



Friends of Freedom Park

200 Monroe St. Prescott, WI 54021

www.freedomparkwi.org 715-262-0104

Supporting the mission of the Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center through membership, volunteer recruitment and fundraising.

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From: Margaret Smith, Executive Director
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Subject: Wildlife and Nature Viewing Tourism Conference Held

Date: April 20, 2011

Over 70 city, county, state, business and organization representatives from Wisconsin and Minnesota, the cities of Hastings, Prescott, River Falls, and Afton, and Washington, Dakota, and Pierce counties, and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and the Mississippi River & Recreation Area National Parks, attended the April 7 conference, “Developing a Sustainable Community and Wildlife Nature Tourism Program.” Held in the historic Hastings Courthouse, the conference was led by Jim Mallman, President of the international organization Watchable Wildlife (www.watchablewildlife.org) and hosted by the Great Rivers Confluence Project.

Mallman leads workshops throughout the world, helping communities and regions develop wildlife and nature tourism programs. Worldwide overall tourism is estimated to be a \$93 trillion industry. In the United States, a 2006 survey done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, found that \$45.7 billion was spent by people in wildlife recreation expenditures, surpassing expenditures in fishing (\$42.2 billion/year) and hunting (\$22.9 billion/year). The upward trend continues for wildlife recreation expenditures.

Mallman noted travel trends are changing. Women tend to plan vacations and make 80% of travel decisions, favoring shorter distance trips, flexible itineraries and experiential activities. Women prefer wildlife recreation which includes walking, hiking, photography, and birding. Mallman recommended communities develop 18 month timelines for creating and implementing wildlife nature tourism programs, which include focusing on short day trips, promoting the spring and fall “shoulder seasons”, and identification, knowledge and prioritization of area wildlife and nature assets.

Identification of area assets should be done by a wide group of local experts from a variety of fields (nature, business, recreational users, state, city and county representatives etc), and communities need to provide accessible relevant information, supporting materials including appropriate signage, special events, and site enhancements which attract wildlife or make wildlife viewing more accessible.

Following Mallman’s presentation, Ian Muehlenhaus and Zach Bodenner of the University of WI- River Falls presented a draft interactive computer map of the confluence region of the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers with map layers including parks, historic sites, trails, information, and more. The map will be developed for further use in identifying key area assets for use in the region’s wildlife and nature tourism programs of the Great Rivers Confluence Project.

The Great Rivers Confluence Project is a coalition of regional organizations, agencies, cities, counties and state groups and national parks which came together in 2009 to address preservation, recreation and

economic issues arising at the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. For more information about the Great Rivers Confluence Project, contact Margaret Smith, Executive Director of Friends of Freedom Park, 715-262-0104 or mhsmith@freedomparkwi.org



Caption: Over 70 attendees participated in the April 7 wildlife/nature tourism conference, including (front row) Karen Blodgett of WI DNR, River Falls Mayor Don Richards, Prescott Mayor Mike Hunter, Prescott City Council Members Marissa Holst and Mark Huber, Eau Galle Recreation Area Park Ranger (US Army Corp of Engineers) Brad Labadie, Audubon MN Policy Director Don Arnosti, and Hastings's Classic Rosewood Inn owner Dick Thorsen.



Watchable Wildlife presenter Jim Mallman gave a lively and fact-filled presentation to representatives from a wide variety of organizations, groups and representatives from 2 states, 3 counties, 4 cities and the region.