

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION

1ST QUARTER MARKETING REPORT

January-March, 2016



## ADMIN

### Fulfillments

- Over 1,100 maps sent this first quarter
- Includes online requests, phone requests and bulk orders requested by interpretive centers and other businesses.

### Phone Inquires

- Answer phone calls daily: map requests, travel guidance, members' assistance, etc.

## PRINT

### Map

- Updates
  - Created contact list (members, DOT, tourism and interpretive centers)
  - Collected and organized updates from contact list
- Interpretive Centers
  - Updated ICs information (compared to current information)
  - Added new ICs
- Copy
  - Refresh copy
- Design
  - Created draft 1 map based on updates provided
  - Created webpage for review
    - Uploaded new map files
    - Created feedback form
    - Created feedback page
  - Organized feedback
  - Created draft 2 map based on feedback
  - Update webpage for review
  - Collected final feedback
  - Made final changes to map



## MEETINGS

### Semi-Annual Meeting April 27-29

- Event prep (Susanne)
  - Booking
  - Speakers
  - Pricing
  - Trips
  - Etc
- Registration
  - Set pricing
  - Create registration form (hard copy and electronically)
  - Print and mail form out to members
  - Email registration information
  - Collect payments
  - Send invoices
- Newsletters
  - Sent multiple newsletters to remind registration for meeting, hotel reservations and other news (see newsletters section)



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
Semi-Annual Meeting**  
La Crosse, WI | April 27-29, 2016

**Join us in La Crosse!**  
The next MRPC Semi-Annual meeting will take place in La Crosse, WI, from April 27-29. The meeting will feature a full agenda, including sessions on developing tourism on the Great River Road, the success of agritourism on the Great River Road, a Geo-tourism update and more. We'll meet and stay right in the heart of beautiful downtown La Crosse, a thriving river town located on the banks of the Mississippi River. Be sure to attend this year's semi-annual meeting. Register today!

**Agenda (Subject to change.)**

**Wednesday, April 27**  
4pm **Board of Directors Meeting**  
5-7pm **Registration**  
8-10pm **Hospitality Suite**

**Thursday, April 28**  
Breakfast - on your own  
7-9am **Registration**  
8-8:30am **New Member Orientation**  
8-8:30am **Committee Chairs Meeting**  
8:45-11:50am **General Session**  
• Welcome: Sherry Quamme, WI-MRPC Chair  
• Introductions: Karl Samp, MRPC Pilot  
• La Crosse Welcome: Sen. Jennifer Shilling  
• Greetings from a WIGRR Commissioner: Sen. Kathleen Vinehout  
• Developing Tourism on the Great River Road as an Economic Driver: Patrick Reinsma, WI Department of Tourism  
• Roadtrip with a Raindrop: The story of traveling the GRRNSB, Gayle Harper  
• WI Interpretive Centers: Potosi Brewery & Museum, Great River Road Visitor & Learning Center, Stonefield State Historic Site and Villa Louis  
• Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative Update, Tim Kabat, La Crosse Mayor

Noon-1:15pm **Lunch**  
Agritourism along the Great River Road "Organically Speaking": Hans Eisenbeis, Organic Valley

1:30-4pm **Technical Committee Meetings**  
4-4:30pm **Roundtable discussion on Funding and Support Opportunities for Byways**  
4:30-6pm **Welcome to Wisconsin Tastings and Samplings**  
Dinner - on your own

**Registration**  
Register at [mrpcmembers.com](http://mrpcmembers.com)

**Delegates (all sessions & meals included):**  
\$185 - Early Bird - by April 12  
\$225 - After April 12

**Spouses/Guest of Delegate:**  
\$95 - Early Bird - by April 12  
\$130 - After April 12

**One Day (Day of sessions and meals included):**  
\$100

**Remember—April 12 is the deadline for early-bird pricing.**

**Cancellation Policy**  
Cancellations made on or prior to Tuesday, April 12, will receive a full registration fee refund minus a \$20 processing fee.  
Cancellations made after Friday, April 12, will **not** be eligible for a refund.

