

WILDRIVERSCONSERVANCY.ORG

FALL/ WINTER 2021

# rivertime

CONSERVING OUR WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS



**WILD RIVERS**  
CONSERVANCY



Dear River Friends,

I'm hopeful you have heard that the St. Croix River Association has changed its name to the Wild Rivers Conservancy of the St. Croix & Namekagon. The new name reflects our goal to increase visibility and support for our work, and for our national park.

They say that progress is impossible without change, and change continues in 2021 for the Conservancy. We have been looking for a new base of operations to accommodate our expanding staff and program equipment, and from which to advance our mission. We hoped to find a location along the Riverway that would inspire future park champions, a place to create unique visitor experiences and provide educational opportunities for all ages.

The Horst Rechelbacher Foundation (HRF) has offered us the use of Boulderwall, one of the buildings at The Acreage, on the north edge of Osceola, WI. We are moving in September to this 350-acre woodland and prairie site adjoining the St. Croix River. The missions of the Conservancy and HRF are closely aligned, and this growing partnership has extraordinary potential. Both organizations have significant changes on the horizon to accommodate each other's needs and to better serve the river valley.

Changing our address has already opened new possibilities. Artist Mary Pettis has committed to creating 30 new paintings of the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers for a show hosted by Wild Rivers Conservancy at the Acreage, to run from November 12th through January 6th. Singer-songwriter Peter Mayer will bring his songs for a small planet to a special holiday concert on December 9th. Both artists are inspired by the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway; they are committed to help us ensure that future generations can enjoy it as they do.

With growing challenges facing the Riverway, it is more important than ever for us to continue expanding our partnerships. Wild Rivers Conservancy is ready and excited to realize the possibilities.

Ever Forward,



*Dele Byrum*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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# IT TAKES ALL OF US

JULIE GALONSKA, SUPERINTENDENT, ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY

On October 2, we celebrate the 53rd anniversary of the designation of the St. Croix and Namekagon under the 1968 Wild & Scenic Rivers Act and their inclusion in the National Park System. This was a direct result of the efforts of Walter Mondale and Gaylord Nelson when they served together as U.S. senators. In April, we sadly mourned the passing of the former vice president.

I know that Mr. Mondale was a great supporter of the National Park Service and deeply grateful for the work that we do. He also knew that the NPS is only one member of the wide and diverse coalition required to preserve and protect the Riverway for the future. His long years of public service continue to remind us of our responsibility to not only do our part but to also work together to do more than any of us can alone.

Fittingly, the Conservancy's new name speaks to continuing this legacy. This is an important change—one that speaks to the growth and strength of the organization and the continued commitment to the Riverway and our collaboration. The new name and mission will increase visibility and support from park visitors, advancing our joint efforts to protect park resources and enhance experiences to cultivate future park champions. We're very fortunate to work so closely with such a dynamic and innovative partner!

## WELCOME, NEW STAFF!



**Jenn Lutz, Business Manager**

"Our organization is composed of talented, passionate individuals - staff, interns, board members, and eager volunteers. I most look forward to sharing my skills with the Conservancy so that others may be successful. When they thrive, so does the Riverway."



**Wendy Tremblay, Community Engagement Coordinator**

"In my role as Community Engagement Coordinator, I am most looking forward to making connections. I am looking forward to helping to create moments of wonder through our programs and events, and connecting people to this amazing place we call home."



**Caitlin Nagorka, Natural Resources Program Manager (St. Croix National Scenic Riverway)**

"I look forward to exploring the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers more in depth, working with our amazing staff, partners, and community members to identify ways to increase our collective knowledge about this unique landscape, and helping conserve these incredible resources for future generations."



# CONSERVANCY AT WORK

A glimpse of what your support makes possible...

## Protecting Woodlands and the Watershed Through Outreach

Healthy forests help keep our wild rivers wild. By connecting people with the resources to achieve their woodland goals and promote permanent protections, we turn ideas into actions.

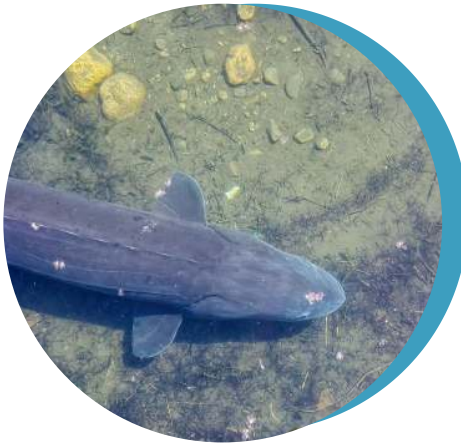


## Inspiring New Stewards

"Rivers Are Alive" provides children access to outdoor spaces and connection to their national park. This K-12 environmental educational program gives students opportunities to learn and love the river, inspiring the next generation of Riverway stewards.

## Exploring the Wild Side

Paddlers experienced a magical moment when a 4 ½-foot-long sturgeon was spotted swimming alongside their kayaks in the crystal clear waters of the Namekagon River. These unexpected encounters can only happen when people explore the wild side of our national park.



## Raising Beetles to Protect Native Habitat

The Conservancy raised *Galerucella* beetles as an eco-friendly solution to mitigate harmful impacts of invasive purple loosestrife on the native ecosystems within the St. Croix River watershed.



### Welcoming Our 2021 Seasonal Staff and Interns

Our seasonal staff and interns play a vital role in the success of monitoring and outreach efforts across the watershed.

### Helping Out and Endangered Mussel Species

The St. Croix is home to one of the last reproducing population of the winged mapleleaf mussel, a rare and federally endangered species. We partnered with the U.S. Geological Survey and National Park Service on a mussel propagation project to promote healthy populations in the Riverway.



