Rock River Trail Founder Frank Schier on the North Branch near Waupun, 1992
The Rock River Trail Initiative; It’s History, Vision and Goals

Southeast Fox River Partnership: Protecting, restoring, and enhancing the natural resources of the Fox River basin

2015 Fox River Summit, Friday, March 20, 2015, Veterans Terrace at Echo Park, Burlington, WI
ROCK RIVER TRAIL INITIATIVE

Mission Statement

The mission of the Initiative is to establish and interpret a Rock River Water Trail along the 320-mile river course from the headwaters in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois, and a separate Rock River Scenic and Historic Route on roads and biking and hiking trails within the river corridor to provide access for all to the natural resources, recreational opportunities, scenic beauty and historic and cultural assets of the Rock River Valley.
February 2010

- Idea for the Rock River Trail conceived.
- Web site construction begun.
- Research on campsites and dams begun.
- Initial county contacts made.
- First volunteers approached.
- Winnebago County, City of Rockford, Rockford Park District, Winnebago County Forest Preserve, Rock River Water Reclamation District, City of Loves Park, Village of Machesney Park, North Park Public Water District and Village of Cherry Valley, at the behest of Winnebago County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen, commit to $20,000 worth of mapping time.
April 16 & 17, 2010
The Clock Tower
Rockford, IL

FIRST ROCK RIVER TRAIL CONFERENCE

Getting to Know Ourselves, Re-Discovering the Rock River: An exploration, inventory, assessment and declaration of the Rock River Trail.

HISTORICAL MEETING: This is the first time in history a meeting was held, which was attended by all 10 counties and 33 municipalities of the entire mainstream of the Rock River.
International Environmental Hall of Fame and New Campgrounds

The Rock River Times (TRRT), Rock River Trail, Winnebago County, TRRT Editor & Publisher and Rock River Trail Founder and Chairman Frank Schier, and Winnebago County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen are inducted into the Environmental Hall of Fame.

AND… Rockford Park District and Winnebago County Forest Preserve District create 18 new campsites on the Rock River, at Hononegah Forest Preserve, Sportscore 1, Brook Road, Atwood Outdoor Educational Center and Hinchliff Forest Preserve, as Rockford Park District Executive Director Tim Dimke declares a “Touchdown” in celebration.

August 25, 2010: The National Park Service’s Outdoor Education Planner for the Midwest Region’s River and Trails Program, Jeff Obirek, visited Winnebago County to meet with Rock River Trail partners in Winnebago County.

Rock River Sweep

Frank Masterson’s vision to clean up the Rock River in his community quickly grew into a river-long event. The first-ever Great Rock River Sweep was a Rock River clean-up conducted in each and every community along the river for its entire 285 miles reaching from Horicon, Wis., to Rock Island, Ill., simultaneously. Originally scheduled for July 31, 2010, the event was postponed due to flooding and was successfully held on September 11, 2010. The RRTI assisted in 3 zones in Winnebago County. Pictured above, members of the Illinois Paddling Council swept the Rock River from the Fordam Dam in Rockford to the old Ace Diamonds boat ramp. This year’s clean up will be Saturday September 12, if you’d like to pitch in and paddle over.
December 15, 2010

New website design announced at VisionBeloit’s last session of the City Center Seminar series
Feb. 2, 2011

A Momentous Meeting

Congress members Bobby Schilling, Tammy Baldwin and Host Don Manzullo attend a legislative briefing on the Rock River Trail at Rockford's Burpee Museum Complex, along with state and local legislators and staff, the Illinois and Wisconsin DNRs, and the Army Corp of Engineers.

Greg Farnham volunteers.

Living Lands & Water's Chad Pregacke donates 10,000 oak trees.
Rock River Trail Initiative AGAIN needs your help to distribute 10,000 free bur, swamp, white and red oak trees in the 11 counties of the Rock River!!!