Mississippi River Parkway Commission • 701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202 • Madison, WI 53703  
experiencemississippiriver.com • 1-866-763-8310 • FAX: 1-608-242-8896

### Marketing Conference Call

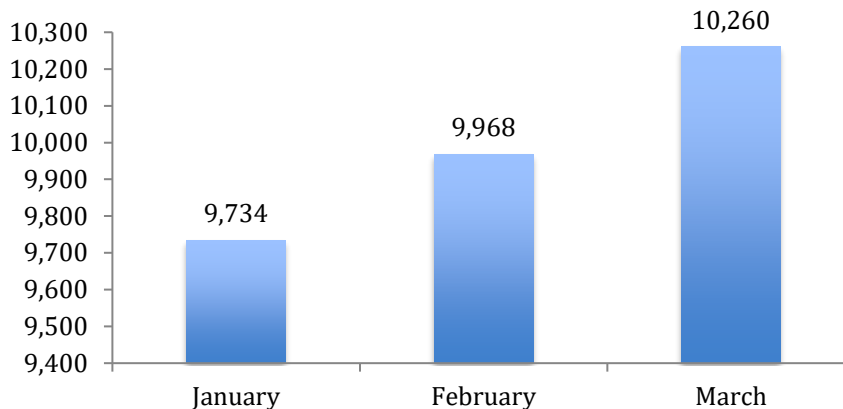
- February 16, 2016

## MARKETING RESEARCH

- Media rates for advertising consideration
  - Obtained Marketing Committee members recommended publications for ad placement
  - Contacted publications for media rates
  - Organized presentation on publications, rate cards and demographic reach
- Researched and presented multi-state bicycle races as organizational examples

## E-NEWSLETTERS

### Subscribers



### Subscribers – Tourism list

- Subscribers (as of 3/31/16):
- Average subscriber rate: 60 per month
- Average open rate: 35% (industry average: 19%)
- Average click rate: 13% (industry average: 3%)



### Birding Bonanza Giveaway e-newsletter

- Subject line: Win \$250 for your next Great River Road Trip!
- Topics: Best birding in the country and giveaway info
- Subscribers: 10,153
- Open rate: 34%
- Click rate: 11%

### MRPC Member e-newsletters

- 3/21 – Semi Annual Meeting online registration reminder, hotel reservations, featured speakers and agenda
- 3/29 – Semi Annual Meeting online registration early bird pricing reminder, hotel room block extended, “Stay Updated” section on MRPCmembers.com, state event submission, bicycling event submission, year of birding and Birding Bonanza Giveaway promotion tool kit link and marketing news

[View this email in your browser.](#)

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#### MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting April 27-29 in La Crosse, WI

**Register Today and Save**  
 The 2016 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting will be held in April 27-29 in beautiful La Crosse, WI, located on the Mississippi River. The meeting has a full agenda with sessions on developing tourism on the Great River Road, the success of agritourism on the Great River Road, a Geo-tourism update and more. There will be a few entertaining activities and some great speakers, including Gayle Harper, author of “Roadtrip with a Raindrop: 90 Days Along the Mississippi River.”

Save on your registration fee by registering before April 12. After that date, prices increase by \$40.

- \* Early Bird Delegate (\$185)
- \* Early Bird Spouse/Guest (\$95)

Registration includes the Wednesday evening hospitality suite, lunch on Thursday and Friday, and a Friday afternoon excursion. Register for the meeting today to take advantage of the early-bird pricing. [Register now!](#)

The current agenda for the Semi-Annual Meeting is available online. Download it [here](#).

**Hotel Deadline Extended**  
 We have arranged with the La Crosse Radisson to extend our room block rate to **Friday, April 1**. If you have not reserved your stay, please be sure to do so before the discount rate no longer applies. Hotel reservations can be made by calling the National Toll Free Reservations Line: 800-333-3333. Make sure to mention the **MRPC Group Block** to get special rate (\$122 for king city view; \$142 for two queen river view).

**Stay in the Loop**  
 The [MRPC members website](#) includes regularly updated information about meetings, projects and more. For the latest MRPC updates and announcements, check the new “Stay Updated” section on the left side of the [homepage](#).

**Submit Your Events!**  
 We have a new form that member states can use to submit events on the Great River Road. We’re hoping to post signature events for every state on the road, providing a resource for travelers. Please submit your event information using this [form](#).

We are also gathering information on bicycling events and races along the Great River Road. Please submit your state’s bike events using this [form](#).

