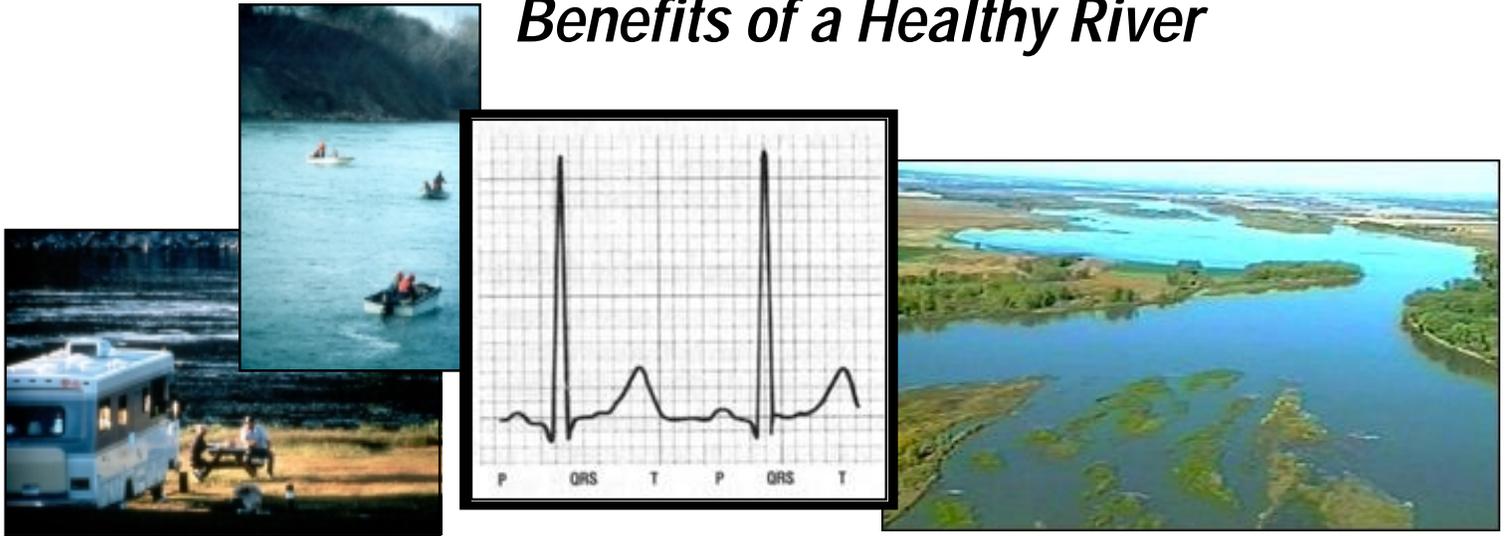




The Heartbeat of a River: Benefits of a Healthy River



The hydrograph of a river is similar to an EKG (electrocardiogram) - it records the heartbeat of the river. A healthy hydrograph shows the river's pulse - a series of high and low flows. Currently, the Missouri River's hydrograph is artificially maintained as a flatline. For most of the river, water is held and released to create a steady flow all year long - not at all what a healthy hydrograph should look like.

In its biological opinion regarding Missouri River operations, the Fish and Wildlife Service recommends restoring a semblance of the river's healthy hydrograph by moderately increasing the spring flows, and moderately decreasing the summer flows. A healthy river benefits everyone - the communities of people who use the river, and the communities of native fish and wildlife that depend on the river for their survival.

While the recommendations are aimed at protecting the three endangered species (least terns, piping plovers, and pallid sturgeon), there will be significant benefits for everyone - people and animals.

Here's how:

Increased Recreational Opportunities: *Fishing, Hunting, Birdwatching, and Canoeing:*

- The flow recommendations and habitat restoration efforts below Gavins Point Dam will begin to restore shallow/slow water areas which are extremely limited but extremely important to the species. These areas will also serve as staging grounds for fall flights of ducks, geese, and shorebirds. A more natural hydrograph tied to habitat restoration will improve sport fisheries and provide migratory songbirds with places to feed and rest. Slow water conditions are ideal for canoeing.

- The intra-system reservoir unbalancing will create better nesting habitat for terns and plovers and will also significantly increase sportfish production in the reservoirs.

- Flow modifications below Fort Peck in Montana will not only be good for pallid sturgeon reproduction, but also for other large native fish such as paddlefish.

- The recommended biological monitoring program on the Missouri will not only improve our understanding of the rarest of Missouri's native residents, but will also allow State game and fish agencies to better manage the sportfish resource.

- Creation of sandbars are not only good for least terns and piping plovers, but the shallow, slow water found behind these sandbars are some of the most popular fishing spots for anglers.

- When habitat restoration and creation throughout the basin is government-sponsored, it typically means more areas open to the public to recreate on and more opportunities for fish and wildlife viewing, hunting, or fishing.

- Successful hatchery operations to save pallid sturgeon may mean that someday this magnificent species will again be the trophy fish sought by some anglers.

- Natural resource-based recreation on the river is good for local economies.