



## Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission Annual Report July 2010



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On behalf of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota (MN-MRPC), which is organized and guided by Minnesota statute 161.1419, I am pleased to provide the following Annual Report highlighting the Commission's activities from July 2009 to July 2010.

### Mission

The mission of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota is to promote, preserve and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. Work is carried out by the full Commission along with four defined work groups – Capital Improvement; Economic Development; Marketing; and Organization. Accomplishments are listed below by work group.

### Quarterly Meetings of the Full Commission

The MN-MRPC held four full Commission meetings between July 2009 and July 2010. Meetings were dated August 27, 2009; November 19, 2009; February 18, 2010 and May 27, 2010. Minutes are attached. Each meeting included updates from all regional citizen Commissioners and technical advisors from affiliated state agencies to keep everyone informed on activities and issues related to the work of the MN-MRPC.

### Work Plan

The MN-MRPC held a planning session as the focus of the November 19, 2009 quarterly meeting. Wayne Gannaway and Kathie Knapp from America's Byways Resource Center facilitated the discussion, resulting in a work plan for 2010-2011. The work group sections below highlight progress on identified priorities.

### Capital Improvement Work Group

- Work continues on projects funded by the state's \$4.299 million appropriation for **restoration of historic waysides**, managed by Mn/DOT. 12 sites on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are included in the project.
  - The following restorations have been completed: National Grange Historical Marker, Elk River (TH 10); and Camp Ripley Entrance Walls (TH 115). The Camp Ripley project involved a detailed process to restore the walls based on the dry stone process used in the 1930s when the walls were built and a resulting training video for use in future projects.
  - The following restorations are currently in progress: Burns Avenue Overlook, St. Paul (TH 61); St. Cloud Historical Marker; Sibley Pioneer Church Memorial; and MN State Training School Walls in Red Wing.
  - Six restorations will then remain for completion: Ft. Beauharnois Historical Marker; Lake City Concourse; Reads Landing; La Crescent Overlook; La Crescent State Entry Marker; and Reno Springs Wayside.
- The **roadside storybook interpretive panel project** continues. Panel frames have been fabricated, historic photos purchased and new illustrations developed. Remaining work involves placing interpretive signs in four of the 21 counties along the Minnesota Great River Road. A total of 24 panels will be placed (6 per county). The first panels are planned for placement in the Brainerd area in fall 2010, with the others to follow after evaluation.
- One of the group's priorities for 2010-11 is active involvement in **road and bridge projects affecting the GRR, and overall quality monitoring of the byway**. During 2009-10, Technical Advisor Zoff participated on bridge committees; and Commission action was taken regarding a closed section of the GRR in Minneapolis. The short section of wood plank road is located in the historic riverfront district of Minneapolis. The Commission sent letters of concern, made contacts with area officials and participated in meetings to stress the importance of re-opening the road section. The road repair process will begin in summer/fall 2010.

### Economic Development Work Group

- **Resource protection** was listed as a top priority for the group. 2009-10 activities in that regard included:
  - **CapX2020** - CapX 2020 is a high voltage transmission line project involving several routes across Minnesota, three of which will impact the Great River Road. Those routes are Bemidji to Grand Rapids, St. Cloud to Monticello, and Hampton to La Crosse. MN-MRPC members and staff have spent significant time on this issue during 2009-10. Examples of activities include following the process, hearings and documents for each route and providing public comment; reviewing Environmental Impact Statements; meeting with representatives from the Office of Energy Security regarding the cumulative GRR effects of the routes; Commissioners participating in public meetings, hearings and task forces; organizing a van tour of one affected area with staff from the Public Utilities Commission to view potential impacts and provide mitigation options. Mn/DOT has provided outstanding technical support and advice on the legal process. MN-MRPC members also coordinated with the WI-MRPC, since the project will affect the GRR on both sides of the river.
  - **Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area** rulemaking project – Future development along the river will likely be guided by this project. Commissioner Paul Labovitz participated on the advisory group.
  - **Debris from 35W bridge collapse** – Debris from the bridge remains on the banks of the Mississippi in Minneapolis' Bohemian Flats Park, affecting the scenic and recreational qualities of the Great River Road and Grand Rounds Scenic Byways. The Commission requested removal of the debris and communicated with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Mn/DOT on the topic.
  - **Eliminate remaining billboard gaps** - The Brainerd City Council took action to eliminate the gap in the City of Brainerd, initiated by Commissioner Karl Samp.
- The **Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT)** was also a priority. Mn/DOT is planning to sign all state and trunk highway portions of the MRT in Minnesota. Community meetings were held around the state in June-July 2010 to introduce route information and gather feedback. MN-MRPC members participated in those discussions, provided stakeholder databases for invitations, and Technical Advisor Zoff is part of the Mn/DOT team heading up efforts.

### Marketing Work Group

- Distribution of the **Minnesota Great River Road Explorer's Guide** continued, with the final planned shipment sent to GRR state parks, visitor centers and interpretive centers in December 2009. Electronic copies are also posted at [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com), allowing travelers to view and download information by destination area.
- **Map tablets** were developed for each destination area (6) with a map on one side and travel information on the reverse side. An **agri-tourism** section including lists of Minnesota Grown sites within 5 – 10 miles of the Great River Road is included thanks to help from the MN Department of Agriculture. Printing and distribution of the maps will be completed late summer 2010 and the maps will also be posted at [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com).
- A grant from Explore Minnesota Tourism was received to assist with the next marketing project involving development of **videos from each destination area**, featuring favorite places.
- The MN-MRPC participated in the National MRPC **2009 GRR Geocaching Event** through a partnership with Minnesota State Parks. GRR cache cards were placed in 11 state park caches along the Mississippi in summer of 2009. Finders were able to claim a prize by submitting information through the MN GRR website, and were also eligible to enter the national GRR contest. Prizes were provided by MN-MRPC members, with special thanks to the Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau, Mall of America, the Fairfield Inn and Explore Minnesota Tourism for providing an overnight stay and activity package.

### Organization Work Group

- The Organization Work Group headed up MN-MRPC efforts for **2009 MRPC Annual Meeting** in Red Wing; in partnership with local entities such as the Red Wing Visitor and Convention Bureau, City of Red Wing, and tour sites in the Red Wing/Lake City area. This was the major focus for the group for several months. Special thanks to Commissioner Karl Samp for chairing the effort and to all MN-MRPC members who assisted and provided donations.
- A **National Scenic Byway Grant Application Workshop** was offered the day prior to the MRPC Annual Meeting in Red Wing, open to members of the MN-MRPC and other scenic byways in the region.
- The group met with partners from Mn/DOT and the Mississippi National River & Recreation Area (MNRRA) to consider a joint application for a **2010 National Scenic Byways Grant**, actively supported the application submitted by the MNRRA, and will coordinate planning for a possible MN-MRPC application in 2011 focused on a new corridor management plan.
- The work plan for this group now includes a priority to **maintain affiliation with National MRPC** and active participation in national initiatives. This involves staying current on dues payments, maintaining national meeting participation, and implementing priorities/projects at the state level. Since these items require funding and time, they are included in the plan to help document budget levels needed for Commission operation.

## **Funding/Great River Road Investments**

The Minnesota Great River Road and its amenities are supported by several funding sources, including those managed by the MN-MRPC (state operating budget, direct FHWA and state grants) and those managed by related organizations (other scenic byways, State of Minnesota, etc.).

### **State Operating Budget**

The MN-MRPC operated with state funding appropriated during the 2009 session, at levels allowing the Commission to proceed with most priorities. State operating funding for FY '10 was initially \$67,000. The final funding level for the year was \$66,000 after a required unallotment due to the state budget shortfall.

### **Federal Highway Administration Grants Being Implemented by the MN-MRPC**

2006 Minnesota Great River Road National Scenic Byway Marketing SB-2006-MN-8 \$43,000

Projects remaining include GRR videos; printing/shipping of destination area map tablets developed in 2009-10, hospitality training, and group travel planning. 52% of the grant has been utilized to date.

2005 Great River Road Corridor Management Plan Implementation SB-2005-MN-6 \$25,000

This is the fifth in a series of 5 Corridor Management "Seed" Grants. Regional meetings, public relations, in-state and out-of-state travel for Commissioners and staff are included. 74% of the grant has been utilized to date.

2003 Minnesota's Great River Road Interpretive Panels, Phase 1 SB-2003-MN-50159 \$50,000

This project will place a series of interpretive signs in various Minnesota Great River Road destination areas. Sign holders have been fabricated and the MN-MRPC has incurred the majority of the cost as required match to the federal grant. Pilot signs will be ordered and placed in fall 2010 with remaining signs to follow. 20% of the grant funds have been utilized to date.

### **State Grants**

Explore Minnesota Tourism \$2,500

Funds will be used as part of a FY '11 project to develop a series of videos on "favorite places" along the Great River Road.

### **National Scenic Byways Grants Awarded in 2009 along the Great River Road in Minnesota**

Four applications were submitted by entities along the MN GRR, with none receiving funding as part of the 2009 Scenic Byways Program.

## **Local River Activities and Amenity Development**

**Brainerd Mississippi River Revitalization Project** – A grant from the Blandin Foundation enabled a six-month community visioning process, with next steps to focus on communication, education and engagement. Information is available at <http://www.sehinc.com/online/brainerd/>. Commissioner Samp has represented the MN-MRPC, and Technical Advisor Zoff has also participated.

**St. Cloud Area** – Two related projects are evolving in the area. The Mississippi River Renaissance Project is funded by the McKnight Foundation and developing a vision for the river in Central Minnesota's Stearns and Benton Counties, coordinated by the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District. The St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor plan will build upon and expand the success of the Mississippi River Renaissance initiative through Central Minnesota, as well as the 2008 Central Minnesota Community Foundation sponsored public luncheons, in building interest and support for river planning and implementation in St. Cloud. Commissioner Samp, Technical Advisor Zoff and commission staff have participated in various sessions related to these efforts.

**Mountain Bike Trail** – A new mountain bike trail is under development within the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. The March/April 2010 edition of AAA Magazine featured the trail, stating, "The International Mountain Bike Association begins construction in April on the first of five mountain biking trails to be built in the United States." The trail will offer views of crystal clear mine pit lakes. MN-MRPC members will be viewing the trail progress at their August 2010 meeting. Commissioner Schaubach has been active in trail planning efforts as well as other tourism planning initiatives in the area.

## **Partnerships with Related Organizations**

Members of the MN-MRPC continue to work closely with related organizations and gratefully acknowledge their contributions for the benefit of the river and byway travelers. Activities during fiscal year 2010 included the following, with organizations listed in alphabetical order.

**Explore Minnesota Tourism:** An Explore Minnesota Tourism grant awarded to the MN-MRPC in 2009-2010 will be used to develop short videos featuring favorite places along the MN GRR.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture:** Department staff partnered with the MN-MRPC to leverage “Minnesota Grown” information for agri-tourism efforts along the Great River Road.

**Minnesota Department of Transportation:** The Department provided technical assistance and project management for the historic wayside property restoration project.

**Minnesota State Parks:** Minnesota State Parks continued to partner with the MN-MRPC to place Great River Road cards in their geocaches located in 11 state parks along the Mississippi River.

**Mississippi River Trail, Inc:** Commissioner Paul Labovitz is a member of the MRT Inc. Board of Directors. Carol Zoff, MnDOT technical member, continues an active role in MRT Inc. activities.

**MRPC National Office:** On-going partnerships with the National Office continue on projects such as geocaching, oral histories and agri-tourism. The MN-MRPC also appreciated the opportunity to host the 2009 MRPC Annual Meeting.

**National Audubon Society’s Great River Birding Trail:** The MN-MRPC promoted the Great River Birding Trail on cards for the 2009 and 2010 geocaching programs.

**National Park Service/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA):** Multiple partnerships continue, including shared exhibit space/promotional efforts and placement of Great River Road Interpretive Center cards in existing caches for participation in the 2010 MRPC geocaching contest.

**Red Wing Visitor’s Bureau and City of Red Wing:** The MN-MRPC is grateful for the help and support of Red Wing partners as the MN-MRPC hosted the 2009 MRPC Annual Meeting in September.

### **Conferences & Events**

In addition to its four Commission meetings, members and staff represented the MN-MRPC/GRR at conferences and special events listed below, networking with key byway and tourism contacts, staffing trade show booths and distributing Great River Road (Minnesota and National) brochures and maps. Commission members also attended many local and regional Chamber of Commerce, CVB, partnership and association meetings.

- National MRPC Annual Meeting – Sept. 2009 – Red Wing, MN (Johnson, Mulry, Golfis, Frost, Samp, Pafko, Schaubach, Pappas, Frerichs, Vogel, Senjem, Labovitz, Kelliher, Miller)
- National Caucus of Environmental Legislators – Sept. 2009 – Minneapolis, MN (Johnson)
- International Conference on Ecology in Transportation – Sept. 2009 – Duluth, MN (Pafko)
- Minnesota Scenic Byways Conference – Nov. 2009 - Walker, MN (Zoff, Pafko, Frost)
- Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference – January 2010 - Brainerd, MN (Samp, Frost)
- Frozen River Film Festival – January 2010 – Winona, MN (Mulry)
- National MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting – April 2010 – Baton Rouge, LA (Frerichs, Golfis, Zoff)
- Minnesota Bicycle Tourism Summit - April 2010 – Deerwood, MN (Labovitz, Zoff, Offerman and others)
- Crow Wing County Trails Meeting – April 2010 – Brainerd, MN (Samp)
- Great River Gathering Dinner & Trade Show – May 2010 - St. Paul, MN (Mulry, Zoff, Labovitz & National Park Service Partners)
- Southern MN Tourism Association Meeting – May 2010 – Bluff Country, MN (Mulry)
- Native American Tourism Conference – May 2010 – Shakopee, MN (Mulry)
- Urban Wilderness Canoe Area – Paddle and Presentation – May 2010 – St. Paul, MN (Mulry)

- Tour De Pepin Bicycle Event – June 2010 – Lake City, MN (Zoff)
- Mn/DOT Community Meeting on the MRT – June 2010 – Brainerd, MN (Samp, Schaubach, Pafko)
- MNRRA Mississippi River Forums – Monthly – Twin Cities and St. Cloud (several Commissioners)

### **Membership**

The current MN-MRPC Roster is attached. The MN-MRPC is organized by state statute to include:

(2) Members of the House of Representatives

(2) Members of the Senate

(5) Members of State Agencies - (1) appointed by each: DNR, MnDOT, Historical Society, Agriculture & Tourism

(5) Regional Members – (1) from each of the Great River Road regions established by statute

(1) Member-At-Large – appointed by the other 14

New members welcomed over the past year: Cheryl Offerman, Technical Advisor from Explore Minnesota Tourism; Cynthia Wheeler, Technical Advisor from the Department of Natural Resources; and Andrea Hart-Kajer, Appointee from the Historical Society.

**This report is respectfully submitted on July 29, 2010.**

**Rep. Sheldon Johnson**  
**MN-MRPC Chair**

<b>Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission Members</b>							
<b>May-10</b>							
<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Main Phone:</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Zip</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
Paiko	Mr. Frank	Dept. of Transportation	651-366-3602	395 John Ireland Blvd.- ms 620	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:frank.paiko@state.mn.us">frank.paiko@state.mn.us</a>
Frerichs	Mr. Don	Explore MN Tourism	507-285-9624-h	644 Southern Woods Circle SW	Rochester	55902	<a href="mailto:dfrerichs@msn.com">dfrerichs@msn.com</a>
Frost	Mr. Jack	Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids Region	218-335-6773	15228 Joe's Lodge Dr. SE	Bemidji	56601	<a href="mailto:jack@joeslodge.com">jack@joeslodge.com</a>
Golfis	Mr. Andy	Member At-Large	651-699-6629	570 Mount Curve Blvd.	St. Paul	55116	<a href="mailto:agolfis@gmail.com">agolfis@gmail.com</a>
Johnson	Rep. Sheldon	Minnesota House - DFL-67B	651-296-4201	549 State Office Building, 100 Rev Dr MLK Jr Blvd	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:rep.sheldon.johnson@house.mn">rep.sheldon.johnson@house.mn</a>
Kinney	Ms. Robin	Dept of Agriculture	651-201-6435	625 Robert Street North	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:robin.kinney@state.mn.us">robin.kinney@state.mn.us</a>
Labovitz	Mr. Paul	Elk River to Hastings Region	651-290-3030 x253	111 Kellogg Blvd. East, #105	St. Paul	55101	<a href="mailto:paul_labovitz@nps.gov">paul_labovitz@nps.gov</a>
Mulry	Ms. Sheronne	Hastings to Iowa Border Region	651-565-2745	P.O. Box 164	Wabasha	55981	<a href="mailto:sheronne@gmail.com">sheronne@gmail.com</a>
Murray	Mr. Greg	Dept. of Natural Resources	320-257-2683	1848 6th Avenue North	St. Cloud	56303	<a href="mailto:g.murray@mahowald.net">g.murray@mahowald.net</a>
Pappas	Sen. Sandra	Minnesota Senate - DFL - Dist 65	651-296-1802	75 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr Dr., #120	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:sen.sandy.pappas@senate.mn">sen.sandy.pappas@senate.mn</a>
Samp	Mr. Karl	Brainerd to Elk River Region	218-821-5619	10769 River Hill Circle	Brainerd	56401	<a href="mailto:ksamp@charter.net">ksamp@charter.net</a>
Schaubach	Mr. John	Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region	218-838-8459	P.O. Box 275	Deerwood	56444	<a href="mailto:jschaubach@cuyunamed.org">jschaubach@cuyunamed.org</a>
Senjem	Sen. David	Minnesota Senate - R- Dist 29	651-296-3903	147 State Office Building, 100 Rev Dr MLK Jr Blvd	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:sen.david.senjem@senate.mn">sen.david.senjem@senate.mn</a>
Davids	Rep. Greg	Minnesota House - R - Dist 31B	651-296-9278	283 State Office Building, 100 Rev Dr MLK Jr Blvd	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:rep.greg.davids@house.mn">rep.greg.davids@house.mn</a>
Hart-Kajer	Andrea	Historical Society	651-259-3105	345 Kellogg Blvd. West	St. Paul	55102	<a href="mailto:andrea.kajer@mnhs.org">andrea.kajer@mnhs.org</a>
<b>TECHNICAL MEMBERS:</b>							
Hubinger	Mr. Greg	Legislative Coordinating Commission	651-296-2963	40 State Office Building	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:greg.hubinger@lcc.leg.mn">greg.hubinger@lcc.leg.mn</a>
Kelliher	Mr. David	Historical Society	651-259-3103	345 Kellogg Blvd. West	St. Paul	55102	<a href="mailto:david.kelliher@mnhs.org">david.kelliher@mnhs.org</a>
Wheeler	Ms. Cynthia	Dept. of Natural Resources	651-259-5601	1200 Warner Road	St. Paul	55106	<a href="mailto:cynthia.wheeler@state.mn.us">cynthia.wheeler@state.mn.us</a>
Offerman	Ms. Cheryl	Explore MN Tourism	651-757-1860	121 7th Place East, Suite 100	St. Paul	55101	<a href="mailto:cheryl.offerman@state.mn.us">cheryl.offerman@state.mn.us</a>
Zoff	Ms. Carol	Dept. of Transportation	651-366-4705	395 John Ireland Blvd.- ms 686	St. Paul	55155	<a href="mailto:carol.zoff@state.mn.us">carol.zoff@state.mn.us</a>
Miller	Ms. Chris	The Odyssey Group	651-341-4196	300 33rd Ave S, Suite 101	Waite Park	56387	<a href="mailto:chris@togpartners.com">chris@togpartners.com</a>
<b>ALTERNATES:</b>							
Pederson	Mr. Jim	Historical Society (for Kelliher)					<a href="mailto:pederson33@aol.com">pederson33@aol.com</a>



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
3rd Quarter Meeting  
August 27, 2009  
State Office Building Room 500 North**

**MINUTES – Approved 11/19/09**

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**Commissioners Present**

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large, Secretary  
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River Region  
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region  
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee  
Sen. Sandra Pappas  
Rep. Greg Davids  
Jack Frost – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Treasurer  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border, Vice-Chair  
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present**

Dave Vogel – Explore MN Tourism  
Carol Zoff – Transportation  
Matt Hill – Historical Society (Alternate)  
Chris Miller - Staff

**Commissioners/Advisors Absent**

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee  
Sen. Dave Senjem  
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee  
Greg Hubinger – LCC Technical Advisor  
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings Region

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Meeting was called to order at 2:35 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Agenda**

Commissioners reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Commissioner Golfis made a motion and Commissioner Frerichs seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from May 28, 2009**

Minutes from the 2009 Second Quarter Meeting (May 28, 2009) were distributed. Commissioner Frerichs made a motion and Commissioner Golfis seconded to approve the May 28 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**Commission Business**

**Review FY 2009 Final Budget Status:** A final summary of FY 2009 expenditures was distributed. The year end balance was zero.

