



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
1st Quarter Meeting – February 6, 2014  
State Office Building, St. Paul MN  
MINUTES - DRAFT**

**Commissioners Present**

Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair  
Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River  
Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids  
Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee  
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd  
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings  
Sen. David Senjem  
Sen. Patricia Torres-Ray  
Rep. Mike Benson

**Technical Advisors & Staff Present**

Carol Zoff – Transportation  
David Kelliher – Historical Society  
Cynthia Wheeler – DNR

Paul Labovitz – National Park Service  
Greg Hubinger - LCC  
Chris Miller - Staff

**Commissioners & Technical Advisors**

**Absent**

Paul Huginin – Agriculture Appointee  
Keith Parker – DNR Appointee  
Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism  
Mark Anderson – At Large Member  
Adam Johnson – Explore MN Tourism Appointee  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border

**Guests/Speakers Present**

Todd Holman – The Nature Conservancy

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The meeting was called to order at 2:35 by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Sen. Senjem served as acting chair for a portion of the meeting.

**Approval of Meeting Agenda and Minutes from 11/14/13 Meeting**

Motion by Andrea Kajer and seconded by Cordelia Pierson to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the 11/14/13 minutes as printed. Motion carried.

**Presentation – The Nature Conservancy, Mississippi River Initiatives**

Karl Samp introduced Todd Holman of The Nature Conservancy. Mr. Holman shared information about priorities and freshwater programs of The Nature Conservancy as general information for possible future collaboration with the MN-MRPC. The Nature Conservancy works in 13 countries. Science, protection and conservation are the overall guiding principles. Minnesota initiatives using The Healthy Waters Approach were described along with examples of water protection successes. The Conservancy works with three freshwater program areas – Mississippi Headwaters, St. Croix Headwaters and Rivers of Southeastern Minnesota. The Nature Conservancy was a lead partner on the Mississippi Northwoods Heritage Project, resulting in approximately 2,200 acres of protected land along the Mississippi River near Brainerd. The Conservancy is working with the Minnesota DNR, private landowners and the Army Guard Bureau at Camp Ripley in central Minnesota to limit encroachment by surrounding development through the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program.

Questions and discussion followed the presentation on topics including aquatic invasive species and activity on the Minnesota River as it relates to the Mississippi River. The Mississippi Headwaters Board is working to protect lifts and landings. Movement of aquatic invasive species is a high attention issue with multiple counties working together. There was discussion on how to continue information sharing between The Nature Conservancy and MN-MRPC. Suggestions included providing annual “check in” updates at meetings; expansion of email lists to invite MN-MRPC members to meetings/events organized by The Nature Conservancy; and working through the three MN-MRPC regional members from Lake Itasca to Elk River.

## **Agency and Regional Updates**

**Historical Society:** Andrea Kajer thanked the Commission for their letter indicating support for capital improvements at the Oliver Kelley Farm; and invited everyone to the Winter Farmers Market at Mill City Museum. Details about the proposed Kelley Farm improvements were circulated.

**Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids:** Nancy Salminen invited everyone to a ribbon cutting on June 28 to recognize new amenity sites along the Lady Slipper Scenic Byway. Details will be forwarded as available. Information about the upcoming National Geographic presentation has been shared with the Chippewa National Forest, and the Corridor Management Plan RFP was forwarded to firms in Bemidji. Bemidji would like to be considered as a site for the next MRPC National Meeting hosted in Minnesota. Visit Bemidji could help pull together information.

**Grand Rapids to Brainerd:** John Schaubach reported that planning continues for an eight mile stretch of bicycle trail from the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area to the Brainerd Airport. Partners are looking for possible alignment and recommendations for the route. The trail segment would link to the Paul Bunyan trail and would be the locally recommended route for the MRT.

**Brainerd to Elk River:** Karl Samp recently met with Convention & Visitors Bureaus in Brainerd and Little Falls to update them on the Corridor Management Plan project and geotourism initiative. He has also been invited to speak to the Morrison County Mayors group on April 2. Brainerd-Baxter is forming a riverfront development partnership and will be contracting with the University of Minnesota for assistance.

