



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2010-11 Annual Report July 2011



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Mission

The mission of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota is to promote, preserve and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. The Commission is organized and guided by Minnesota statute 161.1419. Work is carried out by the full Commission along with four defined work groups – Capital Improvement; Economic Development; Marketing; and Organization.

Quarterly Meetings of the Full Commission

The MN-MRPC held four full Commission meetings between July 2010 and July 2011 - August 26, 2010; November 18, 2010; February 23, 2011; and May 26, 2011. Minutes are attached. Each meeting included updates from all regional citizen Commissioners and state agencies. The August 26 meeting was held in Crosby, MN and included a tour of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, Croft Mine Historical Park and new mountain bike trail.

Capital Improvement Work Group

- Work continues on projects funded by the state's \$4.299 million appropriation for **restoration of historic waysides**, managed by Mn/DOT. 12 sites on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are included in the project.
 - Eight of the twelve projects have been completed: Camp Ripley Entrance Walls; St. Cloud Historical Marker; National Grange Historical Marker; Burns Avenue Overlook; Minnesota State Training School Walls; Ft. Beauharnois Historical Marker; Lake City Concourse; Reads Landing Overlook.
 - The final four restorations are planned for completion in 2012: Sibley Pioneer Church Monument; La Crescent Overlook; La Crescent State Entry Marker; and Reno Springs Wayside.
- A **ribbon cutting event** was held on October 21, 2010 to celebrate completed restoration of Lake City Concourse and provide an overview of the statewide project.
- The MN-MRPC applied for a 2011 National Scenic Byways Award for the **Camp Ripley Wall Restoration** project in the category of resource protection.
- The **roadside storybook interpretive panel project** continues. During 2010-11, the first panels were designed, fabricated and placed at the TH 371 Travel Information Center in Brainerd. Remaining work involves placing interpretive signs in four of the 21 counties along the Minnesota Great River Road. A total of 24 panels will be placed (6 per county).
- One of the group's priorities for 2010-11 is active involvement in **road and bridge projects affecting the GRR**. During 2010-11, Technical Advisor Zoff participated on bridge committees and sought Commission input on bridge plans and designs. Current bridge projects include Lafayette Bridge – St. Paul (near completion); Lowry Bridge (under construction); Hastings Hwy 61 (under construction); Red Wing Hwy 63 (preliminary design phase); Winona TH 43 (preliminary design phase); Dresbach I-90 (final design phase).

Economic Development Work Group

- **Resource protection** is a top priority for the group. 2010-11 activities included:
 - **Coon Rapids Dam Commission and Mississippi Critical Area Advisory Group** – Commissioner Labovitz participated on these groups.
 - **CapX2020** - CapX 2020 is a high voltage transmission line project involving several routes across Minnesota, three of which will impact the Great River Road. Those routes are Bemidji to Grand Rapids, St. Cloud to Monticello, and Hampton to La Crosse. MN-MRPC members and staff have spent significant time on this issue during 2010-11. Activities included following the process, hearings and documents for each route and providing public comment; reviewing Environmental Impact Statements; meeting with representatives from the Office of Energy Security regarding GRR concerns and impacts; Commissioner participation in public meetings, hearings and task forces; and meetings with CapX representatives regarding vegetation and mitigation plans. MN-MRPC members shared information with the WI-MRPC, since the project will affect the GRR on both sides of the river.

- **Debris from 35W bridge collapse** – Debris from the bridge collapse had been placed on the banks of the Mississippi and not moved due to being considered evidence. The MN-MRPC made calls and submitted letters requesting removal of the debris. After a motion filed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, an order was issued by a judge in fall of 2010 to remove the debris and Mn/DOT is moving the debris to a storage facility away from the river.
- **Closed Section of the GRR in Minneapolis** – MN-MRPC members attended meetings and submitted letters encouraging maintenance of the historical character of the road section and stressing the importance of re-opening the road. The wood plank road has been removed, replaced with concrete due to cost and maintenance concerns, and reopened. Planks will be kept in the sidewalks to maintain some of the character.
- The **Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT)** remains a priority. A Minnesota status update was provided at the May 26 MN-MRPC meeting by Dan Collins and Liz Walton of Mn/DOT. Commission members are active in meetings and initiatives related to the MRT, and a statewide MRT visitor information initiative was included in the MN-MRPC's application for a 2011 National Scenic Byways Grant. Details and maps of the Minnesota MRT route are available at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike.mrt.html>.

Marketing Work Group

- Printing and distribution of **regional tear-off maps** was completed late summer 2010 and the maps are also posted at www.mnmississippiriver.com. An **agri-tourism** section featuring lists of Minnesota Grown sites within 5 – 10 miles of the Great River Road is included thanks to help from the MN Department of Agriculture. Some interest has been indicated in using the maps as restaurant place mats in GRR communities.
- The **Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planner** was updated, reprinted, and shipped to 50 sites along the GRR throughout the state.
- A Minnesota Great River Road **ad was placed in the 2011 Minnesota Biking Guide**.
- A grant from Explore Minnesota Tourism was received to assist with the next marketing project involving development of **videos from each destination area**, featuring favorite places.
- The MN-MRPC participated in the National MRPC **2010 GRR Geocaching Event** through a partnership with Minnesota State Parks. Cards were placed in 11 state park caches along the Mississippi. Finders were able to claim a prize by submitting information through the MN GRR website, and were also eligible to enter the national contest.

Organization Work Group

- A **2011 National Scenic Byway Grant Application** was submitted to fund Corridor Management Planning and Implementation.
- MN-MRPC **member appointments/elections** are scheduled to take place in 2011. The Organization Work Group ensures that the Commission roster is filled, and that the MN-MRPC is represented on National MRPC committees and initiatives. House and Senate members are appointed by their respective bodies. State agency appointees are identified by Agency Commissioners. Regional members are elected by citizen committees.
- General planning took place for a series of five regional meetings. The **Bluffs Regional Citizen Committee Meeting was held in Winona on June 2, 2011** and will serve as the pilot for the remaining meetings. Four additional meetings will be held in the fall of 2011. Agendas will include updates on Great River Road and related initiatives, gathering of input from the region, and election of an MN-MRPC Commissioner for a four-year term.
- **Google map workshops** are being considered, which would be organized and sponsored by the MN-MRPC for regional stakeholders.

2011 State Legislative Session

- Legislation was introduced to **extend the sunset date of the MN-MRPC** from 2012 to 2016, with testimony provided by MN-MRPC members in both the House and Senate.
- The MN-MRPC submitted letters to committees in support of various bills related to the Mississippi River and Great River Road.
- Status of several bills, including MN-MRPC continuation, still uncertain due to the state government shutdown.

Funding/Great River Road Investments

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

State Operating Budget

The MN-MRPC operated with state funding appropriated during the 2009 session, at levels allowing the Commission to proceed with most priorities. State operating funding for FY '11 was \$66,000 along with carry-over funding from the previous year of the biennium.

Federal Highway Administration Grants Being Implemented by the MN-MRPC

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

Remaining projects remaining include GRR videos, hospitality training, and group travel planning. Map tablets were finalized and shipped to distribution sites in summer of 2010. 68% of the grant has been utilized to date.

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

This is the fifth in a series of 5 Corridor Management "Seed" Grants. Regional meetings, public relations, in-state and out-of-state travel for Commissioners and staff are included. 76% of the grant has been utilized to date.

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

This project will place a series of interpretive signs in various Minnesota Great River Road destination areas. Sign holders have been fabricated and the MN-MRPC incurred the cost as required match to the federal grant. During 2010-11, pilot signs were designed, ordered, produced and placed at the Highway 371 Travel Information Center in Brainerd. The signs will be evaluated and the balance of the project then completed accordingly. 25% of the grant funds have been utilized to date.

State Grants

Explore Minnesota Tourism \$2,500

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

National Scenic Byways Grants Awarded in 2010 along the Great River Road in Minnesota

Six applications were submitted by entities along the MN GRR. One project, for a Great River Road Visual Resource Protection Plan through the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, received funding. MN-MRPC members will be asked to participate in the project to identify high quality river views in the region followed by development of a plan for protection or improvement of those resources. The process developed can be modified and expanded to all destination areas of the Minnesota Great River Road and also shared with other byways.