### Monitoring for Zebra Mussels

The Conservancy staff, interns, and partners sampled 57 sites in lakes and rivers across the watershed for zebra mussel veligers (larvae) and spiny waterfleas providing data to help us act to protect uninfested waters.

### Connecting with Communities

No matter who you are or where you're at, there are opportunities for you to make a difference in the Riverway. The Conservancy welcomes you to be a part of supporting the watershed whether it is joining a paddle, monitoring for invasive species, visiting us at a booth, attending a program, or being a citizen scientist...and more. See you out there!





# STANDING UP FOR OUTSTANDING WATERS

DEB RYUN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cumberland LLC has applied for a permit to build a Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) for hogs, near Trade Lake, in Burnett County, WI. It's estimated that this hog factory will produce about 13 million gallons of waste annually. This manure would be stored on the 38-acre hog production site, then spread on nearby farm fields.

As part of their application, Cumberland is required to identify the fields which will be used. Wisconsin law requires that CAFOs must have "adequate acreage available for the manure produced", and severe restrictions are placed on spreading manure where groundwater is less than 24" below the surface. How do these requirements compare with Cumberland's proposal?

Mapping shows that at least 30% of their proposed acreage for spreading manure has a water table depth of less than 12", half of the required 24" minimum. Further, nearly 80% of the proposed fields have additional legal restrictions on spreading, due to proximity to important surface waters, including lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands.

Cumberland's application, as written, clearly does not meet legal requirements for manure disposal and should be rejected on that basis alone. However, this should not be a matter of simply tweaking the manure disposal plan and reapplying. The problem is greater than this.

A study of groundwater in Burnett County states that its overall quality is now very good and that no health risks are present. Burnett County is a very water-rich county, with more than 500 lakes, 10 rivers, and 145 miles of streams, including 66 miles classified as trout streams. The Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers, along with seven other water bodies, are listed as outstanding resource waters.

But a combination of shallow groundwater and sandy soils makes our groundwater particularly susceptible to contamination. County data show that more than 75% of the county has groundwater less than 20 inches below the land surface, and this groundwater exists as part of one large, continuous aquifer, much of which flows to surface water.

**Pollution of groundwater from application of manure in fields where the water table is near the surface could thus be disastrous, affecting not just local water but the whole St. Croix River system.**

This is not just a problem with one particular CAFO application; Burnett County area is geologically unsuited to CAFOs.

Since early 2019, the Wild Rivers Conservancy has been actively engaged with local efforts to stop this hog factory. We support the development of ordinances and policies at the Township level in a newly developed consortium. The Conservancy is providing technical expertise related to groundwater, surface water, air pollution, manure management, topography, and other variables. The Conservancy is very much engaged in this effort and will remain so.

We have focused here on groundwater concerns, but there are also other, well-documented, negative environmental, economic, and social consequences associated with CAFOs. On a narrow, local level, no one would be happy having millions of gallons of manure stored or spread on fields near their home. But the problems with this CAFO proposal are neither narrow nor local; they are broad and regional. There are ample reasons for this project to be opposed and, ultimately, rejected.





## CONNECT WITH THE CONSERVANCY

Once you have experienced the beauty of our wild and scenic Riverway, it is natural to feel inspired to ensure that it remains the gem that it is today. Maybe you find yourself wanting to be more engaged in conservation but knowing how to best use your talents or time is the hard part. The good news is that just like **there are many unique ways to celebrate and enjoy the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway**, there are just as many unique opportunities to protect and support it.

In our office, we have staff that work behind the scenes and staff that are out in the field. In the same way, steward support can look very different depending on interests, skills, and time available. Field work is available as a river or trail guide, citizen scientist, or guest speaker. **Equally important are our donors, event photographers, administrative support volunteers, and event sponsors...**to name just a few. Remember, our specialized staff at Wild Rivers Conservancy are experts so that you don't have to be.

Learn more and connect with your park today. You can visit our website, talk with our staff, or share a donation online.

**Interested in volunteering your time?** Connect with Wendy Tremblay, Community Engagement Coordinator at: [wtremblay@wildriversconservancy.org](mailto:wtremblay@wildriversconservancy.org)

**Interested in becoming a donor or event sponsor?** Connect with Bethany Cox, Director of Development at [bcox@wildriversconservancy.org](mailto:bcox@wildriversconservancy.org), or share a donation online at: [wildriversconservancy.org/support/donate](https://wildriversconservancy.org/support/donate)



## CONSERVE YOUR WILD & SCENIC RIVERS!

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Wild Rivers Conservancy and mail to: PO Box 655, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

☐ \$5,000    ☐ \$2,500    ☐ \$1,000    ☐ \$500    ☐ \$250    ☐ \$50    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Secure online donations: [wildriversconservancy.org/support/donate](https://wildriversconservancy.org/support/donate) | Donations to the Conservancy are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

- ☐ I would like to be contacted for volunteer opportunities    ☐ I would like to be contacted for ways I can share my expertise  
☐ I would like to be contacted to talk about financially supporting the Conservancy



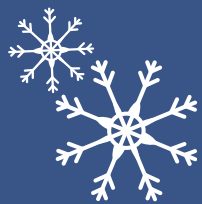
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@wildriversconservancy



# Save the dates!



Winter Wild Rivers Conservancy Events at The Acreage in Osceola

Nov. 12 - Jan. 6

Watershed

An Exhibition of Paintings  
by Mary Pettis...

showcasing the St. Croix Riverway  
and telling shared stories of our  
love affair with its watershed

December 9

Peter Mager  
Holiday Concert

a cozy concert and locally crafted  
dinner and drinks from The  
Watershed Cafe

stay up to date at [wildriversconservancy.org/events](http://wildriversconservancy.org/events)

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