



## Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2018-19 Annual Report (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019) August 2019

56 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue S, #283, St. Cloud, MN, 56301 • 651-341-4196 • [www.MnMississippiRiver.com](http://www.MnMississippiRiver.com)

### **Mission**

The mission of the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) is to preserve, promote and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road (GRR). The Commission is organized and guided by Minnesota Statute 161.1419. The Minnesota Great River Road is designated and managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation under Minnesota Statute 161.142. The Minnesota Great River Road spans 565 miles, 43 communities, 20 counties, three tribes and six unique destination areas.

### **Commission Meetings**

The MN-MRPC held regular quarterly meetings on August 16, 2018, November 29, 2018, February 28, 2019 and May 30, 2019. Executive Committee meetings were held on July 16, 2018 and December 12, 2018. Meeting materials are available at <https://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/mrpc.html>. The Commission continues to focus on implementation of the MN Great River Road Corridor Management Plan (CMP).

### **Projects & Activities**

**Wayfinding Signage:** The full 565 mile MN Great River Road was re-signed prior to Drive the Great River Road Month in September. MnDOT also completed signage projects for five other Scenic Byways in Minnesota. Wayfinding signage was one of four initial CMP implementation projects identified.

**Plan Your Trip Interactive Mapping:** The new Plan Your Trip interactive map and regional travel guides were launched for Drive the Great River Road Month and featured in Minnesota promotion of the month. Work since the launch has included adding photos to the 700+ byway attractions listed and updates to Department of Agriculture Minnesota Grown listings. Links are available at [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com). Plan Your Trip and Plan Your Project were two of the four initial CMP implementation projects.

**Plan Your Project Interactive Mapping:** Interactive map has been developed including data from Plan Your Trip plus additional information for road management authorities and GRR partners. Additional refinement is planned prior to the formal launch including training units on how to use the tool to design road projects that enhance the byway experience.

**Ambassador Development:** Ambassador Development is the fourth of four initial implementation projects identified in the Corridor Management Plan. The objective of the Ambassador Program is to provide resources, materials and training for MN-MRPC member facility managers, local road and attraction managers, and local businesses and residents to improve corridor management, better serve tourists and encourage economic development. Year one will include an initial phase of two hour workshops at the 12 MN GRR Interpretive Centers with their local CVBs invited, as well as development of a test MN GRR Toolkit for use by and with first year Ambassadors. Year two will include two hour workshops with the 12 MN GRR Interpretive Centers and their CVBs, and 12 additional two hour workshops with select GRR CVBs, transportation agencies, local to state government officials and MN Grown members. A plan for expansion and maintenance will also be developed. Funding has been secured to begin the program in FY 20.

**GRR Interpretive Center Training:** A training and feedback session was held for staff of the Minnesota Marine Art Museum in November 2018 and also served as a beta test for new MN GRR Ambassador Development.

**Regional Meetings/Elections:** Two regional meetings and elections were held per MN Statute 161.1419 for Commission members to represent specific regions of the Great River Road. The meetings include MN and National Great River Road updates; gathering input, ideas and local updates from the region; and election of a citizen Commissioner. The Hastings to Iowa Border Regional Meeting was held November 8, 2018 at the Winona County History Center. Sheronne Mulry was re-elected as Regional Commissioner. The Elk River to Hastings Regional Meeting was held December 5 in St. Paul. Cordelia Pierson was re-elected as Regional Commissioner. Megan Christianson was elected via electronic election to fill the remainder of the term for the Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region.

**Route Change:** The MN-MRPC, MnDOT and local authorities approved a route change in downtown Little Falls for safety reasons related to railroad upgrades and intersection updates. The change is reflected in the navigation available on the Plan Your Trip online mapping.

**Partner/Stakeholder Outreach:** The Executive Committee recommended outreach to partners and stakeholders inviting them to share information at MN-MRPC meetings or request involvement via letters of support or comment on projects in local areas. A notice was sent to over 350 partners and stakeholders in January 2019. Nine letters were authorized and sent and five presentations to the Commission took place during the year. Vice Chair Pierson also reached out personally to other organizations doing work related to the Mississippi River and byway intrinsic resources including the Mississippi Headwaters Board, The Nature Conservancy, and Trust for Public Land, exploring ways to bring groups together to learn about missions, activities and partnership opportunities. A New Year e-newsletter was sent to community tourism offices and Great River Road Interpretive Centers thanking them for their help in 2018 and sharing highlights including National Great River Road campaigns.