**Review/Approve Budget Line Items for FY 2010:** A draft line item budget for FY 2010 was distributed. Total allocation for the year is \$67,000. Proposed line item amounts were determined using existing contracts, open grant projects, past practices and patterns, and known plans for FY 2010 with a primary item being the MRPC 2009 Annual Meeting. The line item amounts as proposed also recognize possible restrictions on out-of-state travel as experienced for the 2009 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting; and/or use of grants for this travel. Commissioner Frerichs suggested that a letter be sent soon requesting permission to send representatives to the 2010 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting in Louisiana. More will be known on available budget after all expenses related to the Red Wing Annual Meeting are paid. Technical Advisor Zoff noted that the interpretive panel project is still underway which requires matching funds and cash flow. Commissioner Frerichs requested an itemized list of costs considered in the line item budget. Information will be provided to Commission Members with the meeting minutes.

Commissioner Frerichs made a motion to approve the proposed FY 2010 budget line items, with the recommendation that the out-of-state travel amount be increased during the year if possible. Commissioner Frost seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**National MRPC Updates**

**Details for 2009 National MRPC Meeting in Red Wing:** Commissioner Samp, planning team chair, provided copies of the agenda and led a discussion on final details and needs for the MRPC Annual Meeting, September 24 – 26 in Red Wing. A conference call was held on July 9, involving the MRPC National Office and Minnesota planning team members. All sessions, speakers and activities for the meeting agenda have now been confirmed. Thanks to Mn/DOT was noted for addition of a bus option for the tour of historic waysides. Post cards announcing the Annual Meeting have been mailed to our database of Great River Road CVBs, state parks, and interpretive centers; along with other MN-MRPC partners and

Mn/DOT regional contacts. The St. James Hotel is full for the event. Commissioner Samp reviewed the list of MN-MRPC members who are registered for the Annual Meeting, and confirmed volunteers to serve as mobile workshop contacts and handle speaker introductions. Carol Zoff reviewed plans for the bike tour of historic waysides and Commissioner Frost volunteered to assist with the tour. Commissioner Golfis, hospitality chair, circulated a list of donated items needed, as well as needs for volunteer staffing.

**Other:** The MRPC is holding a geocaching event again this year. Caches are placed in all 10 states and finders who participate in multiple states will be able to enter a prize drawing. Staff will be in contact with Commission members regarding donations for the Minnesota prize box.

#### **State MRPC Travel Updates & Upcoming Events**

- Chairman Johnson will be speaking about the MN-MRPC at the upcoming National Caucus of Environmental Legislators Meeting, in Minneapolis in September 24.
- Frank Pafko noted that the International Conference on Ecology in Transportation will be held in Duluth in September.

#### **Historic Wayside Restoration – Project Overview**

Carol Zoff serves as project manager for the Minnesota Great River Road Historic Property Restorations and provided an update on progress. A one page overview of projects was distributed. These projects are possible due to the \$4.299 million appropriated during the 2008 legislative session. All projects are done in concert with SHPO to maintain the historical designations of these properties along the Great River Road. The first project, the National Grange Historical Marker, has been completed, serving as an overall pilot for restoration projects to follow. The Camp Ripley Entrance Wall project is now underway, and is a much larger project than originally thought. The original walls were built in the 1930s and are being restored in keeping with those original techniques. The project started with a two day workshop taught by the Dry Stone Conservancy on how to do restorations on these types of properties. A resulting how-to video will be used for future projects. Construction will begin soon on the Burns Avenue Overlook project in St. Paul. Overall, nine projects are scheduled for 2010.

#### **CAPX2020 – Status, MN-MRPC Input**

CapX2020 is an initiative involving placement of new high voltage transmission lines through Minnesota. Several different segments are planned with various route proposals for each. Current areas of concern for the Great River Road are the Monticello to St. Cloud segment, along with Bemidji to Grand Rapids. Potential transmission line corridors would directly impact the Great River Road. Commission members discussed the importance of protecting the Great River Road National Scenic Byway and the Mississippi River from activities that would affect the intrinsic qualities of the byway and river corridor. It was suggested that letters be sent to appropriate authorities to place concerns of the MN-MRPC on record. Commission members also noted that a special meeting of the MN-MRPC could be needed. Commission members indicated interest in attending public meetings, hearings, etc on the topic.

Commissioner Samp made a motion, seconded by Senator Pappas, authorizing Chairman Johnson to submit letters to appropriate entities noting the MN-MRPC's concerns related to potential placement of transmission lines along the Great River Road. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Work Group Updates**

Most recent work group time has been spent on preparations for the 2009 MRPC Annual Meeting. No other updates noted. The Marketing Work Group tentatively set its next meeting for 7:00 p.m. on September 24, while members will be in Red Wing.

#### **Agency and Regional Updates – Additions to Attached Written Reports**

**Explore Minnesota Tourism:** Dave Vogel referenced the handout provided. Also, Commission members were directed to the EMT Express handout, and all were encouraged to sign up for this e-newsletter to receive regular updates from Explore Minnesota Tourism. July marked an all-time high in visits to the Explore Minnesota website. Leisure and hospitality led job growth in the state according to recent reports.

**Department of Transportation:** Carol Zoff encouraged Commission members to become involved with bridge projects in their areas if they have the opportunity. Preliminary design ideas are now under development for a new Hastings bridge, and also a monument on the north side of the bridge in partnership with the National Park Service. Plans are currently moving ahead for the Lafayette Bridge in St. Paul. The new bridge at Dresbach is slated for 2011/2012 and discussions are just beginning regarding the Winona bridge. Rail projects will affect the Great River Road – both the Twin



Cities Central Corridor and the North Star line from Minneapolis to Big Lake. Future projects will include Twin Cities to Winona and high speed rail from St. Paul to Chicago. All of these developments could provide marketing opportunities for the Great River Road and new options for byway travelers. A study has been funded to look at the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) as a major transportation opportunity for commuters and visitors. Partners include Mn/DOT, National Park Service and the Metropolitan Council. Commissioner Pafko noted that the Minneapolis Park Board and Mn/DOT are evaluating options for removal of material from the 35W bridge collapse. With many activities underway, Chairman Johnson requested that Commissioner Pafko and Technical Advisor Zoff help prioritize the list of projects as they relate to the Great River Road and keep MN-MRPC members informed accordingly.

**MN Historical Society:** Matt Hill provided an update. The Director of the Historical Society will be appointing a new representative to the MN-MRPC, to fill the position held by the late John Wood. Activity is underway related to the Legacy Amendment and historic/cultural groups will be able to begin applications for grants this fall. The next capital budget request is likely to include the Oliver Kelley Farm and other sites along the Great River Road.

**Grand Rapids to Brainerd:** Commissioner Schaubach explained an initiative beginning in his region, with many local partners involved in a visioning process for area tourism. A world class mountain bike trail is already in the works with other outdoor activities such as scuba diving in former mining areas also under consideration. Outdoor adventure tourism provides a distinct type of amenity for the byway traveler. Commissioner Schaubach is playing an active role in the process and is seeking MN-MRPC endorsement to continue, and to use the name of the MN-MRPC as a partner and continue to inform and involve members in the process. Commissioner Mulry suggested that the America's Byways Resource Center could be a good resource for the visioning process, and Technical Advisor Zoff noted that the State Scenic Byways Conference in late October would be a valuable source of information.

Commissioner Frerichs made a motion stating that the MN-MRPC is in support of the community tourism visioning process in the Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region. Commissioner Samp seconded the motion which then passed unanimously.

**Brainerd to Elk River:** Commissioner Samp reported that many activities focused on the Mississippi River continue in the St. Cloud area, and he remains involved in the related groups and meetings.

**Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids:** Commissioner Frost noted that the Concordia Language Village was held again this summer, providing opportunities to interact with international visitors and promote the Mississippi River and Great River Road. The Mississippi Headwaters Board continues operation and recently completed a visioning session. Mississippi Headwaters State Forest has a new shooting sports arena with a nearby campground, and an ATV area in a nearby quarry.

**Metro:** Senator Pappas mentioned a new river venue in St. Paul. The City House is a historic site across the river from Harriet Island. The St. Paul Riverfront Corporation recently held an event at this location.

#### **Scenic Byway Grant Workshop - Reminder**

As discussed at the last MN-MRPC Quarterly Meeting, Mark Anderson, MN Scenic Byways Coordinator will be offering a workshop to help applicants prepare for the next round of National Scenic Byway Grants. The session will be held in Red Wing just prior to the MRPC Annual Meeting, and is open to MN-MRPC members, stakeholders and other byways in the region.

#### **Update on MN-MRPC Staffing Contract for FY 2010**

The MN-MRPC administrative staffing contract extension has been signed by all parties and is in effect through June 30, 2010.

#### **Next Meeting**

November 19, 2009

2:30 – 5:00 p.m.

State Office Building, Room 500 North

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.



## Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Quarterly Region and Agency Updates August 2009

### Grand Rapids to Brainerd – Commissioner Schaubach

Much of the local focus this summer has been on the continued development of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area on the Cuyuna Range. The CCSRA is located adjacent the Mississippi River near Crosby. As a first of its kind state recreation park it provides a number of opportunities for recreational tourism that will help diversify and grow the tourism economy locally and in the region. Attractions include trout fishing, scuba diving, canoeing, kayaking and paved trail riding. And now the construction of 20+ miles of world class mountain bike trails is expected to take this park to a higher level of use. This also affords opportunities to make the nearby Mississippi an ingredient in this economic development formula. The Great River Road travels through the park. And already the canoeing and kayaking use has extended to the local section of the river.

All of this has led the local communities to consider how this all will affect them and how they may best take advantage of this for the overall benefit of our citizens. Led by the City of Crosby, a task force made up of leaders from government, businesses, advocacy groups and the community have been working to initiate a comprehensive visioning and planning process related to recreational tourism aimed at sustainability at an economic, environmental and social level. It is desired that this visioning begin this fall. The guiding thought is that the development of these recreational amenities should be done in a way that -

- supports a healthy community
- maintains the natural beauty of our area
- enhances prosperity by growing the tourism economy
- provides an optimum experience for visitors.

We are presently in the process of identifying partners in this visioning process for financial support, expertise, aligned interest, and moral support. Some of these partners already interested or engaged include Iron Range Resources [IRR], U of M Central Regional Partnership, DNR, Crow Wing County, area chambers and economic development groups, the local city governments, the local HRA, and the Initiative Foundation. I will be participating as a representative of a number of entities that I am a member of. With this group's permission, I would like to represent the interests of the MN-MRPC as well.

### Brainerd to Elk River– Commissioner Samp

The St. Cloud area continues to hold Mississippi Renaissance meetings as well as the Mississippi River Forums, held alternate months in the Twin Cities and St. Cloud, and hosted by the NPS. The last session in St. Cloud on the August 21<sup>st</sup> dealt with education on storm water runoff and how citizens and river communities can have an impact. I attended and shared flyers from the Annual Meeting with all. There were a number of festivals and events in this region held this summer that celebrated the river. A future opportunity for us.

### Explore Minnesota Tourism Updates (Dave Vogel, Technical Advisor)

#### **Birding Building Consumer Base**

A new 20-page report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service elaborates on data collected in their 2006 survey on hunting, fishing, and outdoor-related recreation, especially as it relates to birding. Of particular interest is that Minnesota ranked fourth nationwide in the percentage of citizens who participated in birding, at 33%. The U.S. average is 21%. Minnesota had 1,448,000 birders, of whom 7% were from out of state. The other 93% of birders were Minnesota residents. Also, between 2001 and 2006, there was a significant national trend—an 8% increase in the number of persons traveling more than a mile from home to see birds. Each traveled an average of 14 times per year for birding. Nationwide, a total of 48 million birders spent \$12 billion on trip-

related expenditures for birding in 2006 and \$24 billion on birding-related equipment for a total of \$36 billion total expenditures. The Web site for the entire report is: [http://library.fws.gov/Pubs/birding\\_natsurvey06.pdf](http://library.fws.gov/Pubs/birding_natsurvey06.pdf).

### **Restaurant Vacancy on Explore Minnesota Tourism Council**

A vacancy exists on the Explore Minnesota Tourism Council for a restaurants representative to complete a four-year term expiring January 3, 2011. The Council exists to serve the broader interests of tourism in Minnesota by promoting activities that support, maintain, and expand the state's domestic and international travel market, thereby generating increased visitor expenditures, tax revenue and employment. Membership includes: up to 28 members appointed by the Governor, meetings are held at least four times a year, and the location varies. Application forms may be found at [http://www.sos.state.mn.us/docs/oa\\_application.pdf](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/docs/oa_application.pdf), or may be obtained from the Office of the Secretary of State, Open Appointments, 180 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1299, or in person at Room 180 of the State Office Building.

### **2010 Grant Guidelines Ready**

Organizational Partnership Grant, Innovative Marketing Grant and Scenic Byway Grant guidelines for 2010 grants are now available. These three programs are offered to assist communities in attracting travelers to Minnesota. Information on the program and guidelines for each type of grant are posted on the Industry Web Site at: <http://industry.exploreminnesota.com/grants>.

If you are a Minnesota non-profit tourism or scenic byway organization and want further information about guidelines contact your Regional Manager:

Central – Carol Altepeter 888-629-6466 or David Bergman 888-563-7777

Metro – Gayle Junnila 800-757-1852

Northwest – Carol Altepeter 888-629-6466 or David Bergman 888-563-7777

Northeast – Tim Campbell 888-876-6784

Southern – Dave Vogel 888-975-6766

OR call Explore Minnesota Tourism at 800-657-3637; 651-757-1848

### **New Resource for Vacation Home Rental Property Owners**

Explore Minnesota Tourism has created a resource for vacation home rental owners in Minnesota on the Web at: [www.industry.exploreminnesota.com/vacationhome](http://www.industry.exploreminnesota.com/vacationhome). This Web page is a summary of information from regulatory and enforcement agencies across the state – and is a valuable resource to help vacation home owners sort through the rules and regulations that affect the short-term rental of their properties, and understand who to contact if they have questions or concerns. Tourism contributes significantly to economies and communities around the world as well as here in Minnesota. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 28 million visitors came to Minnesota in 2008 and of these 4% were international travelers. In response to the importance of international tourism and to enhance the University's goal of internationalizing student's educational opportunities, the current Recreation Resource Management (RRM) minor has been expanded to include an international tourism option. The international tourism option invites students to complete 19 credits, including three core courses. Students can then complete the international focused coursework completely off-campus at a partner institution or complete coursework at the University with an experiential field seminar. Both choices internationalize a student's learning and life experience. Dr. Ingrid Schneider, RRM major and minor coordinator, said, "With a flattening world, international experience is essential. This expansion of our minor creates a competitive edge for our students and broadens the reach of the University of Minnesota." The minor officially becomes available spring 2010, and the first off-campus offering will likely be in the Caribbean where discussions are currently in place with the University of West Indies in Jamaica. Given the Caribbean's history and place in tourism as well as its accessible location and use of English, the region seems a natural first step. According to Dr. Schneider, student response to the new option has been eager and enthusiastic. Visit [www.forestry.umn.edu](http://www.forestry.umn.edu) for more information.



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
4th Quarter Meeting  
November 19, 2009  
State Office Building Room 500 North**

**MINUTES – Approved 2/18/10**

**Commissioners Present**

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large, Secretary  
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River Region  
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region  
Scott Bradley – Transportation (Alternate)  
Jack Frost – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Treasurer  
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee  
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee  
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings Region

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present**

Dave Vogel – Explore MN Tourism  
Carol Zoff – Transportation

David Kelliher – Historical Society  
Jim Pederson – Historical Society (Alternate)  
Chris Miller - Staff

**Commissioners/Advisors Absent**

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee  
Sen. Dave Senjem  
Sen. Sandra Pappas  
Rep. Greg Davids  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border Region  
Greg Hubinger – LCC Technical Advisor

**Guests Present**

Wayne Gannaway – America's Byways Resource Ctr  
Kathie Knapp – America's Byways Resource Ctr

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Meeting was called to order at 2:35 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Agenda**

Commissioners reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Chairman Johnson noted that the vast majority of time is devoted to discussion on MN-MRPC plans and priorities. Wayne Gannaway and Kathie Knapp from America's Byways Resource Center will be leading that discussion and were welcomed to the meeting. Commissioner Golfis made a motion and Commissioner Samp seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from August 27, 2009**

Minutes from the 2009 Third Quarter Meeting (August 27, 2009) were distributed. Commissioner Frost made a motion and Commissioner Frerichs seconded to approve the August 27 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**Review/Approve Financial Report**

A report showing year-to-date status of the MN-MRPC operating budget was distributed and discussed. Line item amounts available could shift depending on MN-MRPC travel to the MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting in Baton Rouge. Chairman Johnson is working with LCC to request travel authorizations noting the importance of MN-MRPC representation at National MRPC meetings. More information on travel to the Semi-Annual Meeting should be known shortly after the first of the year. Commissioner Golfis made a motion to approve the financial report, seconded by Commissioner Samp. Motion passed unanimously.

**Reflections on Red Wing Annual Meeting**

Chairman Johnson opened discussion on the MRPC Annual Meeting, held in Red Wing, September 24 – 26. He called the meeting a wonderful event and thanked the planning committee for their work highlighting Mississippi River efforts in Minnesota. Commissioner Frerichs received positive comments from our colleagues attending from other states, and commended Minnesota for bringing the meeting into a local river community. Technical Advisor Zoff thanked all who assisted with the field trips, especially the bicycle tour of historic properties.

## **Updates, Action Items & Reminders**

**Explore Minnesota Tourism:** Dave Vogel announced that this will be his last meeting serving as Explore Minnesota Tourism's Technical Advisor to the MN-MRPC. Cheryl Offerman will now serve in this capacity. She is located in the St. Paul Office, which will facilitate attendance at meetings held in the Twin Cities area, and is also the Explore Minnesota Tourism representative for Mississippi River Country which aligns well with the work of the MN-MRPC. Dave will continue at the Southern Regional Office for EMT. The group expressed thanks for Dave's service and wished him well.

**Minnesota Tourism Conference:** The 2010 conference will be held January 26 – 27 at Cragun's. MN-MRPC participation was discussed and Chairman Johnson asked for two interested representatives. Advisors Vogel and Zoff both recommended the event. It was also noted that the Minnesota Scenic Byways Program often has a booth area for byway promotion and the MN-MRPC trade display could be utilized. Commissioners Frost and Samp indicated interest in attending. Chris will coordinate registration.

**Minnesota Scenic Byways Conference:** Commissioner Frost presented information at the Minnesota Scenic Byways Conference, held in Walker in late October. He reported that the event was well attended and informative.

**Legacy Grants:** David Kelliher and Jim Pederson were also in attendance at the State Scenic Byways Conference and presented information on newly available grants made possible by funds from the Legacy Amendment. Information on funds available for history programs can be found at [www.mnhs.org/legacy](http://www.mnhs.org/legacy).

