

20
25

ANNUAL REPORT



WILD RIVERS

ST. CROIX CONSERVANCY NAMEKAGON

Photo: Owen Anderson



Wild Rivers Conservancy is the official nonprofit partner of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

Our Vision

A thriving watershed, forever accessible, scenic and wild.

Our Mission

Inspire stewardship to forever ensure the rare ecological integrity of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway.

Board of Directors

2026, Current

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2026, Current

Matt Poppleton, Executive Director
Owen Anderson, Outdoor Program Coordinator
Rose Armstrong, Environmental Educator, Seasonal
Alex Bouthilet, Seed Farm Manager
Jennifer Hutchins Farrell, Business Manager
Will Jenkins, Director of Development
Hanna Mierow, Development Associate
Katrina Schlicker, Environmental Education Coordinator
Tanner Stofferahn, Communications & Marketing Coordinator
Sierra Stukenholtz, Volunteer Coordinator
Wendy Tremblay, Director of Community Engagement
Kylee Wesbrook, Invasive Species Field Technician
Marc White, Natural Resources Manager
October Yates, Outdoor Program Specialist, Seasonal
Maria Young, Invasive Species Coordinator

A YEAR OF RESILIENCE, PARTNERSHIP, AND LOOKING AHEAD

There is something extraordinary about the people who care for the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers.

The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is both nationally recognized and locally cherished. As one of America's original National Scenic Riverways, it protects an extraordinary landscape, but it is the people who bring it to life. Volunteers who repeatedly roll up their sleeves to help where needed. Landowners restoring forests and wetlands. Educators connecting young people to the Riverway. Donors, partners, and community members who quietly invest their time, talent, and resources to ensure these rivers remain accessible, wild and scenic for future generations.

As we reflect on 2025, one theme stands above all others: the power of partnership.

When a 43-day federal government shutdown challenged park operations, Wild Rivers Conservancy and the National Park Service demonstrated the strength of our enduring partnership. Together, we responded to immediate needs while strengthening our shared planning and vision for the future of the Riverway.

Throughout the year, we also found new ways to connect people to the Riverway through innovative partnerships, expanded educational opportunities, and welcoming outdoor experiences. At the same time, we advanced collaborative conservation efforts across the watershed. From protecting forests and restoring habitat to slowing the spread of invasive species, every effort demonstrates that lasting stewardship depends on people working together.

While responding to today's needs, we also invested in tomorrow. We welcomed six new members to our Board of Directors, launched the development of our next strategic plan, and, thanks to generous foundation partners, strengthened the Conservancy's capacity to think boldly and expand our impact for years to come.

The stories throughout this report demonstrate what is possible when people unite around a shared purpose. Every student inspired, volunteer engaged, acre protected, and dollar invested reflects a community committed to caring for a place that belongs to all of us.

To our volunteers, donors, partners, board, staff, and our colleagues at the National Park Service—thank you. Your commitment makes this work possible and reminds us that the future of this nationally recognized and locally cherished Riverway is brighter because we care for it together.

Together, we are inspiring stewardship to forever ensure the rare ecological integrity of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway.



Matt Poppleton
Executive Director
Wild Rivers Conservancy



Loralee DiLorenzo
Board Chair
Wild Rivers Conservancy



Craig Hansen
Superintendent
St. Croix National
Scenic Riverway

Community Engagement

In partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) at the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, our Community Engagement program provides opportunities for people to discover, explore and steward the Riverway. Our goal is to foster and increase awareness of this National Park, break down access barriers for all to enjoy the Riverway, and increase community and watershed stewardship through five key programs: Rivers Are Alive, Explore Wild Rivers, Riverway Volunteers, Summer Internships, Community Outreach.



St. Croix Youth Summit

The St. Croix Youth Summit is a virtual event for students and classrooms who want to learn about the incredible ecology of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. This year's theme was "Go With the Flow," allowing us to understand how we connect to the world around us.

This year, we had 618 students register for our St. Croix Youth Summit! During Earth week, 484 students were able to tune in live to hear from amazing professionals.

Learn more about St. Croix Youth Summit:
wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore/rivers-are-alive/

Summer Internships

Since 2014, the summer internship program has been successful in building capacity for the Riverway and providing opportunities for young adults to build skills and gain experience working with conservation professionals. Intern activities included creating summer camp curriculum, monitoring for oak wilt, supporting mussel surveys on the Namekagon River, and more.