2011 National Scenic Byways Grant Application

The MN-MRPC submitted an application for a 2011 NSB Grant for Corridor Management Planning and Implementation. Partners include the National Park Service, Mn/DOT (MRT) and Trust for Public Land. The CMP would involve a comprehensive process for the full 575-mile Minnesota route, resulting in a plan to guide the work of the MN-MRPC and partners over the next 10 – 15 years. The implementation piece would involve signage and visitor information for the MRT, as identified in the existing CMP. The MN-MRPC also sent letters to Minnesota's Congressional Delegation regarding proposed cuts to Transportation Enhancement programs and the importance of these funding sources to byways and local communities.

Local River Activities and Amenity Development

- **Brainerd Mississippi River Revitalization Project** – An overview of the Brainerd-Baxter Area Mississippi Riverfront Vision Plan was provided at the August 26, 2010 meeting of the MN-MRPC. Details are available at <http://www.sehinc.com/online/brainerd/>. MN-MRPC members also assisted with review of the Great River Road route in the Brainerd-Baxter area.
- **St. Cloud Area** – After a comprehensive process with involvement from throughout the community, the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan was released at an open house in May 2011. Details are available at <http://www.ci.stcloud.mn.us/planning/RiverCorrPlan.aspx>.
- **Mountain Bike Trail** – This new world class trail, located within the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, was officially opened during a ribbon cutting held in June 2011 during the Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Festival.
- **Mississippi Headwaters Partnership Meetings** - "Mississippi River Headwaters: Sharing Information on Habitat, Water Quality, Recreation and Community Development" was held in Brainerd in December of 2010, bringing together organizations from the Headwaters to St. Cloud to learn about issues and develop partnerships. A follow up session was held in June 2011. The meetings were convened by the Initiative Foundation and Trust for Public Land. Future sessions are planned to continue the dialogue.

Partnerships with Related Organizations

Members of the MN-MRPC continue to work closely with related organizations and gratefully acknowledge their contributions for the benefit of the river and byway travelers. Activities during fiscal year 2011 included the following, with organizations listed in alphabetical order.

- **America's Byways Resource Center:** MN-MRPC members and partners have planned field workshops and presentations to be offered at the 2011 National Scenic Byways Conference in Minneapolis. Byways Resource Center staff participated in the February MN-MRPC meeting via phone.

- **Explore Minnesota Tourism:** An Explore Minnesota Tourism grant awarded to the MN-MRPC in 2010-11 will be used to develop short videos featuring favorite places along the MN GRR. Great River Road materials are distributed via a network of travel information centers.
- **Minnesota Department of Agriculture:** Department staff partnered with the MN-MRPC to leverage “Minnesota Grown” information for agri-tourism efforts along the Great River Road.
- **Minnesota Department of Transportation:** The Department provided technical assistance and project management for the historic wayside property restoration project, representation on bridge committees, and scenic byways technical assistance.
- **Minnesota Historical Society:** MHS provided planning assistance and meeting space for MRPC Oral History interviews, August, 2010.
- **Minnesota State Parks:** Minnesota State Parks continued to partner with the MN-MRPC to place Great River Road cards in their geocaches located in 11 state parks along the Mississippi River. The Department of Natural Resources is in planning stages for a new river amenity – a Whitewater Kayak Park in Minneapolis near the Stone Arch Bridge.
- **Mississippi River Trail, Inc.:** Commissioner Paul Labovitz is a member of the MRT Inc. Board of Directors. Carol Zoff, Mn/DOT technical member, continues an active role in MRT Inc. activities.
- **MRPC National Office:** On-going partnerships with the National Office continue on projects such as geocaching; agri-tourism; and the oral history project.
- **National Park Service/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA):** Multiple partnerships continue, including shared exhibit space/promotional efforts, the upcoming Visual Resource Protection Plan Project, and application for a NSB grant for Great River Road Corridor Management Planning and Implementation.
- **Trust for Public Land:** The Minnesota Office of The Trust for Public Land is a partner on the 2011 National Scenic Byway Grant application for development of a Great River Road Corridor Management Plan. TPL will be involved throughout the CMP process.

Conferences & Events

In addition to its four Commission meetings, members and staff represented the MN-MRPC/GRR at conferences and special events listed below. Commission members also attended a variety of local and regional Chamber of Commerce, CVB, partnership and association meetings.

- Blandin Foundation Meeting/Taskforce – July 2010 – Winona (Mulry)
- Events/Tourism Task Force for St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan – August 2010 (Samp, Miller)
- National MRPC Annual Meeting – Sept. 2010 – La Crosse, WI (Johnson, Mulry, Frerichs, Golfis, Labovitz, Zoff, Kelliher)
- Minnesota Scenic Byways Conference – Oct 2010 – Gunflint Trail, MN (Anderson, Pafko, Zoff, Kelliher)
- Heartland Tourism Association Annual Meeting – October 2010 – Bemidji, MN (Frost)
- “Mississippi River Headwaters: Sharing Information on Habitat, Water Quality, Recreation and Community Development” – December 2010 – Brainerd, MN (Frost, Schaubach, Miller)
- Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference – January 2011 - Nisswa, MN (Schaubach)
- Minnesota Bicycle Tourism Summit - April 2010 – Deerwood, MN (Labovitz, Zoff, Offerman and others)
- Crow Wing County Trails Meeting – April 2010 – Brainerd, MN (Samp)
- Brainerd Area Environmental Learning Network – April – Brainerd, MN (Samp)
- Great River Gathering Dinner & Trade Show – May 2011 - St. Paul, MN (Labovitz, Schaubach, Kajer)
- Urban Wilderness Canoe Area Partner Paddle – May 2011 – Mississippi National River & Recreation Area (Labovitz)
- MNRRA Mississippi River Forums – Monthly – Twin Cities and St. Cloud (Samp)
- Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Festival – June 2011 - Crosby, MN (Schaubach)
- Mississippi Headwaters Meeting – June 2011 – Little Falls, MN (Schaubach, Samp, Zoff)
- Minnesota Scenic Byways Regional Meeting – June 2011 – Mankato/Duluth (Anderson, Pafko, Miller)
- CapX 2020 Public Hearing – June 2011 – Plainview (Mulry)

Membership

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

- (2) Members of the House of Representatives
- (2) Members of the Senate
- (5) Members of State Agencies - (1) appointed by each: DNR, Mn/DOT, Historical Society, Agriculture & Tourism
- (5) Regional Members – (1) from each of the Great River Road regions established by statute
- (1) Member-At-Large – appointed by the other 14

New members welcomed over the past year: Charlie Poster, Agriculture Appointee; Adam Johnson, Tourism Appointee; and Mark Anderson, At-Large Member. Thank you to outgoing members Andy Golfis, Robin Kinney, and Don Frerichs for their service to the Commission.

This report is respectfully submitted on July 19, 2011.
Rep. Sheldon Johnson, MN-MRPC Chair



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
3rd Quarter Meeting
August 26, 2010
Heartwood Conference Center - Crosby, MN**

MINUTES – Approved 2/23/11

Commissioners Present

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River

Others Present

Miranda Anderson – Brainerd Lakes Chamber
Todd Holman – The Nature Conservancy

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

David Kelliher – Historical Society
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Cynthia Wheeler – Natural Resources
Chris Miller - Staff

Commissioners & Advisors Absent

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee
Senator Sandy Pappas
Representative Greg Davids
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee
Jack Frost – Itasca to Grand Rapids
Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism

Following lunch, meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Andrea Hart-Kajer, appointee from the Minnesota Historical Society, was welcomed.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Schaubach provided an overview of special portions of the agenda, including guest speakers from the region and a visit to the Cuyuna Country Recreation Area to view new amenities along the Great River Road. Commissioner Golfis made a motion seconded by Commissioner Mulry to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from May 27, 2010

Minutes from the 2010 Second Quarter Meeting (May 27, 2010) were distributed via email in advance and hard copy at the meeting. Commissioner Samp made a motion and Commissioner Pafko seconded to approve the May 27 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

Commission Business – Financial Report and Authorization to Sign Commission Contracts

A financial report showing FY '10 final status was distributed and discussed. Commissioner Golfis made a motion to approve the FY '10 final financial report, seconded by Commissioner Schaubach. Motion passed unanimously.

The Commission discussed a resolution authorizing the Chair to sign contracts on behalf of the MN-MRPC, in consultation with LCC as fiscal agent. It was noted that this is recommended documentation of current practice. Commissioner Kajer made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, that the MN-MRPC authorizes the Chair to negotiate and execute contracts on behalf of the Commission with concurrence of the Executive Director of the Legislative Coordinating Commission as fiscal agent for the Commission, and in keeping with approved Commission budgets. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion also took place regarding MRT (Mississippi River Bicycle Trail) maps currently under development at the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Commissioner Pafko made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz, to request that Mn/DOT include the Great River Road on MRT maps and all other public maps produced. Motion passed unanimously.

