

RiverTime

St. Croix River Association | March 2018
50th Anniversary Edition



EXPERIENCE IT. PROTECT IT. FOREVER.

Cover photo © Craig Blacklock

MISSION To protect, restore and celebrate the St. Croix River and its watershed.

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CELEBRATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The St. Croix River is a unique and vital wilderness with abundant habitat, clean water, and spectacular natural beauty that have been cherished for generations. While other rivers near urban areas have seen their values squandered, the St. Croix has remained largely healthy and accessible to the public.

As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act that protected the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, it is an important opportunity to both revisit the past and look toward the future. By telling the story of how the St. Croix was preserved — and made public for all to enjoy — we can gain insights that can guide us in continuing to protect, restore, and celebrate this vibrant resource.

It is also the ten year anniversary of the May 2008 St. Croix Convening, which was initiated by the St. Croix Valley Foundation and the McKnight Foundation with inspiration and support from Vice President Walter Mondale. The organizers saw the opportunity to kick start efforts to boost protection of the Riverway and its watershed. Over 50 stakeholders participated in the six-hour session, with a consensus that there was a need for a watershed-wide organization to address key concerns: water quality, land protection, education and advocacy, and support for this national park.



Deb Ryun, Executive Director

As we look to the next 50 years, the challenges and threats facing the watershed are substantial.

- Diminished water quality from increased farmland and urban pollution runoff
- Loss of forests and grassland, and habitat fragmentation
- Encroachment of invasive species displacing native plants and animals
- Intensified challenges to the protections provided through the wild and scenic laws, and rules

Fundamentally, it will take people to protect the Riverway. The changes in demographics, people spending less time outdoors than ever before, and the aging of our Riverway champions leave the Riverway vulnerable.

This newsletter reflects on these two important anniversaries and we hope you are inspired to be involved. What can you do? Commit to deepening your Riverway experience during this anniversary year. Explore a stretch of river you've never visited. Learn about the park's history or geology. Take up a new activity like paddle boarding or nature photography. Be a fishing or watershed discovery mentor. Find a new way to care for the river you love.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deb Ryun".

Deb Ryun, Executive Director

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FIRST WILD AND SCENIC RIVER NATIONAL PARK

Julie Galonska, Superintendent, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

What comes to mind when you think about the St. Croix or the Namekagon, the two rivers of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway?

Do you think of a river flowing from its narrow headwaters through marshes and forests; widening and slowing as it makes its way downstream? A solitary kayak trip through the riffles and pools of the upper Namekagon, stopping for rest at a campsite? Boating on the St. Croix with island visits to picnic and swim with family and friends? Do you picture the native mussels that lie on the river bottom like hidden jewels, or remember the thrill of a smallmouth bass at the end of your line? Do you ponder the stories of the people who experienced the rivers before us?

The rivers entice us in myriad ways. Our connections to them are many and varied. More often than not, they are rooted in the very reasons that the St. Croix and Namekagon were designated as one of America's first wild and scenic rivers and a national park.

In 1968, Congress passed landmark legislation to preserve selected rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Fifty years later, of the approximately 3.6 million miles of streams in the United States, less than one quarter of one percent – 12,734 miles – are protected by the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

What places the St. Croix and Namekagon in this upper echelon of America's rivers? What makes them exceptional?

The Riverway's Foundation Document, finalized by the National Park Service in 2017, provides a good summary. Each unit of the National Park System completes one of these documents to describe what is most important about the park. What is its purpose? What makes it significant?

To be eligible for the wild and scenic rivers system, a river must be free-

flowing and have good water quality. Additionally, it must have at least one outstandingly remarkable value (ORV) - a value that is (1) river related or dependent and (2) rare, unique, or exemplary at a comparative regional or national scale. Based on these criteria, the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers contain aquatic, cultural, recreational, riparian, scenic-aesthetic, and geologic values.