4 Invasive Species Interns
1 River Connections Intern
2 Resource Management Interns
6 Park Guide Interns

13 Total Interns
5,397 Hours
\$187,762 Estimated Value

Learn more about the joint internship program:
wildriversconservancy.org/internships



Photo: K. Schlicker



Rivers Are Alive is our K-12 environmental education program in partnership with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Field trips occur throughout the watershed at National Park sites, state & city parks, and schools along the Riverway, and at schools engaging riverway youth.

114 Field trips

4,523 Field trip participants

1,677 Youth Summit attendees (total)

339 Wild River Journey participants

6,539 Total Youth Served

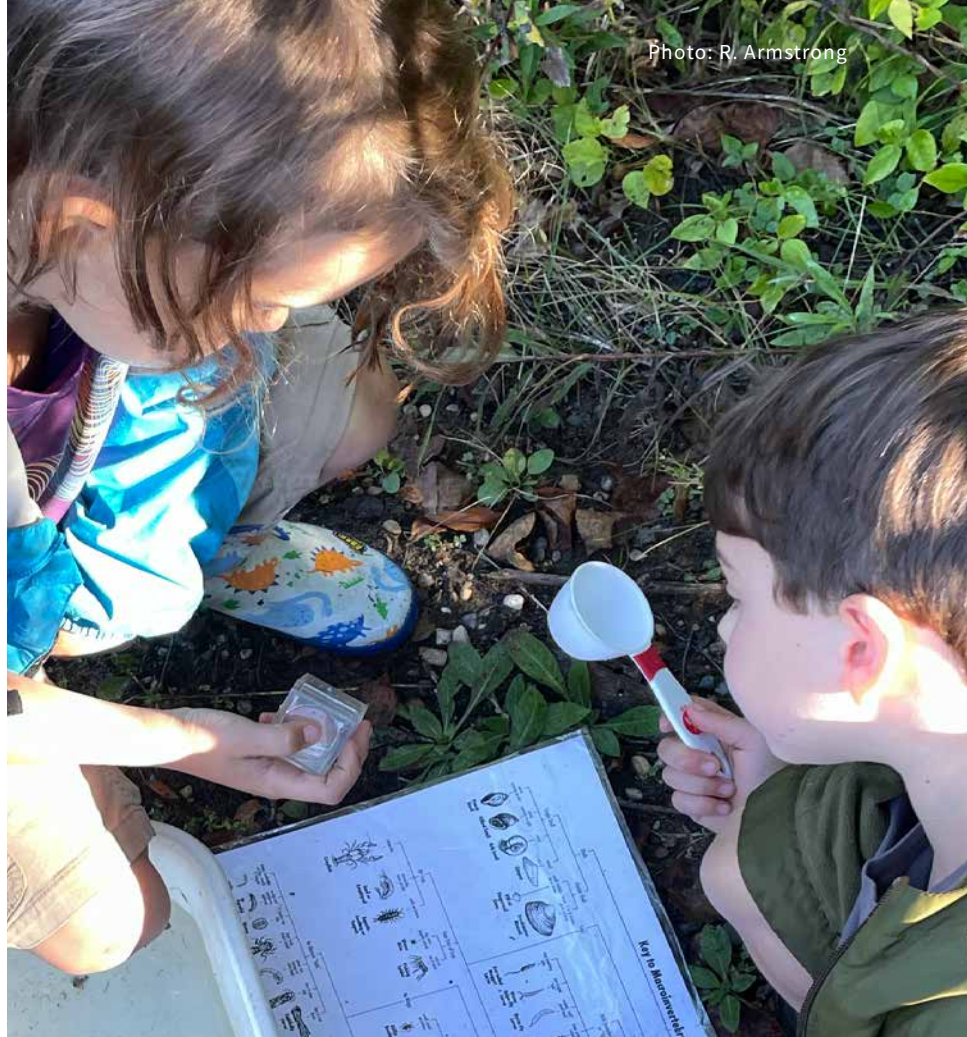


Photo: R. Armstrong

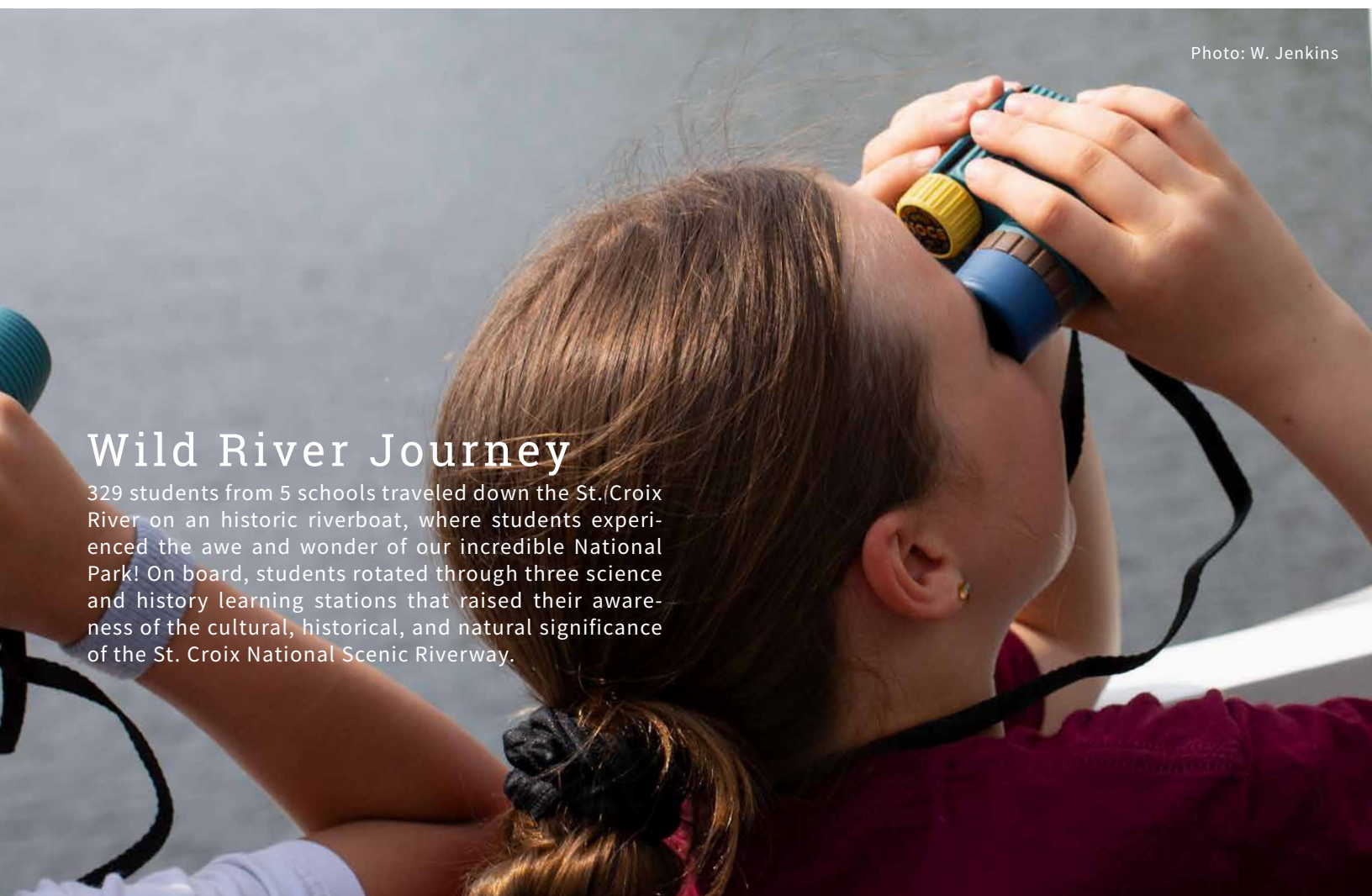


Photo: W. Jenkins

Wild River Journey

329 students from 5 schools traveled down the St. Croix River on an historic riverboat, where students experienced the awe and wonder of our incredible National Park! On board, students rotated through three science and history learning stations that raised their awareness of the cultural, historical, and natural significance of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.



Photo: O. Anderson



Photo: O. Anderson

Explore Wild Rivers

Since 2016, our outdoor programs have connected people with the Riverway through year-round outdoor activities, offering accessible, affordable, and inclusive experiences. Focused on first time park visitors and underserved communities, participants have enjoyed birding, kayaking, camping, snowshoeing, hiking, ice fishing, and shore fishing.

