

WILDRIVERSCONSERVANCY.ORG

SPRING/ SUMMER 2022

rivertime

CONSERVING OUR WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS



WILD RIVERS
CONSERVANCY

Dear River Friends,

A 50th anniversary is approaching. On October 25th, 1972, the lower St. Croix River, from Taylors Falls to 27 miles downstream, was designated as the first addition of new river miles to our country's Wild and Scenic Rivers system. This Federal system was established for its member rivers to protect their free-flowing character and exceptional water quality, as well as the aquatic, riparian, geologic, cultural/historic, recreational, and aesthetic values present in them. Our St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, including both the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, exemplifies these qualities, and the 27-mile addition of 1972 adds to our Riverway's uniqueness in its proximity to a major metropolitan area.

We are far from being the first people to benefit from the rich natural resources the Riverway provides. Native American tribes have lived in the St. Croix valley for centuries hunting wild game, fishing, and gathering wild plants such as rice and blueberries. French trappers and traders were the first Europeans to explore the valley. Loggers arrived to harvest what was considered a never-ending supply of timber, and others soon followed to establish permanent settlements. All told, humans have been impacting our rivers for thousands of years.

What astounds me about this is how resilient the St. Croix watershed has proven to be. Our watershed's biodiversity is impressive. It is still home to 110 species of fish and 41 species of mussels that existed here 300 years ago. Karner blue butterflies, St. Croix snaketail dragonflies, Kirtland's warblers, and many other threatened and endangered animals and plants can still be found here.

This didn't just happen by itself. Conservation efforts began long before our Riverway was designated as wild and scenic. Everyone – private industry, government agencies, politicians, nonprofit organizations and many individuals – all had a part in protecting the river they love. The river will always need champions, however, so this year's 50th anniversary gives us more than just another milestone to commemorate. It also gives us a chance to recommit ourselves to doing our part, to ensure that the Riverway remains special, year after year, for generations to come.



Ever Forward,

Deb Ryan

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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MEET SUPERINTENDENT HANSEN

DEB RYUN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am excited to introduce you to Craig Hansen, the new superintendent for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Craig has extensive experience working with partners and collaborating with Tribes on complex issues. A 19-year veteran of the NPS, Craig has a wide range of work and leadership experiences in parks throughout the Midwest Region including Grand Portage National Monument, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, and Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site.

“It’s a great honor to be selected as superintendent of Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway,” Hansen said about his appointment. “I am excited to work together with the park’s staff, partners, and communities along the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers to protect and continue to connect people to the amazing resources and experiences of the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway.”

As the park’s official nonprofit partner, we are committed to continuing our work with Craig and his team. Over the past several years, we have built a strong partnership with the Riverway staff. Together we work to protect the vibrant ecological, cultural, and recreational value of our national park, and create opportunities for everyone to access the Riverway, participate in stewardship programs, and enjoy the benefits of river-time.

Craig has been at the Riverway since February 28. He and his family plan to move to the Osceola area soon. I can’t wait to take Craig out to the Riverway and show him some of my favorite spots on the Croix and Namekagon.

RIVERWAY NATIVES VS INVASIVES



BLUE FLAG
IRIS

NATIVE

This native iris is most distinguishable when in bloom from June to July with a deep blue or violet flower with yellow markings. It grows along rivers and lakeshores and in wetlands and is beneficial for our native species such as hummingbirds, native bees, and butterflies.

VS



YELLOW
IRIS

INVASIVE

This completely poisonous invasive species invades rivers, lakes, and wetlands throughout the watershed. Growing from June to July, it produces a yellow bloom and can reach 3-5 feet tall. This plant produces seeds that float and establish new plants elsewhere, forming dense clumps or floating mats that alter wildlife habitats and species diversity.



NORTHERN
CLEARWATER
CRAYFISH

NATIVE

Native to the midwest, these crayfish are very common, distributed throughout the watershed, and are usually found on gravel or rocky bottoms. Colored gray or brown, gray specimens are more commonly found in very clear waters. Features include a dark stripe down the top of their tails and claw tips are marked orange with a black ring.

VS



RUSTY
CRAYFISH

INVASIVE

This invasive crayfish is widely distributed throughout the watershed and is found on a variety of bottom types. The most defining characteristic is a rusty spot on their sides. Spreading throughout the upper midwest, they have caused serious ecological damage by consuming massive amounts of native vegetation and disrupting food webs.



BLUE
VERVAIN

NATIVE

Commonly mistaken for purple loosestrife, this native plant also has beautiful purple flowers that grow on spikes and can be found in aquatic habitats such as lakes and river banks. Blooming from July to October, it has much smaller flowers on pencil-thin spikes, leaves are toothed and oval in shape.

