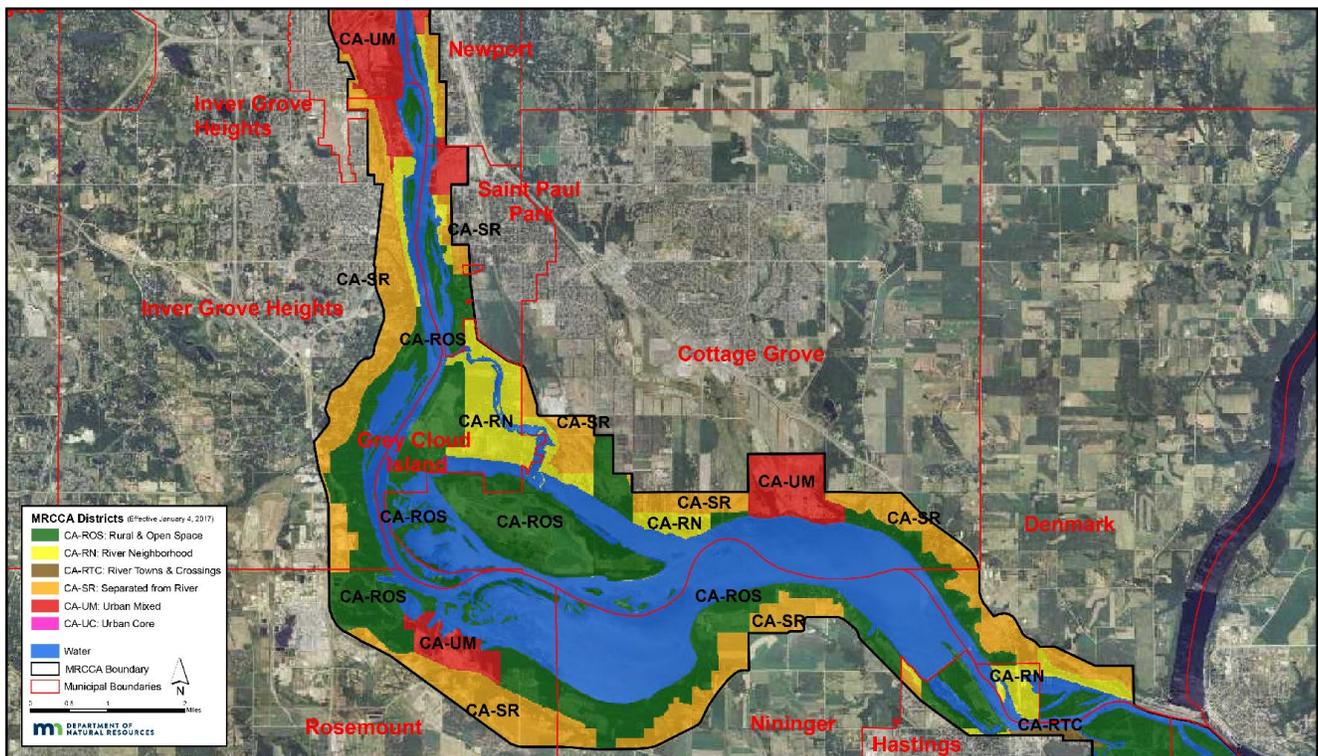


Appendix F: Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA)

Introduction

The Minnesota DNR has established districts, minimum standards, and criteria to guide land use and development within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA), consistent with purpose of Minn. Stat. § 116G.15 (2015). These rules, in effect on January 4, 2017, replace Executive Order 79-19 (1973), which previously guided land use and development.

The MRCCA extends 72 miles from Anoka and Hennepin counties to the southern border of Washington County (see Figure 6). The lands and waters within the MRCCA are to be managed to conserve and protect the existing and potential recreational, scenic, natural, and historic resources and uses for the use and enjoyment of the surrounding region. Open space is to be provided in the open river valley lands for public use and the protection of unique natural and scenic resources.



MRCCA Districts

Four land use districts, established 35 years ago, were used to identify generalized land use patterns and natural resources within the corridor. With the establishment of the new rule, the four districts have been transformed into six districts, described below. The new districts were developed to be more responsive to unique resource conditions within the MRCCA and to better reflect local planning efforts. Varying levels of protection and flexibility are defined for each of the districts dependent on the resources and features included. The figure

above provides the districts located within Washington County, including Rural & Open Space, River Neighborhood, Separated from River, and Urban Mixed.