**MN-MRPC/Great River Road Information Campaign:** MN-MRPC and Great River Road awareness building was a focus for the 2019 Minnesota Legislative Session. Information packets were developed including a series of overview handouts by topic. The information was shared via email, personal meetings and presentations. The MN-MRPC sunset date was removed from statute. This change was requested to help facilitate funding requests, multi-year project completion and fulfillment of obligations to the National MRPC. The request was carried forward by legislative members of the Commission.

**MN Great River Road Maps:** A preliminary layout was completed for a new drivable map similar in format to the MN State Highway Map and also showcasing MN GRR Interpretive Centers. Feedback was gathered from MN-MRPC members and at regional meetings. Funding has been secured for printing and distribution of the maps in FY 20 - 21. The MN-MRPC office provides maps to partner distribution sites and individual travelers on an ongoing basis and also responds to individual travel inquiries.

**MN Great River Road Website:** The MN GRR website home page now features links to the Plan Your Trip Interactive Mapping and regional travel guides. There were 220,038 visits to the website from July of 2018 through June of 2019 (average of 18,336 per month) and 11,132 maps and map tablets were downloaded (average of 927 per month.)

**MRCTI Collaboration:** MN-MRPC members continue to pursue partnership with the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative as they and the MRPC plan their annual meetings for September 15 – 17, 2020 in Bemidji.

**National MRPC:** MN-MRPC members participated on MRPC Standing Committees, served in leadership roles and carried out projects at the state level. Karl Samp currently serves as Pilot Emeritus, Anne Lewis as Pilot Pro Tem, Sheronne Mulry as Culture & Heritage Committee Co-Chair and Carol Zoff as Transportation Committee Chair, including providing leadership on a new ten state Great River Road Corridor Management Plan. Four MN-MRPC members attended the Annual Meeting in West Memphis and three attended the Semi-Annual Meeting in Clarksdale. Individual MN-MRPC members provided input and connections for Relay of Voices.

**Drive the Great River Road Month:** The MN-MRPC promoted the National Drive the Great River Road Month sweepstakes and also promoted travel along the MN GRR with a theme launching the Plan Your Trip online mapping and regional travel guides and all new GRR wayfinding signage.

**National Scenic Byway Foundation:** MN-MRPC is a member of the National Scenic Byways Foundation and sent letters to Minnesota's members of Congress as the National Scenic Byways Program was considered for reinstatement.

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

The Minnesota Great River Road and its amenities are supported by several funding sources including those managed by the MN-MRPC (state operating budget) and those managed by member/partner organizations.

### **State Operating Budget**

The MN-MRPC operated with state funding at levels allowing the Commission to continue its basic work. The budget for FY 19 was just over \$68,000 which included \$63,000 in operating funds along with carry-over from the prior year. A funding request was prepared for FY 20 – 21 reflecting an increase in operating funds to implement the Corridor Management Plan and funds to complete three priority projects – website update, new print map and Ambassador Development program launch. The requested funding was authorized for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

### **MnDOT/MnDNR**

MnDOT provided special project staffing in the form of a graduate student worker for final development of the Plan Your Trip and Plan Your Project Interactive Mapping Tools, and the new print map. Funds and project management were also provided to sign the Great River Road and five other Minnesota byways. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources dedicated funds to the GRR signage project as required match to MnDOT funds for certain roadways.

### **Minnesota Transportation Alternatives Program**

Local Great River Road communities sought funds for projects through the Minnesota Transportation Alternatives Program. MnDOT provided information on project intent, MN-MRPC conducted outreach to local applicants, reviewed project information, approved and provided letters for five project applications along the Great River Road. Requests were for a variety of projects that would improve the byway experience for visitors and residents and help implement the GRR Corridor Management Plan. \$1,174,106 in funding was authorized for three GRR projects – Lady Slipper Scenic Byway Trail Bridge (runs concurrently with GRR); downtown Little Falls safety improvements; and Beaver Island Trail Expansion in the St. Cloud Area.