74 Programs offered
40 General public events
34 Focused partner events

1,146 Total Participants

Wild Connections Programming

2025 marked the start of our Wild Connections series of events. Wild Connections is a program designed to offer new ways for people to engage with the Riverway through partnerships with other local organizations. In 2025, we partnered with Fishing For All to offer Wild Connections: Explore Fly Fishing, an event that expanded our Fly Fishing 101 program with a chance to float on a drift boat, fish with real flies, and get new expert advice! This was a success for bringing people together to meet, learn new skills, and get connected with how to continue further.

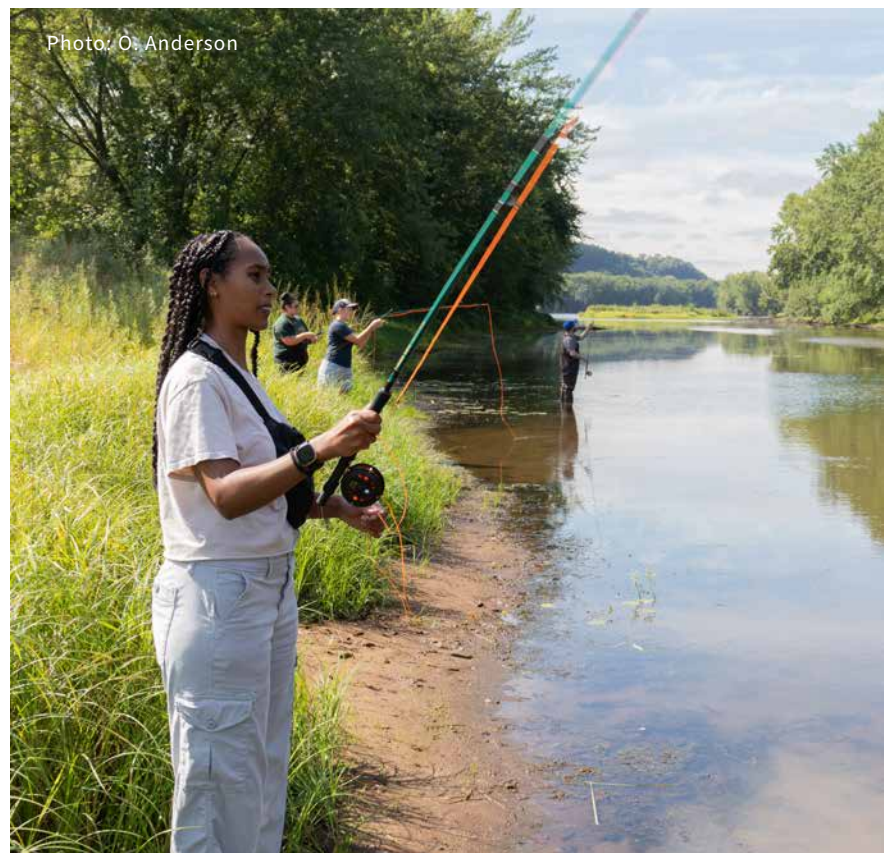


Photo: O. Anderson

RIVERWAY VOLUNTEERS

Our co-managed volunteer program with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway supported over 250 volunteers as they served the St. Croix, Namekagon, and the greater watershed. Volunteers helped students make new discoveries, worked to restore native habitats, supported important behind-the-scenes projects, and met visitors where they were to share information and facilitate new connections with the Riverway.

261 Riverway Volunteers in 2025
5,985 Volunteer hours
\$208,239 Estimated value of service

Learn more about our volunteer program:
wildridersconservancy.org/volunteer/



Photo: W. Jenkins

Photo: A. Toering



Namekagon River Cleanup

During our largest volunteer event of the year, this crew of 65 eager volunteers dedicated their Saturday to the Namekagon River. Collectively they donated over 400 hours of service to care for their national park, and were able to remove 24 bags of trash and other large items from the river! Thank you to Hayward Fly Fishing Company for working alongside the Conservancy to organize another successful cleanup

65 Volunteers
463 Volunteer hours
24+ bags of trash removed

Join us for the 2026 Namekagon River Cleanup on Saturday, September 12th



INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION & MONITORING EFFORTS

Our invasive species program works to prevent the spread of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species through early detection monitoring, targeted outreach and education, and collaborative management. Partnerships with federal, state, and local organizations allow watershed-wide coverage of our invasive species program.

Wild Rivers Conservancy's mobile decontamination unit (above) made its debut at Osceola Landing on July 12th, 2025. The unit uses low pressure, high temperature water to kill and remove aquatic invasive species on watercraft entering or exiting the St. Croix River.

