



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
3rd Quarter Meeting
August 13, 2020 • 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

DRAFT AGENDA

2:00 p.m.	Welcome & Introductions	Senjem
2:05 p.m.	Approve Today's Agenda & Minutes from 2/6/20	Senjem/All
2:10 p.m.	Commission Business <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Budget Report- Regional Meetings/Elections	Handout/Lewis/Miller Miller
2:20 p.m.	Federal Legislation Updates & Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">- INVEST/Moving Forward Act- Great American Outdoors Act	Handout/All Handout/All
2:30 p.m.	All American Road Designation <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Status Review & Next Steps	Project Team
2:45 p.m.	Drive the Great River Road Month	Lewis/Miller
3:00 p.m.	National MRPC <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2020 Annual Meeting – Virtual- 2021 Annual Meeting – Bemidji?- Committee Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Communications & Marketing▪ Culture & Heritage▪ Environment, Recreation & Agriculture▪ Transportation	Lewis/Senjem/All Lewis/Senjem/Miller Committee Members
3:30 p.m.	Commission Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none">- MN GRR Print Map- Ambassador Development	Miller Zoff/Wilcox/Miller
3:45 p.m.	New Business <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improving Access and Welcoming Environment along the Mississippi River	Pierson/All
4:00 p.m.	Commission Member Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Potential Interpretive Center Nominations- Refer to Written Updates in Packet- Brief Highlights or Action Requests	Christianson All All
4:25 p.m.	Other Business	
4:30 p.m.	Wrap Up and Adjourn	



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
1st Quarter Meeting – February 6, 2020
Minnesota Senate Building, St. Paul MN
MINUTES – Draft**

Commissioners Present

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings
Sen. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (phone)
Rep. Tony Jurgens
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee (phone)
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society Appointee
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Gina Bonsignore – Natural Resources

Carol Zoff – Transportation
John Anfinson – National Park Service
Diane Henry Wangensteen – LCC
Chris Miller – Staff

Commissioners/Technical Advisors Absent

Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee
Rep. Anne Claflin
Anne Lewis – At Large Member

Speakers Present

Jody Yungers – City of Brooklyn Park

Meeting called to order at 2:05 p.m. by Chair Senjem. Congratulations were extended to David Kelliher, recently appointed as voting member of the MN-MRPC representing the Minnesota Historical Society. A quorum was present.

Approve Minutes from 11/21/19 Meeting: Motion by Cordelia Pierson and seconded by David Kelliher to approve the minutes from the 11/21/19 meeting as presented. Motion carried.

City of Brooklyn Park – River Park Redevelopment: Jody Yungers from the City of Brooklyn Park provided an update as follow up to her presentation to the commission in November of 2018 and the commission's letter of support for a grant application in 2019. Key design areas for River Park include a river overlook, fishing platforms, river edge trail, canoe/kayak launch, expanded parking lot, invasive species removal station, relocated shelter, stormwater treatment area, new park building, and maintenance of existing park buildings. Project total cost is estimated at \$3.2 million and four out of six grants recently pursued have been awarded. Work will begin in spring of 2020 and continue to late fall, with clean up and project finalization in spring of 2021 followed by a summer grand opening. In addition, the City of Brooklyn Park is partnering with Three Rivers Park District on a cooperative agreement and master plan for Mississippi Gateway Regional Park.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations/VW Grant Process: The presentation was postponed due to the schedule for release of the Phase 2 Plan and grant information over the coming weeks. Information will be shared at the next MN-MRPC meeting or will be shared via email or conference call.

Budget Report: A report showing year to date expenditures as compared to budget was included in the meeting packet. A question was raised on whether the Commission has an ongoing contract with the website development company for future edits that may be necessary. This is not currently in place but will be looked into. Report was approved by consensus.

Commission Staffing Contract: Diane Henry-Wangensteen provided a summary of the commission's staffing status. The current MN-MRPC staff support agreement that the MN-MRPC and LCC have with The Odyssey Group expires on June 30, 2020 but the contract has a provision for a two-year extension if all parties agree. The chair has the authority by a standing resolution of the commission to sign agreements with the LCC as a fiscal agent. All parties are in agreement of this extension LCC will draft an amendment. With this amendment, the next RFP the commission and LCC will issue will be the spring of 2022.

Commission Member Participation: Sen. Senjem noted that Bluffs Regional Member Sheronne Mulry has missed three consecutive MN-MRPC meetings and stressed the importance of representation for all Great River Road regions. There was discussion on the need for representation and agreement with Sen. Senjem's suggestion to send a letter.

All American Road Designation – Process & Timeline for MN GRR Application: Summary information about the process was included in the meeting packet. The deadline for All American Road nominations is May 15 but byways will need to submit to their state Scenic Byways Offices sooner to allow for review and final submission. Needs and process were discussed. Assistance will be requested from members including identification, documentation and photography of up to 16 historic and cultural features for the application. Letters of support will also be needed. More details will be sent out as the process continues. The online application portal will open February 13 and the Federal Highway Administration will be offering a webinar on February 26 to provide more details on the process. A suggestion was made to obtain a copy of a successful application to serve as reference.

