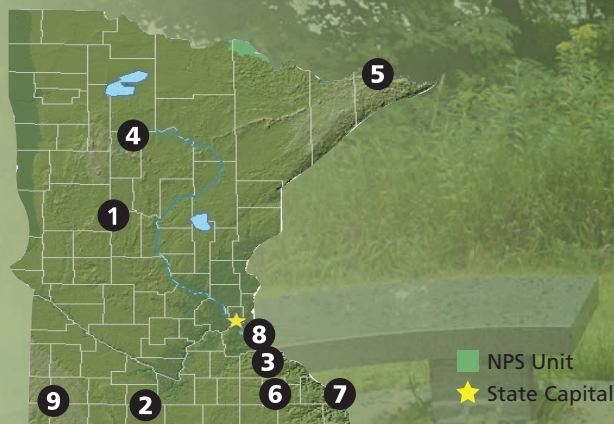




Minnesota News



Resting spot along Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail. Photo: Bolton & Menk

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2013

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Brainerd-Baxter Mississippi Riverfront
Cities of Brainerd & Baxter
2. Des Moines River Valley State Trail
Friends of Jackson County Trails
3. Great Rivers Confluence Project - Phase 2
Friends of Freedom Park
4. Headwaters of the Mississippi River Water Trail
Chippewa National Forest Partnership
5. Heart of the Continent Partnership: Sustainable Gateway Community Initiative
Heart of the Continent Partnership
6. Indian Heights Park Community Partnership
RNeighbors
7. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/
Mississippi River Trail
Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
8. Mississippi River Waterway Access & Trails Assistance
City of Newport
9. Poplar Creek Trail
City of Luverne

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

Recent Successes

Camp Ripley / Veterans State Trail

An exciting new multi-use trail planning effort in north central Minnesota is gaining both local and national attention. It is called the Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail (CRVST). The CRVST will be one of the first, true multi-use trails in Minnesota, accommodating a wide range of motorized as well as non-motorized users. When completed, the CRVST will provide a connection between Crow Wing State Park and the Soo Line Trail, effectively linking the Central Lakes, Lake Wobegon, Soo Line, Paul Bunyan, Heartland, and the Mi-Gi-Zi trails into one continuous estimated 400-mile recreational trail. Along the way, trail users will have access to Charles A. Lindbergh State Park, the Crow Wing, the Mississippi River, and many other natural and historic sites. In addition, this trail will be part of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT), a designated route from the Mississippi River Headwaters (in Minnesota) to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Minnesota RTCA, as part of the CRVST project team and Advisory Committee, has been working with community leaders, both public and private, and a project engineering and planning consultant, to complete a CRVST Master Plan that is part of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources state trail planning process. Numerous public open houses, site visits, photo and field documentation, and recreational as well as environmental analysis has been undertaken as key elements of the Plan, and the project is now in its initial implementation phase. Funding, as well as key legislative and community support, has, and continues to reflect both local and statewide interests.

Current Projects

1. Brainerd/Baxter

Mississippi Riverfront Corridor Partnership Plan

Project Partners: Cities of Brainerd and Baxter

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Brainerd and Baxter

Congressional District: MN - 8

Project Goal

Implement and complete the Brainerd-Baxter Mississippi Riverfront Master Plan. Plan and implement connections to regional trail networks including the Glacial Lakes Trail and the Camp Ripley Veterans State Trail.

NPS Role

Achieve consensus in Brainerd and Baxter communities for the Master Plan and implementation of a Mississippi River Riverfront Downtown Revitalization, planning and design of new and existing trails connections within the area, and links to a regional trails network.

2. Des Moines River Valley State Trail

Project Partner: Friends of Jackson County Trails

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Murray, Cottonwood and Jackson Counties

Congressional District: MN - 1, 7

Project Goal

The shorter term outcome is to complete several trail segments in the City of Jackson and in southern Jackson County while transforming the Friends group into a sustainable organization to carry on trail efforts. The long term outcome is a 50 to 70-mile multi-use trail from the Des Moines River headwaters to the Iowa border. The trail will connect with the Dickinson County, Iowa trail system and Iowa's Mini-Wakan State Park.

NPS Role

Work with local partners and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff to achieve approval of the draft master plan for the Des Moines River Valley State Trail. Assist in restructuring the Friends of Jackson County Trails organization, developing community and political support for trails, and creating a fundraising strategy for trail development.

3. Great Rivers Confluence Project - Phase 2

Project Partner: Friends of Freedom Park

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Hastings and Afton

Congressional District: MN - 2, 4

Project Goal

Through connections and partnerships, Phase 2 of the project aims to: foster partnerships across national, state, and local divisions; create and adopt a common vision of Great Rivers Preservation and management; and plan and implement land and water recreational opportunities within the MN and WI confluence project area.

NPS Role

Provide continued technical assistance, coordination, and facilitation in the planning and development of recreational opportunities, tourism, mapping formulation, partnerships building, and natural resources protection strategies as part of the Great Rivers Confluence Project.

4. Headwaters of the Mississippi River Water Trail

Project Partner: Chippewa National Forest Partnership

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Lake Itasca State Park to Grand Rapids

Congressional District: MN - 7, 8



Paddling the St. Croix River. Photo: NPS

Project Goal

To work towards the official framework and designation of the Headwaters of the Mississippi River as a National Water Trail.

NPS Role

Provide technical assistance, coordination, and facilitation in the planning and designation of the Headwaters of the Upper Mississippi River as a National Water Trail.