### **Minnesota Scenic Byways Program**

The annual MN Scenic Byways Workshop was held November 14 – 15 in Fergus Falls. The MN-MRPC was represented. Final feedback, strategy prioritization and approval were provided on the new MN Scenic Byways Strategic Plan. Scenic Byways are now included as a check off on the early notification memo for road construction projects.

## **Examples of Local, Regional and Partner Activities or Issues**

- **Brainerd** – The City of Brainerd was selected to receive technical assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program and the MN-MRPC provided a letter of support. An informational presentation was given to the MN-MRPC on 5/30/19 on the Brainerd Lakes Area Trail System/Mississippi Landing Trailhead Project.
- **Brooklyn Park, River Park Master Plan** – An informational presentation was given to the MN-MRPC on 11/29/18. The plan includes an overlook, shoreline restoration, shore fishing spots and a canoe/kayak access. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2020. MN-MRPC provided letter of support for a grant funding application.
- **Connected Ramsey Communities Network** – An informational presentation was given to the MN-MRPC on 8/16/18. The Connected Ramsey Communities Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan is a collaboration of all municipalities in the county.
- **Cuyuna Mountain Bike Trails** – A trail expansion is underway made possible by state bonding funds, to provide three days of unduplicated riding opportunities. The MN-MRPC has supported this project.
- **Grand Rapids** – The city completed construction of new pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi River, providing increased connections and access to Mississippi River/GRR amenities.
- **Hubbard County Bicycle Plan** – An informational presentation was given to the MN-MRPC on 5/30/19 and feedback gathered. The MN GRR CMP is noted in plan which identifies all county level bicycle routes, bicycle improvement suggestions, and recommends creation of a locally led bicycle committee.
- **Lady Slipper Scenic Byway** – Partial funding was secured for construction of a bicycle and pedestrian bridge across the Mississippi River in a section of the byway that runs concurrently with the Great River Road. MN-MRPC provided letters of support for a Transportation Alternatives funding application as well as a letter of support as matching funds were sought.
- **Minneapolis Lock Disposition Study** - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proceeding with a process to plan for disposition of the Mississippi River locks in Minneapolis. Public meetings will be held in late summer 2019. MN-MRPC members and advisors are reviewing information and participating in the process.

- **Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB)** – MHB works to protect and preserve the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River as a joint powers organization of eight counties. During FY 19, MHB invited MN-MRPC participation in a project to evaluate river access implications of possible new easements.
- **Mississippi National River & Recreation Area (MNRRA)** – A full Mississippi River Visitor Center remodel was completed at the Science Museum of Minnesota, NPS continues to staff the Visitor Center at Upper St. Anthony Lock & Dam, there is continued expansion of the Mississippi River Paddle Share Program, and the award winning multi-organization Trails and Open Space Partnership (TOSP) continues its work in the MNRRA area.
- **Ramsey County Riverview Corridor Project** – An informational presentation was given to the MN-MRPC 2/28/19. The current preferred alternative is an 11.7 mile modern streetcar line with a river crossing in the Fort Snelling Area (Historic Fort Snelling is a GRR Interpretive Center).
- **Shore Excursions Trips to Headwaters** – MN-MRPC members Karl Samp and Anne Lewis served as step on guides and shared Great River Road information on four trips to Itasca State Park for tour groups affiliated with the American Queen.
- **St. Cloud RiverWalk** – The RiverWalk Plan was adopted by the City Council and funding is being sought for implementation, to better connect the community to the Mississippi River in an area just north of downtown.
- **Stone Arch Bridge** – Work has begun to assess underwater condition and make repairs on this iconic structure in Minneapolis.
- **Upper Mississippi River Master Plan** - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be seeking public comment on a new draft plan focused on recreational use of the Mississippi River. MN-MRPC members will consider comments on the draft when available.

## 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, MnDOT, Historical Society, Agriculture & Tourism; (5) Regional Members – (1) from each of the Great River Road regions established in statute (1) Member-At-Large – appointed by the other 14. New members were welcomed during the year – Megan Christianson representing the Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region, Sally Fineday representing the Itasca State Park to Grand Rapids region, and newly appointed legislators Rep. Anne Claflin and Rep. Tony Jurgens. Sen. David Senjem was elected Chair of the MN-MRPC following the retirement of Rep. Sheldon Johnson. The MN-MRPC thanks Rep. Johnson for his many years of dedicated service and leadership. The MN-MRPC also thanks Nancy Salminen, who resigned due to a change in residence, for her expertise and service representing the Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids Region.

