



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2016-17 Annual Report July 2017



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Mission

The mission of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota is to preserve, promote and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. The Commission is organized and guided by Minnesota Statute 161.1419. The Minnesota Great River Road is designated and managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation under Minnesota Statute 161.142.

Quarterly Meetings of the Full Commission

The MN-MRPC held regular quarterly meetings on August 11, 2016; November 10, 2016; March 2, 2017 and June 8, 2017. A special meeting was also held on January 5, 2017.

Projects & Activities

Wayfinding Signage: Field checking and confirmation of Minnesota Great River Road sign data was completed for use in developing a system wide sign replacement estimate. The initial inventory had documented 54% of the 620 signs as either missing or needing modification. The 565 mile Minnesota Great River Road will be completely resigned between fall of 2017 and 2018. MnDOT project letting took place in July 2017. Project design and construction funding provided by MnDOT, and the local construction match was provided by DNR.

Plan Your Trip & Plan Your Project Interactive Mapping Tools: Mapping and data on 750+ resources along the Great River Road were reviewed. A Plan Your Trip story map framework was created for each of the six Minnesota Great River Road Destination Areas, along with straight line mapping. MN-MRPC state agency partners provided information and links to data/websites/images to be included on the interactive mapping tools. Sample story maps were shared with the MN-MRPC and comments gathered for use as the project is completed. Goal is for completion of a full prototype by October 2017. Plan Your Project mapping will then be developed to include additional technical information for road management authorities.

GRR Ambassador Development: A plan for a pilot effort was developed to allow for feedback, partnership development and refinement prior to large scale implementation. A toolkit would be developed and rolled out by MN-MRPC members to targeted contacts in each GRR region. Plans will proceed after new interactive mapping is completed and ready for use.

Executive Committee: The Commission created an Executive Committee as an outcome of the Corridor Management Plan. The Committee will generally meet twice per year and is charged with the following – maintain Commission membership – appointment/election process, recruitment, orientation; maintain affiliation with National MRPC including staying current on dues payments, ensuring National Meeting and National Committee representation from MN-MRPC; monitor Corridor Management Plan implementation progress and leverage resource needs; facilitate coordination with House and Senate. The first meeting was held on January 5, 2017 and a second scheduled for July 10.

Regional Meetings/Elections: Two regional MN-MRPC/GRR meetings for partners and stakeholders were held in fall of 2017. Locations were Red Wing for the Hastings to Iowa Border Region, and St. Paul for the Elk River to Hastings Region. Special thanks to meeting hosts Red Wing Ignite and Historic Fort Snelling. Great River Road updates were provided, feedback was gathered from partners and regional MN-MRPC members were elected to new two year terms.

New GRR Interpretive Center Designations: The Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site and Oliver Kelley Farm, both Minnesota Historical Society sites, submitted nominations and were approved for inclusion in the National Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers. The Oliver Kelley Farm also completed a significant renovation project resulting in a new visitor center and increased programming.

MN GRR Maps & Website: Minor edits were made to the Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planner, and 28,000 copies were printed with the majority shipped to over 50 partner distribution sites. A copy of the map is attached. The Minnesota Great River Road website had 214,601 visits during the year - an average of 17,883 per month. Individual brochure requests and travel inquiries were answered by the MN-MRPC office, but the most prevalent form of material access was in electronic form directly from the website, including the Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planner being downloaded 11,975 times from July 2016 to June 2017. A variety of other resources were also accessed often.

Letters to Congress: Letters were sent to Minnesota's U.S. Representatives and Senators in February of 2017, highlighting the recent 25th anniversary of the Scenic Byways Program and the importance of the Great River Road (sample attached). MN-MRPC Member Anne Lewis met with staff from four of those congressional offices while in Washington DC and provided packets of Great River Road information.

National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure: MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle was selected to participate on the council, as was Diana Threadgill of Tennessee, representing the ten state MRPC. Carol Zoff, MnDOT Technical Advisor to the MN-MRPC, serves as staff for Commissioner Zelle on this council.

National MRPC: MN-MRPC members participated in MRPC Standing Committees and carried out projects at the state level. Four MN-MRPC representatives participated in the 2017 Semi-Annual Meeting in Paducah, Kentucky. Newly produced 10-state Great River Road maps were distributed to 12 MN GRR Interpretive Centers. A spring contest promoting Great River Road birding and summer contest promoting Great River Road biking were conducted. MN-MRPC actively participated in and promoted Drive the Great River Road Month – 11 “Glimpses of America” via the MN Great River Road were featured. Details are attached. A 10-state Corridor management plan is also in development.

Mississippi River Geotourism Program: The MN-MRPC continued to promote the Mississippi River Geotourism Program as well as encourage nominations from within Minnesota. The MN-MRPC assisted in organizing and promoting a Mississippi River Connections Collaborative rollout event in conjunction with MN-MRPC Metro Regional Meeting on October 27, 2016 at Historic Fort Snelling.

Minnesota GIS/LIS Conference: The MN-MRPC was asked to provide a keynote presentation on the Great River Road at this annual conference of 600 -700 GIS professionals from around the state, to take place in October 2017. Story maps that are under development as part of new MN GRR interactive mapping tools will provide the base for the presentation, with a theme of “Travel the Great River Road to Find Minnesota’s Sense of Place.”

Mississippi Multimedia Gallery: Representatives from Hamline University provided a project demonstration and presentation to the MN-MRPC in June 2017 and potential for a partnership will be considered by the MN-MRPC at a future meeting. The Gallery is a place based story telling tool featuring the full length of the Mississippi River via 55 inch kiosk.

Funding/Great River Road Investments

The Minnesota Great River Road and its amenities are supported by several funding sources, including those managed by the MN-MRPC as listed below (state operating budget) and those managed by related organizations (State agency partners, partner organizations such as the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, etc.).

State Operating Budget

The MN-MRPC operated with state funding at levels allowing the Commission to proceed with priorities. The budget for FY '17 was \$63,000 plus carry over from the first year of the biennium. Commission allocations for FY '18 and '19 will be steady at the FY '17 level. Materials highlighting present and past accomplishments of the MN-MRPC

were prepared for use by public members of the Commission as they shared information during the 2017 legislative session. Samples are attached.

Final audits were completed for the National Scenic Byways Corridor Management Planning and Implementation grant that ended June 30, 2016. Notification of project close out was received from FHWA in June 2017, with no findings or adjustments.

MnDOT/MnDNR

MnDOT provided staffing in the form of a graduate student worker for the Plan Your Trip and Plan Your Project Interactive Mapping Tools as well as the Wayfinding Signage Project. Funds have also been committed to re-sign the Great River Road and five other Minnesota byways. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has dedicated funds to the GRR signage project as required match to MnDOT funds for certain roadways.

Minnesota Transportation Alternatives Program

Local byway communities sought funds for projects through the Minnesota Transportation Alternatives Program. MN-MRPC held a special meeting on January 5, 2017 to consider requests for letters of support for local projects requesting funds through Area Transportation Partnerships. MN-MRPC approved letters for nine project applications along the Great River Road.

