



2025-2026 River Activities Questionnaire Findings

Summary

Between September 2025 and January 2026, the St. Louis River Alliance collected community input through its River Activities Questionnaire to better understand how residents engage with the St. Louis River, Allouez Bay, and Wisconsin Point, and to identify improvements that could increase access, stewardship, and connection. This effort was conducted in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as part of a shared goal to more meaningfully connect residents to these areas.

The questionnaire was designed not only to gather information about current and desired river-based activities, but also to better understand how access, amenities, and communication could be improved to support those activities. Input collected helps identify community interests and informs how partners can build or enhance access, programming, and resources to better serve residents. Equally important, this effort was part of a broader intention to build trust and strengthen relationships with the community, while creating opportunities for residents to stay informed and engaged. By inviting early input, the St. Louis River Alliance and its partners sought to encourage ongoing community involvement and ensure meaningful opportunities for public input on restoration projects planned for Allouez Bay, Wisconsin Point, and the St. Louis River in the near future.

The questionnaire gathered a broad range of information about current use, interests, and barriers to participation. Survey questions addressed respondents' neighborhood, zip code, and age range; whether they had visited Allouez Bay or Wisconsin Point within the past year; the activities they currently enjoy; and favorite places along the St. Louis River to recreate or visit.

Participants also identified their top river-based activities of interest, including paddling, bird watching, fishing, guided walks and talks, swimming, service projects, winter recreation, and water safety classes.

The survey further explored barriers to participation, such as limited or unclear access points, inadequate amenities or equipment, transportation and time constraints, safety concerns, and uncertainty about where or how to participate. Respondents also shared their preferred communication methods, provided open-ended feedback, and had the option to sign up for future updates from the St. Louis River Alliance and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources related to projects and programs in Allouez Bay and Wisconsin Point.

The questionnaire was distributed through multiple outreach methods, including two physical postcard mailings to households and businesses in Superior, Wisconsin. The first mailing, sent on September 16, 2025, reached 837 addresses in the Allouez and Itasca neighborhoods. A second, broader mailing on November 17, 2025, reached 6,613 households across Allouez, Itasca, South Itasca, Parkland, Faxon, East End, Central Park, and one route in the North End. Additional responses were collected through printed surveys at in-person outreach events and electronic versions shared via the St. Louis River Alliance's website, blog, email newsletter, and social media channels (Facebook and Instagram).

