

RIVERTIME

EXPERIENCE IT. PROTECT IT. FOREVER.

FALL/WINTER 2019

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF RIVER STEWARDS

I have been asked why the St. Croix River Association has developed a strong education program when there are so many other pressing issues and urgent needs. My answer is pretty simple: we care about the future.

This has been a pretty tough year for losing some of our important River Champions. Some have passed away: George Reid, Martin Kellogg, Jack Warren, Vicki Cross, Bill Clapp and sadly, many others. There is also a long list of people whose work has been so important to Riverway protection and enhancement, that have retired or are retiring soon. We are losing the champions that were instrumental in permanently protecting this wild and scenic river, people we have counted on to ensure this high-functioning river system remains special long into the future.

We believe that if you truly want to protect the Riverway, it's critical to inspire the next generation of stewards. The students that are in 4th grade now could be the next Randy Ferrin, Jill Medland, Bill Clapp, Walter Mondale or Gaylord Nelson. Julie Galonska, our National Park Superintendent, has said that connecting with schools is our best opportunity to reach kids that otherwise might not come to the river. School children reflect all communities, all backgrounds, and all aspects of society. We agree.

Who knows who could be the next set of river champions, if they are given the chance to discover what the river has to offer? We know that people protect what they love, and our single best chance to protect this River depends on allowing kids to explore wild places, like so many of us had the opportunity to do.

It wasn't so long ago that we didn't have a K-12 program. Now, Rivers Are Alive is a pillar of our work. The St. Croix River Association is dedicated to investing in our future. It is said that the National Park Service is in the Forever Business. We are committed to protecting this National Park. Forever.



DEB RYUN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WHAT WE DO:

PROTECT & RESTORE

The St. Croix River Association takes a holistic approach to watershed protection and renewal. We target and prioritize conservation efforts that result in the greatest pollution reduction, land conservation, and stewardship growth.

LEARN & EXPLORE

We lead programs so people of all backgrounds and abilities can discover and explore the St. Croix, inspire river stewardship through watershed-wide education, and engage children and non-typical park visitors to realize the health and inspiration that comes from time spent on the river.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE - OSCEOLA LANDING

JULIE GALONSKA, SUPERINTENDENT, ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY

Osceola Landing is the busiest National Park Service (NPS) landing on the St. Croix River. Well known as the take-out point of the popular day trip from Minnesota or Wisconsin Interstate Park through the Dalles, the landing also provides access for motorized boats and paddlers headed downstream. Additionally, the day use area is a place for picnicking, fishing, walking, and enjoying the beauty of the river.

With the number of visitors now using Osceola Landing, there can be quite a bit of congestion on busy summer days. The two side-by-side launches are used by both non-motorized and motorized watercraft while paddlers are landing, exiting their canoes or kayaks, and seeking to find their shuttles. Safety is an issue where pedestrians and motor vehicles, often with trailers, are in close proximity. The landing also was not designed to accommodate the number of commercial providers (outfitters) that now use it, nor the number of visitors they serve.

Earlier this year, the NPS assembled an interdisciplinary team to take a comprehensive look at Osceola Landing for increasing visitor safety, improving operations for commercial use, and enhancing the overall visitor experience. The design seeks to address motorized and non-motorized boat use, parking and wayfinding, day uses, natural resource protection, and messaging and interpretation.

We would appreciate your input on the draft options. These will be available online for public review between October 18 and November 18, 2019. We will also host a public open house meeting on November 5 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at the Osceola Medical Center. At the meeting, the NPS will provide a brief presentation describing the planning and design process and draft options, followed by the opportunity for you to ask questions and share your perspectives.

We look forward to your participation in this process. For additional information, visit www.nps.gov/sacn or call 715-483-2274.



GET TO KNOW YOUR BOARD CHAIR

BRIAN ALTON, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CHAIR

I am proud to be a member of the St. Croix River Association, and it has been a joy to be part of an organization that has had tremendous growth in the past ten years. SCRA now has ten professional full-time staff, plus up to 12 interns and seasonal employees. Together with our partners and volunteers, we target and prioritize conservation efforts that result in the greatest pollution reduction, land conservation, and stewardship growth. SCRA has become the "go-to" group for addressing issues that affect the St. Croix watershed and this national park. As the Board Chair, I have a few straightforward priorities:

- 1) As the nonprofit partner of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway since 2011, it is important that we continue to grow in our role as the official Friends Group.
- 2) We need to realize new and innovative ways to leverage and grow the available resources for Riverway protection and enhancement to address ever-increasing threats.
- 3) SCRA will be accountable to our members, partners, and staff, building and maintaining healthy management practices to ensure continued financial stability.

My connection to the outdoors and this wild and scenic river has motivated me to serve on this board. I have spent a great deal of time exploring new places, fishing, camping, canoeing, and just being. My personal experiences have shaped who I am, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to work on behalf of this national treasure.

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST STAFF



Bethany Cox

DIRECTOR OF
DEVELOPMENT

I look forward to connecting donors' visions with the reality of work being done to protect and restore the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers.



Nichole Henger

FORESTRY PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

I am very thrilled to join the energetic SCRA team and begin working with landowners to help them create a legacy for future generations.