Minnesota Scenic Byways Program

State agency partners updated the Memorandum of Understanding for the Minnesota Scenic Byways Commission. The annual MN Scenic Byways Workshop was held November 29-30 in Willmar. A survey of byways was completed to provide information for a strategic plan to serve as a resource and reference for all MN byways. Three members of the MN-MRPC serve on the Scenic Byway Strategic Plan Committee.

Examples of Local, Regional and Partner Activities

- **Bemidji** – A historic bath house structure on Lake Bemidji (Mississippi River) was restored with a grand opening held in June 2017. The facility will be available for rentals.
- **Lady Slipper Scenic Byway** – Design has been completed for a new pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi River, along a stretch of roadway that is both Lady Slipper Scenic Byway and Great River Road.
- **Grand Rapids** – Funding for a new Mississippi River pedestrian bridge in downtown Grand Rapids was included in the 2017 Minnesota State Bonding Bill. The 2017 Grand Rapids Visitor Guide features the Mississippi River.
- **Aitkin** – Partners in the City of Aitkin are restoring The Mississippi Showboat and will be using it as a venue for performances and a featured stop during Riverboat Days events.
- **Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trail** – The Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association is working toward expansion of the trail system to result in 75 miles of trail options and a three day non-repetitive trail experience. Funds were included in the 2017 Minnesota State Bonding Bill for the trail expansion, and the Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association has also raised significant funds toward the project. 15 new businesses have opened in the area since the mountain bike trail was developed.
- **Brainerd Riverfront Committee** – The group is in planning phases for the Three Bridges Trail, a scenic suspended path along the river that would pass under three main bridges in Brainerd. Informational video is available at <https://videopress.com/v/4RGPbOQP>. The committee is also exploring ways to connect two large parcels of land along the Mississippi River on opposite side of town - Crow Wing State Park to the south and the Mississippi Northwoods property to the north.
- **Take a Day OFF* (Outdoor Family Fun) on the Mississippi** - This 8th annual event at Stearns County Mississippi River Park was held on July 30 and is organized by Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District, Minnesota DNR, Benton County, St. Cloud State University and several other local partners. Hundreds of attendees participated in a variety of free outdoor activities focused on the river.
- **St. Cloud Area** – Greater St. Cloud successfully hosted the 2017 MN Governor's Fishing Opener and featured three fishing locations on the Mississippi River. The St. Cloud Riverwalk Committee developed a plan to redevelop a one mile stretch of riverfront north of downtown. Phase I of the plan focuses on current public property and would include a narrowed street, canoe/kayak launch, granite features, fishing areas, trail, docks, seating areas and shoreline restorations.

- **Oliver Kelley Farm** – A major renovation project was completed in 2017 including a new visitor center. A grand opening event was held in May 2017. The site allows visitors to experience the story of farming, food and agriculture – past and present. The MN-MRPC provided a letter of support for state funds to complete the project, and also endorsed the Kelley Farm for designation as a National Great River Road Interpretive Center.
- **Minneapolis** – Development plans are evolving for the Upper Harbor terminal area including an entertainment venue along the river. Nine acres of land on the St. Anthony Historic District will be undergoing new development, bringing more people to the riverfront. A strong focus on the Mississippi River is evident in the Destination Transformation 2030 Initiative led by Meet Minneapolis.
- **Mississippi National River and Recreation Area:** MNRRA convenes quarterly meetings of the Trails and Open Space Partnership, a coalition of over 50 agencies and organizations. MnDOT and MN-MRPC participate. A new first of its kind paddle share program held a soft launch in summer of 2016 followed by expansion in 2017. Kayaks are available for check out and use on the Mississippi River near Nice Ride bicycle stations – allowing for a multi-modal experience on and near the river. For information - <http://paddleshare.org/>. The NPS Mississippi River Visitor Center within the Science Museum of Minnesota was completely remodeled with a grand opening held in August 2016. After closure of Upper St. Anthony Lock, MNRRA has taken on operations of the visitor center there, with significant increases in visitation and a possible expansion being considered, with potential for Great River Road promotion and involvement.
- **Saint Paul** – The Great River Passage initiative continues, led by Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, implementing a broad vision for the Saint Paul Riverfront including projects such as the River Balcony, envisioned as a publicly accessible balcony running along the full 1.5 miles of downtown Saint Paul's Mississippi River bluff. Discussions are underway to redevelop the site of the RiverCentre Parking Ramp, with options that could include a new riverfront hotel.
- **Historic Fort Snelling** – State bonding funds were approved for design of improvements including a new visitor center at Historic Fort Snelling (a GRR Interpretive Center). The MN-MRPC provided a letter of support.
- **Red Wing** – The City of Red Wing, which features a historic riverfront downtown, was a finalist in the Small Business Revolution Main Street competition. There was extensive community involvement throughout the process.
- **Mississippi River Trail** – The second annual Headwaters to Hills Tour was held in July 2016. A MRT Kiosk Dedication Event was held in Brainerd on July 12 in conjunction with the ride. The kiosk was funded by the MN GRR Corridor Management Planning and Implementation grant.
- **Minnesota APA Conference** – A mobile workshop featuring the Great River Road and Mississippi River Trail was presented during the September conference of the Minnesota chapter of the American Planning Association in St. Cloud.
- **Shore Excursions Trips to Headwaters** – Two tour groups affiliated with the American Queen took trips to Itasca State Park. MN-MRPC member Karl Samp served as step on guide and shared Great River Road information. The tours were a success and will be offered again.

Membership

The MN-MRPC is organized by state statute to include: (2) Members of the House of Representatives; (2) Members of the Senate; (5) Members of State Agencies - (1) appointed by each: DNR, MnDOT, Historical Society, Agriculture & Tourism; (5) Regional Members – (1) from each of the Great River Road regions established by statute (1) Member-At-Large – appointed by the other 14. Millie Phillip was welcomed as the new technical member representing Explore Minnesota Tourism. Amanda MacDonald represented the Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region for a portion of the year and the Commission is grateful for her interest and service. Mark Anderson was thanked for his long time service as at-large member and Anne Lewis was elected to fill the open position.