VS



PURPLE
LOOSESTRIFE

INVASIVE

This invasive aquatic plant blooms purple flowers from July to September. It has a square stem, grows 3-9 feet tall, and can produce 2-3 million seeds annually. Find it growing along lake and river shores, wetlands, and roadside ditches that retain water. Purple loosestrife has drastic effects on the loss of native flora and fauna and inhibits recreation.



3 TIPS FOR NATIVE PLANTINGS



Learn what you have.

Learn how to distinguish non-native and invasive plants from those native to our region. Then, you'll have the ability to manage the aggressive or invasive plants that compete with your native plants for space, water, and nutrients. Leave or transplant any native plants already in your yard. Utilize the iNaturalist app for assistance in identifying what you find.



Start small.

Do you have a section of yard that needs an upgrade? Get started with areas where the grass isn't growing well or that you are tired of mowing. Begin by reducing turf or adding a pollinator or rain garden. You can continue to expand year over year!



Look for cost-share opportunities.

Oftentimes Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts, and cities provide cost-share opportunities for residents to plant native plants in their yards. Helpful resources can be found at bwsr.state.mn.us/native_vegetation and dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/endangeredresources/nativeplants.html to get you started.

NETWORKING WITH WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE WATERSHED

NIKKI HENGER, FORESTRY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

“A woman’s relationship with the natural world is often unique and meaningful. For women who own land, this connection can be rewarding as well as challenging.”

