. (Appendix 1) This greenway provided the opportunity to capitalize on the aesthetic and recreational values of the rivers.

The Greenway offers public access to the Red and Red Lake Rivers within the city limits. It has renewed interest for more activities on the rivers. Requests for more river access and amenities continue to rise and people realize the advantages of an urban river. In 2014, the local non-profit group Ground UP Adventures opened a boathouse facility along the Red River in downtown Grand Forks. Four existing boat ramps have provided access but the boathouse project was a catalyst for increased interest in river access and creating an urban water experience.

The number of special events hosted on or along the rivers has grown significantly in the past few years. Events like Battle of the Borders, Cabela's Catfish Days, Uff Da Mud Run and END-WET Extreme North Dakota Water Endurance Test attract participants from around the region and beyond.



PARTICIPATION

The River Access Master Plan is the result of the discussions and cooperation of many agencies involved with the Greenway. The Greenway Technical Committee provided oversight of the project. This committee serves as the primary mechanism for the four agencies managing the Greenway, as well as interested citizens, to discuss the management and development of the Greenway.

Citizen input was an important in the development of this plan. Public input meetings were held in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks to gather ideas for river access. A comment sheet was available online for anyone unable to attend the meetings. Comments from these meetings and online submissions provided insight and guidance for planning river access along the two rivers. A draft plan was available online for review and comments.

“Support efforts to improve shore fishing access on Red & Red Lake Rivers.”

Citizen comment from online survey

CHALLENGES

The primary purpose of the Greenway is to serve as a floodplain during high water events. This designation affects the development of all recreational features within the Greenway. Any changes or additions to the Greenway require a review by local, state and federal agencies. These agencies consider how any addition or change to the Greenway will the impact water flow, impervious surfaces, the environment, maintenance and overall Greenway Plan.



The varied slope and soil conditions along the rivers present a unique set of challenges for installing permanent features along the riverbank. The soil along the riverbanks is an Aquolls mixture of clay, black dirt and some sand. The water table tends to be at or near the surface for much of the year and drainage is poor. This high level of moisture produces a high plasticity in the clays. (Schwert 2003). Slumping occurs in many areas along the rivers and results in steep drop-offs that make river access difficult.

Funding for greenway amenities comes from a variety of sources. Residents and businesses in both communities pay a fee, designated for the Greenway, on their monthly utility bill. In Grand Forks these fees are used for the administration, maintenance and additions to the Greenway. In East Grand Forks these fees are used for trail maintenance. Funding opportunities are available through state recreation and natural resource agencies.

OTHER RIVER PLANS

Several regional river use plans reference the Red and Red Lake Rivers. These plans focus on existing water access features, fisheries management and connecting communities along both rivers.

- Original Greenway Plan and Supplemental Plan
- LaFave Park, East Grand Forks Conceptual Plan
- Minnesota State Parks and Trails Water Trail
- Red Lake River Corridor Enhancement Project, 2005
- Red River of the North Canoe and Boating Route Master Plan (River Keepers 2002)
- Red River of the North Watershed Draft 2016, US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District
- Red River of the North Fisheries Management Plan (ND Game & Fish Department 2008 – 2012)

EXISTING FACILITIES



Floating dock in downtown Grand Forks

Both cities maintain several developed river access facilities. In addition, at least six primitive sites have been created by anglers. The primitive sites are not maintained by either City at this time. The developed sites include:

- Four public access boat ramps for launching motorized boats. This includes two in Grand Forks and two in East Grand Forks. Non-motorized watercraft can also utilize these launches.
- One fishing platform on the Red River in the Red River State Recreation Area.
- Floating docks in downtown Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.
- One walk-up fishing site on the Red River near River Heights Trail Head in East Grand Forks.
- Riverbank along LaFave Park in East Grand Forks.

POTENTIAL FACILITIES

Public input revealed several locations for possible river access. (Appendix 2) A brief review was done for each site. Potential development at these sites could focus on low maintenance improvements that provide high impact (clearing of vegetation, signage, etc.). Environment impact studies would be necessary for larger projects.

