



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of MN
2014-15 Meeting Minutes**



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
3rd Quarter Meeting – August 28, 2014
State Office Building, St. Paul MN
MINUTES – Approved 11/20/14**

Commissioners Present

Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings
Anne Lewis – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Mark Anderson – At Large Member
Rep. Sheldon Johnson
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Sen. David Senjem

Technical Advisors & Staff Present

Cynthia Wheeler – DNR
David Kelliher – Historical Society
John Anfinson – National Park Service
Chris Miller - Staff

Commissioners & Technical Advisors

Absent

Paul Huginin – Agriculture Appointee
Keith Parker – DNR Appointee
Colleen Tollefson – Explore MN Tourism
Adam Johnson – Explore MN Tourism Appointee
Rep. Mike Benson
Carol Zoff - Transportation
Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border

Guests/Speakers Present

Liz Walton – MnDOT
Brian Smalkoski – Kimley-Horn
Ashley Ver Burg – Kimley-Horn
Bryan Anderson – Mn DOT District 1

The meeting was called to order at 2:35 by Chair Sheldon Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Chair Johnson welcomed Anne Lewis, new Commission member representing the Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region, and congratulated John Anfinson on his new position as Superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

Review of Minutes from 2/6/14 and 5/15/14 Meetings

Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the May 15 meeting minutes as printed. Motion carried. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the February 6 minutes as printed. Motion carried.

Review of Agenda

Request by Karl Samp to add the topic “press releases” under new business. Motion by Cordelia Pierson and seconded by Mark Anderson to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.

Agency and Regional Updates

Brainerd to Elk River: Karl Samp mentioned two Great River Road public open houses he attended (St. Cloud and Brainerd). Brainerd-Baxter Riverfront Planning efforts continue. A public input process was recently conducted, which gathered online rankings of amenities. Results will be unveiled by the University of Minnesota Center for Rural Design at a meeting on October 2. Popular topics include trails, access, sculpture, and an outdoor amphitheater.

Elk River to Hastings: Cordelia Pierson thanked the Chair for recognizing the need for preparation of MN-MRPC comments on the draft Mississippi Corridor Critical Area Rules. Thanks were noted for the recent installation of Mississippi River Trail signs in the region. Comments have been received requesting clarification of what MRT is, and regarding the possibility of at least one sign somewhere spelling out the words and ten-state context. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board continues work on an ecological system plan and central riverfront plan, with Cordelia serving on the citizen advisory group.

Historical Society: David Kelliher reported on funding approved during the last legislative session for visitor center renovations at the Oliver Kelley Farm. All MN-MRPC members were invited to the kick-off celebration scheduled for September 13.

Natural Resources: Cynthia Wheeler provided an update including information on the 6th Annual Take a Day OFF (Outdoor Family Fun) held at Mississippi River Regional Park near Sartell on August 2. The DNR is a partner on this event and turnout was great again this year. Efforts continue to manage invasive carp. St. Anthony locks will be closed next spring. Upgrades recently completed on the Coon Rapids dam should provide a 90% barrier to invasive species. Two female invasive carp were recently found between Hastings and St. Paul. The rulemaking process for the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) continues. Listening sessions have been held, changes are being made to the draft and the deadline for public comment has been extended to September 30, 2014.

Transportation: Scott Bradley provided information on the recent Scenic Byway Grant solicitation from MnDOT, for FY '15 projects. Applications were due in June. Up to \$1.5 million was available for infrastructure projects. Six proposals were received. Three projects along the Great River Road were funded (Pine Bend Bluff Overlook, Mississippi River Regional Trail – Rosemount West, and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe/Cass County Multi Use Trail). This parallel process and grant opportunity was intended to help buy new relationship-building time and to successfully transition selection and implementation of eligible byways projects within the new MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program (TA Program) funding structure which is based upon a regional solicitation and competitive process in Minnesota under the oversight of Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs). More projects (everything eligible within the TA Program) now compete for less funding than had been previously available in conjunction with the former federal Transportation Enhancements funding program and byway organizations and applications will have to compete with all other eligible projects in each ATP's fiscal year solicitation process for the federal TA Program. To aid in this regard, MnDOT amended and added funding to contracts for planning services provided by Regional Development Commissions and their planners to expedite updating of the Corridor Management Plans for Minnesota Scenic Byways to now identify and prioritize desired infrastructure projects. This approach enhances competitiveness for potential funding of byway projects and demonstrates that the projects are already part of an overall statewide or regional plan. A question was raised about involvement of byway organizations in future grant applications – will letters of support be required as in the past? Scott responded that the recently selected byways projects had grant applications that included letters of support from byways organizations and the recommended priorities for selection were made by the Minnesota Scenic Byway Commission and that is an approach we plan to continue.

National Park Service: John Anfinson reported that a meeting will be coming up soon with a coalition of agencies and the Army Corps of Engineers to discuss invasive species issues. Concern was voiced over the invasive carp that were caught and the likelihood that many more are present if two were caught. Closing of additional locks could help but would also create other concerns including portaging. NPS and Friends of the Mississippi River recently took Rep. Ellison canoeing on the river, and also provided a similar experience for a staff member from Rep. Paulsen's office. Both expressed the importance of seeing the river from this vantage point.

Commission Business

FY '15 Budget: Chris Miller referred to the FY' 15 budget in the handout packet. The budget reflects the \$63,000 operating budget for the year as well as approximate grant balances. Line item allocations were made based on spending in FY '14, needs for the CMP project, 2015 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting, etc. There will also be funds carried forward from FY '14 after all fiscal year end records are finalized. Mark Anderson discussed the need to begin looking forward to FY '16 and possible projects. Motion by Rep. Johnson and seconded by Scott Bradley to adopt the FY '15 budget as presented. Motion carried.

Staffing Contract for MN-MRPC 2015-16: Rep. Johnson reported that a contract is in place with The Odyssey Group and Chris Miller will continue to provide staffing services for the Commission for fiscal years 2015 and 2016.

National MRPC Updates

Rep. Johnson noted that Karl Samp is currently National MRPC Pilot Pro Tem (President Elect).

2014 Annual Meeting: The 2014 MRPC Annual Meeting will be September 17 – 20 in Memphis. Karl Samp, Nancy Salminen, Carol Zoff and Chris Miller will be attending.

2015 Semi-Annual Meeting: Minnesota will host the 2015 Semi-Annual meeting and discussions are underway with potential locations in St. Cloud. Karl Samp mentioned that the River's Edge Convention Center is the preferred location for meeting rooms but cost is a concern. The St. Cloud Convention and Visitors Bureau would serve as a sponsor to help bring down costs, and has also been extremely helpful in securing information on meeting space and lodging. National Office will make a final decision on meeting location soon. MN-MRPC member assistance will be needed to plan the agenda and hospitality room. The theme is likely to be "Planning for the River (Road)" and might feature information on statewide planning, large city, midsize city and small city riverfront/byway plans. Several possible presentation topics were mentioned including – "Take a Day OFF," Kelley Farm visit, Little Falls visit, NPS Enjoy the View project, and Minneapolis Central Riverfront Planning.

