

rivertime

CONSERVING OUR WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS



WILD RIVERS
CONSERVANCY

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Dear River Friends,

I grew up in a family with a father who was a Silver Beaver leader in the Boy Scouts, which led to our entire family being pulled into all things outdoors. Among other things, he taught us that you should leave a place better than you found it. While I can't say I enjoyed picking up someone else's cigarette butts, soda can tabs, and other trash when we left a campsite or recreational area, it was satisfying to know we did what we could to minimize human impacts in natural settings. I have carried that core value with me to this day.

Wild Rivers Conservancy (Conservancy) takes the value of leaving a place better than we found it seriously. We work throughout the watershed, addressing current and future needs, to ensure that the St. Croix remains a healthy, intact river system. To that end, this fall, we hired a Volunteer Coordinator and a Climate Resiliency Specialist to increase our capacity to protect the ecological, cultural, and recreational value of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (Riverway) and to maintain the health of the watershed that flows into it.

Volunteers play a critical role in achieving the missions and goals of both the Conservancy and the Riverway. Our small but mighty crew helps to ensure that visitors and residents can experience and enjoy the Riverway's healthy ecosystem. Volunteers can provide support well beyond the combined capacity of the Conservancy's and National Park Service's staffs for land restoration, park maintenance, education programs, outdoor recreation, citizen science monitoring, and more. We now have dedicated staff to build a structured and more robust joint volunteer program with the National Park Service, which will also enable us to provide more meaningful experiences for the volunteers themselves. Our Volunteer Coordinator will help recruit, train, and match people to opportunities within the St. Croix watershed.

As weather and temperature patterns change, our forests are becoming stressed and more vulnerable to pests and disease. The Climate Resiliency Specialist will develop a forestry-based climate mitigation and adaptation program. The overall goal is to increase forest cover and to ensure woodlands continue to thrive. Healthy forests amplify carbon storage, improve ecosystem services, and provide an abundance of forest products for healthier local communities and economies. Reforestation is our best opportunity to sequester carbon in the St. Croix watershed, mitigating the effects of a changing climate.

It's important for the Conservancy to build a sense of community around the St. Croix Valley and to inspire community action to protect the Riverway's rare ecological integrity, leaving this special place better than we found it. Stay engaged with us. The River needs you.



Ever Forward,

Deb Byrum

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ONE RIVERWAY FOR ALL

EXPERIENCING DISCOVERY AND HEALING ON THE ST. CROIX RIVER



Members of the Indigenous People's Task Force and Standard Edition Women experienced the St. Croix's healing and stress relief benefits. They connected with the restorative energy of the St. Croix Riverway through kayaking, on-river observation, and personal reflection.



The Conservancy partnered with the St. Croix Master Watershed Stewards, National Park Service, and The Acreage at Osceola to provide opportunities for inclusive discovery experiences.



**The River
Teaches.
Heals.**



FIGHTING INVASIVES & FIGHTING FOR NATIVES





Phrag-mi-tes (non-native)

[frag'mīdēz] noun



A perennial wetland plant that can quickly spread through marshes and wetland areas, robbing fish, plants, and wildlife of nutrients and space; blocking access to the water for recreation; spoiling shoreline views; and posing a fire hazard. Standing nearly 20 feet tall, non-native phragmites is causing major issues on the Riverway landscape.

The Conservancy and our healthy riverine system rely on strong partnerships to protect and enhance the rare ecological integrity of the Riverway. Throughout the past four years, the Conservancy has partnered with Chisago County, the University of Minnesota's Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC), and local lake associations to combat invasive, non-native phragmites. Over 1,000 miles of roadside and Sunrise River surveys have been completed throughout Chisago County to date. Over 40 unreported stands of this highly invasive plant were discovered and treated.

Now that this invader is pinpointed on the landscape, management efforts can take place. Currently, Chisago County and MAISRC staff work with consulting and conservation crews to manage these populations. The goal is to prevent the plant from taking a foothold in the county like it has in other areas of Wisconsin.



Winged Ma-ple-leaf (native)

[wiNGd 'māpəl lēf] noun



A species of federally critically endangered freshwater mussel. It is an aquatic bivalve mollusk in the family Unionidae. This genetically distinct mussel is only located in a short stretch of the St. Croix River.

Can one of the last reproducing populations of the winged mapleleaf mussel (WML) be saved from extinction? The US Geological Survey, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, and the Conservancy have banded together in an innovative effort to propagate and grow WML in a lab-river hybrid setting. Juvenile mussels spent the summer in a trailer that fed river water into their tanks from early June to mid-September.

