

# ST. LOUIS RIVER NATURAL AREA



The St. Louis River Natural Area is comprised of nine places along the shoreline of the St. Louis River from Chambers Grove Park in the Fond du Lac neighborhood on the west, to Grassy Point in the Irving neighborhood on the east. The approximately 1,200 acres are home to a mix of 17 distinct native plant communities and over 150 species of birds. The natural area protects the waters of the St. Louis River estuary and provides river access for Duluth's residents and visitors.



## UNIQUE FEATURES

### Native Plant Communities

- Lake Superior estuary marsh—this community only occurs in estuaries and river mouths influenced by Lake Superior water elevations
- Sandstone cliffs, upland and floodplain forest, wet meadows

### Sensitive Species

- Sensitive plants, including: discoid beggarticks (*Bidens discoidea*), soapberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*), and the endangered pale sedge (*Carex pallescens*)
- Fifty-two sensitive bird species, including: Common Tern, Horned Grebe, Trumpeter Swan, and Peregrine Falcon

### Natural Water Features

- St. Louis River Estuary, the largest freshwater estuary in North America
- Trout streams: Knowlton, Stewart, Kingsbury and Keene Creeks

### Important Bird Congregation Area

- Tens of thousands of shorebirds, waterbirds, waterfowl, and migratory landbirds congregate in the natural area

## Geological Landforms

- Shallow sheltered backwaters of Rask Bay, North Bay, Radio Tower Bay, Mud Lake, and Kingsbury Bay are evidence of the drowned river mouth that once flowed into glacial Lake Duluth

## THINGS TO DO

### Explore, Relax, Get Healthy

- Hike and bike on designated trails, including the Western Waterfront Trail
- Go kayaking or canoeing on the National Water Trail (designation pending)
- Go fishing or boating
- Enjoy bird watching

### Volunteer

- Contact Parks and Recreation Division at 218-730-4300

## HABITAT PRIORITIES

Management and restoration of human-induced impacts and invasive species control are important to long-term protection of St. Louis River Natural Area's native plant and animal communities.



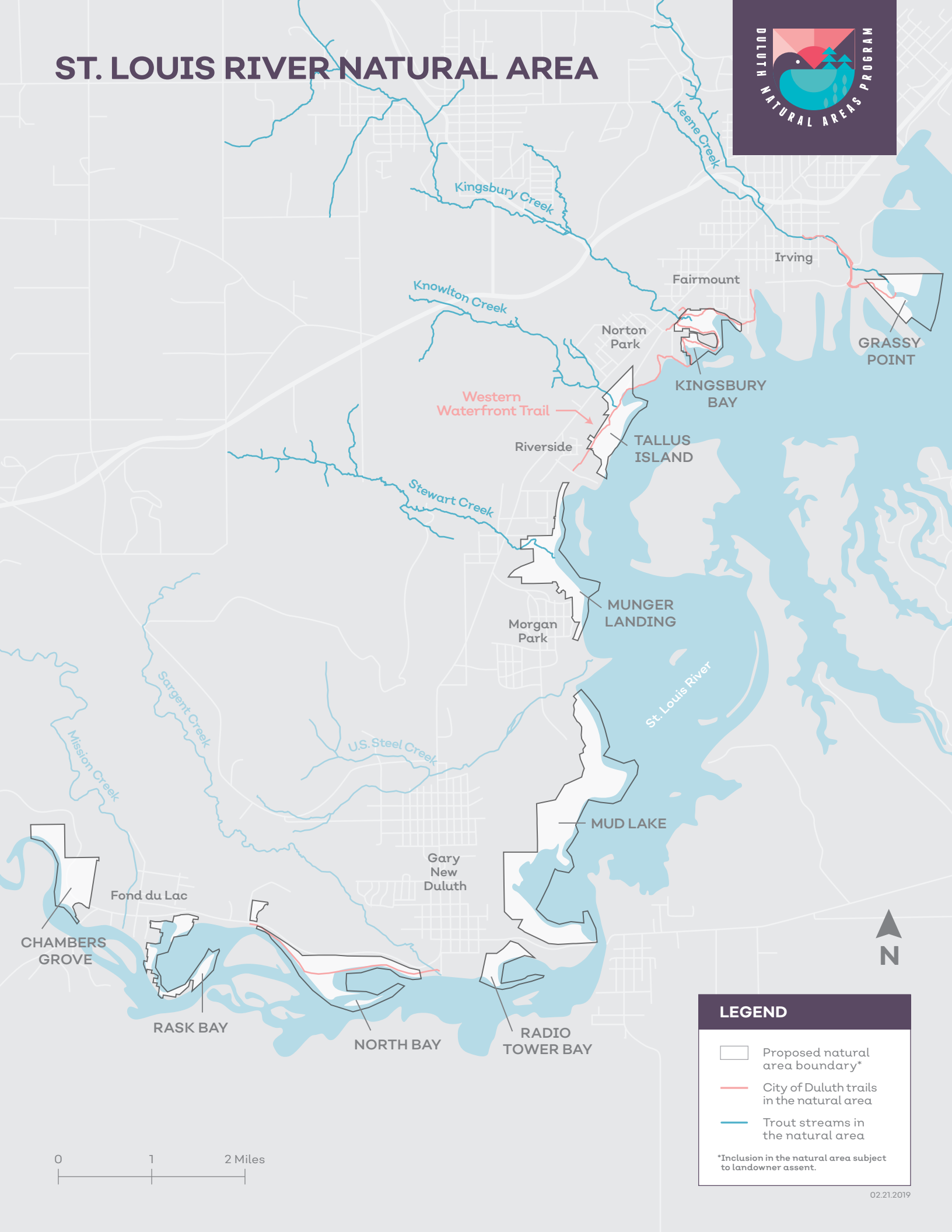
The Duluth Natural Areas Program enables the city to celebrate and sustain select open places that enrich the lives of all Duluthians by preserving and protecting the city's natural heritage.