National MRPC Updates

2010 MRPC Annual Meeting: The 2010 Annual Meeting will be held in La Crosse, Wisconsin on September 10 – 11. This will be the only opportunity to attend a National MRPC Meeting in the current

fiscal year, since a Semi-Annual meeting will not be held on the spring of 2011, as a one time change to the regular meeting schedule. MN-MRPC members discussed one versus two national meetings per year, with varying opinions from the group. The MN-MRPC has received authorization to fund six attendees for the La Crosse meeting. Don Frerichs, Andy Golfis, Sheronne Mulry, Rep. Johnson, Paul Labovitz and Sen. Senjem will attend. Carol Zoff will also be in attendance. The MN-MRPC submitted two nominations for National MRPC awards, Karl Samp, for his outstanding service to the Commission including serving as chair for the 2009 Annual Meeting, and Tine Thevinin, for long term dedication to river related causes in the Bluffs Region.

Future MRPC National Meeting Host States: 2011 Annual Meeting – Arkansas; 2012 Semi-Annual Meeting – Illinois; 2012 Annual Meeting – Tennessee; 2013 Semi-Annual Meeting – Iowa; 2013 Annual Meeting – Missouri.

Committee Updates: Culture & Heritage – Louis Intres of Arkansas State University is working on the oral history project, and was in the Twin Cities earlier in August to conduct interviews. He met with Andy Golfis and Nina Archabal at the Mill City Museum. Thanks to both for their help, and also to the Minnesota Historical Society for providing the meeting space and help arranging interviews. Marketing – the 2010 National Great River Road Geocaching Contest is running from August 1 – December 31. This is a later end date than originally discussed to give more time for entries. Prizes will again be needed for a Minnesota basket, including an overnight stay. Please notify the MN-MRPC office if you can help.

State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events

Chairman Johnson reminded everyone to request approval prior to attending events to be reimbursed by the MN-MRPC. An email serves as sufficient documentation. The requests assist in budget planning. Special authorization must be obtained in advance of any out-of-state travel or reimbursement/per diem cannot be approved. Expense reimbursement forms and instructions were distributed.

Commissioner Mulry reported that the Nina and Pinta recently traveled up the Mississippi with stops in Winona and Lake City.

The 2010 Minnesota Scenic Byways Conference will be October 26 – 27 at the Gunflint Lodge, hosted by the Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway.

CapX 2020 Update

Technical Advisor Zoff provided background on the August 2 meeting and van tour focused on the Monticello – St. Cloud route, attended by representatives of the MN-MRPC, Mn/DOT, and CapX2020/Xcel Energy. Notes from the meeting/tour were distributed. Advisor Zoff described the high level of impact the new power transmission lines will have on the Great River Road in this area, including crossing the GRR in six locations. CapX 2020 is asking for the MN-MRPC's specific recommendations related to minimizing the impact on the Great River Road, and enhancing the Great River Road experience in general, including projected costs which could likely be covered by CapX 2020. Minimizing impact would involve maintaining trees and vegetation as much as possible where power poles are to be placed and putting in new plantings where practical and effective. Enhancements to help offset negative impacts could include plantings to better screen the Great River Road from I-94; road shoulder improvements and/or interpretive and MRT signage. Detailed maps of the area will be marked up to note specific recommendations and will be shared with MN-MRPC members and also the counties involved (Wright and Stearns).

Commissioner Mulry shared information on the Hampton – La Crosse route. She served on a task force to determine the scope of content for the Environmental Impact Statement to be developed for the route. The MN-MRPC Office has registered electronically to receive information updates as the process continues and will send dates/details out to the Commission as they become available. Technical Advisor Zoff noted the importance of aligning efforts with the Wisconsin MRPC, since the route will impact both states. Commissioner Mulry mentioned efforts to begin pursuit of Scenic Byway designation in the Zumbro Valley, an area also affected by the proposed CapX project.

Work Group Updates

Capital Improvement: Commissioner Golfis reported on the closed plank road portion of the Great River Road in Minneapolis. He attended a recent meeting of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board

advising the opening of the closed section as soon as possible; along with treatment to maintain the historic feel of the section. Technical Advisor Kelliher distributed copies of the Minneapolis Star Tribune article about the closed plank road. He also noted that the plank road is not an actual historic features but rather a replication to re-create the feel of a particular era. Maintenance, safety and noise issues have been noted. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has authority over the road section and had decided to remove the planks and replace with concrete, after considering cost and maintenance. It has been determined that a design in the concrete would be impractical, but planks will be kept in the sidewalk to maintain some of the character.

Economic Development: Commissioner Pafko reported on status of the 35W bridge debris in Bohemian Flats Park. An order has been issued by a judge allowing the debris to be removed. Work will begin after Labor Day and will likely take around one month to complete. Debris will be moved to a Mn/DOT storage area near I-94 at Lakeland. Mn/DOT has an obligation to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to restore the current site. The associated clean up and restoration will take place in the summer of 2011. Three FHWA Scenic Byways projects have been on hold but now will re-start: a picnic shelter; restrooms; and parking.

Marketing: The map tablet project was recently completed, with six different designs produced, one for each Minnesota Great River Road destination area. Regional Commissioners received copies for their areas. Maps were available at the meeting for anyone else interested, and can also be accessed at www.mnmississippiriver.com. A question was raised about the possibility and cost if businesses would like to use the maps as placemats, etc. Cost information can be gathered upon request. The MN-MRPC has received positive comments about the maps, along with notification of an omission. Along with the positive comments, we've also been contacted about an error. Unfortunately, after all of the drafts produced and multiple reviews/proofing by many, Historic Fort Snelling was inadvertently left off the Metro map. The group discussed options including a reprint of the Metro maps. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kajer, to revise and reprint the Metro maps. Motion passed unanimously. All Commissioners were asked to review the Metro map for items to be included in the current revision, as well as all other maps for any corrections to future printings or other related projects.

Agency and Regional Updates

Natural Resources: Technical Advisor Wheeler referred to the attached report and highlighted an August 14 event held on the Mississippi River in the St. Cloud area, involving a number of partners.

Transportation: Technical Advisor Zoff reported that Mn/DOT has hired someone on a part-time, temporary basis to work on the MRT project. Signage is being planned for trunk highway segments of the MRT, with another phase later for additional signage. Zoff and Labovitz noted that the MN-MRPC's concerns and recommendations for the MRT should be considered as part of the process. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, authorizing the MN-MRPC to send a letter noting concerns. Motion passed unanimously.

Brainerd to Elk River Region: Commissioners Samp and Murray reported on recent St. Cloud area river planning meetings. Task forces have been created to focus on different topics and will be making recommendations to the overall planning group.

Elk River to Hastings Region: Commissioner Labovitz announced release of the Mississippi River Companion, a new guide to exploring the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA). Copies were available for all MN-MRPC members. MNRRA hosted an August 4 listening session for the White House Outdoors Initiative. Commissioner Labovitz attended a Corps of Engineers meeting in St. Louis and has been involved in discussions related to the future of the Coon Rapids dam.

Hastings to Iowa Border Region: Commissioner Mulry noted positive comments about the historic wayside restoration projects in the area.

Brainerd Mississippi River Revitalization Project

Commissioner Samp introduced Miranda Anderson of the Brainerd Lakes Chamber. Ms. Anderson provided an overview of the Brainerd-Baxter Area Mississippi Riverfront Vision Plan. The initiative grew out of the Blandin Leadership Program and recognition that awareness of the river was lacking for the

area, and that the different entities working on river related projects were not well aligned. SEH helped coordinate a six month project to start overall discussions on what role the Mississippi could play in the area. 120 organization and individuals have become involved. The following vision has been developed: The Brainerd-Baxter Area Mississippi River corridor should be a place where residents and visitors can easily access and enjoy year-round natural scenery along with a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities in harmony with a healthy river environment. Four main project areas have been identified: community gathering places; pedestrian/bicycle bridge; trail system; and environmental enhancement/protection. The next step involves master planning including possible partnership with the MN-MRPC on pursuit of a National Scenic Byways Grant.

Update on Potential Mississippi River Land Acquisitions

Commissioner Schaubach introduced Todd Holman from The Nature Conservancy. Mr. Holman shared information on an opportunity for land acquisition along the Mississippi River in the Brainerd area. Discussions began in 2004 regarding a 2,000 acre tract of land belonging to Potlach. A group of partners is exploring ways to secure funding for the acquisition of this land, which could protect over two miles of Mississippi River shoreline, a link to an additional seven miles of public shoreline, a development corridor for the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail, and an undeveloped buffer for the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport and Crow Wing County Landfill. Numerous statewide, county and local initiatives are consistent with and supportive of this project concept. Mr. Holman will continue to keep the MN-MRPC informed.

