

SPRING / SUMMER 2024

rivertime

CONSERVING OUR WILD & SCENIC RIVERS



WILDRIVERSCONSERVANCY.ORG



WILD RIVERS

ST. CROIX CONSERVANCY NAMEKAGON

Pitcher Plant, *Sarracenia purpurea*

A Note From The Executive Director

NEW GROWTH IN THE WATERSHED

Spring is in the air and while this may be one of those winters that wasn't, we still yearn for what I think of as open water season. Spring beauty, skunk cabbage, hepatica, all the spring ephemeral flowers we look forward to. And of course, the return of migrating birds with cardinal and chickadee songs leading the way with a welcome spring chorus. Change isn't always easy. The changing seasons are a great example of change being something to look forward to.

A new project at the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (SACN) is another very welcome change. Your national park has embarked on being a climate friendly park and the Conservancy is an active partner in this initiative. We already tick a lot of the boxes for that designation but an important component is to replace most of the NPS vehicles at SACN to electric vehicles (EV). We're helping to make that happen with a grant from the National Park Foundation to install EV charging stations at three park buildings throughout the Riverway.

In this newsletter you'll see that there are new faces working for the Riverway. Marc White is the Natural Resources Manager for Wild Rivers Conservancy, Cassie Hargrave joins us to combat invasive species as an Invasive Species Field Technician, and Allissa Reynolds is the Environmental Protection Specialist for SACN. We welcome these new staff members to the team and are full of anticipation for the great work we know they will bring to the Riverway.

I have been with Wild Rivers Conservancy for almost 15 years now. I am so proud of the growth of this organization, from an ambitious, all volunteer led group to what is now a member driven organization with 13 full time staff and about twice that number with seasonal employees, working alongside over 300 volunteers. Our exploration and educational transformative work has opened the hearts and minds of so many people to a new world view, one that includes caring for this nation's first wild and scenic river national park. We've partnered with so many to support Riverway protection and enhancement, and prioritize conservation activities that improve water quality, protect and enhance land, and connect the public to this wild and scenic riverway to increase stewardship efforts.

The changes over the years have been many, and of course, have not always been easy. It's been both rewarding and fun to see our partnership with the Riverway grow and evolve. I'm so glad to be part of the journey, and glad to have you involved with us along this road.

Ever Forward,



Deb Ryun
Executive Director

RESILIENT ROOTS

HOW PRAIRIE PLANTS PROTECT THE WATERSHED

While it is easy to focus on the land and water immediately adjacent to the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, conservation efforts throughout the 7,800 square mile watershed is critical for water quality and climate resiliency. Take a look below at the incredible anchors these plants and their root systems are to the ecosystem.

Compass Plant



photo Dan Mullen/ Flickr CC

Switchgrass



photo kswildflower.org

Big Bluestem



photo kswildflower.org

Little Bluestem



photo kswildflower.org



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CRITICAL ROLE NATIVE PLANTS PLAY IN OUR WATERSHED



Scan this QR code with your phone's camera to watch our Youth Summit 2023 Webinar with Alex Bouthilet, Seed Farm Manager, St. Croix Wetland Management District, or visit youtube.com/@wildriversconservancy

LIKE A DIVERSE PRAIRIE, OUR TEAM REFLECTS THE NEEDS OF THE WATERSHED

We are grateful to have grown our staff, experience, and focus in the natural resources department while our friends at the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway have made additions to their talented team as well. We recently sat down for a conversation with Marc White, Cassie Hargrave, and Allissa Reynolds to better get to know them and their passion for conservation work. To best get to know new Wild Rivers Conservancy and NPS staff, consider attending an upcoming event or volunteering with us through our Riverway Volunteer Program.

MARC WHITE

Natural Resources Manager

Marc, you bring a wealth of knowledge to our team, including a lot of experience from your years at the renowned Schlitz Audobahn Nature Center in Milwaukee. Tell us a little about your time there.

I take pride in building strong teams, leading conservation efforts and bring nonprofit organizational knowledge. A highlight of my time at Schlitz Audobahn Nature Center was writing and securing a \$575,000 grant to restore critical habitat prone to storm water runoff and erosion. We used natural solutions such as increasing native plant biodiversity, removing concrete dams, and removing invasive species from the affected area.