St. Louis River Corridor Initiative  
[www.duluthmn.gov/st-louis-river-corridor](http://www.duluthmn.gov/st-louis-river-corridor)

Duluth City Parks  
[www.duluthmn.gov/parks](http://www.duluthmn.gov/parks)

DNAP program website  
[www.duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/duluth-natural-areas-program](http://www.duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/duluth-natural-areas-program)

# ST. LOUIS RIVER NATURAL AREA



## LEGEND

- Proposed natural area boundary\*
- City of Duluth trails in the natural area
- Trout streams in the natural area

\*Inclusion in the natural area subject to landowner assent.

December 31, 2019

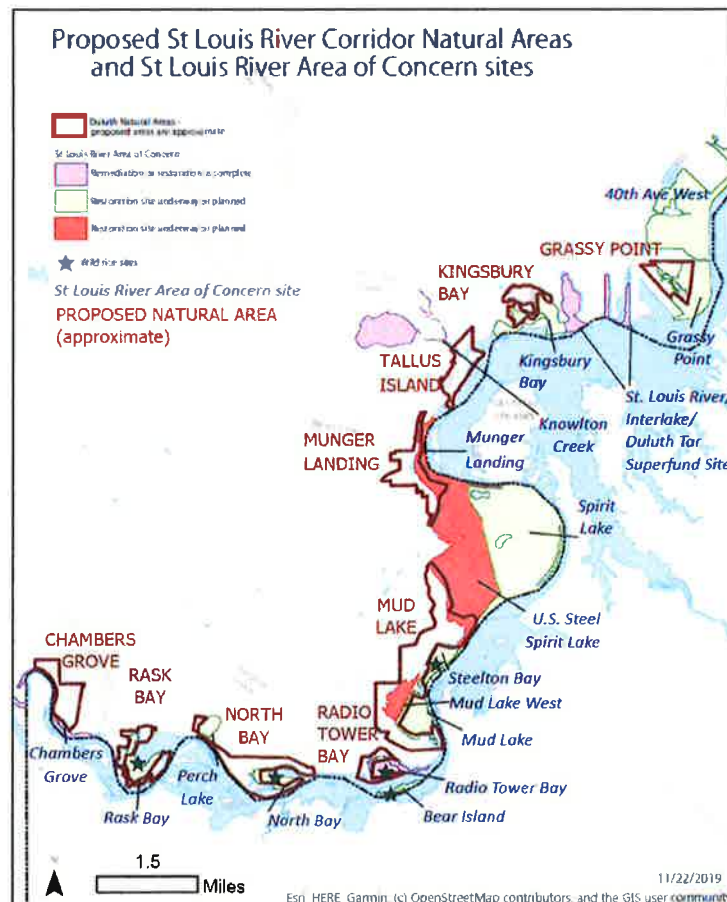
Honorable Mayor Emily Larson and Duluth City Council Members  
411 West First Street  
Duluth, MN 55802

Dear Mayor Larson and Duluth City Council Members,

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) are submitting this letter in support of the nomination of the St. Louis River Natural Area (SLRNA) under the City's Natural Areas Program. MNDNR and MPCA have reviewed and commented on the draft management plan for the SLRNA and support that effort, as well.

The St. Louis River estuary is Minnesota's only large freshwater estuary and it is vitally important as a natural, cultural, and economic resource for the State of Minnesota. It is also significant nationally and internationally for its unique ecological, historical, and economic values. We appreciate the opportunity to work collaboratively with the City of Duluth on protecting and restoring this important place.

