The Rum River

The Rum, a 148-mile river of gradual grade, is stumped in history. The French explored it. The Chipewa and Sioux fought along it, and the mussel beds that helped build the cities of the Midwest were fished out of it during the lumber booms of the 1880s. The Rum was particularly prized because it supplied its bounty of mussels into the Mississippi River above the falls of St. Anthony. It, like the Minnesota River to the west and the St. Croix River to the east, carried away the vast pine stands of east-central Minnesota in less than 50 years.

The Rum’s name is an interesting story in itself. The Sioux referred to Lake Mille Lacs, the source of the Rum, as Spirit Lake. Europeans apparently mistranslated “Spirit” to “Rum.”

The Rum’s headwaters were the capital of the Sioux when the French explorer Daniel Greysolon, Sieur Du Lhut, arrived in 1679. Du Lhut had been sent to the region of the “beautiful lakes” by the Governor of New France, Count Frontenac, who hoped to establish new trapping grounds and west domination of the fur-trade industry from the British. Du Lhut, who had left from Montreal, discovered what the Indians already knew, the nearby lands were rich in natural resources, especially wild rice, fish and game.

The Rum is a river for beginning and intermediate canoeists. Flows are moderate, rapids are few, and the river is generally shallow, with the exception of the extreme southern reach.

The Rum is a designated Wild and Scenic River, which means state Legislation preserves and protects its outstanding scenic, recreational, natural, historical and scientific values. The Wild and Scenic River Act is not meant to narrow rivers, but rather prevent damage to exceptional rivers caused by uncontrolled development.

Boating Information

- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device that state law requires to be on board the craft.
- Bring an extra paddle.
- Not all portions of this water trail are suitable for motor use.

Register your watercraft. All watercraft must be within 9 feet in length, including nonmotorized canoes and kayaks, must be registered in Minnesota or your state of residence.

Sustainable Ecosystems

Outdoor recreation is dependent on a healthy and attractive natural environment. Sustainable outdoor recreation enables people to enjoy the outdoors without negative impacts on the environment.

Communities working together can improve water resources by promoting environmentally sensitive land-use practices along rivers and throughout watersheds. Natural shoreline buffers improve water quality by filtering out pollutants and sediments.

Healthy and diverse native shoreline plant communities are attractive and provide important habitat for birds and wildlife.

- Bring drinking water. It is only available at a limited number of rest areas. Drinking river water is not recommended, but if you do it must be treated.
- Respect private property. Stop only at designated sites; much of the shoreline is private property.
- Be sanitary! Use designated toilet facilities or bury human waste away from the river.

Rest Areas and Camping Sites

- Public rest areas are available along the route to rest, relax, and enjoy the scenery.
- Camp only in designated campsites, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis.