



## Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2011-12 Annual Report July 2012



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### **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. The Commission is organized and guided by Minnesota Statute 161.1419.

### **Quarterly Meetings of the Full Commission**

The MN-MRPC held four full Commission meetings between July 2011 and July 2012 - August 18, 2011; November 17, 2011; February 16, 2012; and May 24, 2012. Each meeting included updates from regional citizen Commissioners and state agencies. Work is carried out by the full Commission along with four work groups – Capital Improvement; Economic Development; Marketing; and Organization.

### **Projects & Activities**

#### **Great River Road Corridor Management Planning and Implementation**

The Commission was awarded a 2011 National Scenic Byways Grant for Corridor Management Planning and Implementation. This project will develop a Corridor Management Plan to guide the work of Minnesota's Mississippi River Parkway Commission for the next 10 – 15 years. With a foundation of planning that reaches back to 1938, current conditions will be evaluated and strategies developed addressing livability, changes in personal/global economies, intrinsic resource protection, multi-national culture, multi-modal transportation, context sensitive solutions, and technology. The project will also implement a current CMP key strategy - signing the Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT) statewide. Partners include the MN-MRPC, MnDOT, National Park Service, Minnesota Legislative Coordinating Commission, and Trust for Public Land. Required matching funds are being provided by the National Park Service. A Project Management Team has been convened, responsible for detailed planning and oversight of the project. First tasks will likely include development of a GIS inventory/database of Great River Road resources and a stakeholder communication system to be used during the planning process and for future implementation. The Corridor Management Plan will include an inventory and map of GRR resources; confirmed Great River Road Storybook content and locations; route assessment and recommendations; visitor impressions and analysis of visitor needs; corridor development strategies; byway organization business plan; and communications/public relations plan. The MRT implementation portion of the project includes signage; community information kiosks, maps and electronic traveler information. This will be a multi-year project carried out in phases, with completion tentatively planned for June 2015. A project overview sheet is attached.

#### **Great River Road Videos**

The Commission released a series of Minnesota Great River Road videos in January 2012. Videos are available on You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/mnmississippiriver/>, or via a link on the Minnesota Great River Road website, [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com). Seven videos were developed, one for each of the six destination areas, as well as one overview video for the full length of the Minnesota Great River Road. The videos highlight unique features and attractions while telling the story of the Great River Road. MN-MRPC Regional Commissioners and the MN-MRPC Marketing Work Group determined content. Hard Working Pictures of St. Paul produced the videos, which were promoted via email to stakeholder lists and also distributed on DVD to tourism information sites along the river. The project was funded by National Scenic Byways and Minnesota Tourism grants.

#### **Great River Road Regional Meetings**

Great River Road Regional Meetings were held around the state during the year - one in June 2011, two in September 2011, and two in December 2011. Stakeholders and partners from the regions were invited and agendas consisted of updates on Great River Road and related initiatives, gathering of input and updates from the region, and election of MN-MRPC Regional Commissioners to new four-year terms. Votes were accepted at the meetings or electronically for those unable to attend. Three Regional Commissioners were re-elected, and the Commission welcomed two new Regional Commissioners. Two of the regional meetings were held in conjunction with the Mississippi River Forums held by the National Park Service. Great

River Road meetings began immediately after the Forums in an effort to expand audiences for both meetings.

### **Member Elections and Agency Appointments**

Regional Commission members were elected as noted above, and state agencies were asked to confirm or change their appointments to the Commission as needed. The Commission also voted to establish a new technical member position on the MN-MRPC, to be filled by the Superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area or his/her designee. A new member orientation session was provided in conjunction with the February Commission meeting.

### **Great River Road Visual Resource Protection Plan Project**

A National Scenic Byways grant was received by the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) for this effort. The project will create a Visual Resource Protection Plan for Minnesota's Great River Road that will serve as a prototype for protecting visual resources in the byway's six destination areas, one of which is the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area where the project will take place. The plan will 1) develop a methodology to preserve high quality scenic resources along the byway, many of which are threatened by urban development; 2) identify opportunities to enhance the byway traveler's visual experience; and 3) identify new scenic resource viewing opportunities along the byway. The project is a partnership between the National Park Service, Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission, and MnDOT. During FY '12, a contractor was selected, project kick off meetings were held with partners, and the project approach and process were developed. The project will rely heavily on public input to help identify specific views and volunteer involvement (including MN-MRPC members) to participate in a scientific process to classify and rate the views. Completion is tentatively scheduled for June 2013. The process and results will be utilized in Corridor Management Planning for the full length of the Minnesota Great River Road.

### **Community Asset Mapping Workshops**

The Commission partnered with University of Minnesota Extension to offer and promote workshops to assist local Great River Road communities in establishing and strengthening their presence on electronic maps to better reach today's travelers using mobile devices. Participants received free training to learn about digital mapping technology, why it is important, and how to share points of interest with the world. A sample flyer is attached. Commissioner Karl Samp led the efforts.

### **Interpretive Panels**

The Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors is partnering with the MN-MRPC on the interpretive panels to be placed at New Albin, near the Iowa border. MSPS donated funds to assist with the cost, and are assisting with content. This partnership supplements the National Scenic Byways Grant currently managed by the Commission for placement of Great River Road interpretive panels in several locations along the river. Plans are also underway to place panels at Itasca State Park, Bemidji, St. Cloud, and Mendota locations. Draft panel layouts have been developed and a sample is attached. These are in addition to the first set of completed panels, placed last year at the Highway 371 Travel Information Center in Brainerd. The full project will result in an estimated 24 panels at six sites, utilizing stories developed for the Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Plan.

### **Historic Roadside Property Restorations**

Eight of twelve planned restorations have been completed, funded by a state appropriation targeted toward restoration of Great River Road wayside properties on or eligible for National Historic Register status. Work was delayed in the summer of 2011 due to a shutdown of state government. Planning and contracting has been proceeding for the final four restoration projects with completion scheduled for 2013.

### **National Scenic Byways Conference**

The MN-MRPC was a byway sponsor at this event, held August 21 - 24 in Minneapolis. It provided a perfect opportunity to showcase the Great River Road. Commission members hosted a field workshop on historic property restorations along the Great River Road, visiting the Burns Avenue Overlook (St. Paul) and Sibley Pioneer Church Memorial (Mendota). Partners from MnDOT and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area provided a mobile workshop on the Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT). Several Commission members also attended the conference and staffed the Great River Road exhibit.

### **GRR Route/Signage Review**

In preparation for the Visual Resource Protection Plan and Corridor Management Planning projects, representatives from the MN-MRPC and Mississippi National River and Recreation Area drove and reviewed the Elk River to Hastings Destination Area route and signage in December of 2011. Several signage recommendations were made and differences in seasonal views were noted as an important consideration. GRR Pilot Wheel way showing signs were fabricated and delivered during the year to Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Crow Wing County, and Brainerd-Baxter.

### **Road and Bridge Projects**

MnDOT continues work on several Mississippi River bridge projects along the Great River Road

and provides regular updates to the MN-MRPC. Projects include – Lafayette (St. Paul) and Hastings bridges currently under construction; I-90 Dresbach bridge in final design phase; Winona bridge in project development and likely to include rehabilitation of the historic main span with new approaches; and scoping process just beginning for the new Red Wing bridge.

### **Resource Protection - CapX2020**

CapX 2020 is a high voltage transmission line project involving several routes across Minnesota, three of which will impact the Great River Road. Activity during 2011-12 focused on the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse transmission route which will include a Mississippi River crossing and impacts to the Great River Road in both Minnesota and Wisconsin. The MN-MRPC monitored information from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and provided comment on the Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement issued by USDA Rural Development. The National MRPC resolution was included with the MN-MRPC's letter.

### **Resource Protection - Silica Sand Mining**

A Great River Road stakeholder contacted the MN-MRPC regarding concerns resulting from rapid expansion of silica (frac) sand mining near the Great River Road in Wisconsin and Minnesota. After discussing the issue, the Commission requested a study of potential impacts of silica sand mining to the Great River Road and Mississippi River, including: landscape and cultural resource degradation; increased road and bridge pressures and potential damage; road and shoulder safety; pedestrian and bicycle conflicts; air and water quality; noise; reduced tourism activity and related economic losses; and cumulative impacts on the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Such a study would provide consistent information to be used by the various jurisdictions involved in decision making. The letter was sent to the Governor and copied to counties, cities and townships in the Bluffs Region of the Minnesota Great River Road.

### **Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT)**

The MN-MRPC and MnDOT continue to partner on efforts to fully implement and promote the MRT. Commission members participated in MRT regional meetings. An MRT update was included on the agenda for each Great River Road Regional Meeting held during the year. A status and route update was provided at the February 16 MN-MRPC meeting by Liz Walton of MnDOT. Ms. Walton also serves on the Project Management Team for the MN-MRPC's National Scenic Byways Corridor Management Planning and Implementation Grant. The grant will provide MRT signage, information kiosks, maps and electronic information for travelers. MRT information can be accessed at [www.dot.state.mn.us](http://www.dot.state.mn.us), then click on "bikes" at top of page, then on Mississippi River Trail (MRT) for details, Google Maps, and a marketing toolbox. A Minnesota MRT overview is attached.

## **2012 State Legislative Session/Great River Road Highlights**

### **Mississippi Northwoods Habitat Complex**

Funding was approved by the legislature for purchase of this nearly 2,000 acre parcel of land with 2.5+ miles of Mississippi River frontage northeast of Brainerd. The MN-MRPC provided a letter of support for this important effort and MN-MRPC Commissioner John Schaubach serves on the leadership team for this project. A fact sheet is attached.

### **Mississippi River Trail State Bikeway Designation**

The MRT was officially designated as Minnesota's first state bikeway, through legislation passed on May 7, 2012 and signed shortly thereafter by the Governor. The Mississippi River Trail utilizes shouldered highways, low use roads and available off-road paths to guide bicyclists along one of the world's most significant Rivers throughout the state to provide over 800 miles of bicycle opportunity.

## **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 as listed below (state operating budget, FHWA and state grants) and those managed by related organizations (other scenic byways, partner organizations such as the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, State of Minnesota, etc.).

### **State Operating Budget**

The MN-MRPC operated with state funding at levels allowing the Commission to proceed with most priorities. State operating funding for FY '12 was \$63,000.

### **Federal Highway Administration Grants**

- Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management Planning & Implementation (\$560,000) - Grant work will begin in fiscal year 2013.
- Minnesota Great River Road National Scenic Byway Marketing (\$43,000) - Remaining projects remaining include hospitality training and group travel planning. 92% of the grant has been utilized to date with completion scheduled during fiscal year 2013.
- Great River Road Corridor Management Plan Implementation (\$25,000) - This is the fifth in a series of five Corridor Management "Seed" Grants. Regional meetings, public relations, in-state and out-of-state travel for Commissioners and staff are included. Grant activities were completed in 2011-12.
- Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Panels, Phase 1 (\$50,000) - This project will place a series of interpretive signs in various Minnesota Great River Road destination areas. Sign holders have been fabricated, pilot signs were designed, ordered, produced and placed at the Highway 371 Travel Information Center in Brainerd, and plans are underway for placement at five additional sites. The Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors has donated funds to assist with the project at one of those sites. 25% of the grant funds have been utilized to date.

### **State Grants**

Explore Minnesota Tourism (\$2,500) Funds provided match to the National Scenic Byways Marketing Grant, for development of Minnesota Great River Road videos.

### **2012 National Scenic Byways Grant Program**

Three grants were submitted by local partners for Great River Road projects. The MN-MRPC provided letters of support for 1) Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge – creation of an Education Station for visitors; 2) Aitkin County – paving and addition of shoulders on gravel section of Great River Road and 3) Dakota County – multimodal wayside rest and trailhead project. The Commission also sent letters to Congress regarding importance of the NSB program and maintaining designation and funding eligibility as well as provided information to National Office for their efforts in Washington.

### **Local & Regional Activities and Amenity Development**

- **Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership** - The Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership is launching the Riverfront Vitality Indicators Project, in partnership with the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). This initiative will report on indicators of revitalization: healthy ecosystem; exceptional parks and trails, world-class history and culture; and vital, livable communities. The partnership project will inform private and public decisions affecting diverse, challenged neighborhoods of North and Northeast Minneapolis and the city's entire 15.5 miles of riverfront. This report may provide a model for other waterfront cities facing challenging choices about public and private investments. Cordelia Pierson, Executive Director of the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership, is a member of the MN-MRPC, representing the Elk River to Hastings Region.
- **Mississippi National River and Recreation Area: Alternative Transportation Plan** – The goal of this plan is to increase visitation to national park without increasing congestion, via a multi-modal transportation system. Implementation includes installation of 32 new "Nice Ride" bike stations along the Mississippi. A kick off ride event was held on June 4. Park Superintendent Paul Labovitz serves as a technical advisor to the Commission.
- **National Water Trail Designation** – The 72 miles of river within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area was designated as the 2nd National Water Trail in the United States.
- **Coldwater Site Restoration** – The National Park Service is restoring this 27 acre parcel to a park setting between Fort Snelling and Minnehaha Park. The project will result in 100 acres of connected open space owned by various agencies.
- **Brainerd-Baxter Mississippi River Revitalization Project** – This group applied for and is receiving assistance from the National Park Service's Parks and Trails Program as they move forward with plans for the Brainerd-Baxter area. MN-MRPC Commissioner Karl Samp serves on the committee.
- **St. Cloud Area** – "Mississippi Partners" was established in 2012 to champion implementation of the recently completed urban river plan by prioritizing, educating, marketing/promoting, advocating, and fundraising for future river initiatives. Committee membership consists of active representatives from area cities and counties, environmental organizations, local businesses, and other river stakeholders meeting quarterly to spur greater interest, support, and leadership in riverfront projects. The City of St. Cloud received an award for Excellence in Community Engagement from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association.
- **Take a Day OFF\* (Outdoor Family Fun) on the Mississippi** - This annual event at Stearns County Mississippi River Park is organized by Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District, Minnesota DNR Benton County. St. Cloud State University and several other local partners. 1,300 people participated in the August 13, 2011 event. Free activities included fishing, river rides, archery, river education, nature hikes, kayaking, canoeing, kids games, native plantings, nature art, river shore landscaping, know your duck, and family picnics.

- **Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trail** – This new world class trail, located within the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, is attracting both visitors and attention. The trail is considered a model by the International Mountain Bike Association and has been featured in the Wall Street Journal.
- **Mississippi Headwaters Board** – The Headwaters Board, a joint powers board involving the first eight counties along the Mississippi River, published its newly updated guidebook. The guide is available at <http://mississippiheadwaters.org>.
- **Upper Mississippi Gatherings** - The third and fourth gatherings in this series were held during 2011-12, convened by the Initiative Foundation, Mississippi Headwaters Board and Trust for Public Land, focused on bringing together partners and initiatives along the first 400 miles of the river. MN-MRPC members have participated in and presented at these meetings and look forward to continuing.

## **Membership**

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, Mn/DOT, 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: Keith Parker, Natural Resource Appointee; Paul Hugunin, Agriculture Appointee; Jim Lucachick, Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids Region; Cordelia Pierson, Elk River to Hastings Region; and Senator Patricia Torres-Ray. Thank you to outgoing Commissioners Paul Labovitz, Jack Frost, Greg Murray, Charlie Poster and Senator Sandra Pappas for their service to the MN-MRPC.

**This report is respectfully submitted on July 30, 2012.**

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



# Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management & Implementation Plan

June 2012 Summary



This project will develop a Great River Road Corridor Management Plan to guide the work of Minnesota's Mississippi River Parkway Commission and their byway partners for the next 10 years. The Commission will evaluate current and projected future conditions to develop strategies that:



- enhance livability in Mississippi River communities (see principles below),
- increase tourism economic benefits including target marketing to increase length of stay and revisitation
- enrich travelers' byway experience by updating and implementing the interpretive plan
- protect intrinsic resources via GIS database & applying NPS/MNRRRA Visual Resource Protection Plan,
- integrate multi-modal transportation by applying the NPS/MNRRRA Alternative Transportation Plan statewide, highlighting the Mississippi River Trail and transit for getting to, and exploration along, the river.
- develop target marketing that recognizes and anticipates changes in personal/global economies,
- embrace and support the multi-national cultures of our river communities and travelers,
- apply context sensitive solution principles to road, trail and resource management and GIS database,
- improve communication with stakeholders and travelers thorough technology, and
- install Mississippi River Trail bikeway signage statewide.

## Great River Road Traveler Benefits

This project will expand the traveler's enjoyment of the river's ecological, recreational and cultural resources. Travelers will experience preserved and enhanced intrinsic resources within the context of a working river whose engaging stories they take home. This project will improve Minnesota Mississippi River trip planning and on-the-fly tools for technologically savvy travelers. Authentic and active lifestyles will be promoted with more sustainable and better coordinated transportation choices that get travelers closer to and on the river. Local businesses will learn how to welcome Great River Road travelers and leverage cross promotion of other river businesses and destinations so travelers can return again and again for fun and memorable Minnesota Mississippi River byway experiences that meet their personal needs.

## The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) will partner with

- MN Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources, Agriculture, Tourism and Historical Society
- National Park Service (NPS)/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA),
- Trust for Public Land,
- local/regional river communities, work groups and development foundations,
- National Mississippi River Parkway Commission and Mississippi River Trail Inc., and
- partners with similar missions along the 575-mile length of the Minnesota Great River Road
- Federal Highway Administration



Project funding provided by the Federal Highway Administration and National Park Service.

## Livability principles

- **Provide more transportation choices.** Safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices decrease costs, reduce dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce emissions, and improve public health.
- **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through educational opportunities, services, and expanded business access to markets.
- **Support existing communities.** Increase community revitalization, increase the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes the byway celebrates.
- **Coordinate and leverage Federal policies and investment.** Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.
- **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Contact [info@mnmississippiriver.com](mailto:info@mnmississippiriver.com) to learn more or get involved in this effort.



# Mapping Community Assets

A rapidly growing number of travelers and consumers are using GPS units in their car, their smart-phones, or their laptop to figure out how to get to where they want to go. Are your businesses, services and community amenities ready to attract these modern travelers? How easy is it for them to find a place to eat or drink coffee in your community? Can they find the local farmer's market and learn when it's open? Can visitors find your trail heads or the best public beaches?

Mapping Community Assets is an opportunity for people to help their communities while they learn more about digital maps and how these can be used to market businesses, locations, and communities. Participants will receive free training to learn about digital mapping technology, why it is important, and how they can share points of personal or communal interest with the world. Participants will add and update points of interest in their communities on a variety of digital map databases.

## Friday, April 27 9-11 a.m.

Sauk Rapids-Rice High School, NW 224, Enter Door 23


Presenter: Adeel Ahmed, UMN Extension

To register contact Sauk Rapids-Rice Community Education Phone: 320-258-1577 or visit  
[www. SaukRapidsRiceOnline.org](http://www.SaukRapidsRiceOnline.org)



# GREAT RIVER ROAD INTERPRETIVE PANELS

## SHERBURNE COUNTY, MINNESOTA



### Great River Road

The Mississippi River's National Scenic Byway

One of 170 National Scenic Byways in 46 States, the Great River Road stretches nearly 1,600 miles from the Mississippi River headwaters at Lake Itasca, Minnesota through five river states to the Gulf of Mexico. The Great River Road was developed by the Mississippi River Parkway Planning Commission which was formed in 1938.

**Finding Your Way in Minnesota**


In Minnesota, the Mississippi River includes diverse ecological and cultural resources along its length. Six distinct destination areas have been developed based on the unique characteristics of the Mississippi as it flows through the state. These destination areas are shown in blue and orange on the Minnesota map below.

### Sights to See, Places to Explore in the St. Cloud Area



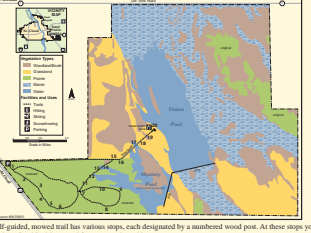
**Map Legend**

- Great River Road
- Mississippi River Trail
- State Capitol
- Red Area
- Historic Sites
- State Historic Site
- Historic Site
- Wildlife Refuge
- State Park
- City/City Park
- Campground
- Parking Area
- Other
- Chlorine
- State Prison
- State Capitol
- U.S. Highway
- Minnesota Highway



### Self-Guided Nature Trail

Welcome to the Sand Prairie Wildlife Management and Environmental Education Area managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, for the conservation of plant and animal resources. A self-guided nature and hiking trail, developed for your enjoyment.



This self-guided, paved trail has various stops, each designated by a numbered wood post. At these stops you can read about Sand Prairie natural features, geology, history, etc.

As you walk, keep your eyes and ears open for signs of prairie wildlife and the myriad of the hundreds of prairie grass and wildflower species that occur here. Sand Prairie is a unique natural area. Please help by not picking or collecting plants and animals, and by not littering on the trail. Please keep your eyes peeled. Keep in mind there are no poisonous snakes here, but wood and deer ticks are present in the spring, summer and fall. While we value and promote hunting and trapping, Sand Prairie is closed to these activities to encourage full use of this area for nature observation and hiking year round.

**Did You Know...**  
Wildlife is with us include everything from warblers to woodpeckers in wetlands. Frogs, toads, muskrats, turtles, deer, fox, and arrays of butterflies and other insects are among the other wildlife you may come across as you stroll the paved prairie trail and across the backwoods.

**Did You Know...**  
Unlike Minnesota's other 1,200+ wildlife management areas, hunting and trapping is not allowed.

**Did You Know...**  
Wildlife is with us include everything from warblers to woodpeckers in wetlands. Frogs, toads, muskrats, turtles, deer, fox, and arrays of butterflies and other insects are among the other wildlife you may come across as you stroll the paved prairie trail and across the backwoods.



### Sand Prairie Fire Management

Generally, prairie fires with the occasional influence of grass and fire. Without such influences, the prairie grasslands would slowly evolve into woodland. Grazing is a natural phenomenon and herbivores, or animals that eat only plants or natural materials, are an important component of the prairie ecosystem.

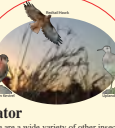
Fire patterns are typically patchy, random, and irregular, depending on wind, temperature, terrain of the land, and the amount of vegetation left by grazing. Historically, fires were set by lightning and American Indians kept the prairie from becoming brush lands and forests. Fire kills the above ground parts of shrubs and small trees. Prairie plants grow more vigorously when built-up plant materials and shade are removed. Spring fire uncovers the soil, so it warms sooner, thus extending the growing season.

Prescribed fire is a carefully planned and controlled fire conducted to manage natural areas such as prairie, oak savanna, wetlands and oak woodlands.




**Did You Know...**  
The purple loamseed is a non-native species introduced from Europe for flower gardens, its invasive Minnesota wetlands, choking out many native species.

**Did You Know...**  
For more information about the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, call (763) 388-3323 or visit [www.dnr.state.mn.us/landrefuge/](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/landrefuge/).



### Butterflies, a Prairie Pollinator

The best known pollinators may be bees, but there is a wide variety of other insects and animals that contribute to pollination. Butterflies are diurnal, pollinating a wide variety of flowers that open during the day. They frequent bright and beautiful colored blooms. Butterflies have great color vision and are able to sense more color "wavelengths" than humans, or bees, and unlike bees, butterflies are able to see the color red.



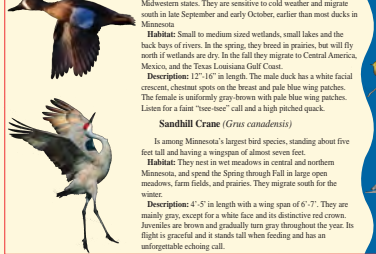
**Monarch** (*Danais plexippus*)  
The monarch is one of the most recognizable and abundant butterflies and was discovered in 1759 by Linnaeus. They eat up staggering amounts of milkweed in the California coast and in central Mexico. At the Mexican winter sites, butterflies will roost in tens and thousands long aggregations that may have millions of individuals.

**Dakota Skipper** (*Hesperia dactylus*)  
The Dakota skipper is a small butterfly with 1-1.5 wingspans. Scientists have recorded spotting these butterflies from northeast Illinois to southern Saskatchewan. Its current distribution extends the border between tallgrass and mixed grass prairie, covering, with adequate sources of nectar and a quality habitat, females may lay up to 250 eggs.

**Ureus Skipper** (*Hesperia ureus*)  
This butterfly is an extensive one in western North America. In the Canadian prairie south of the U.S. border, it is an isolated population in Saskatchewan. The population is confined to a large complex of sand dunes that make up of dry sand prairie and open barrens, scattered by wet prairie and wet meadow. The Ureus Skipper is a small butterfly with a robust body, narrow, angular forewings, and dorsal, more rounded hind wings. Length is 0.5 to 0.7 in.

**Regal Fritillary** (*Speyeria dafnis*)  
The Regal Fritillary was first discovered in 1776 by Drury in Minnesota. The butterfly is strongly associated with areas of open and wet prairie habitat. The adult Regal Fritillary is a very powerful flier and is capable of winging widely across the landscape. The butterfly is kept, characteristically marked species and can grow to a length of 2 inches.

### Bird Visitors



**Blue-Winged Teal** (*Anas discors*)  
This duck is a small fast-flying bird that flies in flocks and is commonly found throughout prairie of Canada and many Midwestern states. They are sensitive to cold weather and migrate south in late September and early October, earlier than most ducks in Minnesota.


**Habitat:** Small to medium sized wetlands, small lakes and the back bays of rivers. In the spring, they breed in prairie, but will fly north if wetlands are dry. In the fall they migrate to Central America, Mexico, and the Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast.

**Description:** 12-14" in length. The male duck has a white facial crescent, chestnut spots on the breast and pale blue wing patches. The female is uniformly gray-brown with pale blue wing patches. Listen for a "fain" "one" call and a high pitched quack.

**Sandhill Crane** (*Grus canadensis*)  
Is among Minnesota's largest bird species, standing about five feet tall and having a wingspan of almost seven feet.

**Habitat:** They nest in wet meadows in central and northern Minnesota, and spend the Spring through Fall in large open meadows, farm fields, and prairie. They migrate south for the winter.

**Description:** 4' to 5' in length with a wing span of 6-7'. They are mainly grey, except for a white face and its distinctive red crown. Juveniles are brown and gradually turn gray throughout the year. Its flight is graceful and it usually tall when feeding and has an unforgettable scolding call.



### What Lies Below - Prison Quarry

The Minnesota Legislature voted to construct a reformatory for offenders between sixteen and thirty years old who were seen as medium risk and could be salvaged from a life of crime. The new prison, originally named the Minnesota State Reformatory for Men, also served as an intermediate facility between the Territorial Prison in Stillwater, and the State Reform School in Red Wing.


During the selection process for the prison location legislators agreed that the new facility should be built near one of Minnesota's stone quarries, and the Brown & Young Quarry established in 1868, Minnesota's oldest quarry, was unanimously selected. The site is roughly 240 acres, including 40 acres of usable granite, was chosen not only for the quality and abundance of granite, but also for the availability of land and water and its proximity to transportation. Plans were to teach inmates to quarry, cut, dress, and lay stone.

Johnson designed the administrative building and adjoining cell blocks were designed in the Richardson Romanesque style, which includes massive stonework, arched openings, and bold masonry elements.

One of the most popular elements of the prison is the four-foot thick at the base tapering to three feet wide at the top, 22-foot high granite wall that surrounds the entire perimeter of the compound. The wall was quarried, dressed and constructed from 1905 to 1922 completely by inmates of the prison, and inmates from the Stillwater prison. The tailings, scrap and remnants from the building process were used as crushed stone for highways, up until 1930.


### Reformatory Wall Claim to Fame

- The second longest connected wall in the United States (Roughly 1.5 miles long)
- The largest granite wall in the United States
- One of the most extensive outlays of granite in the United States
- The longest wall in the world built entirely by prisoners



**Did You Know...**  
Butterflies lay their eggs on a small number of host plants, because butterfly caterpillars are herbivores. Insects, which eat plants, are herbivores. Insects, which eat insects, are carnivores. Insects, which eat other insects, are omnivores. Insects, which eat other insects, are omnivores.

**Did You Know...**  
During the first decade of the prison was built, when released, it was used to house two a horse, saddle, rifle, and a gold piece.



### St. Cloud Historical Marker


Designed by Arthur R. Nichols and built in 1937, the St. Cloud Historical Marker is a small site with a symmetrical design. The original yardside rest was planted with American elms, silver maples, and red, white, and yellow pines. The site is surrounded on three sides by low walls. A granite tablet describes Minnesota's first granite quarry that opened just west of the site in 1868.

**Arthur R. Nichols (1880-1970)**  
Nichols was the consulting landscape architect for the Minnesota Department of Highways from 1932-40 and became the Roadside Development Division's first Consulting Landscape Architect where he designed most of the division's waysides, scenic overlooks, and historical markers built during the 1930's and '40's. [Arthur] Nichols attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he studied engineering, architecture, and landscape design. He was the first person to graduate from the newly created landscape architecture program at MIT. Nichols partnered with Anthony Morsell in 1909. Their firm completed a wide range of projects that included dozens of parks, city master plans, residential subdivisions, civic centers, and college campuses. They also designed private estates, country clubs, cemeteries, and parkways.

Many of the works Nichols produced while consulting for the Minnesota Department of Highways represent excellent examples of the "National Park Service Rustic Style," a movement in American architecture and landscape design that produced appropriately scaled, well-crafted structures of stone, concrete, and log that were designed to harmonize with the environment, rather than dominate it. The Minnesota Department of Highways was fortunate to call upon the skills of Nichols, perhaps the most productive landscape architect in the history of the state, and one of the individuals credited with establishing the field of landscape architecture in Minnesota.

### Roadside Development

Roadside development projects are defined as structures and landscapes that were designed, built, or used for what are broadly termed "roadside development" purposes. Roadside development is a field of landscape architecture and highway design that is concerned with improving highway safety and aesthetics. Roadside development engineers blend roadways into the natural environment, control erosion, increase driver visibility, ease road construction scars, screen ugly views, and enhance scenic vistas. Many properties were built during the difficult days of the Depression by unemployed Minnesotans who sought work through such federally-funded programs as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Not only did these properties fulfill the objectives of roadside development, but they are the legacy of a broad public effort to reduce poverty by providing meaningful work for the unemployed and, at the same time, invest in needed public facilities that would serve future generations.



**Did You Know...**  
During the summer of 1938, approximately one million people, 25% of whom lived out of the state, visited Minnesota's state parks. By 1938 tourism was Minnesota's third most profitable industry.



**Rolling on the River!** The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) is a world-class bicycle route that originates at the headwaters within Itasca State Park and continues through ten states to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. It is a 3,000-mile network of bicycle-friendly roads and multi-use paths that provides a cross-section of America.

Within Minnesota, dip your wheel into the river's origins; ride through Paul Bunyan country; explore bicycle friendly communities; try local delicacies; rent a canoe; stay in comfortable north country accommodations or pitch a tent in a rustic setting; linger in bicycle-renowned Minneapolis-St. Paul and the Mississippi National River Recreation Area; and appreciate the grandeur of the river bluffs that frame your journey as you follow river boats to the Iowa border.



**Minnesota MRT WEBSITE/MORE INFORMATION** <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>

*Bicycling is a unique way to experience the Mississippi River's natural wonders, recreational facilities, and cultural heritage*

### WHY "MRT?"

- **A great adventure!** Visitors and residents alike have a chance to explore America's cultural and natural heritage and see what tourists in an automobile will never see.
- **Additional local economic activity.** The MRT represents opportunities for businesses to profit from a new set of travelers seeking locally provided services. The University of Minnesota Tourism Center identifies bicycling as the state's second most popular outdoor recreation activity. In 2009, road bicyclists' total trip spending was \$337,641,000.
- **Better health.** At its core, the MRT encourages healthy and life-extending outdoor activity.
- **Enrichment and social cohesiveness.** The trail represents an opportunity to remember and celebrate important Mississippi River people, places, and stories that have made Minnesota's communities great. Through local interpretation, the bikeway can encourage a sense of community locally and with neighboring communities that share a common heritage.
- **Added value for roads and trails.** The Mississippi River Trail adds value to existing roads and trails by bringing new users to our existing transportation network.
- **Fulfillment of state statutes.** The MRT helps MnDOT fulfill its statutory requirements to develop bikeways (Statute 160.265), to encourage tourism through transportation, and promote and increase bicycling and healthy forms of transportation (Statute 174.01).

### MRT COMPOSITION in MN

Approximately 15% of Minnesota's route is located on separated off-road paths and trails and 85% relies on road shoulders and relatively low-volume roads administered by numerous road authorities.

### IT'S A BIKEWAY

Even though it's called the Mississippi River "Trail," this bikeway is different from exclusively



off-road state trails largely built on abandoned railroad grades (such as the DNR-managed Paul Bunyan, Gateway, and Root River State Trails). Minnesota's route travels on both roads and trails taking advantage of existing facilities. The route will continue to change over time as improvements to roads and trails that can "host" the MRT are made. And even though additional off-road segments will be incorporated into the future MRT alignment, most of the route will continue to share the road right-of-way with cars, trucks, and motorcycles.



The distance between the Headwaters in Itasca State Park and the Minnesota-Iowa border is approximately 575 miles however, with the miles of roads and trails Minnesota has added, riders in Minnesota can pedal a total of nearly 800 miles—the longest distance in any of the ten states. Riders between Bemidji and Brainerd can choose to ride portions of the Heartland and Paul Bunyan State Trails or choose a rustic on-road route. And bicyclists in the Twin Cities can ride both sides of the river, which offers the chance for a 144-mile Metro MRT loop.

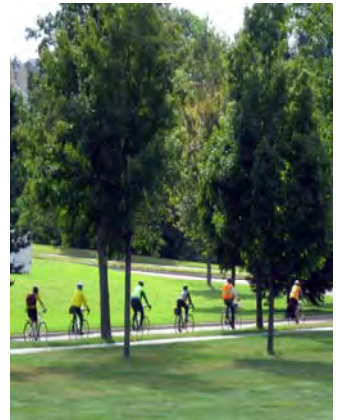
## MnDOT DOES NOT “OWN” THE MRT

Only 21% of the route is located on state and U.S. highways. MnDOT’s role has been and will continue to be that of the “convener.” By bringing people together and encouraging public-private partnerships, MnDOT endeavors to ignite the fire of self-interest on the part of local governments, businesses and local residents for the common good of all involved.

Like the links of a chain, the route’s appeal and success is tied to the enthusiasm and commitment of the authorities that administer the remaining 79% of the Mississippi River Trail. Moving forward MnDOT sees itself as a key partner with a lot to gain if the vision of a vibrant Mississippi River Trail is realized. For the Mississippi River Trail to be used, appreciated, and reach its full potential, all road and trail authorities will need to collaboratively manage and support the bike route. Now that the route is operational, MnDOT is bringing together MRT partners to discuss how to collaboratively make decisions related to maintenance, route adjustments, future improvements, marketing, and other efforts.

## TARGET AUDIENCES

Generally paralleling the motorist-oriented Great River Road and the canoe and boat-oriented Mississippi River Water Trail, the entire route has special appeal to adventurous bicyclists that are comfortable with and knowledgeable about sharing the road with vehicles. Off-road segments have been incorporated within the route, which are very popular with less experienced bicyclists (but none the less adventurous). The MRT has served as a venue for charitable bike rides, an avenue for recreation, and as an entry point for people rediscovering the joys of cycling. The hope is that it will contribute to more vibrant and healthy communities that take full advantage of the bicycle for travel and fun.



## RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Reviewed and refined the route based on collaborative statewide meetings;
- Conducted evaluation rides to confirm route decisions made in the meetings;
- Introduced the concept of bicycle-friendly communities along the route;
- Posted a GIS-interactive map and printable maps on MnDOT’s website;
- Developed a marketing toolbox to enhance local marketing efforts and promote the MRT;
- Completed a signing plan for segments located on state highways;
- Received federal funding to permanently sign the entire route, print maps, and construct 6 MRT orientation kiosks along the route.

## PRESENT INITIATIVES (WINTER 2011-SPRING 2012)



- Convene additional statewide meetings to improve the alignment and coordinate activities and expectations amongst MRT’s road and trail authorities. Concentrate on: segments previously identified as needing additional review; the National Park Service’s Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) in the Twin Cities; and on developing recommended design guidance for off-road segments;
- Implement marketing and outreach. Encourage formation of mutually beneficial marketing partnerships within the public and private sectors, and facilitate local marketing action plans (including a series of festive 2012 MRT Discovery Rides) in selected “MRT Host Communities”, locate and design MRT orientation kiosks in six “MRT HUB Communities,” and develop local bicycle-friendliness recommendations;
- Seek Legislative authorization of the MRT as Minnesota’s first designated Bikeway (H.F.1367);
- Develop signing plan for road and off-road segments not located on state highways;
- Evaluate the need for/best elements of a printed map for general distribution;
- Develop and implement cooperative MRT management structure for road and trail authorities.
- Apply for inclusion within the U.S. Bicycle Route System (as MN’s first route).

## WORK STILL TO BE COMPLETED (SUMMER 2012-2013)

- Upgrade access to WEB based maps;
- Print maps;
- Install comprehensive route signing throughout MRT;
- Install MRT orientation kiosks in select communities.



### MORE INFO:

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Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Office of Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Section, MS 315  
395 John Ireland Boulevard St. Paul, MN 55155

# Mississippi River Northwoods Habitat Complex

## PROJECT NAME:

MISSISSIPPI RIVER NORTHWOODS  
HABITAT COMPLEX

## ACRES:

+/-1,988

## OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND RECOMMENDATION:

\$14,040,000

## NATURAL RESOURCES:

2.5+ MILES MISSISSIPPI  
RIVER FRONTAGE  
FISHERIES  
WETLANDS  
FORESTS  
WILD RICE  
TROUT STREAM  
BLANDING'S TURTLE (THREATENED)  
RED SHOULDERED HAWK (CONCERN)  
CUYUNA -PAUL BUNYAN STATE  
TRAIL CONNECTION

## PROGRAMMATIC SIGNIFICANCE:

HUNTING  
FISHING  
WILDLIFE VIEWING  
SNOWMOBILE & TRAIL USE  
WATERFOWL MIGRATION HABITAT  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER SHORELAND  
WILD RICE BAY  
CRITICAL HABITAT CORRIDOR  
SPAWNING AREA  
LARGE-SCALE HABITAT COMPLEX  
PREVENTS FOREST FRAGMENTATION  
COMPLEMENTS EXISTING PUBLIC  
LANDS  
CLEAN WATER



Beginning at Lake Itasca in northwestern Minnesota, the Mississippi River is one of the longest rivers in North America, a major route for migratory waterfowl, and a significant source of drinking water for many Minnesota residents. In Minnesota, the river meanders through a diversity of different forest communities and by many growing towns and communities including Brainerd in Crow Wing County. One of the most rapidly growing areas in Minnesota, Brainerd is also a popular recreation spot for tourists and visitors from the Twin Cities, which are only two and a half hours to the southeast, and elsewhere. Recreational opportunities around the region include hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, wildlife viewing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, canoeing, and camping.

As forested regions of Minnesota experience pressures from growth, efforts are underway to protect forests and open spaces from fragmentation and development in order to provide recreational, natural resource, and economic benefits to the community. In FY 2013 there is an opportunity to protect nearly 2,000 acres through fee title purchase with help from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. This project builds on a nearly ten-year collaborative effort among the State of Minnesota, the Potlatch Corporation, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, and local community supporters.

Located several miles northeast of the town, the 1,988-acre property would serve as a significant addition to protected spaces around Brainerd. With 2.7 miles of direct frontage on the southern bank of the Mississippi River, this project would link other adjacent public properties to create a 9 mile stretch of protected natural river shoreline. It would also provide connectivity within an area containing 6,200 contiguous acres of protected lands, including Crow Wing County Memorial Forest, the Loerch State Wildlife Management Area, State of Minnesota School Trust Lands, and Crow Wing County tax-forfeited lands that are managed for timber.



A paper mill dam downstream has contributed to the formation of Stump Bay, a lake-like basin along the property's river front. This basin serves as critical habitat, including spawning, brooding, and rearing areas for fisheries. Sand Creek, which runs through the property for one mile, provides habitat for brook trout, brown trout, and slimy sculpins. As 60% of migrating birds in North America use the Mississippi River Flyway, the property provides crucial riparian habitat and approximately 240 acres of wetlands for migrating and resident waterfowl. These wetlands also play a critical role in upholding the area's water quality. Blanding's turtle, a state listed threatened species, have been documented on the property, and the area also supports bald eagle and red-shouldered hawk, a state listed species of special concern.

Several sites on the property that have been noted for their cultural and archeological value would be protected through this project. As windows into prehistoric and pre-Columbian settlements, these sites may qualify for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

By providing public access to the property for recreation and ensuring that sustainable forestry practices are employed, the Mississippi River Northwoods Habitat Complex project will benefit the Brainerd Lakes area economically. Visitors from Minnesota and elsewhere come to the region throughout the year to experience the outdoors. By providing an alternative to development and fragmentation of the forestlands, by protecting a popular snowmobile trail, and by ensuring that the public can hunt and hike on these lands, this project will also protect the opportunities that draw tourists and residents here to begin with. Once the property is acquired, sustainable timber management on the property will help ensure the long-term availability of timber, which feeds the local economy through logging, transport, processing and product manufacturing and sale.

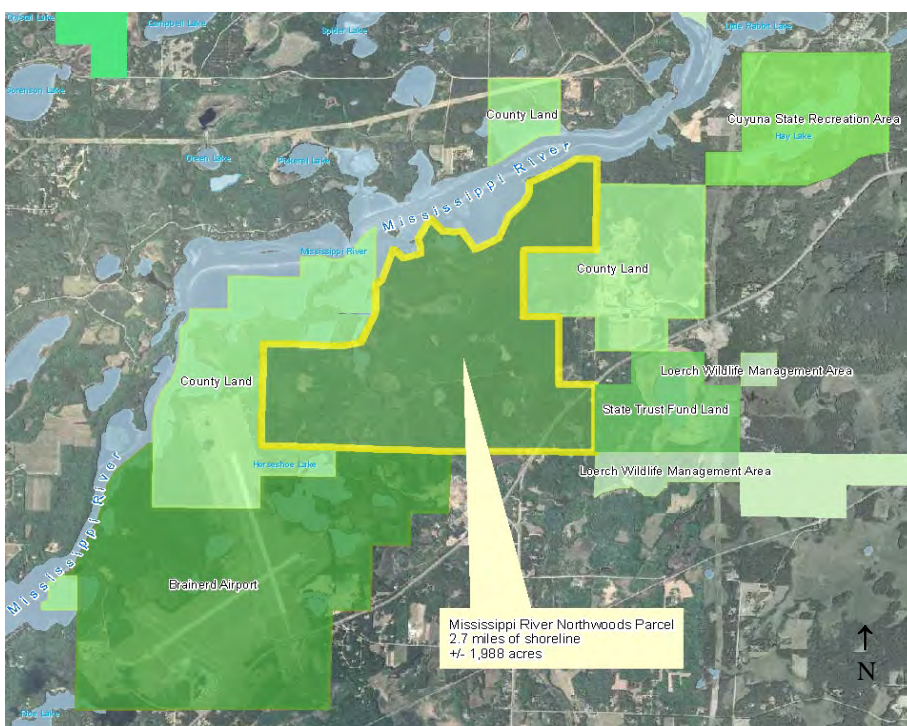
In order to protect this property and its highly valued natural resources from fragmentation and development, \$14.5 million is needed for the effort in fiscal year 2013.

**Lead Partners:** Anglers for Habitat; Crow Wing County; Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association; Delta Waterfowl (Brainerd Chapter); The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; The Nature Conservancy; The Trust for Public Land

**Supporters include:** Anderson Bros Construction; Brainerd Lakes Chamber of Commerce; Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission; Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation; Brainerd Nordic Ski Club; Brainerd Snoods; Christenson Agency; Cycle Path and Paddle; International Mountain Bike Association; Minnesota B.A.S.S. Federation; All Chapters in Region 5 of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA), including: The Brainerd Chapter, Cuyuna Range Whitetails Chapter, Lakes and Pines Chapter (Longville), Morrison County Chapter, and Wahoo Valley

Chapter (Staples); Mississippi Headwaters Board; Muskies Inc (Brainerd Lakes Chapter); Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota; Rice Lake Association; and the Whitefish Resource Coalition

**Area Legislative Supporters include:** Senator Paul Gazelka; Representative Larry Howes; Representative Mike LeMieur; and Representative John Ward



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