Committee Assignments: MN-MRPC members are needed for National MRPC Standing Committees. The Culture & Heritage Committee is currently co-chaired by Sheronne Mulry but having another member would be helpful; Sheldon Johnson and Karl Samp currently serve on the Environment, Recreation & Agriculture Committee; 1 - 2 MN-MRPC members are needed for the Marketing Committee (Sen. Senjem serves as alternate); and Carol Zoff chairs the Transportation Committee which could use another member. Staff will make individual contacts to fill committee rosters. Work sessions are held during MRPC Annual and Semi-Annual Meetings and work is handled via periodic conference calls outside of those meetings. The time commitment is generally quite minimal.

Corridor Management Plan (CMP) Project

Overall Project Status Update: Chris Miller reported that an additional \$35,000 in grant funds has been approved by the National Park Service, to be used for MRT signs. Special thanks to NPS for this assistance. MN-MRPC and CMP project staff have participated in National Park Service "Enjoy the View" project work this week. Information will be incorporated into the CMP. Project Management Team meetings are held monthly involving project managers and the consulting team. Carol Zoff and Chris Miller participated in all public open houses held in July.

MRT Update: Liz Walton reported that signs are up in the Metro region (with a few gaps where work continues). The ribbon cutting event for the Metro MRT will be held in June 2015, potentially in conjunction with National Trails Day. Work is underway to finalize the plan for Elk River to Lake Itasca. Meetings have been held and municipal agreements are being developed. Route adjustments have been suggested and some have been implemented. Bids will be let on December 19. Nice Ride bike stations were recently installed in Bemidji and a group of 20 rode Nice Ride bikes on the MRT from Big Lake to Bemidji to mark the occasion. Parks and Trails Magazine recently featured the Mississippi River Trail and Great River Road. "Mr. B's Joybox Express" (a piano pulled by bicycle) will be traveling the MRT soon and Liz will send a link to details. A presentation on the MRT is on the agenda for the Rail-Volution Conference in September. There was discussion on the process for sign review in the future. What happens if signs are missing or need to be replaced? The MRT is the first state bikeway and management policies and plans are being developed. Work is underway to get all MRT sign locations in an electronic database for future reference.

Corridor Management Plan Project: Brian Smalkoski and Ashley Ver Burg of Kimley-Horn and Associates shared project updates.

An overview of information and results was provided on the public open houses held in July. Targeted meetings with cities and Regional Development Commissions were also held during the open house weeks. Commission members provided feedback on the meetings and structure, commented on the information received from the public and provided suggestions for future public outreach.

An online survey is currently being conducted to gather information from a broad audience. To date, 400 pins have been dropped noting favorite places. More feedback is needed. All members were asked to share the survey link with their networks, newsletters, etc.

The social media campaign continues, with the most success so far on Twitter. Facebook has the greatest market penetration and more "likes" are needed on the Great River Road – MN page. All were asked to like the page and share information with others.

Field work continues focused on completing a detailed inventory of intrinsic resources. Richard and Sherry of Paw Paw Partners started the process at Lake Itasca and have completed the inventory up to Fort Snelling. They will continue to the Iowa border and then will drive the full byway as a visitor would. They have met with groups along the way and participated in local events.

Meetings have been held in local communities to discuss locations of MRT community information kiosks. The purpose of these meetings was to identify the shipping location for the sign frames and establish contacts for work on panel content. Kimley-Horn will work with the local communities on panel content this winter.

An update was provided on the project schedule. The resource inventory and initial data collection will be completed by October. Winter tasks will include distilling themes, developing draft strategies and working with the Commission. Data and draft strategies will be shared with the National MRPC at the 2015 Semi-Annual Meeting to gather feedback. The next round of public open houses will be held in spring of 2015. The Corridor Management Plan will be finalized in fall of 2015.

The Project Advisory Team met in June and is scheduled to meet again in early September. A current membership list was shared. The GRR has broad statewide impact affecting more than 60 Minnesota communities, thus the project must seek broad input in the development of the CMP.

The focus of the Advisory Team is to:

- Advise the MN-MRPC on matters related to the development of the CMP from a broader agency/organization perspective to maximize its effectiveness in meeting shared goals
- Share data and other available resources to complement development of the CMP
- Build relationships and brainstorm ways to partner in the future to leverage additional value from efforts your agency/organization may already be providing
- Utilize existing networks to broaden the extent of CMP outreach
- Highlight related efforts or facilities that can contribute to successful byway management

Next steps in the project include data collection and processing; agency coordination and meetings with senior staff; strengthening of partnerships; and spreading the word about the project. Commission members asked questions and shared ideas.

New Business

Mississippi Corridor Critical Area Draft Rules: The Department of Natural Resources is currently working on updated rules for the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA). Comments are welcome and are being accepted through September 30. The MRCCA is a land corridor along the Mississippi River in the seven county metro area where there are special land use regulations that guide development activity. The corridor extends for 72 miles from the cities of Ramsey and Dayton on the north to the cities of Hastings and Cottage Grove on the south. John Anfinson provided background on the critical area's history and its relationship to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Cordelia Pierson noted that this comment period is an opportunity to share information about the Great River Road and its intrinsic qualities. The Great River Road is a nationally significant resource. Commission members discussed whether comments should be provided and if so how such comments should be organized and the level of detail to be included. Cynthia Wheeler noted that she and Keith Parker will not be able to participate since their agency is developing the rules.

Motion by Cordelia Pierson and seconded by Karl Samp authorizing a subcommittee to develop comments on the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area draft rules, addressing issues that directly relate to the Great River Road and charge of the MN-MRPC, for consideration by the MN-MRPC. Motion carried. Cordelia Pierson and David Kelliher volunteered to serve on the subcommittee, and Carol Zoff also indicated interest. Comments will be developed and emailed to the MN-MRPC for review.

Water Trails Tourism Summit: Information on the Minnesota State Water Trails Tourism Summit was referenced in the meeting packet. Members were asked to notify the MN-MRPC office if interested in attending.

Press Releases: Karl Samp advised that the Commission prepare more press releases about MN-MRPC and Great River Road efforts and developments. All members were asked to send information to the MN-MRPC office on topics of interest for press releases.

Next Meeting

The Fourth Quarter meeting will be November 20, 2014
2:30 – 5:00 p.m., State Office Building 500 South

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota
Agency & Regional Updates
August 2014**

Brainerd to Elk River – Commissioner Karl Samp

- Brainerd has completed the public input process for its riverfront planning efforts. They are now awaiting draft schematic design work from the University of Minnesota Center for Rural Design. If you wish to see results of the public process or the draft design work when it is in let Karl know.