Zebra Mussel And Spiny Waterflea Monitoring

In 2025, 70 samples were collected from Riverway and lake sites. All 70 samples were analyzed for the presence of zebra mussels and 27 of the 70 samples were analyzed for spiny water fleas. These sampling efforts resulted in the discovery of one new lake/river site with zebra mussel veligers (microscopic larvae) in 2025.

Watercraft Inspections

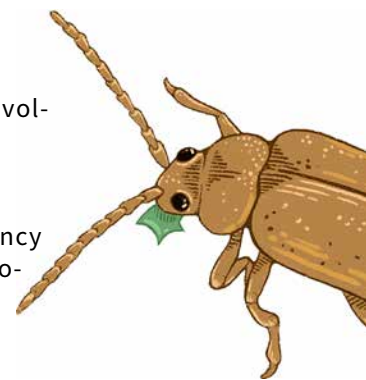
Our four invasive species interns spent 52 hours at boat landings on the St. Croix River, encouraging river users to clean, drain, and dry their watercraft and equipment. They reached more than 64 boaters at landings, resulting in zero positive aquatic invasive species (AIS) occurrences. Boat launches included in the inspection program were: Osceola Landing, Shafer, MN, and Lion's Park Landing, St. Croix Falls, WI.

Watercraft inspections are valuable for preventing AIS introductions at launches and for teaching watercraft users the best practices for inspecting and decontaminating their watercraft to further prevent the spread of AIS in the St. Croix River Watershed.

Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Project

The Conservancy and NPS comanaged volunteer program, Riverway Volunteers, recruited 16 volunteers to raise and release *Galerucella* beetles as a biocontrol for purple loosestrife.

In total, volunteers contributed 287 hours and released 4,500 beetles in high priority purple loosestrife management areas within the St. Croix Watershed in Minnesota in 2025. Conservancy staff worked to raise and release 2,300 *Galerucella* beetles in Wisconsin in 2025 to use as a biocontrol for purple loosestrife. (Art: Sophia Larson)



Purple Loosestrife Monitoring

Purple loosestrife monitoring efforts were expanded to include: 18.5 miles of the Sunrise River, 14.3 miles of the Snake River, The Matthew Loury State Trail in Chengwatana State Forest, St. Croix State Forest, Carlos Avery State Wildlife Management Area, Bean Dam Wildlife Management Area/Snake River State Forest, Martin-Island-Linwood Lakes Regional Park, and Ki-Chi-Saga County Park.

Roadside Monitoring

In 2025, the Conservancy and NPS partnered with Chisago County, MN to survey for roadside populations of invasive phragmites and purple loosestrife in: Harris Township, Lent Township, Stacy Township, Franconia Township, Chisago Lakes N Township, Chisago Lakes S Township. Roadside monitoring led to the discovery of no new invasive phragmites populations, 16 new native phragmites populations, and 48 new purple loosestrife stands. This information is valuable for developing a comprehensive management plan for purple loosestrife and invasive phragmites in Chisago County.

Youth Education & Community Outreach

Invasive Species Educational Trainings & Volunteer Events: Invasive Species Workshop with Chisago County (MN), Project RED with Polk County (WI), Starry Trek with Chisago County (MN), Snapshot Day Training with Polk County (WI), Water Action Volunteer (WAV) Training with Polk County.

Rivers Are Alive (RAA), the K-12 environmental education program conducted in partnership with NPS, helps students foster a connection to the rivers and lakes in their watershed through hands-on learning, interactive games, and art activities. Students learn about habitat components, the diversity of life beneath the surface of the water, the interconnectedness of all things, their local National Park, and invasive species and how they impact our wild & scenic treasure. Over 3,283 students were reached with invasive species education in 2024!





Photo: A. Monti

LAND PROTECTION & OUTREACH



Photo: W. Tremblay

The land stewardship program operates with the knowledge that what happens within the watershed impacts the river. Beyond the Riverway boundary, more than 75% of the watershed's forest habitat remains in private landownership, where the threats of development, habitat fragmentation, and conversion to agriculture continue to exacerbate.

In 2025, Wild Rivers Conservancy sent out four physical mailings to 583 landowners within the Minnesota side of the St. Croix Watershed. All land stewardship mailings were sent to a targeted landowner audience. Programs advertised in the mailings are best suited to landowners with over 40 acres of high-quality natural lands.

