

FALL / WINTER 2023

rivertime

CONSERVING OUR WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

WILDRIVERSCONSERVANCY.ORG



WILD RIVERS

ST. CROIX CONSERVANCY NAMEKAGON

A Note From the Executive Director

COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR THE CROIX

The St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, with their meandering course through the heart of our region, have always been more than just a body of water; it is the lifeblood of our community. They connect us, sustain us, and provide endless opportunities for recreation and reflection. Their clean waters, lush forests, and diverse wildlife are a testament to the wonder of nature. But this treasure is not invulnerable, and it depends on all of us to ensure its survival.

In recent years, the challenges facing our beloved Riverway have become more pressing than ever. Pollution, development proposals, and climate change threaten the delicate balance that sustains this ecosystem. But it is in the face of these challenges that our community shines brightest. Our strength lies not only in our love for the river but in our ability to come together, to forge partnerships, and to act as stewards of this natural wonder.

Community is at the heart of everything we do. The passion, dedication, and tireless efforts of our volunteers, supporters, and partners have allowed us to make real progress in safeguarding the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. Together, we have organized river cleanups that have removed countless tons of debris, worked with natural resource partners to protect and restore critical habitats, and educated the next generation about the importance of conservation. Our community is a living testament to the power of collective action.

Partnerships have been instrumental in our journey. We have joined hands with local businesses, governmental agencies, and other non-profit organizations that share our commitment to the greater watershed. Through these collaborations, we have been able to leverage resources, expand our reach, and implement projects that would have been impossible to undertake alone. The river's health depends on our ability to work together, to pool our expertise, and to find innovative solutions to complex problems.

As we look to the future, the challenges facing rivers are significant, but so too are the opportunities. By strengthening our community ties and nurturing our partnerships, we can turn the tide in favor of conservation.

Together, we can ensure that the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway remains a source of inspiration, recreation, and life itself for our community. Together, we can be the guardians of this natural wonder. Let us rise to the challenge, for the sake of the river, for the sake of our community, and for the sake of all those who will come after us.

Ever Forward,



Deb Ryun
Executive Director

CLIMATE FOCUS

Working toward becoming a Climate Friendly Park



We are proud to be partnering with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway to achieve the status of being a Climate Friendly Park

The Climate Friendly Parks (CFP) program provides the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway with tools and resources to address climate change and ensure sustainable operations across the park.

The goals of the program are to:

- Measure park-based greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Educate staff, partners, stakeholders, and the public about climate change and demonstrate ways individuals and groups can take action to address the issue.
- Assist parks in developing strategies and specific actions to address sustainability challenges, reduce GHG emissions, and anticipate the impacts of climate change on park resources.

Milestone 1 | Done

Submit a Climate Friendly Park Application to express interest in the program and identify the park CFP team.



Milestone 2 | In Progress

Complete a GHG Inventory to develop a baseline emissions inventory for park operations.

This involves compiling all the necessary park data from multiple departments and then plugging it into a data set.

Milestone 3 | Done

Conduct a CFP workshop or webinar training to provide park staff, partners, and stakeholders with an educational opportunity to learn more about the potential impacts of climate change on park resources and discuss response strategies.



Milestone 4 | In Progress

Complete a CFP Action Plan or Comprehensive Environmental Management System to outline planned sustainability and climate change response actions as well as educational initiatives to help educate visitors.

Learn more at:

> nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/cfpprogram.htm

A RIVERWAY ENJOYED BY ALL IS A RIVERWAY PROTECTED BY ALL

Our vision of a thriving watershed, forever accessible, scenic, and wild, simply will not happen without the support of a diverse community of riverway supporters.

This year, our community engagement programming took on a special focus of strengthening our relationships with diverse communities from within our watershed. These highlights from the past summer are a step forward in supporting the next generation of river users to be caretakers of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway.

Photos : J. Galligan



**THIS TRIP IS THE
BEST!
55 OUT OF 5 STARS!**

- Roman, Age 9

BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin

"Roman, the youngest of the birders on this trip at just 9 years old, searched all weekend for a scarlet tanager, one of the birds on his life list. On Sunday morning, as we all gathered for a hike in the parking lot of Wild Rivers Conservancy, an audible gasp came from the young birder. As the birders around him slowly realized that he was seeing a scarlet tanager perched on a nearby branch, the whole group erupted in cheers of joy! Some of the BIPOC Birding Club leadership ran to Roman and proudly picked him up in the air, like someone who had just won the Superbowl. The positive and encouraging energy of the group was contagious and felt throughout the weekend by everyone involved. It was truly a magical experience and I am grateful to have been a part of it."

-Wendy Tremblay, Community Engagement Manager

Wild Rivers Conservancy, NPS, and The Acreage at Osceola hosted the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin for a weekend of hiking, camping, kayaking, and birding discovery in the St. Croix Valley.

Latino Conservation Week

This July, we joined Latino Conservation Week 2023 celebrations. This weeklong event brings community, non-profit, faith-based, and government organizations and agencies together for local events, nationwide.

This year, Wild Rivers Conservancy staff, Conservancy board member Ray Ruiz, and NPS Ranger Dan joined attendees at William O'Brien State Park for a fun-filled day of outdoor programming. We brought together education and outdoor recreation through kayaking, fishing programming, and bird-watching hikes along the St. Croix River.

"My nieces were so excited to come out to the river today. They were most excited to have the opportunity to not have to be on their phones for a day."