**Year of Birding 2016**  
 The Mississippi River Parkway Commission is participating in the [Year of Birding 2016](#), a series of events hosted by partner organizations along the Mississippi River. The events aim to bring people out to experience the beautiful sights and sounds of birding on the river. Year of Birding 2016 is the latest in a series of activity-related events promoted by the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative.

**Birding Bonanza Giveaway**  
 Some of the finest birding in the country is on the Great River Road. **Please consider promoting the Birding Bonanza Giveaway with your Facebook pages, newsletters and websites.** A button linking to the sweepstakes can be found [here](#). The winner of the giveaway will receive \$250 to spend on a Great River Road birdwatching adventure, a signed copy of Gayle Harper’s book, “Roadtrip with a Raindrop: 90 Days Along the Mississippi River, and some fun Great River Road gear. The sweepstakes is off to a strong early start, and it presents a great promotional opportunity for partner states.

(The [sweepstakes](#) runs through May 30.)


**Marketing Successes**  
 2015 was a great year for America’s greatest drive and we had a lot of success promoting the Great River Road. By year’s end, we had grown our subscriber list to nearly 10,000 people and our Facebook fan numbers topped 11,200. Today we’re over 14,300. Our promotions also did extremely well, our Drive the Great River Road Sweepstakes drew over 2,000 entries. We generated further important exposure with the distribution of Drive the Great River Road keychains in our interpretive centers. The keychains proved extremely popular with travelers and were another way to spread the word about the Great River Road. In September, we launched a new app, Drive the Great River Road, for both Apple and Android devices. In less than six months, we’ve had nearly 1,000 downloads. **Help promote the [app](#).**

**Save the Date**  
 Make plans to attend the 2016 Annual Meeting. It will take place September 14-16 in Natchez, MS. Stay tuned for more information.

**Great River Road Fun Fact**  
 Bird lovers flock to the Great River Road for a reason: 60 percent of all North American birds—326 species—use the Mississippi River Basin as their migratory flyway. Click [here](#) for more birding information.

[Register for the MRPC semi-annual meeting today.](#)

[Visit the Great River Road Shop!](#)




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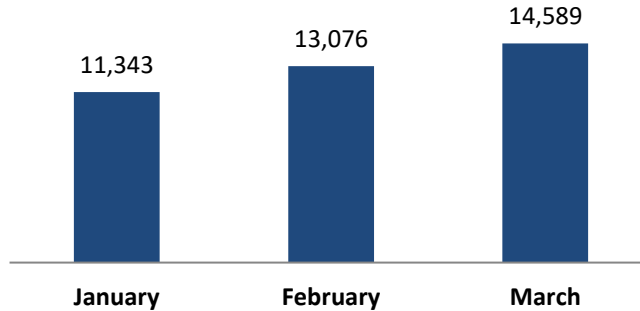
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**GREAT RIVER ROAD 1Q 2016 SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT**

**Facebook Fan Growth**



**January**

Facebook fans	New Facebook fans	Facebook updates
11,343	112	14

**Facebook Top Posts**

- January 8 (“Photo Friday! Have you ever seen the headwaters of the Mississippi (located at Itasca State Park in Minnesota) in the winter?” w/photo): 6,455 people reached, 220 likes, 38 comments, 29 shares, 270 post clicks
- January 22 (“Photo Friday! It takes a lot of line to hold the American Queen steamboat in place in Visit Mississippi” w/photo of boat and rope): 4,173 people reached, 122 likes, 4 comments, 20 shares, 199 post clicks

**February**

Facebook fans	New Facebook fans	Facebook updates
13,076	1,733	7

**Facebook Top Posts**

- 2/20 (“Take the trip of a lifetime on the Mississippi River with The Telegraph” and link to article): 8,007 people reached, 193 likes, 11 comments, 34 shares, 417 post clicks
- 2/18 (“Happy Thursday!” with photo of St. Louis Arch at sunset): 4,469 people reached, 240 likes, 4 comments, 0 shares, 80 post clicks

