

## **Mississippi River Parkway Commission Annual Meeting Memphis, Tennessee**

**September 19, 2014**

**ERA Committee**

The following members were present at the meeting: Bob Ware, Gip Robertson, Bob Jost, Dan Petersen, Bob Miller, Rose Baenke, and Nani Bhowmik.

We started the meeting by discussing the Stewardship Award related to the two nominations that we have received. We continued the discussion on how the recommendations from the ERA Committee were sent to the Board requesting the Board to accept both the nominations. All those present at the meeting felt that it was the right decision.

We also encouraged our Members to consider nominating someone or some entity for a possible Stewardship Award in 2015.

We talked about the viability of using the levees for hiking and biking trails along the Mississippi River. The ERA Committee felt that this topic will need further evaluation and assessment considering the fact that almost all the levees are owned by local Levee Boards or Drainage Districts. Moreover, some of the levees were never designed to carry any kind of traffic on a continuous basis.

Kentucky reported that they are working on a Trail Initiative in their State

We would like to request the State of Minnesota to try to get someone from the St. Paul District of the USACOE to present a talk at the next meeting on the recreation benefits derived from the Mississippi River. This analysis may show that in the benefit/cost analyses of all future projects, recreational related benefits may be quite significant.

We also felt that the habitat rehabilitation at a local level will depend upon the willing land owners providing the necessary support.

It would be wonderful if the ERA Committee could get some information from all the States on what kind or at what extent habitat rehabilitation works are going on within their state boundaries.

The ERA Committee decided to embark on a repeat survey along the Great River Road on "Why Visitors Come to the Mississippi River". A survey similar to the proposed one was completed in July 2002 and it will be great if another Survey could be completed soon. The Chair of the ERA Committee is now working with National Office to slightly modify the old Surveying Form used in 2002 and conduct a new survey probably within the next tourist season. Thanks.

This brief report was prepared by Nani Bhowmik, Chair of the ERA Committee

September 22, 2014