A total of 102 juvenile WML survived and grew from 0.3 mm to 4 mm in total length and are currently being overwintered in the Croix near Hudson, WI. The long-term goal is to stabilize this unique population and eventually reintroduce it elsewhere.

If the reintroduction is successful, this new method will be monumental in reestablishing vulnerable mussel populations throughout the Riverway and beyond. The continued survival of the WML is important to maintain the St. Croix's ecosystem's health and resiliency.



50 YEARS ISN'T JUST A MILESTONE

The Lower St. Croix River was designated a Wild and Scenic River on October 25, 1972. Fifty years have passed since the Lower St. Croix River Act became law, but the anniversary does not just represent the passage of time. This anniversary represents five decades of arduous work by thousands of people to protect the river, individuals who have worked to “hold the line” from proposals that would diminish the character of the Lower River. This is not a weekly or monthly occurrence. We are called to stand up for the river each and every day.

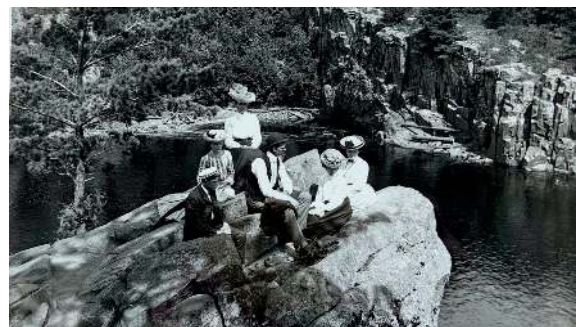


This isn't just a milestone to be celebrated here in the St. Croix Valley. This is a significant milestone within the Midwest region and nationally. The Lower St. Croix River was added to the National Park System because of its nationally significant resources and values. It was designated to protect and enhance these resources for the benefit of everyone.

Passage of the law was not the waving of a wand that magically protected the Lower St. Croix forever. A framework and toolbox were established for cooperation that federal, state, county, and local partners, along with private citizens, can employ to protect what they love and value about the St. Croix River. While leaders at the federal, state, and local levels helped make the designation happen, it was ultimately the advocacy of private citizens that made the designation a reality. Grassroots support continues to safeguard the rivers.



The Lower St. Croix also stands out as one of the few wild and scenic rivers to be located so close to a major population center.



Of all the rivers that enjoy wild and scenic designation nationally, only a fraction of those are within national parks. The Lower St. Croix represents a unique partnership nationally with the first 27 miles being managed by the National Park Service and the remaining 25 miles being managed by the states.



WITH CHANGE COMES OPPORTUNITY

BETHANY COX, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

With change comes opportunity. Whether the changes are internal or external, Wild Rivers Conservancy is always solution-oriented, focusing on protecting the nation's first riverway national park for future generations.

The good news is that you can help!



The communities that make up this almost 8,000-square-mile watershed are growing and changing. St. Croix County, Wisconsin, is the fastest-growing county in the state. In Minnesota, both Chisago and Washington counties are in the top seven. Every community meeting I sit in talks about housing needs. You can have input in your community about thoughtful development, helping to meet the growing housing needs, AND protecting wild and scenic intent and values.

Riverway users are also changing as the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is welcoming more visitors than ever before. New visitors are not always familiar with responsible outdoor recreational ethic. You can lead by example and be a responsible visitor--pick up trash, camp in designated sites, respect wildlife and other park visitors, and follow the rules designed to protect people and this special place.

The Conservancy is creating opportunities for individuals and families to try a new activity with the experience of an outdoor educator leading the way. We bring more diverse audiences out for outside adventures in all seasons. Bring a friend to experience the Riverway and share your story, helping to create the next generation of river stewards.

While there are changes, some things are constant. We know that people protect what they love. We embrace bringing more national park visitors and new watershed residents to learn about our nation's first wild and scenic river national park. The Riverway is an extremely rich and important ecological haven, yet it's fragile. It will always need your help.

Your gift is a critical piece of the complex puzzle that allows the Conservancy to meet the ever-changing needs of the watershed and share this national park with future Riverway Champions. I hope you will send in a gift today!

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N O M I N A T E

2022 WATERSHED STEWARDS & VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Nominees can be **individuals, organizations, businesses, or communities that have made significant contributions** toward the preservation or improvement of the St. Croix River watershed. These are awards for “above and beyond the call of duty” actions.

More info & nomination at wildriversconservancy.org/awards