Visit to Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and Croft Mine Historical Park

Commissioner Schaubach provided background information on the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area (CCSRA) and shared maps depicting the lakes and trails. The CCSRA was created in an area of abandoned iron ore mines. The resulting mine pit lakes now feature fishing and scuba diving opportunities, and construction is underway on a new mountain bike trail sanctioned by the International Mountain Bike Association. The trail is already being recognized as world class, with 25 miles scheduled for completion soon, with additional length to be added in future years. The Commission departed in carpools to view the area, including stops at a scenic overlook, points along the bike trail, and the Croft Mine Historical Park. Commission members noted appreciation for the opportunity to visit this amenity along the Great River Road.

Next Meeting

Thursday, November 18, 2010
2:30 – 5:00 p.m.
State Office Building, St. Paul, Room 500 North

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Regional Updates - August 2010

Department of Natural Resources – Cynthia Wheeler, Technical Advisor

An overview of the Mississippi River Renaissance project is attached. The DNR helped secure funding for it and has been partnering with other entities on its implementation.

A copy of a flyer is attached for an outreach and education event at Stearns County Mississippi River County Park that was held on August 14th. DNR was a partner in sponsoring this event. It is estimated over 650 people turned out for the event. Considering a storm ripped through the area the afternoon before, carrying straight line winds in excess of 75 miles per hour, and downing trees and power lines, it was an amazing turnout!

Another project the DNR is currently involved with is a design for a Mississippi Whitewater Park on the Mississippi River in Minneapolis in the vicinity of the Stone Arch bridge. This park would be for whitewater rafters, canoers, and kayakers. The Corps of Engineers is currently the lead on a (re)design of the project. The DNR is the local sponsor.



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
4th Quarter Meeting
November 18, 2010
State Office Building, St. Paul MN**

MINUTES – Approved 2/23/11

Commissioners Present

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Sen. Sandra Pappas
Jack Frost – Itasca to Grand Rapids

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

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

Commissioners & Advisors Absent

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee
Rep. Greg Davids
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. David Senjem
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society
Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 2:45 p.m. A quorum was not present. Members reviewed the proposed agenda and minutes from August 26, and the Chair proceeded through the agenda for information and discussion.

Commission Business

2011 Financial Status Report: A year-to-date status report listing budget by line item, expenditures to date, and amounts remaining for the 2011 fiscal year was distributed. The report also included balances for federal grants held by the Commission and detail on required local match amounts to complete the grant work. Discussion followed on funding needs for the current year. An invoice will be requested from the National MRPC Office to ensure that 2011 dues are paid soon. Staff time will be needed to do background work for a possible National Scenic Byways Grant application for development of a new Corridor Management Plan (CMP). Input on the process was provided by the group including review of information recently gathered at the MRPC Annual Meeting regarding the GRR five and ten years from now; Mn/DOT's current database from MRT projects that could also be used for CMP development; review and use of information available in the most recent CMP; and development of a possible ad hoc work group. Supplies of Minnesota Great River Road marketing materials for shipment to local visitor centers, state parks, interpretive centers, etc. have been depleted. There was discussion about a reprint of the current map/travel planner. Minimal updating would be required. General consensus was to survey our list of sites regarding desired quantity and then plan for a reprint to last up to two years; and also to proceed with background work for a possible National Scenic Byways Grant/Corridor Management Plan. Staff was asked to prepare a budget plan for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Projections for FY '12 and Beyond: The Commission's operating budget could be reduced due to state budget constraints, and securing local match for any federal grant applications could also be very difficult. Other options to seek matching funds were discussed including Legacy Funds, LCMR, and contributions from partner state agencies. Advance payment of National MRPC dues was noted as an option to provide increased flexibility with operating funds for necessary federal grant match. A suggestion was made to prepare for grant applications but submit later as matching funds are secured. It was also noted that there is a window of time for funded National Scenic Byway projects to begin, which could provide options to begin in a fiscal year when matching funds would more likely be available.

The current sunset date listed in statute for the MN-MRPC is June 30, 2012. Planning should begin during the upcoming legislative session to extend that date and allow for continued appropriation of state operating funds.

Commission Member Vacancy: Commissioner Golfis announced that he will be leaving the MN-MRPC after many years of service. Today will be his last official meeting. Chairman Johnson thanked

Commissioner Golfis for his dedication and service to the MN-MRPC and National MRPC, and announced that recognition will take place at the 2011 First Quarter Meeting.

National MRPC Updates

Report from 2010 Annual Meeting: The MN-MRPC had seven representatives in attendance at the meeting held in La Crosse. Technical Advisor Zoff reported that there was representation from all ten states, providing good information on activities and issues along the full length of the Great River Road. A brainstorming session on the future of the Great River Road identified ideas on where things should be five and ten years into the future. A copy of the information will be forwarded to staff, and then sent out to the Commission. Commissioner Golfis noted the milestone of all ten states being current on dues and having state commissions operational. Commissioner Pappas noted that she did not attend due to a conflict with Rosh Hashana and requested that this conflict be considered in future scheduling.

State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events

Commissioner Pafko and others attended the Minnesota Scenic Byways Workshop, hosted by the Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway. The Chik Wauk Museum, a restoration project utilizing National Scenic Byway funds, was featured. The 2011 Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference will be held January 25-26 in Nisswa. Commission members were asked to notify the MN-MRPC Office if interested in attending.

Old Business

CapX2020 Updates: Technical Advisor Zoff, Commissioner Frost and Commissioner Golfis reported. A route has been selected for the Bemidji-Grand Rapids transmission line. Mn/DOT and MN-MRPC representatives agree that the chosen route is the best available option to reduce impact to the Great River Road. There is concern over herbicides that will be needed in the right-of-way area, and negative impact to desired vegetation. Commissioner Frost was a member of the local citizen advisory group and participated in meetings, tours and hearings. He reported that good efforts were made in addressing concerns and placing the route accordingly. The Monticello – St. Cloud project is moving forward without implementation of the MN-MRPC's full mitigation recommendations. The position is that impact within the transmission line right-of-way will be mitigated, fulfilling requirements of the permit. Earlier involvement in the process may have resulted in a different outcome. The Environmental Impact Statement is currently in development for the Hampton – La Crosse project. A meeting with the permit manager will be requested to ensure that Great River Road concerns are included. Advisor Zoff discussed efforts to gather information on Mn/DOT investments along the Great River Road in the Bluffs Region including items such as scenic easements and waysides. Other partner agencies may also be asked for this information, which can then be mapped to demonstrate specific intrinsic qualities of the byway for protection. At the recent Annual Meeting, the National MRPC Board discussed CapX 2020 implications to the Minnesota and Wisconsin Great River Road. The board approved a resolution to request additional research on the potential to two National Scenic Byways prior to any finalization of actual routes. A draft is pending.

Unpaved Section of GRR in Aitkin County: Commissioner Golfis reported on his conversation with John Welle, Aitkin County Engineer, regarding three unpaved segments of the Great River Road. These are the last unpaved sections on the entire national route. The first segment has been paved, the second is in the design phase, and the third (7 miles in length) has funding in the transportation bill but no definite plans for completion. Commissioner Golfis noted the importance of completing these projects since they are the only unpaved sections in all ten Mississippi River states.

Historic Roadside Property Ribbon Cutting Event: Chairman Johnson shared information on the ribbon cutting held at the Lake City Concourse on October 21. He attended along with Commissioners Mulry and Labovitz, and Technical Advisor Zoff. The event showcased the recently completed restoration project, along with providing an overview of all restorations occurring up and down the river. Chairman Johnson noted the tremendous job that was done on the Lake City restoration and how it will serve travelers for years to come. The event was well received by local and regional officials.

2011 National Scenic Byways Conference, Aug 21 – 24, 2011 – Minneapolis

MN-MRPC Attendance: Since the conference will be held in Minneapolis, it offers MN-MRPC members the opportunity to participate in a national level event without out-of-state travel. All members were asked to notify the MN-MRPC Office if interested in attending. The current Federal Seed Grant could be used to pay for registrations, but travel funds would need to come from the 2011-12 budget.

Nominations for National Scenic Byways Awards: Discussion took place on the possibility of application for a National Scenic Byway Award in the "historic" category as well as a 2011 FHWA National Environmental Excellence Award. The entire Minnesota Great River Road Historic Roadside Property Restoration Project could be highlighted, or certain specific sites could be featured. Consensus was to proceed with award applications for the entire statewide project.

