

**Great Rivers Confluence Partners Meeting  
Tuesday, August 2, 2011, 9:00am - Noon  
National Park Visitor Center, St. Croix Falls**

**Attendees:**

Char Vick, Friends of Freedom Park  
Linda Bjorklund, Friends of Freedom Park  
Randy Thoreston, National Park Service RTCA  
Chris Stein, National Park Service SACN  
Michelle Hanson, MnDNR  
Jonathan Moore, National Park Service SACN  
Emily Shively, National Park Service RTCA  
Dick Thorson, Rosewood Inn, Hastings  
Margaret Smith, Friends of Freedom Park/ Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center

**Agenda:**

- A discussion of our next Symposium tentatively scheduled for Oct 7th,
- Emily Shively's (National Park Service) work to identify and evaluate assets within the confluence area,
- A report on the neo tropical National Park Service Sister Park project with Costa Rica concerning our migrating birds,
- Continuation of Randy Thoreson's work with the Confluence project
- A possible eagle camera project.

Introductions were made; Jonathan Moore is working with the St. Croix Foundation on a plan to designate the St. Croix watershed as a National Heritage Area. There may be some opportunities for the Confluence Partners to participate.

**Symposium Planning**

- Build on past symposiums –
  - Sept. 2010: Natural resources and Economic Development : use and protect = economic growth
  - April 2011: Economic growth and Nature-based tourism
- Target groups to invite
  - Stakeholders (current list of contacts from past events)
  - User groups – bikers and birders
- Identify regional assets: What we have is already here!
  - Themes: Biking, Birding and Business
    - How do trails and wildlife viewing sites impact economic growth?
    - Invite someone from Lanesboro to share their experience with the Root River Trail as an example/inspiration; Participants begin to think about trails in the Confluence area
    - Think about what we already have: Site Inventory and Assessment – Emily Shively will describe process and walk through an example
    - UWRF Map Project – Zach Bodenner (if available) will demonstrate the tool and show which sites have already been mapped so we can see where our assets are

- Planners from Washington Co.(Peter Mott), Dakota Co.(Barry Bernstein), and River Falls (Susan Reese) will present updates on current trail planning efforts
  - Invite Dr. Adrian Forsyth to speak about neo tropical migratory birds and how land use decisions in MN-WI and Costa Rica impact our birds
  - Invite Gayle Junilla (Explore MN) to talk about how businesses can attract attention to area assets
  - Brainstorm actions to move things forward - Where are existing trails? Where are gaps? What are issues with making trail connections and developing new trails? How can Confluence Partners influence decisions? Does the Confluence area have the amenities that birders and bikers are looking for? What needs to happen in order for the area to become a destination for birders and bikers? Have time for people to work in groups
- Review of Preliminary Symposium Agenda
  - Emily will work on finding a speaker from Lanesboro
  - Susan Reese and Barry Bernstein are confirmed
  - Dr. Forsyth has been invited by Chris Stein – waiting for reply
    - There is an article on birding in E. Wisconsin in the current issue of Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine
    - There was a short discussion about possibly having a small meeting/workshop with Dr. Forsyth before the symposium to talk specifically about neo tropical migrant issues
  - Gayle Junilla is confirmed; may want to change the title of her presentation
  - Regarding workgroups: Have all small groups look at all issues or break into issue groups?
    - The symposium planning team should come up with a form/questions to guide workgroups in their discussions
  - Michelle brought up the possibility of an activity after the symposium – a bike ride? She will work on planning something around Hastings
  - Dick mentioned that the Rosewood Inn is considering building a shelter for bicycles and possibly having bikes available for patrons
  - Do we want to have tables for businesses/organizations to have materials on display?
  - Should we have a follow-up meeting shortly after the symposium to get started working on issues?
    - Possibly invite area legislators (2012 is a bonding year) or legislative staff (particularly for the Point Douglas Trail)
- There was a discussion about the need to do more work on branding the Confluence area
  - Since this is a big issue, perhaps we could focus on it for the spring 2012 symposium and promote it at the fall 2011 symposium
  - Possibility of doing a pilot project with the Confluence area and the National Heritage Area project? - Identifying assets and describing regional significance...?
- Dick will forward the symposium Save the Date email to Friends of the Valley B&B group list
- Char needs a photo of a biker in a lovely site with birds in the background – or three images; Dick can send a photo of the Rosewood Inn (for the business aspect)
- An effort needs to be made to get Pierce County staff to attend the symposium
  - They have a map of bike routes (along existing roadways) – would be helpful to know what the plan is going forward (signage? Off-road trail development) and how the partners can be involved with getting more trail infrastructure in the county