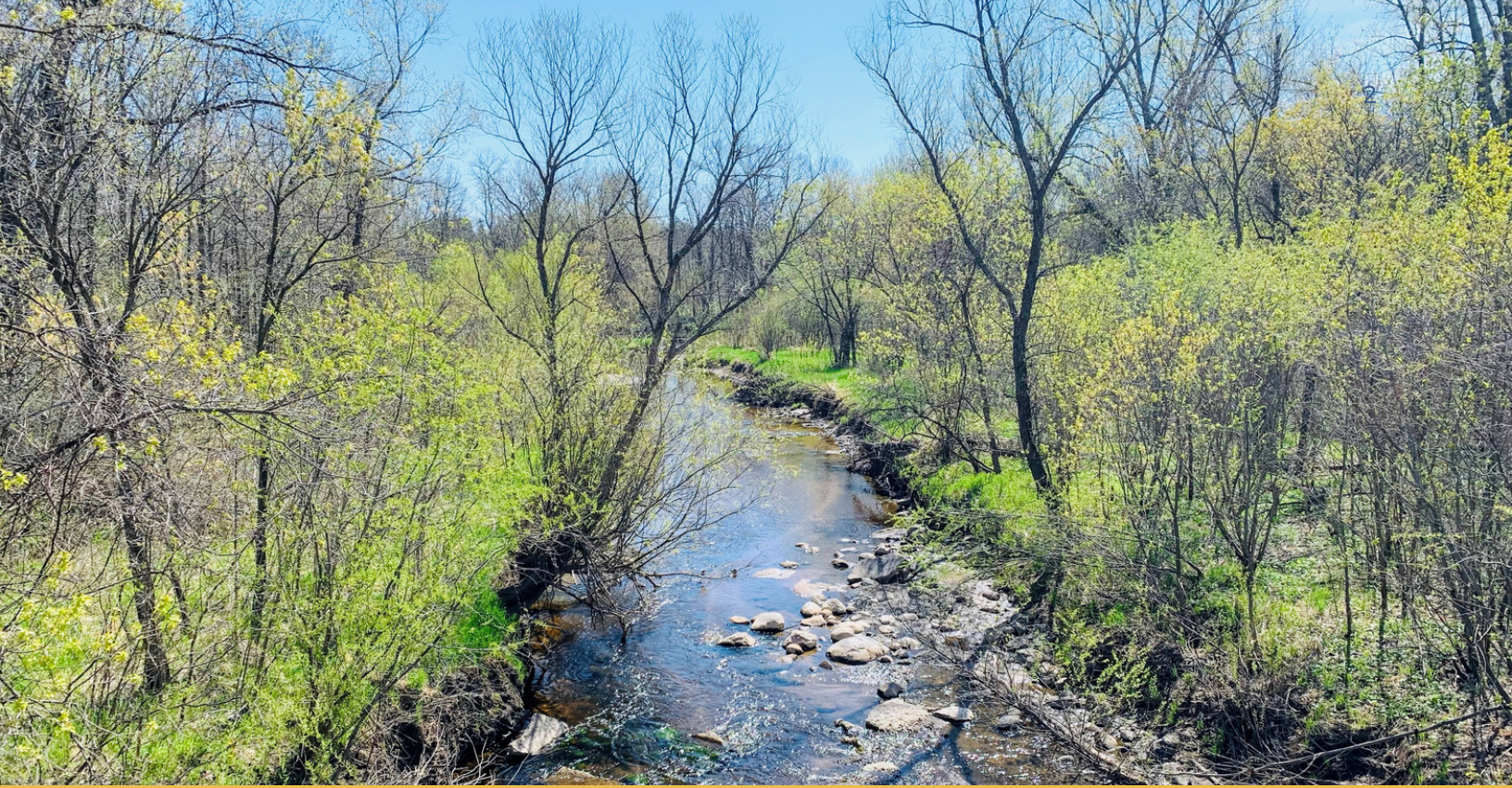
–excerpt from Women on the Land book

When thinking about forestry or landowners, who do you picture? Is it a burly lumberjack with an axe in hand? This is often the image portrayed – whether stemming from movies or actual experiences – but demographics are slowly changing. According to the National Woodland Owner Survey, women assuming the role of the primary decision maker for family forests with 10 acres or more saw an increase from 11 percent in 2006 to 24 percent in 2018. Women also tend to outlive their male partners and end up being the ultimate decision-makers about the future of their land. This creates an opportunity for women to play a larger role in land management within the watershed.

Wild Rivers Conservancy is heavily invested in women woodland owners in this watershed and beyond. We are an active member of the Minnesota Women’s Woodland Network (MNWWN) which provides the opportunity to recognize and enhance the role of women in woodland management. Through our partnership with MNWWN, we host quarterly walks in different areas throughout the watershed. These walks have been a big hit which highlights the interest “woodland women” have in fostering collaboration and sharing experiences. Each walk has a different educational theme. Our first walk taught attendees how to use iNaturalist to ID plants and wildlife in their backyard. These casual woodland walks provide a safe space for women to share knowledge and experiences of woodland stewardship. Empowering woodland owners empowers the watershed; and we are dedicated to providing landowners, especially women, the right resources to make the best decisions for the land.

We plan on continuing with these “woodland women” walks each season and starting a network in the St. Croix. Be sure to join our mailing list or email our Forestry Program Coordinator, Nikki Henger, at nhenger@wildriversconservancy.org if you would like to be involved.





PROTECTING HIGH-QUALITY LAND

MONICA ZACHAY, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

For almost three years, Wild Rivers Conservancy has been working with our partners, The Trust for Public Land and Minnesota Land Trust, on the only permanent land protection program focused on the St. Croix watershed in Minnesota.

To date, we are well on the way in securing over 2,000 acres of conservation easements and land in fee. One of the most exciting acquisitions was a 729-acre addition to the Chengwatana State Forest in northern Chisago County. This property is adjacent to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and has a wide variety of forest types, large areas of grassland habitat, and healthy streams. Additionally, it serves as an important conservation corridor for wildlife traveling along the St. Croix River. This property will soon be conveyed to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and available for the public.

The Conservancy has been connecting with landowners in priority areas and one thing has become clear – this program is long overdue. Landowners are lining up for the opportunity to permanently protect their land, for now and for the generations to come.

Working together and leveraging our strengths is a proven strategy. Together, we have secured two phases of funding from Minnesota's Outdoor Heritage Fund to permanently protect the highest quality land for wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and climate change resiliency. We have an applied for a third phase of funding.

For more information or to see if your land is eligible for enrollment in a protection program, contact Monica Zachay at mzachay@wildriversconservancy.org

WILD RIVERS FEST formerly the Spring Gathering

Sunday, May 22 | 11:00- 3:00 PM | Franconia Sculpture Park

The Spring Gathering is now **Wild Rivers Fest**! Join us on Sunday, May 22 at the Franconia Sculpture Park to celebrate spring weather and our love for the Riverway with live music, local eats, and fun activities.

Miss Myra and the Moonshiners will be playing all your favorite tunes while you enjoy lunch and treats from **delicious food trucks**, sip on **local wine and craft beer**, meet our staff and **learn about our programs**, and participate in **fun activities** for the whole family!

Explore **Franconia Sculpture Park's** 50 acres of dynamic and diverse contemporary art inspired by nature and our ever-evolving world. We encourage all attendees to dress casually and comfortably, and please bring your lawn chairs or picnic blanket. This is a rain or shine event.