Land stewardship initiatives were fostered through educational trainings and volunteer events: Tree ID hike with Minnesota Women's Woodland Network, Tree Seed Collection Volunteer Event (above), Estate Planning Workshop for Landowners, Managing Your Land for Birds hike, Land Stewardship Walk & Talk, Tree Planting Volunteer Event, Forest Health Happy Hour, and the Forests in Fall Day Paddle.



FUNDRAISING

Every gift of support the Conservancy receives matters, and is the foundation that allows us to accomplish so much for the Watershed.

Welcoming and thoughtful events allow our supporters space to connect, share a love for the National Scenic Riverway, and introduce others to our mission.

In 2025 we introduced “River Mixer” events. Held at local businesses, the Conservancy brought together supporters, hospitality, and an opportunity for new followers to find their right fit for getting involved.

In September, our sold out annual fundraiser, Forever Wild, captured the focused energy from our valued donors to fund our continued success in 2026.

To end the year and fall season, 150 attended another sold out year of the Wild & Scenic Film Festival. These films highlighted the parallels between the work happening for public lands around the country.

[Top] A film still from “About Damn Time” shown at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival the Conservancy hosted at Surly Brewing.

[Middle] Added retail products at select events gave many donors a way to physically represent their passion for the Riverway, and helped us raise important funds.

[Bottom] Social gatherings, “River Mixers” brought new and longtime supporters together, at local Riverway establishments.

Photos: Zoe Yates, Wild and Scenic Film Fest, Wild Rivers Conservancy



OUR PARK PARTNERS - THE ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY



In 2025, the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway welcomed more than 852,000 visitors who came to explore, learn, and connect with the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers.

From hands-on programs that inspired river stewards of all ages to the careful upkeep of 48 NPS-owned landings and 138 NPS-owned campsites, the National Park Service worked year-round to support safe, memorable experiences for everyone. Formal partnerships with 43 local businesses (commercial use authorization holders) helped thousands of people enjoy paddle sports, fishing, tubing, and other adventures on and in the Riverway. Effective collaboration with Tribal Nations, gateway communities, countless partners, and additional stakeholders facilitated the stewardship required to maintain these special rivers.

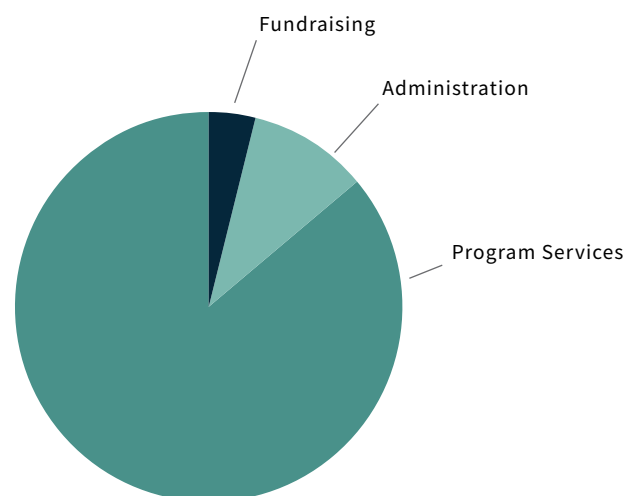
Behind the scenes, NPS staff advanced the Riverway's comprehensive river management plan—set to shape future river stewardship—and continued vital work to enhance forest health and conserve federally listed native mussels. Together, these efforts - and many more - showcase a year of dedicated care, community connection, and a shared commitment to the long-term health of the Riverway.

