

MRPC Stewardship Award Nomination Form

Name of person making nomination: John Anfinson, MN-MRPC Acting Chair

State Commission: Minnesota

Phone: 651-341-4196

Email Address: MN-MRPC Office - chris@togpartners.com

Name of Nominee (Individual, Organization or Community): Minnesota Grown Program/MN Dept of Agriculture – Paul Hugunin, Contact Person

Nominee Address: 625 Robert Street North, St. Paul, MN 55155

Nominee Phone: 651-201-6510 **Email:** paul.hugunin@state.mn.us

In two pages or less, please respond to the following.

1) Describe the history of involvement of the nominee in issues relating to the Great River Road, the Mississippi River, or a river community.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is an agency member of the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission as defined in state statute. The Commissioner of Agriculture appoints a voting member to the MN-MRPC, and the agency actively participates in MN-MRPC business. The [Minnesota Grown Program](#) is a statewide partnership between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota producers of specialty crops and livestock. It was created over 30 years ago by specialty crop growers to differentiate their produce from produce grown thousands of miles away. There are over 200 Minnesota Grown locations (including farmers markets, orchards, tree farms, wineries and more) within 5 – 10 miles of the Minnesota Great River Road. For over a decade, Minnesota Grown has provided this information to the MN-MRPC and has partnered on products such as Regional Map Tablets and the Plan Your Trip interactive mapping tool.

2) Please state examples of enhancing the environment, agriculture, recreation and/or transportation on or along the Great River Road.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture/Minnesota Grown significantly enhanced the connection between Great River Road travelers and Minnesota Grown locations; and implemented Corridor Management Plan objectives through their sponsorship and leadership of the 2022 Drive the Great River Road Month promotion in Minnesota. The theme, "Follow the Great River Road to Fall Harvest Fun!" invited travelers and residents to travel the Great River Road to agritourism locations and communities. Minnesota Grown staff worked with MN-MRPC members to develop content and implement the promotion. Minnesota Grown also funded promotional items, shipping and fulfillment.

The goals were to promote driving the Great River Road and exploring river communities and farms along the route; encourage travel along the Great River Road to find Minnesota Grown products, experiences and members; build and expand upon partnerships with other organizations who are part of the MN-MRPC and have natural synergy with Minnesota Grown; and raise awareness of Minnesota Grown members along the Great River Road to facilitate cross promotion/marketing; enhancing state agency partnerships.

Components of the promotion included:

- MN-MRPC/MN Dept. of Agriculture news release and PR firm contract – 14 news clips from a variety of locations/news outlets along the MN GRR, print and broadcast.
- Fall Harvest on the Great River Road webpage - <https://minnesotagrown.com/great-river-road/>
- State Fair press event/Drive the Great River Road Month kick-off – Comments and trivia contest at the Minnesota Grown Booth. Participants included MN-MRPC Chair and several members, MN

Dept of Agriculture Deputy Commissioner, MnDOT Commissioner, MN Historical Society Executive Director, and Explore Minnesota Executive Director, further enhancing partnerships with state agencies.

- Traveler Kits – Drive the Great River Road kits provided to the first 250 people to sign up. Announced on Facebook and Instagram. Maps, travel information and road trip goodies were donated by MN-MRPC members and partners. Bags and specialty themed Great River Road items were provided by Minnesota Grown. Orders from eight states and 105 cities in Minnesota.
- Surveys – Kit recipients were surveyed, 35 responses received. Most had not heard about the Great River Road before ordering the kit, 82% visited Great River Road locations, 100% plan to visit a Great River Road site in the future.
- Themed itineraries – Seven themed itineraries were developed and promoted, featuring different areas of the Great River Road and Minnesota Grown members.
- Social media – 16 Facebook posts and 5 Instagram posts by Minnesota Grown including videos of State Fair press event and Minnesota Grown staff member travel utilizing one of the itineraries.
- Minnesota Grown “Pick of the Month” e-newsletter – Included a Great River Road Fall Harvest feature in this newsletter to 35,000 subscribers.
- Minnesota Grown “Living Local” fall magazine – Two page spread in inaugural edition of new print publication.
- Photo contest – Social media photo contest with prizes provided by Minnesota Grown and MN-MRPC members.

3) Who would provide testimony as to the work done by the nominee?

- I. Anne Lewis, alewis@americaswaterway.org, 410-493-0362
- II. Megan Christianson, megan@visitgrandrapids.com, 218-259-0572
- III. John Anfinson, janfinson@comcast.net, 612-562-3305



7 Sample Itineraries were created

Page views from September - October:

- Lake Itasca: 49
- Twin Cities: 80
- Winona: 119
- St. Cloud: 98
- Wabasha: 142
- Brainerd: 73
- Grand Rapids: 96



MINNESOTAGROWN.COM

Order a Road Trip Kit for Fall Harvest on the Great River Road - Minnesota Grown