



Minnesota News



PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2015

- NPS Unit
- ★ State Capital



CURRENT PROJECTS

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 3. Becker County Trail Plan
 4. Connecting Volunteers in the Heart of the Continent
 5. Headwaters of Mississippi River National Water Trail
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 8. Mississippi River Waterway Trail and Park System
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ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. Program staff provide 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.

Planning region of Imagine Ely, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.
Photo: NPS

Recent Successes

“Incredible Ely” - Community Revitalization at the Doorstep of the National Boundary Waters Canoe Area

There are incredible things happening in Ely, Minnesota, which has long been known as the “Gateway” or “Doorstep” to the National Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA). A group of local government, business, and citizen leaders under the title of “Incredible Ely” has engaged planning, design, and outdoor recreation experts on a large-scale “Ely Visioning Process.”

Using the Minnesota Design Team (MDT) model, community leaders, business interests, outdoor enthusiasts, and engaged public citizens reached out for ideas on the existing and future well-being of the area. They sought creative and innovative input on topics including downtown improvements, tourism, employment, entry signage, school involvement, and existing and potential trails and parks that serve the greater Ely community. The entire group desires to have Ely become a vibrant city in its own right and not simply an area that visitors pass through to reach the nearby BWCA area.

The Minnesota office of the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program served as a co-leader of the 25 professionals (known as the MDT) who generated ideas for Ely to revitalize itself and become a thriving community for year-round residency and business.

The successful experience culminated in a three-day design charrette in early October of 2014. The MDT group volunteered time and effort, stayed with host families, and led two large community meetings, which had close to 200 attendees.

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Current Projects

1. Active Living Bicycle & Pedestrian System

Project Partner: Ramsey County
NPS Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Maplewood
Congressional District: MN - 4

Project Goal

Encourage healthy lifestyles by bringing people and resources together to build more active, bikeable, and walkable communities and promote environments that make it safe and convenient for everyone to be physically active in their daily routine.

NPS Role

Assist Active Living Ramsey Communities to gather interested leaders, health practitioners, and community members to work together to create and promote environments that make it safe and convenient for people to integrate physical activity into their daily routine.

2. Active Living Plan Worthington

Project Partner: City of Worthington
NPS Contact: Holly Larsen
Location: Worthington
Congressional District: MN - 1

Project Goal

Develop an Active Living Plan to include a master trails plan that will allow the city and its partners to prioritize projects and goals for implementation of recreational and active transportation opportunities in the community of Worthington.

NPS Role

Provide planning expertise, community engagement, and assistance in the creation of a professional document to guide project implementation.



Ely Trails Connection Entry Sign. Photo: NPS

3. Becker County Trail Plan

Project Partner: Becker County
NPS Contact: Randy Thoreson
Location: Detroit Lakes
Congressional District: MN - 7

Project Goal

Build on previous recreation planning to complete a trails plan for Becker County.

NPS Role

Lead planning efforts to convene stakeholders and communities to find regional connections between trail systems; facilitate planning process.

NPS Role

Plan, develop and coordinate the work of the volunteer design team to create the volunteer clearinghouse. Identify and approach community groups and other potential partners to support projects and recruit volunteers.

4. Connecting Volunteers in the Heart of the Continent

Project Partner: Heart of the Continent Partnership
NPS Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Northern Minnesota
Congressional District: MN - 8

Project Goal

Build regionwide dialogue, cooperation, and capacity among communities, public land managers, and conservation, recreation, and industry groups to enable vibrant communities to flourish alongside healthy public lands. Create opportunities for groups to work together in new ways that can benefit the lakes, forests, wildlife, and people of this ecosystem.

5. Headwaters of Mississippi River National Water Trail

Project Partner: Chippewa National Forest
NPS Contact: Randy Thoreson
Location: Statewide
Congressional Districts: MN - 7, MN - 8

Project Goal

Designation of the headwaters of the upper Mississippi River as a national water trail.

NPS Role

Provide technical assistance, coordination, and facilitation in the planning and designation of the headwaters of the upper Mississippi River as a national water trail.

6. Lake Vermilion Trail

Project Partner: Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
NPS Contact: Holly Larson
Location: Tower
Congressional District: MN - 3

Current Projects

Project Goal

Undertake planning for Lake Vermilion Trail and related amenities; establish connections with regional partners.