-Latino Conservation Week participant



Photos: K. Schlicker and W. Tremblay



Photos: Rita Bulger

Harmony Learning Center

There are many levels to the accessibility and diversity barriers in the outdoors. We made a small step in the right direction this year by completing two recreation programs with Harmony Learning Center, both providing first time experiences for immigrants and English language learners from Maplewood.

“My experience of kayaking in nature with my own power was very exciting and healing. Also, fishing was a bit embarrassing. Because around me a child and my -classmates caught a lot of fish, but I could only catch one aquatic plant and hooked the deck. The day and experiences gave me pleasant summer memories. Thank you so much.”

-Student, Harmony Learning Center

Hmong Ambassador Program

Our Hmong Ambassador Program began as a desire to engage more effectively with the Hmong community through signage at river landings. Thanks to listening sessions, we quickly switched our methods to a community-focused approach. A National Park Foundation grant in 2021 allowed us to hire a consultant from the Hmong community to create an intentional, place-based, relationship building strategy. This collaboration brought together focused programming and passionate educators from the Hmong community.

These Hmong ambassador events provided opportunity and community through arts, storytelling, canoeing, kayaking, and camping. Working with Lee Vue as a community consultant created an intentional collaboration to listen deeply, communicate strategically, and co-create solutions that are informed by and for the Hmong community. We are excited to take this year's learning forward, and continue connecting with communities through the watershed.

> Visit wildriversconservancy.org/about/hmong-ambassadors/ to learn more.



Ambassador Kaja Vang



Hmong Educator Paddle | MN Interstate Park

GOING FORWARD WITH NEW PARTNERS

We will continue to grow our reach, making sure that all voices of river users are heard. Our work is laying the foundation of established trust to understand the experiences of underrepresented communities to further explore and cultivate. Each new connection to the Riverway allows for new perspectives and insight into how our river is changing. The diversity within the Riverway has the potential to create stronger connections and create a future generation of engaged stewards.

> Visit wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore to learn more.

HELLO FROM OUR NEW VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Hello! It is an honor to be chosen to work with you, passionate Riverway volunteers. Some of you may know that until now I was the Community Volunteer Ambassador with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. That position allowed me to experience building a program from the ground up, from helping behind-the-scenes developing frameworks to supporting activities in the field.

Together, we can build and strengthen partnerships throughout the watershed, connecting more people to the Riverway, while providing more opportunities for people to give back. It has been exciting to be part of the team that helped the joint Riverway Volunteers program take off, and even more exciting to help this program grow.

Now let's see what we can accomplish together.

Start your volunteering journey today:
bit.ly/WildRivers-volunteer



Volunteer Coordinator

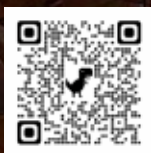
WELCOME SIERRA

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WILD RIVERS
CONSERVANCY

FALL APPAREL NOW AVAILABLE



Wear your love for the Riverway

**SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR MOBILE PHONE
TO SHOP NOW** or visit www.bonfire.com/store/wildriversconservancy/

Note: Fall apparel is available for sale for a limited time. All orders ship on demand. See bonfire for details.

Bethany Cox, Director of Development

LET US GO FORWARD, TOGETHER

The power of partnership is a repeating lesson in nature. Just as a river and its tributaries come together to form a mighty force, so too do we, as a community, unite for a greater purpose. We understand that we are stronger together. And as we continue on this journey, we introduce and bring along new riverway stewards. Our goal is clear: a thriving watershed, forever accessible, scenic, and wild. This is a call to action, a testament to the strength of partnership, and a heartfelt thank you for your support in this noble endeavor.

A river is the sum of its tributaries; the Conservancy is the sum of its donors, school groups, board members, volunteers, staff, partners, visitors, and more. Both the Riverway and the Conservancy are stronger because of this convergence. The river represents our collective effort, our shared vision for a better future. And it is in this convergence that we find our true strength.

However, we understand that our efforts within the park boundaries are just one part of the equation. None of our work will matter if we do not address the larger challenges that threaten our watershed. Climate change, native habitat loss, and pollution know no boundaries. They affect us all, and we must confront them collectively. This is where the true power of partnership shines.

By collaborating with like-minded organizations and individuals, we amplify our impact. Together, we advocate for smart Riverway development, support native habitat, and promote environmental education. Our collective voice is stronger, and our influence extends further when we stand united.

Fundraising plays a crucial role in our mission. It is the lifeblood that allows us to realize our vision of a thriving watershed, forever accessible, scenic, and wild. Every dollar donated contributes to the preservation of our natural wonders, the education of future generations, and the creation of a more sustainable future. We are immensely grateful to all our donors, large and small, who believe in our cause and have chosen to be part of this journey.

We want to share our gratitude. Thank you for believing in the power of partnership and convergence. Thank you for recognizing that we are stronger together. And thank you for understanding that none of our work will matter if we do not safeguard our national park for the generations to come.

As we move forward, let us remember the lesson of the river and its tributaries. Let us continue to converge, to come together, for something bigger than ourselves. Together, we can protect our natural world, ensuring that it remains a source of inspiration and wonder for all. Together, we can create a legacy of stewardship and sustainability that will endure for generations. Together, we can be the change the world needs.

Thank you for being a part of this journey, for your unwavering support, and for sharing in our vision of a brighter, flowing future.

Thank you for your support!



Bethany Cox



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@wildriversconservancy



Platinum
Transparency
2022

Candid.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wild & Scenic Film Fest

Tuesday, November 7th

Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

Thursday, November 16th

Holiday Concert

Friday, December 1st

FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT -
wildriversconservancy.org/events

Photo: Craig Blacklock