5. Heart of the Continent Connecting Volunteers

Project Partner: Heart of the Continent Partnership

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Ontario

Congressional District: MN - 8

Project Goal

Create a web-based, region-wide clearinghouse to match volunteers with conservation projects on public spaces throughout the 5.5 million-acre Heart of the Continent region. Pilot volunteer projects will take place in 2012 and 2013, with the system's launch in 2013.

NPS Role

Plan, develop, and coordinate the work of the volunteer design team to create the volunteer clearinghouse. Identify and approach community groups and other potential partners to identify projects and recruit volunteers.

Current Projects cont.

6. Indian Heights Park Community Partnership

Project Partner: RNeighbors
RTCA Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Rochester
Congressional District: MN - 1

Project Goal

Enhance the 37-acre natural, passive recreation park, restore and enhance native habitats, celebrate Dakota and other Native American history, improve walking trails, and educate visitors about the cultural history and environment. The site will be preserved as a sacred Native American site while allowing use of the park for nature viewing, walking, and spiritual connection. Trails will connect this park to other parks and trails in Rochester, and the Zumbro River.

NPS Role

Assist in developing a Master Action Plan and a conservation plan for the 37-acre park; assist in identifying funding sources and other resources for implementation, establishing a volunteer program, developing community participation and support, and connecting with national conservation and recreation partners.



Camp Ridley/Veterans State Trail Open House.
Photo: NPS

7. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/Mississippi River Trail

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
RTCA Contact: Rory Robinson
Location: Mississippi River, Ten States
Congressional Districts: AR - 1, 4; IA - 1, 2, 4; IL - 12, 16, 17; KY - 1; LA - 3, 5, 6; MN - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; MO - 1, 2, 3, 8, 9; MS - 2, 3; TN - 8, 9; WI - 3, 7

Project Goal

Continued assistance to the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative (MRCC) with a focus on expanding the Collaborative to additional partners, creating a sustainable forum, and enhancing the organization. Assist MRT with planning and implementation of the Year of Cycling 2013, outreach to local communities to encourage improved recreation, tourism, and community development; development of an organizational strategic plan to support MOU objectives and increase long-term organizational viability; and development of the Mississippi River "blueway" portion of the trail system.

NPS Role

Assist the MRCC with organizational development, outreach to other organizations and agencies, and development and implementation of their strategic and operations plans. Increase MRT's capacity to help develop water and land based trail along the Mississippi River.

8. Mississippi River Waterway Access & Trails Assistance

Project Partner: City of Newport
RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson
Location: Newport
Congressional District: MN - 4

Project Goal

Improved and new recreational public access sites to the Mississippi River in the Community of Newport. Planned and constructed trail linkages to said access points, as well as the new Metro Red Rock Transit Station.

NPS Role

Provide technical and facilitation assistance in the research, planning, and implementation of improved and new Newport community access points to the Mississippi River for boating (motorized and non motorized), fishing, and possible recreational swimming activities. Provide technical and facilitation assistance in the research, planning, and implementation of trail linkages to access points and the new Twin Cities Metro Red Rock Transit Station located in Newport.

9. Poplar Creek Trail

Project Partner: City of Luverne
RTCA Contact: Holly Larson
Location: City of Luverne
Congressional District: MN - 1

Project Goal

A five-mile, multi-use asphalt trail throughout the city that connects 8 local parks, 2 athletic complexes, school facilities, the fairgrounds, and prairie land. This trail will connect to the existing Blue Mounds Bike Trail leading to Blue Mounds State Park, forming a 10-mile loop. The project includes conservation of natural habitat along Poplar Creek, and possibly 8 acres of new park.

NPS Role

Organize and facilitate committee meetings to develop a trail plan. Assist the committee in conducting a trail feasibility assessment, developing community support and involvement, and identifying potential funding sources. Advise the committee on the easement procurement process and permit requirements.

We're Here For You.
Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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2012 Nationwide Partnership Success

2,154 Miles of Trail Developed

1,074 Miles of River Conserved

70,385 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

94% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca



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Recent Successes cont.

Lincoln County Opens Its First Hard Surface Trail

Hole-In-The-Mountain County Park, a hilly, forested park on the Buffalo Ridge, the dividing line between the Missouri and Mississippi River watersheds, is the setting for Lincoln County's first hard-surface trail. The 1.1-mile loop trail opened to the public in November 2012, and represents the initiation of a countywide effort to connect five cities, three major lakes, three county parks, and several city parks with an extensive network of trails. The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program staff assisted in writing the successful application for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Local Trail Connections Grant, and in organizing the Lincoln County Trails Task Force. RTCA staff worked with the Task Force for 18 months to create a plan for the countywide trail system, facilitating meetings as well as providing planning advice, computerized mapping, and a plan layout. The result is the Lincoln County Comprehensive Trail Plan, a combination long range and strategic plan that creates a vision for the entire desired network, identifies 10-year priority trail segments, and outlines implementation steps to build the first four trail segments by 2015. This is an ambitious plan for a county of approximately 5,900 residents in 550 square miles. The Task Force and local officials, however, have been inspired by the positive response to the opening of the first trail, and are determined to continue, and even enhance, trail development efforts. "[The County Commission] is so excited... congratulations on a job well done!" says Task Force member Nancy Beech.

As the Task Force sees it, achieving their vision for a countywide trail network will increase recreational opportunities; connect people to the history, culture, and natural beauty of their county; and increase tourism.



Goodhue Pioneer Trail. Photo: NPS