2025 FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT

Expenses

86% Program Services
10% Administration
4% Fundraising

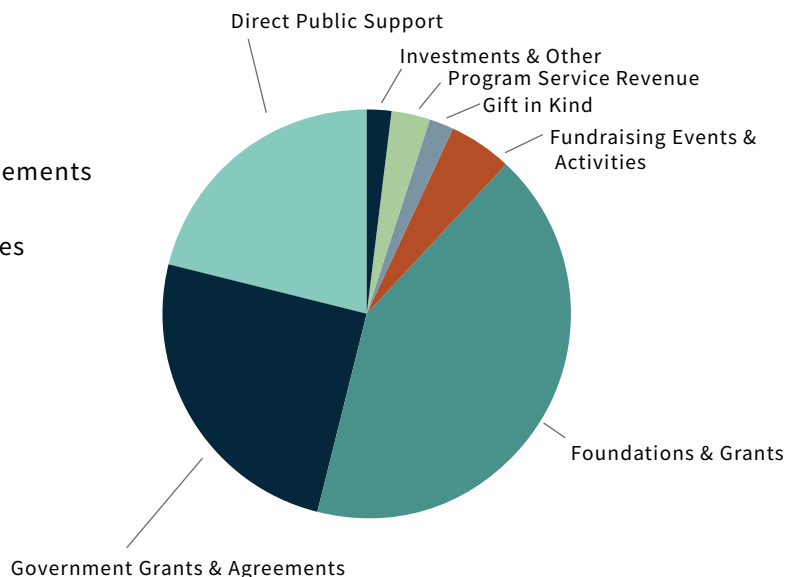
\$1,506,571 Total Expenses



Income

21% Direct Public Support
25% Government Grants and Agreements
42% Foundations and Grants
5% Fundraising Events & Activities
2% Gift in Kind
3% Program Service Revenue
2% Investments & Other

\$1,994,204 Total Income



Assets

\$ 846,859 Current Assets
\$ 229,575 Other Assets
\$ 187,556 Property & Equipment

\$ 1,263,990 Total Assets

Liability & Equity

\$ 49,282 Accounts Payable
\$ 82,506 Other Current Liabilities
\$ 131,788 Total Current Liabilities
\$ 1,132,202 Net Assets

\$ 1,263,990 Total Liabilities and Equity

In 2025, Wild Rivers Conservancy received grant and project funding for several major initiatives that will be completed in 2026. This timing resulted in grant and project revenue being recognized in 2025, while the corresponding project expenses will be incurred in 2026.

2025 FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

Your support matters to us. This list represents gifts given from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025, and includes in-kind and memorial gifts. Every attempt was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. We sincerely regret any errors or omissions. You may call our Development office at 715-483-3300 with questions or corrections.

\$10,000 +

Anonymous [3]
Julia Kaemmer Fund of HRK Foundation
Carson and Amanda Kipfer
Bridget and Ross Levin
Thomas and Dianne Polasik
Xcel Energy

Christina and Dwight Porter
School District of Osceola
David Sonstegard
Matt Spector and Lisa Vincent
Ray and Caroline Stacey
Stillwater Area Schools
Heidi and Michael Stofferahn
The Bitworks Inc.
Presbury West

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Susan Miles and Bob Wilmers
Richard and Valerie Moore
Cynthia and John O'Halloran
Cathy Anson and Peter Vaughan
Piper Sandler Companies
James Reid
Neil and Stephanie Riley
River Market Community Co-op
Dr. Thomas Rumreich and Ruth Ronning
Rustic Roots Winery
Dr. Steve and Donna Schletty
School District of New Richmond
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Karen Swisher
Taylors Falls Scenic Boat Tours
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Ted Blank Luxury Travel & Adventure
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John and Gracy Waugh
Weekes Family Foundation
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White Bear Lake Area Public Schools
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Philip Willkie

\$9,999 - 5,000

Sally Arneson and Steve Scallon
Beckman Design Studio
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Dr. David and Sandy Brandt
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John Velin and Jane Harper
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Terry and Sharon Poppleton
Stantec
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Brian Van Abel

\$2,499 - 1,000

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45th Parallel Distillery
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Thomas Anderson and Nancy Conger
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Jennifer Gross
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Richard and Kathryn Hansen
Einar and Michelle Hanson
Kathy Harker and Curt Moe
Becky Hendrickson
Michael and Lindsay Herbert
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Enya Hinck
Mark and Briley Holloway
Josie Holman and Gerry Mroska
Ward Denaway and Mary Ippel
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Howard and Shannon Killilea
Andrew and Karen Kramer
Richard and Sally Leider
Lee Lewis and Steve Bubul
Sarah Lovegreen
Frederick C Markwardt
Daniel and Nan McGuinness
Anonymous

\$4,999 - 2,500

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School District
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Deborah Borek
Bill and Ginny Buell
Pat and Jack Cahoon
Kevin Callahan
Mary Croft
Gretchen Davidson
Ernest and Sarah Lehmann Family Fund
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Dorothy Goldie
Craig and Monica Hamer
Gail Hanson
Hayward Fly Fishing Company
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Daniel Jansen
Todd King
Lee Lynch and Terry Saario
Jennifer and Scott Mason
Jeanne and Jack Matlock
Nocs Provisions LLC
David and Marla Olson