**This report is respectfully submitted on August 28, 2019**



**Sen. David Senjem, MN-MRPC Chair**



National Scenic Byway of the Mississippi River  
Protected, Enhanced and Promoted by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota

## explore *Minnesota's Great River Road*



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### Headwaters Mississippi



### Northwoods Mississippi



### Crossings Mississippi



### Scenic Mississippi



### Metro Mississippi



### Bluffs Mississippi



NEW

MINNESOTA

# Great River Road Plan Your Trip



[LEARN MORE »](#)

Chrome is the preferred browser

Explore the Mississippi River by sampling stories and experiences offered in these online travel guides framed by each of the unique regions of Minnesota's Great River Road:

[Mississippi Headwaters](#)

[Mississippi Northwoods](#)

[Mississippi Crossings](#)

[Scenic Mississippi](#)

[Metro Mississippi](#)

[Mississippi Bluffs](#)

Before and during your journey, use the [Plan Your Trip](#) interactive map to understand the Great River Road and Mississippi River (bicycle) Trail alignments, discover over 700 points of interest, find over 200 local food providers, and see where Tribal lands are along the river. Beyond the car, Great River Road travel options include Amtrak train stations, excursion boat landings and airports. Beyond the river, alignments of Minnesota's 20 other state and National scenic byways offer their own sense of place. Welcome!



Greetings Great River Road Partners & Stakeholders –

Happy New Year! The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) is looking forward to 2019 and all the wonderful things to come in communities along the Minnesota Great River Road. The MN-MRPC is interested in learning about projects that improve the Great River Road byway experience and help implement the Corridor Management Plan. To this end the MN-MRPC is pleased to consider providing letters of support for local projects seeking funds, technical assistance or other resources; or consider supporting local recommendations and concerns about impacts on Mississippi River intrinsic resources and the byway experience.

If you are planning to seek project resources or anticipate concerns the MN-MRPC may share, you are invited to submit requests for letters of support or time on a MN-MRPC meeting agenda. To allow time for members and agencies to review and consider your requests, please submit the details listed below one month in advance of MN-MRPC Quarterly Meetings. 2019 meeting dates are February 28, May 30, August 15 and November 21. All meetings are from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m. in the State Office Building, in St. Paul.

The MN-MRPC asks for the following details:

- Name of requestor, title, organization, mailing address, email address and phone number
- Topic or project name
- Brief overview, map, project cost, local match and/or link to online details for Commission review
- Action requested (letter, MN-MRPC representation at your meeting, presentation at MN-MRPC meeting, material/update for information purposes only, etc.)
- Positive or negative impacts to the Great River Road, Mississippi River Intrinsic Resources (archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, scenic), the byway experience, and/or MN-MRPC mission (*To preserve, promote and enhance the scenic, historic and recreational resources of the Mississippi River, to foster economic growth in the corridor and to develop the national, scenic and historic byway known as the Great River Road.*)
- Deadline for requested action or related meeting date
- Details on where letter is to be sent, or meeting to be attended

The MN-MRPC can also use information and updates received to help promote communities and attractions along the Great River Road including posting on the MN Great River Road website and social media, inclusion in the Plan Your Trip online mapping tool, presentations, news releases and/or at events.

Please feel free to share with others who may be interested, and call or email with any questions you may have. On behalf of the MN-MRPC, thank you for making the Great River Road America's Greatest Drive!



As 2019 begins, we'd like to take a moment to thank you for your efforts throughout 2018 as a Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Center or Community Tourism Office and wish you a prosperous new year!

A few 2018 highlights...



### Successful Promotions

Three promotions were held this year throughout the 10 Great River Road states. Many of you helped us get the word out and were instrumental in the success of these campaigns -

- Flavors of the Great River Road
- Drive the Great River Road Month - September
- 80th Anniversary/Follow the Pilot's Wheel

All three promotions were successful when measured in participation by you, our travelers and those with whom we engage online.

Congratulations to Minnesota Interpretive Centers who ordered the highest number of promotional post cards in the 10-state Anniversary Campaign and to Sue M., of Farmington, who won the national Flavors of the Great River Road Sweepstakes!