Jane Rice

RIVER CONNECTIONS
GUIDE

In partnership with NPS, I'm looking forward to introducing new and diverse audiences to the Riverway for outdoor adventures and nature experiences.



Lisa Yager

CHIEF OF RESOURCE
STEWARDSHIP AND
EDUCATION (SACN-NPS)

I'm excited to learn about all facets of the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers, to connect with people who call these rivers home, and to create my own river connections.

BIG INVESTMENT LAUNCHES NEW PERMANENT PROTECTION PROGRAM

MONICA ZACHAY, LAND AND WATER PROGRAM DIRECTOR

St. Croix River Association is excited to announce the launch of its first-ever permanent land protection program, dedicated solely to the St. Croix River watershed.

SCRA began leading the charge in early 2018 along with our core collaborating partners - The Trust for Public Lands and the Minnesota Land Trust. In July of this year, we were granted \$3,751,000 from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature and recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

These funds will be used to permanently protect 750 acres of critical habitat and forestlands through fee-title acquisition and conservation easements. The project will restore up to 50 acres of habitat for species of greatest conservation need. The new project, titled "St. Croix Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration" is the first phase of what we hope to be many phases to come.



MARVELING OVER MUSSELS

KATIE SICKMANN, AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES COORDINATOR

Did you know that the St. Croix River is one of the world's greatest mussel watersheds? An extraordinary forty-one native species inhabit the St. Croix - more than twice the number of species in all of Europe! As these "ecosystem engineers" filter feed, they clean up to ten gallons of water a day, contributing to the outstanding habitat and water resources of the Croix.

Of these forty-one species, five are federally endangered, including the winged mapleleaf - an especially important species here, since the St. Croix is home to one of the last known reproducing populations. Pollution and invasive species are serious threats to our native mussels, including zebra mussels. They smother native mussels and compete for the same food sources. It is essential to the survival of the winged mapleleaf that zebra mussels are not allowed to invade their habitat.

SCRA is taking preventative measures to stop the spread of zebra mussels. During the summer of 2019, 35 lakes around the watershed were sampled for microscopic larvae (veligers) in an early detection effort. Thankfully, results revealed no new occurrences of zebra mussels. SCRA is committed to helping protect our native mussels and with some work, we may even be able to help expand their numbers.



Photo: Winged mapleleaf

RIVER CONNECTIONS FOR ALL

JAIME SOUZA, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Many of you reading this article and newsletter are doing so because your connection to this National Park runs deep. You support the St. Croix River Association because you want to protect the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and its watershed forever. Thank you. WE NEED YOU. The fact is, we need **more** of you. In order to protect this Riverway and the special connections we all have to this place, the River needs more champions. The list of threats to the health and vitality of this watershed seem to grow daily.

Thanks to a generous grant from the National Park Foundation and LL Bean, we are on our way to growing our family of river champions who will help us to protect this National Park forever. In 2020, look for programming through our SCRA Outside program that aims to grow our river family through welcoming and inclusive outdoor experiences for everyone. While you might feel safe and comfortable recreating in this park, not everyone does and that needs to change.

SCRA supports the inspiring efforts across this country to create a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse outdoors thanks to the amazing leadership and mission of organizations, such as Latino Outdoors, Outdoor Afro, Brown People Camping, Natives Outdoors, Women Who Hike, and many others. Diversity strengthens and enriches our work, this place, and our river family. If you love rivers, please join us (if you just think rivers are just okay, please join us)! We need you. All of you.



TODAY TO FOREVER: WE NEED YOUR ACTION

BETHANY COX, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

A thriving watershed, forever accessible, scenic, and wild. This vision for the St. Croix River Association (SCRA) necessitates that we engage in strategic and thoughtful fundraising to continue the financial stability and sustainability that allows SCRA to work on behalf of the River today and forever.

SCRA's programming - whether to K-12 students, landowners, or families living in the watershed - is reaching more people every year. To keep up with this growth, we need to increase staff, summer interns, equipment, and cash reserves. As of this writing, I have been in my role with SCRA for less than one month, but I have big ideas. I am fortunate to be working with an experienced executive director, high-quality staff, and a board of directors that is looking to the future.

To make sure forever is attained, we need creative ideas, bold conversations, and increased stewardship of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. What ideas have you been talking about with your family that you could now share with SCRA? Please call me today and tell me your insights. Not everyone knows about SCRA and its mission. Is there a neighbor, fishing buddy, water skiing competitor, colleague at work, or former high school classmate you can share SCRA's mission with today?

The commitment to forever is going to take us all and more. I will be in touch to see how we can work together to reach this vision!

Thank you for supporting the River.



SUPPORT THE RIVER YOU LOVE!
EVERY. GIFT. MATTERS.

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Please make checks payable to St. Croix River Association and mail to: PO Box 655, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

\$5,000 \$2,500 \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$50 Other _____

You can also make a secure donation online at stcroixriverassociation.org/support/donate

Donations to SCRA are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.



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Save the Dates

Osceola Landing Public Meeting

November 5

5 - 7 PM

Osceola Medical Center

2020 St. Croix Youth Summit

February 27

9 AM - 2 PM

UW - River Falls University Center

2020 Forestry Conference

March 27

8:30 AM - 4 PM

Audobon Center of the North Woods