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
4th Quarter Meeting – November 20, 2014
State Office Building, St. Paul MN
MINUTES – Approved 2/26/15**

Commissioners Present

Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Anne Lewis – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Mark Anderson – At Large Member
Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Keith Parker – DNR Appointee
Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee

Commissioners & Technical Advisors

Absent

Paul Huginin – Agriculture Appointee
Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Appointee
Rep. Sheldon Johnson
Rep. Mike Benson
Sen. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings

Technical Advisors & Staff Present

Bill Von Bank – Explore Minnesota
Cynthia Wheeler – DNR
David Kelliher – Historical Society
John Anfinson – National Park Service
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Greg Hubinger – LCC
Diane Henry-Wangensteen - LCC
Chris Miller - Staff

Guests/Speakers Present

Liz Walton – MnDOT
Brian Smalkoski – Kimley-Horn
Jessica Laabs – Kimley-Horn

The meeting was called to order at 2:35 by Vice Chair Sheronne Mulry, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Bill Von Bank, new technical advisor to the Commission from Explore Minnesota Tourism, was welcomed.

Review of Minutes from 8/28/14 Meeting

Scott Bradley provided revisions to the Department of Transportation section of the minutes. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the August 28 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried.

Review of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed prior to the presence of a quorum.

Agency and Regional Updates

Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids: Nancy Salminen will be meeting soon with partners including the HRDA, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Beltrami County to discuss a possible Transportation Alternatives funding application for a pedestrian bridge across the Mississippi River on a section of road designated as both Lady's Slipper Scenic Byway and Great River Road. A fundraising event for local charities was held at the historic Bena Gas Station on Halloween. Construction projects have been underway along Highway 2. The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe recently received funding for a trail near the school. The Lady's Slipper Byway Board and Nancy have received Minnesota Horticultural Awards for lady's slipper transplant efforts.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: Anne Lewis reported on her meetings with the Aitkin Chamber of Commerce and Grand Rapids Convention and Visitors Bureau. Grand Rapids offered specific suggestions for the Great River Road. Aitkin was not quite as familiar with the Great River Road. Anne also reported on her recent driving trip along the Minnesota Great River Road, which provided a better understanding of the issues and needs of the byway. Collaboration among regions was suggested, especially discussions with Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids. This year's National Christmas Tree is from the Chippewa

National Forest. Several Great River Road communities participated in events related to the tree and its journey to Washington D.C.

Brainerd to Elk River: Karl Samp reported on conversations with John Schaubach, former Commission member, related to possible new mining activities in and around the Cuyuna Range Area. Concern was noted over possible impact to Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, Cuyuna Mountain Bike Trails, and overall recreation activities in the area. All local units of government have passed resolutions to maintain the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and mountain bike trails. This might be a topic for a subcommittee of the MN-MRPC to consider. A question was raised about surface rights versus mineral rights in the area. Cynthia Wheeler will request information from others in the DNR and CCSRA, for sharing with the MN-MRPC. Brainerd Riverfront Planning efforts are continuing. The first design schematics have been presented and the planning group has reviewed and responded. Karl will share materials with the Commission electronically when ready for distribution.

Hastings to Iowa Border: Sheronne Mulry shared information on the recent anniversary celebration of the Eagle Watch group, tundra swan migration, and plans for increased barge traffic due to heavier railroad traffic.

Explore Minnesota: Bill Von Bank provided an update on recent participation in a Japanese trade show as part of Mississippi River Country (partner organization of the MRPC) as well as other stops in Asia promoting Minnesota. The Mississippi River is an important highlight for the state. Two media groups visited Minnesota last month with a focus on culinary destinations. Pedal Minnesota, a partnership including Explore Minnesota and other agencies, is picking up momentum and recognition. The 2015 Minnesota Tourism Conference is scheduled for early February in Saint Paul.

Historical Society: David Kelliher and Andrea Kajer reported on the kick-off event held at the Oliver Kelley Farm in September to celebrate the ground breaking for visitor center improvements. An initiative is underway to envision the future of Historic Fort Snelling including stakeholder meetings throughout the winter and spring. The MN-MRPC was invited to participate and consider recommendations for areas such as facilities, stories and programs.

Natural Resources: Cynthia Wheeler noted upcoming lock and dam closures in 2015 and the DNR's work internally and with other agencies to explore options on how to manage this including updating guide books and identifying possible portage routes around Upper St. Anthony Falls. The Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is on the agenda for the December 15 Central Region Management Team Meeting. DNR staff have been meeting with partners including the Wisconsin DNR regarding dredging near Lock & Dam #2, and considering options for placement of dredge spoils. North and East Groundwater Management Plans are continuing, to address aquifer management for long term sustainability. Keith Parker officially thanked the MN-MRPC for providing comments on the MCCRA rules. An updated draft should be available in early 2015, when the overall approval process will then begin.

Transportation: Scott Bradley provided information about funding opportunities available to scenic byways as they continue the transition into the new Transportation Alternatives structure. FY '15 byway projects were reviewed. Funds were recently secured to assist with an additional project in Duluth in FY '15 and FY '16. A solicitation was released on October 24 for FY '16 (year two of what is likely to be a four year process) scenic byway grants funded by MnDOT. MnDOT has committed 1.5 million to this effort. In addition, a solicitation was released for 2019 Transportation Alternatives projects, through area transportation partnerships. Carol Zoff reported on starting up and managing the Great River Road Corridor Management Plan project; work on Phase III of Mississippi River Trail signage; partnership activities with the National Park Service and participation in Trails and Open Space Partnership meetings; and participation in the ribbon cutting event at the Lady's Slipper Scenic Byway. Carol attended the Great Rivers Confluence (St. Croix and Mississippi) Workshop in Afton which included discussion on marketing river communities during fall and winter seasons. Fabrication of metal sign frames for the MRT community information kiosks is underway, which will close out the MN-MRPC's interpretive panel grant.

National Park Service: John Anfinson reported on lock and dam issues in the Twin Cities area. The Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam will close on or before June 10, 2015. DNR Commissioner Landwehr recently convened a meeting of several agencies to discuss impacts and actions needed such as

identification of portages. Lock and Dam #1 and Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam will be affected by the closure of the Upper Falls Lock & Dam. Decisions are being made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the level (hours and days) that these locks will remain open. NPS is urging level 6 due to potential silver carp movement. The City of Minneapolis and other entities have also written letters regarding their recommendations for lock operation levels. Planning is underway for the 2016 National Park Service Centennial Celebration. A \$250 million campaign will be announced in March or April. The theme for the centennial is "Find Your Park" and intended to promote all parks whether local, state or national. The National Park Service will be focusing attention on a few large urban parks during the celebration and the Mississippi National River and Recreation area is interested in working together with local partners during the celebration.

Commission Business

FY '15 Budget Status: Treasurer Mark Anderson introduced the budget status report included in the meeting packets. The report shows year to date status of the operating budget (including funds carried forward from FY '14) as well as grant balances. Chris Miller answered questions, provided additional details and noted the possible need for a limited quantity reprint of the Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planner. The reprint would be intended to carry the Commission through until completion of the Corridor Management Plan which will provide guidance for future print and electronic information. Members were in favor of looking into this and polling distribution sites to gather details on possible quantity. Motion by Scott Bradley and seconded by Karl Samp to accept the budget report. Motion carried.