**EMT Scenic Byway Marketing Grant:** The MN-MRPC has been awarded a \$2,500 scenic byway marketing grant by Explore Minnesota Tourism. Funds will be used for the MN Great River Road video project as match to federal marketing grant dollars.

**MN-MRPC At Large Appointment:** Commissioner Golfis explained that his status on the National MRPC Board has changed due to the recent election and he will no longer hold the position of pilot emeritus. He recommends seeking a new at large member for the Commission upon expiration of the current term.

## **Corridor Management Plan Discussion, Review of Commission Priorities, Brainstorming of New Priorities**

To assist the MN-MRPC as it considers goals, projects and priorities, Wayne Gannaway provided background on Corridor Management Plans including the definition, items to be included, key questions, critical aspects and involvement.

Technical Advisor Carol Zoff provided a review of the MN-MRPC's current list of priorities and status of each. The list of priorities was developed two years ago based on information and recommendations from the current Corridor Management Plan, the Great River Road Development Study. The study was completed ten years ago and is in need of an update. Many of the work group tasks have been accomplished but some do remain.

Commission members began planning discussions by individually listing their vision for the Minnesota Great River Road, on sheets of paper the size of a bumper sticker. The group then brainstormed a list of initial items needing Commission attention now and in the coming years.

Next steps include prioritization of tasks for the next 1 - 2 years and assignments to works groups; as well as considering application for a 2010 National Scenic Byways Grant for development of a new Corridor Management Plan to guide the longer term direction of the Commission. A full summary of the planning and priorities discussion is attached.

## **Next Meeting**

To be announced when the quarterly meeting schedule for 2010 is set.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

# MN-MRPC Corridor Management Plan and Commission Priorities Discussion

## November 19, 2009

### Introduction to Corridor Management Plans

A Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is a written document that outlines how a byway organization plans to protect, promote, enhance and manage the intrinsic qualities of their byway. A CMP will act as the guiding document for all efforts of the byway group and be a key element in all planning. A CMP is required for designation as a National Scenic Byway.

The existing CMP for the Minnesota Great River Road was developed in 2000. The Commission's work plan was based on the CMP and specific opportunities/issues that have been identified based on current events and needs. Today the Commission will be reviewing status, brainstorming short term priorities (1-2 years) and considering an updated or new CMP for long term direction of the byway.

### Great River Road Development Study & Current Work Plan

Commission members reviewed the list of priorities developed for 2007-09. Much has been accomplished and specifics were defined in a PowerPoint presentation. Work has been handled through a structure of four committees – capital improvement; economic development; organization and marketing.

### Brainstorm Goals/Ideas

Commission members individually listed their short version of a vision for the Minnesota Great River Road on paper the size of a bumper sticker.

- A journey in the past, the present, and into the future
- Headwaters to the Gulf – our Mississippi River
- Experience the 4<sup>th</sup> Coast
- Minnesota Great River Road – watch old man river grow up
- America's Backbone – the Mississippi River
- Share the Mississippi with us and with others
- Drive. Bike. Walk. Great River Road – Enjoy your river!
- Let a river run through you
- Greener
- Take a drive through history! The Great River Road
- Be the Mississippi
- Take the immersion excursion – [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com)

### MN-MRPC Member Brainstorming – General

- The multi-dimensional nature of the river was stressed along with a need for continued focus on economic development.
- Address continued debris issued related to the 35W bridge collapse.
- The plank road (only wooden section of the GRR) in Minneapolis is currently closed, diminishing GRR access
- Rulemaking processes for Critical Area Designation and Wild & Scenic River will be coming up soon. Recommend that Commission member(s) sit on advisory boards for these and other related efforts.
- Be proactive rather than reactive on efforts.
- Resource protection is a critical and ongoing activity. Specifics can be listed underneath (i.e. rulemaking processes and boards listed above).
- Lack of awareness is an overall problem/issue for the GRR and MN-MRPC, up and down the river
- Involvement is needed in current processes (i.e. St. Cloud Mississippi River Renaissance) as well as long term continued participation.
- Social media are growing areas and important to consider.
- It would be helpful to have an inventory of agencies and groups actively working on the river and related initiatives. Everyone could share their missions and work together.
- Many partnerships exist at an individual level but we might also need more formalized partnerships at the organization level.
- Personal level partnerships should continue while more formalized partnerships are investigated.
- CapX2020 needs to be on short term priority list.
- Commission members should be involved and go to other groups' meetings to build relationships. What do we offer that someone else also offers? We could add to the energies and efforts of others.
- Everyone is "going green" and the Commission should address this – sustainable tourism.
- Help link CVBs up and down the river on joint efforts such as fam tours.
- Explore Minnesota Tourism has regional offices, and each region hold meetings of regional CVBs (tourism promotion meetings). This would provide an opportunity to access existing groups.

- Identify what the GRR can and can't do for others. What can GRR offer to processes like Wild & Scenic Designation? The CMP should address roles of technical advisors and encourage full representation. Overall active Commissioner participation is important for public awareness.
- The Commission needs to continually raise its profile and highlight the role we play working with the entire river corridor.
- We need to participate – there's a lot going on out there (McKnight efforts, DNR bike trail development, etc) and we should be at the table.
- All members should represent the MN-MRPC at everything they do, and then do more of it.
- The MRT is a huge priority and the water byway is also important – encouraging and assisting people in using the water itself.

Items from the 2007-09 plan were carried forward along with new brainstormed ideas and were preliminarily placed under work groups and headings as follows.

#### Capital Improvement

- Roadside Storybook Interpretive Panels (consider Legacy Funds for counties not in federal grant?)
- Restore Historic Roadside Properties
- Funding Resource Inventory
- Future Projects
- Paving the GRR in Aitkin County
- Context Sensitive Solutions
- Distinctive Mile Markers

#### Economic Development

- Maximize River Experience & Economic Development
- MRT (More work to be done noted by group)
- Scenic Byway Billboard Management
- Resource Protection

#### Organization

- More robust technical participation needed
- Partnerships – All Stakeholders (more structured? CVBs mentioned. More work to be done)
- Business Plan

#### Marketing

- Is there enough public awareness?
- Promotions Funding
- Web Marketing
- Public Relations Plan
- Themed Itineraries
- Complete Marketing Grant (good progress has been made)
- Communication Plan (include social media, green initiatives)

#### Legislative Strategy

- Critical Area Designation
- Wild & Scenic River Designation (on going effort, Nature Conservancy)
- Assign Commissioner(s) to participate in boards, groups

#### Action Plan

- Get out to related organizations' meetings
- Increase Commissioner participation in others' efforts

The information above will be used to develop a proposed list of priorities for the next 1 – 2 years for feedback from Commission members. Commissioner Samp suggested prioritizing using an axis based on urgency and level of difficulty to implement. Technical Advisor Zoff recommended that each Commission member choose at least one thing that they will work on. Kathie Knapp noted that the group has some huge projects on the table and could consider grant applications to facilitate the work. Some tips – never use the term “seed grant” and never list a lump sum for salaries, everything must be project based. The Commission should continue to review information and updates available through the National Scenic Byways Office. Technical Advisor Zoff mentioned that timelines for federal grant applications have been shortening, and the Commission should anticipate this moving forward. Local match for any grants pursued is also a critical consideration.



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota  
Quarterly Region and Agency Updates  
November 2009**

**Explore Minnesota Tourism Updates (Dave Vogel, Technical Advisor)**

**2010 Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference: "Achieving Success in the 'New Normal'":** Join Minnesota tourism industry colleagues at the 2010 Explore Minnesota Tourism conference at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd, January 26-27, 2010. The conference is one day shorter to accommodate busy schedules and challenging budgets. Participants will only need one overnight as the conference begins Tuesday, January 26 at 1:00 p.m. and ends on Wednesday, January 27 at 3:30 p.m. Early registration has been reduced to \$169. Cragun's Resort is offering a room rate of \$74 per room per night. For more information contact **Gayle Junnila, 651-757-1852** or [gayle.junnila@state.mn.us](mailto:gayle.junnila@state.mn.us)

**Travel Promotion Act Passes U.S. House:** H.R. 1035, the Travel Promotion Act has passed the U.S. House. It has now been sent back over to the Senate for concurrence. The final vote tally in the House was 358 – 66. Passage of the Act would allow a significant increase in international promotion of the United States. More information on the Travel Promotion Act can be found at:  
<http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/pressrec.asp?>

**Minnesota Lodging Performance Through 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2009:** Recent lodging metrics for Minnesota show performance declines through the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2009. Year-to-date lodging performance shows a decline of 9.8% in occupancy, a decline of 14.2% in room revenue, and a decline of 16.4% in revenue available per room. Monthly decreases in occupancy and demand are similar for January through July, and moderated somewhat in August and September. For more information on this report go to:  
<http://industry.exploreminnesota.com/emt-express-november-4-2009>





Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
1st Quarter Meeting  
February 18, 2010  
State Office Building Room 500 North

**MINUTES – Approved 5/27/10**

**Commissioners Present**

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large  
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River  
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee  
Jack Frost – Itasca to Grand Rapids (via phone)  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border  
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee  
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings  
Al Withers – Agriculture (alternate)  
Rep. Greg Davids

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present**

Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism  
David Kelliher – Historical Society

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present,**

**Continued**

Carol Zoff – Transportation  
Greg Hubinger - LCC  
Chris Miller - Staff

**Others Present**

Ben Main (for Sen. Sandra Pappas)  
Mark Anderson – MN Scenic Byways Office

**Commissioners/Advisors Absent**

Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee  
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd  
Sen. Dave Senjem

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Meeting was called to order at 2:35 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Agenda**

Commissioners reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Commissioner Golfis requested addition of specific items under the work plan review/work group updates section. Commissioner Samp made a motion and Commissioner Golfis seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2009**

Minutes from the 2009 Fourth Quarter Meeting (November 19, 2009) were distributed. Commissioner Golfis made a motion and Commissioner Pafko seconded to approve the November 19 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**Election of 2010 Officers**

Existing officers indicated their willingness to continue for 2010: Rep. Sheldon Johnson, Chair; Sheronne Mulry, Vice-Chair; Jack Frost, Treasurer; Andy Golfis, Secretary/At-Large Member. A motion was made by Commissioner Samp to elect the slate of officers as presented, seconded by Commissioner Pafko. The officers were elected unanimously.