### March

Facebook fans	New Facebook fans	15
14,589	1,513	23

### Facebook Top Posts

- 3/11 (“Photo Friday! Reelfoot Lake in northwestern Tennessee was formed by a series of earthquakes in the early 1800s and is known for its cypress trees and great fishing.” w/photo)
  - 12,156 people reached, 395 reactions, 24 comments, 54 shares, 427 post clicks
- 3/18 (“Photo Friday: A foggy morning at Mississippi River State Park in Marianna, Ark.” w/photo of kayakers):
  - 6,302 people reached, 217 reactions, 4 comments, 15 shares, 154 post clicks

### Facebook Advertising

#### General Page Likes Ad

- Impressions: 77,985
- Clicks: 3,322
- Click-through rate: 4.3%
- Fans added: 2,707

#### Website Clicks Ad (directs to [experiencemississippiriver.com](http://experiencemississippiriver.com))

- Impressions: 244,637
- Clicks: 3,454
- Click-through rate: 1.41%
- Clicks to website: 1,643
- Fans added: 108

### Facebook Audience

- Fan profile
  - Fans of page: 73% women (54% are ages 45-65+), 27% men (18% are ages 45+)
  - Engaged fans (those who are liking, commenting and sharing our material): 73% women (57% are 45+), 27% men (20% are 45+)
  - Top engaged cities (in order): Davenport, IA; Dubuque, IA; St. Louis, MO; Belleville, IL; Alton, IL; St. Charles, MO

### Takeaways

- Scenic photos continue to be the most popular and engaging posts
- Posts and links to articles about road trips along the Mississippi River are always well-received

### PINTEREST

- Update monthly

### BLOG

- Wrote blog posts and shared on Facebook
  - February: Four things to love about the Great River Road
  - March: Top 5 birds to see on the Great River Road

#### Four things to love about the Great River Road

Thursday, February 04, 2016

There's a certain romance to the open road that's unmatched by other styles of travel and there's perhaps no more romantic American driving destination than the Mississippi. The Great River Road National Scenic Byway traces this mighty river through the heart of the America, from the snow-frosted forests of the north to the moss-covered groves of the Mississippi Delta. There are more than 3,000 beautiful miles of open road to explore, so no two trips are alike and there are always new views to take in, new people to meet and new surprises to discover. For some, exploring this country can become a life's journey. It's a road you can travel alone, but the Great River Road is a place of shared memories. Consider making a few of your own with someone special.

Here are a four things to love about this unforgettable route:

##### Historic Sites

The Mississippi River is drenched in history and along the Great River Road, you'll encounter beautiful architecture, impressive native history and the legacy of early settlers and adventurers. The route features sites like [Historic Fort Snelling](#) in St. Paul, the [Effigy Mounds National Monument](#) in Harpers Ferry and the [New Madrid Historic Museum](#).

##### Scenic overlooks

The Great River Road has scores of inspiring vistas. Pull over and take time to relax at these beautiful spots. Watch the sun set, see eagles drift on the wind or take in the sight of massive barges hauling freight to market. The views are unforgettable. Check out [Wyalusing State Park, Sunset Park](#) and the [Old Mississippi River Bridge Scenic Overlook](#).

##### Fascinating museums

The Great River Road will take you to memorable museums that share the story of this great river – from the days before European settlement to the time when it became a center of industry that helped fuel a fast-developing world. Museums on the road include the [C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa](#), the [Delta Blues Museum](#) and the [Louisiana State Museum](#).

##### Natural areas

The Great River Road will also take you to some beautiful parks and recreation areas. They are fantastic places to take a short nature stroll or a longer and more ambitious hike. Wildlife is abundant in these parks and you'll encounter habitat unlike anyplace else on earth. Some great parks on the route include [Reelfoot Lake State Park](#), [Lake Chicot State Park](#) and [Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve](#).

Tags: Agriculture, Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi River, Museum, Tennessee, Wisconsin

Discover and save creative ideas Sign up Log in

**The Great River Road**  
www.experiencesmississippiriver.com

The Great River Road follows the mighty Mississippi from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. 3,000 miles of beautiful.