\$999 - 500

Anonymous
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Andersen Windows and Doors
Angry Minnow
Rebecca Anton and Don Grooms
Arrowhead Fly Fishers
Ron and Terry Barczak
Vanessa and Joel Barvels
Belwin Conservancy
Stefano Benvenuti
William Bergstrom
Nancy Berry
Stephen and Claudia Bradley
Lloyd and Shelley Brandon
Clifton Brittain and Peggy Ladner
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 Deluxe Corporation
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 Trisha Duncan
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 Patrick and Martha Gerkey
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 Dan Guenther and Margaret Pennings
 Gerry Gunderson
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 Mark and Deborah Kravik
 Tony Kuehn
 Parke Kunkle
 Dr. Arne and Miriam Lagus
 Peggy Lauritsen and David Rogge
 Lift Bridge Builders
 Jim and Kristen Lindberg
 Heather Logelin and Marc Prokosch
 LS Black Constructors
 Tom and Anna Maakestad
 David Shanteau and Madeleine Kerr
 Michael Madigan
 Marine Village School #4297
 Robert and Jane Marquard
 Sarah McKenzie and Mark Conrad
 Shellee Mierow
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 Catherine Nelson
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 Timothy Old and Morgan Clifford
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 Doug Plunkett
 Private Sector LLC
 Gaylen and Beth Reetz
 Peter and Anne Reich
 Catharine Reid
 Sapphire Realty
 Laurie Schmidt and Jeff Comins
 Amy Short and Tom Sedlack
 Michael and Pamela Smith

The WaterShed Cafe
 Tom Triplett
 Gerald and Nancy Viebrock
 Washington County 4H
 Curtis West
 Larry and Mary Whitaker
 Michael Wilhelmi and Anne Bunkers
 Jeffrey Willius and Sally Gibson
 Ann Wolff
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\$499 - 250

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 Laurel Anderson and David Morris
 Joseph and Lynne Ardolf
 David Babcock
 Alice O'Brien Berquist and Charlie Berquist
 Bjorn and Elizabeth Bjornson
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 Rebekah Mansour
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 Stuart Milsten and Nicole Emery
 Donald Mitchell and Barbara Staub
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 Tim and Francine O'Brien
 Jena Paquette
 Rosetta Peters
 Adam Peterson and Annie Becker Peterson
 Polaris Industries LP
 Matt and Kristen Poppleton
 Public Lands
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 Tim Reimann
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 Kathy and Doug Scharfenberg
 Katrina Schlicker
 Sarah Schmiede
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 Ernie Steck
 Madison Steffen
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 Shane Walker
 St. Croix Valley Foundation
 Washington County
 John and Susan Weitz
 Steve and Terri Wilcox
 Doug Williams
 Monica Zachay and Dan Jorgenson
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 Ice Age Trail Alliance
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KNOWING RIVERS & THOSE WHO WORK TO PROTECT THEM

I started at the Conservancy in early 2025 so this was very much a learning year for me. From better understanding how the Conservancy operates, to getting time on the water, to better understanding the importance of this entire Riverway. 2025 brought many challenges but as evidenced by the preceding pages of this Annual Report, those challenges were no match for our dedicated staff and supporters.

There are a few profound moments from 2025 that stick with me. On a 3-Day Paddle on the Namekagon there was a short amount of time where I was alone on a bend in the river and I just sat there and looked around. Calm, clean waters. Beautiful Northwoods scenery. It's pretty hard to have an experience like that and not come away willing to do most anything to ensure it stays exactly like that. Then at our Annual Fundraiser, we had over 200 people come together. A show of force. Over 200 people who love a Riverway and are willing to support it with their time, money and talents. From a moment alone on the river to a dinner filled with supporters, it's quite the contrast but illustrates the importance of quiet places of retreat supported by passionate folks.

As we make our way through 2026, there's no doubt we're pushing the Conservancy forward, and with continually mounting threats and challenges, it won't get any easier. I also know there are thousands of you out there willing to support the work we do. I truly look forward to working with each of you to forever ensure the rare ecological integrity of the St. Croix and Namekagon Riverway.

Together we can make sure the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is a thriving watershed, forever accessible, scenic and wild for current and future generations.

Will Jenkins



Will Jenkins

Director of Development
Wild Rivers Conservancy

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