- The trees will again be distributed in Rock Island, Henry, Whiteside, Lee, Ogle, Winnebago, Rock, Dane, Jefferson, Dodge and Fond du Lac counties.
- Half of the trees are slated for the public sector: city, county, state and national parks, preserves or conservation areas. The other 455 trees are slated for farms, commercial property and residences within sight of the Rock River.
- Sponsored by Living Lands and Waters, the City of Rockford, and Penske Rentals!
April 28, 2011
The Clock Tower Resort
Rockford, IL

2nd ANNUAL ROCK RIVER TRAIL CONFERENCE


- Trail Founder, Frank Schier, presented with “2011 Conservationist of the Year” award by United Sportmen’s Youth Foundation.

- Presentations on the Horicon Marsh, Lake Sinissippi, Rock River Coalition, Rockford Waterfront Plans, Belvidere Dam Options, River Buffer Techniques, Effigy Mound Inventory, Portage and Campsite Costs.
RRTI Letters of Support

WARP
Wausau Area Recreation Project

Anne Schiller
Rock River Trail Initiative
The Rock River Times
1327 N. Church Street
Racine, WI 53401

Mr. Schoettler

The Wausau Area Recreation Project understands the need for those involved with the Rock River Trail initiative. The proposed trail will highlight the beauty of the rock river and its significance to the communities which border it.

Wausau Area Recreation Project (WARP) is a grassroots, not-for-profit group founded to develop, promote, maintain the recreational, environmental, historical, aesthetic, and cultural asset created by the Rock River. WARP works in cooperation with the City of Wausau and surrounding communities. WARP’s goal is to unite all 60,000 residents. WARP has a Board of Directors, officers, executive director, and a membership drive. Over the past year WARP has held several small fundraisers and is building a membership drive in June 2011.

Wausau Area Recreation Project (WARP) has committed to the City of Wausau to help maintain this asset for the development and future maintenance of the City’s Hiking/Walking Path System. WARP has made a pledge to raise 25 percent of the total cost of this undertaking. Because WARP is fairly new, our initial support will gain momentum as the projects are developed.

Additional fundraisers are slated for 2011 and several people from the community have approached WARP to put on a large event such as a bike race, a Rock or hijack event in 2012. WARP, the Chamber of Commerce and the City of Wausau also collaborated to promote the June 1st Walk. The June 1st Walk event brought in several people who are interested in our program. The goal of June 1st walk is to increase bike traffic and visitors to the downtown area and surrounding communities. This City’s encouragement of a multi-purpose recreational trail which will begin within the City and link to the W68 Green State Trail and other trail systems along the River will have a positive impact economically. Many of WARP’s supporters are local businesses and community activists who see the benefit of a trail of this sort and will have.

In 2010, WARP, Chamber of Commerce, United Christian Rural Ministry, Wausau Rotary also promoted and looked part in the first annual Rock River Clean Sweep.

Some of WARP’s main concerns are:
- Rock River: riverfront, wetland, natural preservation and enhanced recreation
- Transportation: which will lead to the opportunity for new and existing businesses to prosper as a result of improved marketing & feasibility infrastructure
- Health of Wausau Area residents
- Opportunities for individuals and groups year-round recreational activities to foster a sense of community.

WARP anticipates the following benefits of the Rock River Trail initiative to the City of Wausau:

Economic Growth:
At the owner of a coffee/creamery shop in Wausau, I am excited to see something being done to bring in tourism. For too long we have sat idle instead of making something happen. WARP hopes to work with the City in developing a whole trail. Another such site is a boat launch & possible canoeing and picnicking will create a new arena for the County Park, adding value to the decor and increasing traffic to the weekends of town. WARP has identified the County Park as the location to site an outdoor aquatic center, disc golf, tennis and concession stand.

In addition to the benefits already mentioned, manufacturing & professional businesses will consider quality of life assets when considering where to site their future operations. More businesses increase the tax base and add to property owner’s and the school district.

Health: Benefits: Exercise such as walking, bicycling, etc., can help people from many chronic & life threatening conditions and increase their lives.

Environmental: dads: To preserve the Rock River through education and increased interest in the area will ensure that this natural resource is enjoyed for generations to come.

Education: People of all ages will gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Rock River’s significance in the development of communities along its shores. The proposed trail initiative will bring attention to the Native Americans who relied on the river for food and travel. It is important that this information be preserved and passed down to future generations.