### Plan Your Trip Online Tool

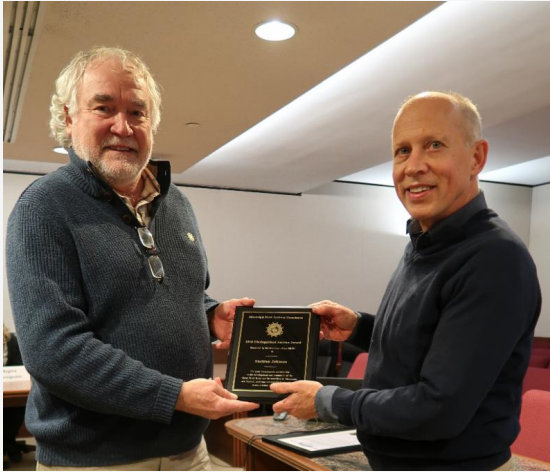
The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission launched, through its partner the Minnesota Department of Transportation, a new app available at [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com). The goal is to help Great River Road travelers plan trips using GIS mapping and a compendium of river stories. If you have suggestions or corrections, please be sure to share them with us via the contact information on the web site – or just email Chris at the MN-MRPC office ([info@mnmississippiriver.com](mailto:info@mnmississippiriver.com)).

Special thanks to MnDOT and especially Boxuan Xia, MnDOT graduate student worker, for making this new tool possible!

### Bluffs and Metro Regional Meetings

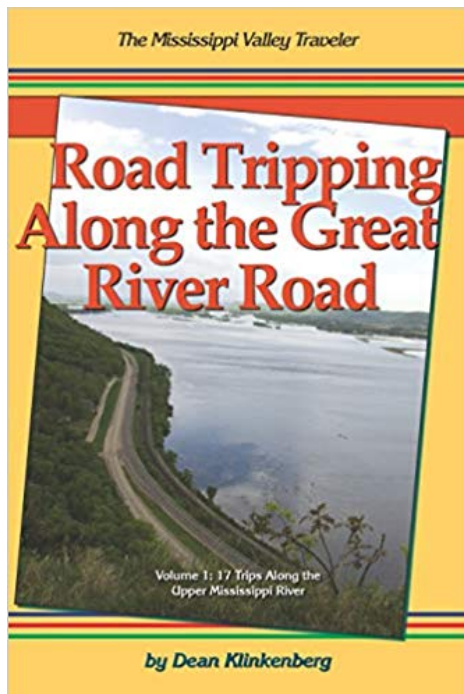
Two Regional Meetings were held late in the year – Bluffs Region (Hastings to Iowa Border) on November 8 at the Winona County History Center in Winona and Metro Region (Elk River to Hastings) on December 5 at the Transportation Building in St. Paul. Thank you to our hosts and to all who participated! Your time, feedback and updates on local community activities are vital to the success of the Great River

Road. Special congratulations to MN-MRPC members Sheronne Mulry (Bluffs) and Cordelia Pierson (Metro) on their elections to new terms on the Commission.



### **Rep. Sheldon Johnson Honored by National MRPC**

Retiring six-term state representative from St. Paul, Sheldon Johnson, was presented with the National MRPC's highest award for leadership and service at its annual meeting in West Memphis, Arkansas in October. He served as Chair of the MN-MRPC for over ten years with distinction. Rep. Johnson received the plaque at the MN-MRPC's quarterly meeting in St. Paul, Nov. 29. (Pictured - Karl Samp on left presenting award to Rep. Johnson.) Also recognized at the meeting were Senator David Senjem for his work on state preservation projects and Greg Hubinger of the Legislative Coordinating Commission.



### **New Great River Road Guidebook**

If you're looking for new books for your museum and gift shops, or to recommend to visitors, consider Road Tripping Along the Great River Road, by Dean Klinkenberg. This author has written several books focused on specific sections of the Mississippi River. This year he dove deep into the restaurants, Interpretive Centers, attractions and unique features of the towns along all 10 states of the Great River Road. You can order copies through Dean at [www.mississippivalleytraveler.com](http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com).