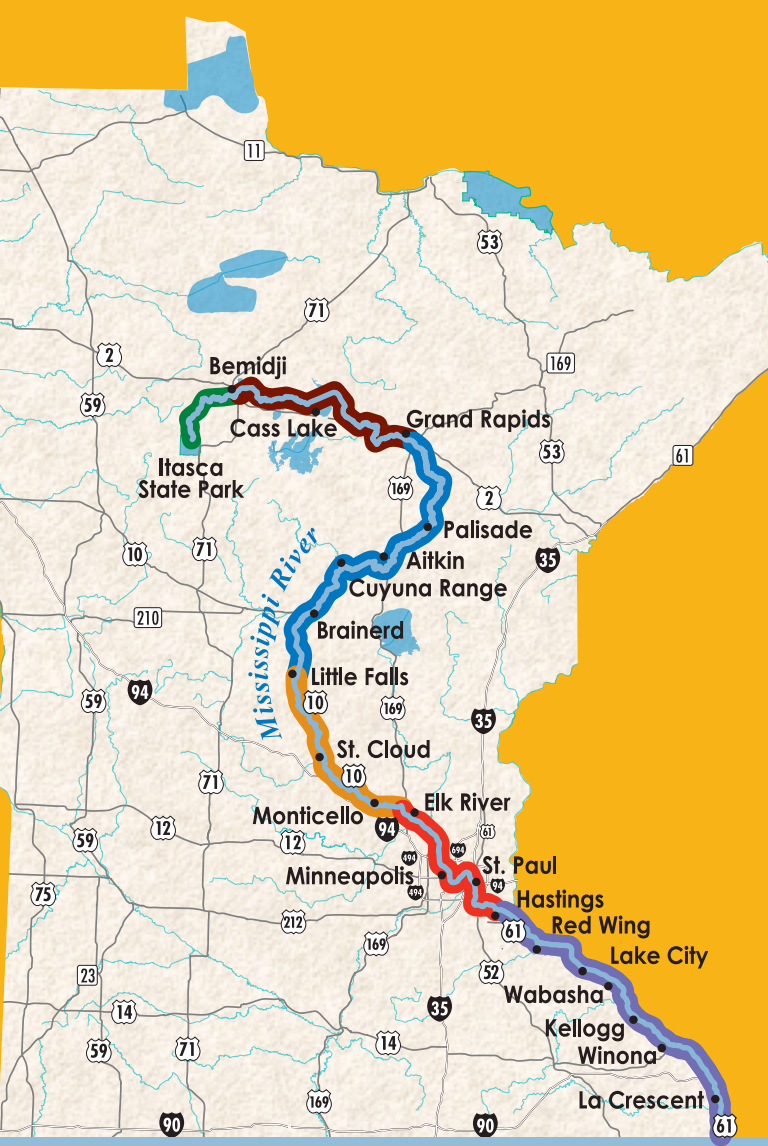
This report is respectfully submitted on July 27, 2017.

Rep. Sheldon Johnson, MN-MRPC Chair



explore

Minnesota's Great River Road



experience
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
ten states. one river.

NATIONAL
SCENIC
BYWAY

LEGEND

- Great River Road Destination Areas:**
- Mississippi Headwaters
 - Mississippi Northwoods
 - Mississippi Crossings
 - Scenic Mississippi
 - Metro Mississippi
 - Mississippi Bluffs
- 94** Interstate highway
10 U.S. highway
23 State highway
33 County state aid highway
- State park
 - National forest
 - National Great River Road Interpretive Center



*Explore Minnesota Tourism photo(s), except where noted

For more Great River Road travel information, contact:



MINNESOTA MISSISSIPPI RIVER
PARKWAY COMMISSION
300 33rd Avenue South - Suite 101
Waite Park, MN 56387
Phone: 651-341-4196
Minnesota Great River Road:
www.MnMississippiRiver.com
10-State Great River Road:
www.ExperienceMississippiRiver.com

EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM
Phone: 1-888-VISITMN
www.ExploreMinnesota.com

AMERICA'S
BYWAYS
NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS
www.Byways.org

The Great River Road... National Scenic Byway of the Mississippi River

The Great River Road in Minnesota travels 565 miles following the legendary Mississippi River on its way to the Gulf of Mexico. It is a network of roadways that offers a bounty of river experience, from the pristine Mississippi headwaters in Itasca State Park through lush forest and the central lakes region, rich farmland and the metropolitan bustle of the Twin Cities, to the awe-inspiring bluffs in southeastern Minnesota.

Nature lovers will find ample opportunity to view wildlife along the byway and

unique geological features throughout the 11 Great River Road State Parks and numerous scenic areas that border its route. Visit interpretive centers and historic sites to learn about the history and ecology of the state and the role of the mighty river. Take a hike on a woodland trail, float down river in a steamboat or canoe, bike the Mississippi River Trail or catch breathtaking views from the Mississippi bluffs, all the while partaking in one of America's favorite pastimes: The Pleasure Drive.



Photo - MN - MRC Library

For its cultural, historic, recreational and scenic qualities, the Great River Road in Minnesota has been designated a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration – a river and its road to be treasured, explored, experienced, enjoyed!



As you navigate the Great River Road, look for the green pilot's wheel logo with the steamboat in the center. Like the Mississippi River, the Great River Road has many twists and turns.

Please use the Official State Highway Map of Minnesota or visit www.MnMississippiRiver.com for more detailed directions.



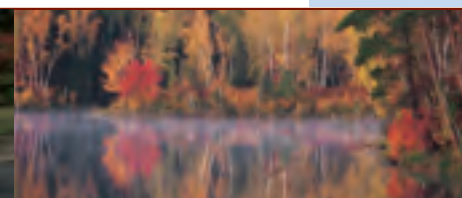
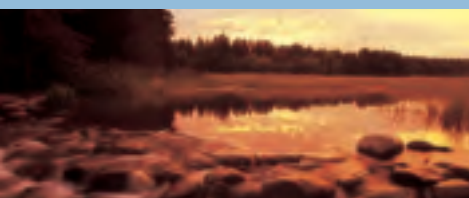
Catch the Sensation of each Destination

Six distinct regions – or destination areas – with unique travel experiences have been identified along the Minnesota Great River Road, “anchored” on either end by larger cities that offer a variety of lodging, dining, entertainment and transportation options. The “destination area” concept for the byway is designed to help travelers navigate shorter, more focused trips. For the adventurous traveler, with a week or more to travel, the wonders of the entire byway await! Use the destination area descriptions that follow to create the Mississippi River experience that’s just right for you. Enjoy the ride!

Destination Area Tourism Contacts

- Mississippi Headwaters:**
ITASCA STATE PARK TO BEMIDJI
Visit Bemidji
218-759-0164
877-250-5959
www.visitbemidji.com
- Monticello Chamber of Commerce
763-295-2700
www.monticellochamber.com
Elk River Chamber of Commerce
763-441-3110
www.elkriverchamber.org
- Mississippi Northwoods:**
BEMIDJI TO GRAND RAPIDS
Visit Bemidji
218-759-0164
877-250-5959
www.visitbemidji.com
Cass Lake Chamber of Commerce
218-987-2299
800-356-8615
www.casslake.com
Visit Grand Rapids
218-326-9607
800-355-9740
www.visitgrandrapids.com
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Commerce Information Depot
218-326-6619
- Minneapolis Northwest
763-566-7122
800-541-4364
www.minneapolisnorthwest.com
Meet Minneapolis
218-767-8000
888-676-MPLS
www.minneapolis.org
Visit Saint Paul
651-265-4900
800-627-6101
www.visitsaintpaul.com
National Park Service – Mississippi National River & Recreation Area Visitor Center
651-293-0200
www.nps.gov/miss
Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau
651-437-6715
888-612-6122
www.hastingsmn.org
- Mississippi Crossings:**
GRAND RAPIDS TO LITTLE FALLS
Visit Grand Rapids
218-326-9607
800-355-9740
www.visitgrandrapids.com
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Commerce Information Depot
218-326-6619
Aitkin Chamber of Commerce
218-927-2316
800-526-8342
www.aitkin.com
Cuyuna Lakes Chamber
(Bay Lake, Crosby, Cuyuna, Deerwood, Emily, Ironton, Riverton & Trommald)
218-546-8131
www.cuyunalakes.com
Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
218-829-2838
800-450-2838
www.explorebrainerdlakes.com
Lake City Chamber of Commerce
www.lakecitymn.org
Wabasha-Kellogg Chamber & CVB
651-565-4158
800-565-4158
www.wabashamn.org
Visit Winona
507-452-0735
800-651-4912
www.visitwinona.com
La Crescent Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Information Center
507-895-2800
800-926-9480
www.lacrescentmn.com
- Mississippi Bluffs:**
HASTINGS TO IOWA BORDER
Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau
888-612-6122
www.hastingsmn.org
Mississippi Valley Partners (Red Wing to Winona)
www.mississippi-river.org
Red Wing Visitors & Convention Bureau
651-385-5934
www.redwing.org
Lake City Chamber of Commerce
877-525-3248
www.lakecitymn.org
Wabasha-Kellogg Chamber & CVB
651-565-4158
800-565-4158
www.wabashamn.org
Visit Winona
507-452-0735
800-651-4912
www.visitwinona.com
La Crescent Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Information Center
507-895-2800
800-926-9480
www.lacrescentmn.com

This map was produced by the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission 2017.