2020 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting – Baton Rouge, LA: The agenda in the meeting packet was referenced. Anne Lewis and Karl Samp will be attending as National MRPC officers, Carol Zoff will be attending for MnDOT. Sen. Torres Ray has indicated interest and the question was raised whether any others would like to be considered before out of state travel approval is requested. Cordelia Pierson noted interest. Staff will work with the Chair on the out-of-state travel request.

2020 MRPC Annual Meeting – Bemidji, MN: Thanks were noted to team members Sally Fineday, Gina Bonsignore, David Kelliher, Anne Lewis and Carol Zoff. The first planning call was held in January and another one is planned for later in February. A brief overview of the January planning discussion was provided which included a general focus on river stories including indigenous culture and stories. Coordination with the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative and National Caucus of Environmental Legislators continues. More information will be shared as planning continues and members will be asked for help along the way. Sen. Senjem encouraged all members to mark their calendars for this event, September 15 – 17 in Bemidji. Recommendations from members included Connie Cox at Itasca State Park as a storyteller, involvement of all MN-MRPC member agencies in the presentations, a photo op for the full MRPC group at Paul and Babe or the Headwaters, Dr. Anton Treuer of Bemidji State University as a speaker, and inclusion of sustainability and climate concerns. The new Explore MN Travel Guide includes a section on the Mississippi River with great photos and copies could be made available or the MRPC Annual Meeting.

Interpretive Center Nominations: Interest in Interpretive Center nominations has been expressed by several communities in the Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region. Megan Christianson has met with local representatives and she and Karl Samp will be presenting information at the Cuyuna Lakes Chamber of Commerce as well. Members discussed the opportunities as well as process and timeline for letters of support for nominations which are due to National Office by September 1. Ideas for inclusion of smaller communities were discussed and Carol Zoff and Chris Miller offered to assist with further exploration. John Anfinson will share information with the MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee when appropriate.

MN Great River Road Website: The new Minnesota Great River Road website launched on January 31. Due to the tight development timeline prior to launch, the project team completed final reviews with Meta 13, the service provider. Members were asked to review the site, currently still in a soft launch phase, and notify staff of any must-do fixes soon, before the new site is promoted. Ideas for future consideration and site improvement are also welcome. Carol Zoff reported that MnDOT is developing how to videos that will be added to the Plan Your Trip mapping to assist the public in fully utilizing the information. Megan Christianson suggested looking into adding live links to the downloadable print map. Special thanks were noted to the project team of Megan Christianson, Lisa Havelka, Carol Zoff and Diane Henry Wangensteen.

MN Great River Road Print Map: A Request for Proposals was issued in January for printing, shipping and storage of the new map. Four proposals were received. A conference call will be held soon to review and make a vendor recommendation to the Chair. A volunteer was requested to work with Carol Zoff, Chris Miller and Diane Henry Wangensteen. Megan Christianson offered to assist. Printing and shipping of the map is planned for April.

Ambassador Development: The first round of Ambassador Training Workshops will be held in summer (possibly June) as Phase I of the project. Workshops will focus on Great River Road Interpretive Centers to provide information and gather feedback for use in Phase II of the project. Refinements will be made and then an expanded round of training workshops will be planned for 2021.

Mississippi Multimedia Gallery Welcome Center Pilot: A report was included in the meeting packet describing pilot placement of a kiosk at the St. Croix Welcome Center and results of the placement.

Commission Member Updates: Cordelia Pierson reported on recent news related to the proposed "Wishbone Project" in Minneapolis in the St. Anthony Falls area. John Anfinson was contacted by the Star Tribune and advised members to watch for another story coming up soon. Questions were raised about origination of the project and whether it is included in planning projects that are underway.

John Anfinson reminded the Commission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Disposition Study, which will likely be released in May-June.

Karl Samp reported that Shore Excursions will again be offering trips to Itasca State Park for Mississippi Queen travelers. Two tours are scheduled for July and August. Karl Samp and Anne Lewis will be serving as guides.

Karl Samp recommended River Trail Media as presenters for a future MN-MRPC meeting and/or as cross promotion partners at the National MRPC level.

Gina Bonsignore asked whether information on DNR events and initiatives would be appropriate to share for distribution on MN Great River Road social media. The answer was definitely yes and staff is very appreciative of content suggestions.

Sen. Senjem noted the significant number of infrastructure needs in the bonding bill.

Rep. Jurgens spoke about conversations that have taken place with the city, Chamber of Commerce and others in the Hastings area regarding the possibility of a Great River Road Interpretive Center nomination related to new development taking place. John Anfinson offered support and the Commission is interested in learning more as things continue.

