

Mississippi River Critical Corridor Area

The Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) is a joint state, regional and local program that provides coordinated planning and management for the 72-mile stretch of the Mississippi River through the seven-county metropolitan area and for 54,000 acres of surrounding land across 30 local jurisdictions. The MRCCA shares a boundary with the [Mississippi National River and Recreation Area \(MNRRA\)](#), a unit of the National Park Service.

The MRCCA was designated a state critical area in 1976 to protect its many unique natural and cultural resources and values. These resources and values are protected through development standards and criteria implemented via local land use plans and zoning ordinances.

The purpose of the MRCCA designation is to

1. protect and preserve the Mississippi River and adjacent lands that the legislature finds to be unique and valuable state and regional resources for the benefit of the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the state, region, and nation;
2. prevent and mitigate irreversible damages to these state, regional, and natural resources;
3. preserve and enhance the natural, aesthetic, cultural, and historical values of the Mississippi River and adjacent lands for public use and benefit;

4. protect and preserve the Mississippi River as an essential element in the national, state, and regional transportation, sewer and water, and recreational systems; and
5. protect and preserve the biological and ecological functions of the Mississippi River corridor.

The MRCCA is home to a full range of residential neighborhoods and parks as well as river-related commerce, industry, and transportation. Though the river corridor has been extensively developed, many natural areas remain, including bluffs, islands, floodplains, wetlands, riparian zones, and native aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna.

In January 2017, the State of Minnesota adopted new rules for MRCCA. These rules (see Minnesota Rules, chapter 6106) updated standards for protecting natural, scenic, cultural, recreational, and economic resources within MRCCA and laid out standards for updating local MRCCA plans for complying with these standards.

The new rules were the result of a four-year rulemaking process that focused on developing standards to be implemented through city and township zoning ordinances. However, there are a number of standards that must be implemented by jurisdictions such as counties that own and operate land and facilities within the corridor. Counties are specifically required by the rules (see 6106.0060, subp. 7) to prepare or amend MRCCA plans consistent with the rules.

Hennepin County's role

Hennepin County prepares or amends Mississippi River Critical Corridor Area plans, as required under Minnesota Rules, chapter 6106.0060, subp.7.

Hennepin County does not have land use authority, does not own land other than right-of-way, and does not own or operate facilities, parks, surface or water oriented uses within the MRCCA and as such MRCCA requirements pertaining to those areas do not apply to Hennepin County and are not included in this plan.

The county recognizes that local communities may identify public river corridor views (PRCV) within the MRCCA that include county operated or owned transportation facilities. These are likely to be views from the river that include county owned facilities or views from a county owned facility to the river.

MRCCA management

MRCCA is operated through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and is intended to enhance the management and use of land and water within the corridor. The DNR provides guidelines for how development should be managed in order to protect resources and the scenic qualities of the river corridor.

Corridor districts

Six districts are defined in the MRCCA rules (see Minnesota Statutes, section 116G.15, subdivision 3). The districts are established based on the natural and built character of different areas of the river corridor. All include diverse land uses, including parks and open space and scenic, natural, and historic areas.

Rural and open space district

The rural and open space district (CA-ROS) is characterized by rural and low-density development patterns and land uses. This includes land that is riparian or visible from the river as well as large, undeveloped tracts of high ecological and scenic value, floodplains, and undeveloped islands. Many primary conservation areas exist in the district. Primary conservation areas are defined in the

MCRRA rules (6106.0050, subp. 53) as key resources and features, including shore impact zones (SIZ), bluff impact zones (BIZ), floodplains, wetlands, gorges, areas of confluence with tributaries, natural drainage routes, unstable soils and bedrock, native plant communities, cultural and historic properties, significant existing vegetative stands, tree canopies

The CA-ROS district must be managed to sustain and restore the rural and natural character of the corridor and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas.

River neighborhood district

The river neighborhood district (CA-RN) is characterized by primarily residential neighborhoods that are riparian or readily visible from the river or that abut riparian parkland. The district includes parks and open space, limited commercial development, marinas, and related land uses.

The CA-RN district must be managed to maintain the character of the river corridor within the context of existing residential and related neighborhood development, and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas. Minimizing erosion and the flow of untreated stormwater into the river and enhancing habitat and shoreline vegetation are priorities in this district.