NPS Role

Facilitate partnership process; provide technical assistance throughout planning process.

7. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/ Mississippi River Trail

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.

NPS Contact: Rory Robinson

Location: Mississippi River, Ten States
Congressional Districts: MN - 1, MN - 2, MN - 4, MN - 6, MN - 8

Project Goal

Foster improvements to the Mississippi River Trail for recreation, tourism, and community development; assist in the development of the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative and increase long-term organizational viability; further develop the Mississippi River blueway portion of the trail system; develop geotourism initiative with National Geographic Society.

NPS Role

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 the capacity of Mississippi River Trail, Inc. to develop a water and land based trail along the Mississippi River. Assist Mississippi River Connections Collaborative to develop a sustainable destination tourism (geotourism) initiative in partnership with the National Geographic Society.

8. Mississippi River Waterway Trail and Park System

Project Partner: City of Newport

NPS Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Newport

Congressional District: MN - 4

Project Goal

Improve and add new recreational public access points (sites) to the Mississippi River in the community of Newport. Plan and construct trail linkages to the access points and to the Metro Red Rock Transit Station.

NPS Role

Provide technical and facilitation assistance in the research, planning, and implementation of improved and new community access points to the Mississippi River for motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, and possible recreational swimming activities. Assist in the research, planning, and implementation of trail linkages to the river access points and the Metro Red Rock Transit Station located in Newport.

9. Mississippi Riverfront Parks and Trails, Brainerd and Baxter

Project Partner: Cities of Brainerd and Baxter

NPS Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Brainerd and Baxter

Congressional District: MN - 8

Project Goal

Complete and implement a Brainerd-Baxter Mississippi riverfront master plan for parks and trails. Plan and implement connections to regional trail networks including the Glacial Lakes Trail and the Camp Ripley Veterans State Trail.

NPS Role

Work to achieve consensus in the Brainerd and Baxter communities for the master plan and implementation of a Mississippi River riverfront downtown revitalization. Assist with planning and design of new and existing trail connections within the area and links to regional trail networks.

10. National Water Trail, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Project Partner: Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

NPS Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Twin Cities

Congressional Districts: MN - 2, MN - 3, MN - 4, MN - 5, MN - 6

Project Goal

Establish the Mississippi Water Trail within the Twin Cities Metro Area.

NPS Role

Assist in the development of all elements of a formal water trail encompassing the 72-mile stretch of the Mississippi River and a 4-mile stretch of the Minnesota River in the Twin Cities Metro Area and within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area corridor. Assist with research, facilitation, and coordination of the water trail project with primary partners and 30+ supporting agencies and groups.

11. The Great Rivers Confluence Vision

Project Partner: Friends of Freedom Park

NPS Contact: Randy Thoreson

Location: Prescott and River Falls, WI; Hastings and Afton

Congressional Districts: MN - 2, MN - 6

Project Goal

Develop water trails, protect natural resources, promote ecotourism, and strengthen educational systems, outreach, and wayfinding for citizens and visitors to the approximately 100-square-mile area.

NPS Role

Support the Great Rivers Confluence Vision: "Recognize and appreciate the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers and its people, places and stories through connections, partnerships, and recreational opportunities."

We're Here For You.

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

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2014 Nationwide Partnership Success

3,278.74 Miles of Trail Developed

2,046.25 Miles of River Conserved

9,411.06 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

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



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Recent Successes cont.

Using a community citizen input model, the group set short- and long-term priorities and ultimately presented 27 design boards for an open and interactive meeting at the local college auditorium on the evening of day three of the charrette.

In summary, the Ely Visioning Process is successfully underway thanks to the involvement of the MDT group and the now-thriving “Incredible Ely” group. (<https://www.facebook.com/incredibleely>)

“As out-going State Chair for the Minnesota Design Team, I was involved from the start in the Ely MDT visit. The skill set of NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program staff working with diverse communities, being able to differentiate core mission from wish lists, and their ability to work both as an individual and team leader served both our group of volunteers and the host community of Ely in countless ways.”

- Paul Mandell, Principal Planner, MN Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board



The Minnesota Design Team members for Incredible Ely. Photo: NPS