### **Update on Site Inventory and Assessment**

- Emily and Zach (if available) will be presenting at the symposium
- Emily will do a site assessment of a few sites prior to the symposium to walk through as an example
- The inventory and assessment form will be made available to symposium attendees

### **Neo tropical Migratory Birds – Corcovado Sister Park Relationship Update**

- Chris Stein gave an overview of how Sister Park connections are set up – the Office of International Affairs works to match parks with similar issues; Glacier National Park in MT and Waterton Lakes Park in Alberta was the first cross-boundary park relationship *Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park* (formed in 1932 at the initiation of the Rotary Club)
- Chris stated that he would like to model a new type of sister park relationship with greater involvement of “citizen stewards” in the project from the start
- Other river parks were considered for the sister park relationship with SACN, but the OIA recommended Corcovado in Costa Rica because of the connection with migratory birds (winter in Costa Rica; summer in upper Midwest). The other regional National Parks (Voyageurs, Apostle Islands, and MNRRA) as well as the Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network will also participate
- The signed arrangement between the parks was hand delivered to Corcovado; however, the government of Costa Rica is requesting a more formal arrangement with the United States government before approving the Sister Park relationship
- The arrangement will hopefully raise the visibility of the park as well as the issue of migratory bird habitat
- While waiting on the arrangement, SACN is going forward with restoration work in pine plantations (essentially biological “deserts”) that has been planned for the last 10 years. The restoration may become more visible as well due to the sister park relationship
- A network of citizen stewards has begun to form – many people are drawn to the issue of conservation for migratory birds. A goal is to do restoration on public and private lands in order to create “habitat harbors” for migrating birds. Chris is hoping someone will step forward to take leadership of the citizen group.
- The stewards would hopefully get plugged into current efforts in the area and the group would have the full support of SACN

### **Update on renewal of the NPS RTCA Technical Assistance Grant**

- The application was received by the August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline to extend Randy Thoreson’s work with the Confluence Project for a third year
- Randy suggested collecting letters of support from Partners to demonstrate the importance and impact of the project (he may draft a template letter for people to use)
- The Project’s goals have changed over the past 2 years – the Confluence Project has provided a place for communication, networking, collaboration, and partnerships (versus focusing just on connecting trails)
- There is a good case to be made for continuing the project to build on momentum created in the first two years
- Grant approval should be given in late September; Randy is confident the Confluence Project will continue to receive NPS RTCA support

### **Update on the Eagle Cam Project**

- The camera would be located at a nest on Prescott Island (owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers)
- There may be another camera at a nest site in Costa Rica (Corcovado Sister Park)

- The budget for the project is being worked out right now
- The camera footage would likely stream to the Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center, the Carpenter Nature Center, the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Visitor Center, and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Visitor Center
- Project planners are still working on how the cam might be used for educational programming
- There also needs to be a maintenance plan worked out
- Consideration is being given to the issue of advertising (looking at the Decorah eagle cam example)

**Next meeting: November 1<sup>st</sup> at the Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center in Prescott, 9am**

**Plan to attend the symposium on October 7<sup>th</sup> at the Hastings City Hall!**

**There will likely be more subcommittee meetings before the symposium and next Partners meeting – stay tuned**