12 Boards 790 Pins 0 Likes 467 Followers 265 Following

- Drive the Great River Road ...** The Great River Road (Pin #56)
- Interpretive Centers** The Great River Road (Pin #80)
- Minnesota** The Great River Road (Pin #76)
- Wisconsin** The Great River Road (Pin #71)
- Illinois** The Great River Road (Pin #59)
- Iowa** The Great River Road (Pin #62)
- Missouri** The Great River Road (Pin #60)
- Kentucky** The Great River Road (Pin #47)
- Tennessee** The Great River Road (Pin #64)
- Arkansas** The Great River Road (Pin #53)
- Mississippi** The Great River Road (Pin #65)
- Louisiana** The Great River Road (Pin #95)

## PROMOTIONS

### Birding Bonanza Giveaway Overview

- Running date: 3/21 – 5/31
- Goals:
  - To promote birding options and the 2016 Year of Birding along the Great River Road
  - To increase interaction and fan numbers on the Great River Road’s social media channels
- Prize: \$250, “Roadtrip with a Raindrop” signed book, plus Great River Road gear
- Total entries as of 3/31/16: 848

### Promotion Toolkit for partners

- Wrote copy: overview, website, newsletter blurb, Facebook and Twitter sample posts
- Included graphic and link
- Uploaded to mrpcmembers.com resources and forms page

### Newsletter

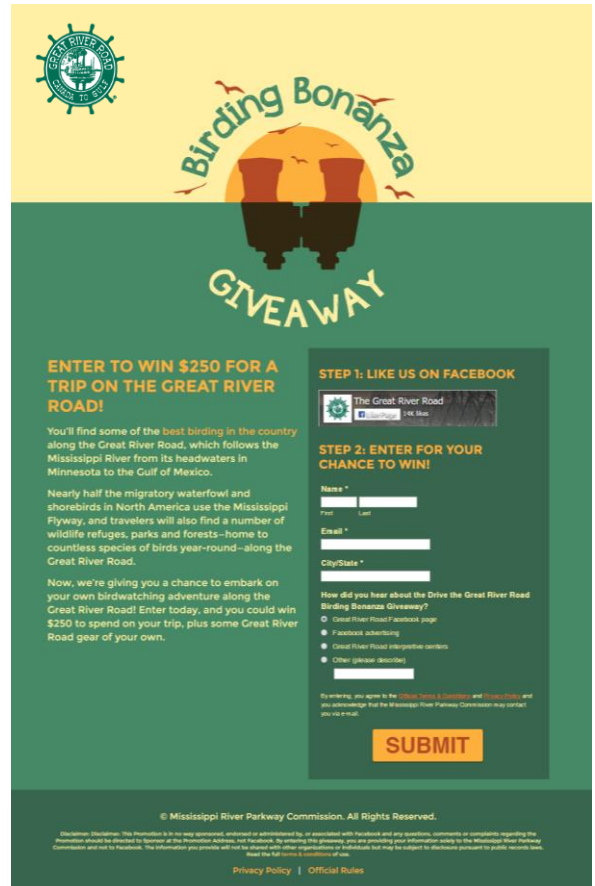
- See newsletter section

### Facebook Website Clicks Ad (directs to promotion entry page) (started 3/21)

- Impressions: 24,447
- Clicks: 693
- Click-through rate: 2.83%
- Clicks to website: 321

## PR/PUBLICITY

- Wrote/distributed release announcing Birding Bonanza Giveaway
  - Picked up by River Cities’ Reader





## WEB MAINTENANCE

1. ■ [google / organic](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

2. ■ [\(direct\) / \(none\)](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

3. ■ [m.facebook.com / referral](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

4. ■ [bing / organic](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

5. ■ [Experience Mississippi River E-newsletter / email](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

6. ■ [yahoo / organic](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

7. ■ [facebook.com / referral](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

8. ■ [usatoday.com / referral](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

9. ■ [roadtripusa.com / referral](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

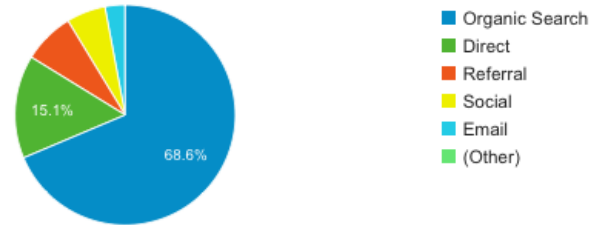
10. ■ [drivethegreatriverroad.com / referral](#)