National MRPC Updates

2014 Annual Meeting: The 2014 MRPC Annual Meeting was held in Memphis, September 17-19. The MN-MRPC was represented by Karl Samp, Nancy Salminen, Carol Zoff and Chris Miller. Karl Samp referenced the meeting agenda in the meeting packet.

The meeting included a press conference on the Mississippi River Geotourism Project highlighting major funding contributions. A contract is now in place between MRT Inc. and National Geographic Maps Division to move forward with the project. The MRPC's role is being defined. The MRPC Board of Directors approved a \$40,000 cash contribution along with in-kind contributions, contingent on additional information as requested and an approved Memorandum of Understanding defining roles and responsibilities. John Anfinson mentioned that he has been contacted by Rory Robinson of the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative (and NPS colleague) regarding four major meetings to be held in winter-spring 2015, one of which will be in the Twin Cities area.

The meeting also included many good presentations, a tour of the Mud Island Mississippi River Park, and technical committee work sessions. Nancy Salminen reported on the Culture and Heritage Committee and their discussion the Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers and ways to better connect with them. A visit checklist has been provided and each state commission is being asked to make sure each interpretive center is visited annually. A presentation has been developed that can be used to help familiarize center staff with the Great River Road and Network of Interpretive Centers. The presentation is being piloted in Arkansas, additional information will be included, and Chris Miller will forward to MN-MRPC members when the final version is complete. David Kelliher suggested that a MHS site managers meeting might be a good fit for the presentation, since several of the interpretive centers are MHS sites. Carol Zoff noted that overlays have been developed to update the Interpretive Center signs and she will assist in placing them on the signs. Carol also mentioned that the Transportation Committee has requested materials to help build awareness and can potentially use some of the tools under development by the Culture and Heritage and Marketing Committees. The Marketing Committee discussed the Great River Road mobile device app under development as well as a focused campaign to generate awareness of the Great River Road and benefits to travelers and stakeholders. National Office is developing a proposal for the board.

The MN-MRPC was selected as the recipient of the 2014 Pilot's Award, presented annually to a state commission in recognition of outstanding achievements in pursuing the goals and objectives of the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC). The traveling plaque is available for display and members could rotate placement through agencies and regions if interested. A suggestion was made

that a presentation of the award be held in Minnesota, to recognize and celebrate the achievement. Discussion took place on options including presentations on the House and Senate floors. If arrangements could be made to align with the next MN-MRPC meeting, members could be in the gallery for the presentation.

2015 Semi-Annual Meeting: Karl Samp discussed preliminary plans for the 2105 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting in St. Cloud. He along with Carol Zoff and Chris Miller visited potential sites in early November with the St. Cloud Convention and Visitors Bureau and details were provided to the National MRPC Office. They will handle the site contracts and arrangements. The St. Cloud CVB has been extremely helpful and special thanks were noted. Dates are April 22 – 24, with National Board Strategic Planning and Board Meeting on April 22 followed by presentations, meetings and field sessions on April 23-24. Two field sessions are being considered – attendees would choose to visit sites around the Little Falls area or greater St. Cloud area. Information will also be provided to meeting attendees on things to see and do before or after the meetings, including details on visiting the source of the Mississippi River. A working agenda is being developed by the subcommittee (Samp, Zoff, Lewis, and Miller) and will be sent out for MN-MRPC review before being finalized. Help will be needed as the meeting dates approach and the hope is to have as many MN-MRPC members as possible in attendance, along with representation from CVB's, Chambers and Cities along the river. Bill Von Bank offered to share information in Explore Minnesota's newsletter as well as at the 2015 Minnesota Tourism Conference in February.

Corridor Management Plan (CMP) Project

Overall Project Status Update: Carol Zoff and Chris Miller reported that timelines, budgets, and activities are moving ahead according to plan.

MRT Update: Liz Walton of MnDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Section provided an update on Mississippi River Trail activities. Bids will be opened on December 19 for Phase III (Elk River to Lake Itasca) installation of signs, with the installation planned for spring-summer 2015. Carol Zoff has been working on funding details and municipal agreements necessary. There will be a few small gaps in signs from Elk River to Lake Itasca. Route changes have been made as a result of meetings with local units of government, mostly minor in nature but also including a larger change from Hwy 210 to Crow Wing State Park that will take the route off-road for that section. MRT maps are being revised and will include the Great River Road. A Google map is also being finalized, and MnDOT's MRT web page is being updated. Many publications have mentioned the MRT recently and it is becoming more recognized. A question was asked about the number of signs to be placed from Elk River to Lake Itasca. It will be hundreds.

Corridor Management Plan Project: Brian Smalkoski and Jessica Laabs of Kimley Horn Associates provided updates on the project and began discussion on priorities for the Great River Road over the next 10 – 20 years. Information gathered during the first round of public outreach (open houses and online survey) was shared and discussed. Meetings are being held with MN-MRPC member agencies to discuss partnerships moving forward. Feedback received during recent meetings at Explore Minnesota and the Department of Agriculture was shared. Meetings are coming up soon with the Historical Society, Department of Natural Resources and Department of Transportation. Two meetings of the Project Advisory Team have been held since the last MN-MRPC meeting and summary information was provided. Preliminary field observations were also shared. Mapping and resource listings on the project website were reviewed – locations are included as provided in the public input process, as well as those inventoried by the field team. The information is available at www.mnmississippiriver.com/cmp. Commission members began brainstorming priorities for the Great River Road in the coming years and this work will continue in more detail at future meetings. Next steps for the project also include processing of field data and agency data needs, refining the public outreach plan, meetings with agencies and legislators, and planning for the next round of public outreach (May 2015) including potential venues.

New Business

Mississippi Corridor Critical Area Draft Rules: In keeping with action taken at the last MN-MRPC meeting, a subcommittee developed comments focused on the MN-MRPC's mission and National Scenic Byway intrinsic qualities. Special thanks to the subcommittee – David Kelliher, Cordelia Pierson and Carol Zoff. Thanks were also expressed to the National Park Service staff. Their comments were very helpful to the subcommittee.

Letter of Support Request from Dakota County: A request was received from Dakota County for a letter of support as they submit a request through the Met Council for MAP-21 funding to complete the final 1.6 miles of Mississippi River Trail between South St. Paul and Hastings. Commission members discussed the project and requested time to review the letter and seek approval within agencies. Staff will check on the timeline and will notify the MN-MRPC Chair regarding the meeting discussion.

