



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2019-20 Annual Report (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020)

56 33rd Avenue S, #283, St. Cloud, MN, 56301 • 651-341-4196 • www.MnMississippiRiver.com

Mission

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

Commission Meetings

The MN-MRPC held regular quarterly meetings on August 15, 2019; November 21, 2019; and February 6, 2020. The meeting scheduled for June 4 was cancelled due to meeting restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Executive Committee met on July 30, 2019 and February 10, 2020. Meeting materials are available at <https://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/mrpc.html>. The Commission continues to focus on implementation of the MN Great River Road Corridor Management Plan (CMP) and the ten state MRPC Corridor Management Plan.

Projects & Activities

MN Great River Road Website: The Minnesota Great River Road website was completely redesigned, and the new site was launched in February of 2020. Priorities included a more visual approach, mobile device friendliness and a focus on Plan Your Trip online mapping and travel guides. The project team of Megan Christianson, Lisa Havelka, Carol Zoff, Diane Henry-Wangensteen and Chris Miller managed the project on behalf of the Commission.

MN Great River Road Print Map: A new map was designed by MnDOT with significant input from MN-MRPC members, Great River Road Interpretive Centers, and marketing partners. The new design features a drivable map of the full route, Interpretive Center information and community detail maps. 80,000 maps were printed and will be distributed as partner sites are able to receive and distribute, through approximately mid 2021 dependent on demand. Maps are also sent out individually as ordered from the website and are available for meetings and events.

Plan Your Trip Interactive Mapping: The online interactive resource mapping, managed by MnDOT, continues to be available to the public via www.mnmississippiriver.com. Updates to resource listings are made on a regular basis. "How-to" videos are in development to assist the public in accessing features of the mapping and resource listings.

Plan Your Project Interactive Mapping: Final development of this online resource continues at MnDOT including creation of training materials to facilitate use by road management authorities, attraction managers and communities along the route as they proceed with construction or maintenance projects impacting the byway or its resources.

Ambassador Development: The objective of the Ambassador Program is to provide resources, materials and training for MN-MRPC member facility managers, local road and attraction managers, and local businesses and residents to improve corridor management, better serve tourists and encourage economic development. The plan that was in place to launch the program in early summer of 2020 with a series of in-person workshops was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and the full two year launch plan will be restructured to a virtual approach with options to transition to in-person workshops and visits if and when appropriate. The Ambassador Development process will also gather information to update and maintain the 700+ resources on the Play Your Trip online interactive mapping.

Regional Meetings/Elections: Three regional meetings and elections were held per MN Statute 161.1419 for Commission members to represent specific regions of the Great River Road. The Headwaters/Northwoods Meeting was held on August 5, 2019 hosted by the Beltrami County Historical Society; Scenic Region Meeting was held on November 6 hosted by the Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce; and Crossings Region Meeting was held on November 7 hosted by Visit Grand Rapids. Agendas included state and national Great River Road updates, gathering of feedback from regions and elections. Sally Fineday, Karl Samp and Megan Christianson were elected to two-year terms representing their respective regions.

All-American Road Nomination: All-American Road is the highest level of byway designation given by the Federal Highway Administration for byways that are destinations unto themselves. A one-time solicitation for new nominations was opened after being closed for several years. The National MRPC Board of Directors endorsed the process, encouraged all ten states to proceed with the nomination process and provided coordination and support through the MRPC Transportation Committee. The MN-MRPC endorsed moving forward, a project team was designated, and work began in February 2020. The comprehensive nomination was submitted in May 2020. The nomination included details about all aspects of the byway and highlighted eight scenic and eight historic features of the MN Great River Road. Many individuals, agencies and groups were involved in the process including the project team of John Anfinson, David Kelliher, Carol Zoff and Chris Miller; development of the GIS maps by Suzy Scotty of MnDOT; overall guidance, suggestions and feedback from the full MN-MRPC; photographs provided by Explore Minnesota, DNR, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Mississippi Headwaters Board; letters of support from MN-MRPC member agencies and members identified to represent certain constituencies; letters of support from other partners and agencies; Holly Slagle of the MN Scenic Byways Office; and the National MRPC Transportation Committee.

MRCTI Collaboration: MN-MRPC members partnered with the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative as they and the MRPC planned for September 2020 Annual Meetings in Bemidji which were subsequently postponed to future dates.

National MRPC: MN-MRPC members and advisors participated on MRPC Standing Committees, served in leadership roles, and carried out projects at the state level. Anne Lewis serves as Pilot Pro Tem of the National MRPC; Karl Samp is Pilot Emeritus; John Anfinson was named Co-Chair of the Culture and Heritage Committee. Thanks were expressed to Carol Zoff as she transitioned out of her long-time role as Transportation Committee Co-Chair. Four MN-MRPC members attended the Annual Meeting in La Crosse.

Drive the Great River Road Month: The MN-MRPC promoted the National Drive the Great River Road Month sweepstakes and also promoted travel along the MN Great River Road featuring Minnesota State Parks along the route via a new online story map/travel guide developed by Suzy Scotty, MnDOT, for the occasion. The travel guide is available at www.mnmississippiriver.com under "Photos & Videos." Anne Lewis served as the Minnesota lead for the promotion.