WARP is glad to be a part of this initialed and we will be happy to work with the Rock River Trail initiative to make the area safer.

Respectfully,

Steve Caflisch
President, Wausau Area Recreation Project
City of Waupun
201 W Main Street
WALUPUN, WISCONSIN 53963
Phone: 920-324-9300
Fax: 920-324-7359

7/18/11

To Ward & Mary Conners

It was our pleasure to meet with Greg Farmer at our Tour de March wrap up meeting. After hearing about the Rock River Trail Initiative and reading about what the goals are of this initiative, Friends of Horicon Marsh International Education Center are happy to give our full support and encouragement to this project.

A trail such as this along the Rock River will be a big plus in the area of tourism for Wisconsin. An increase in visitors will help positively impact economic development for the state and this area in particular. This initiative lines up with our own goals and mission for the area.

Respectfully,

Linda Dowell-Hessbrger
Executive Director

July 18, 2011

Frank Salzer
Rock River Trail
128 North Church Street
Rockford, IL 61101

RFT: Rock River Trail

Dear Mr. Schier:

On June 28, 2010, the Waupun Committee of the Whole heard a presentation on the Rock River Trail from Greg Farmer to discuss recent efforts to establish a national trail designation for the Rock River Trail.

The City of Waupun fully supports your efforts to make this trail a reality. A national trail designation would not only be a great benefit to the City of Waupun but all of the communities and areas that surround the Rock River from it’s Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin headwaters to the mouth of the river in Rock Island, Illinois where it empties into the Mississippi River.

Thank you for your efforts with obtaining this designation.

Sincerely,

Jodi Steger
Mayor

Kyle J Clark
City Administrator
Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department
Administration Building
127 Lime Oak Street
Janesville, WI 53545

Phone: 920-386-3860  Fax: 920-386-3870  Email: jphill@co.dodge.wi.us

June 27, 2011

Frank Schier
Rock River Trail
128 North Church Street
Rockford, IL 61101

Subject: Rock River Trail

Dear Mr. Schier:

Earlier this year, I and Bill Ehlenbeck, Dodge County Manager of Parks and Trails, met with John de Loe, County’s Director of Planning and Parks, City of Waukesha’s Director of Public Works, two members of the Friends of the Dodge County Park, and Greg Furnham to discuss recent efforts to establish a national trail designation for the Rock River Trail.

A national trail designation would be a great benefit to all communities and areas that lie along the Rock River as it makes its way from its Grand Lacs County headwaters through the length of Dodge County and on to Rock Island where it empties into the Mississippi.

Bill Ehlenbeck, Manager of Parks and Trails, and I, as Director of Land Resources and Parks for Dodge County, are writing this letter to demonstrate our support for the Rock River Trail initiative to designate the Rock River Trail as a national trail. Thank you for your efforts in this endeavor and good luck in obtaining the designation.

Respectfully,

Joyce L. Phillips
Director Land Resources and Parks

Cc: Gregory Furnham

Lake Simnissippi Improvement District
PO Box 89
Hustisford, WI 53034

June 20, 2011

Frank Schier
Rock River Trail Initiative
The Rock River Times
128 N. Church Street
Rockford, IL 61101

Re: Rock River Trail Initiative

Dear Mr. Schier:

We are pleased to learn about efforts to establish through Wisconsin and Illinois a national Rock River Trail that will highlight the recreational, scenic and historic elements of the Rock River and the river corridor.

Lake Simnissippi is part of the Rock River waterway, just downstream from the Hocking Marsh. Our lake and the river are used by residents and tourists alike for enjoyment of scenic beauty and water-based recreational activities. And we value the historic connections of our area with Native American cultures and the early settlement of Dodge County. In 1846 a log dam and sawmill were built on the river in present-day Hustisford. Impoundment of the river caused it to spread across the wetland basin, forming the picturesque lake and wooded islands that we see today. The name “Simnissippi” is derived from an Algonquin phrase, “sin sepe,” which means “lake-like river.”

We support efforts of the organizers of the Rock River Trail Initiative to obtain designation of the Rock River as a national trail.