- **Rural & Open Space District (CA-ROS)** – Rural undeveloped and developed low density residential land that is riparian or visible from the river, often contains tracts of high quality ecological resources.
- **River Neighborhood District (CA-RN)** - Developed residential lands and existing/planned parkland that are visible from the river, or that abut riparian parkland
- **River Towns & Crossings District (CA-RTC)** - Historic downtown and river crossing commercial areas, as well as existing institutional campuses.
- **Separated from River District (CA-SR)** - Land that is separated from and not visible from the river.
- **Urban Mixed District (CA-UM)** - Commercial, institutional, and industrial mixed-use areas as well as existing/planned parklands.
- **Urban Core District (CA-UC)** - Urban cores of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Primary Conservation Areas

Primary conservation areas (PCAs) define key natural and cultural resources and features that are addressed by the MRCCA rules. Key features and resources have been defined as PCAs throughout the MRCCA districts to ensure that they are given priority consideration for protection.

All local governments in the river corridor are required to have a plan that meets the MRCCA requirements, including the establishment of a permit program for vegetation management and land alterations in specific environmentally sensitive areas. Chapter 6 of the Washington County Development Code: Shoreland Management Ordinance, Critical Area Ordinance – does comply with the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan as well as the requirements of federal and state legislation, within 1,000 feet of the Mississippi River. Appendix F includes detailed information regarding the MRCCA and Washington County’s role in conservation efforts.

Grey Cloud Island and Denmark townships are within the MRCCA and are classified as a rural and open space, river neighborhood, and separated from river districts. Washington County has land use authority in the shoreline management districts; however, Grey Cloud Island Township and Denmark Township create and administer zoning and land use plans. The shoreland area of Grey Cloud Island Township is zoned as parkland and rural residential. River terraces in this area include bluffs and steep slopes and floodplain that form narrow corridors along the river and backwater lakes, greatly limiting the development potential. In Denmark Township, the best sites for rural residential development within the MRCCA are already developed. The remaining areas lack good road access or have steep slopes that limit their development potential.

Public River Corridor Views

Public river corridor views (PRCVs) is a term developed to identify scenic resources throughout the MRCCA districts. The PRCVs have been identified as the most highly valued views within the river corridor and include “views toward the river from public parkland, historic properties and public overlooks,” as well as views towards bluffs from the opposite shore. Washington County will continue to support its local government partners with the delineation and protection of PRCVs within the county.

Priorities for Restoration

Restoration of natural vegetation and plant growth within the MRCCA plays important roles for the preservation of existing resources. Benefits can include the stabilization of soils, retention and filtration of run off, provision of habitat, and the recharging of ground water. Washington County support the restoration of natural vegetation throughout the MRCCA and will support efforts of the local government partners.