Funding/Great River Road Investments and Support

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

State Operating Budget

The MN-MRPC operated with state funding at levels allowing the Commission to continue its basic work and also implement Corridor Management Plan priorities. The operating budget for FY '20 was \$78,000. \$82,000 in special project funds were also approved for Corridor Management Plan implementation projects in FY '20 and '21 focused on a new website, new print map, and Ambassador Development program launch.

MnDOT

MnDOT provided special project staffing in the form of a SEEDS student worker for ongoing work on the Plan Your Trip and Plan Your Project Interactive Mapping Tools, development of story maps, and the new print map.

Minnesota Transportation Alternatives Program

Local Great River Road communities sought funds for projects through the Minnesota Transportation Alternatives Program. MnDOT provided information on project intent, MN-MRPC conducted outreach to local applicants, reviewed project information, approved and provided letters for five project applications along the Great River Road. The requests, totaling over \$2 million, were trail projects that would improve the byway experience for visitors and residents and help implement the MN Great River Road Corridor Management Plan.

Minnesota Scenic Byways Program

The annual MN Scenic Byways Workshop was held October 15 – 16, 2019, hosted by the Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.

Examples of Local, Regional and Partner Activities or Issues

Brooklyn Park River Park Redevelopment: An update was provided to the MN-MRPC in February 2020 in follow up to the Commission's letter of support in 2019. Four of six grants pursued for the project have been awarded. Work on the project was scheduled to begin in spring of 2020 with a grand opening in summer of 2021. Key design areas include a river overlook, fishing platforms, river edge trail, canoe/kayak launch, and new park building.

Grand Rapids Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge: A new bridge over the Mississippi River was celebrated with a local ribbon cutting event. Art and historic markers were also installed in the area.

Great River Road Interpretive Center Nominations: Interest was expressed in Grand Rapids and Aitkin County and groups are working toward nomination of sites for National Great River Road Interpretive Center status which if approved would highlight these attractions at a ten-state level. MN-MRPC members provided details on the process and feedback on preliminary local plans.

Mississippi Gorge Regional Mark Master Plan: The plan was reviewed, and feedback was provided on the need to address maintenance of Great River Road signage.

Mississippi Headwaters Board: The Mississippi Headwaters Board held their Biennial Conference on November 1, 2019 in Walker, MN. The MN-MRPC participated in this event and appreciates ongoing communication with the organization.

Mississippi River Learning Center Project: A presentation was made to the MN-MRPC in November 2019. The vision is to create a river learning center on land owned by the City of St. Paul, which would also house a new headquarters and visitor center for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. The visitor center would provide increased capacity for experiences and telling the story of the full Mississippi River.

Shore Excursions Tours: MN-MRPC members served as step-on guides for Shore Excursions group tours of American Queen passengers to the Mississippi River headwaters at Itasca State Park.

St. Cloud Riverwalk Project: The City of St. Cloud continues with plans for a one mile stretch of riverfront from downtown north to the St. Cloud Hospital area and providing a connection to the Lake Wobegon Trail. An update presentation was provided to the MN-MRPC in November 2019.

USACE Minneapolis Upper Lock Disposition Study: The MN-MRPC authorized a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers urging consideration of National Scenic Byway intrinsic resources and historic district impacts when evaluating alternatives for future uses of the Upper Lock.