Next Meeting: 2015 meeting dates – to be determined

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota
Agency & Regional Updates
November 2014**

Elk River to Hastings – Commissioner Cordelia Pierson

- Dakota County in partnership with the City of Inver Grove Heights has completed MRT Rock Island Swing Bridge Trailhead/Wayside Rest. The \$1.5 million project was funded in part by a \$500,000 Scenic Byway grant and a \$80,000 grant from the National Park Service. The completed project is a highlight along the Mississippi River Trail/Great River Road providing unique access to the converted Rock Island Swing Bridge/Pier. A grand opening will be scheduled next spring. (see attached pic)
- Dakota County has just received bids for the Mississippi River Trail – Spring Lake Park trail/greenway project. The \$8.9 million project will construct 4.2 miles of the Mississippi River Trail between Cities of Rosemount and Hastings through Spring Lake Regional Park Reserve. The project includes two long pedestrian bridges and a large rock cut in order to manage the difficult terrain. Construction will begin in 2015 with scheduled completion in October of 2016. (see map)
- A public comment period will open December 4 and close January 18 for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Draft Central Riverfront Master Plan. Information on the process is available at - <http://www.minneapolisparcs.org/default.asp?PageID=1396>

Letter of Support Request:

- Dakota County will be submitting to the Regional Solicitation for MAP-21 funding for the Mississippi River Trail – Rosemount East segment. This segment is the final 1.6 miles of the of the Mississippi River Trail between South St. Paul and Hastings that is not constructed or funded.



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
1st Quarter Meeting – February 26, 2015
State Office Building, St. Paul MN
MINUTES – Approved June 11, 2015

Commissioners Present

Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Anne Lewis – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Mark Anderson – At Large Member
Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Keith Parker – DNR Appointee
Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings

Technical Advisors & Staff Present

Bill Von Bank – Explore Minnesota
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Diane Henry-Wangenstein – LCC
Chris Miller – Staff

Commissioners & Technical Advisors

Absent

Paul Huginin – Agriculture Appointee
Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Appointee
Rep. Sheldon Johnson
Sen. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray

Guests/Speakers Present

Liz Walton – MnDOT
Barb Huberty – Legislative Water Commission

The meeting was called to order at 3:25 by Vice Chair Sheronne Mulry, followed by introductions. A quorum was present.

Review of Minutes from 11/20/14 Meeting

Motion by Andrea Kajer and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the November 20 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Agency and Regional Updates

Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids: Nancy Salminen reported on Enbridge Energy public meetings held recently regarding the Sandpiper Pipeline Project. Two routes are being considered, both of which could impact the Mississippi River. Meetings were well attended. Stay tuned for more information. The Lady Slipper Scenic Byway has decided to delay a grant application for a pedestrian bridge until the project is reflected in the Leech Lake Band's transportation plan. Estimated cost of the project is \$703,000 and matching funds could be difficult to secure. A meeting was held in Bemidji recently on bike friendly transportation and planning bike routes.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: Anne Lewis reported that the Grand Rapids Convention and Visitors Bureau has completed a study of tourism in the area and now will work with the findings. A marketing advisory committee has been formed and Anne will serve on the committee and share information.

Brainerd to Elk River: Karl Samp noted that the Brainerd Riverfront Planning Group continues work. They now have the second phase of preliminary design and are seeking funding to implement their plan. Details are available electronically for those interested. The Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area has a plan for trail expansion to create a three day riding experience that would be near the river. They are working on a cooperative agreement with mining companies to preserve the mountain bike trails.

Elk River to Hastings: Cordelia Pierson referenced updates included in the meeting packet. More information from the region will be shared during the National Park Service report. The Metropolitan Council just completed regional solicitation for grant projects. Funding decisions have not yet been made.

Hastings to Iowa Border: Sheronne Mulry reported that Houston County will be voting next week on a possible ban of silica sand mining. Other counties in the region will be watching the results.

Explore Minnesota: Bill Von Bank commented about the references to biking earlier in the meeting and announced the 2015 Pedal MN Conference, May 4 – 5 in Minneapolis. Details are available at www.pedalmn.com. Viking Cruises have announced that they will begin Mississippi River cruises. Saint Paul is a likely stop. Red Wing and Stillwater have also expressed interest in being ports. The Ryder Cup is coming to the Twin Cities in 2016 and will be used to leverage Minnesota marketing in Europe. 250,000 guests are expected for this major event at Hazeltine National, bringing huge economic impact in a shoulder tourism season. Mississippi River Country (ten state partner organization of the MRPC) is completing projects funded by a Department of Commerce grant, including development of an app featuring the Great River Road in all ten states. The app for mobile devices will feature information on interpretive centers, agri-tourism, scenic overlooks, and locks/dams along with Great River Road mapping.

Historical Society: Andrea Kajer reported on improvements underway at the Oliver Kelley Farm Visitor Center. MNHS is currently seeking funds for improvements at Historic Fort Snelling, a Great River Road Interpretive Center. \$4.4 is being requested for predesign and design work for repurposing of existing buildings. Funds would then also be needed to carry out the project, with a goal of completion by 2020, the Fort Snelling Bicentennial. The Minnesota Humanities Council will be hosting a Smithsonian exhibit focused on water. Several communities will be selected to showcase the traveling exhibit and host dialogue. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Natural Resources: Cynthia Wheeler shared information on the Governor's Pheasant Summit and feedback received regarding buffer laws. A DNR roundtable was held in January and the Governor announced that he will propose a fifty foot buffer on all public waters in Minnesota. A framework is being developed with partner organizations. The existing statute covers 30% of waters in the state. Changes could cover more waters, with a 1 – 4 year phase in period. Plans are still very preliminary but a bill could be coming in March. Keith Parker reported on the DNR's involvement with the Fort Snelling Upper Post, including work with partners to identify future re-uses of the barracks. The DNR's internal Mississippi River Team has been working with other partners including the Corps of Engineers on handling of dredge spoils to ensure they are not harmful to people or animals. Work continues in three Groundwater Management Areas, to manage aquifers for long term sustainability. A question was raised about deforestation in Hubbard County. The DNR is aware of the situation and is now involved. The DNR's 10-Year Strategic Plan for 2015-25 was recently released. Copies were distributed to Commission members. A question was raised regarding status of the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area Rules. Response was that a full draft is expected to be released during the first quarter of 2015. Comments have been received and considered.

Transportation: Carol Zoff reported that DOT has offered assistance to byways to ensure that all have updated Corridor Management Plans. Since the Great River Road has a planning effort underway, an investment inventory is being developed by the Region 5 Development Commission which will be an attachment to the Corridor Management Plan, providing a compilation of specific projects underway or planned along the Great River Road. Region 5 will also provide a recommendation on how to update this document in the future. Scott Bradley provided a summary on the transition for Minnesota Scenic Byways into the new Transportation Alternatives/Map-21 funding structure. The transition process is in the second year. Two processes are simultaneously underway – 1) a centralized process providing funds for byway infrastructure projects with \$1.5 million on funding available, and 2) a regional process for Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) regional solicitations with \$7 million in funding available. The centralized process is temporary while byways develop relationships and begin to work under the ATP regional process. Two Great River Road projects were funded under the last centralized solicitation – Leech Lake Band/Cass County Bike Trail; and Mississippi River Regional Trail/Rosemount East. The next solicitation for centralized scenic byway grants will be released in May, and regional solicitations for FY '20 projects will be released in the fall.

National Park Service: John Anfinson shared information on the upcoming campaign, beginning in April, to promote the 2016 National Park Service Centennial. Upper St. Anthony Falls locks will reopen on June 10, then will close. 50 – 60 paddling groups per year will need to portage after the locks are closed.