As you can see from the figure below, the nine units of the proposed SLRNA are in close proximity to several contaminated sediment remediation sites and aquatic habitat restoration sites being addressed by the MNDNR and MPCA through the St. Louis River Area of Concern (SLRAOC) program.



December 31, 2019

Specifically, each unit in the proposed SLRNA will help protect these SLRAOC projects:

<b>SLRNA Unit</b>	<b>SLRAOC Project</b>
Grassy Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grassy Point aquatic habitat restoration (in progress)</li></ul>
Kingsbury Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kingsbury Bay aquatic habitat restoration (in progress)</li></ul>
Munger Landing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Munger Landing contaminated sediment remediation (future project)</li></ul>
Mud Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• US Steel/Spirit Lake contaminated sediment remediation &amp; aquatic habitat restoration (future project)</li><li>• Wild Rice restoration (in progress)</li><li>• Mud Lake aquatic habitat restoration (future project)</li><li>• Mud Lake West contaminated sediment remediation (future project)</li></ul>
Radio Tower Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Radio Tower Bay aquatic habitat restoration (complete)</li><li>• Wild Rice restoration (in progress)</li></ul>
North Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wild Rice restoration (in progress)</li><li>• Perch Lake aquatic habitat restoration (future project)</li></ul>
Rask Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wild Rice restoration (in progress)</li></ul>
Chambers Grove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chambers Grove aquatic habitat and shoreline restoration (complete)</li></ul>

Protecting these areas through designation as the St. Louis River Natural Area and developing a plan to manage their unique and important natural resources will help protect and enhance the SLRAOC's projects. They will provide high-quality riparian habitat that will serve as riparian buffers to help manage storm water runoff, reduce erosion potential, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Conversely, we also believe that the remediation and restoration projects, with the implementation of their long-term operations and management plans, will help protect the designated units in the St. Louis River Natural Area by enhancing the ecological functions and values of those sites. For example, the completed Knowlton Creek stream restoration project will help protect the Tallas Island Unit through the reduction of excess sedimentation through its improved hydrology.

The City's programs and the SLRAOC program are working in tandem with each other. As conditions in the St. Louis River improve with each completed SLRAOC project, peoples' desire to return to the river increases. The City of Duluth's St. Louis River Natural Area and the implementation of the Western Waterfront Trail Plan will help protect these projects and improve access to the river. Just as the SLRAOC programs are intended to help drive economic revitalization in this area, the St. Louis River Natural Area will drive further natural revitalization that will also support economic revitalization.

We applaud the City of Duluth for being proactive in protecting the St. Louis River estuary's significant habitats and we look forward to continuing to work with you in the future to protect and restore this important resource.

December 31, 2019

Sincerely,



Laura Bishop  
Commissioner  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194



Sarah Strommen  
Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4002

LB/SS/DW:nld

cc: Diane Desotelle, City of Duluth, for distribution to the Natural Resources Commission members  
Adam Fulton, City of Duluth, for distribution to the Planning Commission members  
Jessica Peterson, City of Duluth, for distribution to the Parks and Recreation Commission members  
Jim Filby-Williams, Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth



**W.J. McCABE (DULUTH) CHAPTER**  
**IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA**

P. O. Box 3063. • DULUTH, MN 55803

---

January 14, 2020

Subject: Management Plan For the St. Louis River Natural Area

The W.J. McCabe (Duluth) Chapter of the Izaak Walton League are submitting this letter to offer our organization's support for the Management Plan for the St. Louis River Natural Area (SLRNA). Since 1951, the McCabe Ikes have advocated for protecting and restoring the natural areas where we live, work and play. We applaud the City of Duluth for taking the initiative to better the ecological health of this important waterway (and surrounding areas); as well as benefiting wildlife and adding to the intrinsic value of the area.

The following are an example (but not all) of the key resources this management plan intends to protect and improve:

- 17 distinct native plant community types
- 120 acres of Estuary Marsh (Lake Superior)
- Mouths of four designated trout streams (Knowlton Creek, Stewart Creek, Kingsbury Creek, and Keene Creek)
- One state-listed endangered species, pale sedge (*Carex pallescens*)
- Two state-listed special concern species, discoid beggarticks (*Bidens discoidea*) and soapberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*)
- 52 sensitive bird species

The McCabe Chapter of the Izaak Walton League strongly agrees with the City of Duluth that the above list of natural resources are worthy of our protection and we should be fully vested in maintaining the ecological health of this natural area. We are enthusiastic that this process is moving forward and are supportive of the DNAP in general.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments, and we hope they are helpful to you as this process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Rich Staffon, President  
W. J. McCabe Chapter, IWLA

Matt Hansen, Conservation Issues Chair  
W. J. McCabe Chapter, IWLA