**Review Financial Reports**

A report showing year-to-date status of the MN-MRPC operating budget was distributed and discussed. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Frost, to approve the financial report. Motion passed unanimously. Technical Advisor Hubinger of the Legislative Coordinating Commission provided an update on budget proposals affecting current and future years for commissions. The governor has proposed a 3% reduction on unspent portions of FY '10 budgets as well as 6% reductions for next year and the following biennium. Proposals will also be coming from the legislature and Mr. Hubinger will keep the MN-MRPC updated as the process continues. Commissioner Golfis noted the importance of maintaining funding and the annual opportunity to apply for 80% in National Scenic Byway grant funds if 20% local match can be secured.

### **Legislative Session Update**

Representative Johnson reported that the Supreme Court has ruled against the DNR, allowing a mansion to be built on a bluff overlooking the St. Croix River. Possible implications for the Mississippi River and Great River Road were discussed. Comments included the ruling being a setback for the State's Wild and Scenic Rivers; technicalities that could have impacted the ruling; balancing resource protection and development; local zoning working well in many areas; need for DNR representation on the MN-MRPC; role of various commissions, agencies and the legislature; and the overall best approach for the MN-MRPC in this arena. A motion was made by Commissioner Golfis, seconded by Commissioner Murray, authorizing a letter to the DNR Commissioner requesting MN-MRPC involvement in rule making for Wild and Scenic Rivers and Critical Area Designations. Motion passed unanimously.

Representative Davids reported that the bonding bill just passed, and advised that the MN-MRPC watch activities of the Cultural Heritage Finance Committee for possible project and funding opportunities related to water quality. Rep. Davids serves as lead Republican on that committee.

### **2010 National Scenic Byway Grants**

Mark Anderson, MN Scenic Byways Coordinator provided information on the National Scenic Byways Grant Program and increased national focus on larger scale projects and partnerships. Minnesota's levels of grant funding have gone down over the past few years. Over the last rounds of grants, many states seemed to have 4 – 6 projects funded, with those projects being strategic for the overall byway and state. Maryland received a large grant for a statewide effort involving multiple state agencies.

Carol Zoff reported on an ad-hoc meeting held earlier on 2/18 to discuss possible applications from the MN-MRPC and partners. All applications need to connect with the current Corridor Management Plan and show benefit to the byway traveler. Possible projects for grant applications were identified: MNRRA Visual Resource Protection Plan; Mn/DOT invasive species management; Great River Road interpretive panels (in 17 counties not covered in current implementation); paving remaining gravel sections of the GRR; restoration of historic waysides not eligible for the National Historic Register; web marketing/upgrade; MRT signage on local roads. Discussion regarding these options included: advice not to mix construction and planning projects; need for 20% in local matching funds; possibility of MN Legacy Funds as another resource; partnerships with other groups in the state working on Mississippi River related initiatives (St. Cloud, Brainerd, etc); increased partnerships with CVBs along the GRR. The MN deadline for National Scenic Byway grant applications in March 26. A group (Paul Labovitz, Sheronne Mulry, Karl Samp, Cheryl Offerman) volunteered to assist with decision making regarding a 2010 application from the MN-MRPC. The MN-MRPC will also have the opportunity to rank all applications received from entities along the MN Great River Road.

### **National MRPC Updates**

The 2010 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting will be held in Baton Rouge, April 8-9. Chairman Johnson has confirmed approval for three non-legislators to attend representing the MN-MRPC. Anyone interested, please notify the MN-MRPC office and names will be forwarded to Chairman Johnson. The next MRPC board conference call is scheduled for February 19. Andy Golfis agreed to serve as Minnesota proxy on the call. The MRPC Marketing Committee will be planning a geocaching initiative for the summer of 2010, with a focus on Great River Road Interpretive Centers.

### **State MRPC Travel Updates & Upcoming Events**

**2010 Minnesota Tourism Conference:** Commissioner Samp reported on his attendance and goal of meeting CVB representatives from along the river to consider joint projects. He also noted a presentation by the Canadian Automobile Association and possible opportunities for marketing.

**Great River Gathering, St. Paul, May 13:** The MN-MRPC was represented by two attendees at last year's dinner, along with participation in the exhibit area in partnership with MNRRA. Commissioner Labovitz invited the MN-MRPC to partner again in 2010 by sharing MNRRA's exhibit space. Discussion determined that two dinner tickets will be purchased by the MN-MRPC again this year. An e-mail will be sent out to all members asking that anyone interested in the dinner or exhibit area reply to the MN-MRPC Office.

**2010 MN-MRPC Meeting Dates:** May 27, August 26 and November 18. All meetings are currently scheduled for 2:30 – 5:00 p.m. May and November meetings will be at the State Office Building in St. Paul. The August meeting will be held at a river site, with Commissioners Schaubach, Frost and Samp asked for recommendations. Details to be announced.

**Other Events:** Commissioner Mulry attended the Frozen Film Festival in Winona and suggested that the MN-MRPC consider booth/exhibit space at the event next year.

### **CapX 2020 Updates**

Chairman Johnson referred to the packet of materials everyone received today, including notes from an informational briefing held on 12/21/09 with details on CapX2020 routes affecting the Great River Road and suggested MN-MRPC actions; letters submitted by the MN-MRPC to date; and information on the upcoming public hearing for the St. Cloud to Monticello route. Commissioner Samp attended a public meeting on the St. Cloud to Monticello route and referred to information in his regional report. The MN-MRPC will continue to monitor developments related to the Bemidji-Grand Rapids, St. Cloud-Monticello and Hampton-LaCrosse routes as they affect the Great River Road and will submit comments as appropriate. Members discussed overall impact to the Great River Road and other communications related to this concern. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, authorizing an MN-MRPC letter to the Commissioner of Transportation describing our recommendations and preferred route, and including maps showing Great River Road intrinsic qualities. Motion passed unanimously.

### **2010-11 Work Plan and Work Group Updates**

The 2010-11 Work Plan was developed from information generated at the 11/19/09 MN-MRPC meeting. Copies were distributed and everyone was asked to review the listed tasks, along with confirming their participation on MN-MRPC Work Groups and National MRPC Committees. An updated roster of groups and committees is attached.

Commissioner Golfis explained current concerns under the areas of Capital Improvement (overall quality monitoring of the byway) and Economic Development (resource protection). The wood plank section of the Great River Road has been closed in Minneapolis, near the Mill City Museum and Stone Arch Bridge. This situation results in difficulty for the byway traveler and limits access to a historic portion of the Great River Road. Also, debris from the 35W bridge collapse remains in the Mississippi River, which is detrimental to the river and negatively impacts the intrinsic qualities of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Discussion indicated that members shared concern regarding these issues. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, authorizing a letter to the Mayor regarding the closed portion of the Great River Road. Motion passed unanimously. After further discussion, Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz, authorizing a letter regarding both the closed section of the Great River Road and the river debris, to be sent to the Mayor of Minneapolis and copied to area legislators, Commissioner Sorel, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Motion passed unanimously.

The Marketing Work Group has been working on development of map tablets, as part of the current marketing grant. Draft layouts for the Metro Mississippi and Northwoods Mississippi regions were distributed and discussed. These regions were chosen as the pilots for the project with the other four regional designs to follow once content and layout are finalized for the pilots.

### **Agency and Regional Updates**

**Camp Ripley Veteran's State Trail:** A group of partners in the Little Falls area is working toward development of the Camp Ripley Veteran's State Trail, a multi-use trail that would link the Paul Bunyan Trail to the Soo Line Trail. The trail would provide increased opportunities for byway travelers. A letter of support from the MN-MRPC has been requested. Commissioner Samp made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz, authorizing a letter of support for the Camp Ripley Veteran's State Trail. Motion passed unanimously.

**MRT Project and Historic Roadside Properties:** Technical Advisor Zoff reported. Mn/DOT is working to access trunk highway funds to map and sign state/trunk highway sections of the MRT statewide (approx. 25% of the MRT). Goal is to completed signage by next riding season. Last year, the National Grange marker in Elk River and Camp Ripley wall projects were completed under the historic roadside properties restoration project. Work is underway on the Burns Avenue Overlook. Next in line are the St. Cloud Historic Marker; Sibley Pioneer Church Memorial; MN State Training School Walls (Red Wing). The Lake City Concourse project will be the most complex and expensive of the upcoming restorations. Work will also be done at Reads Landing; La Crescent and Reno Springs.

**Mn/DOT:** Commissioner Pafko updated the group on major grants for passenger rail, including planning funds for a Chicago to Twin Cities rail line, part of which would be along the Mississippi.

**Brainerd to Elk River Region:** Commissioner Samp referred to his written report and also reported on continuing work to eliminate the gap in the Brainerd area, with consideration at a city council meeting coming soon. He recently completed the MN Master Naturalist Program and noted the program could be a good resource for the MN-MRPC.

**Elk River to Hastings Region:** Commissioner Labovitz reported that he has met with most mayors and county managers in the Metro Mississippi region to discuss both MNRRA and the MN-MRPC. May 14 will be the kickoff canoe paddle for summer 2010 Urban Wilderness Canoe Area programming. On April 29, EMT, DNR and other partners will be holding a one day bicycle tourism summit. The "Great River Race" is being planned for next year, to involve teams in 24-person canoes raising funds. Commissioner Labovitz invited the MN-MRPC to fill a canoe for the event.