**Looking forward to 2019 - thank you for making the Great River Road  
America's Greatest Drive!**





## 2018 Drive the Great River Road Month Minnesota



### Goals

- Promote 10-State Great River Road Sweepstakes
- Highlight Launch of Plan Your Trip Online Mapping and Regional Guides
- Announce New MN GRR Wayfinding Signage
- Celebrate Great River Road 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



### MN-MRPC Member Agency Participation

- Requested promotion assistance from MN-MRPC members
- Minnesota Grown Facebook share on 9/10/18, Explore Minnesota Industry E-Newsletter on 9/11/18

### Governor's Proclamation

- Requested and received proclamation from the Governor's Office, posted at [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com), & sent to National MRPC Office

### MN Great River Road Social Media

- 10 Facebook posts (Great River Road MN). Total Facebook reach – 3,950 (compared to 3,324 in Sept. 2017, 789 in Sept. 2016, and average reach June – August 2018 of 246)
- Top Facebook post – “Just in time for Drive GRR Month” – new online mapping and regional travel guides (9/4/18). Reach of 2,851 shared by MN Grown, Visit Hastings, Hastings Chamber and Charles Lindbergh House & Museum.
- Twitter (@GreatRiverRdMN) – 5 MN GRR Tweets
- Social media posts by Visit Grand Rapids, Visit Winona, National Eagle Center

### MN Great River Road Website

- General information was posted about the sweepstakes and GRR. Plan Your Trip interactive mapping, regional travel guides and navigation launched on MN GRR website homepage.
- 21,795 website visits in September (24,855 website visits in September 2017). September visits up from summer 2018 numbers – 21,278 visits in August, 18,808 in July, 16,856 in June)
- 385 MN Great River Road Map/Travel Planners and 740 MN GRR Regional Maps downloaded. This is a decrease from September 2017 when 1,066 MN GRR Maps and 3,046 Regional Maps were downloaded. 2018 focus was on new online maps/travel guides.

### News Release

- Release was sent to media list, distribution partners (CVBs/Chambers, State Parks, Interpretive Centers, Welcome Centers, etc.) and MN-MRPC members
- Articles - Grand Rapids Herald Review 8/24/18; Forbes magazine blog on Minnesota Scenic Byways including Great River Road 9/5/18





STATE of MINNESOTA

# Proclamation

WHEREAS: The Great River Road is America's greatest drive, encompassing 3,000 miles of interconnected roads that follow the Mississippi River through ten states, from Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS: The Great River Road has been designated as a National Scenic Byway for its historical, cultural, recreational, natural, and scenic resources; and

WHEREAS: The Great River Road connects hundreds of vibrant cities and unique river towns; and

WHEREAS: The Great River Road is the ideal way to discover and experience the rich culture of the Mississippi River region, the heart of America; and

WHEREAS: The Minnesota Great River Road spans 565 miles, 41 communities, 20 counties, three tribes and six unique destination areas—linking travelers from near and far with all the riches of the Mississippi River region; and

WHEREAS: Minnesota is the proud home of the Headwaters of the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS: There is no scenic drive in America quite like the Great River Road; and

WHEREAS: This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Great River Road.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, MARK DAYTON, Governor of Minnesota, do hereby proclaim the month of September, 2018, as

## DRIVE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD MONTH

in the State of Minnesota.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Minnesota to be affixed at the State Capitol this 10th day of August.



GOVERNOR



SECRETARY OF STATE



**National Eagle Center** added 3 new photos.

August 29 at 2:50 PM

Like as Your Page

SEPTEMBER IS "DRIVE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD" MONTH


Fall is a great time of year, especially along the Upper Mississippi River. We enjoy fall migration, vibrant autumn colors, and a variety of seasonal festivals... all along the Great River Road MN! 2018 marks the 80th anniversary of the GRR and September is the "Drive the Great River Road" month. We encourage you to get out this September and check out the variety of great sights and venues along the route, including the National Eagle Center. Plus, you can enter the Great River Road sweepstakes. For more information about the GRR, venues, and the sweepstakes, visit [experiencemississippiriver.com/](http://experiencemississippiriver.com/).