Organizations are meeting to discuss the best options for portage locations. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is reaching out to partners to discuss how to use the St. Anthony Falls Lock Visitor Center in the future. The Corps would still be responsible for maintaining the flood control structure but any interested partners would need to fund use of the visitor center if it is to remain open. MNHS, DNR, NPS and the City of Minneapolis have been involved in preliminary discussions. If the center is kept open it could provide opportunities to share information about the Great River Road and teach people about the river. April 9 is the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War. At 2:15 Central Time, communities are being asked to ring their bells to mark this occasion.

Commission Business

FY '15 Budget Status: Mark Anderson provided an overview of the budget report and Chris Miller responded to questions. The interpretive panel grant project is now complete. There was discussion regarding possible details of a MN Great River Road map reprint, future budgets and legislation including the MN-MRPC sunset date.

National MRPC Updates

2015 Semi-Annual Meeting: Karl Samp, planning team chair, reported on status. The 2015 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting will be held April 22 – 24 in St. Cloud at the Rivers Edge Convention Center and Kelly Inn. The full agenda (in the meeting packet) was referenced. Board strategic planning will take place on April 22 followed by the MRPC meeting April 23-24. Staff at the St. Cloud Convention and Visitors Bureau have been outstanding to work with and their efforts and assistance are greatly appreciated. A goal is to involve additional stakeholders including CVBs, planners, etc. The theme for the meeting is “Planning on the River” designed to showcase and share current efforts in the state and facilitate future collaboration. A suggestion was made to promote the Semi-Annual Meeting at the upcoming Geotourism Project Meeting. MN-MRPC members were asked to notify staff if they plan to attend. The hope is to have a strong MN-MRPC presence for this national meeting held in state. Help will be needed including volunteers for session introductions, items for welcome bags and hosting evening activities. Details will be shared via email.

Old Business

MRT Update: Liz Walton provided an update on Mississippi River Trail activities. Signs for Elk River to Lake Itasca are being fabricated, a pre-construction meeting is set for late March prior to installation, and installation from Elk River to Lake Itasca should be complete by July 1. The first ever Mississippi River Bike Ride is being planned for August 26 – September 2. The ride will cover 500 miles beginning at Itasca State Park, following the Paul Bunyan Trail, and ending at the Iowa border. Partners on the event include Explore Minnesota, Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota and Wahoo Adventures. Liz invited a speaker from the MN-MRPC to participate in the ribbon cutting event to be held at Itasca State Park on August 27. DNR, MnDOT and the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota will also have speakers. Adventure Cycling may participate and promote the event as well. A celebration will also be held in the Metro area when the tour moves through on August 31. New MRT maps will soon be posted on the MnDOT website. Three Rivers Park District is undertaking a master plan to develop off-road trails along the Crow River and Mississippi River.

MN Great River Road Map Reprint: Chris Miller reported that an inquiry was sent out to our map distribution partners regarding interest in receiving maps for the upcoming travel season and quantity desired. Significant response was received, preliminary pricing has been obtained and the current year budget could sustain the cost. The reprint would be a limited quantity, one-time shipment to sites with some kept in reserve at the MN-MRPC office. Purpose would be to provide materials in the short term, as the Corridor Management Plan is completed which will then help determine future direction. There was member discussion on whether information could be changed or added. Motion by Keith Parker and seconded by Sheronne Mulry to proceed with a reprint of the current Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planner without design changes, for the upcoming spring - fall travel season. Motion carried.

National Geographic Geotourism Project: A brief overview of the project was provided by Karl Samp. A coalition of partners is working with National Geographic geotourism website for the Mississippi River. The National MRPC is a partner on the project and encourages members to attend and promote a

series of upcoming planning meetings. Details on the March 11 – 12 Twin Cities meeting are included in today's meeting packet.

New Business

Proposed Process for Letters of Support: A process for considering and providing letters of support was provided for MN-MRPC member consideration. The Commission often receives requests, and timelines do not always align well with regularly scheduled MN-MRPC meeting. The proposed process provides steps to be followed if a timeline allows for discussion at a regular meeting, and also steps to be followed if the timelines does not align with a regular meeting. After review, motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Nancy Salminen to adopt the process as presented. A copy of the process is attached.

National Scenic Byway Foundation – Action Alert: The National Scenic Byways Foundation recently sent out an action alert requesting assistance from all byways in asking for clarification of language in the federal transportation bill to specifically mention Scenic Byways as eligible for funding under the Transportation Alternatives Program. After discussion, motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Scott Bradley to provide the letters to Congress from the MN-MRPC as requested in the action alert. Motion carried.

Great River Gathering – May 14: The Annual Saint Paul Great River Gathering is scheduled for May 14, with exhibits from 5:00 – 6:30 and dinner/program from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. The MN-MRPC has sent representatives in the past. Members were asked to confirm interest with MN-MRPC staff, for consideration by the Chair.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, June 11, 2015

1:00 – 3:00 MN-MRPC Corridor Management Plan Workshop

3:15 – 5:00 MN-MRPC Quarterly Meeting

State Office Building Room 500 North

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota
Agency & Regional Updates
February 2015**

Elk River to Hastings – Commissioner Cordelia Pierson

Three Rivers Park District (Park District) will soon be kicking off two master plans for recreational facilities - existing and planned - along the Great River Road/MNRRRA.

1) Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park Master Plan (Hennepin County side)

This master plan has recently begun and is slated to be ongoing through this summer with submission to Met Council next Spring 2016. Coon Rapids Dam RP is scheduled to receive pavement funding to improve the park's access and circulation. This pavement reconstruction project provided an avenue to review the park in its entirety to ensure that the facility is best serving the region's users – and if there are deficits, the master plan is intended to flush those issues out into a clear plan for future improvements. A consultant is being considered to conduct an extensive public engagement process, which is proposed to be coordinated with the Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan (below).

2) Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan (Hennepin County side)

The Park District has hired HKGi to lead this master plan which is slated for formal kick off mid-March. The intent of the master plan is to propose a regional trail route (off-road) from North Mississippi Regional Park in Brooklyn Center, along the Mississippi River, to the confluence of the Crow River in Dayton. The consultant will examine existing off-road trail segments that are currently in place (several MRT segments) and analyze gaps to propose a continuous off-road regional trail route. The consultant is also cognoscente of the NPS's Water Trail Plan effort that is also taking place within MNRRRA and is expected to coordinate (to the extent possible) touch points to the Mississippi River etc. A significant community outreach program is proposed this summer, many events in conjunction with the Coon Rapids Dam RP Master Plan outreach. A Fall/Winter 2015 timeframe is proposed for submission to the Met Council for review.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota
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Members of the House: Sheldon Johnson (DFL – 67B) – Chair **Members of the Senate:** David Senjem (R – 29); Patricia Torres Ray (DFL – 62) **State Agency Appointees:** Paul Hugunin – Agriculture, Scott Bradley – Transportation, Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Tourism, Keith Parker – Natural Resources, Andrea Kajer – Historical Society **Regional Appointees:** Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Anne Lewis – Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River, Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings, Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border **Member at Large:** Mark Anderson

Process for Letters of Support (Approved 2/26/15)

The following actions will be taken after a request for a letter of support is received.