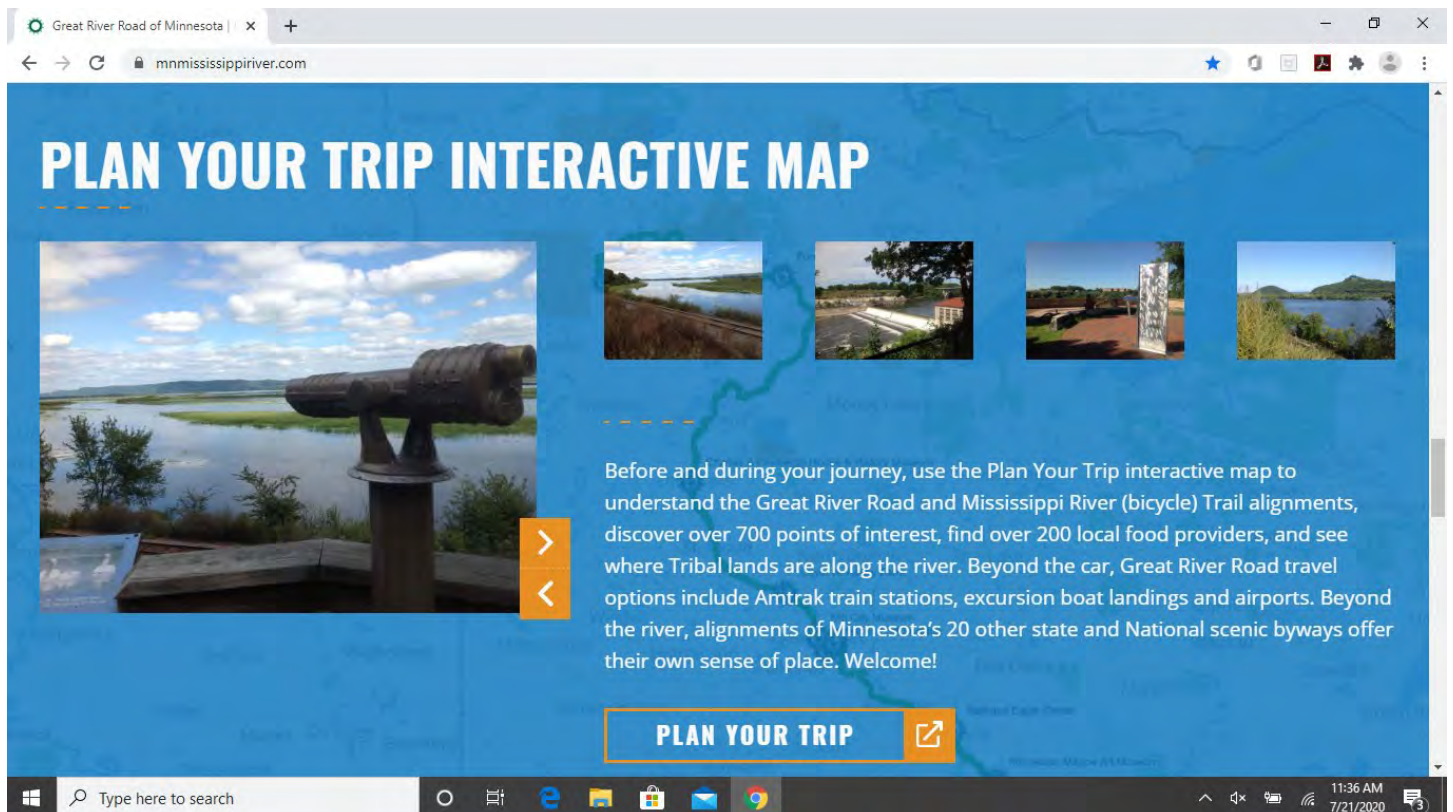
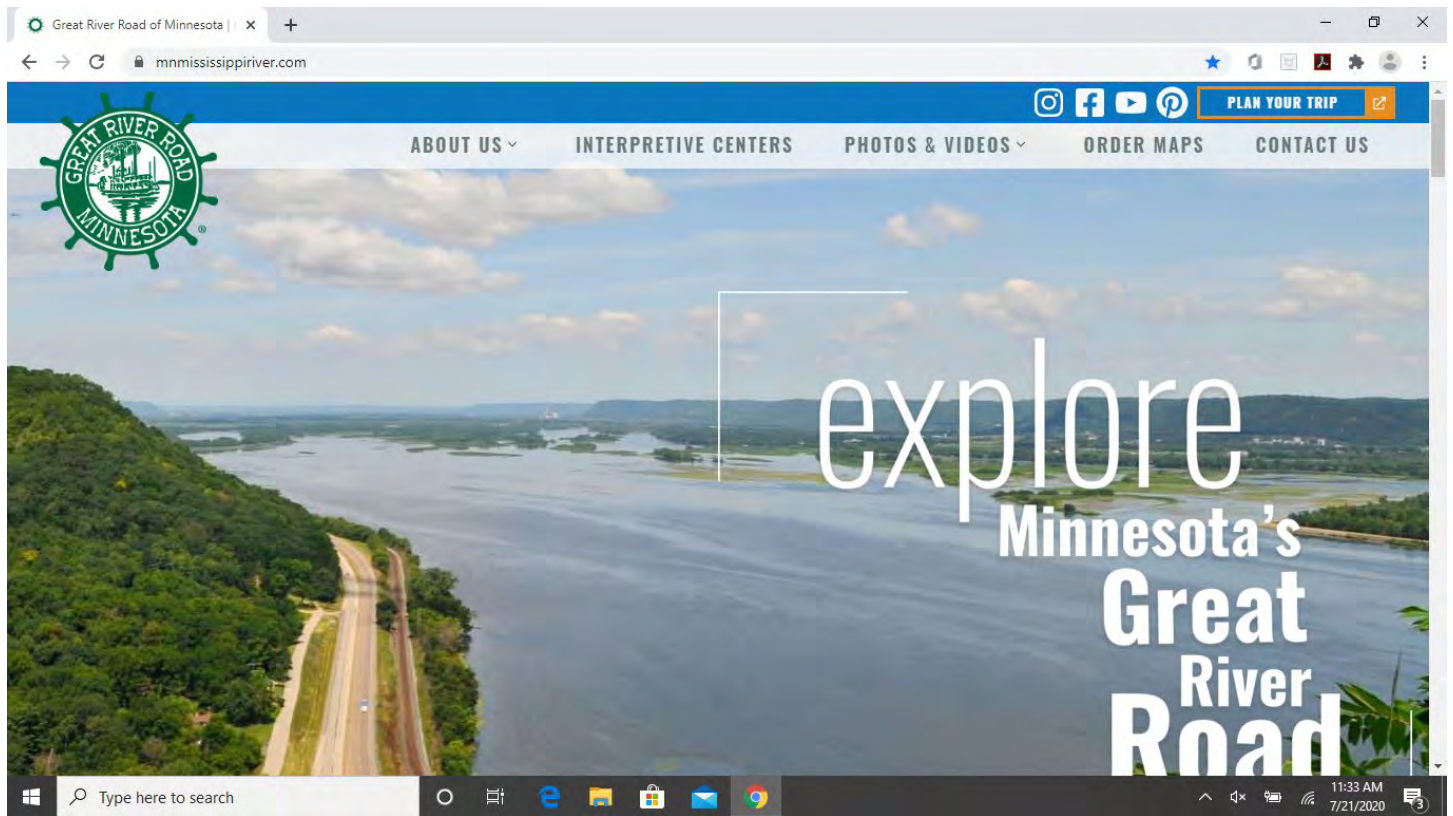
Membership

