

Winona Trip Report Sept 16-17, 2017

By Susan Lamoureux

Trip leaders: Peggy O'Neal and Katie Katzner

Trip participants: Aaron Katzner, Sandy Touba, Tom Quinn, Sue Lamoureux, Becky Hoyer.

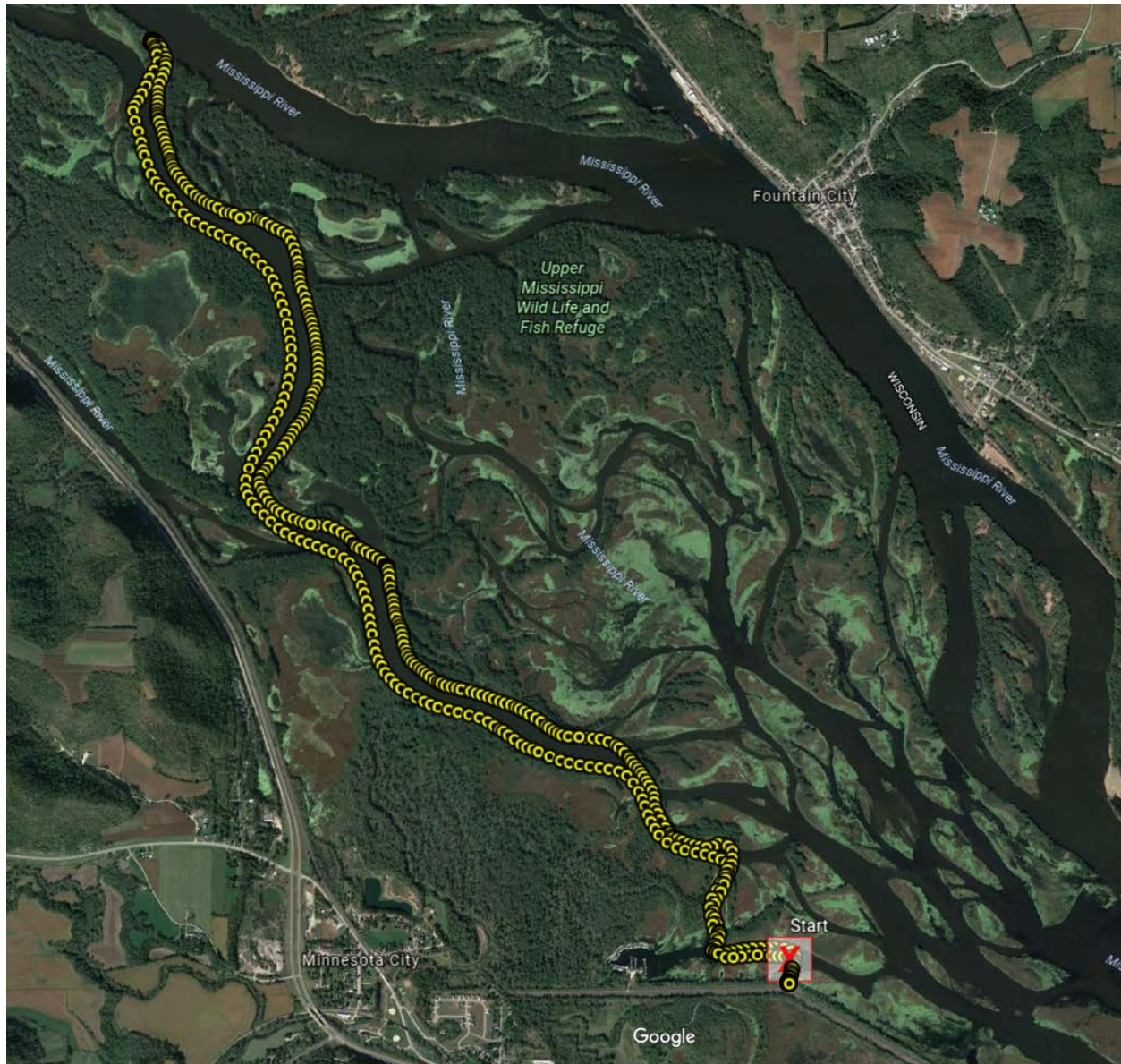
Plan was to launch late Saturday morning from one of the landings near Prairie Island campground. The unusually warm weather spawned rain and thunderstorms which we were carefully monitoring using WeatherBug and other weather trackers. The forecast of afternoon thunderstorms kept us off the water until 3. We all decided to tour the Winona [Marine Art Museum](#) which proved to be a good diversion. If you can't be on the water, why not enjoy art about water? The special photography exhibit "Mississippi River Photo Shootout" was an added bonus.

After rain but no thunderstorms, we decided on a short late afternoon paddle from the McNally landing. We paddled between and around Turtle Island and Paddlefish Island and then up the main river channel. We saw white pelican and eagles. It was about a 2 hour paddle.

Turtle and Paddlefish Islands are man-made islands in a wide area of the river named Polander Lake. They were built in 2002 to break up the wave action that was destroying vegetation on the lake, according to an information board posted at McNally Landing. The islands may be helping the spread of wild rice across the lake, which provides a food source for migrating birds. It's been interesting to see the increase in vegetation over the years we've been going down there, as shown by Google Earth photos.



Sunday was a clear, cool and glorious paddling day. We launched from Verchota landing, north of the previous day and followed part of the Verchota Canoe Trail, winding our way through Crooked Slough and Burleigh Slough to a lovely sandy lunch spot. The river is low enough that there are narrow shorelines for landing if needed. Although it was a perfect day for a much longer paddle, obligations (i.e. work) meant only a 4 hours paddle, covering 9.93 miles.



If you have not paddled in this area before, the views of the bluffs from the river is stunning. Due to the start of waterfowl hunting season Sept 23rd, paddling in this area will be more risky.