Presentation Proposals: Presentation proposals for the National Scenic Byways Conference are due December 17. Mobile workshops featuring local sites will also be developed soon. Ideas discussed included a canoe trip on the river in conjunction with MNRRA/Urban Wilderness Canoe Area/Wilderness Inquiry; bike trip along the MRT; and bus tour down Highway 61.

Work Group Updates

Meetings or conference calls of the Organization and Marketing Work Groups are needed to address work plan items and grant projects. Work Group chairs will be contacted regarding dates.

Agency and Regional Updates

Itasca to Grand Rapids: Commissioner Frost referred the group to his written report (attached) and also mentioned activities of the Mississippi Headwaters Board, which he currently chairs. A new river book is being developed. Also in the region, work is taking place on the County Roads 33 and 39 sections of the Great River Road.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: Commissioners Schaubach and Frost invited all MN-MRPC members to a meeting on December 9 from 8:30 to 3:30 at the Northland Arboretum in Baxter. "Mississippi River Headwaters: Sharing Information on Habitat, Water Quality, Recreation, and Community Development" will involve multiple organizations and communities reaching from the Headwaters to St. Cloud area. It is designed to be a brainstorming session to identify common concerns and related initiatives. Discussion could be useful as development of a Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is considered.

Natural Resources: Technical Advisor Wheeler referred to the attached report and highlighted information related to the Whitewater Kayak Park; designation of the Upper Mississippi River floodplain wetlands as a "Wetland of International Importance;" and Mississippi River Renaissance initiative in Central Minnesota. She also distributed information on the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Program and upcoming rulemaking.

Transportation: Technical Advisor Zoff reported on progress of the historic roadside restoration project. The Camp Commander has requested a ribbon cutting to showcase the recently restored Camp Ripley Walls. Memorial Day 2011 has been set as the tentative date. The Burns Avenue Overlook project is in final stages of completion. Plans to address security concerns by locking the site overnight are being discussed with local partners. It was suggested that a neighborhood event be scheduled in spring. Work on the interpretive panel project is continuing. Final proofs of the first two signs were shared with Regional Commissioners.

Next Meeting

2011 meeting dates have not yet been determined. Dates will follow a similar pattern as 2010 meetings. More information will be forwarded as it becomes available.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Regional Updates - November 2010

Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids – Commissioner Jack Frost

It has been a busy fall with the long campaign season finally over. I am pleased to report that I was re-elected to another term as Beltrami County commissioner by a margin of 66% to 33% over my opponent. Now, back to work on a full time basis....

The Mississippi Headwaters Board has kept me, as chair, very busy. The MHB, after two stakeholder group visioning sessions, has elected to embark on a revitalization and rebranding initiative. We have engaged the services of Chip Borkenhagen, Publisher of Lake Country Journal, to facilitate this initiative. After three project review committee meetings, we have developed a new logo, commenced a new incarnation of the MHB website and plan to publish a new printing of the MHB River Book. Other projects include: a revitalized, fully accredited River Watch Program, a potential working relationship with the Nature Conservancy, and a new power point presentation for funding at the state legislature.

I attended the Heartland Tourism Association annual meeting at Bemidji's new Sanford Regional Event Center on October 21st. MRPC was mentioned in my introductory remarks. John Edman of the Minnesota Office of Tourism was the keynote speaker on "Opportunities in the New Normal - Changing Trends and Impacts to MN Tourism."

I have been asked to attend and make a short presentation on the MHB at the first meeting of the Upper Mississippi Stake Holders meeting in Baxter on December 9th. The theme is "Sharing a Mississippi River Vision."



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
1st Quarter Meeting
February 23, 2011
State Office Building, St. Paul MN**

MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Jack Frost – Itasca to Grand Rapids
Mark Anderson – At-Large Member
Charlie Poster – Agriculture Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee

Greg Hubinger – LCC
David Kelliher – Historical Society
Chris Miller - Staff

Commissioners & Advisors Absent

Rep. Branden Peterson
Sen. Sandra Pappas
Sen. David Senjem
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

Carol Zoff – Transportation
Cynthia Wheeler – Natural Resources
Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism

Others Present

Andy Golfis
Michelle Johnson, Wayne Gannaway – America's
Byways Resource Center (via phone)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 2:40 p.m. A quorum was present. New member Charlie Poster from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture was welcomed to the Commission. Rep. Branden Petersen was also announced as a new member.

Approval of Minutes from 8/26/10 and 11/18/10 Meetings

Draft minutes from 8/26/10 and 11/18/10 were distributed. Motion by Commissioner Kajer and seconded by Commissioner Mulry to approve the 8/26/10 minutes as presented. Motion passed. Motion by Commissioner Pafko and seconded by Commissioner Samp to approve the 11/18/10 minutes as presented. Motion passed.

Commission Business

Election of 2011 Officers: Chairman Johnson recommended tabling this item until the 2nd Quarter Meeting due to Commission appointments from the Senate to be completed soon. Members agreed and current officers will continue to serve until the next meeting.

Appointment of At-Large Member/Secretary: The MN-MRPC has a vacancy in the at-large position, which is to be appointed by the other 14 members. Three nominations were received. Jack Frost nominated Paul Thiede, Crow Wing County Commissioner and member of the Mississippi Headwaters Board; Frank Pafko nominated Mark Anderson, long-time Mn/DOT employee and current State Scenic Byways Coordinator; and Carol Zoff nominated Craig Churchward, who recently moved back to the area and has Scenic Byways experience including work on the Great River Road Development Study. Nominators provided information on the candidates, followed by ballot voting. Mark Anderson was appointed as the new at-large member of the Commission.

Financial Status Report: A report showing budget, year to date status, open grant amounts, and projected expenses to year end was distributed and discussed. Motion by Commissioner Frost and seconded by Commissioner Pafko to approve the report as presented. Motion passed.

Legislative Session Update: Chairman Johnson presented information on the MN-MRPC to the House State Finance Committee recently. He also noted House File 554/Senate File 346 which would extend the sunset date of the MN-MRPC for four years. Other bills are listed as separate items later in the agenda.

National MRPC Updates

MRPC Board: The Board made a one-time change and will not hold a Semi-Annual Meeting in the spring of 2011, for a variety of reasons including budget constraints in member states. A webinar will be held on April 8 at 10:00 a.m., open to all MRPC members in lieu of a spring meeting. The webinar will focus on the National MRPC work plan.

MRPC National Committees: Technical Advisor Offerman reported on a recent conference call of the Marketing Committee. The 2010 National Great River Road Geocaching Contest did not receive enough entries to award prizes, and so prizes from the states are not needed at this time. The contest criteria will be revised for 2011 and the new geocaching event/contest is scheduled to begin around June 1. Technical Advisor Zoff reported that the MRPC will be assessing whether All American Road designation should be pursued for the 10-State Great River Road; and whether application would be made by the National MRPC or the individual states. This will be discussed as part of the April 8 MRPC webinar.

State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events

Travel Updates: Commissioner Schaubach reported on the 2011 Minnesota Tourism Conference, including presentations focused on interests and activities of different generational groups and a presentation by a representative from the International Mountain Biking Association. Commissioner Frost reported on a regional tourism meeting in Bemidji, held in a refurbished industrial site along the Mississippi and providing a great example of improvements along the river.

Upcoming Events: The Commission discussed the upcoming Great River Gathering, scheduled for May 12 at the St. Paul RiverCentre. Recent practice has been to purchase two tickets for Commission members to attend. The MN-MRPC has also participated in the exhibit hall thanks to space shared by MNRRA. The following indicated interest in attending: Sheronne Mulry, Andrea Hart-Kajer and John Schaubach. Details will be emailed to them. MNRRA offered to share exhibit space again this year and Commissioner Mulry volunteered to staff on behalf of the MN-MRPC. Commissioner Schaubach noted that a second meeting of the Mississippi River group organized by the Initiative Foundation and Nature Conservancy could be coming up in late April, possibly the 21st. Members felt that the MN-MRPC should have representation at the meeting and Commissioner Samp offered to attend. The Central Minnesota Community Foundation will be holding a meeting on February 25 to finalize a list of community priorities.