The MN-MRPC is organized by state statute to include: (2) Members of the House of Representatives; (2) Members of the Senate; (5) Members of State Agencies - (1) appointed by each: DNR, MnDOT, Historical Society, Agriculture & Tourism; (5) Regional Members – (1) from each of the Great River Road regions established in statute; (1) Member-At-Large – appointed by the other 14. Welcome to Sally Fineday, new member elected to represent the Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids region and Grant Wilson, new member appointed to represent the Department of Natural Resources. Congratulations to David Kelliher, who moved from technical advisor to appointee representing the Minnesota Historical Society. Thank you to departing members Nancy Salminen and Keith Parker for their service to the Commission.

This report is respectfully submitted on July 28, 2020

Sen. David Senjem, MN-MRPC Chair

Partial views of MN Great River Road website homepage 2020





Explore Minnesota's Great River Road

National Scenic Byway of the Mississippi River

MnMississippiRiver.com



Green and white pilot's wheel signs mark the route

| Byway miles between Interpretive Centers | 0-10 | 10-20 | 20-30 | 30-40 | 40-50 | 50-60 | 60-70 | 70-80 | 80-90 | 90-100 |
|---|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Forest History Center | 0 | | | | | | | | | |
| Charles Lindbergh House & Museum | 291 | 151 | 0 | | | | | | | |
| Oliver Kelley Farm | 371 | 231 | 80 | 0 | | | | | | |
| Mill City Museum | 407 | 267 | 116 | 36 | 0 | | | | | |
| Historic Fort Snelling | 417 | 277 | 126 | 46 | 30 | 0 | | | | |
| Science Museum of Minnesota | 427 | 287 | 136 | 56 | 20 | 10 | 0 | | | |
| Mississippi National River & Recreation Area Visitor Center | 427 | 287 | 136 | 56 | 20 | 10 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Minnesota History Center | 428 | 288 | 137 | 57 | 21 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| National Eagle Center | 528 | 388 | 237 | 157 | 121 | 113 | 101 | 101 | 100 | 0 |
| Minnesota Marine Art Museum | 540 | 420 | 340 | 304 | 294 | 143 | 133 | 133 | 132 | 32 |
| Winona County History Center | 561 | 421 | 341 | 305 | 295 | 144 | 134 | 134 | 133 | 33 |

Legend

- Interpretive Center
- Information Center/Rest Area
- Native American Culture
- Get On the Water
- Arts and Culture
- History
- Other Gems
- Scenic Overlook
- Park, Forest or Wildlife Area
- Excursion Boat Landing
- Great River Road
- Other Minnesota Byways
- Find alternative fuel stations at <https://afdc.energy.gov/stations/#find/nearest>
- Lake
- Major Rivers
- Interstate
- US Trunk Highway
- Minnesota Trunk Highway
- Metro Area
- State Boundary
- County Boundary
- Initial Land
- Military Boundary
- State Park
- State Forest
- Wildlife Management Area
- National Park
- National Forest
- National Wildlife Refuge

Plan your Great River Road Trip!

Want to learn more about Mississippi River exploration? Visit MnMississippiRiver.com to explore an online **Great River Road Plan Your Trip Interactive Map**. We couldn't fit them all on this map, but the website allows you to discover over 700 points of interest, find over 200 locally grown food providers, and see where tribal communities are along the river. Other Great River Road travel options include Amtrak train stations, excursion boat landings, airports and the Mississippi River (Bicycle) Trail. Beyond the river, Minnesota's 21 other state and national scenic byways offer even more travel opportunities.

MnMississippiRiver.com also offers **Mississippi River online travel guides** that highlight six unique regions of Minnesota's Great River Road and special interests, with an enriched sampling of in-depth stories and river experiences, attraction hot links, 360 views, video, tour maps and more.