Sen. Senjem requested feedback on the new meeting room and positive comments were provided.

Next Meeting – June 4, 2020, 2:00 – 4:30 p.m., Minnesota Senate Building Room 1100

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:55 p.m.

MN-MRPC FY20 Activity/Project Budget

7-27-20

<u>Activity/Item</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Spent 7/7/2020</u>	<u>Pending</u>	<u>Remaining</u>	<u>% Spent</u>
MN-MRPC Operating Budget					
Quarterly Meetings (4 @ up to \$1,650 each)	\$6,600.00	\$1,796.20		\$4,803.80	27%
Special Meeting and/or other Commissioner meetings travel & per diem	\$2,000.00	\$488.44		\$1,511.56	24%
Executive Committee Meetings (2 @ \$300)	\$600.00	\$85.10		\$514.90	14%
MRPC Dues	\$15,000.00	\$10,578.00		\$4,422.00	71%
Admin Contract	\$26,400.00	\$24,200.00	\$2,200.00	\$0.00	100%
Website & phone basic costs (incl. 800 website + 300 phone + 204 Constant Contact)	\$1,600.00	\$1,387.56	\$44.13	\$168.31	89%
National Meetings	\$8,700.00	\$803.42		\$7,896.58	9%
Regional Meetings/Elections	\$900.00	\$899.98		\$0.02	100%
Mailing/Shipping Maps (10 State and MN GRR Maps)	\$500.00	\$70.00	\$28.80	\$401.20	20%
Additional Staff Hours for CMP Implementation Activities (incl. regional mtgs, ambassador program mgmt, letters of support/comment, investment inventory)	\$15,000.00	\$12,045.00	\$825.00	\$2,955.00	86%
Website Programming Changes - Minimal	\$500.00	\$89.10		\$410.90	18%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$200.00	\$0.00		\$200.00	0%
Total Operating Budget	\$78,000.00	\$52,442.80	\$3,097.93	\$22,459.27	71%
Special Projects - Funding for implementation during FY20 and FY21					
Website Updates for Map Tools, Mobile Devices	\$20,000.00	\$16,357.76		\$3,642.24	82%
Ambassador Development	\$28,000.00			\$28,000.00	0%
New Print Map	\$34,000.00	\$24,692.10		9,307.90	73%
Total Special Projects	\$82,000.00	\$41,049.86	\$0.00	\$40,950.14	
Estimated Total Expenses	\$160,000.00				
Total FY 20 Allocation	\$149,860.00				
LCC Funds for Website	\$10,140.00				
Total Funds Available	\$160,000.00				

MN-MRPC FY21 Activity/Project Budget

Draft 7-30-20

<u>Activity/Item</u>	<u>Estimate</u>
<u>MN-MRPC Operating Budget</u>	
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,600.00
Other Commissioner meetings travel & per diem	\$1,200.00
Executive Committee Meetings (2 @ \$300)	\$600.00
MRPC Dues	\$15,000.00
Admin Contract	\$26,400.00
Website & phone basic costs (incl. 450 website + 300 phone + 204 Constant Contact)	\$2,000.00
Map Shipping & Storage	\$3,000.00
National Meetings	\$2,000.00
Regional Meetings/Elections	\$900.00
Additional Staff Hours for CMP Implementation Activities with Partners & Stakeholders including letters of support/comment, investment inventory, regional mtgs and elections, ambassador program mgmt	\$15,000.00
Website Edits and Updates	\$2,000.00
Drive the Great River Road Month Promotional Campaign	\$4,500.00
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$800.00
Total Operating Budget	\$78,000.00
<u>Special Projects - Funding for implementation during FY20 and FY21</u>	
Website Updates for Map Tools, Mobile Devices	Carry forward TBD
Ambassador Development	Carry forward TBD
New Print Map	Carry forward TBD
Total Special Projects	
FY21 Operating Budget Allocation	\$78,000.00

Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Resolution Re: Funding for National Scenic Byways Programs
July 10, 2020

Whereas H.R. 2 passed on July 1, 2020 and included language to fund the reinstated National Scenic Byway program for five years at a total level of \$325 million; and...

Whereas, the Great River Road in all 10 Mississippi River states is a National Scenic Byway and its 10 member commissions would be eligible to apply for this funding to support long-overdue projects that will most likely include planning, interpretation, wayshowing and marketing; and...

Whereas, the Great River Road, collectively, is the longest National Scenic Byway and arguably one of the nation's most significant National Scenic Byways, as well as a pending applicant for All-American Road status; and...

Whereas, previous National Scenic Byway funding between 1992 and 2012 resulted in roughly \$33.8 million* in investments across all ten states and especially benefitted small river communities; therefore...

