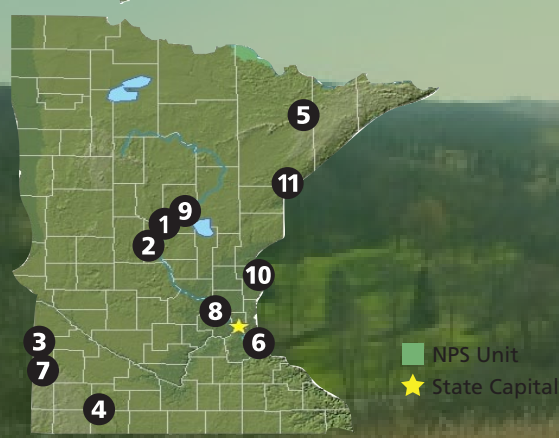




Minnesota News



Lincoln County Hole-In-The-Mountain Park from the 2nd highest point in the state.

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2012

1. Brainerd-Baxter Mississippi Riverfront
Cities of Brainerd & Baxter
2. Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail
Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail Committee
3. Canby Trail
City of Canby
4. Des Moines River Valley State Trail
Friends of Jackson County Trails
5. Heart of the Continent Partnership:
Sustainable Gateway Community Initiative
Heart of the Continent Partnership
6. Great Rivers Confluence Project
Friends of Freedom Park
7. Lincoln County Comprehensive Trails
Lake Benton Area Foundation Trails Committee
8. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/
Mississippi River Trail
Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
9. Portage Lake Trail
Crow Wing County Land Services Department
10. Taylors Falls River Walk, Phase II
Taylors Falls Economic Development &
Parks Commissions
11. Wheels on Trails
Wheels On Trails

Recent Successes

Ten Community Teams Participate in International Community Congress

For four days in October 2011 a binational group of over eighty community, business, and non profit leaders; elected officials; and public land managers from northeast Minnesota and northwest Ontario assembled in Thunder Bay, Ontario and Grand Portage, Minnesota for the International Community Congress, a workshop focused on balancing nature and commerce in communities that neighbor public lands. The goal of the workshop was to build stronger economic, social, and environmental connections between communities and their neighboring public lands for mutual benefit. Dr. Livio DiMatteo, Economist at Lakehead University, describes the Heart of the Continent area, the geographic focus of the workshop, as “two nations, one region.” This region contains the largest expanse of public green space in the heart of North America - more than five million acres - and includes Superior National Forest, Voyageurs National Park, Grand Portage National Monument, Quetico Provincial Park, and several other state and provincial parks. The Heart of the Continent Partnership initiated this regional concept and convened the workshop. “I hope we can all

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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.

Current Projects

1. Brainerd-Baxter Mississippi Riverfront/Parks and Trails

Project Partner: Cities of Brainerd and Baxter

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Brainerd and Baxter

Congressional District: 8

Project Goal

Complete and implement a master plan for Parks and Trails. Plan and implement connections to regional trail networks, including the Glacial Lakes Trail and the Camp Ripley Veterans State Trail.

NPS Role

Assist partners in: achieving consensus in the Brainerd and Baxter communities for the master plan; implementing a Mississippi River Riverfront Downtown Revitalization; and planning and designing connections to new and existing trails within the area and links to the regional trails network.

2. Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail

Project Partner: Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail Committee

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Little Falls

Congressional District: 8

Project Goal

Complete a vital link between the Soo Line Trail and the Paul Bunyan Trail. This trail will offer approximately 90 miles of trails on both sides of the Mississippi River. The trail will connect communities to parks in the area as well as promote healthy recreation.

NPS Role

Assist in the planning and development of the trail. Provide facilitation, technical assistance, and coordination of the project by engaging local, regional, and statewide partners.

3. Canby Trail

Project Partner: City of Canby

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Canby

Congressional District: 7

Project Goal

Develop a 4-mile walking, biking, and skating 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. RTCA staff will work with the community and trail committee to: identify the preferred route, organize and facilitate committees, collaborate with government agencies, identify potential funding sources, and assist in obtaining approvals to meet major grant timelines.

4. Des Moines River Valley State Trail

Project Partner: Friends of Jackson County Trails and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Along the Des Moines River Valley in Murray, Cottonwood and Jackson counties

Congressional District: 1

Project Goal

Develop an approximately 70-mile multi use trail in southwest Minnesota from the Des Moines River headwaters to the Iowa border.

NPS Role

Work with local partners and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff to complete a master plan for the Des Moines River Valley State Trail and assist in initiating implementation. Assist in developing an active, sustainable Des Moines River Valley Trail organization.



North Shore Scenic Drive Team at International Community Congress (ICC)

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

Project Partner: Heart of the Continent Partnership

RTCA Contact: Holly Larson

Location: Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Ontario, an area of over 5.5 million acres

Congressional District: 8

Project Goal

Build region-wide dialogue, cooperation, and capacity among communities, public land managers, and conservation, recreation, and industry groups to enable vibrant communities to flourish alongside healthy public lands. Through the International Community Congress (ICC) workshop and follow up coaching, inspire and educate community teams to create and complete community development projects that enhance the sustainability of the region.