- 47th Avenue South, Grand Forks
- 62nd Avenue South and South 16th Street SE, Grand Forks
- Country Club, Grand Forks
- Eagles Point Trail Head and LaFave Park, East Grand Forks
- Hartsville Coulee, East Grand Forks
- Hartsville Coulee Diversion
- Kannowski Park, Grand Forks
- Lincoln golf clubhouse, Grand Forks

POTENTIAL ENHANCEMENTS

River users expressed a desire for more amenities at the existing and future river access sites. These enhancements could be as simple as adding refuse containers to building infrastructure to help navigate the slippery or steep riverbank.

- Wash stations for cleaning watercraft
- River mile signs
- Box steps or wood platforms to access the river on steep slopes
- More refuse containers at access sites



Wood platform at Red River State Recreation Area



Example of box steps

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Maintenance is performed on an as needed basis. Many of the existing facilities are over ten years old and beginning to show their age. Sloughing along the riverbank has caused the paved boat ramps to crack and slump. Frequent flooding has eroded the gravel parking lots. These areas are patched throughout the season as a temporary fixes to prolong the life of the ramps.

Fluctuating river levels are a challenge in maintaining the paved boat ramps. River silt remains on the ramps after the water recedes but it can take several days before the silt can be removed. The river fluctuations can also cause the need to remove the floating docks. Low water also affects use of the boat ramps. Trailers are prone to sinking in the mud when the water level is low. Staff has been looking at options for potential solutions for this problem.



Sloughing at Lincoln Drive Park boat ramp

REFERENCES

A Geologist's Perspective on the Red River of the North: History, Geography, and Planning/Management Issues. Donald P. Schwert 2003.

Appendix 1

River Access Master Plan for the Red & Red Lake Rivers

Map of the Greenway

The Greenway

Grand Forks / East Grand Forks



For more information about the bikeway system in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks please call

THE GREENWAY

GRAND FORKS / EAST GRAND FORKS

The flood of 1997 dramatically altered the landscape of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. More than 56,000 people were evacuated before waters of the Red and Red Lake Rivers crested at a record high level of 54 feet. Seventy-five percent of Grand Forks and ninety-five percent of East Grand Forks were inundated with water. The cities made national headlines as eleven of Grand Forks' downtown buildings burned. To ensure that Greater Grand Forks would be protected against future flooding, the US Army Corps of Engineers proposed the construction of a flood protection system, including a Greenway, along the Red and Red Lake Rivers.

The Greenway provides a unique opportunity for year-round outdoor recreational activities in the Greater Grand Forks area. With approximately 2,200 acres of open space, vegetation, and recreational amenities, there's something for everyone in the Greenway.

LEGEND

- YOU ARE HERE** (Red dot icon)
- Hiking Trail Access (Hiker icon)
- Biking Trail Access (Biker icon)
- Information/Kiosk (Question mark icon)
- Parking (P icon)
- Restrooms (Toilet icon)
- Picnic Area (Picnic table icon)
- Playground (Playground icon)
- Wildlife Observation Area (Binoculars icon)
- Campground (Tent icon)
- Recreation Area Office (Building icon)
- Trailer Sanitation (Trailer icon)
- Boat Access (Boat icon)
- Rapids (Waterfall icon)
- Swimming Pool (Swimmer icon)
- Fishing Access (Fishing rod icon)
- Athletic Fields (Baseball field icon)
- Golf Course (Golf club icon)
- Dog Park (Dog icon)
- Disc Golf (Disc icon)
- Softball Fields (Softball icon)
- Basketball Courts (Basketball icon)
- Tennis Courts (Tennis racket icon)
- Sand Volleyball (Volleyball icon)
- Horseshoe Pits (Horseshoe icon)
- Wildflower Garden (Flowers icon)
- River Level Monument (Monument icon)
- Labyrinth (Labyrinth icon)
- City of Grand Forks, ND (Light green box)
- Grand Forks Park District (Medium green box)
- East Grand Forks Parks (Dark green box)
- Red River State Recreation Area (Lightest green box)
- Permanent Flood Protection System (Blue line)
- Paved Trails (Red line)
- Trail Mileage between points (Double-headed arrow)