Take some time this spring, before the ice goes out and the rivers beckon, to consider the amazing array of attributes – clean water, beautiful scenery, rare plants and animals, high quality outdoor recreation – that led to the protection of the St. Croix and Namekagon. It will be a good foundation for celebrating 50 years!

"The Riverway's Foundation Document can be found at: www.stcroixriverassociation.org/national-park-service/"



Choosing to save a river is more often an act of passion than of careful calculation. You make the choice because the river has touched your life in an intimate and irreversible way, because you are unwilling to accept its loss.

- David M. Bolling

AN AMAZING COLLABORATION CREATED THE RIVERWAY

Deb Ryun, Executive Director

When something long lasting and spectacular happens, we should remember and celebrate. On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the 1968 National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, SCRA is doing just that.

For half a century the public has been able to enjoy and use the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers -- a unique and vital national park with abundant habitat, clean water, and spectacular natural beauty. What many don't realize is that much of the St. Croix's public parks and waters, enjoyed for generations, would not have been protected if it weren't for some far-sighted executives at Northern States Power (NSP), now Xcel Energy.

At the start of the industrial era, NSP purchased thousands of acres of riverfront land on the St. Croix north of Taylors Falls, planning for hydroelectric power. Even as the company changed its approach to energy generation, NSP was a civic-minded steward of its riverfront

lands, making the St. Croix available for canoeing, fishing and picnicking, and even created maps for visitors.

In the 1960s, the company no longer needed all of the land they owned. They considered ways to protect this land and river for future generations. Simultaneously, U.S. Senators Gaylord Nelson (WI) and Walter Mondale (MN) were working at the federal level to pass the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to protect the country's most vital waters, including the St. Croix and its principal tributary, the Namekagon.

NSP executives went to Washington and testified before Congress that they were willing to donate 25,000 acres of river land if the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed. Leaders in Congress recognized this donation could jump start protection of our nation's most vibrant waters. The 1968 Act now has protected not just the St. Croix, but 12,734 miles of 208 rivers.

After the 1968 passage of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, NSP worked for years to shape the future of the St. Croix and was recognized in 1971 by the Department of Interior for its "intense devotion" to the river.

The Riverway is a magnificent national treasure. It is also a fragile one. Continued protection of this place and its world class experiences will take the commitment of all of us working together.

In the current climate of weakening environmental protections, it is important to remember the story of a farsighted company that helped create something truly remarkable for its community and this country. As we celebrate the anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, NSP's historic role in protecting the St. Croix river leaves a lasting legacy that can be an enduring gift for another 50 years.