The 10-state Mississippi River Parkway Commission commends the Mississippi River U.S. House of Representative members on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for their support of this legislation, especially Rep. Rodney Davis, Ill., along with Representatives Daniel Lipinski, Ill., Steve Cohen, Tenn., Abby Finkenauer, Ia., Jesus Garcia, Ill., Angie Craig, Minn., Sam Graves, Mo., Rick Crawford, Ark., Thomas Massie, Ky., Garret Graves, La., Mike Bost, Ill., Bruce Westerman, Ark., Mike Gallagher, Wisc., and Pete Stauber, Minn., and, furthermore...

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission urges U.S. Senators Klobuchar, Smith, Baldwin, Johnson, Ernst, Grassley, Duckworth, Durbin, Blunt, Hawley, McConnell, Paul, Alexander, Blackburn, Boozman, Cotton, Hyde-Smith, Wicker, Cassidy and Kennedy – all U. S. Senators living in Great River Road states – to support similar language when and if it appears as part of upcoming U.S. Senate legislation to address U.S. transportation and/or economic recovery.

*Unverified



Mississippi River Parkway Commission

701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202
Madison, WI 53703



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Susanne Thiede-Barnet, Managing Director, National Mississippi River Parkway Commission,
1-866-763-8310

Mississippi River Parkway Commission Thanks Congress for Support

River state representatives backed program vital to economic health of Mississippi River Corridor

MADISON, Wis. (July 17, 2020)—The Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) Board of Directors met recently and commended congressional representatives along the river for their support of National Scenic Byway fund reinstatement in the recently passed House of Representative's "Moving Forward Act."

H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act, included \$325 million for National Scenic Byways over five years. In 2019, the National Scenic Byway program was re-opened after eight years and recently took applications for the first time. When the program previously operated, funds were available for transportation infrastructure programs that benefitted hundreds of U.S. communities, especially small and rural towns. National Scenic Byways are designated by the Federal Highway Administration, through a strict application process and must meet set criteria for intrinsic resources and comprehensive, community-based planning.

"The reinstatement of these funds is important to the future of our Great River Road and all the communities who are served by this National Scenic Byway," said Terri McCullough, chair of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission. "Between 1992 and 2012, roughly \$34 million enabled plans and improvements that made travel and transportation into and out of our Mississippi River towns and cities safe and more enjoyable. For many communities, traveler visits are crucial to their economies."

In its resolution, the MRPC commended the congressional representatives on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee from eight of the 10 Great River Road states: Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Tennessee and Wisconsin for their support of the renewed program.

The Commission Board also urged U.S. senators from those states, as well as Kentucky and Mississippi, to support this funding in its legislation soon.

For more information: www.experiencemississippiriver.com or call 1-866-763-8310.

About the Great River Road

Created in 1938 and stretching for 3,000 miles through and beside 10 states, the Great River Road National Scenic Byway is the longest such designated roadway and one of the oldest. The Mississippi River Parkway Commission is a nonprofit organization founded to preserve and improve the natural resources, cultural heritage, economic viability, scenic quality, recreational amenities and other features significant to the Mississippi River Valley.

###

Legislative Victory: The Great American Outdoors Act is Headed to the President's Desk

Posted June 19, 2020 by KAngell

On Wednesday, July 22, at 5:33 p.m., the House passed the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), **which provides full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and provides major funding toward maintaining our National Parks and other federal lands.** This follows the Senate's passage of the legislation on Wednesday, June 17. Since the President has pledged to sign GAOA when it reaches his desk, that means one thing: VICTORY!

For those who have been following the intense efforts by the Scenic America and its coalition allies to permanently authorize and fund the LWCF and also fix our National Parks, **the GAOA's passage is huge news.** The GAOA will provide nearly \$900 million a year to the LWCF, which has been called one of the most important pieces of environmental legislation ever passed.

Scenic America, as well as its affiliates and chapters, worked extremely hard to support the GAOA, and it's a testament to our work that it has cleared all its hurdles and is on the way to the President's desk.

"There's no other way to put it," said Scenic America's President, Mark Falzone. "This could not be a bigger victory. Fully funding the LWCF and addressing our parks' maintenance backlog has been a top priority not only for our organization, but for many others, and the day seems to be here at last."

Created by Congress in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was passed to direct revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling to environmental preservation. **The LWCF has supported the creation and maintenance of our national parks, national wildlife refuges, national battlefields, and national forests – as well as state and local land conservation, water conservation, parks, trails and sports fields in every state in our nation.**


On March 12, 2019, the LWCF was permanently reauthorized, which means it no longer faced the possibility of expiring. But it still lacked funding, and that has contributed to another major effort by our community – addressing the shocking, almost \$11.9 billion maintenance backlog in our national parks, not to mention on our other federal lands.

With the passage of the GAOA, we can begin to address the most critical maintenance needs for the National Park Service's highest priority infrastructure, **including repair and improvement of trails, roads, bridges, water systems, and more.** Under the bill, \$1.9 billion in additional funds per year is set aside to fund priority deferred maintenance projects in federal fiscal years 2021-2025. Of that, 70% is allocated to the National Park Service, 15% to the U.S. Forest Service, and 5% each to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Education.