NPS Role

Assist in planning and coordinating the workshop. Continue community team support following the Congress as teams work to implement community projects and plans.

6. Great Rivers Confluence

Project Partner: Friends of Freedom Park

RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Confluence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers in the greater Prescott, WI and Hastings, MN areas of east central MN and west central WI

Congressional Districts: MN 6, 2; WI 3

Project Goal

Through connections and education, foster partnerships across national,

Current Projects cont.

state, and local divisions; support a common vision of Great River Confluence preservation and management; and research and identify the feasibility of land and water trails within the Confluence 100 square mile area.

NPS Role

Provide facilitation, coordination, partnership building, research of possible funding sources, and conceptual design assistance.

7. Lincoln County Comprehensive Trails Plan

Project Partner: Lincoln County County-wide Trails Task Force
RTCA Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Lincoln County
Congressional District: 7

Project Goal

Develop a comprehensive countywide trail plan. The long-term goal is to develop a trail system of approximately 15 new trail miles for four season use that includes natural and hard-surface trails to accommodate a variety of non-motorized and motorized uses.

NPS Role

Help create a planning strategy, build public support and involvement, identify and analyze alternative trail routes, and facilitate the planning process.

8. Mississippi River Trail & Collaborative Support

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
RTCA Contact: David Thomson



Great Rivers partners on the Mississippi

Location: Headwaters of Mississippi River in Minnesota to Gulf of Mexico, New Orleans
Congressional Districts: 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

Create a network of 3,000 miles of trails and bicycle routes from Minnesota to Louisiana.

NPS Role

Provide facilitation assistance towards developing a framework for the 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.

9. Portage Lake Trail

Project Partner: Crow Wing County Land Services Department
RTCA Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Near Riverton in Crow Wing County in central Minnesota
Congressional District: 8

Project Goal

Plan and construct an approximately 5-mile water and land trail connecting Mahnomen, June, Portage, and Little Rabbit Lakes to the Mississippi River along an historic route.

NPS Role

Assist in developing community support for the project, coordinating meetings, and developing and implementing a plan for the trail.

10. Taylors Falls River Walk, Phase II

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

Project Goal

Build upon and extend the Taylors Falls River Walk Project (Phase I) that was

completed four years ago by the extension of the walk through the riverside area along downtown Taylors Falls and into the neighboring residential neighborhood along the St. Croix River (Phase II).

NPS Role

Provide facilitation, coordination, partnership building, research of possible funding sources, and conceptual design assistance.

11. Wheels On Trails

Project Partner: Wheels on Trails
RTCA Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Duluth
Congressional District: 8

Project Goal

Bring about physical improvements to public trails and outdoor recreation facilities to make them more accessible; get more people with disabilities involved in outdoor recreation; and inventory and map the accessibility of outdoor recreation facilities.

NPS Role

Assist the Wheels on Trails organization in several initiatives: 1) building an outdoor recreation program where people with disabilities are mentored in camping and trail use by other outdoor enthusiasts; 2) working with trail providers on accessibility improvements to existing trails and facilities; 3) assessing and mapping the accessibility of existing trails; 4) developing a model universal trail.

“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

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



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2011 Nationwide Partnership Success

- 1,991 Miles of Trail Developed
- 1,925 Miles of River Conserved
- 33,230 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.

be creative and explore life beyond the boundaries,” said Anna DeSchampe, Grand Portage State Park Naturalist and “3G” team member.

Teams learned from national and regional experts about issues facing their communities, such as economic trends and sustainable tourism, and about project management tools such as partnership building and project financing. Throughout the workshop, community teams worked hard to complete action planning assignments to identify and begin planning a community project that they would implement when they returned home. For example, the Iron Range team will provide an educational experience at their next Earth Fest to reconnect people to the outdoors. The binational Connecting Volunteers team will create a clearinghouse of volunteer opportunities in the region. The Heart of the Continent Partnership considers the workshop a resounding success. Participants buzzed about the “collective energy,” the networking opportunities, the valuable information, and the action planning sessions. Participants called it “the start of lasting relationships,” and an “excellent international partnership building exercise.” Another affirmed, “I do now feel we are part of the Heart of the Continent.” Another simply summed up what many participants felt upon the workshop’s conclusion: “Wow!”

RTCA staff participated on the design team for the workshop, assisting in developing the agenda, finding speakers, and recruiting community teams. RTCA staff will continue to work with Partnership members to provide assistance to community teams as they plan and implement their projects.

Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail to Link 400 Miles of Trails

There is an exciting new multi-use trail planning effort in north central Minnesota which is gaining both local and national attention, called the Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail (CRVST). Strategic planning workshops and open houses have been held and a conceptual design of trail route alternatives is underway. The project team is working on a CRVST plan, to be completed in Spring 2012. This work is being accomplished through many local, regional, and state partnerships.

The CRVST will be a true multi-use trail, accommodating a wide range of motorized and 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 Mi-Gi-Zi trails into one continuous 400-mile recreational trail. Along the way trail users will have access to other natural and historic sites. This trail will also be part of the planned 3000-mile Mississippi River Trail. The Minnesota RTCA, as part of the CRVST project team, is providing coordination, facilitation, and public involvement assistance.