Old Business

CapX2020 Updates: The route from Bemidji to Grand Rapids is proceeding and seems to have minimal impact on the Great River Road. Vegetation removal and pole installation are underway in the Monticello to St. Cloud area, with significant impact to the Great River Road. A meeting was held with MN-MRPC, Mn/DOT and CapX representatives on January 10 to discuss vegetation removal concerns. It was learned that individual landowner preferences, including those of counties, supersede the approved vegetation plan. Future meetings will be scheduled regarding the implementation of the mitigation plan for the Monticello-St. Cloud area; and the MN-MRPC requested copies of any future information related to the permit section involving the MN-MRPC. It was also suggested that for the Hampton – La Crosse route, the MN-MRPC hold its own meetings with landowners early in the process to explain National Scenic Byway status and issues. Discussion followed on the Hampton – La Crosse route and process. There is significant potential impact to the Great River Road in both Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Wisconsin MRPC is interested in meeting and working jointly with the MN-MRPC. It was suggested that a work group be designated to attend related meetings; develop a white paper; work with the WI-MRPC and develop a joint proposal on the preferred route; and meet with local communities. Sheldon Johnson, Sheronne Mulry, Carol Zoff and Chris Miller will serve on this group. Others are welcome and invited to notify the MN-MRPC office.

Mississippi River Trail (MRT): Status updates on the MRT in Minnesota were provided in the handouts, and Liz Walton of Mn/DOT has offered to present information at the next MN-MRPC meeting. Commissioner Labovitz reported that the MRT is moving ahead nationally with a common vision, there is optimism about progress, and the support of the MN-MRPC is appreciated. The MRT is a scenic byway for bicycles and pedestrians making it possible for people to get closer to the river and on trails. Technical Advisor Zoff noted the possibility of the MRT being designated as the state's first scenic bikeway. This new designation would help provide clarity for future funding opportunities. Chairman Johnson offered to follow up on any recommended language for legislation.

New Business

HF 95/SF39 – Mississippi River Critical Area Repeal: Commissioner Labovitz provided background, having served on the Advisory Board for Mississippi River Critical Area Rulemaking. House File 95 and Senate File 39 would repeal the Mississippi River Critical Area designation, including repeal of authority for the Department of Natural Resources to finish the rulemaking project that has been underway and is near completion. The 72-mile Critical Area provides the boundaries of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Issues include incremental loss of protected property over time and decreased vitality of the national park. Commission members expressed concern that much public input has been gathered through the rulemaking process and all should be fully considered through completion of the rulemaking process. Motion by Commissioner Schaubach and seconded by Commissioner Samp authorizing the MN-MRPC to write letters in opposition of HF 95/SF 39 and requesting that the DNR be given authority to complete the rulemaking process that was underway. Motion passed.

Action Request: FY '11 Federal Scenic Byways, Historic Preservation, Trails and

Bike/Pedestrian Funding: Details on Great River Road related federal funding and program reductions were included in the handout packets. Discussion followed on importance of the federal programs and funding sources to the Great River Road, its partners and local communities. Although eligibility to apply for funds would still likely exist if levels are reduced and/or programs combined, opportunities would be reduced. Members discussed the importance of these tools to the commission and local communities and advised that a letter be sent to Minnesota's congressional delegation, outlining the benefits of the programs and requesting support. Personal contacts from individual members of the commission can also be made using content of the letter as background, with additional local detail. It was also advised that the MN-MRPC letter be shared with the National MRPC. Draft letters will be developed and sent to members for revision/approval via email.

2011 National Scenic Byways Conference, Aug 21 – 24, 2011 – Minneapolis

Chairman Johnson welcomed Michelle Johnson and Wayne Gannaway of America's Byways Resource Center, joining the meeting by phone. They are pleased that the conference will be held in Minneapolis. There are several means for local scenic byways such as the Great River Road to be involved in the event and showcase the local area: pre-conference tours, field workshops, and byway sponsorships. Several field workshops will involve the Great River Road including a tour of historic waysides, Fort Snelling, the Oliver H. Kelley Farm, and a Great River Road experience by bike and other modes of transportation. MN-MRPC members look forward to attending the conference and suggested providing a byway sponsorship. Commissioners Mulry and Samp offered to help staff the booth. Additional requests for volunteer time at the event or donations from throughout the state will be communicated by the State Scenic Byways Office as the conference date approaches.

Work Group Updates

Marketing: Commissioner Mulry reported on the February 14 conference call, with information also provided by Commissioner Labovitz and Technical Advisor Offerman. The group discussed and made recommendations for a re-print of the MN Great River Road Map/Travel Planner; developed initial parameters for the destination area video project; and discussed an opportunity/made a recommendation to place a Great River Road ad in the new Minnesota Biking Guide. Suggestions were made for future agendas of the work group – social media, mobile applications, and consider partnering with communities/offering a workshop on roadside marketing.

Organization: Commissioner Samp noted that a meeting will be held soon.

Agency and Regional Updates

Itasca to Grand Rapids: Commissioner Frost noted Mississippi Headwaters Board initiatives and an upcoming meeting with Governor Dayton, a county partnership with the Soil and Water Conservation District, and area events including geocaching and the Bemidji Dragon Boat Festival. Further detail is included in the written report following the minutes.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: Commissioner Schaubach reported on a December 9 meeting sponsored by the Initiative Foundation and the Trust for Public Land, which brought together many Mississippi River partners from Lake Itasca to St. Cloud. This provides a good opportunity for partnership on initiatives including a possible update of the Great River Road Corridor Management Plan. Commissioner Schaubach

suggested that the group could facilitate identification of intrinsic qualities and then align efforts as well as partner on initiatives. Further detail is included in the written report following the minutes.

Brainerd to Elk River: Commissioner Samp reported that groups in Brainerd and St. Cloud continue to meet regularly regarding river related plans and topics. The Brainerd group meets quarterly and would like to participate in any processes related to updating the Great River Road Corridor Management Plan. One of the projects under consideration is a white water rafting park.

Elk River to Hastings: Commissioner Labovitz reported that the National Park Service has participated on the Coon Rapids Dam Commission, with results to be shared with the legislature soon. The Urban Wilderness Canoe Area was featured in the Presidents Great American Outdoors report. A Great River Canoe Race is being planned which will involve local companies and organizations. St. Paul is currently working on a master plan for the Great River Park. Minneapolis recently selected a firm to develop an area of riverfront, demonstrating a re-focusing on the Mississippi.

Hastings to Iowa Border: Commissioner Mulry discussed concerns in her region over potential for significant spring flooding, which some projections indicate could rival 1965 levels.

Explore Minnesota Tourism: Cheryl Offerman reported that Don Frerichs will be resigning his position on the MN-MRPC after many years of service, and EMT is in the process of considering potential candidates to fill the appointment.

Natural Resources: Cynthia Wheeler provided updates on Mississippi River Critical Area Rulemaking; status of the white water park in Minneapolis; central Minnesota river initiatives; and an award recently won by the Friendship Tour Project which connected people from various areas of the river. Further detail is provided in the written report following the minutes.

Transportation: Commissioner Pafko listed several current bridge projects, including Lafayette and Lowry bridges now under construction; and Dresbach, Winona and Red Wing bridges in planning stages. Carol Zoff is active on the bridge projects related to visual quality, vegetation and wall design. She requested input from Commission members on wall design and material/design preferences. Information including photos or diagrams will be sent to the MN-MRPC office for distribution to members and gathering of comment.

Historical Society: David Kelliher reported that the Minnesota Historical Society has completed its Legacy Funds report to the legislature. Information is available at www.mnhs.org/legacy. The grants program provided 474 grants, covering all 87 counties. An example is the "Paul & Babe Geocaching" organized by the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway. A series of Legacy Weekends will be coming up to highlight programs in communities across the state.

Recognition of Distinguished Service to the Commission – Andy Golfis

Chairman Johnson and Technical Advisor Zoff provided commentary about the contributions of Andy Golfis. Commission members shared their thoughts and thanks as well. Commissioner Golfis served for many years and in many capacities including State MRPC Chair and National MRPC Pilot. His dedication and perseverance will be greatly missed.

Next Meeting

Thursday, May 26, 2011

2:30 – 5:00 p.m.

State Office Building Room 500 North

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Agency & Regional Updates February 2011

Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids – Commissioner Jack Frost

This regional commissioner has been quite busy with the Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) re-branding initiative. We have the latest draft of our Mississippi Headwaters Guidebook in draft form which I will bring to the meeting on 2/23. Chip Borkenhagen of Lake Country Journal created a video presentation for the Senate Environmental Committee hearing which will occur on Thursday as well as a meeting with Governor Dayton. The web site is being updated and plans to introduce a number of new initiatives and alliances planned subject to obtaining continuing funding from the legislature. We remain optimistic on that issue.