Neglect of our national parks has not only impacted the enjoyment and access of millions of visitors, it has also limited the economic benefits that surrounding communities can receive from providing services to those visitors. With COVID-19 already impacting those communities, this funding could not come at a better time.

Congratulations to all our supporters and coalition partners who helped make this happen! The work will continue, but it's important to recognize a job well done.

0
SHARES

 Share (<https://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scenic.org%2Fblog%2Flegislative-victory-the-great-american-outdoors-act-funds-the-lwcf-and-helps-fix-national-parks%2F>)

 Tweet (<https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=Legislative%20Victory%3A%20The%20Great%20American%20Outdoors%20Act%20is%20Headed%20to%20the%20President%20Desk&u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scenic.org%2Fblog%2Flegislative-victory-the-great-american-outdoors-act-funds-the-lwcf-and-helps-fix-national-parks%2F&via=ScenicAmerica>)



Minnesota Plan 2020

Background

September is celebrated annually as Drive the Great River Road Month in all ten Mississippi River states, to build awareness and encourage GRR travel and experiences. For the past several years Minnesota has promoted a designated theme along with the National Great River Road sweepstakes. The 2019 promotion centered on MN State Parks along the Great River Road. The National MRPC Office handles the overall promotion at the ten-state level including news releases, sample materials, social media posts, blog, and sweepstakes.

Focus

The Minnesota promotional/information effort will focus on the MN Great River Road Scenic Reaches included in the MN-MRPC's All-American Road nomination. Details are attached. These unique scenic features allow for safe exploration locally or on a larger scale and are not dependent on status of specific attractions or businesses.

Ad Campaign

Minnesota Monthly – 1/3-page print ad in fall "Hit the Road" edition; online article beginning August 1; online ad; 2 e-newsletter sponsorships; social media campaign.

Rationale

- Rates this year are low and it maximizes promotion dollars in ways we haven't had available before.
- Opportunity coincides with Drive the Great River Road Month, which is an annual Commission activity and priority as a ten state MRPC marketing effort. Drive the Great River Road Month promotion is more needed by our river communities more than ever before because of the uncertainties related to the pandemic.
- Traveler attitude surveys indicate a growing interest in road trips which could be leveraged with this ad.
- We have received good free media attention early in the season and we should build on that strategically.
- Funds were available due to reduced travel in second half of fiscal year 2020 and projected for beginning of fiscal year 2021.
- Addresses strategies in the MN GRR Corridor Management Plan including driving travelers to the website and social media platforms.

News Release

A news release about Drive GRR Month and the MN GRR scenic features will be distributed to media along the MN GRR in late August. It will also be sent to community tourism offices and MN GRR Interpretive Centers with details on the national promotion and sweepstakes, with a request to help spread the word.

MN GRR Social Media

Facebook/Twitter posts during September will share information on the National GRR, sweepstakes and scenic reaches.

Governor's Proclamation

A request for September to be proclaimed "Drive the Great River Road Month" was submitted via online form in late July.

MN-MRPC Member Involvement Requested

MN-MRPC members are asked to share information on Drive the Great River Road Month as appropriate for their settings - newsletters, social media, email forwarding, word of mouth, etc. Feel free to highlight your own scenic reach(es) and/or agency information related to the Mississippi River/GRR. Your help is needed and appreciated!



The Mississippi River in Minnesota

Eight Scenic Reaches to Explore

- **Lake Itasca:** The journey of this world-renown river begins at Lake Itasca. But there is more here than the point where the Mississippi spills out. The lake lies within the 32,000-acre Itasca State Park, the second oldest state park in America.
- **Serpentine River:** After percolating from Lake Itasca, the infant river follows a serpentine course to Brainerd, frequently twisting back on itself, leaving cut off lands and oxbows.
- **Headwaters Lakes & Reservoirs:** The headwaters region includes thousands of lakes. The largest contribute to America's first reservoir system. Created by the Corps of Engineers over 100 years ago, the reservoirs provide a wide range of scenic views.
- **Prairie River:** From Brainerd to St. Anthony Falls, the Mississippi becomes the Prairie River, as it straightens out and islands replace oxbows. Here, the prairie runs up to the river's banks, not bluffs.
- **St. Anthony Falls:** No place anchors the Mississippi's significance in the Twin Cities like St. Anthony Falls - the river's only major waterfall. Its physical power gave rise to Minneapolis, but its scenic power has drawn nationally known artists since the 1800s and still attracts modern day painters and photographers.
- **The Gorge:** Below the falls, the Mississippi drops into the 8.5-mile Gorge, stepping down 110 feet through three locks and dams, running between bluffs one-quarter to one-third of a mile apart. Nowhere does the river fall so quickly over such a short distance.
- **The Big River:** The Big River – the river of Mark Twain - begins at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. It is characterized by a broad valley and a wide floodplain, with many side channels, backwater lakes and wooded islands.
- **Driftless Area:** Below Hastings, the Mississippi enters the Driftless Area, with its distinctive limestone bluffs. During the last ice age, glaciers bypassed the Driftless Area, creating a unique and nationally significant landscape.

