



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Midwest Regional Office/ Wisconsin Field Office

Rivers and Trails Program

626 East Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 400

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

9.B(MWR-P/RTCA)

October 6, 2015

Ms. Karen Miller
Fox River Ecosystem Partnership
719 Batavia Avenue
Geneva, IL 60134

Dear Ms. Miller:

Thank you for your renewed application for technical assistance from the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program for Fiscal Year 2016. Although we have not received an approved budget from Congress and the President, we would like to confirm that your application requesting assistance for the Illinois and Wisconsin Fox River Water Trail Initiative meets our program goals and application criteria. Consequently, we have preliminarily accepted your application and fully expect to continue our assistance once the budget is finally approved.

The Illinois and Wisconsin Fox River Water Trail project is a 223-mile, multi-dimensional project encompassing 11 counties and numerous units of local government including municipalities, towns, and townships. The river valley is resplendent with rich resources including protected open space, Native American and pioneer cultural sites, urban and rural landscapes, and recreation opportunities making the river ideal for a water trail. In addition, your application sites many plans which refer to developing assets associated with a water trail. Lastly, your project is aligned with National Park Service strategic objectives identified in the NPS "Call to Action" such as youth engagement, linking parks, increasing outdoor recreation, etc.

A water trail is an excellent vehicle for stewarding Fox River resources and improving the quality of life, health, recreation, safety, and ecotourism along its course. Your application demonstrates an abundance of support for water trail planning and implementation including non-governmental organizations, governments and elected officials, businesses and individuals. One of the primary challenges, as you mention in your application, will be coordinating among many stakeholders over a long distance.

You've requested our assistance assessing and engaging partners to work over the 223 river miles; assistance in priority setting and consensus building, identifying community outreach, and participation strategies; and assistance in identifying potential funding sources. You've identified river related work in which you and the partners have been engaged as well as potential other partners who may help with mapping and data collection.

I would like to suggest that you convene a meeting this fall among primary stakeholders, e.g., the same group of people who met in Twin Lakes last July, to craft a strategy for water trail development. Since one of water trail supporters you mention is president of the Johnson Foundation and he has offered use of Wingspread Conference facilities for planning meetings, I suggest holding the meeting there if available. Dates I am available to meet include October 29-30; November 2-4, 9-10, 12-13, 30; December 1-16. In the meantime, it would be helpful to initiate conversations with organizations able to assist with mapping in both states.

We anticipate that most if not all of our work will be completed by September 30th, 2016, at which time our assistance will end. Continuation into FY 2017 would require an extension request for your existing application.

I look forward to meeting with you and others this fall to define our work plan for the Illinois Wisconsin Fox River Water Trail Initiative. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at Angie_Tornes@nps.gov or 414-297-3605.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela M. Tornes".

Angela M. Tornes
Senior Natural and Recreation Resource Planner
Wisconsin Field Office Manager