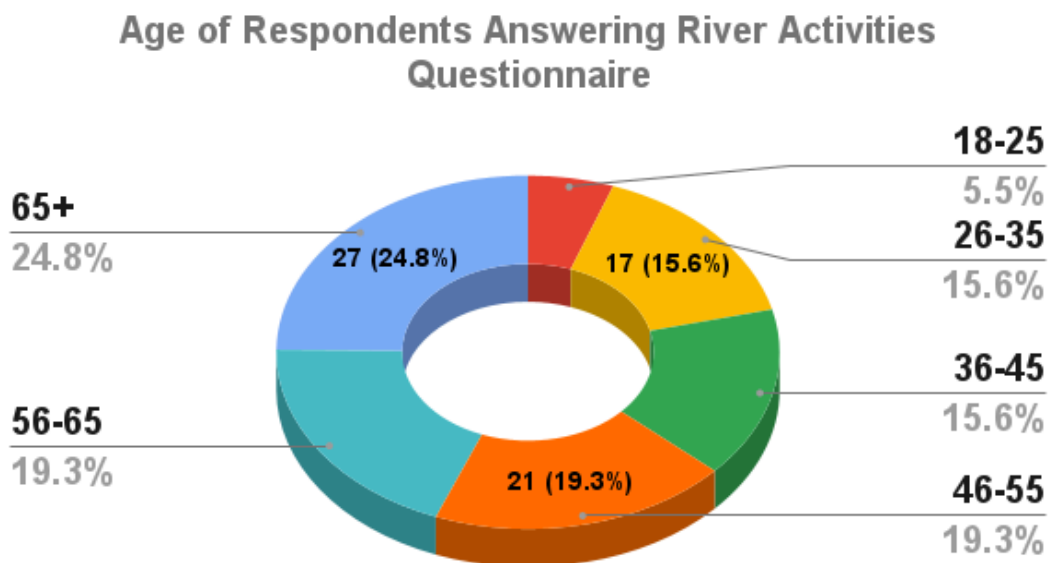
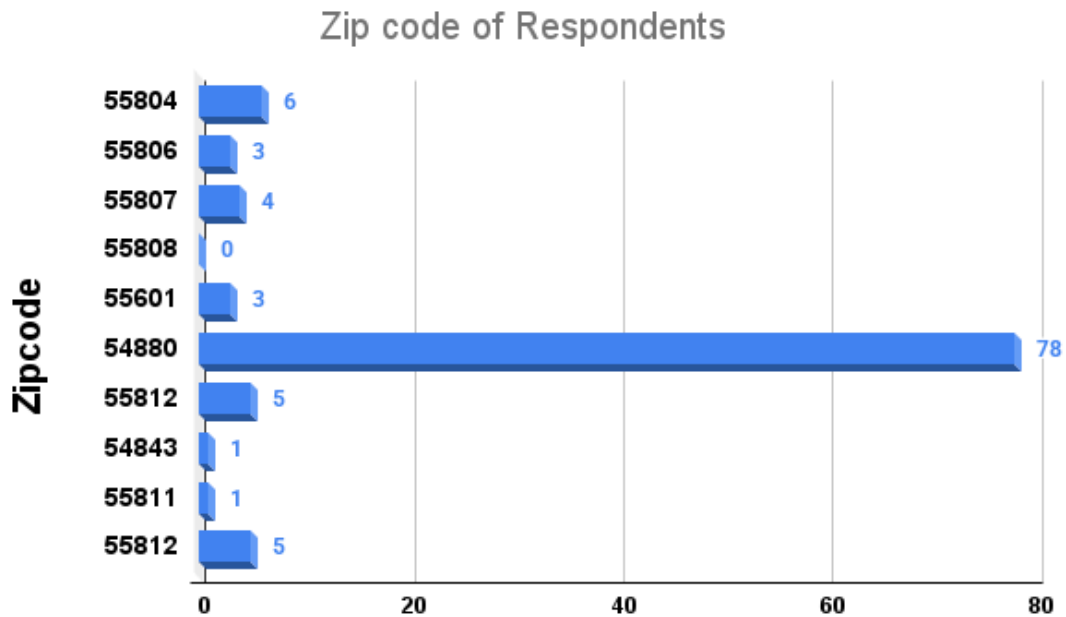
A total of 109 responses were received, with 71% coming from the 54880 zip code (Superior, Wisconsin), indicating strong participation from residents living near the river corridor. Across responses, participants expressed a strong emotional and cultural connection to Wisconsin Point, Billings Park, Allouez Bay, and the St. Louis River Estuary, while also identifying persistent barriers to participation, including limited access, inadequate amenities, safety concerns, and lack of equipment or companions.

There was strong interest in low-impact, river-based activities such as paddling, bird watching, guided walks and talks, and swimming. Respondents also consistently expressed a desire for ecological restoration, expanded trail systems, interpretive signage, and greater acknowledgement of Indigenous history and presence in the river landscape. Communication preferences were clear, with over 90% of respondents indicating they would like to receive future updates, most commonly through email and social media.

Overall, the findings highlight both a strong community desire to engage with the St. Louis River and clear opportunities to improve access, programming, restoration, and outreach to better serve residents and visitors.

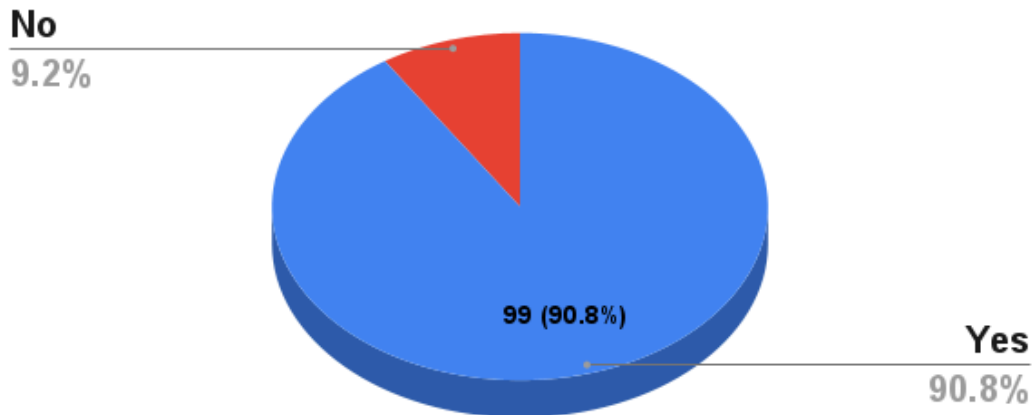
Below are summary graphs, updated 1/6/2026. [Data can be found here.](#)

Demographic Information



Current Use

Have you Allouez Bay or Wisconsin Point within the last year?