Sincerely,

James E. Gronowski
Chairman

A Wisconsin Public inland Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District Established by Dodge County
August 1, 2010

Winnebago County, Illinois

To the National Park Service and Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program Staff,

The Rockford Park District is an active and proud partner with the Rock River Trail. We look forward to future opportunities to enhance the trail.

Various staff members, our Deputy Director Ron Butler and Rock River Trail Founder Frank Schler have worked together to help establish the trail in our area. We have assisted with campsite design, cost estimates, and signage and shared our findings with the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District. We have also committed our involvement in the WinCIS mapping system to creating the first modern and satellite map of the Rock River. We are also updating a countywide hiking trails, canoeing and boating map, which will include the new elements of the Rock River Trail.

At a July 21, 2010 press conference, we announced the creation of new campsite at Sportscore I, 3286 Elway Road, and five new campsite at the district’s Rock River Greenway South Brookwater Road property. We also announced five new campsite on the Kishwaukee River. A news conference was held at our Andrew Outdoor Educational Center.

We have also examined the Fordam Dam in Rockford, and will offer our advice as to the elements of the safest passage route and its construction.

We look forward to our continued support of the Rock River Trail.

Tim O’Neill
Executive Director
Rockford Park District
Member of the Board, Director, Governor of Illinois Mississippi River Corridor Council
Office 815-397-6800 Cell 815-394-7530 Fax 815-395-3670
401 S. Main Street Suite 110 Rockford, Illinois 61104
http://www.rockfordparkdistrict.org

Please remember the water must always be kept clean. The information is the most current and accurate water to the individual or entity to whom it is addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the sender by return email. Close this email and delete any attachments or volume based on the information.
RRTI Letters of Support

Rock River Trails - USACE
Contacts (UNCLASSIFIED)

Russell, Stephen S MVR
To tran@wilk.com, Frehlich, Wendy I

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Contents: NONE

Frank,

The Corps can help the Rock River Trails project through the following authorizations:

Section 22 Planning Assistance to States
+ 50/50 cost share with a matching body for planning and other studies. First opportunity may occur in FY 12.

Section 206 Ecosystem Restoration
+ 65/35 cost share with a matching body for improving ecosystems in the watershed.

Rock River Feasibility Study
+ 50/50 cost share with a matching body for evaluating planning projects in the Rock River Watershed.

Recreational projects must be part of a flood control, ecosystem restoration, navigation project unless specially authorized.

Section 3 Snag or felled trees must also have special authorization not directly applicable to you problem.

FYI

This is what we sent to members of congress:

It was very good to meet you yesterday in Rockford. As I was taking notes I realized that there are other projects and causes
Dear Frank Schier,

On behalf of the Mississippi River Coordinating Council (MRCC), I would like to thank you for your presentation on the Rock River Trail at the May 11, 2011, MRCC meeting.

We had an informative agenda, and the Council members, as well as members of the public, enjoyed the opportunity to hear about the trail. We applaud your efforts and look forward to working with you in the future.

Thanks again for presenting to the council and to the members of the public who came to the meeting. Your knowledge and expertise are much appreciated.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

11. Governor Sheila Simon

July 6, 2011

To Whom it May Concern:

In 1998, at the age of 23, I started an organization called Living Lands & Waters, with the mission to aid in the protection, preservation, and restoration of the natural environment of our nation's major rivers and their watersheds to expand awareness of environmental issues and responsibility accompanying our rivers, and to create a desire and opportunity for citizens to take an active role in helping to make a cleaner river environment.

On behalf of LL&W and as a fellow conservationist, outdoorsman, and river steward, we fully support and admire your work, mission, and goals of the Rock River Trail.

Because of our mutual vision, LL&W contributed 10,000 native hardwood saplings to the Rock River Trail through our MillionTrees Project in the spring of 2011. These trees were evenly distributed to the 11 counties along the entire length of the river.