2. Forest History Center

2609 Co Rd 16
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
<http://www.mnhs.org/foresthistor>



Photo credit: MNHS

3. Charles Lindbergh House & Museum

1620 Lindbergh Dr S
Little Falls, MN 56345
<http://www.mnhs.org/lindbergh>



Photo credit: MNHS

4. Oliver Kelley Farm

15788 Kelley Farm Rd NW
Elk River, MN 55330
<http://www.mnhs.org/kelleyfarm>



Photo credit: MNHS

5. Mill City Museum

704 S 2nd St
Minneapolis, MN 55401
<http://www.mnhs.org/milcity>



Photo credit: MNHS

6. Historic Fort Snelling

201 Tower Ave
St Paul, MN 55111
<http://www.mnhs.org/fortsnelling>

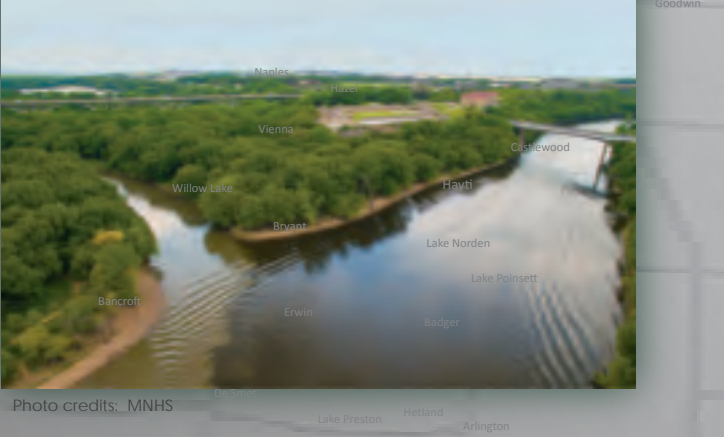


Photo credit: MNHS

7. Minnesota History Center

345 W Kellogg Blvd
St Paul, MN 55102
<http://www.mnhs.org/historycenter>

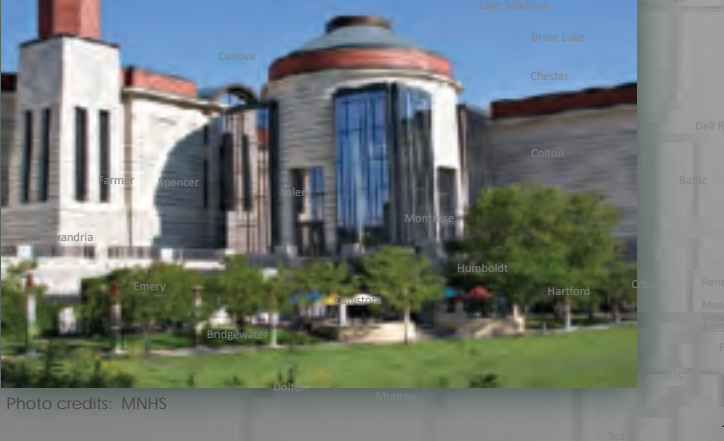


Photo credit: MNHS

1. Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center

Itasca State Park
36750 Main Park Drive
Park Rapids, MN 56470
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?pk=spk0181#homepage



Photo credit: MINNISTON OF THE MARY LEEA VISIT CENTER

Follow the Great River Road National Scenic Byway of the Mississippi River

Welcome to Minnesota's Great River Road, a National Scenic Byway that travels 565 miles following the legendary Mississippi River on its way through Minnesota and then out through nine other states to the Gulf of Mexico. It is a signed network of roadways offering a bounty of river experiences in evolving river landscapes including the pristine Mississippi headwaters in Itasca State Park, lush Northwoods forests, Minnesota's central lakes region, rich scenic farmland, Twin Cities metropolitan area, and the awe-inspiring bluffs in southeastern Minnesota.

Nature lovers will find ample opportunity to view the trees, wildlife and unique geological features in national forests, parks and refuges, 12 state parks and numerous scenic overlooks along the byway in addition to on the river itself.

Take a hike on a woodland trail, float down the river in a steamboat or kayak, bicycle on the Mississippi River Trail and test your photography skills at breathtaking views along this ever-changing river. Whether your passion is a walk, pleasure drive, fishing, hunting, golfing, camping, shopping or star gazing – the Great River Road can fulfill.

Explore a network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers featured on this map and hundreds of other museums, theaters, galleries and historic sites to immerse yourself in the history, cultures and ecology of the Mississippi River.

Minnesota's 12 National Great River Road Interpretive Centers are part of a network of over 80 along the Mississippi River in ten states. Each Interpretive Center has been specially designated for its unique presentation of Mississippi River stories. Mileage listed above is between Interpretive Centers and assumes following the Great River Road.

8. Science Museum of Minnesota

120 W Kellogg Blvd
St Paul, MN 55102
<https://www.smm.org>



Photo credit: SMM

9. Mississippi River Visitor Center

120 W Kellogg Blvd
St Paul, MN 55102
<https://www.mnhs.org>



Photo credit: MNHS

10. National Eagle Center

50 Pembroke Ave
Winona, MN 55981
<https://www.nationaleaglecenter.org>



Photo credit: National Eagle Center

11. Minnesota Marine Art Museum

800 Riverbend Dr
Winona, MN 55981
<http://www.mmam.org>



Photo credit: MMAM

12. Winona County History Center

140 Johnson St
Winona, MN 55987
<http://www.winonahistory.org>

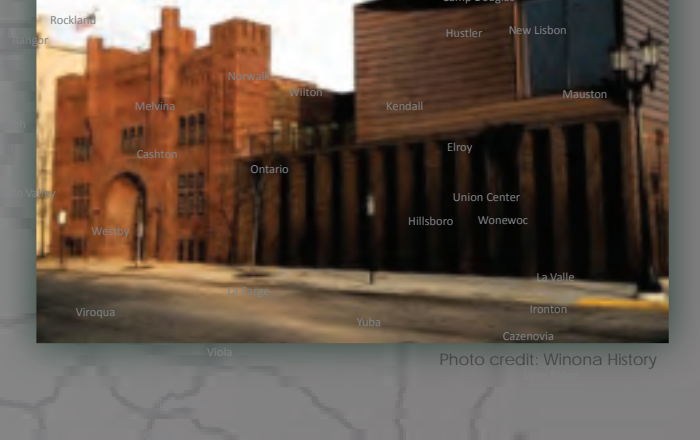


Photo credit: Winona County History Center

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Explore Minnesota's Great River Road