Surface Water and Water-oriented Uses

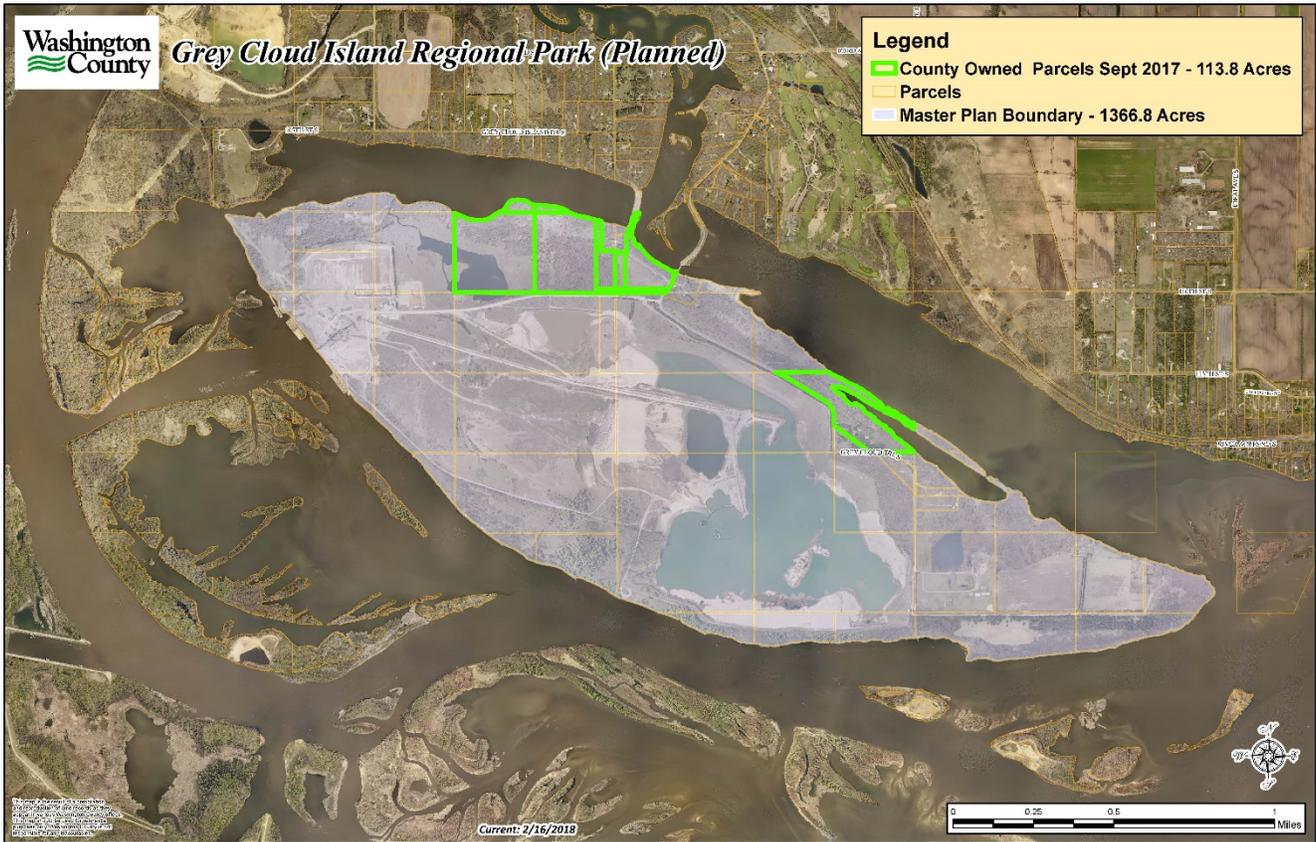
Surface water and water-oriented uses vary by Washington County community. They vary from barge operations in Grey Cloud Island to recreational marinas in Cottage Grove. These uses are controlled by the local government and supported through the county's shoreland ordinance. Washington County will work with the local government units to address existing and potential conflicts from surface water and water-oriented uses.

Open Space and Recreational Features

Open spaces and recreational features within MRCCA provide opportunities to deploy conservation efforts and preserve corridor views, among other efforts. Washington County currently maintains the Point Douglas County Park within MRCCA. The part serves as a trailhead for the Point Douglas Regional Trail and the planned St. Croix Valley Regional Trail. It features views of and access to the Mississippi River. The county is pursuing the acquisition of an addition 12.4 acres to expand the park boundary. The park's master plan calls for development including: trailhead facility improvements, picnic area improvements, parking and access improvements, and landscaping improvements.



Additionally, a master plan was adopted for the future land acquisition for the Grey Cloud Island Regional Park. Washington County currently owns 113.8 acres, with a total master plan boundary of 1366.8 acres. The park is not currently open to the public. Grey Cloud Island features natural and archaeological resources that represent an important link within the Mississippi River corridor network. This park will also support wildlife habitat (i.e., Mississippi River Valley wildfowl flyway) and sensitive water basins (i.e., Mooer's Lake, Baldwin Lake, and Mississippi River shoreline). The landscape types include mixed hardwood forest and 100-year designated floodplains. The land resides in the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area, as defined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.



Transportation and Public Facilities

Transportation facilities, when located or designed improperly, can have a negative impact on MRCCA. These impacts can include visual impacts to PRCVs or environmental impacts to PCAs. Washington County will continue to employ best practices when pursuing transportation and public facility improvements.