

A half dozen ISK'ers welcomed in the New Year at Hidden Falls Park near Ford Parkway on the Mississippi River on January 1st. Although the air temperature was just a sparse 5 degrees, there was plenty of sunshine and open water. Paddlers arrived around 1pm and put on dry suits, wet suits, tuiliks, gloves, and hats. Several put their boats in the water first and then carefully got in, while others climbed in their boats on the ice near the water's edge and slid into the water once their spray skirts were fully fastened.

Once all the paddlers were afloat, the group rafted up for a couple of photos by Mike O'Neill, then paddled upstream toward the falls. A light breeze from the northwest kept us cool for about 10 minutes until we reached the bend in the river and were protected from the wind by the high banks on either side of the river. As we approached the falls, the current grew more rapid and our paddling pace quickened just to make forward progress. (btw, all that paddling against the current really quickens your pulse and warms your hands! Were it not for the ice on the outside of our mitts, our paddles and the decks of our boats, you'd hardly believe it was New Year's Day in Minnesota!)

Three of us advanced toward the wash from the falls and played among the ice flows, occasionally venturing out into the rapid water just downstream from the falls for a quick ride with the current only to paddle back upstream to try it again.

A New Year's Day paddle wouldn't be complete without at least one roll before returning to shore, so Jeff Christensen volunteered and completed two rolls without hesitation.

Back on land, frosty gear and ice covered boats and paddles were loaded back on top of vehicles and all paddlers went home, pleased with another successful start to the new year.

Jeff Christensen