Mississippi Headwaters Itasca State Park to Bemidji (Approx. 30 miles)

Come to leap the 15 stones that cross the humble source of the awesome Mississippi River, one of the world's greatest and longest waterways. Stay to experience the forested wonders of Itasca State Park—Minnesota's first, established in 1891 to conserve its giant pines from logging. Head north to Bemidji, “first city on the Mississippi,” where you won't want to miss a photo opportunity with legendary Lumberjack Paul Bunyan and his faithful friend, Babe the Blue Ox. Home of Bemidji State University and the famous Concordia Language Villages, Bemidji also offers fine shopping, dining and theater. Lake Bemidji offers lovely views and recreation for all seasons.

Great River Road State Parks:
Itasca State Park
Lake Bemidji State Park, Bemidji

State Forests:
Mississippi Headwaters State Forest
Paul Bunyan State Forest

Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:
Headwaters of the Mississippi River, Itasca State Park
♦ Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center, Itasca State Park
Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center, Itasca State Park
Fireplace of States, Bemidji
Beltrami County History Center/James J. Hill Depot
♦ National Great River Road Interpretive Center

Destination Area Highlights:
Antique Shopping
Bemidji Woolen Mills Factory
Camping
Downtown Art Walk, Bemidji
Historic Landmark Statue of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, Bemidji
Lake Country Scenic Byway, Park Rapids
Northern Continental Divide, Lake Julia (15 miles north of Bemidji)
Resort Vacationing & Fishing (400 fishing lakes within 25 mile radius of Bemidji)
Towering Pines at Preacher's Grove in Itasca State Park
Veteran's Memorial, Bemidji
Wilderness Drive - Scenic Driving, Biking or Hiking Path Within Itasca State Park
Wildlife Watching



Mississippi Northwoods Bemidji to Grand Rapids (Approx. 95 miles)

Three of Minnesota's largest lakes are located along this stretch of the Great River Road, Cass, Leech and Winnibigoshish. The Mississippi actually flows through the heart of Cass and Winnibigoshish and 666,000 acres of forest within the surrounding Chippewa National Forest. The Cass Lake Chain of Lakes was part of the Red Lake-Leech Lake Trail; a series of interconnected waterways used as a “water highway” by the Native Americans, trappers and traders. Come to enjoy the serenity of the forest wilderness, the awesome red pines, Native American lore and the call of the loon. Grand Rapids offers visitors lots of amenities, shopping and entertainment. Once a famous logging community, Grand Rapids also offers visitors the chance to relive history on the river at the Forest History Center—a national Great River Road Interpretive Center.

Great River Road State Park:
Schoolcraft State Park,
West of Grand Rapids

National Forest:
Chippewa National Forest

Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:
Cass Lake Museum, Cass Lake
♦ Forest History Center, Grand Rapids
Lyle's Logging Camp, Cass Lake
White Oak Rendezvous, Deer River
♦ National Great River Road Interpretive Center



Destination Area Highlights:
Art Galleries, Grand Rapids & surrounds
Biking Trails
Eagle Watching
Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway, Grand Rapids
Judy Garland Birthplace, Grand Rapids
Lady Slipper Scenic Byway, Pennington
Pow Wows, Leech Lake Indian Reservation
Resort Vacationing, Hunting and Fishing
Star Island, in Cass Lake
UPM, Blandin Paper Mill, Grand Rapids



Crossings Mississippi

Mississippi Crossings Grand Rapids to Little Falls

(Approx. 145 miles)

The Mississippi Crossings area of the Great River Road is named for its history as a crossways of transportation by river, rail and road; first for the voyageurs and fur traders, then the loggers, and today, for the thousands of vacationers that flock to this region each summer. The river was the main highway of the Native peoples of Minnesota and later served as a major transportation route for the booming fur trade and logging economies during the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, many of the 25 steamboat landings once located between Aitkin and Grand Rapids are water access and camping sites. Commerce in river transportation flourished in the early 1870s when access to the Mississippi was established by rail from Duluth. Both Aitkin and Brainerd served as Northern Pacific Railroad sites. Between Aitkin and Brainerd, just south of the Mississippi, lies the Cuyuna Iron Range, which produced over 100-million tons of high-manganese ore during WWI and WWII. From humble beginnings, area farmers, former loggers and railroad employees who owned good lake sites throughout the area in the early 1900s, created what was to become the booming lake resort communities of today. Providing good home-cooked meals and a piece of land to pitch a tent, these early "resorters" treated guests to a true wilderness experience. Today, visitors still enjoy the local hospitality, fishing, swimming, boating and now golfing, that are plentiful throughout this Great River Road destination area.



Great River Road State Parks:
Charles A. Lindbergh State Park, Little Falls
Crow Wing State Park, Brainerd
Savanna Portage State Park, north of Palisade

Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:
Croft Mine Historical Park, Crosby
Crow Wing County Historical Society Museum, Brainerd
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley
Northern Pacific Depot, Aitkin

Destination Area Highlights:
Antique Shopping
Canoeing & Camping
Community Theater
Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area
Cuyuna Lakes State Trail - Hiking & Biking
Golfing
Paul Bunyan National Scenic Byway
Paul Bunyan State Trail - Hiking & Biking
Resort Vacationing & Fishing Lakes
Wildlife Watching & Birding

For directions go to www.MnMississippiRiver.com

Scenic Mississippi Little Falls to Elk River

(Approx. 90 miles)

The Scenic Mississippi Destination Area offers visitors an unspoiled river experience. Parks and gardens, complete with footbridges and fountains, dot the riverbanks and surrounding area in the region. Both Little Falls and St. Cloud boast historic main street districts, offering architectural beauty and a variety of shopping and dining experiences for travelers. Little Falls gained international fame as home to Charles Lindbergh, pilot of the first solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. As its name implies, Little Falls was once the location of a natural waterfall on the river. Today, visitors find both a serene and exciting experience as they watch the water pause at the gates of a dam—first built at the falls site in the mid-1800s—then force its way through the man-made chutes, bubbling and spraying as it tumbles to the bed of slate below. Home to many businesses and St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud offers travelers a wide range of amenities and entertainment including the riverside Clemens and Munsinger Gardens. Traveling onward to Elk River, the Mississippi winds through lush farm and open prairie land as it journeys through Monticello and into Elk River on the northwestern fringe of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Great River Road State Parks:
Charles A. Lindbergh State Park, Little Falls
Lake Maria State Park, Monticello

Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:
◆ Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site, Little Falls
Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum, Little Falls
◆ Oliver H. Kelley Farm, Elk River
The Stearns History Museum, St. Cloud
◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Center

Destination Area Highlights:
Antique & Craft Shopping
Clemens & Munsinger Gardens, St. Cloud
Hiking, Biking, Birding & Camping
Minnesota Fishing Museum, Little Falls
Mississippi River Dam, Little Falls
River Fishing and Canoeing
Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Zimmerman

For directions go to www.MnMississippiRiver.com



Metro Mississippi

Metro Mississippi Elk River to Hastings

(Approx. 75 miles)

From the serene north woods, the Mississippi meanders its way into the heart of the buzzing metro area of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Here, amidst fine dining, an outstanding theater scene, museums of all varieties, and world-class shopping, 72 miles of Mississippi riverfront have been designated a National River and Recreation Area by the National Park Service, offering 54,000 acres of parks, open space and historic sites along the river. Visit this Great River Road destination area for a big-city experience, but also to be inspired by nature on the fringe of commerce. Learn how the Mississippi River played a role in the creation of this tale of two cities.

Great River Road National Park:
Mississippi National River & Recreation Area

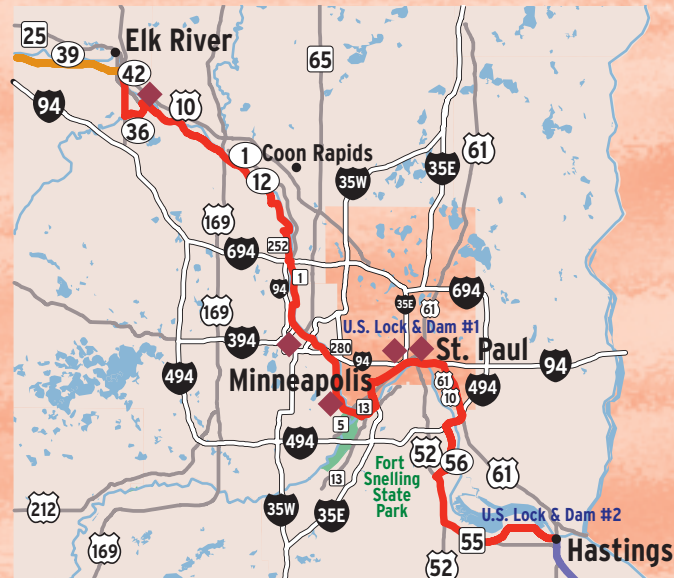
Great River Road State Park:
Fort Snelling State Park, St. Paul

Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:
Alexander Ramsey House, St. Paul
Ard Godfrey House, Minneapolis
Carl Kroening Interpretive Center, Minneapolis
◆ Historic Fort Snelling, St. Paul
James J. Hill House, St. Paul
◆ Mill City Museum, Minneapolis Riverfront
◆ Minnesota History Center, St. Paul
◆ National Park Service - Mississippi National River & Recreation Area Visitor Center, St. Paul Riverfront
◆ Oliver H. Kelley Farm, Elk River
◆ Science Museum of Minnesota Mississippi River Gallery, St. Paul Riverfront
Sibley House, St. Paul
St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail / Stone Arch Bridge, Minneapolis Riverfront
◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Centers

Destination Area Highlights:
Boom Island, Minneapolis Riverfront
Cathedral of Saint Paul, St. Paul
Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, Coon Rapids
Downtown Shopping, Dining & Entertainment, Minneapolis & St. Paul
Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis Riverfront
Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, Minneapolis
Harriet Island, St. Paul Riverfront

For directions go to www.MnMississippiRiver.com

Mall of America, Bloomington
Minnehaha Falls & The Longfellow House, Minneapolis
Minnesota Lynx Basketball (WNBA), Minneapolis
Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul
Minnesota Timberwolves Basketball (NBA), Minneapolis
Minnesota Twins Baseball (MLB), Minneapolis
Minnesota Vikings Football (NFL), Minneapolis
Minnesota Wild Hockey (NHL), St. Paul
Mississippi Riverboat Excursions, Minneapolis & St. Paul
Mounds Park, St. Paul
St. Anthony Falls & U.S. Lock & Dam #1
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis Riverfront



Bluffs Mississippi

Mississippi Bluffs Hastings to the Iowa Border

(Approx. 140 miles)

The Mississippi Bluffs destination area is dotted with charming river towns, replete with historic main streets and wonderful river vistas. Plan a delightful day trip or a relaxing long weekend. Come to shop for antiques, woolens, pottery and more. Come to picnic and enjoy a concert along the Mississippi. Come to experience the river by boat. Cozy up in a quaint bed & breakfast. Get out and enjoy the many recreational opportunities this region offers... fishing, boating, biking or hiking. Be amazed at the wildlife viewing, especially for birders. Take your pick of cities, or better yet visit them all.

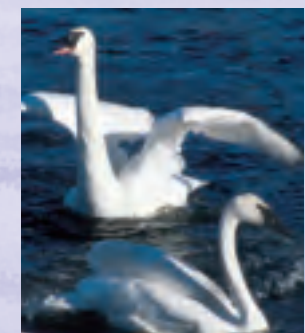
Great River Road State Parks:
Frontenac State Park, Frontenac
Great River Bluffs State Park, south of Winona
John A. Latsch State Park, north of Winona

Historic Sites & Interpretive Centers:
Bunnell House, Winona
Goodhue County Museum, Red Wing
Le Duc Historic Estate, Hastings
◆ Minnesota Marine Art Museum, Winona
◆ National Eagle Center, Wabasha
Old Frontenac, Frontenac
Pickwick Mill, Winona
Polish Cultural Institute, Winona
Wabasha County Museum, Reads Landing
Watkins Heritage Museum, Winona
◆ Winona County Historical Museum, Winona
◆ National Great River Road Interpretive Center

Destination Area Highlights:
Apple Orchards, La Crescent
Birding - Prominent Eagle Watching Area
Faith, Hope & Charity Bluffs, between Wabasha & Winona
Garvin Heights Park, Winona
Historic Downtown Hastings
Historic St. James Hotel, Red Wing
Lake Pepin / Marina, Lake City
Lark Toy Company, Kellogg
Levee & Jaycee Parks, Hastings
Levee Park & Milwaukee Depot, Red Wing
Mississippi River Lock & Dam #2, upstream of Hastings

For directions go to www.MnMississippiRiver.com

Mississippi River Lock & Dam #3, near Red Wing
Mississippi River Lock & Dam #6, 10 mi. NW of Winona
Mississippi River Lock & Dam #7, near La Crescent
Riverboat Excursions, Lake City & Red Wing
Red Wing Pottery Tour, Red Wing
Sorin & Barn Bluffs, Red Wing
Sugar Loaf Bluff, Winona
Upper Mississippi River Wildlife & Fish Refuge,
Wabasha to Rock Island, IL
Vermilion Falls, Hastings





Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota

300 33rd Avenue South, Suite 101 • Waite Park, Minnesota 56387

Phone: 651-341-4196 • E-Mail: info@MnMississippiRiver.com

Members of the House: Sheldon Johnson (DFL – 67B) – Chair **Members of the Senate:** David Senjem (R – 25); Patricia Torres Ray (DFL – 63) **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, Amanda MacDonald – 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:** Anne Lewis

February 2, 2017

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar,

In December of 2016, National Scenic Byways celebrated 25 years of bringing residents and travelers closer to places of scenic, historic, natural, recreational, archaeological, and cultural value in their states and throughout the nation, enhancing the public's appreciation for their country and its iconic resources. The National Scenic Byways Program, established in 1991 and administered by the Federal Highway Administration, oversees 120 National Scenic Byways (as of 2010) and 31 All-American Roads in 46 states. Minnesotans are fortunate to host 21 Scenic Byways (including seven National Scenic Byways and one All-American Road), most accessing rural areas and small towns, but also offering access to thousands in our urban centers as well.