In 2012, we plan to continue this partnership and commit to providing 10,000 trees to the Rock River Trail once again with the hopes that they will be enjoyed by each community.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chad Pregracke, President & Founder

[Website: www.livinglandsandwaters.org]
River Action cleans up fast and impressively! In just about three hours, from 9 a.m. to a little past noon, the Quad Cities environmental group, River Action, cleaned out an entire quarter-mile slough, extending from the Mississippi to near the mouth of the Rock River. Formerly blocked by fallen trees and log jams, the slough just off Rock Island’s Sunset Park and Marina is now clear for canoeing and kayaking. Pictured are: front row, left to right: River Action Program Manager Dan McNeil, Leo McNeil, Walter Blackman, Chloe Kilty, and Frank Martin; back row, left to right: Tammy McDonald, Candice Vroman, Joe Weiltispach, Sarah McGlynn, Shawn Kilty, Dean Mathias, Jeff Leonard, and Rock River Trail Illinois Coordinator Dave Druen. The mission statement of River Action is as follows: “Dedicated to fostering the environmental, economic, and cultural vitality of the Mississippi and its riverfront.” The group has also established many area water trails, including one at the mouth of the Rock River, and worked on the portage around the Milan, Ill., Steel Dam and the Hennepin Canal on the Rock River. For more spring and summer fun information, go to www.riveraction.org. Upcoming events include: Fish & Fire Fundraiser—April 20, Earth Day Cleanup—April 21, Channel Cat Talks & Riverine Walks—June-August; Ride the River Father’s Day Bike Ride—June 17; and the BIG Floatzilla—Aug. 18. (Photo by Frank Schier)
Oregon Park District’s Erin Folk (pictured above right) and her maintenance crew received two warning signs, a launch and portage location signs for the dangerous Oregon Dam. (Photos by Debbie Thompson and Frank Schier). (Photos by Debbie Thompson and Frank Schier, courtesy of The Rock River Times)
Now in its 20th year, the Native Awareness Committee of Winnebago County hosts “Honor the Mounds” to celebrate the effigy mound group in Rockford's Beattie Park. The RRTI presents its efforts to preserve the river and its environs, while promoting responsible use of the river. As a large draw for tourism and showing a need for preservation and protection, an inventory is presented of the Native American effigy mounds along the entire Rock River.
Wisconsin sections of Rock River Trail declared open, Aug. 6-8, 2012

Horicon, Hustisford, Mayville, Theresa, Watertown and Janesville now have signs denoting those sections of the river as part of the Rock River Trail.

 Representatives from the National Park Service and the Wisconsin and Illinois Departments of Natural Resources have given their permission to erect sings denoting the trail.

 As sections of the trail are marked, maps are being made and the trail plan is being written, along with other requirements to submit an application for the formal designation as a national trail.

In the Village of Theresa, Village President George Marsh, Village Clerk/Treasurer Pam Koll and Rock River Trail Coordinator Greg Farnham open the East Branch of the Rock River.
Wisconsin sections of Rock River Trail declared open, Aug. 6-8, 2012

Mayville Parks Director Mike Kurutz, Mayville Alderperson Kathy Sertich, Mayville Mayor Jerry Moede and Farnham open the Mayville section of the trail.