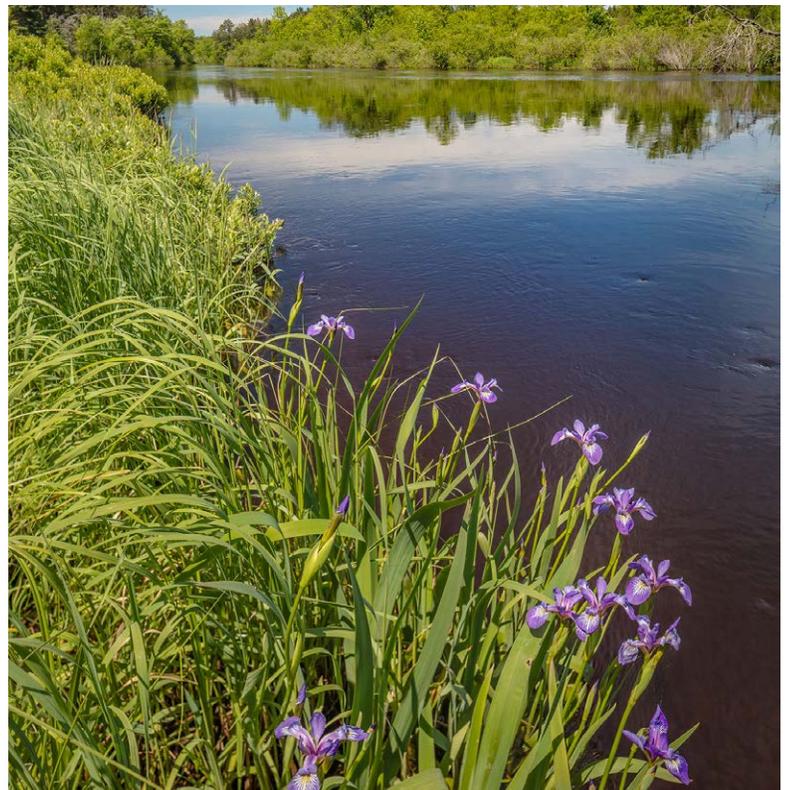
SAVE THE DATE - JUNE 6

**SAVING THE ST. CROIX RIVERWAY
FILM PREMIERE**

**FITZGERALD THEATER
10 E Exchange St., St Paul, MN**

Saving the St. Croix Riverway is a tribute to the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers and the people who preserved it for future generations.

The documentary features former Vice President Walter Mondale and others who can attribute to the history of the river.



PROGRAM UPDATES

Oriental Bittersweet Detection

Sean Griffin, Invasive Species Program Assistant

Oriental bittersweet is an invasive vine and an emerging threat to the St. Croix River and its watershed. Identifiable by its bright red fruit, yellow capsules and snake-like vines, oriental bittersweet "climbs," constricts, and collapses trees along the Riverway. This destabilizes banks and leads to erosion problems.

Thanks to funding from the Legislative Citizenship Commission on Minnesota Resources and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, SCRA is working on early detection. This will allow for quick treatment and more effective control. Help protect the Riverway and keep an eye out for Oriental bittersweet on your property!



Oriental bittersweet.

New Winter Snowshoe Program

Jamie Souza, River Connections Steward

Thanks to a generous grant funding from the National Park Trust, SCRA purchased 40 pairs of snowshoes, primarily for leading K-12 snowshoe hikes as part of the Rivers Are Alive program. Snowshoes are a great way to get youth outside and active during winter months.

This winter, SCRA reached 737 students throughout the watershed.

Contact Jaime at jaimes@scramail.com for more information or please visit our website: www.stcroixriverassociation.org/river-connections/



Taylor Falls Elementary students learned that exploring the great outdoors can be fun in a pair of snowshoes.

Woodland Stewardship Resources

Nicole Butler, Landowner Outreach Assistant

SCRA and watershed partners are taking great strides in supporting woodland stewardship. The new My St. Croix Woods program provides a one-stop-shop for woodland owner needs – with just a call or visit to www.mystcroixwoods.org, landowners can request tailored resource materials

and advice, find local professionals, schedule site visits, connect with peers and learn about upcoming events. If you would like to learn more about your woods and your stewardship options, please visit our website: www.mystcroixwoods.org.



MY ST. CROIX WOODS

MEET OUR DONORS - DAN WILLIUS

Interview by Peter Gove

As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, RiverTime asked former St. Croix River Association board chair Peter Gove to interview his predecessor as chair, Dan Willius, about the creation of the “new” River Association.

Dan, remind us of your family's history with the St. Croix.

In 1950, my parents bought a summer home in Franconia. That opened the door to years of personal and family experiences of the St. Croix Valley and all its treasures. And out of those experiences came my passionate love for the river.

What inspired you to play a leadership role in creating the 'new' St. Croix River Association?

For years conservationists bemoaned the absence of an organization with the clout needed to address growing threats to the St. Croix. The SCRA had been a voice for the river for decades; but, well into the 21st century, we still charged \$1 dues, had no staff, a small membership, a narrow geographic focus and little name recognition.

What the Association did have was a tradition and members who loved the river, making it a logical starting place to build something stronger. I wanted to help make that happen.

Remind our readers of the milestones leading to the expansion of SCRA to a watershed wide advocacy organization, beginning in 2007.

