

# Site #24 - Willow River

The Willow River flows approximately 30 miles through St. Croix County and empties into the St. Croix River at Hudson, Wisconsin. The headwaters of the Willow River are in the Cylon State Wildlife Area near the Village of Deer Park. From the headwaters, the river passes south of Deer Park and winds through New Richmond, Boardman and Burkhardt, flowing through the Betterly Waterfowl Production Area and the Willow River State Park along the way. In the Willow River State Park, it tumbles 45 feet over the Willow Falls on its way to the St. Croix River.

## Quick Facts:



### State & Country:

Wisconsin, St. Croix and Polk

### Habitat Types:

Forested stream  
Trout Stream  
Wetlands  
Prairie and wetland complexes in the watershed  
Floodplain forest

### Important Wildlife:

Bald Eagle, wood duck, great blue heron  
Remnant wild brook trout population  
Stocked wild strain brown trout  
Stocked rainbow trout

### Protection Designations:

Various portions are classified as Class II or III stream dependent on location



## Ecological & Cultural Significance:

The River provides important habitat for fish and many species of waterbirds including wood ducks, great blue herons, green herons and bald eagles. On certain stretches, the river is used for fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Many people also come to enjoy the scenic beauty of the river and the water falls in the Willow River State Park. It is a locally important trout stream providing habitat to a remnant wild brook trout population as well as stocked wild strain brown trout and stocked rainbow trout.

## Potential Threats:

The population of St. Croix County has increased 25% between 1990 and 2000 and an additional 18% between 2000 and 2004. Along with this population growth, there has been an increase in urban and rural residential development in the watershed. Farming activities have also shifted from a corn alfalfa rotation to a corn soybean rotation. These changes in the watershed are threatening the water quality of the Willow River. In addition to the water quality impacts, development along the Willow River is also threatening the pristine nature of the river.

## Current Activities:

In an effort to provide wildlife habitat and improve water quality, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin DNR are actively restoring wetlands and grasslands on private and public lands within the 292 square mile watershed.

The University of Minnesota and the St. Croix Research Station (Science Museum of Minnesota) are using the Soil and Water Assessment Tool to model the effects of land use changes in the Willow River Watershed. Hopefully, this information will help direct Best Management Practices in the watershed that can improve the water quality of the Willow River.



## Contact Information:

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## Working Partners



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