Great River Road MN, Linda Grassie, Michelle Rasmussen and 56 others      3 Comments 10 Shares



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission**  
 56 33rd Avenue South, #283 • St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301  
 Phone: 651-341-4196 • E-Mail: [info@MnMississippiRiver.com](mailto:info@MnMississippiRiver.com)

**Members of the House:** Sheldon Johnson (DFL - 67B) - **Chair**; **Members of the Senate:** David Jensen (R - 25); Patricia Torres Ray (DFL - 63); **State Senator/Associate:** Paul Huginn - Agriculture, Scott Bradley - Transportation, Lisa Hawke - Explore Minnesota Tourism, Keith Parker - Natural Resources, Andrea Keller - Historical Society; **Regional Associates:** Nancy Salminen - Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Megan Christianson - Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Neil Samp - Brainerd to Elk River, Cordelia Pearson - Elk River to Hastings, Sheronne Mulry - Hastings to Iowa border; **Member at Large:** Anne Lewis

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Chris Miller, Director, Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission, 651-341-4196

**Minnesota Great River Road Marks 80th Anniversary with Improvements to Enhance the Public's Mississippi River Experience**

St. Cloud, Minn. (September 3, 2018): This year the Great River Road, the 10-state byway of the Mississippi River, marks 80 years of encouraging the American public to experience the Mississippi River. September is also Drive the Great River Road month. Traveling Minnesota's portion of the Great River Road just got easier with two recent Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission improvements.

The Commission partnered with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to replace 601 distinctive pilot's wheel signs along the full 565-mile route from Itasca State Park to the Iowa border after a survey determined over half the wayshowing system was missing or defective.

Second, a [Plan Your Trip](#) interactive map application, complete with Great River Road Interpretive Center and attraction details, is now available. The online application makes exploration of Minnesota's river stories more accessible and traveler planning easier, both before and while on the road. Biking, hiking and on-the-water experiences are also included.

"With these improvements, there's no better time to explore the byway and learn how the river has impacted you as a Minnesotan and an American," said Anne Lewis, Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commissioner.

The new planning tool provides local resources and maps for recreational areas, historic and arts displays, airport and train station locations, aerial and highway maps and links to local resources such as farmers' markets and state parks. The goal is to make traveling the Great River Road the most rewarding way to explore the Mississippi River and its communities.

Printed maps are still available at [www.mnmississippiriver.com](http://www.mnmississippiriver.com), and also at many vacation information centers in towns along the river.

"These tools are a launching pad," said Carol Zoff, Technical Advisor to the MN-MRPC from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. "Our goal is to get started with this online approach to Great River Road travel planning and refine it with the help of travelers and our local partners at Interpretive Centers, river attractions and Convention and Visitors' Bureaus throughout the river's corridor."

John Anfinson, superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and a Parkway Commission liaison, said the Mississippi River is one of the state's most important resources. "Having its assets collected and archived in one place provides an invaluable tool for visitors and residents along the river."

Plan Your Trip also includes expanded interactive travel guides for each of Minnesota's Great River Road six distinct regions from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Bluffs Region at the Iowa border. Each has unique features and histories, towns and recreational opportunities. At least one Great River Road Interpretive Center is in every one of the six regions, often at a cultural, historic or recreational site.

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## September Is Drive the Great River Road Month

Release Date: Sep 11, 2018

Traveling Minnesota's portion of the Great River Road just got easier with a recent Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission improvement.

Minnesota has launched the [Plan Your Trip](#) interactive map application complete with Great River Road Interpretive Center and attraction details. The online application makes exploration of Minnesota's river stories more accessible and traveler planning easier, both before and while on the road. Biking, hiking and on-the-water experiences are also included in the interactive application.

This year the Great River Road marks 80 years of encouraging the American public to experience the Mississippi River. For more information, visit [mnmississippiriver.com](http://mnmississippiriver.com).





# Great River Road

## Plan Your Trip



**Welcome to Minnesota's Great River Road,  
National Scenic Byway of the Mississippi River!**

**Inspire your river exploration by sampling stories and experiences offered in six online travel guides framed by the unique regions of Minnesota's Mississippi River.**

**Before and during your journey use the Plan Your Trip interactive map to understand the Great River Road and Mississippi River (bicycle) Trail alignments, discover over 700 points of interest, and see where Tribal lands are along the river. Consider multi-modal travel opportunities including Amtrak train stations, excursion boat landings and airports. Beyond the river, alignments of Minnesota's 20 other state and National scenic byways offer their own sense of place.**