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016

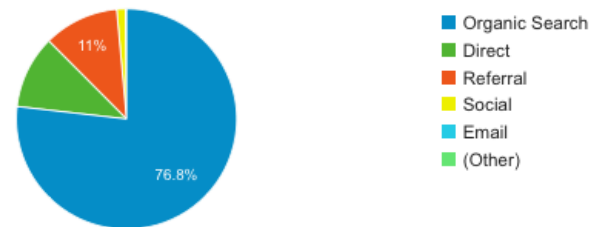
Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015

### Top Channels

Jan 1, 2016 - Mar 31, 2016



Jan 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2015



www.experiencemississippiriver.com/			
2016-01-01 to 2016-03-31			
Total Sessions		44108	
Unique Visitors (Users)		37059	
New Users		83%	
Returning Users		17%	
Pages Viewed per Session		2.3	
Time Spent per Page Visited		1.1 minutes	
Avg Session Duration		2.3 minutes	
Top 10 most visited pages			
Page	Pageviews	Sessions	Avg time on page (minutes)
homepage	17886		1.2
/river-attractions/	10316		2.2
/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/	8776		1.4
/interactive-tools/fun-facts/	7880		4.8
/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/	4832		1.8
/itineraries/	3670		1
/states/louisiana/	2800		2.1
/states/illinois/	2516		1.9
/app/	2398		3.2
/states/iowa/	2205		2.1
Top 10 Referring Sites			
Page	Pageviews	Sessions	Avg time on page (minutes)
m.facebook.com	1851		0.8
facebook.com	339		1.6
usatoday.com	332		3.1
roadtripusa.com	318		4.5
drivethegreatriverroad.com	266		1.2
secure.pilchbarnet.com	152		1.9
kidrex.org	110		1.2
l.facebook.com	108		1.4
lm.facebook.com	105		1.8
travel.nationalgeographic.com	105		4.7
Facebook Referrals: 2151			
Top 10 Facebook Referrers			
Source	Page	Sessions	
m.facebook.com referral	homepage	1339	
m.facebook.com referral	/mrpc/birding-bonanza/index.php	287	
facebook.com referral	homepage	177	
m.facebook.com referral	/app/	82	
lm.facebook.com referral	homepage	77	
l.facebook.com referral	homepage	56	
m.facebook.com referral	/four-things-to-love-about-the-great-river-road/	41	
facebook.com referral	/mrpc/birding-bonanza/index.php	33	
facebook.com referral	/app/	31	
m.facebook.com referral	/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/	28	
Mobile Usage (percent)			
30%			
Top 10 Metro Areas			
Metro	Users		
Chicago IL	2426		
Minneapolis-St. Paul MN	2168		
St. Louis MO	1140		
Milwaukee WI	962		
London	919		
Madison WI	880		
New York NY	845		
Atlanta GA	766		
Houston TX	748		
Dallas-Ft. Worth TX	742		

### Ongoing web checks & maintenance

- Monthly website checks
  - Tested and updated links as necessary
  - Checked copy and photos, ensured content was current
  - Removed expired packages
- Photo collections
  - Called interpretive centers/request for photos
  - Collect/organize photos
  - Upload site
- Update new Minnesota logo
- Seasonal flip
  - Wrote spring copy, updated bounceback, flip photos and Facebook to spring
- Year of Birding
  - Researched information
  - Added to Birding page

### Takeaways

Sessions on the site are up by 34% overall, which helped bump up users by 32% and pageviews by 23%.

The site still seems to be performing well with SEO. The majority of the visits this quarter came from organic search. A few of the popular search keywords were:

- Mississippi river
- Great river road
- Mississippi river facts
- The great river road
- Great river road national scenic byway

Facebook was one of the top referrers this quarter, bringing almost 2,500 users to the site. That is a 769% increase from last years Facebook referrals.

The Birding Bonanza Giveaway has been pretty successful thus far. It has had nearly 1,300 sessions already and it still has well over a month to go.

### Demographics:

Mobile visits made up nearly half of the sites visits this quarter. The mobile bounce rate increased slightly this quarter, but it is still below 60%, which is around average.

### MRPCmembers.com

- Added meeting minutes to Forms & Resources page
- Added Stay Updated section to homepage
  - Added news/posts regarding meetings and map review

- Continue to update roster

## WEB AND MOBILE APP

### Drive the Great River Road App

- Total of downloads as of 3/31/16:
  - 715 Apple
  - 392 Android
  - 1,107 total downloads