As the state commission that is organized by statute and, in partnership with MnDOT, oversees the Great River Road – an integrated, intermodal transportation artery providing access statewide to the Mississippi River – the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission wanted to share the significance of this national tourism and travel infrastructure program with you.

For Minnesota's Great River Road, we know that the impact of tourism in adjacent counties is evidenced by gross leisure and hospitality sales of over \$9.8 billion, and 180,091 jobs (MN Dept. of Revenue, and Dept. of Employee and Economic Development, 2014). Also special for our state is the length of the Great River Road: 565 miles of route touch 20 counties, 43 communities and three tribes, as it meanders down the center of the state and makes its way to the Iowa border. It intersects federal, state, county and township roads, as well as bike trails, 11 state parks, the only U.S. National Park dedicated to America's great river, and numerous waterway access points along the way. It is a complex collection of intermodal systems maintained to encourage travelers and residents to touch their great river.

One of the roles of the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission is to integrate National Scenic Byway programs into our management of the Great River Road. We do this through Corridor Management Plan implementation, localized grants support, statewide connections to Convention and Visitors Bureaus, and the constant input of our state partners at the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Explore Minnesota Tourism, Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Minnesota completed a new Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management Plan in 2016, and we're enclosing a summary brochure for your reference. The full report and supporting documents are available at www.mnmississippiriver.com/cmp. Anne Lewis, MN-MRPC Commissioner At-Large, will be in Washington D.C. March 1. She will be contacting your office to request an appointment to further discuss the importance of Minnesota's Great River Road and specific opportunities to benefit your district, Minnesota and our nation. Thank you in advance for considering her request.

Sincerely,


Rep. Sheldon Johnson, Chair

2016 Drive the Great River Road Month - Minnesota Promotion Fall Road Trip Minnesota: 10 "Glimpses of America" via the Great River Road

Goals

To raise awareness of Great River Road and its ability to connect the public to events and places in Minnesota's history that reflect the state's connection to the building of the United States. Get people to drive the Great River Road for even just a few of the stops that may be nearest them and to plan a trip for the future.

MN-MRPC Member Agency Promotion

Requested promotion assistance from MN-MRPC member agencies. Special thanks to the agencies for their help!!

- EMT Express Online Industry Newsletter
- Featured on EMT Website under "Travel Ideas" - <http://www.exploreminnesota.com/travel-ideas/10-glimpses-of-america-via-the-great-river-road/>
- MNHS Social Media
- MnDOT Facebook Post (4,180 people reached, 28 reactions, comments or shares)
- MnDOT Newsline Article to 5,000 MnDOT employees

Governor's Proclamation

Requested and received, posted during the month at www.mnmississippiriver.com.

MN GRR Social Media

Facebook (Great River Road MN): Posted weekly about 2-3 of the featured sites. Promoted 10 state contest.

Twitter (@GreatRiverRdMN) – Promoted 10 state contest. 4 tweets during September

- 12 Facebook posts from September 1 to September 29 (ten featured sites, two sweepstakes posts)
- Total Facebook reach - 789 (compared to 328 and 411 the two months prior, which were also high months)
- Top Facebook posts – MNRRA, Savanna Portage, Weisman Museum, sweepstakes "final chance"
- Posts/shares included (both Facebook & Twitter) - Red Wing VCB, Visit Grand Rapids, St. Cloud Times, Cathy Wurzer (MPR)

MN Great River Road Website

General information was posted on September 1 about the promotion and GRR, along with links to National GRR contest and Governor's Proclamation. Added weekly posts, photos and links to featured sites.

- 124,830 website hits from September 4 – 30
- 1,335 MN Great River Road Map/Travel Planners downloaded from September 4 – 30
- Top referral sites – Google, MnDOT, Bing, [experiencemississippiriver](http://www.experiencemississippiriver.com), [Explore MN](http://www.exploremn.com)
- Numbers relatively consistent with other months

Feature Schedule

- Week of Sept 6 - Great Dakota Gathering; Mississippi National River & Recreation Area
- Week of Sept 12 - Forest History Center; Historic Fort Snelling; Savanna Portage
- Week of Sept 19 - Charles A Lindbergh Historic Site; Mill City Museum
- Week of Sept 26 - National Eagle Center; Federal Dam; Weisman Art Museum "Silver River" Exhibit

News Release

General: Provided draft release to featured sites along with request for photos. Sent release week after Labor Day to media list and distribution partners (CVBs/Chambers, State Parks, Interpretive Centers, Welcome Centers, etc.).

Localized Media: Third week of September, sent release with specific customized message and photo to local community papers of featured sites.

- Articles - Red Wing Republican Eagle Editorial, Grand Rapids Herald Review Article
- Increased communication with partners/featured sites and receipt of photos/comments

Print Materials

10-State Great River Road Maps were provided to Interpretive Centers as needed to replenish their supplies. 10-State and Minnesota Maps also provided in bulk to partners upon request.

- Total shipped during September - 2,750 10-State Maps, 400 MN GRR Maps

Lessons Learned/Plans for Next Year

- Set up Google Alert to pick up more news stories
- Start planning concepts in May at MN-MRPC Quarterly Meeting
- More and earlier interaction with CVBs

Minnesota Drive the Great River Road Month 2016



Great River Road MN
September 29 at 9:27am

MN Drive the Great River Road Month Glimpse of America - The Weisman Art Museum University of Minnesota - "Silver River" Exhibit (Frederick R. Weisman Museum, Minneapolis, Hennepin County): Works by a dozen artists chronicle the Mississippi's role in industrialization of the state and the nation. The Mississippi River has been a lifeline for the Twin Cities since the foundation of Minneapolis and St. Paul nearly two centuries ago. By placing contemporary perspectives in conte...