#### **Next Meeting**

Thursday, May 27, 2010 • 2:30 – 5:00 p.m. • State Office Building Room 500 North

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

**MN-MNRPC**  
**Work Group and National Committee Rosters, 2/18/10**

**MN-MRPC Capital Improvement**

Andy Golfis  
Sheldon Johnson  
Carol Zoff

**MN-MRPC Economic Development**

Paul Labovitz, Chair  
Don Frerichs  
Frank Pafko  
John Schaubach  
Sandy Pappas  
Carol Zoff  
Greg Murray

**MN-MRPC Marketing**

Sheronne Mulry, Chair  
Paul Labovitz  
Robin Kinney  
Cheryl Offerman  
Carol Zoff

**MN-MRPC Organization**

Karl Samp, Chair  
David Kelliher  
Carol Zoff

**National MRPC Board**

Sheldon Johnson  
Sheronne Mulry, Proxy

**National MRPC Culture/Heritage**

Sheronne Mulry, Co-Chair

**National MRPC Transportation**

Carol Zoff, Co-Chair  
John Schaubach, Alternate  
Frank Pafko

**National MRPC ERA**

Sheldon Johnson  
Karl Samp, Alternate

**National MRPC Marketing**

Jack Frost  
Cheryl Offerman  
Dave Senjem, Alternate



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota  
Regional Updates  
February 2010**

**Brainerd to Elk River – Commissioner Samp**

St. Cloud continues to work on planning for a community focused on the Mississippi River. We have asked to be included in the citizen group involved with the planning.

A citizen group in Brainerd, initiated by the latest cohort in Blandin Leadership, has begun a planning process on how to bring the Mississippi River to the forefront in development efforts in Brainerd and Baxter. I have attended one of the meetings. The next one is next Tuesday which I am unable to attend.

Finally, I attended the CapX 2020 hearing for the draft environmental impact study for the project. I read and submitted our "talking points" memo. The meeting to take testimony with the Administrative Law Judge will be held on March 8<sup>th</sup>. We should share the same information at that time. Sherburne County was not in favor of our suggested Option D route as that would take it through their county. I think we should clarify what a "modified" route D means. Their biggest concern was down Highway 8. The majority of those who spoke were in favor of a route along I-94.



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
2nd Quarter Meeting  
May 27, 2010  
State Office Building Room 500 North

MINUTES – Draft

**Commissioners Present**

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large  
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair  
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee  
Jack Frost –Itasca-Grand Rapids (phone)  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings-Iowa Border (phone)  
Paul Labovitz – Elk River-Hastings  
Rep. Greg Davids  
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee  
Sen. Sandra Pappas  
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd  
Sen. Dave Senjem

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present**

Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism  
David Kelliher – Historical Society

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present,**

**Continued**

Carol Zoff – Transportation  
Cynthia Wheeler – Natural Resources  
Chris Miller - Staff

**Others Present**

Dave Seykora – Dept of Transportation

**Commissioners/Advisors Absent**

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee  
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee  
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River

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Meeting was called to order at 2:40 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Cynthia Wheeler, new MN-MRPC Technical Advisor from the Department of Natural Resources, was welcomed to the Commission. It was also noted that Andrea Hart-Kajer will be joining the Commission as the new appointee from the Historical Society.

**Approval of Agenda**

Commissioners reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Commissioner Davids made a motion and Commissioner Labovitz seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from February 18, 2010**

Minutes from the 2010 First Quarter Meeting (February 18, 2010) were distributed. Commissioner Frost made a motion and Commissioner Labovitz seconded to approve the February 18 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**Commission Business – FY '10 Financial Report and FY '11 Draft Budget**

A report showing current status of the FY '10 MN-MRPC operating budget was distributed and discussed. There is likely to be carry over into FY '11 partially due to longer than anticipated timelines on the current marketing grant project resulting in required local match for the remaining projects being carried forward; and lower than anticipated expenses related to the 2009 Annual Meeting. The Commission requested that the Marketing Work Group develop a plan for allocation of carry over funds; agreed to by Work Group Chair Mulry. A draft line item budget for FY '11 was distributed along with explanations of the amounts. Special considerations in the FY '11 budget include the 2010 MRPC Annual Meeting in La Crosse, Wisconsin, which provides a good opportunity for MN-MRPC members to attend a national MRPC meeting. Commissioner Golfis made a motion to approve the FY '10 financial report and the FY '11 draft budget as presented, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz. Motion passed unanimously.

**National MRPC Updates**

Commissioners Golfis and Frerichs reported on the 2010 MRPC Semi-Annual meeting held in Baton Rouge. Attendance was strong from southern MRPC states. Field trips focused on local issues of the Louisiana/Delta region, including revitalization of the river. The field trips were excellent but left less time for committee meetings. Commissioner Golfis noted the importance of the national meetings to learn about what the other states are doing related to the river and Great River Road, and bring those ideas

back for consideration in Minnesota. Commissioner Frerichs reminded the group about the National Endowment Committee, preparing information for rollout at the 2010 Annual Meeting in La Crosse.

### **State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events**

**Great River Gathering:** Senator Pappas, Commissioner Labovitz and Commissioner Mulry attended the event on May 13 at the St. Paul River Centre. All shared that it was an excellent event highlighting many riverfront improvements, with approximately 1,200 people in attendance at the dinner. The National Park Service/MNRRRA purchased exhibit space which was shared with Wilderness Inquiry and the MN-MRPC.

**Tour de Pepin:** Technical Advisor Zoff will be participating in this third annual bicycle event, starting in Lake City. The event has grown each year and offers different lengths for participation.

**Bicycle Tourism Summit:** Commissioner Labovitz participated in the summit, with over 150 others also in attendance. The focus of the summit was discussion on development, packaging and promotion of trails. If a statewide trail system is developed, the Mississippi River could be a logical spine for many trails.

**MRT Meetings:** Technical Advisor Zoff updated the group on a series of meetings coming up in preparation for MN/DOT's MRT sign project on all trunk highway segments. MN-MRPC members will be notified of the meetings, which will be offered in each destination area. Also, bike rides along the route will be conducted in 50 mile segments and all are welcome to join in for any number of miles.

**MRT Inc:** Commissioner Labovitz is a member of the MRT Inc. Board and recently attended their meeting in Memphis, which included activities on the Mississippi. He reports that the concept of a Headwaters to Gulf bicycle trail is gaining momentum.

**Legislative Parks & Trails Strategy Committee:** Commissioner Schaubach has been invited to serve on this committee and would appreciate input from other MN-MRPC members.

**Dog Days of Stockholm:** Commissioner Mulry is working with a group in Stockholm in planning this August 13 – 14 event celebrating writing, literature and furry friends. The Lake Pepin circle tour is mentioned in the promotional info, which includes the Minnesota Great River Road. For details, please visit [www.dogdaysofstockholm.com](http://www.dogdaysofstockholm.com). There was general discussion about promotion of the MN-MRPC at local festivals and events, including ideas such as parade participation.

### **CapX 2020 – Recent Actions and Future Plans**

Chairman Johnson welcomed Dave Seykora, from the Office of the Chief Counsel at MN/DOT. Mr. Seykora provided background on the current status of the three CapX projects affecting the Minnesota Great River Road. The three projects are in different stages as noted below. Local communities and the general public have opportunities for input. Final location decisions will be made by the Public Utilities Commission.

**Bemidji – Grand Rapids Project:** All deadlines for evidence have passed and the Administrative Law Judge is expected to issue a report by early July. There were three proposed routes. It appears likely that the preferred route will become the recommended route, which is relatively good news for the Great River Road.

**St. Cloud – Monticello Project:** The report from the Administrative Law Judge was recently released and recommends the I-94 corridor for location of the power lines. The Office of Energy Security (OES) will issue a report by June 25, with a Public Utilities Commission hearing scheduled for early July. The OES recommendations will be very detailed. Mr. Seykora reported that MN/DOT will be providing recommended language to be included in the OES report, and suggested inclusion of language regarding mitigation along the Great River Road as well. Draft text was distributed to Commission members for review. 20 miles of the Great River Road will be affected by this project. Commission members discussed the potential impacts. It was decided that a group of MN-MRPC members, accompanied by Mr. Seykora, will visit the affected area and make mitigation recommendations to be submitted to OES. Representatives from OES will be invited to participate in the visit.



Commissioner Pafko made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Golfis, authorizing a letter of support for the response and language being submitted to the OES by MN/DOT regarding the St. Cloud – Monticello Route. Motion passed unanimously.

Hampton – Rochester - La Crosse Project: Commissioner Mulry reported on her participation in the Advisory Task Force formed to identify issues to be included in the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project. The last meeting of the task force will be held on June 3. After that date, the MN-MRPC will remain on the project list to receive activity updates and opportunities for comment. Commissioner Mulry is also communicating with the Wisconsin MRPC since the route will impact the Great River Road in both states and will be visible from both sides of the river. Mr. Seykora noted that the review process for this line is in the early stages and is likely to continue for a year or more. Of the proposed routes, the McCarthy Lake Alternative Route could be of greatest concern because it would run parallel to the Great River Road for 2.5 miles.

#### **Camp Ripley Veterans Trail**

A letter of support was sent as authorized at the last Commission meeting. Funding was included in the bonding bill at one point but did not make it through to the final version.

#### **Minneapolis Plank Road/Bridge Debris Concerns**

A letter outlining MN-MRPC concerns was sent as authorized at the last Commission meeting. Commissioner Golfis has been following up with the City of Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has responded, noting that repair of the closed plank road section of the Great River Road has been approved, and the RFP for the project will be out this summer. MN-MRPC members raised questions about the repair plan and whether it will maintain the current scenic and historic value of the road using similar materials. Staff will request more information and will forward to Commission members. The MN-MRPC has been contacted by an attorney representing the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board regarding the 35W bridge debris. They will be taking legal action on removal of the debris from the Bohemian Flats area. Chairman Johnson will follow up and MN-MRPC members will consider further actions as needed.

#### **Critical Area Rulemaking Project**

A letter requesting MN-MRPC participation was sent as authorized. Commissioner Labovitz was invited to participate and reported on a recent meeting and scenic quality workshop. Recommendations are due to the Department of Natural Resources by June 11 regarding the different geographical features that should be grouped together for the Critical Area designation. A report will then be prepared in the fall for consideration by the Legislature.