Use the Plan Your Trip online mapping at www.mnmississippiriver.com for Great River Road route details and information on 700+ things to see and do.

SAVE THE DATE

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION **ANNUAL MEETING**

...goes virtual

SEPT. 17, 2020 | 9AM-3PM

• COMPLIMENTARY • SHARE WITH COLLEAGUES



**EDUCATIONAL
CONTENT**



**GUEST
SPEAKERS**



**IDEA
SHARING**

A CELEBRATION OF THE GREAT RIVER ROAD

- Great River Road Story Ideas
- Ensuring Clean Water for the Mississippi River
- The Future of Travel on the Great River Road
- National Scenic Byway Updates

Photo Credit: Illinois Office of Tourism



Mississippi River Parkway Commission • 701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202 • Madison, WI 53703
experiencemississippiriver.com • 1-866-763-8310 • FAX: 1-608-242-8896





MRPC Virtual Annual Meeting 2020
September 17, 2020 Approximately 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM

Segment #1 Introduction & Welcome – MRPC Pilot

Segment #2 *Stories from “the Spine of the Nation” – Travel along the Great River Road.*

Rodney Slater, former U. S. Secretary of Transportation, said the Great River Road “... literally connects the nation”. The stories range from history to innovation and from agriculture to industry. Take Aways: Compelling stories of the River suitable for safe promotion of the Great River Road

Segment #3 *Getting off the Road to the River*

Three interpretive centers will showcase how they’ve connected to travelers while they couldn’t come in their doors. Featuring: National Mississippi River Aquarium and Museum; Arkansas Heritage sites; Delta Blues Museum. invited
Take Aways: Share ideas and best practices for connecting in the time of Covid

Segment #4 *Ensuring Clean Water for the Mississippi River*

MN Representative Betty McCollum, Appropriations Committee Chair of Interior and Environment Subcommittee. Confirmed.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Upper Mississippi River Manager Sabrina Chandler will facilitate a follow-up conversation with River-based water quality decision-makers.
Take Aways: Strengthened links between Great River Road tourism and clean water

Segment #5 River Laureate – TBD

Purpose: Inspire and unite all attendees with a speaker, video or case study.
Eddy Harris, videographer & paddler of the MR twice, Presentation and clips from his movie “River to the Heart”. Invited.
SPOILER ALERT: Two MN-MRPC commissioners featured in this trailer.
<https://vimeo.com/236326393>

Segment #6 The Future of Travel on the Great River Road (WT)

Transportation planning featuring multi-modal transportation; healthy community and wayshowing, scenic overlook planning.
Speaker: Toole Design Midwest Director Ciara Schlichting – Multi modal transportation of the Future. Confirmed.
Take Aways: Ways to work with local officials to increase access to the Great River Road

Segment #7: *Moving from Here to There on the Great River Road (WT)*

Mark Falzone, Scenic America, will congratulate MRPC states for their All American Road applications and update attendees on future of funding for Scenic Byways. Confirmed.
Take Aways: Current status National Scenic Byways Program and ways to help

Segment # 8 Closing and Thank You – MRPC Pilot



Member Update to MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Commissioner: Anne Lewis

Representing: At-Large

Quarter: 2nd & 3rd Quarters 2020

Minnesota

MN Great River Road Corridor Management Plan Implementation Support

1. Minn. Monthly – Article placement and Ad Buy for Drive the Great River Road Month
 - Page 04-14 describes responsibilities to the National MRPC
 - 4.2.6 Purchase advertising in tourism materials that feature Great River Road experiences
 - 4.3.7 Drive travelers to website and social media platforms
 - 4.7.7 Partner w/ agencies in promotion initiative.
 - 4.9.1 Encourage people of all ages (theme-dependent)
 - 4.13.1 Maximize MRPC social media platform integration
2. Drive the Great River Road Month News Release

State-wide Issue, Project, Event or Partner

Drive the Great River Road Month promotions are designed this year to emphasize scenery and Great River Road communities, in general. In this era of coronavirus caution, road trips are popular. Driving the Great River Road – whether close to home or for a journey – will build on this popularity. Using content developed for the All-American Road application, we pivoted to an integrated promotional approach that enables us to use social and traditional media and deliver a message of safety and scenery for all Minnesotans to enjoy.

MRPC – Ten-State

Ten-state Corridor Management Plan Implementation Support

Virtual Annual Meeting Plan: Meets 10-state CMP item #7 (A, D, E, F) addressing the goal of linkage of the MRPC and Great River Road to a broader audience. The virtual format will be open to travel media, Mississippi River legislators, MRC, MRCC, Interpretive Centers and CVBs. Its goal is also to build brand strength at a time where planned campaigns and contests could not be used to their fullest potential.