- Board leaders including Bill Clapp, Jim Harrison and my predecessor, Randy Ferrin, embraced the need for change, including a huge but necessary shift in geographic scope to include the entire watershed. Peter, when you joined the board you brought a specific vision for the new SCRA and the inspiration to go for it.
- So, we influenced stakeholders (DNR's, NPS, conservation organizations, etc.) to back our initiative. The Park Service was particularly supportive and today the SCRA is the official Friends Group for our river park.
- We secured funding. Peter, you paved the way to a McKnight startup grant of \$15,000 and a

subsequent operating grant of \$100,000. You, I and others then raised another \$100,000 from individuals.

- We recruited a new board of directors, created a strategic plan and began the search for a permanent executive director.
- And we worked hard to create the best governance: new by-laws, job descriptions, committee charters, processes for hiring staff, financial oversight, and more.

In this 50th anniversary year, what are your hopes for the Riverway and the role that SCRA plays?

Thanks to donors, partners, Deb Ryun and staff, the Association has achieved a status that 10 years ago was merely a dream for you and me. Today the SCRA is indeed making a difference!

That said, we must remember that the battle to protect what we love will never end. Threats to the river continue to grow, and so must the SCRA in pursuit of its mission.



Peter Gove, Dan Willius, and Randy Ferrin

2018 ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF
WILD & SCENIC!

SAVE THE DATE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

4:00 TO 7:00 PM

THE HORST REHELBACHER FARM

Stay tuned for details. Invitations to come this summer. Sponsorship packages are available.

For more information, contact Katy Gaynor at katyg@scramail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Find out more about all our events on our website: stcroixriverassociation.org/events.

April 21 | Give Back to the River Day
St. Croix Falls, Lions Park, WI

April 24 | 2018 St. Croix Summit
University of Wisconsin, River Falls, WI

May 11 | SCRA Spring Gathering - Changing the Face of Conservation Leaders
Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN

June 6 | Saving the St. Croix Riverway - Film Premiere
Fitzgerald Theater, St. Paul, MN

June 9-15 | 2018 Paddle Namekagon
Hayward, WI

August 25 | Wild & Scenic Film Festival
Trollhaugen, Dresser, WI

September 9 | Annual Fundraiser Celebrating Wild & Scenic at 50!
Horst Rechelbacher Farm, Osceola, WI

September 14-October 21 | Heart of the River: Celebrating the First 50 Years of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
The Phipps Center for the Arts, Hudson, WI



SUPPORT THE RIVER YOU LOVE!

Complete and mail the form below or make a secure donation online at stcroixriverassociation.org.

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please make checks payable to St. Croix River Association and mail to PO Box 655, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024 or donate online at stcroixriverassociation.org.

- _____ \$5,000 and above
- _____ \$2,500 - \$4,999
- _____ \$1,000 - \$2,499
- _____ \$500 - \$999
- _____ \$50 - \$499
- _____ \$25 - \$49

Donors of \$25 or more receive a one-year SCRA membership, unless they opt out here: _____

Please contact Katy Gaynor, Director of Development, at 715-483-3300 for information about including SCRA in your will or estate plan.

____ I have included SCRA in my will or estate plan.

Donations to SCRA are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

JOIN US!



SCRA Spring Gathering - Changing the Face of Conservation Leaders

May 11

We are very pleased to announce that Rue Mapp of Outdoor Afro will be our featured speaker at the Spring Gathering. Ms. Mapp is the Founder and CEO of the nation's leading-edge network that celebrates and inspires African American connections and leadership in nature.

stcroixriverassociation.org/events

REGISTER NOW!

WILD & SCENIC PADDLES

2018 Namekagon Paddle June 9 - 15

This 6-day, 92-mile river camping trip offers incredible scenery and a chance to explore one of the nation's first wild and scenic river national parks. SCRA makes it easy for those that want to experience a multi-day river adventure with some conveniences.

Expect to be challenged, inspired, and to build lasting relationships with a new community of river friends. Registration is now open!

scrapaddle.org