#### **2010 National Scenic Byway Grants**

As directed at the last meeting, a group met to discuss a possible joint application involving the MN-MRPC, National Park Service/MNRRRA, Department of Transportation and other partners. The decision was for MNRRRA to move forward with their 2010 application for a Visual Resource Protection Plan, as updated from 2009 and supported by several organizations. The other partners will consider applications in 2011. MN-MRPC members discussed whether to begin planning for a FY '11 application focused on development of a new comprehensive Corridor Management Plan. It was agreed that discussions should begin and the project was referred to the Organization Work Group.

#### **Work Group Updates**

Several work group priorities were discussed as part of previous agenda items. In general, work groups might want to consider a summer meeting to review recent activities and plan for FY '11. Staff will follow up with work group chairs. The Marketing Work Group reports that the regional map tablets will be printed and shipped soon. Each Regional Commissioner will receive 200 for their own distribution and Commission business. The MN-MRPC office will also receive 200 copies of each regional map for general distribution.

#### **Agency and Regional Updates**

**Historical Society:** Technical Advisor Kelliher reported that the Historical Sites season begins in earnest this week. A new brochure highlighting all sites in the state was distributed. The recently passed bonding bill includes funds for Fort Snelling, but not improvements to the Oliver Kelley Farm. An update on

activities related to the Fort Snelling Upper Post and related site visit should be considered for a future MN-MRPC meeting. It was also noted that Legacy Funds have resulted in some good history projects being funded around the state.

**Natural Resources:** Technical Advisor Wheeler reported on a project underway at the Mississippi Headwaters and also planning efforts beginning again for Mississippi Whitewater Park. Outreach efforts in partnership with Stearns County, St. Cloud State University, and others continue and there will be a river activity day held on August 14 based on last August's successful event.

**Tourism:** Technical Advisor Offerman announced that the 2011 Governor's Fishing Opener will be held in the Grand Rapids area. This could present potential promotional opportunities for the Great River Road and it would be good for MN-MRPC members to become involved in the planning process. Ideas to promote the river and Great River Road could include a wide range of things including canoeing on the river; bicycle rides; or garbage pick up activities. If the Mississippi happens to run through the chosen lake, it would provide a natural tie to the Great River Road.

**Transportation:** Technical Advisor Zoff reported on the historic wayside restoration projects. Current priorities include the St. Cloud Historical Marker, which will be moved to a new location in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and St. Cloud State University. Work also continues on the Burns Avenue Overlook in St. Paul, which is on an extended contract and should be completed this summer. Planning and partnering with other agencies is also underway on the Reno Springs wayside, La Crescent wayside and Minnesota Training School walls in Red Wing. The Lake City Concourse project will begin soon and will be one of the largest of the restorations including new stone walks, utility replacements and installation of a rain garden.

**Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region:** Commissioner Schaubach offered to host the August MN-MRPC meeting in his region, in partnership with Commissioners Frost and Samp. This would be an expanded session on August 26 consisting of the quarterly business meeting along with visits to area points of interest along the Great River Road. Meeting space has been tentatively reserved and the remainder of the agenda will be planned based on what Commission members would like to see. Commissioner Labovitz offered to provide van transportation for 6 – 7 people. Details will be planned and announced during the summer.

**Elk River to Hastings Region:** Commissioner Labovitz reported on the Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventure program, which recently held its kick-off event for the season. He also reported on an upcoming trip to talk with representatives from the Delaware River area about development of a possible new park. News from Washington - Congresswoman Betty McCollum will now be serving on the Interior and Environmental Subcommittee on Appropriations.

**GRR in Canada:** Senator Senjem reported on a recent visit to his office by Minnesota's General Consul from Canada. They discussed the Great River Road including its history in Canada and the marker located near Kenora, Ontario.

#### **Management/Marketing RFP for 2011-12**

Chairman Johnson reported that the Legislative Coordinating Commission is handling the RFP process for MN-MRPC management and marketing services. The announcement has been published in the State Register, applications are due June 1, and LCC will work with Chairman Johnson on review and selection.

#### **Next Meeting**

Thursday, August 26, 2010 • Crossings/Scenic Region • Please set aside the full day

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.



## Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Regional Updates - May 2010

### Grand Rapids to Brainerd – Commissioner Schaubach

There is continued progress and more opportunities for promoting and developing amenities for the Mississippi River in our region. Throughout this spring, the communities of the Cuyuna Range have worked on community development opportunities around diversifying recreational tourism in our region. The offerings of the nearby Mississippi River and the development of the master plan of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area [CCSRA] are keys to this effort.

As I mentioned in previous reports, the 5000 acre CCSRA master plan calls for a number of integrated, compatible silent sport offerings in the abandoned mine lands of the Cuyuna Iron Range. Paved trail biking / hiking, mountain biking, kayaking / canoeing, trout fishing, birding, nature photography, geocaching, snowmobiling, SCUBA, etc. This CCSRA connects directly to the Mississippi at Riverton, MN. So it is a natural fit as a major amenity and attraction to this section of the headwaters of the Mississippi and has the potential to play an important role in expanding the tourism potential for Minnesota's Mississippi.

There are some major advancements in the development of these tourism attractions taking place.

- Following along the course of the Mississippi, more paved segments of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail will be constructed this summer and next... some in Brainerd, more on the Cuyuna Range and some in Aitkin. All this will serve as a resource to in time build out the assets of the Mississippi River Trail.
- Two fund raisers for the Cuyuna Lakes Trail are in place. On April 24 the Brainerd Jaycees held the annual Brainerd Lakes Marathon. On Saturday, September 11 the Cuyuna Lakes trails Association will hold the Tour of Cuyuna Bicycle Ride. All proceeds go to continued trail development. Pass the word around if you know people who may have an interest.
- Construction began this week on 22 miles of world class mountain bike trails in the CCSRA. This is a new national model for this sport led by the International Mountain Bike Association and is expected to draw mountain bikers from outside our state.
- The CCSRA is being touted by the diving world as one of the very best places in the upper Midwest for this sport.
- More and more people are kayaking, canoeing the CCSRA mine lakes and the area Mississippi. When we get folks to the CCSRA from outside our state, we find they also want to experience the Mississippi.

As a result of this, the local communities have initiated visioning and planning to transform local tourism to take advantage of these opportunities.

- This spring the Iron Range Resources and the University of Minnesota regional Partnerships funded a number of community visioning sessions [The Cuyuna Visioning Partnership]. These sessions were facilitated by Kent Gustafson and Cynthia Meisner of the U of M Tourism Center. Results demonstrated support for the emergence of the CCSRA and surrounding region as a center for this new approach to tourism. Something that introduces a new generation to the outdoors through new ways to experience the outdoors... using a silent sports approach that encourages fitness... that is family friendly.
- The Cuyuna Range communities were also selected as a project for the Minnesota Design Team. The Minnesota Design Team brings a volunteer group of architects, planners, marketers, landscape architects to help communities. This effort, called PROJECT REVIVE, used citizen input to devise a plan to brand and beautify the towns within the CCSRA... and to transform the local tourism economy this silent sport attractions.
- In both of these citizen-input processes comments about appreciating, preserving and protecting the local Mississippi came out. [We are excited to hear of the grass roots Mississippi River advocacy in the Brainerd community in which Karl is involved.]
- Through this past bonding session, \$1.25 million was approved for infrastructure development of the CCSRA. [Thanks to all our legislators who supported this investment.] The CCSRA remains, at it core,

We have one other significant opportunity that has our attention. The Potlatch Company presently owns two plus miles of Mississippi shoreline between Brainerd and the Cuyuna Range [2000+ acres]. Potlatch may be willing to sell. There is an effort to purchase this to make this parcel a part of the public trust. Price, funds, etc are at issue. If this could be accomplished this quality river asset would be elevated. It would be a significant step in our mission to protect and provide Mississippi access for the public in the years ahead. And this parcel, along with others in the area already acquired, would help elevate our headwaters sections of the Mississippi to epic status... for quality of life of local citizens... and continued tourism development around river attractions... There is a group of citizens, advocates and entities like the Nature Conservancy engaged to promote this and help make it happen.

### **Hastings to Iowa Border – Commissioner Mulry**

#### Recent Activities

- CapX2020 Advisory Task Force Meetings and Follow Up
- SMTA Meeting, Historic Bluff Country
- Spring Day Conference for Artists and those interested in the Arts, Jon Hassler Theater, Plainview, MN
- Great River Gathering
- Wilderness Inquiry Canoe Paddle
- Native American Tourism Association of WI

#### National Updates

- Working with WI MRPC and their marketing committee on CAPX2020 and Fish/Wildlife Service Cell Phone Grant. Plan to attend both quarterly meeting and marketing meeting if time allows in my schedule.
- Working with Culture & Heritage Committee issues and helping schedule lots of river interviews with Minnesota folks in July.

### **Brainerd to Elk River – Commissioner Samp**

Our Gap communities are now down to two. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, Brainerd City Council passed a resolution to prohibit any new billboards along the GRR through town. I worked with Mark Ostergarten, City Planner for some time on this, and Carol and Mark Anderson were very helpful.

Brainerd / Baxter now has an active group planning for revitalization along the Mississippi River through town. The latest Blandin Leadership cohort from Brainerd is playing an active role in this endeavor. They have hired SEH to lead a preliminary visioning process which took place on April 26<sup>th</sup>. The draft vision statement and some base plans will be revealed on June 14<sup>th</sup>. I will be attending that meeting, though I missed the April one. I have been keeping the GRR and MRT in front of them at gatherings leading up to the planning meeting. Steve Voss of MnDOT District 3, has attended at least one of the meetings I attended.

The Cities of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Sartell kicked off the public information gathering phase of their efforts to develop a plan for the Mississippi River frontage through their communities. The kick off meeting was May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Civic Center in St. Cloud. I signed up to be notified of planning committee meetings for the Tourism Task Force.

I regularly attend the Mississippi River Forums in St. Cloud put on by the NPS and Paul's staff covering various topics (storm water runoff management, value of Green Space etc.). Lots of activity up here in Central MN. We hope you consider having the Aug. meeting up here. John and I (and hopefully Jack) will work hard to provide a pleasant experience.