Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
Midwest Region

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wisconsin News

Merrill's River Bend Trail. Photo: NPS

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2013

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. **Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway Water Trail**
   Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway
2. **Great Rivers Confluence Project - Phase 2**
   Friends of Freedom Park
3. **Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge**
   McHenry County Conservation District
4. **Lake Michigan Water Trail, Wisconsin Segment**
   Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
5. **Lake Michigan Watertrail Organizational Development**
   Lake Michigan Water Trail Association
6. **Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/ Mississippi River Trail**
   Mississippi River Trail, Inc
7. **Niagara Escarpment Greenway**
   Niagara Escarpment Resource Network (NERN)

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

Recent Successes

River Bend Trail – Concept Plan Design and Report Completed

Merrill, Wisconsin is a small community that extends one mile by five miles along the Wisconsin River's undulating bends. Civic leaders, recognizing the juxtaposition of the beautiful river and the abandoned railroad tracks, as well as pedestrian use of the area, formed the idea of a riverfront trail. The 2.5-mile trail would connect major parks on the city's western edge to downtown, while providing a safe, attractive alternative transportation route. The proposed trail corridor contains historic commercial and industrial buildings, as well confluence with the Prairie River, recognized for its trout fishery. The proposed trail is poised to link with the Ice Age National Scenic Trail and form part of the spine of a proposed state trail.

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"I know the work you have done for us will probably be the most critical link in the entire process. Yes, raising the money will be hard work, yes, convincing skeptics it will be money well spent will be difficult, but without this foundational work and this report, those things would have been impossible."

- Christopher Malm, Owner; Park Street Properties, LLC.

Current Projects

1. Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway Water Trail

Project Partner: Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway
RTCA Contact: Angie Tornes
Location: Green Bay, Brown, Prairie du Chien, and Crawford Counties
Congressional District: WI - 3, 8

Project Goal

Ultimately this water trail will be a well-marked, easily-portaged, ADA-accessible 280-mile water trail along the historic Fox and Wisconsin Rivers connecting the Mississippi River with Green Bay in Lake Michigan. Outcomes include selection of format and begin work on website and print materials; improved designs for portages around locks and dams on the historic canal; and agreed upon safety measures to adopt along the river.

NPS Role

Assist in developing outreach/educational materials (map/brochure) and website; improve portage design to better withstand seasonal flow damage; and assist in addressing safety concern around dams. As time permits, also assist with recommendations on developing sustainable programming events such as the annual Heritage Paddle; and assist with making the portages ADA accessible and studying impacts on user health.

2. Great Rivers Confluence Project - Phase 2

Project Partner: Friends of Freedom Park
RTCA Contact: Randy Thoreson
Location: River Falls
Congressional District: WI - 3

Project Goal

As Phase 2 continues, the Great Rivers Confluence Project, intends through connections and partnerships, to: foster partnerships across national, state and local divisions; create and adopt a common vision of Great Rivers preservation and management; and plan and implement land and water recreational opportunities within the MN and WI confluence project area.

NPS Role

To provide continued technical assistance, coordination, and facilitation in the planning and development of recreational opportunities, tourism, mapping formulation, partnerships building, and natural resources protection strategies as part of the Great Rivers Confluence Project.

Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway Water Trail. Photo: NPS

3. Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

Project Partner: McHenry County Conservation District
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta
Location: Bi-state Region, IL and WI
Congressional Districts: WI - 1

Project Goal

Define and establish the Friends of Hackmatack which will work to support the development of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge.

NPS Role

Guide Friends of Hackmatack through the process of defining the Friends group for the National Wildlife Refuge, working on partnership building, public involvement and building a sustainable non-profit organization.

4. Lake Michigan Water Trail, Wisconsin Segment

Project Partner: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
RTCA Contact: Angie Tornes
Location: Wisconsin's Lake Michigan shoreline
Congressional District: WI - 1, 4, 5, 6, 8

Project Goal

A 533-mile water trail along the Wisconsin Shorelines of Lake Michigan and Green Bay. A gap analysis identifying zones where public access is needed; these would be targeted for future land acquisition. Develop a branding strategy/logo and provide educational opportunities to encourage better understanding of the need to help protect the lake's ecosystem. Develop website and brochure to improve paddler experience.

NPS Role

Contribute expertise in developing previous large water trail projects, e.g., Lake Superior Water Trail. Lead public participation efforts. Facilitate future

Current Projects cont.

partnerships with organizations that can help implement/build the water trail. Provide technical assistance in developing logo, brochure, website, interpretation panels, and National Water Trail System application.

5. Lake Michigan Trails Organizational Development

Project Partner: Lake Michigan Water Trail Association
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta
Location: IL, IN, MI, WI
Congressional District: WI - 1, 4, 5, 6, 8

Project Goal

Build a partnership organization to work on the Lake Michigan Trails which will provide access to Lake Michigan in four states through planning three recreation travel modes while marketing the trail for increased tourism and economic development opportunities.

NPS Role

Convene quad state organizations, local governments, and state governments to set vision, mission, and goals/outcomes leading to the development of land and water trails, US Bike Routes and enhancing the Lake Michigan Circle Route.

6. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/Mississippi River Trail

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
RTCA Contact: Rory Robinson
Location: Mississippi River, Ten States
Congressional District: AR - 1, 4; IA - 1, 2, 4; IL - 12, 16, 17; KY - 1; LA - 3, 5 ,6; MN - 1, 2, 6 ,8; MO - 1, 2, 3, 8, 9; MS - 2 ,3; TN - 8 ,9; WI - 3, 7

Project Goal

Continued assistance to the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative with a focus on expanding the Collaborative to additional partners and creating a sustainable forum with general assistance to MRT focused on enhancing the organization. Specific assistance in planning and implementation of the Year of Cycling 2013, outreach to local communities to encourage improvements to the MRT for improved recreation, tourism, and community development; continued technical assistance in the development of a organization strategic plan to support MOU objectives and increase long-term organizational viability; and to further develop to the Mississippi River "blueway" portion of the trail system.

NPS Role

To assist the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative with organizational development, outreach to other organizations and agencies and development and implementation of their strategic and operations plans. Increase MRT's capacity to help develop water and land based trail along the Mississippi River.

The Niagara Escarpment Greenway. Photo: NPS

7. Niagara Escarpment Greenway

Project Partner: Niagara Escarpment Resource Network (NERN)
RTCA Contact: Angie Tornes
Location: Door, Kewaunee, Brown, Calumet, Fond du Lac, and Dodge Counties
Congressional District: WI - 5, 6, 8

Project Goal

The project will identify and map out a 170-mile greenway corridor associated with the Niagara Escarpment geological formation. Existing resource and recreation-based nodes will be identified in order to develop a connected network of regional and local sites which may include off-road and on-road walking and bike trails/ routes as well as driving routes.

NPS Role

Assist with revising goals and objectives for the draft greenway plan; assist in the assessment of resources, particularly aesthetics; assist in the development of a concept plan with broad indications of 1) greenways which incorporate priority conservation areas and 2) a wide main corridor and side trail connectors. Assist in developing public involvement and media relations. Assist in identifying potential funding sources and strategies for implementation.

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.

Angie Tornes
414-297-3605
angie_tornes@nps.gov

Diane Banta
312-863-6287
diane_banta@nps.gov

Rory Robinson
330-657-2951
rory_robinson@nps.gov

Randy Thoreson
651-293-8450
randy_thoreson@nps.gov

David Thomson
402-661-1570
dave_thomson@nps.gov

2012 Nationwide Partnership Success

2,154	Miles of Trail Developed
1,074	Miles of River Conserved
70,385	Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected
94%	Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca

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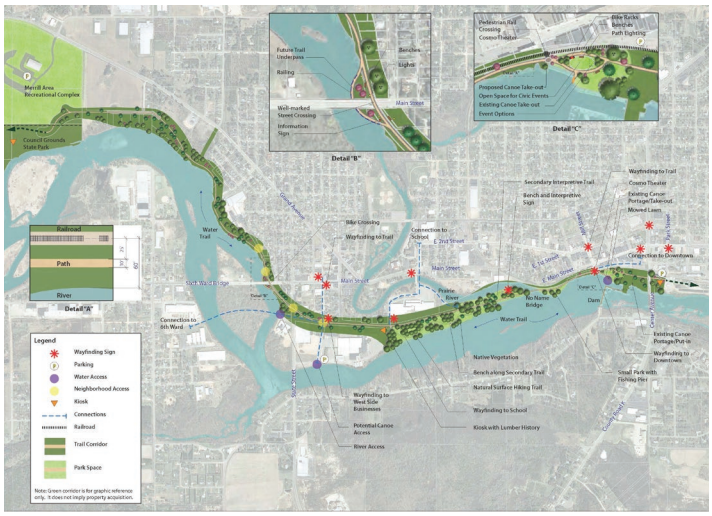
Recent Successes cont.

Staff from RTCA led the River District Development Foundation of Merrill in planning for a passive use trail along the riverfront; coordinated well-attended public design workshops and development of a trail concept plan; identified steps for trail implementation; and prepared the "River Bend Concept Plan Report."



A concept map for the City of Merrill's River Bend Trail. Photo: Jennings & Associates Landscape Architects

Planning Connections: Milwaukee County Grounds Trail Plan and Report Completed

Synchronicity of events forges new ideas, opportunities, and actions. Such is the genesis of this project where diverse ideas and activities began to evolve around a large, publicly-owned, natural open space, proposed university research facilities and office/residential developments, and a proposed reconfiguration of a major highway intersection in the heart of the Milwaukee metropolitan area. Many stakeholders, from recreational users to new and existing institutional neighbors, converged to define issues and potential solutions to preserve open space, define connecting trails, and provide guidance to future adjacent developments.

"The trail guide that RTCA spearheaded for the Milwaukee County Grounds is a vital component in the planning for this diverse site. It will help integrate disparate elements into a unified whole that is greater than the sum of its parts."

Eddee Daniel, Author, Urban Wilderness, and Photo-artist

The solutions included linkages to Monarch Butterfly migration roosting habitat, Neo-Gothic "Historic Eschweiller Buildings," a regional medical research campus, naturalistic detention ponds, and a future forestry exploration center.

The City of Wauwatosa recruited staff from RTCA who formed the planning committee and process; recruited graduate students to develop a map and graphics; coordinated public design workshops; wrote and oversaw production of the report that included recommendations for trails design, steps for implementation, and concept plans for connecting areas and infrastructure.