- 1) If the timeline allows for discussion at a regular quarterly meeting –
 - The topic will be placed on the agenda with information sent out to members in advance for review and consideration.
 - Discussion will take place at the meeting and action will be taken.
 - Staff will follow up with letter requestor as directed by the Commission.

- 2) If the timeline does not allow for discussion at a regular quarterly meeting –
 - The request and any background information will be emailed to MN-MRPC members asking if there is support.
 - If no concerns are raised, the letter will be provided as requested.
 - If concerns are noted, a phone meeting of the MN-MRPC will be scheduled at the discretion of the Chair.
 - A meeting notice will be posted on the Legislative Coordinating Commission website, and a room will be available at the State Office Building to allow for members of the public to attend. MN-MRPC members may participate by phone or in person.
 - Discussion will take place and a decision will be made on how to proceed.
 - Staff will follow up with letter requestor as directed by the Commission.



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota
Agency & Regional Updates
February 2015**

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Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
2nd Quarter Meeting – June 11, 2015
State Office Building, St. Paul MN
MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Anne Lewis – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Mark Anderson – At Large Member
Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Keith Parker – DNR Appointee
Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Rep. Sheldon Johnson - Chair

Commissioners & Technical Advisors

Absent

Paul Huginin – Agriculture Appointee
Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Appointee
Sen. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings
Bill Von Bank – Explore Minnesota
Cynthia Wheeler - DNR

Technical Advisors & Staff Present

David Kelliher – Historical Society
John Anfinson – National Park Service
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Diane Henry-Wangenstein – LCC
Chris Miller – Staff

The meeting was called to order at 3:15 by Chair Sheldon Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present.

Review of Agenda

The agenda was considered. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Nancy Salminen to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Review of Minutes from 2/26/15 Meeting

Motion by Andrea Kajer and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the February 26 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Agency and Regional Updates

Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids: Nancy Salminen will be doing Great River Road interpretive center training at Itasca State Park next week, at one of their three regular training sessions for personnel. This will provide a good audience for the information. Bike Bemidji: Loop the Lake Festival is scheduled for June 20. Lady Slipper Byway representatives will be meeting soon with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe regarding a possible project to build a pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi River near Pennington, paralleling the Great River Road.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: Anne Lewis reported on recent conversations with representatives from area Convention and Visitors Bureaus and the Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association. The Cuyuna Crusher mountain bike event is coming up at the end of June. Flyers were distributed. This event draws 300 – 500 people from around the country. Other events are also coming up and the Cuyuna Lakes group is interested in Great River Road and Mississippi River Trail materials for distribution. Aitkin Riverboat Days will be held July 30 – August 2, and the group has asked for maps or details on where boat landings are located for public access to the river. Carol Zoff offered to send a link to this information. In Grand Rapids, the Showboat Landing venue is being repurposed and will be used this summer for several events including a film festival and series of “Wine on the Mississippi” gatherings (over 100 people attended the first event in the series).

Brainerd to Elk River: Karl Samp provided updates on local events coming up – Little Falls Dam Festival, June 19-20; Elk River Art Soup, June 27; Brainerd 4th of July Celebration, Monti River Festival,

July 9-12; and Take a Day OFF on the Mississippi, August 1. The Brainerd Riverfront Planning Project is continuing. Release/presentation of the final plan release is scheduled for June 17, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. The Community Foundation has provided a grant to hire part time staff to begin implementation of the plan. The HRA will serve as host for the funds and position.

Historical Society: Andrea Kajer noted that the Mill City Museum's opera season will begin soon, followed by the concert season. Pre-design work for Historic Fort Snelling projects will begin soon if funding is included as currently listed in the bonding bill. The Oliver Kelley Farm visitor center has been demolished and a new center will be built in its place thanks to funding provided by the legislature. The historic site will remain open while the new center is constructed.

Natural Resources: Keith Parker reported that the DNR will again partner with several other organizations to offer the Take a Day OFF on the Mississippi River event, August 1 at Stearns County Mississippi River Park. The Take Aim at Summer Fun event was recently held at the Central Region headquarters featuring many free outdoor family activities. Over 400 were in attendance and response was very positive. The City of Saint Paul is developing a new archery range in the area. The DNR will also be partnering on the Powderhorn event next Saturday, where attendees can learn to camp, fish or participate in archery. Outreach events such as these have provided good connections to the community, and also help provide pathways to careers in conservation. Upper St. Anthony Lock was recently closed. Invasive carp have been caught in the St. Croix, which is a concern but not a crisis due to the healthy ecosystem. The DNR is working with a group including the Minnesota Historical Society and National Park Service on plans to redevelop the Fort Snelling Upper Post.

Transportation: Scott Bradley announced that the solicitation for FY '17 Transportation Alternatives/Scenic Byway Grants was released at the end of May. This is the third and final year that these grants will be funded as a transition into MAP-21. Byways will then need to work through Area Transportation Partnerships to apply for Transportation Alternatives funding. \$1.5 million is available through the FY '17 solicitation for byway infrastructure projects. Applications are due at 3:00 p.m. on August 7 and eligible funded projects must be ready for construction by September 30, 2018. Carol Zoff has met with MnDOT districts regarding the Corridor Management Plan project and input received to date. She has also brought the project through the MnDOT Conflict Scoping Process, which has identified priorities for management of the road. Meetings have been held with GIS staff to begin planning for receipt and maintenance of data to be provided by Kimley Horn. The data will likely be maintained in two formats – 1) "Plan your Trip" for travelers seeking information and 2) "Plan your Project" for road management entities. MnDOT has also worked with Regional Development Commissions to update all byway Corridor Management Plans, to assist in transitioning into new funding structures. As part of that process, an investment inventory was completed for the MN Great River Road, listing current and future projects along the corridor. The inventory will be included in the CMP.

National Park Service: John Anfinson reported that the National Park Service is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other partners to determine how the Upper St. Anthony Lock & Dam Visitor Center will move forward after closure of the lock. Many events and initiatives with a focus on art are part of the National Park Service Centennial Celebration, including painting and writing about the Mississippi River. The book Roadtrip with a Raindrop was also mentioned as an example of current interest in the river. The author will be at Mill City Museum on October 22, 7:00 p.m. NPS is partnering with the Saint Paul Police Department to offer "Cops & Bobbers," a program to involve youth in fishing. The Minneapolis and Saint Paul Convention and Visitors Bureaus participated in a large trade show in Orlando last week and featured the Mississippi River as a draw for international tourists, as well as the NPS Centennial.

Commission Business

FY '15 Budget Status: Mark Anderson provided an overview of the budget report, included in the meeting packet, and Chris Miller responded to questions. If funds remain at year end, the MN-MRPC could pay a portion of their National MRPC dues for 2016. An invoice has been requested. As approved at the last meeting, the MN GRR map re-print was completed. 25,100 maps were printed and shipped to 48 partner locations. Costs related to the MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting (mainly member attendance/travel and registrations for invited speakers) have been paid. Expenditures are on track for the National Scenic Byways CMP Grant and National Park Service Grant.