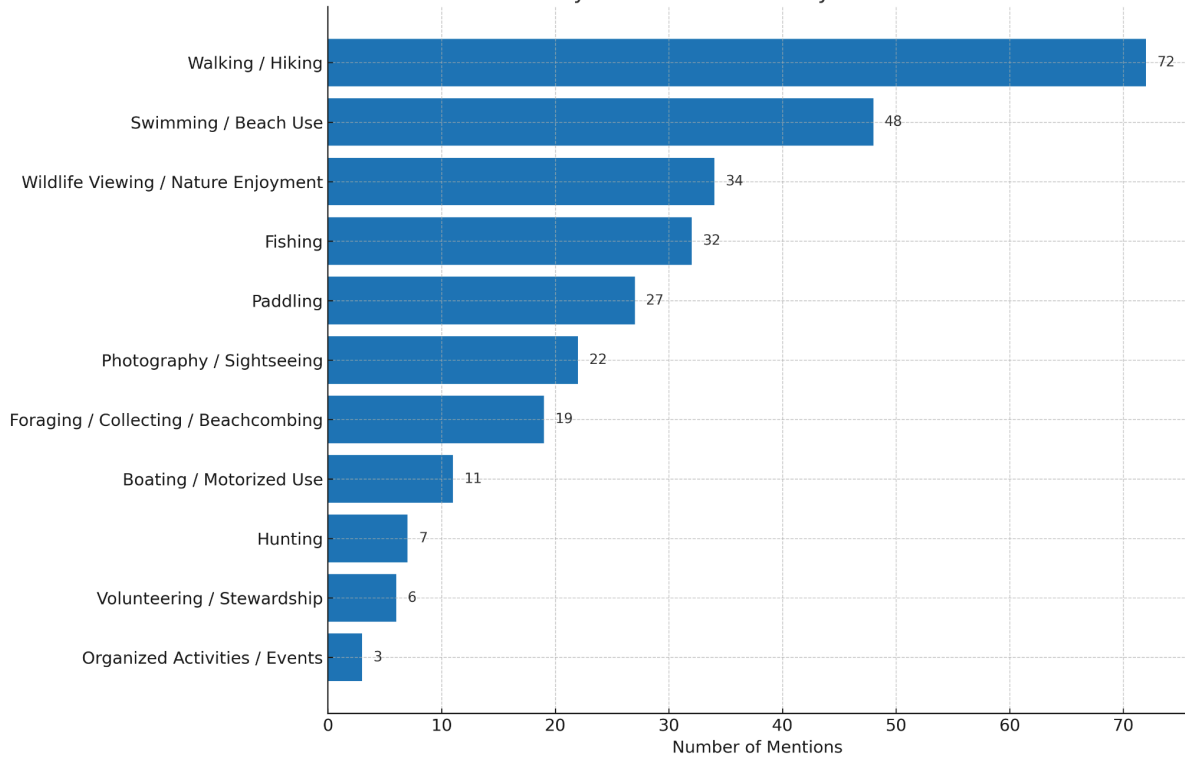
Top Activities People Already Do

The community uses the estuary for low-barrier, nature-based recreation and wants simple, safe access. ~120 mentions (not respondents)

Most common existing recreation includes:

1. Walking/hiking (72)
2. Swimming/beach use (48)
3. Wildlife Viewing/Nature Enjoyment (34): bird watching, plant/flowers, star/northern lights viewing, etc.
4. Fishing (32)
5. Paddling (27)
6. Photography (22)
7. Foraging/collecting/beachcombing (19)
8. Boating/motorized use (11)
9. Hunting (7)
10. Volunteering/Stewardship (6)
11. Organized activities/events (3): weddings, programming, etc.