River towns and crossings district

The river towns and crossings district (CA-RTC) is characterized by historic downtown areas and limited nodes of intense development at specific river crossings, as well as institutional campuses that predate designation of the Mississippi River Critical Corridor Area and that include taller buildings.

The CA-RTC district must be managed in a manner that allows continued growth and redevelopment in historic downtowns and more intensive redevelopment in limited areas at river crossings to accommodate compact walkable development patterns and connections to the river. Minimizing erosion and the flow of untreated stormwater into the river, providing public access to and public views of the river, and restoring natural vegetation in riparian areas and tree canopy are priorities in this district.

Separated from river district

The separated from river district (CA-SR) is characterized by its physical and visual distance from the Mississippi River. The district includes land separated from the river by distance, topography, development, or a transportation corridor. The land in this district is not readily visible from the river.

The CA-SR district provides flexibility in managing development without negatively affecting the key resources and features of the river corridor. Minimizing negative impacts to primary conservation areas and minimizing erosion and flow of untreated stormwater into the Mississippi River are priorities in this district.

Urban mixed district

The urban mixed district (CA-UM) includes large areas of highly urbanized mixed use that are a part of the urban fabric of the river corridor, including institutional, commercial, industrial, and residential areas and parks and open space.

The CA-UM district must be managed in a manner that allows for future growth and potential transition of intensely developed areas that does not negatively affect public river corridor views and that protects bluffs and floodplains. Restoring and enhancing bluff and shoreline habitat, minimizing erosion and flow of untreated stormwater into the river, and providing public access to and public views of the river are priorities in this district.

Urban core district

The urban core district (CA-UC) includes the urban cores of Minneapolis and St. Paul

The CA-UC district must be managed with the greatest flexibility to protect commercial, industrial, and other high-intensity urban uses while minimizing negative impacts to primary conservation areas and minimizing erosion and flow of untreated stormwater into the river. Providing public access to and public views of the river are priorities in this district.

Hennepin County MRCCA plan

Hennepin County is required under Minnesota Rules, chapter 6106.0060, subp.7, to prepare a MCRRA plan.

Hennepin County's role in MRCCA stems from ownership and operation of transportation facilities that are located within MRCCA as depicted in Figures 5-1 and 5-2, and listed below.

County roads

- CSAH 3 — Lake Street
- CSAH 5 — Franklin Avenue
- CSAH 12 — Dayton River Road, E Hayden Lake Road, West River Road
- CSAH 23 — Marshall Street NE
- CSAH 46 — 46th Street E
- CSAH 52 — Hennepin Avenue, 1st Avenue NE (the old 952)
- CSAH 66 — Broadway Street NE
- CSAH 152 — Washington Avenue
- CSAH 153 — Lowry Avenue
- CSAH 204 — Bloomington Road

County bridges

- Br. 62082 (Lake Street, CSAH 3)
- Br. 2441 (Franklin Avenue, CSAH 5)
- Br. 27636 (Hennepin Avenue, CSAH 52)
- Br. 27537 (Hennepin Avenue, CSAH 52)
- Br. 27538 (Hennepin Avenue, CSAH 52)
- Br. 27608 (Broadway Street, CSAH 66)
- Br. 9360 (Washington Avenue, CSAH 152)
- Br. 27B60 (Lowry Avenue, CSAH 153)



- Where feasible, minimize the impacts to primary conservation areas and public river corridor views from county transportation projects. in accordance with Minn. Rule Chapter 6106.0130, Subp. 4.
- Plan and implement county programs and projects in the MRCCA in a manner consistent with the purposes of the Critical Area Act (see Minnesota Rules, chapter 6106).
- Regulate road and right-of-way maintenance activities for transportation facilities in accordance with Minn. Rule Chapter 6106.0130, Subp. 4

Property

- Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority — Midtown Greenway

Hennepin County recognizes that transportation facilities can have impacts on scenic views, habitat, and soil erosion and that development of these facilities should be conducted in a manner that minimizes impacts to the MRCCA.