Legislative Updates: The state government finance bill has been signed. LCC received a slight increase in their appropriation but is also projecting significant cost increases in some areas of their budget. MN-MRPC funding levels are expected to remain stable. The MN-MRPC sunset date was also extended from June 30, 2016 to June 30, 2020.

National MRPC Updates

2015 Semi-Annual Meeting: Karl Samp, Planning Team Chair, reported that great feedback was received from MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting attendees. Special thanks were noted to John Anfinson for his excellent presentation and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area was also congratulated on their receipt of the MRPC Stewardship Award. There was a very positive response to the presentation by the Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association. MN-MRPC attendees mentioned highlights including Ed Fairbanks' presentation followed by the song and dance group graciously provided by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. It was a highlight of the meeting. Field sessions went well even though the weather was cool and rainy. Sincere appreciation was conveyed for the efforts and financial support of the St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. The meeting also would not have been a success without the work of the planning team – Karl Samp, Anne Lewis and Carol Zoff, as well as all MN-MRPC members who donated items, attended the meeting, introduced speakers and assisted overall.

Interpretive Center Checklist & Presentation: Nancy Salminen reported on the meeting of the MRPC Culture and Heritage Committee, which included discussion on the new Mississippi River cruises to be offered by Viking River Cruises. A letter from the MN-MRPC went to the cruise line director, to provide information about the Great River Road and offer ideas on Mississippi River attractions such as the Great River Road Interpretive Centers. Training and better connections with Interpretive Center staff are priorities for the Culture and Heritage Committee. Assistance is needed to make sure all Interpretive Centers are visited and that training/information on the Great River Road is provided for staff. A visit checklist is included in the meeting packet – each center should be visited annually. A power point presentation has been developed for training and copies for all interpretive centers have been provided on flash drives. There was discussion on how to accomplish the visits and training for the ten GRR Interpretive Centers in Minnesota. Nancy Salminen has set an appointment to visit/train staff at Itasca State Park. Anne Lewis offered to visit the Forest History Center. John Anfinson will do the checklist and training for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Visitor Center. Karl Samp might be able to visit one or two centers in SE Minnesota on his way to the MRPC Annual Meeting. A suggestion was made that a possible timeline could be to complete the visits and training prior to National "Drive the Great River Road Month" in September. Chris Miller will add a list of Minnesota GRR Interpretive Centers to the presentation on the flash drives, and will follow up with members regarding visits of the remaining sites. (MN GRR Interpretive Centers are: Itasca State Park (Jacob Brower and Mary Gibbs Centers); Forest History Center; Mill City Museum; Minnesota History Center; Science Museum of Minnesota; MNRRA Visitor Center; Historic Fort Snelling; National Eagle Center; Minnesota Marine Art Museum; and Winona County History Center.

Marketing Committee: Anne Lewis reported on activities of the MRPC Marketing Committee and implementation in Minnesota. September has been designated as annual "Drive the Great River Road Month." A promotional toolkit including details and press releases will be provided by the National Office, along with printed postcards. A Facebook sweepstakes will run during the month, with a \$500 grand prize. Materials will be received by the MN-MRPC by August 1 for use in promoting within the state. Anne suggested contacting news outlets and John Anfinson suggested a possible partnership with the National Park Service Centennial Find Your Park campaign. He will check on use of the logo and joint promotion options. The National Office is also working on a promotional toolkit for states to use with stakeholders, partners, and local communities. The purpose is to build GRR awareness and partnerships. A presentation, video and giveaways (key chains and window clings) will be included.

Mississippi River Geotourism Website – Nomination Process: Anne Lewis provided an overview of discussion by the MRPC Marketing Committee. Each state is being encouraged to nominate their section of the Great River Road, and also to encourage nomination of the Interpretive Centers in each state along with other sites as appropriate. The nomination process requires entry of information by someone at or close to/responsible for the specific attraction. A fact sheet has been developed as a possible tool for use by the MN-MRPC in encouraging nominations. The fact sheet is included in the meeting packet

along with the nomination guidelines provided by the Mississippi River Geotourism Program. Chris Miller has entered preliminary information for the Minnesota Great River Road and will help facilitate the process for others as needed. John Anfinson mentioned that MNRRA is a sponsor for the Mississippi River Geotourism program within the National Park Service, and is applying for funding that would support development of a mobile app.

Old Business

CMP Project Update: Chris Miller and Carol Zoff reported that the overall project is progressing well, and remains the primary focus for the Commission. After the plan is complete and implementation begins, committees and work groups will likely be convened. Existing/former MN-MRPC committees have generally not been meeting as the CMP is being completed. Pilots of the view assessment process to be included in the CMP were conducted in each of six communities where open houses were recently held and the feedback received was extremely valuable.

MRT Update: Liz Walton gave an overview of recent Mississippi River Trail activities and accomplishments. Phase III installation of signs is near completion, and a protocol is being established to track sign status over time. The MRT continues to get press, including being featured on the new Minnesota Bike Map and a television show called "Minnesota Travelers" that will air soon on Fox Sports. The first airing will be on July 5, 8:30 p.m. Slow progress is being made on getting the MRT route to show up on Google. The Inaugural Headwaters to Hills Ride will take place August 26 – September 2, from Lake Itasca to the Iowa Border. Space remains available and all were asked to help spread the word. Two ribbon cuttings for the newly signed MRT will be associated with the ride – one at Lake Itasca on August 27, and another in Saint Paul on August 31. MN-MRPC members mentioned that they're hearing much interest in the MRT. Materials were requested by Anne Lewis for the Cuyuna Crusher event.

New Business

Minnesota Business First Stop – Economy in Motion Event: An overview of the Minnesota Business First Stop project was provided in the meeting packets. An event called "Economy in Motion" will be held in September, involving commissioners of eight state agencies participating in a 2.5 day tour focused on forestry and transportation in greater Minnesota. The MN-MRPC has been invited to speak on September 11 in Duluth for 10 - 15 minutes about the Commission and Great River Road including transportation, tourism, workforce attraction and quality of life perspectives as well as the partnerships involved. MN-MRPC agencies involved in this group are DNR, DOT and Agriculture. Commission members expressed appreciation for the opportunity and designated Chris Miller to provide the presentation.

FY '17 MnDOT Transportation Alternatives/Scenic Byway Grants: Questions regarding the process were discussed, including application deadline (August 7), construction ready date (September 30, 2018) and matching funds requirement (20%). Letters of support from the scenic byway are required with the application. The application deadline is prior to the next MN-MRPC meeting and so any requests for letters received by the MN-MRPC office will be sent to members via email for consideration, as outlined in the process attached to the February 26, 2015 meeting minutes. Scott Bradley noted applications received for the FY '15 and '16 solicitations were excellent. Nancy Salminen reported that there could be an application for a pedestrian bridge project over the Mississippi River where the Lady Slipper Scenic Byway and Great River Road run concurrently, near Pennington.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, August 20, 2015

2:30 – 5:00 p.m.

State Office Building Room 500 North

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.