Summary of Use at Allouez Bay & Wisconsin Point

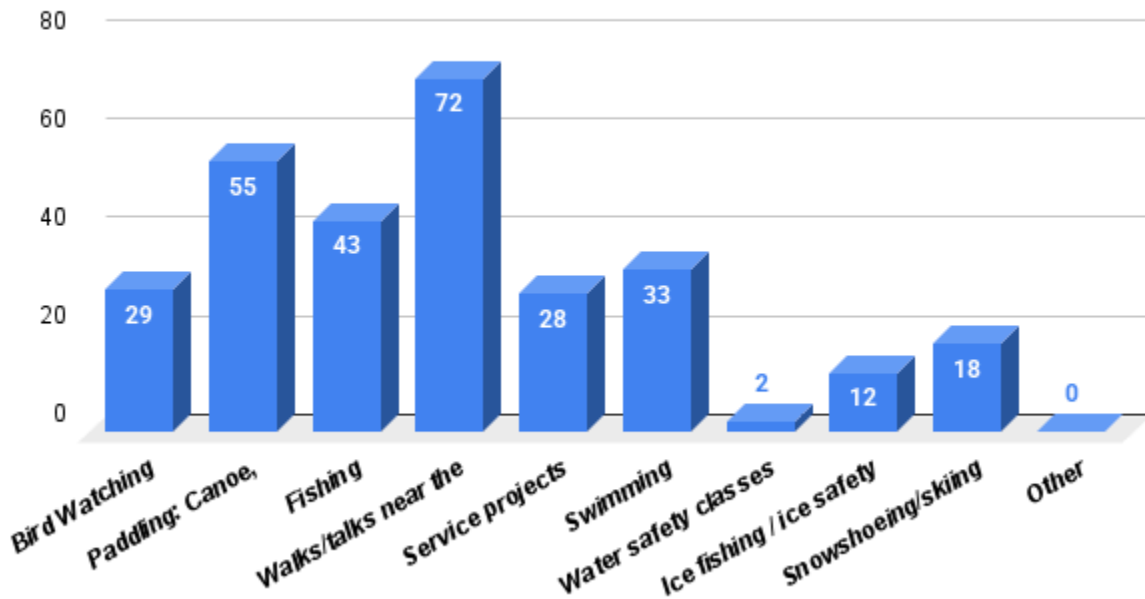


Activities People Want More Of

The strongest requests:

- **Walks/Talks & Natural History Learning:** Plants, animals, river history, Indigenous history.
- **Paddling (canoe, kayak, SUP):** Large interest, but most of them list barriers preventing them from doing it (see following section 'Most Common Barriers').
- **Swimming:** But only where it feels safe, clean, and accessible.
- **Fishing:** Especially from shore, safe docks, and accessible spots.
- **Service & Stewardship:** High interest in clean-ups, invasive species removal, native planting, habitat restoration, huge potential to recruit volunteers.
- **Winter Activities:** Skiing and snowshoeing along river trails, Ice fishing/safety workshops.

Bar Chart of Preferred River Activities from Respondents



Most Common Barriers

Top obstacles to participation, based on frequency:

1. "I don't know where to go"

- The single most common barrier.
- Residents don't know:
 - Where public access points are
 - What's safe
 - Where paddling routes are
 - Which areas are kid-friendly
 - Where amenities exist
- This directly harms participation and sense of access

2. Lack of Amenities Repeated over 40+ times:

- Bathrooms
 - Launches
 - Lighting
 - Benches
 - Safe parking
 - Clear signage
 - Shade / resting spots
- Especially at:
- Wisconsin Point
 - Allouez Bay
 - Chambers Grove
 - Billings Park
 - Spirit Lake

3. "I don't have equipment" Particularly for paddling and winter sports.

4. "I don't have anyone to go with" Highlights a need for group outings, social clubs, and publicized beginner-friendly programs.

5. "I'm too busy" But people still want short, local opportunities and self-guided experiences.