See More

Like Show more reactions Comment Share

STATE of MINNESOTA

Proclamation

WHEREAS: The Great River Road is America's greatest drive, encompassing 3,000 miles of interconnected roads that follow the Mississippi River through 10 states, from Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS: The Great River Road has been designated a National Scenic Byway for its historical, cultural, recreational, natural, and scenic treasures; and

WHEREAS: The Great River Road connects hundreds of vibrant cities and unique river towns; and

WHEREAS: The Great River Road is the ideal way to discover and experience the rich culture of the Mississippi River region and the heart of America; and

WHEREAS: Minnesota boasts 565 miles of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, linking travelers in Minnesota with all the riches of the Mississippi River region; and

WHEREAS: Minnesota is the proud home of the Headwaters of the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS: There is no scenic drive in America quite like the Great River Road.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, MARK DAYTON, Governor of Minnesota, do hereby proclaim the month of September, 2016, as:

DRIVE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD MONTH

in the State of Minnesota.

Mark Dayton
GOVERNOR

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Minnesota to be affixed at the State Capitol this 11th day of August.

Steve Pimmon
SECRETARY OF STATE

EAGLE

Editorial: Ride a great road

By *Wind Whig Newsroom* on Sep 10, 2016 at 2:09 p.m.

Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

1000 Hennepin Avenue, Suite 1000, Minneapolis, MN 55402
Phone: 612.673.1111 | Fax: 612.673.1112 | Email: info@mnriver.com

Fall Road Trip Moments: 10 "Glimpse of America" via the Great River Road

Sept. 10, 2016 - On the Great River Road, there are many ways to enjoy the scenic views of the Mississippi River. One way is to take a fall road trip along the Great River Road. The road is a beautiful mix of natural beauty and historic sites. There are many ways to enjoy the scenic views of the Mississippi River. One way is to take a fall road trip along the Great River Road. The road is a beautiful mix of natural beauty and historic sites.

Minnesota History

Four of our historic sites featured as great Fall road trip destinations... grandrapsmn.com/news/fall-road

September is designated as the month to celebrate Minnesota's Great River Road

By *Judy Jacobs*

Minnesota's Great River Road stretches 565 miles and includes federal interstates, state, county and local roads. *Photo courtesy of the Office of Environmental Stewardship.*

On Aug. 11, Gov. Mark Dayton issued a proclamation that September would be designated as "Drive the Great River Road Month" in all 10 of the Mississippi River states from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. In Minnesota, the Great River Road stretches 565 miles and includes federal interstates, state, county and local roads. The road features 10 interpretive centers, 20 counties and 43 communities, each with a story of their own to tell.

"It's become an annual tradition for many people to check out the fall colors in Minnesota," said Carol Zoff, Great River Road program manager, Office of Environmental Stewardship. "The 'Drive the Great River Road' campaign encourages travelers to consider the Mississippi River as their trip destination. By following the Great River Road (the network of roadways that abut the Mississippi River) you not only get to some of the state's pristine out-of-the-way places, you gain a perspective on Minnesota's role in the development of the nation."



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS: Chris Miller, Director, Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission, 651-341-4196
Anne Lewis, Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission Member, 410-493-0362

Fall Road Trip Minnesota: 10 “Glimpses of America” via the Great River Road

Waite Park, MN (September 7, 2016) There's no better time than the fall to get out on the road in Minnesota. There's no snow yet, construction is witting down, and usually there's been a frost up north reducing the mosquito population.

This year, think beyond the traditional fall color trip and consider using the Mississippi River as your guide. By following the Great River Road, the network of roadways and trails that abut the Mississippi River, you not only get to some of the state's out-of-the-way places, you gain a perspective on Minnesota's role in the development of the nation. Plus, September is Drive the Great River Road month, a 10-state promotion to bring Americans closer to their great river.

Here are 10 Minnesota places where you can glimpse America without leaving the state. They're not the usual tourist destinations, but they tell important stories of our country and state from the Mississippi River bank.

1. [Federal Dam](#) (Cass County): Did you know that as early as 1866, the Army Corps of Engineers was trying to manage the flow of the Mississippi River to protect shipping and milling interests in Minneapolis and St. Paul? Routinely faced with diminishing flow in the river after July, the millers at St. Anthony Falls and navigation interests turned to Congress and the Corps to build the Headwaters Reservoirs. Federal Dam, just off the Great River Road and beside Lake Winnibigoshish, gets its name from this mammoth engineering feat shortly after the civil war.
2. [Forest History Center](#) (Grand Rapids, Itasca County): This Minnesota Historical Society site and Great River Road Interpretive Center is devoted to telling the story of Minnesota's forests and their role building America from right after the Civil War up through the early 20th century. Now, its exhibits also tell of modern forestry practices and products that help drive today's economy.
3. [Savanna Portage State Park](#) (McGregor, Aitkin County): Savanna Portage was a canoe portage used by Native Americans for centuries before being used by European explorers, fur traders, Voyageurs and missionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries to link the Mississippi River waterways of the west with the Great Lakes to the east. It's on the National Register of Historic Places for having state-level significance in the themes of commerce, exploration/settlement and transportation.
4. [Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site](#) (Little Falls, Morrison County) Charles Lindbergh's 1927 flight to Paris from New York launched the American aviation revolution. But his boyhood on the Mississippi River was his first launching pad. A National Historic Landmark, the original Lindbergh home and visitor center chronicles his life and his impact on America.
5. [Mill City Museum](#) (Minneapolis, Hennepin County): This Minnesota Historical Society site and Great River Road Interpretive Center beside the Mississippi River commemorates the state's milling history where the world's largest flour mill once resided. You can see how the fortunes of Minnesota's agriculture and the Mississippi River were intertwined to build today's American food industry.
6. [The Weisman Art Museum University of Minnesota - “Silver River” Exhibit](#) (Frederick R. Weisman Museum, Minneapolis, Hennepin County): Works by a dozen artists chronicle the Mississippi's role in industrialization of the state and the nation.

7. [Historic Fort Snelling](#) (Hennepin County): Another Minnesota Historical Society site and Great River Road Interpretive Center, it's breathtaking in fall as well as historic. Home to exhibits on early North American exploration, relations with First Nations People, U.S. and Minnesota military history, this National Historic Landmark gets its significance from its promontory atop the intersection of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers in the early days of the state.
8. [Mississippi National River Recreation Area](#) (St. Paul, Ramsey County): The only National Park devoted to the Mississippi River, this 72-mile park incorporates urban and parkland settings along with on-the-water experiences and history and science. Start at the newly remodeled Visitor Center in the Science Museum of Minnesota.
9. [National Eagle Center](#) (Wabasha, Wabasha County): If you're a birder or just an admirer of America's emblematic bird, this is the place for all-things-eagle. Great naturalist explanations and eagle learning programs with an eye to the role of the Mississippi River Valley Flyway.
10. [Great Dakota Gathering, Homecoming and Powwow](#) (Winona, Winona County): This year's theme, Nurturing Sacred Earth and Water, frames the September 10-11 annual event sponsored by the Winona Dakota Unity Alliance and aimed at both learning and celebrating the heritage of the peoples of the area.

September is Drive the Great River Road Month in all 10 of the Mississippi River states from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. Minnesota's Great River Road stretches 565 miles and includes federal interstates, state and county roads and like the Mississippi River meanders through the whole state. It features 10 Interpretive Centers, 20 counties, and 43 communities, each with a story of their own to tell. For more information visit www.mnmississippiriver.com and www.experiencemississippiriver.com.