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 City Hall
 255 N. 4th St.
 P.O. Box 5200
 Grand Forks, ND 58206-5200
 Phone: 701-748-4636
 Web: www.greenwaygfg.com

East Grand Forks Parks and Recreation
 City of East Grand Forks
 600 Demers Ave.
 P.O. Box 321
 East Grand Forks, MN 56721
 Phone: 218-773-8000
 Web: www.egf.mn

Grand Forks Park District
 1210 - 7th Avenue South
 P.O. Box 12429
 Grand Forks, ND 58208-2429
 Phone: 701-745-2750
 Web: www.gfparks.org

Red River State Recreation Area
 P.O. Box 529
 515 2nd St. NW
 East Grand Forks, Minnesota 56721
 Phone: 218-773-4950
 Web: www.dnr.state.mn.us



Map Updated: March 2012

Web: www.greenwaygfg.com
 Email: greenway@grandforksgov.com

<http://www.facebook.com/greenwaygfg>

Please consult GF / EGF Bikeway Map for connection to metro-wide trail system

Appendix 2

River Access Master Plan for the Red & Red Lake Rivers

Maps of potential shore access facilities within the Greenway

- 47th Avenue South, Grand Forks
- 62nd Avenue South and South 16th Street SE, Grand Forks
- Country Club, Grand Forks
- Eagles Point Trail Head and LaFave Park, East Grand Forks
- Hartsville Coulee, East Grand Forks
- Hartsville Coulee Diversion
- Kannowski Park, Grand Forks
- Lincoln golf clubhouse, Grand Forks

47th Avenue South

Grand Forks, ND



Site Details

- Residential area.
- Water intake & outfall at the riverbank.

Pluses

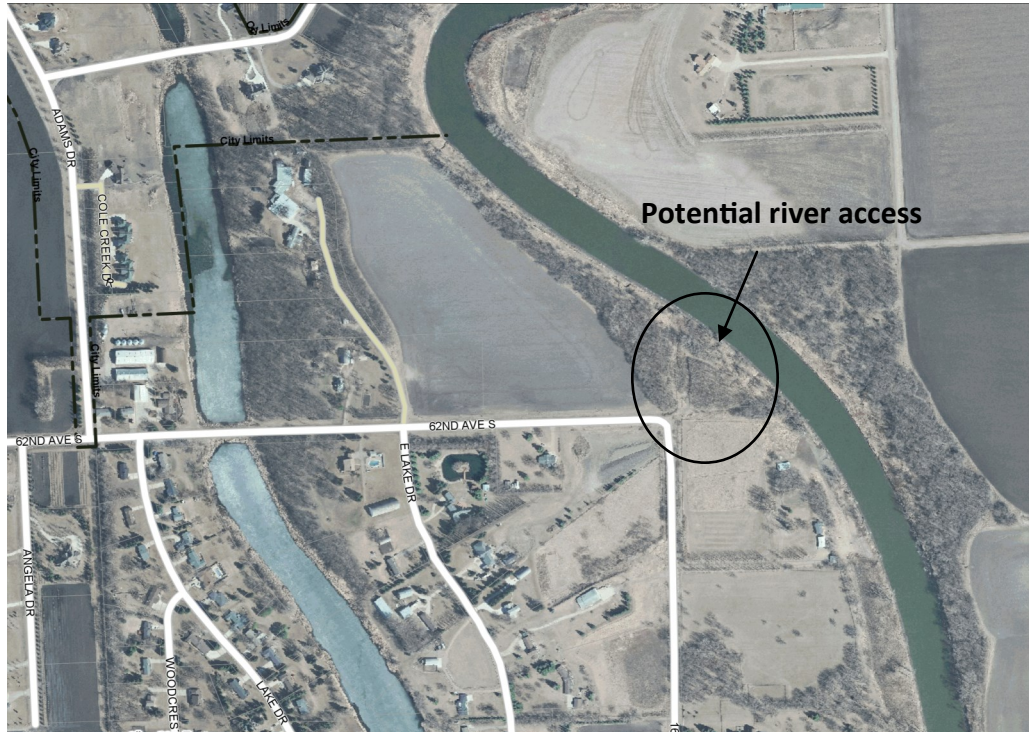
- Area is mowed near riverbank, making river easy to access.
- Paved trails are heavily used by non-motorized users.

