

## Walk & Talk Self-Guided Tours

# Hall's Island Restoration

**Difficulty:** Easy, less than 1 mile walk on paved trails, grass, and some sand

**Recommend bringing binoculars**

This walk features the 2018 rebuilding and habitat restoration of Hall's Island, located in the Mississippi River just north of Boom Island. This multi-partner project brought a rich source of habitat and natural environment back to the Mississippi River corridor. Learn from two project leaders about the development, engineering, and habitat restoration of this unique park amenity.



**About Your Guide:**  
Marcy Bean, Sr. Landscape Architect, Barr Engineering. Marcy was the Halls Island project manager on behalf of the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization.



**About Your Guide:**  
Michelle Kimble, Senior Civil Engineer, Barr Engineering. Michelle was the lead Civil Designer for the Halls Island project.

★ **Start** – The island originally located in this area was used largely for the lumber milling industry. However, in the 1960s, the river channel was filled in as the Scherer Brothers Lumber Company extended its operations outwards to engulf the island. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and partners purchased this 11.3-acre riverfront site with a vision that included reconstructing the historic island and the habitat it once provided, as well as developing the adjacent Graco Park.

**A. Engineering** – Make your way up the stairs to the north side of the Plymouth Avenue Bridge to see an aerial view of Hall's Island. Building an island in the Mississippi River is no small task! Years of design and permitting were required to prevent negative impacts to the river's flow or downstream users. Barr's design — informed by floodplain and sediment transport modeling — had to prevent an increase in flood levels, curtail sediment concerns, and maintain the island's stability.

**B. Habitat** – Walk towards to the south end of the newly created beach on the river's edge. Plants along the water's edge stabilize soil and buffer the land from the river's force. Using plants in this way for new construction is called bioengineering. Log vanes from root wads of trees deflect flow away from the shoreline to reduce erosion and create fish and turtle habitat. Over 7,000 live stakes of willow and dogwoods were planted on the shore to help reduce velocities and erosion, creating substantial songbird habitat.

**C. Biodiversity** – As you make your way along the beach, you can see the beautiful biodiversity of the plants and critters on Hall's Island. The project created three acres of new habitat in the river and improved biodiversity in a heavily industrial Minneapolis neighborhood with limited access to natural areas and the river. Three habitat types were created: riverbed habitat for freshwater mussels, invertebrates, and fish; river shoreline habitat for reptiles,



amphibians, invertebrates, and fish; and floodplain island habitat for mammals and birds.

**D. Mussels** – Freshwater mussels are an important indicator of water quality. In the past few decades, state and federal agencies have made significant efforts toward reestablishing mussel communities in the Upper Mississippi River. The sand and stones used to create the shallow channel between Hall's Island and the park were designed with mussels in mind. With improving water quality and a place to call home, we hope to see many species of mussels thrive in this section of the river.

**E. Future Graco Park** – Further inland, you'll find the future site of Graco Park. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board hopes to begin constructing Graco Park as early as 2023. The approved concept plan includes facilities and lawns for gathering and incorporates native plantings to support the habitat creation that was started on the island.

A new park building will provide the community with a flexible-use space and restroom facilities. Park visitors will be able to view the island, and a tunnel will be constructed to connect the regional trail access from Boom Island to the new park without crossing Plymouth Avenue.



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