###

Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

- The MN-MRPC is defined by Minnesota statute. But its real definition is found in its **steadfast stewardship of public access to the Mississippi River**, since the MRPC was established in 10 states in 1938.
- This **modest state commission coordinates and links together key Minnesota travel infrastructure** and Mississippi River communities with one goal: Ensure safe and scenic public access – via roadways, bike paths, hiking trails, interpretive centers, and water trails – to the Mississippi River.
- MN-MRPC has been doing this job since 1963, **leveraging the resources of MnDOT, DNR, Explore Minnesota Tourism, MN Dept. of Agriculture, Minnesota Historical Society; and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area as a technical advisor and partner.**
- MN-MRPC **leverages an annual budget of about \$65,000 and the work of citizen commissioners** for initiatives such as production of 28,000 Minnesota Great River Road maps for 53 distribution partners and a web site that saw over 97,000 visits in this year's off-season between October and March. <http://www.mnmississippiriver.com>
- Of the MN-MRPC's 53 distribution locations, **70 percent are non-metro river communities** and, of the 19 partner chambers of commerce and convention and visitor bureaus, 74 percent are in greater Minnesota.

Economic Impact of Tourism on Minnesota Mississippi River Communities

(with data from 2017 Tourism & Economy Fact Sheet, Explore Minnesota Tourism)

- Over \$10 billion in gross leisure & hospitality sales in Minnesota's 21 Mississippi River counties in 2015 (72% of the state total)
-
- Over \$680 million in sales tax from leisure & hospitality sales in 2015 in Mississippi River counties (73% of the state total)
- Over 180,000 jobs in private sector of Minnesota leisure & hospitality industry in 2015 in Mississippi River counties (71% of the state total)
- Brainerd, St. Cloud, Red Wing, Minneapolis, St. Paul and others involved in substantial riverfront development investment for their cities' futures.
- 12 Mississippi River Parkway Commission-designated **Interpretive Centers** attract thousands of travelers and residents along the Mississippi River annually.
- **MN-MRPC has a history of successful grant projects** including the recent Federal Highway Administration and National Park Service \$700,000+ project managed with MnDOT. This project included installing Mississippi River Trail wayshowing signage, print maps, corridor management webpages, and a new 10 – 15 year Corridor Management Plan to guide the Commission and local communities.

- Since 1992, **MN-MRPC has supported over \$4 million in federal grants** to Great River Road projects, ensuring local community input into overlooks, rest areas, interpretation, maps, marketing, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, wayshowing, and historic preservation.
- Bicycling – a growing, substantial Minnesota tourism segment – is part of the Great River Road via the **Mississippi River Trail (MRT)**, an MRPC partner organization. An annual Headwaters to Hills Ride has been held since 2015.
- **Increased Mississippi River on-water tourism** ranges from kayak sharing in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area to international riverboat tourism, adding tourism dollars to multiple communities.

10-State Great River Road Network Leverages State Efforts

- MN-MRPC is part of the 10-state Mississippi River Parkway Commission that **leverages resources for the full length of the Mississippi River and Great River Road**. The Great River Road – a network of existing roads – was launched in 1938 and is now a 3,000 mile, 10-state route.
- The current 10-state MRPC Pilot (Chair) is a citizen-member of the MN-MRPC.
- The 10-state MRPC produces Great River Road and Mississippi River marketing information to be distributed at multiple locations in all 10 states; manages a Great River Road website **providing exposure, promotion and connections especially important to small communities along the river**. There were over 209,000 website visits in 2016, 16,000 e-newsletter subscribers, and over 5,000 downloads of a new app. The MRPC also promotes Mississippi River travel internationally. <https://experiencemississippiriver.com>
- **2019 Year of the Great River Road** for the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative – will leverage federal agency, 10-state MRPC and MRT marketing and programming to focus nationally on Great River Road exploration in all ten Mississippi River states, including Minnesota as the Headwaters State.
- The 10-state MRPC is currently represented on the U.S. Department of Transportation's **National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure** created by the FAST Act to advise the Department on tourism infrastructure needs.



MnMRPC - Great River Road Program

April 2017

H.F. No. 2800/ Chapter 152 - sponsored by MnMRPC

Subd. 3. Great River Road \$4,299,000

For predesign, design, construction, and restoration of historic roadside properties on the Great River Road. The commissioner shall consult with the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission to determine project priorities.



Lake City Concourse

- Camp Ripley Walls & Gates
- St. Cloud Historic Marker
- National Grange Historic Marker
- Burns Ave Overlook
- Sibley Pioneer Church Memorial
- Minnesota Training School Walls and Gate
- Ft. Beauharnois Historic Marker
- Lake City Concourse
- Reads Landing Overlook
- LaCrescent Overlook
- LaCrescent State Entry Marker
- Reno Springs Roadside Rest Area

Great River Road Explorer's Guide

Utilizing National Scenic Byway, MN150 and Commission funds the Commission printed 35,000 copies of this guide featuring letters home from each of Minnesota's six Great River Road destination areas.

GRR Destination Area Map Tablets

Marketing Committee developing new collateral piece featuring 6 maps for each of the GRR Destination Areas. Feature content is MNGrown and healthy/green travel.

Group Travel Promotion

Presentations at the Great Northern Group Travel Show and the Explore Minnesota Tourism Mississippi Familiarization Tour events.

Transportation Context Sensitive Solutions

- TH 23 DeSoto Bridge Naming Committee
- TH 10 Elk River realignment review and comments
- TH 52 Lafayette Bridge CRAVE and bicycle meetings
- TH 61 Hastings Bridge CRAVE, VQM, Bike and Ped, Interpretive Plaza & Traffic Calming Committees
- TH 61 Gilbert Bridge review and comments
- TH 43 Winona Bridge CRAVE
- I-90 Dresbach Bridge CRAVE and PAC
- CAPX2020 risk assessment, proposed alignment reviews
- TH 61 Cottage Grove to TH 10 Value Engineering Study

Great River Road Interpretive Panels

National Scenic Byway and Commission funds are used to develop six panels each in 4 of 21 counties along the byway, creating a roadside storybook that drives visitors to things to see and do in each county.

Mississippi River Trail (MRT)

Utilizing a Department of Interior grant Mn/DOT confirmed the route, developed a sign plan, fabricated the signs (\$15K) and distributed them for local installation from Dayton to the Vermillion River.

Worked with MnDOT Transit Office to develop state wide Mississippi River Trail implementation plan including MnMRPC securing FHWA and National Park Service grants to sign the 800 mile route in MN connecting with the other nine Mississippi River States.

Bena Trail (TH 2)

MnMRPC and MnDOT supported funding for development of the Bena Trail on TH 2 which provided bicycle and pedestrian facilities serving both tourists and residents of the Leech Lake Reservation.



Transportation Alternative Program funds

MnMRPC review and letters of support help five Area Transportation Partnership organizations select projects receiving Transportation Alternative Program funds, including 12 GRR community projects seeking \$7.3M matched with \$12.9M local funds improving byway traveler experiences.

Great River Road as part of the Mn Scenic Byway Program

Byways have successfully competed for 173 projects totaling \$17,053,577 million in National Scenic Byway Discretionary Grant funds since 1992. These projects have served as an impetus for action for local byway groups, state agencies and local governments.