Minuses

- Limited street parking because of bike lanes on 47th Avenue South
- Distance from on-street parking to potential access is approximately 1,000 feet.
- Slope is steep from street to river.

62nd Avenue S. & 16th Street SE.

Grand Forks, ND



Site Details

- Wooded area located south of Grand Forks city limits.
- Located on private property.

Pluses

- Offers extension of water trail.

Minuses

- Located on private property.
- Parking only available along narrow dirt road.
- Heavy vegetation around site.

Lincoln Golf clubhouse

Grand Forks, ND



Site Details

- Located near a 9-hole public golf course.
- Located less than one river mile from the Lincoln Drive Park boat ramp.

Pluses

- Ample parking available.
- Restroom in clubhouse.
- Riverbank is relatively flat.

Minuses

- Slope from paved trail to river is steep and soil sloughing has been a problem.
- Heavy tree cover between paved trail and river.
- Access requires crossing the paved trail.
- Distance from parking lot to site is approximately 400'.
- Vehicle access after flooding or heavy rain makes maintenance difficult

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www.facebook.com/greenwayggf
www.twitter.com/greenwayggf

Country Club

Grand Forks, ND



Site Details

- Located south of Grand Forks city limits.

Pluses

- Offers extension of water trail outside the city limits.

Minuses

- Located on private property.
- Parking only available along narrow dirt road.
- Heavy vegetation along site area.

Eagles Point Trail Head & LaFave Park East Grand Forks, MN



Site Details

- Located near the confluence of the Red and Red Lake Rivers.
- Popular area for riverbank fishing.

Pluses

- Restrooms and parking available at Eagles Point
- Parking available at Red Lake River and downtown boat ramps.
- Close to restaurants, sporting goods retailer and campground.

Minuses

- Maintenance when riverbank is wet.

Hartsville Coulee

East Grand Forks, MN



Site Details

- Residential neighborhood
- Level riverbank

Pluses

- Good walk-in Greenway access from James Ave SE.
- Close access to several shore bank fishing areas.
- Flat terrain.
- Popular with local anglers.

Minuses

- No parking lot for vehicles.
- No restrooms.

www.greenwaygf.com
www.facebook.com/greenwaygf
www.twitter.com/greenwaygf

Hartsville Coulee Diversion Outfall

East Grand Forks, MN



Site Details

- Located on Red Lake River.
- Approximately 1 mile south of the East Grand Forks city limits on Bygland Road or one half mile from Highway 220.

Pluses

- Provides easy , protected access to the Red Lake River.

Minuses

- City of East Grand Forks will be closing access to this area to prevent damage to the flood protection system.

Kannowski Park

Grand Forks, ND



Site Details

- Located south of Minnesota Avenue and the Point Bridge.
- Residential area nearby.

Pluses

- Parking and restrooms available at trail head.

Minuses

- Riverbank is muddy after rains.
- Prone to flooding.

www.greenwaygf.com
www.facebook.com/greenwaygf
www.twitter.com/greenwaygf

Lincoln Drive Park

Grand Forks, ND



Site Details

- Located in a destination park in the heart of community.
- Near residential area.

Pluses

- Existing boat ramp.
- Parking available at boat ramp and trail head.
- Restrooms available at trail head.

Minuses

- Any shore bank access would require extensive reshaping of the riverbank.