**Elk River to Hastings:** Cordelia Pierson reported that the National Park Service recently gathered project information from partners for the Alternative Transportation System and is identifying funding needs. The Department of Natural Resources is continuing work on critical area rulemaking for the Mississippi River. The St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board has completed interpretation planning that will highlight Dakota stories. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is working on regional planning.

**Natural Resources:** Cynthia Wheeler distributed a handout (attached) including updates on the Marketing Grant Hospitality Training Project; potential closure of Upper St. Anthony Falls; link to a report on the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area; and ground water monitoring in the metro area.

**Transportation:** Scott Bradley reported on funding opportunities for byways under the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). National Scenic Byways are eligible to apply for certain projects under Transportation Alternatives, but there are more programs competing for fewer funds than in the past. In Minnesota, MnDOT has committed funds to assist with the transition into the new program. Funds will be used for infrastructure projects and to develop relationships between byways and Area Transportation Partnerships, the entities that will make future funding decisions. Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) will assist in preparing byways to compete for TAP funds in the future. Capital investment plans will be developed. A Minnesota Scenic Byways Workshop will be held March 25 – 26 in Duluth – agenda to be released soon. Carol Zoff provided an update on status of interpretive panel installation. Panels were recently installed at the Mary Gibbs Headwaters Visitors Center in Itasca State Park and new panels have been delivered to Bemidji which will be installed as part of a riverfront development project coming up soon.

**National Park Service:** Paul Labovitz announced that he will be taking a new job as Superintendent of Indiana Dunes National Park. Members thanked him for his service to the MN-MRPC over the past seven years and wished him well, also noting that he will be greatly missed. The Federal Water Resources Development Act currently includes a provision to close the St. Anthony Falls locks which could help prevent movement of Asian Carp. The Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventure (UWCA) program continues to lead the nation in youth engagement. The canoe mobile has brought canoes to 17 cities recently. Commission members were asked to watch for information on the annual Partner Paddle, coming up in May. The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area is working with partners on development of the Island Station power plant site, which could include National Park Service offices and other tenants. The annual bald eagle nesting survey will be underway soon. There are approximately 40 active bald eagle nests in the metro area.

## **Commission Business**

**FY '14 Budget Status:** A year-to-date status report for the MN-MRPC operating budget was included in the meeting packets and discussed.

**Commission Priorities:** Rep. Johnson referenced a recent email reminding members of the focus on the Corridor Management Planning project, and the time and effort required of members and staff. This project will be the Commission's main priority until completion.

## **National MRPC Updates**

**2014 Semi-Annual Meeting:** The 2014 Semi-Annual Meeting is scheduled for April 23 – 25 in Alton, Illinois. The agenda will be forwarded when available. Members were asked to notify the MN-MRPC office if interested in attending. Karl Samp will attend as a member of the National MRPC Executive Committee. Carol Zoff requested funds from the MN-MRPC to attend.

## **Corridor Management Plan Project**

**Mississippi River Trail:** A purchase order has been issued for phase II of Mississippi River Trail (MRT) sign fabrication. Bids for installation of those signs were due on January 31. Notification has been sent to the selected installation contractor and installation will take place this spring/summer from Hastings to Elk River. Planning for Phase III of the MRT sign project will begin soon. Meetings will be set with 28 local agencies and the DNR, to discuss signage from Elk River to Lake Itasca. Phase III sign fabrication and installation will take place in 2015.

**Mississippi River Companion Printing:** This National Park Service publication includes detailed mapping of the Great River Road and MRT in the metro area, and is nearing completion at the printer.

**Corridor Management Plan Request for Proposals:** The Request for Proposals was released on January 21. Notice was posted in the State Register and emails were sent to firms that indicated interest in the project, MnDOT's list of prequalified vendors for this type of project, and MnDOT Disadvantaged Business Enterprise lists. An information meeting will be held for interested vendors on February 13 at 1:30 p.m. All Commission members are welcome to attend for details on the project. Karl Samp, Cordelia Pierson, Andrea Kajer, Keith Parker, Susan Overson (NPS), Carol Zoff, Diane Henry-Wangenstein (LCC) and Chris Miller will serve on the Selection Committee. Deadline for receipt of proposals is March 6, followed by individual review by committee members, a selection committee meeting, and interviews on April 1 – 2. The Selection Committee will make recommendations to the MN-MRPC Chair regarding the contract to be awarded.

