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Restoration of Hall's Island along Northeast Minneapolis riverfront begins in November

Workers will carve habitat-rich back channel and build out island over next 6-8 months at site of longtime lumberyard purchased by Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in 2010 as part of RiverFirst Vision

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is excited to announce construction begins in November on a project that will restore Hall's Island along the Northeast Minneapolis riverfront. Work will be based out of the Scherer site, an 11-acre piece of land directly north of the Plymouth Avenue Bridge that was purchased by the MPRB in 2010.

Restoring Hall's Island will be an important milestone in the long-term vision laid out for Upper Riverfront in [RiverFirst](#) and [Above the Falls Master Plan](#). These plans call for the incremental transformation of more than 11 miles of largely inaccessible shoreline degraded through decades of industrial use into an ecologically valuable network of parkland and trails. Work to construct the island will include expanding the existing shoreline into the river and carving out a back channel through the Scherer site to form the island. This phase of the project is expected to last up to eight months.

"Restoring Hall's Island will be a landmark in transforming the Upper Riverfront into a destination that provides a thoughtful balance of wildlife habitat and opportunities for people to play, exercise, relax and connect with the Mississippi River," said MPRB Superintendent Jayne Miller.

"We're incredibly excited to see this project break ground after years of steadfast support and hard work from riverfront advocates, Park Board staff and our many partners," added MPRB Commissioner Liz Wielinski. "It's clear there's significant momentum building toward creating the greener, more accessible Upper Riverfront envisioned in RiverFirst and Above the Falls."

Hall's Island History

The island shows up on the earliest known survey (1895) of the Mississippi River through Minneapolis. The City of Minneapolis operated a bath house on the island from 1905 to 1926. Hall's Island was sold to Scherer Bros Lumber Co in 1963 and Scherer Bros filled the channel and connected the island to shore in 1966 to expand mill operations.

The MPRB purchased the Scherer site in 2010. From 2011 to 2013, a plan to restore the island and build a park on the adjacent shoreline was created and approved as part of RiverFirst and Above the Falls Master Plan. In 2013, the Minnesota State Legislature authorized a six-year window to restore Hall's Island. Since then, the MPRB and consultants conducted extensive environmental investigation and advanced design work to get the project permitted through the US Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

"For decades NE Minneapolis has dreamed of access to natural areas, loop trails and water access - amenities other parts of the city take for granted," said state Representative Diane Loeffler. "This restoration is a huge step forward in having a local connection to nature and restoring habitat."

"The Hall's Island restoration project is significant to our city, region and state," said state Senator Kari Dziedzic. "I want to thank my colleagues at the State and County for their commitment to restoring important habitat along the Mississippi River and returning recreational access to the river after more than a century of industrial use."

Island Restoration

This phase of work focuses on expanding the shoreline into the Mississippi River and carving a back channel to create the island. On the mainland, this project phase will soften the slope adjacent to the river, establish new shoreline vegetation and create a gravel beach for paddlers. Recreational access to the island will not be allowed until future phases are built.

Once restored, Hall's Island will stretch from the northern edge of the Scherer site, extend south underneath the Plymouth Avenue Bridge and include the Boom Island Lighthouse at its southern tip. It will feature a sandy habitat beach (off-limits to people), rock ledges, basking logs, shrubs, plants, trees and prairie grasses.

The open water back channel will range from approximately 120 to 150 feet wide, with an average depth of approximately six feet during normal flow conditions. Materials placed in the back channel will provide high-quality habitat for native mussels.

"The restored Hall's Island will improve the local ecology and provide a rich source of habitat in the heart of the city," said Mississippi Watershed Management Organization Projects and Outreach Director Stephanie Johnson. "We look forward to seeing an island teeming with birds, fish, turtles, mussels and other wildlife."

Future phases of park development will include two pedestrian bridges connecting to the island from the Scherer site and a third bridge connecting to Boom Island Park, an elevated boardwalk on the island with observation platforms, and expanded riverfront trails across the mainland.

RiverFirst Signature Project

RiverFirst is a visionary initiative adopted by the MPRB in 2012 to develop continuous parkland and robust riverfront parks on both sides of the Mississippi River from downtown Minneapolis to the northern city limits. Through RiverFirst, the MPRB and its primary philanthropic partner, the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, will establish parks as an engine for economic development, transform the Mississippi from a barrier to a connector, and create access for North and Northeast Minneapolis to the natural world and one of Minnesota's most dynamic natural resources. RiverFirst signature projects include Hall's Island-Scherer Site, as well as Water Works, the Great Northern Greenway River Link, Upper Harbor Terminal, and the Mississippi East Bank Trail.

A multi-year, multi-agency effort, the RiverFirst Initiative is being supported in part through the Parks Foundation's RiverFirst Capital Campaign, which will bring millions of dollars of philanthropic funding to RiverFirst signature projects now in development.

"The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is thrilled to help celebrate this important RiverFirst milestone," said Minneapolis Parks Foundation Executive Director Tom Evers. "With the leadership of the Minneapolis Park Board, and the tenacity of a committed network of partners, we've upheld this powerful community vision for reconnecting people to the natural wonder of the Mississippi River. It's through projects like these that we help transform human life."

Construction Impacts

Construction is scheduled to start in November. Initial work will include soil remediation and site grading. The Mississippi East Bank Trail will close between Boom Island Park and Sheridan Memorial Park during most of the construction period and reopen next summer, when the project is scheduled to wrap up.

The trail detour reroutes pedestrians and bicyclists to Marshall Street NE between 8th Avenue NE and 13th Avenue NE.

Media Inquiries

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Digital Images

Historic aerial photos of Hall's Island and graphics and illustrations depicting completed project work are available at the following Dropbox link and may be published for editorial use: [Hall's Island Images](#)