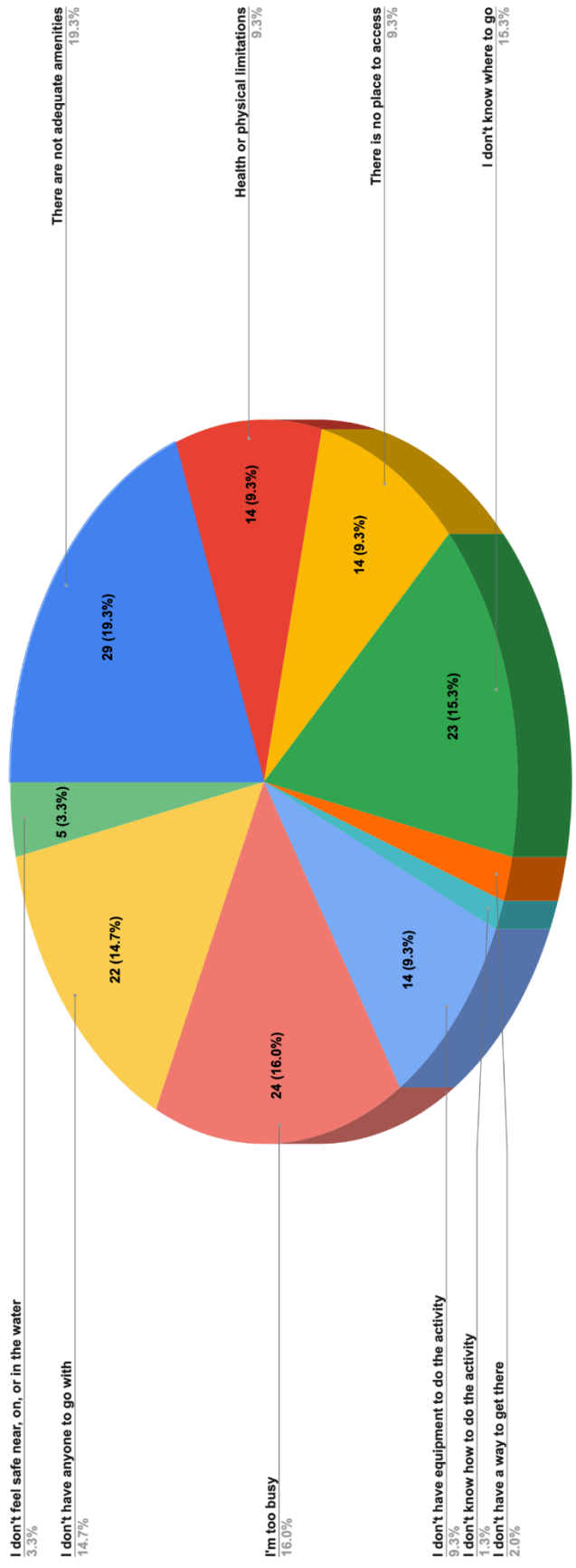
6. Safety Concerns

- Water quality (especially near landfill)
- Big ships while paddling
- Walking alone in dark areas
- Comfort on big water
- Physical ability limitations
- No swimming areas that feel clean

7. Physical barriers

- Limited mobility
- Long distances from parking to beach
- Unmaintained trails
- Overgrown roadsides (Wisconsin Point Road)

Barriers that Prevent Participation in River Activities



Places Mentioned Most Often

These are hotspots for use AND concern:

Top Loved Places

- Wisconsin Point (by far #1)
- Billings Park / Western Waterfront Trail
- Allouez Bay
- Chambers Grove
- Spirit Lake / Spirit Island
- Pokegama River/Bay
- Bear Creek Trail
- Jay Cooke State Park (adjacent interest)