Ten-State Issue, Project, Event or Partner

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission Annual Meeting is virtual and open to everyone Sept. 17. A blend of river stories, interpretive center innovation, river inspiration, clean water initiatives and future multi-modal river road travel, the Sept. 17 event will highlight the marketing, environmental, cultural and transportation work of the Commission. Included in the day's event will be a celebration of the completion of 8 applications for All-American Road status and an update from Scenic America on efforts to fund the National Scenic Byway program. Because all are welcome to attend any and all of the day's offerings, we ask that commissioners pass information along to colleagues and co-workers. Event highlights attached.



Member Update to MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Commissioner: Cordelia Pierson

Representing: Elk River to Hastings

Quarter: 3rd Quarter 2020

From the Region:

Friends of the Mississippi River - (<https://fmr.org/river-corridor-updates>) We continue to be very concerned about Upper Harbor Terminal and that is definitely related to how a riverfront can be made welcoming for communities of color--or not, in the case of the city's current UHT plan. The 26th Ave Overlook in North Minneapolis park also just had its groundbreaking and could be worth mentioning. In the central riverfront, the pending USAF lock and dam disposition study (currently slated for a fall release) and the re-launch/redesign of [The Falls](#) project are both timely.

Minneapolis: West River Parkway Closure - Except for a few locations along West River Parkway that have active construction projects that will linger into the fall, it is scheduled to open to vehicle traffic in early August. There are currently no plans to permanently close the parkway to vehicle traffic. Closing the parkways temporarily during COVID-19 drew more parkway walkers and bikers and raised awareness of the negative impact car commuters have on other non-motorized parkway visitors and recreational drivers. Updates will be available at - https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/activities_events/road_closures/

Minneapolis Parks Foundation:

Water Works (Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park)

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board are nearing completion of this 4-acre addition to the Minneapolis Park System and the MN Mississippi River Parkway. Conceived as a place for stories and storytelling, Water Works weaves in mill history and Indigenous culture past and present. Features include a pavilion with four-season restaurant, classroom, and restrooms, as well as spaces for gathering and viewing St. Anthony Falls - the only waterfall on the Mississippi River.

The park and pavilion will be completed in September. At that time, the grounds will be open to the public. Opening of the pavilion is dependent on local and state COVID-19 guidelines. The restaurant - *Owamni Yomni* by [The Sioux Chef](#) - is anticipated to open in 2021.

Project Page: <https://mplsparksfoundation.org/Initiative/water-works/>

Monthly Construction Updates - including lots of progress

photos: <https://mplsparksfoundation.org/common-ground> (select the Water Works tab)

Great Northern Greenway Overlook at 26th Ave N. (Phase 1 of the Great Northern Greenway River Link)

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is grateful for the MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission's endorsement of our 2018 request for bond funding for this project. Construction is now underway on the initial phase, called the Overlook. The first new riverfront project in North Minneapolis in nearly a generation, the Overlook will help correct the physical disconnection that Minneapolis Northside residents have experienced for a very long time as a result of heavy industry and Interstate-94. Community has

been a part of the project since conception and have even contributed the design of an interpretive steel rail, ensuring that they feel a real sense of ownership of the space.

When it opens in September, the Overlook will be the only stop on the road for travelers between North Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park and the Central Riverfront.

Phase 2 of the project has been included in 2020 Senate and House bonding bills, as well as the Governor's budget. Should a bill be passed, it will support extension of the biking/walking trail from the Central Riverfront and provide needed additional access to the river's transformational natural resources.

Project Page: <https://mplsparksfoundation.org/Initiative/26th-ave-n-trail-link-pier/>

Project News: <https://mplsparksfoundation.org/common-ground> (select the Great Northern Greenway River Link tab)

Reimagining the Civic Commons (announced in June 2020)

Our work as a part of Reimagining the Civic Commons, a national learning network that uses parks and public spaces to build trust and connectivity in communities, is entirely focused on the Upper Mississippi River and its connection to North Minneapolis. Welcoming spaces must transcend their physicality to be successful. The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is working closely with organizations including Juxtaposition Arts, Pillsbury United Communities, Hawthorne Neighborhood Association, the Minneapolis Park Board, and other agencies to ensure that community is part of the ownership solution.

Project Page: <https://mplsparksfoundation.org/Initiative/reimagining-the-civic-commons/>

Friends of the Falls: <https://thefalls.org/>

The Friends has changed our name from Friends of the Lock and Dam to Friends of the Falls, in part to acknowledge the huge impact of the Falls on the birth of Minneapolis, and to highlight the significance of the Falls to the Dakota Indians, the indigenous people who occupied the site for hundreds of generations before the arrival of the Europeans. The Friends' efforts are focused in the St. Anthony Falls historic district and its history pre-dating the arrival of the Europeans.