For more Great River Road travel information, contact:

EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM
EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM
PO BOX 1888 VICTIMIA
ST. CLOUD, MN 56301
651-452-1100
www.exploreminnesota.com

NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS
www.exploreminnesota.com

Destination Area Tourism Contacts

MINNESOTA MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION
PO BOX 1888 VICTIMIA
ST. CLOUD, MN 56301
651-452-1100
www.mnmississippiriver.com

Forest History Center
2609 Co Rd 16
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
651-452-1100
www.mnhs.org/foresthistor

Charles Lindbergh House & Museum
1620 Lindbergh Dr S
Little Falls, MN 56345
651-452-1100
www.mnhs.org/lindbergh

Oliver Kelley Farm
15788 Kelley Farm Rd NW
Elk River, MN 55330
651-452-1100
www.mnhs.org/kelleyfarm

Mill City Museum
704 S 2nd St
Minneapolis, MN 55401
651-452-1100
www.mnhs.org/milcity

Historic Fort Snelling
201 Tower Ave
St Paul, MN 55111
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Minnesota History Center
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St Paul, MN 55102
651-452-1100
www.mnhs.org/historycenter

Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center
Itasca State Park
36750 Main Park Drive
Park Rapids, MN 56470
828-3511
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?pk=spk0181#homepage

Science Museum of Minnesota
120 W Kellogg Blvd
St Paul, MN 55102
651-452-1100
<https://www.smm.org>

Mississippi River Visitor Center
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St Paul, MN 55102
651-452-1100
<https://www.mnhs.org>

National Eagle Center
50 Pembroke Ave
Winona, MN 55981
509-261-1100
<https://www.nationaleaglecenter.org>

Minnesota Marine Art Museum
800 Riverbend Dr
Winona, MN 55981
509-261-1100
<http://www.mmam.org>

Winona County History Center
140 Johnson St
Winona, MN 55987
509-261-1100
<http://www.winonahistory.org>

Explore Minnesota's Great River Road

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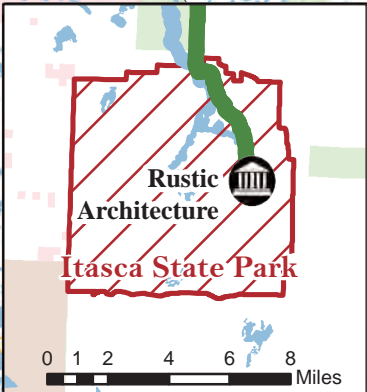
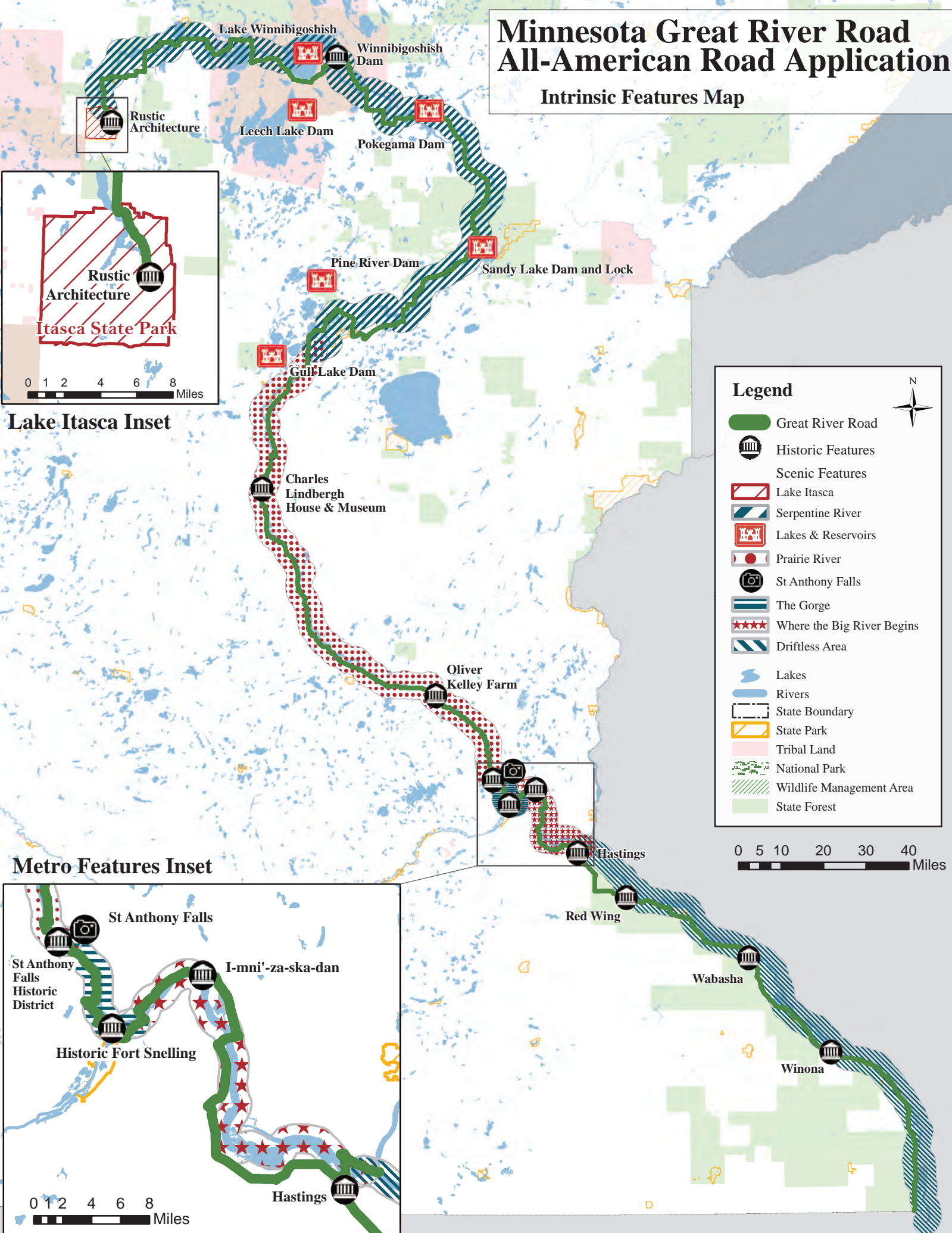
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Minnesota Great River Road All-American Road Application

