

CHIPPEWA RIVER BASIN FACTS

- The Chippewa river watershed drains a 2,080 square mile basin. Counties in this basin include: Chippewa, Swift, Kandiyohi, Pope, Stevens, Douglas, Grant and Otter Tail.
- The source of the Chippewa is near the Fish Lake area in Otter Tail County, from where it flows 130 miles to its mouth in the Minnesota River at Montevideo.
- The Chippewa's gradient is 4 1/2 feet per mile, the annual mean flow at the mouth is 200 cubic feet per second, although it has been as high as 10,000 cubic feet per second at flood stage.
- The main tributaries are: The little Chippewa River, East Branch Chippewa and Shakopee Creek. Together, these tributaries contribute nearly half the flow of the main stem.
- The higher headwaters regions (Pope & Douglas counties) of the Chippewa are rich in wetlands, lakes and fish and wildlife resources. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has restored dozens of wetlands in this area, and water quality and fish populations are relatively healthy.
- The lower reaches of the river from just north of Benson and southward have not fared as well. Several miles of the river near Benson were channelized in the 1950's. Much of Shakopee Creek has been channelized and wildfowl marshes have been greatly reduced in this area through drainage. It is estimated that upwards of 95% of the original wetlands in the lower basin have been drained.
- In its recently completed four year study of the Minnesota River Basin, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency cites the lower Chippewa River as having habitat quality well below the tributary average for the basin. Surveys reveal the Chippewa as having the lowest levels of macroinvertebrate life (i.e. mayflies, caddisflies etc. which are sensitive to pollution and key indicators of water quality) in the entire Minnesota river watershed.
- Much of the Chippewa River Basin lies in Minnesota's 2nd Congressional district, which is among the most agriculturally-intensive districts in the nation. The district is one of the last strongholds of the independent, small-to-medium sized family farmer. The district is among the top 25 congressional districts for total CRP payments.

Appendix A

Map of the Lower Chippewa River Basin