Beltrami County has completed a very promising partnership with the Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District. The SWCD retains its governance board and staff are domiciled at the county administrative building in Bemidji. This will save \$275,000 per year and produce a proactive environmental service team to better serve Beltrami County.

Make sure to check out the geo-caching opportunities on the Mississippi headwaters area and great events like the Dragon Boat Festival on Lake Bemidji this summer.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd – Commissioner John Schaubach

On December 9 I [along with Chris Miller and Jack Frost] attended a conference at the Northland Arboretum in Baxter, Minnesota, "Mississippi River Habitat: Sharing Information on Habitat, Water Quality, Recreation and Community Development". This conference was sponsored by the Minnesota Initiative Foundation and the Trust for Public Land. The purpose of the conference was to gather presentations from a range of stakeholders and advocates of the Mississippi River Headwaters region for shared knowledge and identification of common ground for mutual support. I found the program enlightening and encouraging. I appreciated Commissioner Frost's presentation on the role of the Mississippi Headwaters Board. I was able to share information on some river related community development efforts from my area. I was especially encouraged by the presentations from representatives of St. Cloud and Brainerd about their efforts to transform their communities as Mississippi River towns. We also were able to share information about the MRT and the potential for a Mississippi Corridor Management Plan update. There was such good information sharing that now there is talk now of repeating this conference with additional stakeholders who were not present at this time.

On January 25-26 I represented the MN-MRPC at the Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference in Nisswa. There were much information and reports of about tourism opportunities that are consistent with the mission of the MRPC. Presentations of note in this regard covered topics about changing generational interests for tourism, the new and emerging international travel market potential, bicycle tourism with note of the significance of the MRT, the measured economic impact of national byway status, and the importance of mobile marketing [cell phone application tools] as examples. It was to me additional evidence that there is more and more potential to continue to elevate the Mississippi to its rightful iconic status within the mainstream of our state's tourism marketing. There was also a presentation at the conference by a representative from the International Mountain Biking Association about the new mountain bike course in the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area which our commission toured this past summer. IMBA will be joining the DNR and others in a grand opening ceremony in Crosby on June 10. It was good to see the interest in this development by other attendees of the tourism conference.

Todd Holman of the Nature Conservancy informs me he continues to work on acquiring the Mississippi shore lands that he discussed with the Commission at our meeting last summer. He appreciates the interest and support of the MN-MRPC in this effort. And he will keep me apprised of developments that might be in the interests of the commission so that I can share them with you.

Department of Natural Resources – Cynthia Wheeler, Technical Advisor

Mississippi River Critical Area (MRCCA) Rule Making

DNR ran out of time to adequately evaluate the public input and missed the rule making deadline. The fate of the MRCCA rule making is now in the hands of the Legislature. The Legislature can extend rulemaking authority if an agency missed the statutory deadlines in Chapter 14; however, a bill has been introduced to make sure that doesn't happen for the MCRRA. SF0039/HF0095 repeals the MRCCA rulemaking. As of February 15, 2011, the bill had made it to the Senate floor, but had not yet gone through the House. Even if the bill does not pass, the rulemaking cannot move forward unless the Legislature acts to extend DNR's authority. A lot is up in the air right now however work is continuing on the draft rules and SONAR, both of which are near completion.

Mississippi Whitewater Park Project

The Corps of Engineers contractor has been working on the development of a third design alternative for the Mississippi Whitewater Park - one that starts the whitewater park further upstream and provides greater visibility of the whitewater course from the Stone Arch bridge. We don't anticipate seeing any designs until the end of March. A presentation of the draft report to the Design Coordination Team (key stakeholders) is planned for early May.

Mississippi River – Update from DNR's Sauk Rapids office

Brainerd is continuing to move forward with a Chamber of Commerce led initiative to refocus on the Mississippi River. They are continuing to pull together plans.

The Central Minnesota Community Foundation in St. Cloud is continuing a discussion about refocusing St. Cloud on the river. This effort ties in with all the river planning initiatives that are happening in the St. Cloud area, along with the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan – a draft which should be revealed within the next couple of weeks.

The Central Minnesota Community Foundation also gathered about 40 local community leaders and visited the city of Dubuque, Iowa earlier this year. They are continuing to have conversations about how to make St. Cloud a more river centric city – more along the lines of Dubuque, or at least borrowing some themes from Dubuque.

There is a Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council proposal to purchase land around the Little Nokasippi Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for public outdoor recreation, and to protect the viability of the WMA, which is adjacent to the Mississippi River near Camp Ripley.

Friendship Tour Project Wins Statewide Collaboration Contest

Check out <http://www.curemnriver.org> for a story on the "Friendship Tour Project" that won a collaboration award by bringing "up streamers" (farmers along the Minnesota River) together with "down streamers" (Lake Pepin area residents) to get a grassroots understanding of each other's issues. Pretty cool, if you ask me.



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
2nd Quarter Meeting
May 26, 2011
State Office Building, St. Paul MN**

MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Mark Anderson – At-Large Member
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Adam Johnson – Tourism Appointee

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

Carol Zoff – Transportation
Cynthia Wheeler – Natural Resources
Greg Hubinger – LCC
David Kelliher – Historical Society
Chris Miller - Staff

Commissioners & Advisors Absent

Rep. Branden Peterson
Sen. Sandra Pappas
Sen. David Senjem
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
Charlie Poster – Agriculture Appointee
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee
Jack Frost – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Cheryl Offerman - Tourism

Others Present

Dan Collins, Liz Walton - Transportation
Don Frerichs

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 2:45 p.m. A quorum was not present. Members reviewed the proposed agenda and minutes from February 23, and the Chair proceeded through the agenda for information and discussion. Adam Johnson of Visit Saint Paul was welcomed as a new appointee, representing Explore Minnesota Tourism. Mr. Johnson shared information on his background including his current role as Vice President for Marketing at Visit Saint Paul, and previous work with the St. Paul Riverfront Corporation.

Commission Business

Financial Status Report: A report showing budget, year to date status, open grant amounts, and projected expenses to year end was distributed and discussed. Potential for a state government shutdown on July 1 and its effect on the MN-MRPC was mentioned. Details would not be available until closer to the July 1 date.

Legislative Session Update: Chairman Johnson reported on several bills.

HF 95/SF 39 – Mississippi River Critical Area Repeal – incorporated into Environment, Energy and Finance Bill, passed by Conference Committee, vetoed by Governor.

HF 554/SF 346 – MN-MRPC Sunset Extension from 2012 to 2016 – passed by Senate, included in State Government Finance Bill, vetoed by Governor.

HF 1367/SF 1077 – Mississippi River Trail – State Bikeway Designation – included in Omnibus Transportation Bill, passed both the House and Senate.

HF 528/SF 290 – Funds for Camp Ripley Veterans' Trail - Referred to Legacy Funding Division and not included in final bill.

HF 612/SF 418 – Appropriate for the Mississippi Headwaters Board – not passed in House or Senate.

National MRPC Updates

Spring Webinar: Technical Advisor Zoff reported on the webinar, which was offered in lieu of the Semi-Annual Meeting this year. The first portion of the webinar was much like a board conference call with various updates and reports. There was also a keynote speaker. Topic was a recent project undertaken by the Iowa Department of Transportation, utilizing GPS technology to identify resources and amenities along scenic byways. The project turned out well and can serve as a model for others. Overall feedback on the webinar indicated that it is a good option for sharing of information but was not recommended as a long-term substitute for the Semi-Annual Meeting.

MRPC Board: The May MRPC National Board conference call included discussion on the Spring Webinar; changes to eligibility for the Stewardship Award to include organizations as well as individuals as potential recipients; agri-tourism information due from each state by September 1 to fulfill a National Scenic Byway Grant project (10-state agri-tourism database); discussion on Iowa's 2010 National Scenic Byways Grant to develop an updated Corridor Management Plan; and discussion on various transmission line project crossing the Great River Road.

Old Business - Updates

Mississippi River Bicycle Trail (MRT): Dan Collins and Liz Walton of the Minnesota Department of Transportation provided a status report on the MRT in Minnesota. A summary is provided below. Copies of the new 2011 Minnesota Biking Guide were distributed. An overview of the concept for the US Bike Route System was provided and a map circulated. The MRT would be Minnesota's first route to be included in this national system. Many communities passed resolutions in 2010 in general support of the MRT. Continuing partnership between the MN-MRPC and MRT are important for success. Areas include route selection, marketing, and participation on board/cooperative management structure. The MRT is a partner in the MN-MRPC's 2011 National Scenic Byway Grant application. Funds would be used for statewide signage, and visitor information including a series of community kiosks.