In addition, we are in the earlier stages of a Community Engagement process, which has thus far included dozens of neighborhood, political, business, artistic, culturally diverse, and underrepresented communities, organizations, and individuals. Our Community Engagement is a 3-stage process and we are currently in the "Inform and Introduce" stage. All previous work done by the Friends' "visioning" of the project was shelved in favor of hearing first from the community as to what their priorities for the Lock and Dam site are.

Finally, we are in an intense period of seeking **new Federal legislation** to cause the Army Corps of Engineers to dispose of a portion of the site and convey it to the City, thus assuring us the "site control" we seek that will allow us to build and develop the site per community priorities. It will be several months before we learn the ultimate fate of our legislation, but both our US Senators have sent letters to the Army Corps supporting our efforts, and in the House, Congresswoman Angie Craig, a member of the key committee holding the key to the legislation, and Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, are both working with us to insert our "preferred language" into the legislative vehicle, known as the Water Resources and Development Act, or WRDA bill.

Please know the Friends exists to take the moribund Lock and Dam and re-purpose it with elements supported by the greater community. So far, what we hear is strong support for the Native American component, as well as universal support for opening up the riverfront to boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing and other activities that get visitors to and on the river, as well as significant interest expressed for more greening, as well as the establishment of a Visitors and Native American Heritage Center. We

also want the project to “connect” to other neighborhoods up-river and help transform river activity to include a river transit element.

Events in Minneapolis, connected with the river: enewsletter: MplsRiverCurrent@gmail.com

Great River Passage: GreatRiverPassage.org

We have three active projects now, including a \$3M bonding request in for the River Learning Center. <https://greatriverpassage.org/projects/>

Cottage Grove: Zac Dockter <ZDockter@cottagegrovemn.gov>

I believe Cottage Grove has more shoreline on the Mississippi River than any other community in the metro. This is mostly because of Grey Cloud island’s mass. With all that shoreline, our access is extremely limited and most members of our community don’t even realize the river runs through Cottage Grove. Most of the property along the river is privately owned and transportation access is limited in all ways. Roads are very narrow with a very small railway bridge that needs to be navigated through. Driving it is not so bad, but we have zero access for non-motorized transportation and that is certainly a shortcoming to our community. There is no publicly owned land south of Grey Cloud island where residents can access.

The great news is that we are doing better at getting folks to the river. We have some beautiful bluffs that provide fantastic views of the river and are working to improve a sliver of a property entitled River Oaks Scenic Overlook. But we’d like to acquire more land to incorporate those very small view areas to expand our reach to visitors (it has no parking designation and is less than 40 feet wide at some points).

Down along the river, we actually have a great opportunity to introduce paddlers (kayak or canoe) to the river in a very calm and safe setting. We have lots of backwaters that can keep people off the main channel yet give them all the experiences of the river life habitat.

We are restoring an island in the backwaters with help from the Friends of the Mississippi River in an effort to build on our “River Trail” concept. We have a paddle share station set up (with funding from National Park Service) along with interpretive signage and points of interest along the river trail. This has been very popular in its first year in that we’ve had nearly 500 rentals to date. It is a great opportunity to get people on the water with no necessary investment into equipment. And no fear of the main channel sweeping novice paddlers away.

We are currently compiling a report to identify future boat launch and recreational sites. We are looking at County land and private land opportunities. We have a small vessel launch for canoes and kayaks but nothing for motorized boats at this point. So that too is definitely a shortfall in our community.

We are constantly looking for partnerships with both public and private entities to improve our access and appreciation of the river.

Equity and Access:

Mississippi Park Connection: NPS and MPC are partnering with AMAZEworks on equity consulting. Something like this could be of interest to the commission as well.

Friends of the Falls: In seeking to ultimately increase access and create a welcoming environment for all people along the river, the Friends has needed to move aggressively to re-orient our organization by diversifying our Board and setting an agenda to create a partnership with Native Americans to jointly develop the central riverfront at the Lock and Dam site. More dramatically, the Friends sought and won a

grant from the Minnesota Historical Society and St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board to engage a Native American organization to assist in training our board and expanding our reach in Community Engagement. This work will inform our storytelling about the Native American experience on the riverfront, but most importantly, will expand Native American opportunities and input into decision-making of this major project on the river. The organization we hired is the Native American Community Development Institute, NACDI, the state's premier urban Indian group.

Great River Passage Conservancy: The Great River Passage Conservancy has just joined the Highline Network and we are working with them on reviewing current access and equity plans developed by other organizations leading large scale civic projects in order to understand the components of a plan and what is/is not successful. We will be reviewing the Trinity Park, Beltline and Anacostia 11 St. Bridge plans.

Stone Arch Bridge:

The project is currently in the design phase. Project details are available at <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/stonearchbridge/index.html>. Schedule includes construction bids in summer of 2022 and construction planned for fall 2022 through spring of 2024. The bridge will be preserved for the future and structural condition will be improved.