What experience and knowledge can our supporters and partners expect you to bring to Wild Rivers Conservancy and the Riverway?

I have the ability to integrate education, conservation, and nonprofit administration to help shape successful organizations. I am a strong believer in making humans the solution to ecological issues. We as humans need to be part of the ecosystem, and build a relationship with the natural world. I call this way of thinking ecological citizenship.

As you get up to speed with our programs, watershed, and trusted partners, what excites you the most about the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers and watershed?

I've worked a lot with sturgeon for 9 years at Riveredge Nature Center. We started a sturgeon rearing program to imprint juvenile sturgeon on the upper Milwaukee river. I'm excited to jump into the native mussel work that the Conservancy and partners are doing. I bet there is a lot of crossover in the learnings we took away from the sturgeon rearing project. I'm looking forward to learn more about the St. Croix and Namekagon region and how we can preserve it better.

When you are not protecting land, combating invasives and coordinating with partners what do you like to do in your free time?

I like to fish, kayak, and tandem bike with my wife. I'm also excited to get back into fly fishing now that I'm near the St. Croix and its tributaries. My wife and I love to attend my son's jazz trombone performances at Lawrence University, where he is currently going to school.

How can supporters and the public best support your team's natural resources work?

Take opportunities to share your commitment to nature with young people. Introduce them early and the resulting impact will last for years.

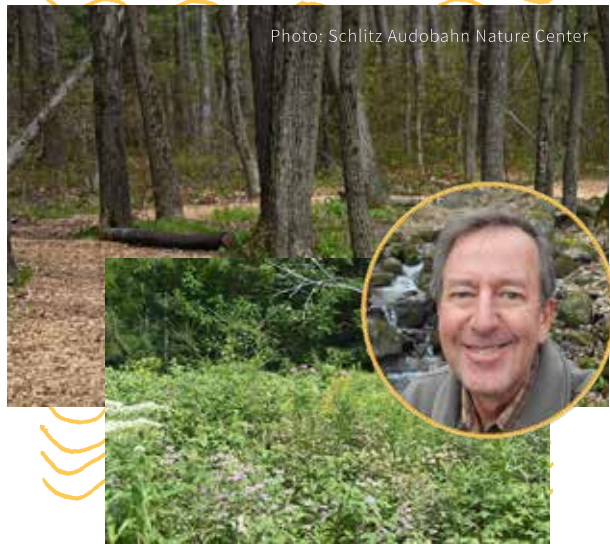


Photo: Riveredge Nature Center

CASSIE HARGRAVE

Invasive Species Field Technician

What inspired you to make the career change to the Invasive Species field?

I wanted to be outside everyday and connect with nature. I want to be part of making this space positive, available, and protected for future generations to love and explore.

For the readers at home, what is the role of an Invasive Species Field Technician?

My main focus this year is public zebra mussel education and how to prevent the spread of the invasive species. I am also excited to work on the set up and running of new mobile decontamination units at boat landings.

What is one thing the public can do to help you combat invasives, and where can they learn more about infected bodies of water?

Clean, drain, and dry your boat or kayak after you have it in any body of water. It only takes a small amount of water to spread juvenile zebra mussels! Readers can learn more at wildriversconservancy.org/protect-restore/



NEW STAFF AT THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Allissa Reynolds

Environmental Protection Specialist, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

What is the core focus of a NPS Environmental Protection Specialist?

- 1 Working with external partners on projects on adjacent lands that have a potential to impact the river. An example would be coordinating with local partners and agencies to ensure bridge replacements maintain or improve the free-flowing condition and Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORV) of the river. This can include mussel or bat surveys, species relocation, wildlife corridors, visual improvements, or a host of other measures to protect the Riverway.
- 2 Compliance for park-initiated projects, like prescribed burning or infrastructure maintenance to ensure natural and cultural resources are protected. The compliance can vary widely but generally includes natural and cultural resource review, at the minimum.
- 3 Planning efforts, such as the Comprehensive River Management Plan that's in development, to help guide the future management of Riverway activities.
- 4 Natural resource support, such as prescribed fire and wildfire suppression. My background is in terrestrial ecology, fire management and forestry, so I'll use this experience to support ongoing efforts at the park.

Why is your work important to protect the river and plan for future generations to come?