2010 MRT Accomplishments

- Review and refine the route based on collaborative statewide meetings;
- Conduct evaluation rides to confirm route decisions made in the meetings;
- Introduce the concept of bicycle-friendly communities along the route;
- Post a GIS-interactive map and printable maps on Mn/DOT's website available for the 2011 bicycling season;
- Develop a draft marketing toolbox to enhance marketing efforts and promote the MRT.
- MRT website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>

2011 MRT Next Steps

- Seek Legislative authorization as Minnesota's first designated State Scenic Bikeway.
- Convene additional statewide meetings to improve the alignment and coordinate activities and expectations amongst MRT's road and trail authorities. Concentrate on: segments previously identified as needing additional review; the National Park Service's Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) in the Twin Cities; and on developing recommended design guidance for off-road segments;
- Signing plan for road and off-road segments not located on state highways;
- Implement marketing and outreach. Encourage marketing partnerships within the public and private sectors and facilitate local marketing action plans and bicycle-friendliness recommendations for select communities;
- Develop and implement cooperative MRT management by road and trail authorities.

CapX 2020: The MN-MRPC provided comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statements for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse route in late April. Public hearings have been scheduled for June 14 – 16 in Plainview, Pine Island and Cannon Falls. Written comments will be accepted by the Administrative Law Judge through June 30.

2010 National Scenic Byway Grants: Congratulations to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area on receiving a 2010 National Scenic Byways Grant. The MN-MRPC is a partner on this project and commission members will be asked to help with the process of identifying visual resources to be protected. The process developed through this project can be modified and expanded to all destination areas of the Great River Road.

New Business

2011 National Scenic Byway Grants: The solicitation for 2011 grant applications was released on May 6 with a state deadline of May 26. The MN-MRPC has been working in partnership with the National Park Service/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area; Mn/DOT and the MRT; and the Trust for Public Land to develop an application for Corridor Management Planning and Implementation. The Corridor Management Planning would be a comprehensive process for the full 575-mile route, to guide the work of the MN-MRPC and partners over the next 10 – 15 years. The implementation piece would involve signage and visitor information for the MRT. The application was finalized and submitted on May

26. The National Park Service is providing the required 20% match for the project. Funding awards should be announced in 3 – 12 months.

Regional Citizen Committee Meetings and Commissioner Elections: Regional citizen committee meetings were last held in 2007 and due to be held again in 2011. Election of Regional Commissioners will take place. The Organization Work Group developed a tentative agenda and plan for the meetings including Great River Road updates and discussion on regional topics. The Hastings to Iowa Border Regional Meeting has been scheduled for June 2 at the Winona County History Center, and will serve as a pilot for the other meetings. Each Regional Commissioner will be asked to identify agenda topics specific to that region as well as names/lists to receive the meeting invitations.

All member appointments will need to be confirmed unless recently completed. Letters will be sent to agency Commissioners/Directors to request appointments. House appointments have been completed, with Senate appointments pending.

2011 National Scenic Byways Conference

Confirm MN-MRPC Attendees: The 2011 National Scenic Byways Conference will be held at the Marriott City Center in Minneapolis, August 21 – 24. This provides a unique opportunity to participate in a national conference and learn from other byways. Registration forms were distributed, which include a link to the full conference information at www.bywaysresourcecenter.org. Several MN-MRPC members have indicated interest and were asked to confirm with the MN-MRPC office so that Chair approval, planning and budgeting can take place.

Great River Road Field Workshops: Field workshops to be offered at the NSB Conference include a tour of Historic Roadside Properties; agricultural interpretation; and biking/multi-modal transportation through the MNRRA Corridor. A total of 11 different Mississippi River related workshops and presentations will be included in the conference.

Work Group Updates

Organization: A meeting was held on March 30. Notes were distributed. Main topics included regional citizen committee meetings, possible GIS workshops, Dresbach Bridge design, and Great River Road Corridor Management Planning.

Marketing: Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planners have been revised, printed and distributed to the database of sites along the Great River Road.

State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events

Commissioner Schaubach reported on his attendance at the St. Paul Great River Gathering, and thanked the National Park Service for sharing exhibit space with the MN-MRPC again this year. Adam Johnson provided background on the history of the event.

Agency and Regional Updates

Brainerd to Elk River: Commissioner Samp has contacted the AmericInn regarding renewing the partnership discussions began with the MN-MRPC several years ago. Advice was to contact again in six months after internal restructuring has been completed. Inquiries have been received about the possibility of reprinting the regional map tablet to be used as placemats in restaurants. The Brainerd Area Environmental Learning Network (BAELN) included presentations on Brainerd and St. Cloud Mississippi River planning initiatives at a recent meeting. An open house was held at the St. Cloud Civic Center to roll out their Mississippi River Urban Corridor Plan. Trails and river amenities have been identified as priorities. The Brainerd Rotary is in process of purchasing 30 acres of land along the Mississippi, adjacent to Kiwanis Park. Brainerd has also recently reviewed the Great River Road route due to expansion of College Drive including a roundabout. MN Master Naturalists were mentioned as a resource for projects. The candidates must do volunteer work and are looking for projects. Go to www.mnmasternaturalist.org.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: Commissioner Schaubach distributed materials and reported on upcoming events related to the Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Biking Trail. A Mountain Bike Festival, including trail ribbon cutting and races, will be held June 10 – 12. 30 miles of mountain bike trails will be a part of the MRT. A meeting will be held on June 16 at the Initiative Foundation in Little Falls as a follow up to the

Mississippi Headwaters meeting in December 2010. Organizations from the Headwaters to St. Cloud area have begun working together to share information, as well as align plans and initiatives.

Elk River to Hastings: Representative Johnson has been participating in St. Paul Lower Town strategic planning, to build connections to the river from Lower Town. He has also been working with buckthorn removal.

Natural Resources: Technical Advisor Wheeler referred to the written update provided. A preferred alignment has been identified for the proposed new Mississippi Whitewater Park. There was discussion on the Mississippi River Critical Area Rulemaking. The DNR stands ready to continue the work if authorized.

Transportation: Technical Advisor Zoff provided an update on bridge projects currently underway including Lafayette Bridge (under construction); 494/Cottage Grove (near completion); Hastings (underway); Red Wing (early planning); Winona (preliminary design); Dresbach/I-90 (final design). The 2011 Tour de Pepin bike ride will be on June 4 and Mn/DOT is assisting with route preparation/detour signage. The Sibley Pioneer Church Memorial restoration is beginning and should be completed this year. The "Complete Streets" program is geared toward transportation facilities serving a greater purpose of livability and accessibility.

Recognition of Distinguished Service to the Commission – Don Frerichs

Chairman Johnson provided commentary about the contributions of Don Frerichs, who has served both the MN-MRPC and 10-State MRPC in many roles over many years. Commission members shared their thoughts and thanks as well. Mr. Frerichs shared his thoughts, recommendations and parting comments with the group.

Next Meeting

Thursday, August 18, 2011

2:30 – 5:00 p.m.

State Office Building Room 500 North

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Agency & Regional Updates May 2011

Department of Natural Resources – Cynthia Wheeler, Technical Advisor

Mississippi River Critical Area (MRCCA) Rule Making

Language repealing the rule making for the Critical Area is winding its way through the legislature. Even if the repeal bill does not pass, the rule making cannot move forward unless the Legislature acts to extend DNR's authority.

The draft rules are at the Revisor of Statutes office. DNR staff are working on finishing the Statement of Needs and Reasonableness (SONAR), and getting everything in order so it is ready to move forward if the legislation is extended. If the legislation is not extended, the work will be available if it is picked up some time in the future

Mississippi Whitewater Park Project

The Mississippi Whitewater Park Project is a proposal for a whitewater park on/adjacent to the Mississippi River just down river from the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis. The Corps of Engineers (COE) is the federal project sponsor. The State of Minnesota (DNR) is the state (local) project sponsor.

The project consultants for the COE recently presented three design alternative alignments to key stakeholders and other interested organizations. There was consensus on a preferred alignment. Legislation is proposed to extend DNR's project funding until June 30, 2012. During this time the federal and local sponsors will need to make a determination about their respective interests in proceeding with further design of the preferred alignment, and working on the next steps.

Mississippi River – St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan

DNR staff have been actively involved in planning efforts, along with the cities of St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and local citizens "to create a regional one-of-a-kind urban river plan that will restore the natural habitat and ecology of the river, create economic vitality, and provide better connections to the Mississippi River that runs through these communities."

A community celebration is being held (May 25th) in St. Cloud to celebrate how the ideas of residents came together to create this plan.