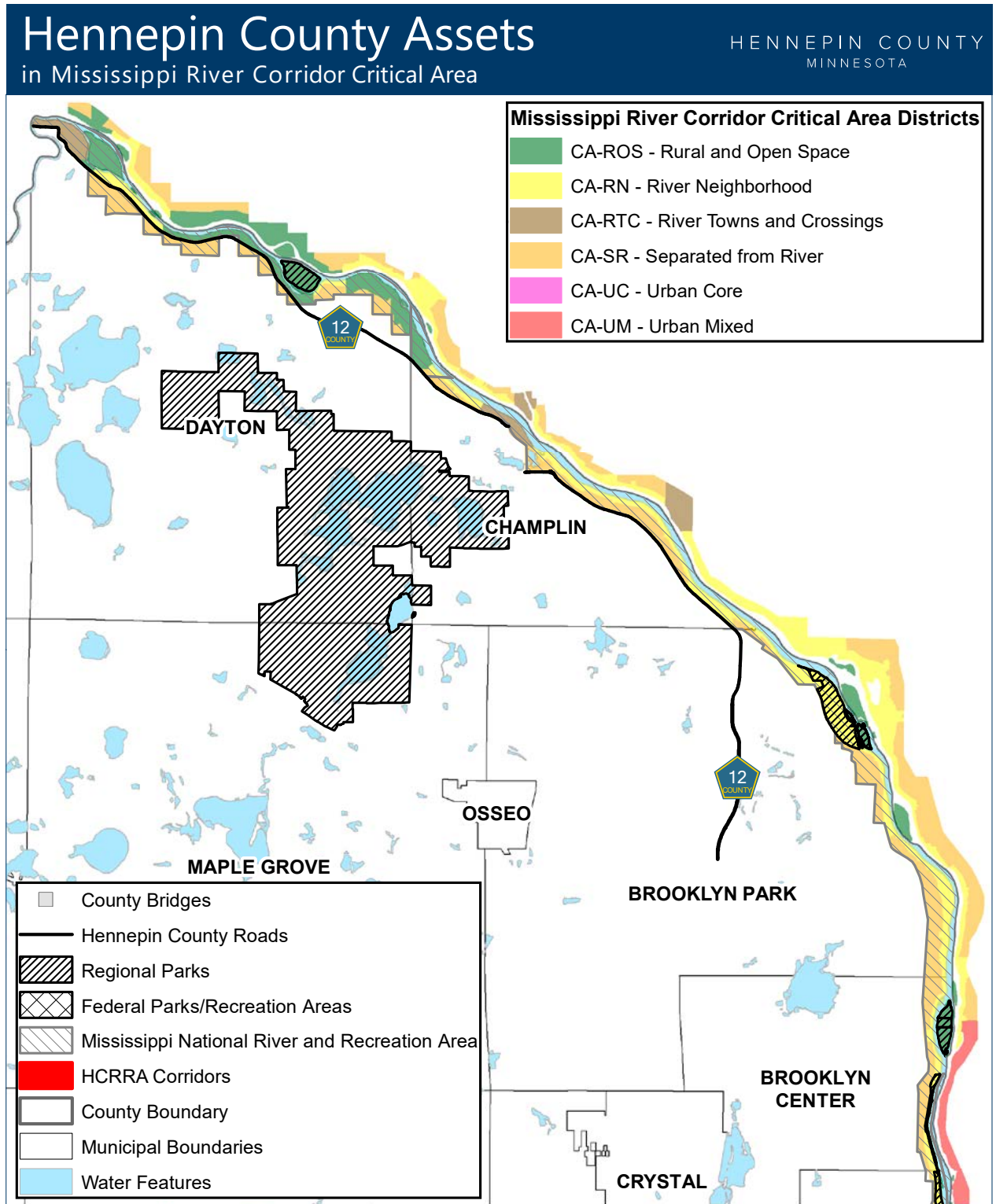
Implementation actions

Hennepin County will employ the following procedures consistent with MRCCA guidance:

- Work with the DNR, local municipalities and other relevant entities when planning and implementing programs and projects within the MRCCA to protect and/or minimize impacts to primary conservation areas on facilities owned by the county.
- Coordinate with cities and townships to ensure the county is aware of public river corridor views identified on county owned and operated facilities.
- Consider provision for scenic overlooks, safe pedestrian crossings, and public riverfront access when planning and designing construction and reconstruction of county transportation facilities.

- Conduct annual bridge maintenance activities, including bridge flushing maintenance.
- Follow a five-year cycle for bridge surface sealing maintenance where bridge surfaces will be sealed with Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) and protect all bridge deck drains to contain the MMA.
- Contain any bridge maintenance work involving concrete repairs in a preplanned containment system.
- Remove and haul away snow from bridges.
- Sweep county roads twice a year.
- Reduce salt use for snow and ice removal.
- Use a spraying system with biodegradable potassium acetate for deicing on Lowry Bridge.
- Include the identification of projects that lie within the MCRRA in the county's capital improvement program (CIP).