Yes! I like to think of my role as the Lorax of the St. Croix Riverway, in that it's my job to speak for the river. Fortunately, I'm one of many folks with this resource-first mentality. That's the primary focus of my work, to ensure the potential river impacts are considered and mitigated in current project planning discussions, and to help develop guidance and planning documents.

What about the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway excites you the most?

The legacy of this Riverway and the land ethic of the people that have enjoyed it for centuries is a testament to the inherent value of this place. I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to learn from the many residents, visitors, advocates, and stewards of this amazing and beautiful place.

Upcoming Wild Rivers Conservancy Events

Learn more at wildriversconservancy.org/events



CELEBRATE SPRING AND THE UPCOMING OPEN WATER SEASON WITH US AT WILD RIVERS FESTIVAL

Friday, May 3rd, 5:00 PM

Meet and greet with local kayak outfitters, tour guides, fishing outfitters, and more. Find everything you need to make the most of the wild and scenic St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers.

Hosted by

45th Parallel Distillery & Eatery

1570 Madison Avenue | New Richmond, WI 54017



FREE AND OPEN TO ALL AGES | SILENT AUCTION | PRODUCT DEMOS



GROW YOUR LOVE FOR THE RIVER ON A GUIDED DAY PADDLE

Birding By Sound Paddle | Sunday, May 26, 2024

Birds and Bees Paddle | Saturday, July 20, 2024

Fish of the Namekagon Paddle | Sunday, July 28, 2024

Sunset Paddle | Friday, August 16, 2024

Invasive Species Paddle | Sunday, August 18, 2024

Fall Colors Paddle | Saturday, September 28, 2024

Buy Tickets at wildriversconservancy.org/events

Photo: T. Stofferahn, Wild Rivers Conservancy



MANY WAYS TO SUPPORT THE SAME MISSION

At Wild Rivers Conservancy, we're dedicated to preserving the ecological integrity of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway. Just as these rivers flow and evolve, there are multiple avenues for you to support our efforts. Your support fuels our growth and impact in preserving these natural treasures. We invite you to explore the various ways you can support us below:



MAKE A DONATION TODAY

Support the Conservancy by making a donation today using the provided envelope or by scanning the QR code to the left. Your contribution allows us to continue and expand our programs, protect more acres of land, and inspire more Riverway stewards.



BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER

Join our growing community of sustaining donors and watch your impact grow over time. Monthly giving provides a stable foundation for our work, allowing us to plan and grow our initiatives steadily. By committing to a monthly donation, you become a vital part of our ongoing growth and success in preserving and protecting our natural landscapes.



DONATE THROUGH A DONOR ADVISED FUND

A donor advised fund (DAF) is a simple, tax advantageous way to support the Riverway. With your strategic giving, you can help us expand our reach, develop innovative programs, and secure the future of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway. By leveraging your DAF, you play a crucial role in fostering our continued growth and impact.



APPRECIATED STOCK

Donating appreciated stocks allows you to maximize your impact and receive potential tax benefits. By contributing stocks, you help fuel the growth of our conservation efforts and ensure the long-term sustainability of our work along the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway.



MAKE A QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION

Satisfy your required minimum distribution while supporting the Riverway by making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) to the Conservancy. Because the gift goes directly to the Conservancy, the gift may be excluded from your taxable income. Your support through a QCD allows us to continue expanding our conservation projects and engaging communities in environmental stewardship.



DONATE TO THE CONSERVANCY ENDOWMENT FUND

Invest in the long-term growth and sustainability of the Conservancy by donating to our endowment fund managed by the St. Croix Valley Foundation. By supporting our endowment, you ensure ongoing growth and resilience of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway for generations to come.



INCLUDE THE CONSERVANCY IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS

Leaving a gift in your will offers an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. By including Wild Rivers Conservancy in your estate plans, you can guarantee that your dedication to preserving this natural treasure endures for years to come. Legacy gifts, whether through bequests a retirement beneficiary designation, or life insurance policies provide critical support for our ongoing mission.

Visit wildriversconservancy.org/support or email development@wildriversconservancy.org to get started.

Thank you for your support of our Riverway and Wild Rivers Conservancy. However you chose to give, we can achieve our vision of a thriving watershed, forever accessible, scenic, and wild with your support.



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Front and back cover photos: Craig Blacklock