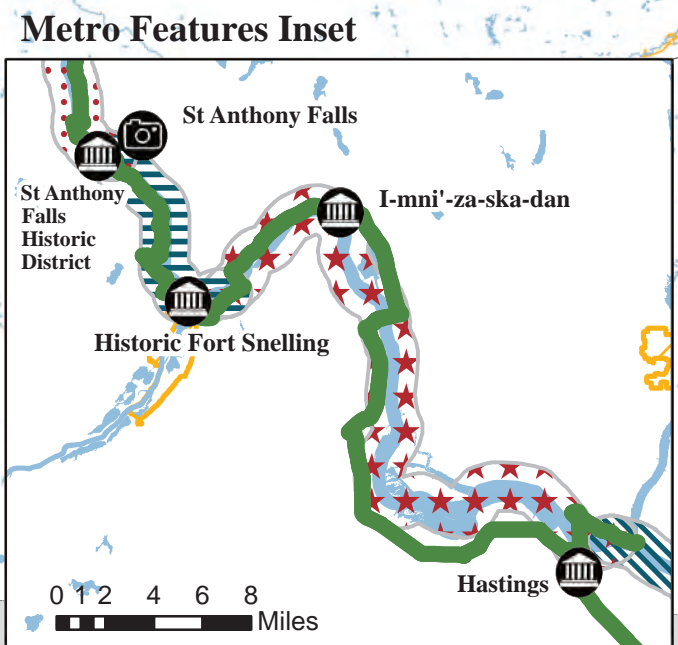
Intrinsic Features Map



Lake Itasca Inset

Legend

- Great River Road
- Historic Features
- Scenic Features
- Lake Itasca
- Serpentine River
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Prairie River
- St Anthony Falls
- The Gorge
- Where the Big River Begins
- Driftless Area
- Lakes
- Rivers
- State Boundary
- State Park
- Tribal Land
- National Park
- Wildlife Management Area
- State Forest



Metro Features Inset



2019 Drive the Great River Road Month Minnesota



Goals

- Raise awareness of the Great River Road and its ability to connect Minnesota tourists and residents to the state's heritage and outdoors by exploring state parks along the Mississippi River.
- Get people to drive the Great River Road to enjoy state and national parks that are nearest them and then plan more GRR trips for the future.
- Promote the ten state GRR and sweepstakes

Governor's Proclamation

- Requested and received proclamation from the Governor's Office, posted at www.mnmississippiriver.com & sent to National MRPC Office
- The proclamation was displayed at the National MRPC Annual Meeting in La Crosse and information on the new MN GRR state park online travel guide was presented during a general session.

MN Great River Road Social Media

- 15 Facebook posts (Great River Road MN). Total Facebook reach – 3,543 (compared to 3,950 in Sept. 2018, 3,324 in Sept. 2017 and average reach June – August 2019 of 481). Engagement for September 2019 posts – 300, compared to 251 in September 2018.
- Top Facebook post – Sept. 3 - *"September is Drive the Great River Road Month in all ten Mississippi River states! We'll be posting Outdoor Adventure Highlights throughout the month from 12 state parks and one national park along the Minnesota Great River Road. Our special correspondent, Suzy, put together an online travel guide highlighting her first visits to nine of these parks. Use it to inspire your own visits or as a virtual visit to Mississippi River parks as a break from your busy day..."*
- Twitter (@GreatRiverRdMN) – 3 MN GRR Tweets
- Social media posts by Visit Grand Rapids, Explore Minnesota, America's Waterway

MN Great River Road Website

- Button/link to new MN GRR state park travel guide developed at MnDOT. 831 visits to the new travel guide.
- General information was posted about the sweepstakes and event.
- 13,833 website visits in September (compared to June – 15,378; July – 16,601; Aug – 16,009).
- 818 MN Great River Road Map/Travel Planners and 153 MN GRR Regional Maps downloaded.