Adults 25+ **\$55** | Students 18-25 **\$25** | Youth <18 **\$10**

Includes tickets for food truck lunch, beverage, and all activities

REGISTER BY MAY 10, 2022

WILDRIVERSCONSERVANCY.ORG/EVENTS/WILDRIVERSFEST



WILD RIVERS
ST. CROIX CONSERVANCY NAMEKAGON

WILD RIVERS FEST REGISTRATION FORM

Reservations and payments can also be made online at: wildriversconservancy.org/events/wildriversfest

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Adults: 25+ @ \$55 ea.

_____ Student: 18-25 @ \$25 ea.

_____ Youth: under 18 @ \$10 ea.

_____ **Total Enclosed**

Tickets include:

- **Food truck and beverage tokens**
- **Live music**
- **All activities**

REGISTER BY MAY 10

Please make checks payable to Wild Rivers Conservancy and mail to: PO Box 938, Osceola, WI 54020
If more space is needed for additional guests, please use an additional sheet. Call 715-483-3300 with questions.

WILD RIVER JOURNEY

WENDY TREMBLAY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

What does a pair of binoculars, a paddle boat, and a flannel shirt have in common? They are all part of our Wild River Journey program happening on the St. Croix River this May!

While many students may live near the St. Croix, access and opportunities to experience the Riverway may be limited. Wild River Journey provides the opportunity for approximately 1,000 4th grade students to connect directly to the river. This program, an extension of our K-12 environmental education program Rivers Are Alive, invites children to experience this wild and scenic national park in an engaging and memorable way.

During this half-day field trip, students will board a paddle boat and travel a section of the St. Croix to witness the natural wonders of this National Park. While wearing period costumes, students will learn about the rich history of the logging era with park rangers from the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Students will also discover the birds who call the St. Croix home from local Audubon Society volunteers and participate in additional hands-on activities to explore our watershed. Through this experience, the Conservancy's goal is to strengthen the student's sense of place and to provide a strong connection to the river - creating future generations of river stewards.

Wild River Journey is made possible with support from the Stillwater Area Community Foundation, the National Park Service, The Partnership Plan, and the National Park Foundation.



“If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it.”

- David Sobel





A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

It took an incredible partnership to create the **St. Croix National Scenic Riverway**, the first wild and scenic national park. And that partnership did not stop in 1968. Four years later in 1972, the first additions to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act came with an expansion of our Riverway. This expansion added 52 miles of the St. Croix from Taylors Falls to the confluence with the Mississippi River.

Many of us have enjoyed these expanded 52 miles over the last 50 years. Whether we've dipped our toes in at the shore, canoed with grandchildren, fished with friends, or picnicked on the banks, this Riverway runs through our communities and our lives.

At Wild Rivers Conservancy, we take our mission to heart; inspire stewardship to forever ensure the rare ecological integrity of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway. And **this work cannot be done without our partnership with you.**

As the nonprofit partner, or friends group, for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, the Conservancy provides opportunities for people to explore and discover the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers while at the same time prioritizing conservation activities that improve water quality and protect or enhance land stewardship.

We ask you to partner with us today by sharing a gift with the Conservancy. Your gift will ensure continued progress towards our mission not just for the next 50 years but for generations to come.



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 | 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

2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

A glimpse of what we have in store for this year!

- 3.24** 2022 Forestry Conference
- 3.25** Superintendent Hansen Welcome Reception
- 4.2** Wild Rivers Adventure: Cold Weather Camping
- 4.21** St. Croix Youth Summit
- 5.14** Gandy Dancer Invasive Species Removal
- 5.21** Birding By Sound Paddle
- 5.22** Wild Rivers Fest
- 6.5** Pride Paddle
- 6.25** Invasive Species Bike Tour
- 7.8** Fish of the Namekagon Paddle
- 7.25** Sunset Paddle
- 8.14** Mussels of the St. Croix Paddle
- 9.8** ForeverWild FUNdraiser
- 9.10** Fall Camping Paddle
- 9.24** Invasive Species Bike Tour
- 10.2** Fall Colors Paddle



WILDRIVERSCONSERVANCY.ORG/EVENTS



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OF THE ST. CROIX AND NAMEKAGON
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Save the dates!

WILD RIVERS CONSERVANCY ANNUAL EVENTS

MAY 22

Wild Rivers Fest

The Spring Gathering is now Wild Rivers Fest! Celebrate spring weather and our love for the Riverway!

SEPTEMBER 8

Foreverwild

You're not going to want to miss the biggest FUNdraising night in the watershed!

stay up to date at wildriversconservancy.org/events