



Minnesota News



Kayaking on Rice Creek

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2011

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Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail Committee
2. Canby Trail
City of Canby
3. Des Moines River Valley State Trail
Friends of Jackson County Trails
4. Green Corridor - Minnesota River Trail
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5. Heart of the Continent Partnership-Sustainable Gateway Community Initiative
Heart of the Continent Partnership
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9. The Great Rivers Confluence Project
Friends of Freedom Park

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

The Great Rivers Confluence Project – A Regional Partnership Effort

A timely and exciting project is underway, through collaborative efforts, to create and connect water and land trails (including an approximately 17-mile gap area that will serve as a ‘hub’ for many local and regional trails) across two rivers, two states, two National Parks, two rivertown communities, and three counties along the border of western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota. This special area is referred to by local and regional residents as “The Great Rivers Confluence”. The project includes the National Park Service Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) and the National Park Service St. Croix National Scenic River (SACN). Technical and facilitation assistance is being provided by National Park Service RTCA.

Following a number of meetings and “partnership information tours,” a successful Great Rivers Confluence Symposium was held on September 24, 2010. Forty-seven stakeholders representing thirty-five different organizations and political entities from western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota attended the Symposium. As a result, an “action plan” was formulated that includes innovative mapping, a framework for fostering environmental stewardship, possible funding opportunities, and regional tourism/marketing planning.

During the keynote session at the Symposium, an historic Sister Park Agreement was signed between the two National Parks, MNRRA and SACN. While both parks have cooperated in the past, work with the Great Rivers Confluence Project has brought these two parks and superintendents together in this

Current Projects

1. Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail

Project Partner: Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail Committee

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Little Falls

Congressional District(s): 8

Project Goal

The primary outcome of the Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail is to complete a vital link between the Soo Line Trail and the Paul Bunyan Trail. This trail will offer approx. 90 miles of trails on both sides of the Mississippi River. As such, the trail will connect communities to parks in the area as well as promote healthy recreation. Both of these strategic initiatives will be emphasized during all phases of the project.

NPS Role

Assist in the planning and development of a trail adjoining existing State Trails (Soo Line Trail and Paul Bunyan Trail) and the Camp Ripley area along both sides of the Mississippi River. RTCA will facilitate, provide technical assistance, and coordinate the project by engaging local, regional, and statewide partners. Other goals will be determined through Strategic Planning and initial project activities.

2. Canby Trail

Project Partner: City of Canby

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Canby

Congressional District(s): 7

Project Goal

Develop a trail circling the city that connects four local parks, three playgrounds, five athletic complexes, three schools, a fitness center, pool, and a regional park.

NPS Role

Develop a trail plan for a four mile walking, biking, and skating trail around the City of Canby. RTCA staff will work with community and planning team to: identify the preferred

route, organize and facilitate committees, collaborate with government agencies, identify potential funding sources, and obtain approvals to meet major grant timelines.

3. Des Moines River Valley State Trail

Project Partner: Friends of Jackson County Trails

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Lake Shetek in Murray County through Cottonwood and Jackson Counties

Congressional District(s): 1

Project Goal

The long term outcome will be a 50 to 70-mile multi use trail from the Des Moines River headwaters to the Iowa border. A water trail component may be included. The trail will connect with the Dickinson Co. trail system and the Iowa's Mini-Wakan State Park. The shorter term outcome is to complete the first 18-mile segment from Mini-Wakan State Park (IA) to Kilen Woods State Park (MN), of which about four miles will be completed in 2011.

NPS Role

Work with local partners and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff to provide assistance and guidance in developing a master plan for the Des Moines River Valley State Trail, especially regarding conservation, stewardship, and sustainability for the proposed trail. Assist in identifying funding sources.

4. Green Corridor - Minnesota River Trail

Project Partner: Green Corridor Trail Committee

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Granite Falls to Fairfax

Congressional District(s): 7

Project Goal

Plan and develop the Minnesota designated "waterways" trail of the Minnesota River - Segment 2 of approxi-



Hand Shake at Great Rivers Symposium

mately 45 miles.

NPS Role

To facilitate and provide input to the planning and development of the "waterways" trail of the Minnesota River - Segment 2 of approximately 45 miles. Other goals and tasks will be determined.

5. Heart of the Continent Partnership-Sustainable Gateway Community Initiative

Project Partner: Heart of the Continent Partnership

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Northeast Minnesota

Congressional District(s): 1

Project Goal

The goal of the "International Community Congress" is to work together to create community development projects to enhance the sustainability of the region. The vision of the Partnership is, "Within 10 years the people at the center of the North American continent will protect, manage, and enjoy their natural treasures in the region with conscious intent to maintain its culture and ecological linkages.

NPS Role

Provide technical support and advise to the Design Team in planning and implementing the International Com-

Current Projects

munity Congress, a Conservation Fund and Conservation Leadership Network workshop on "Balancing Nature and Commerce in Communities Neighboring Public Lands." The workshop is planned for Fall 2011. Assist in developing community teams to participate in the workshop and follow through with actionable projects.