News Release

- Release was sent to media list, distribution partners (CVBs/Chambers, State Parks, Interpretive Centers, Welcome Centers, etc.) and MN-MRPC members.
- Targeted releases with specific state park photos also sent to media in area of state/national parks promoted.
- Articles/Blogs – Aitkin Independent Age, Brainerd Dispatch, Monticello Times, River Travel Magazine, Mississippi Park Connection

CLICK HERE



To explore a Travel Guide for Minnesota's 12 state parks along the

Great River Road

DRIVE the Great River Road Month 2019



STATE of MINNESOTA

Proclamation

- WHEREAS: The Great River Road encompasses 3,000 miles of interconnected roads that follow the Mississippi River through 10 states, from Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico; and
WHEREAS: The Great River Road has been designated a National Scenic Byway for its historical, cultural, recreational, natural, and scenic treasures; and
WHEREAS: The Great River Road connects hundreds of vibrant cities and unique river towns; and
WHEREAS: The Great River Road is the ideal way to discover and experience the rich culture of the Mississippi River region, the heart of America; and
WHEREAS: The Minnesota Great River Road spans 565 miles, 43 communities, 20 counties, 3 tribes and 6 unique destination areas - linking travelers from near and far with all the riches of the Mississippi River region; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TIM WALZ, Governor of Minnesota, do hereby proclaim September 2019 as

DRIVE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD MONTH

in the State of Minnesota.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Minnesota to be affixed at the State Capitol this 26th day of August.

Signature of Governor Tim Walz

GOVERNOR



Signature of Peter Pinnen, Secretary of State

SECRETARY OF STATE



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

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Members of the House: Anne Claitor (DFL - 54A); Tony Jurgens (R - 54B) Members of the Senate: David Semjem (R - 25); Patricia Torres Rey (DFL - 63) State Agency Appointees: Paul Huginn - Agriculture, Scott Bradley - Transportation, Lisa Havelka - Explore Minnesota Tourism, Open - Natural Resources, Open - Historical Society Regional Appointees: Sally Finney - Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Megan Christensen - Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Karl Kemp - Brainerd to Elk River, Candice Peterson - Elk River to Hastings, Sherone Muly - Hastings to Iowa Border Member at Large: Anne Lewis

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Follow the Great River Road to Some of Minnesota's Greatest Parks

St. Cloud, Minn. (August 19, 2019): If it's the great outdoors you seek this fall, follow the Great River Road, Minnesota's longest National Scenic Byway, as it meanders the Mississippi River to 12 state parks and the only national park dedicated to the Mississippi River.

If you're a fan of the National Park Service's parks and monuments, you'll be pleased to find Minnesota has a parallel system of its own, with great outdoor experiences that include just as many recreational options, only in smaller land areas. Following the Great River Road from the headwaters to the bluffs provides a route to explore 12 of those state parks, plus the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

September is national "Drive the Great River Road" month. Traveling Minnesota's Great River Road in fall offers an array of vistas and outdoor experiences unmatched in quantity by any other of the 10 Mississippi River states. Twelve of Minnesota's state parks - plus a national park - call this route home and offer the traveler encounters with nature, history, wildlife and beautiful scenery.

Starting near the river's headwaters, make your way along County Road 2, the Great River Road, to the Mississippi River's pinnacle site - Itasca State Park, where the great American river starts its journey first north, then east, and then finally south to the Gulf of Mexico. This is one of the country's iconic Mississippi River destinations and this Minnesota state park has enriched the tourist experience. Besides the proverbial walk-across-the-Mississippi attraction, there are kayaks, hiking and birding options all within a few steps of each other.

In the middle of the state and Minnesota's Great River Road, take the Great River Road to the only national park dedicated to the Mississippi River. You'll find it starting in Dayton at the north end or on U.S. Highway 61 in Madison at the southern end. In between is everything from Historic Fort Snelling to

Outdoor Notes: Follow the Great River Road to some of Minnesota's greatest parks

Written By: Brainerd Dispatch | Sep 7th 2019 - 5am.



Crow Wing State Park is one of 12 state parks along the Great River Road. Submitted photo

September is national "Drive the Great River Road" month. Twelve of Minnesota's state parks plus a national park call this route, Minnesota's longest National Scenic Byway, home

Great River Road MN
September 3

Like Page

September is Drive the Great River Road Month in all ten Mississippi River states! We'll be posting Outdoor Adventure Highlights throughout the month from 12 state parks and one national park along the Minnesota Great River Road. Our special correspondent, Suzy, put together an online travel guide highlighting her first visits to nine of these parks. Use it to inspire your own visits or as a virtual visit to Mississippi River parks as a break from your busy day. Find it at www.mnmississippiriver.com! And for info on all Mississippi River states be sure to visit www.experiencemississippiriver.com.

Drive the GREAT RIVER ROAD MONTH