Aug. 8, Rock River Trail Founder and Coordinator Frank Schier presented to Beloit’s Director of Parks & Leisure Services Brian Ramsey and Beloit’s Park, Recreation & Conservation Advisory Commission Chairperson Roger Christiansen riverside signs for a portage around the Beloit dam. The signs are gifts of the City of Rockford, which has made almost $5,000 in signs for the Rock River Trail. Special thanks to Mayor Morrissey and City of Rockford Director of Public Works Tim Hanson. The commission voted to accept the signs and write a letter of support. Thursday, Aug. 9, Schier made a presentation to the Village of Roscoe Public Works and Parks Committee asking for a letter of support. That proposal will move forward to the village board, and Village President David Krienke said the village will also erect Rock River Trail signs at Roscoe’s Riverside park for a canoe launch, boat launch and campsite area.
According to their website, River Action’s Floatzilla 2012 – the Quad Cities’ Third Annual paddlesports celebration – was held Saturday, Aug. 18. The event culminated with a Guinness World Record attempt to assemble the largest flotilla of kayaks and canoes on Lake Potter, part of Sunset Marina on the Mississippi. The record is 1,900 boats in one flotilla. River Action’s Project Manager Dan McNiel estimated the event may have gathered up to 1,600 boats, more than 100 more boats than last year. Photographs taken from a crane and plane are now being analyzed. Participants enjoyed a trade show, live music and food. The festival included camping, guided floats on the Quad Cities Water Trails and beginner-friendly paddling lessons and programs. River Action’s Executive Director Kathy Wine was very pleased and said she is looking forward to next year. For more information, call (563) 322-2969. (Photo by Frank Schier)
Besides the art tugboat, the Living Lands and Waters floatilla consists of two garbage barges in the foreground with the home barge in the background that has a classroom, dorm rooms, offices and crew quarters on board. Pregracke is a supporter of the arts and a real recycler. Artists from Chicago were on board, picking items out of the Mississippi refuse to create found art pieces. Pregracke pilots the barges on the Mississippi picking up all kinds of refuse and running educational programs on the environment.
Northern Illinois University held a brainstorming session for wider community involvement and appreciation for the Historic “Eagle’s Nest” Lorado Taft Campus at Lowden State Park, across the river from Oregon, Illinois.
The Rock Falls section of the Rock River Water Trail opened Thursday, Sept. 13, in Illinois.

The Rock Falls section of the Rock River Trail Water Trail opened at the Jim Arduini Boat Launch next to the Upper Dam and Hennepin Feeder Canal. Diane S. Bausman, executive director, Blackhawk Waterways Convention and Visitors Bureau; John Larson, scoutmaster, Rock Falls Boy Scout Troop 902; Julie Jacobs, administrative coordinator, Black Hawk Hills Regional Council; Mayor David Blanton, City of Rock Falls; David Schreiber, SAA Design Group and member of the Rock River Trail Initiative Council; Cathy Brunner, executive director, Rock Falls Tourism; Michael Sterba, director of Parks & Recreation, Coloma Township Park District.
In late August and early September 2012 the final draft of the Rock River Water Trail Plan was submitted to the Wisconsin and Illinois DNRs for approval and released on the Rock River Trail website.
Rock River Trail Initiative invited to join Janesville’s Brownfield Committee, which agrees to set up the first two RRTI water testing sites on the Rock River and the Rock County Health Department gives a $2,500 grant for RRTI signs in Rock County.
STATE OF ILLINOIS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
97TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 97
OFFERED BY REPRESENTATIVES DAVE WINTERS-PATRICK J. VERSCHEUREN

WHEREAS, The Rock River, known for its beauty and ecological importance, flows south through Rockford, then southwest across northwestern Illinois, passing Oregon, Dixon, Sterling, and Rock Falls before joining the Mississippi River at Rock Island; and

WHEREAS, The Rock River provides opportunities for conservation and recreation for many residents of this State; and

WHEREAS, The Rock River has had an important role in Illinois history, and it attracts many tourists each year to such spots as the area in Dixon where former President Ronald Reagan once served as a lifeguard and his favorite fishing spot, now called "Dutch Landing," located just southwest of Lowell Park; and

WHEREAS, Designating the roads along the Illinois portion of the Rock River as a Scenic Route will encourage residents and visitors alike to explore, appreciate, and enjoy the many wonders of the Rock River; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE SENATE CONCURRING HEREBIN, that the Rock River Scenic Route is designated as follows:

(1) from the Illinois-Wisconsin State Line at Shirk Avenue, along South Bluff Road in Rockton Township to Rockton Road on County Highway 9;
(2) along Rockton Road from South Bluff Road to Race Street in Rockton;
(3) along Race Street from Rockton Road to Main Street in Rockton;
(4) along Main Street from Race Street to Hononegah Road (County Highway 8);
(5) along Hononegah Road from Main Street to Illinois Route 231;
(6) along Illinois Route 231 from Hononegah Road to State Street in Rockford;
(7) along State Street from Illinois 231 to Illinois Route 2;
(8) along Illinois Route 2 from State Street through the remainder of Winnebago County and through Ogle County into Lee County to Palm Bay Road;
(9) along Palm Bay Road from Illinois Route 2 (east) to old Illinois Route 2 (west) in Whiteside County;
(10) along old Illinois Route 2 through the remainder of Whiteside County into Rock Island County to Interstate 88;
(11) along Interstate 88 to Illinois Route 5 in Rock Island County; and
(12) along Illinois Route 5 to US 67 in the City of Rock Island in Rock Island County; and be it