## **Old Business – Updates**

**Visual Resource Protection Plan:** Carol Zoff reviewed the project background. This project was funded by a National Scenic Byways grant and managed by the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, focused on development and use of a system to identify and assess views along the Great River Road in the metro area. The project report is in final editing stages. The process and tools will be utilized along the full length of the Minnesota Great River Road during the Corridor Management Plan process. A question was raised about whether the data from this project is being used in the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area project. Though this has not occurred, the project provides a qualitative explanation and evaluation of views for future uses.

**Marketing Grant – Hospitality Training Project:** Information on this project was included in the Department of Natural Resources report. It is the last project in the Commission's federal marketing grant. Regional Great River Road map tablets are being revised, including addition of state forest information. The DNR is providing graphic design time and the marketing grant will cover printing costs. Map tablets and a PowerPoint presentation about the Great River Road will be provided to state parks along the Great River Road for use with visitors and local communities. Train-the-trainer sessions will be scheduled based on interest. The MN-MRPC will also have a limited number of copies for general use at meetings and events, and regional commissioners will each receive a tablet for their regions. There was discussion about other uses for print materials and electronic versions of the maps. Suggestions included

Mayo Clinic and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Electronic copies of the maps can be shared and posted on websites as appropriate. Discussion followed on public outreach that will be conducted and strategies developed as part of the Corridor Management Plan project, including public health and multiple modes of transportation.

**Silica Sand Mining:** Chris Miller referred to the resolution adopted at the last MN-MRPC meeting. A cover letter was sent with the resolution to cities, counties and townships in the Hastings to Iowa Border region, and copied to the Environmental Quality Board, League of Minnesota Cities, Association of Minnesota Counties and Minnesota Association of Townships. It was also sent to those who testified at the November MN-MRPC meeting and is posted on the MN-MRPC page of the LCC website. Karl Samp has received feedback from a testifier expressing thanks. Carol Zoff reported on her work with the Environmental Quality Board's technical support team in development of a toolkit for local governments. Public comments are now being accepted on the toolkit.

**CapX 2020:** No report.

### **New Business**

**Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/Geotourism Project:** Karl Samp reported that the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative will be meeting in Memphis, March 11 – 13 and he will attend to represent the MRPC, at the request of MRPC Pilot Bob Miller. An opportunity is coming up on February 13 to hear about the Mississippi River Geotourism Project. Jim Dion of National Geographic and Terry Eastin of the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative will be here on February 13, 3:30 p.m. An invitation has been sent out to MN-MRPC members and stakeholder lists. It will be re-sent to members as a reminder. Funds would need to be raised before work could begin to develop a National Geographic geotourism project involving all ten Mississippi River States. Products include a website and printed maps.

### **Next Meeting**

The Second Quarter meeting will be May 15, 2014; 2:30 – 5:00 p.m.; State Office Building 500 South

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.



## Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Agency Updates – February 2014

### Department of Natural Resources – Cynthia Wheeler, Technical Advisor

#### **Marketing Grant – Hospitality Training Project**

DNR staff is completing work on updating print (map tablets) and web materials to include state forests and OHV trails along the Mississippi River/GRR corridor. The MN Grown information has been updated as well. Next steps include identifying and “training” the appropriate DNR Parks and Trails Division staff so that they can provide and promote the materials and information to the local chambers of commerce, tourism agencies, and communities, as appropriate.

#### **Potential Closure of Upper St. Anthony Falls/Impact on Public Water Access**

DNR continues to explore opportunities for boater access above and below the lock and dams.

#### **Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA)**

A *Report to the Minnesota Legislature on Rulemaking Initiative on the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area* was completed and submitted last month. The *Report* includes background information about the MRCCA, the process and schedule of the current rulemaking, an overview of the issues and need, as well as anticipated costs of the rulemaking.

The *Report* can be found at:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/rules/mrcca/index.html>

#### **Ground Water Monitoring in the Metro Area**

The north and east metropolitan area is one of three areas designated as a pilot for the development of groundwater management area plans. The north and east metropolitan area plan includes Washington and Ramsey counties and the 8 southern cities of Anoka County.

These areas were created by the legislature in 2012 as one way to address groundwater related resource challenges.

More information about the Groundwater Management Areas and the three pilot planning projects can be found at:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/gwmp/areas.html>