Figure 5-1: Hennepin County Assets in MRCC (North)

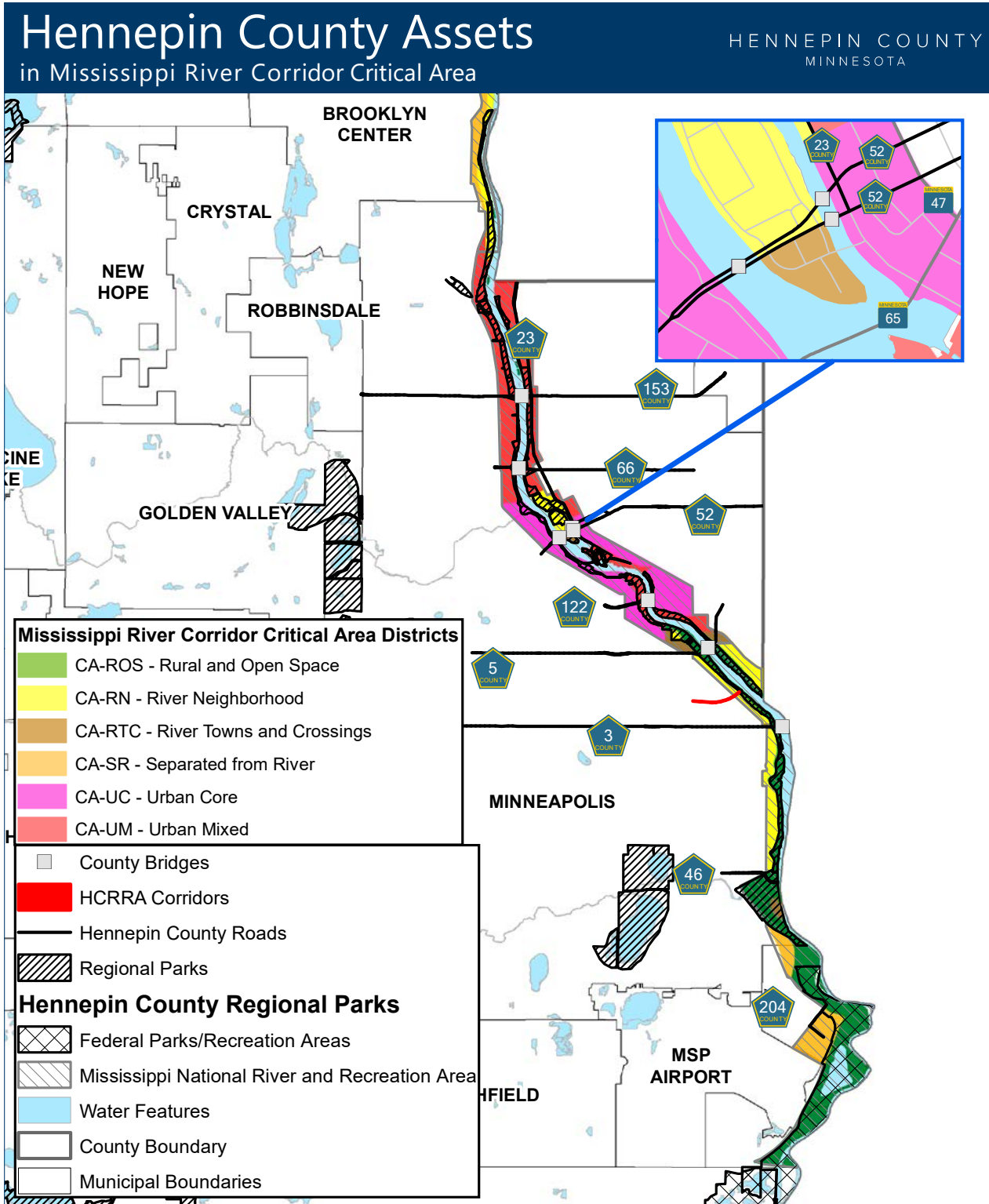


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Publication date: 12/28/2018
Data source: Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, National Park Service



Figure 5-2: Hennepin County Assets in MRCCA (South)



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Publication date: 4/12/2018
Data source: Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, National Park Service