RESOLVED, That the Illinois Department of Transportation and units of local government that maintain any portion of the Rock River Scenic Route are urged to erect at suitable locations on their respective portions of the route, consistent with State and federal regulations, plaques or signs giving notice of the name; and be it

RESOLVED, That units of local government that maintain any portion of the Rock River Scenic Route are urged to enhance suitable areas along the route; and be it

RESOLVED, That the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the Illinois Bureau of Tourism are requested to post the Rock River Scenic Route's location on their Agency websites, and to produce and distribute brochures and other related matter that will make the route known to the public; and be it

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be delivered to the Illinois Secretary of Transportation, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism, and to each of the local governments having jurisdiction over any portion of the route.

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON MAY 3, 2011.

CONCURED IN BY THE SENATE ON MAY 31, 2011.

Mark Wiosecky
Speaker of the House

Michael J. Madigan
Speaker of the House

Pamela M. Babcock
Secretary of the Senate

John J. Cullerton
President of the Senate
Kiosks and kayak/canoe carts at every dam

Informational
3-panelled kiosks with:
- You Are Here
- Grocery stores, pharmacies, B&Bs, tourist attractions, etc.
- Launch instruction for below the dam as to the proper channel

Canoe cart rentals:
- for longer urban portages and/or heavy gear loads
Planning: “Hike it. Bike it.” and building in the gaps!!!

October Speaker Meeting

Frank Shier and the Rock River Trail
Frank is editor of the Rock River Times and an active promoter of the Rock River headwaters above Hanson to its terminus at the Mississippi. Gain a new perspective on bike trails, auto trails and more trails.

When: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, October 25
Where: Jobs Center - 1900 Center Avenue, Janesville

Mocha Moment RTC Fundraiser - This Sunday, October 24
Steve Dean and the crew at Mocha Moment, 1211 Center Avenue in Janesville will host their annual Rock Trail Coalition fundraiser this Sunday from 7:30 to 11:30. All funds collected during this four hour period will be donated to the Rock Trail Coalition for the complete of the Pea Pick Trail towards Beloit. Stop by and have a cup of coffee and a pastry in Beloit Janesville trail.

Just in case you missed it, 9/27/12

Reply ▼ Diane_Banta@nps.gov

-> "BEST PRACTICES FOR BICYCLE TRAIL PAVEMENT CONSTRUCTION AND . . . "

"...Maintenance In Illinois," report by Simpson, Buttlar & Dempsey (Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign); for Illinois Center for Transportation; Research Report FHWA-ICT-12-009; report of the findings of ICT-R27-SP18 Developing Best Practices for Bicycle Trail Pavement Construction and Maintenance in Illinois. June 2012 (general info & link to 6.4 MB pdf) http://1.usa.gov/OJZBiB

Diane E. Banta
National Park Service
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance
Jefferson Street Bridge

Rock River Trail signs were erected on Rockford’s Jefferson and Chestnut Street bridges Wednesday, Oct. 3, and the opening ceremony of the Dixon Section of the Rock River Water Trail is Friday, Oct. 12, at 1 p.m. The 4-by-8-feet signs warning kayakers and canoeists to move to the east shore of the river to portage the Fordham Dam were installed by Rock River Enterprises and Barge, Inc.