Places Needing Improvement

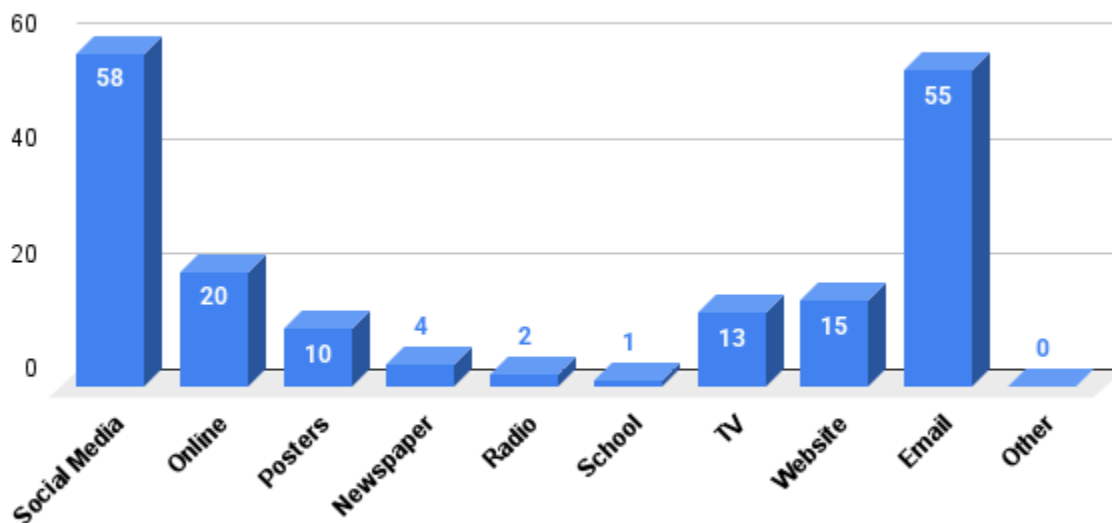
- Wisconsin Point bathrooms (cleaning frequency)
- Wisconsin Point Road (tree trimming)
- Allouez boat landing (amenities and dumping concerns)
- Hog Island access desires
- Lighting at access points
- More visible public signage for beaches/launches

Communication Preferences

Ranked by frequency of mention:

1. Social Media (Facebook, Instagram): Top channel
2. Email: Many respondent opted into email newsletters
3. Online Community Calendars: Especially for events and volunteer opportunities
4. Posters & Physical Flyers: For older adults or non-social-media users
5. TV & Newspaper: Still relevant for 56+ demographic
6. Direct Mailers: Requested specifically by older respondents

Preferred Communication Methods for Event Notifications



How do you hear about events?

Themes in Stories & Comments

Emotional relationship to place is strong.

People shared deep personal stories about:

- Generations fishing or visiting Wisconsin Point
- Family memories (weddings, first dates, childhood exploration)
- Indigenous identity and cultural connection
- Teaching kids about nature
- Grief and healing at the shoreline
- Desire for environmental protection

Key Opportunities for a Community Engagement

1. Improve Sense of “Knowing Where to Go”

Data shows this is the #1 barrier.

Suggested Solutions:

- Produce a Superior Estuary Access Guide (print + digital)
- Map of launches, beaches, trails
- Beginner-friendly paddling routes
- Seasonal “Where to Go Today” posts
- Clearer signage at access points

2. Build Entry-Level, Social Activities

Because people lack equipment and companions:

- “Try Paddling” days or group paddles (boats provided)
- Group hikes/walks
- Birding mornings
- Nature-with-kids programs
- Water safety classes
- Fish-from-shore clinics
- Winter snowshoe

3. Remove Structural Barriers

Prioritized from community feedback:

- Add/clean bathrooms at Wisconsin Point & Allouez
- Maintain launches, signs, and lighting
- Trim Wisconsin Point Road vegetation
- Add benches/accessible seating at beach areas
- Improve clarity of public access at secluded sites

4. Stewardship Engagement

Interest is high:

- Seasonal clean-ups
- Invasive removal days
- Restoration volunteer crews

5. Culturally Grounded Engagement

Strong calls for:

- Indigenous-led programming
- Cultural history interpretation
- Co-creation of education materials
- Visibility of Ojibwe history across the Point and river

6. Water Quality & Safety Transparency

People want:

- Clear information on landfill impacts
- Swimming safety
- Ship navigation safety for paddlers
- Water quality alerts or dashboards

7. Youth & Family Engagement

Themes suggest:

- Nature ID walks
- Hands-on ecology days
- Family paddling outings
- Summer beach exploration series

8. Access for People with Mobility Limitations

Explicit requests for:

- Shorter walks from parking to beach
- Interpretive pull-offs
- More seating
- Accessible boardwalks, especially near Allouez

Conclusion

The River Activities Questionnaire demonstrates a strong community desire to connect with the St. Louis River, Allouez Bay, and Wisconsin Point through low-barrier, nature-based recreation, cultural engagement, and stewardship opportunities.

Overall, the findings highlight clear opportunities to enhance access, programming, restoration, and outreach. Implementing these priorities will strengthen community connection, encourage ongoing participation, and support restoration and stewardship goals for the St. Louis River and its key recreational and ecological areas.