6. Lincoln County Comprehensive Trails Plan

Project Partner: Lake Benton Area Foundation Trails Committee
RTCA Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Lincoln County
Congressional District(s): 7

Project Goal

The comprehensive trail plan developed with RTCA assistance will result in approximately 15 miles of new trails.

NPS Role

RTCA staff will help to create a planning strategy, build public support and involvement, identify and analyze alternative trail routes, and facilitate the planning process.

7. Mississippi River Trail & Collaborative Support

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
RTCA Contact: David Thomson
Location: Headwaters of Mississippi River in Minnesota to Gulf of Mexico, New Orleans.

"The National Park Service RTCA helped us achieve things that we currently could not have undertaken without their help."

- Jim Shiely, Board President,
Friends for Freedom Park

Congressional District(s): AR: 1,4, IA: 2,4, IL: 4,12,16,17,19, MN: 2,3,4,5,6,8, MO: 1,2,3,8,9, WI: 3

Project Goal

Locally: Develop 71 miles of trail from Vicksburg, MS to Natchez, MS. Nationally: Create a network of 3,000 miles of trail from Minnesota to Louisiana.

NPS Role

Provide facilitation assistance in support of the development of segments of the MRT in Mississippi through outreach and MRT workshop planning. Provide facilitation assistance towards developing framework for Mississippi River Connections Collaborative as outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding, by and between, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Mississippi River Trail, Inc.

8. Taylor's River Walk Project Phase II

Project Partner: Taylors Falls Economic Development & Parks Commissions
RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson
Location: Taylors Falls
Congressional District(s): 8

Project Goal

Phase II will continue the Riverwalk for two miles along the St. Croix Riverway adjacent to downtown as well as to a residential area along the top of a bluff linking the soon-to-be constructed Valley View Trail, the Swedish Immigrant Trail, and the Interstate Park Trails, with a spur to Wannigan Point.

NPS Role

Continue to build partnerships to create links for trail systems around Taylors Falls.

9. The Great Rivers Confluence Project

Project Partner: Friends of Freedom Park
RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson
Location: Washington County, MN
Congressional District(s): 6



Trail planning in Minnesota

Project Goal

Through collaborative efforts, establish/create multi-state partnerships for the planning and implementation of a 17 mile trail (land and water) connecting the communities of Prescott, WI and Hastings, MN (including Pierce County, WI and Dakota and Washington County, MN).

NPS Role

The Great Rivers Confluence Project intends, through connection and education, to 1) foster partnerships across national, state, and local divisions; 2) create and adopt a common vision of Great Rivers preservation, management, and recreational experiences; and 3) plan and construct new trails in the existing 17-mile trail gap (Eastern Minnesota and Western Wisconsin) within Mississippi River and St. Croix River Confluence area.



Great Rivers Confluence Project planning

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



Holly Larson
651-290-3003
holly_larson@nps.gov



Randy Thoreson
651-290-3004
randy_thoreson@nps.gov



David Thomson
402-661-1570
dave_thomson@nps.gov

2010 Nationwide Partnership Success

- 1,251 Miles of Trail Developed
- 1,694 Miles of River Conserved
- 25,370 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.

unique and formal way. Listed in the agreement are more than 27 sister park tasks associated with the Project.

In summary, the Great Rivers Confluence Project has gained local, regional, and national interest. Recognition of this special area is strong now and will grow in many ways in the future.

Trails are Happening in La Crescent!

This city of about 5,000 people has been dreaming big to improve conditions for walking and biking, and is beginning to realize those dreams, piece by piece. Construction will take place on the Wagon Wheel Trail in 2011, linking the city to the scenic and wildlife-rich wetlands of the Mississippi River by the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. When the trail is completed, it will form a vital off-highway connection in the difficult terrain of bridges and backwaters between downtown LaCrescent, residents along the river, and the US 14/61 bridges to La-Crosse, WI. Moreover, the Trail will link 100 miles of Wisconsin trails to the Root River State Trail and Southeast Minnesota's 60-mile Blufflands State Trail System. The City and the La Crosse Area Planning Committee received a \$436,400 Trail Enhancement (TE) Grant, appropriations from the State Legislature, and a \$202,500 federal safety grant for railroad crossing improvements to bring this project to fruition. The Houston County Trails Committee, the Minnesota DOT, and the Wildlife Refuge have also been key partners.

But they didn't stop there! With \$175,000 in Federal Safe Routes to School funding, the City constructed new sidewalks and initiated a Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) program. With coordination from La Crescent Area Healthy Community Partnership, which receives funds from BlueCross BlueShield of MN, La Crescent has launched a walking school bus and a safety campaign, completed a health assessment survey, and is installing bike racks and signage. RTCA staff assisted in the TE and SRTS grant applications, and assisted in the trail feasibility assessment of the Root River Trail Extension.

Perseverance, partnerships, and a balance between big dreams and practical planning, have made La Crescent one of the most active small cities in Minnesota in implementing biking and walking improvements.