From left, Deckhand Rob Buchanan and Rock River Enterprises and Barge, Inc. owner Steve Lucas survey their work Wednesday, Oct. 3, at the Jefferson Street bridge. The 4-by-8-feet sign warns kayakers and canoeists to move to the east shore of the river to portage the Fordham Dam. (Photo by Frank Schier)
Dixon Section of RRWT opened Oct 12, 2012, Dam Signs posted in Rockford Oct 16, 2012

Rock River Trail happenings

Oct. 12, another section of the Rock River Trail was opened in Dixon in front of Leonard Cronelle’s 1930 statue of 23-year-old Abraham Lincoln in the Black Hawk Indian War of 1832 — the only known statue of Lincoln in uniform and beardless. From left: Dixon Mayor Jan Burke, RRTI Coordinator Greg Farnham, cutting the ribbon; IDNR Grand Illinois Trail Coordinator & Acting Region 1 Landscape Architect George Bellows, IDNR Greenways and Trails Outreach Coordinator Amy Madigan, with RRTI Council Member and Artist Debbie Thompson, RRTI Founder Frank Schier, and Dixon Park District Executive Director Debra Carey. Thompson has paddled her canoe in the foreground more than 1,000 miles.

Exemplifying great public service and safety, a 4-by-8 sign giving Rockford Park District phone numbers for transport around the Fordham Dam was installed last week at the Prairie Street Brewhouse and Riverview Ice House boat launch. Portaging the dam is dangerous because of construction staging for the Morgan Street bridge project.

Photos by Mike Wercinski

Photo by Josh Albrecht
Economic Impact of Recreation in the Rock River Basin

1.8 million people visited state parks in 2000
$21.5 million in economic outputs
$8.1 million in personal income
400 local jobs
17,000 recreational boats registered in Winnebago and Ogle Counties
27,000 fishing licenses
8,000 hunting licenses

Illinois Department of Natural Resources 2000

For every state tax dollar invested in tourism grants in 2008 and 2009, the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity reported in 2010, $10 and $9 respectively were the returns on investment (ROI).
Friday, Sept. 28
Track 1: Make Room for the River in Your Life
Four Trails in One:
1: Drive It. 2: Hike It. 3: Bike It. 4: Kayak It. Canoe it.

Rock River Trail Initiative
Frank Schier, founder & coordinator

Thank you!
October 9, 2012

Ms. Cortina Waters
National Park Service
National Water Trails System Coordinator
National Park Service
1201 Eye St, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Waters:

On behalf of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and as Illinois’ State Trail Administrator, I want to express my support for the designation of the Rock River Water Trail as National Water Trail.

The trail will have many benefits, including community-based recreation, public access, tourism, economic growth, public health, and environmental education. IDNR fully supports the Rock River Trail Initiative’s application for National Water Trail designation.

The 300-mile recreational trail connects the headwaters in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin to the mighty Mississippi River at the Quad Cities of Illinois and Iowa. This scenic trail conveys the natural beauty of the Rock River basin and traverses other scenic trails including the Grand Illinois Trail and Heron’s Head Canal State Trail in Illinois and the Glacial Drumlin State Trail and Ice Age National Scenic Trail in Wisconsin. It restores the historic connection the river has to the communities it passes through and encourages visitors to appreciate it as an entire experience.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Amy L. Madigan
Outreach Coordinator
Greenways & Trails Section
September 27, 2012

National Water Trails Selection Committee
via Cecilia Waters,
National Water Trails System Coordinator
National Park Service
1201 E Street SW
9th Floor
Washington D.C. 20004

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Wisconsin State Trails Program I would like to express support for designation of the Rock River Water Trail as a National Water Trail.

The Rock River Water Trail (RRWT) project area covers the 360-mile river course from the headwaters in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois. Multiple paddling opportunities throughout the length of the trail; demonstrated community support, including local resolutions, development of access ideas, and installation of signage; and ongoing promotion of the trail by the Rock River Trail Initiative and its partners make this an excellent candidate for National Water Trail designation.

The State of Wisconsin has provided support for this project, and although the majority of the work has been done by local citizens, we will continue in our advisory capacity to ensure that it remains a collaborative effort which includes public input and maintains a clear vision for the project.

We are especially pleased with the demonstrated local support from communities along the trail route, as evidenced by the many resolutions of support, participation on committees, and events such as access point openings and official designations as part of the RRWT route by local units of government and private citizens. With multiple benefits locally, and as an important recreational and educational destination, the RRWT is certainly a fine example of what can be accomplished through partnerships.

We feel the RRWT is a worthy project offering unique opportunities for recreational paddling trail users of all skill levels. We also appreciate that this trail will provide connections to Wisconsin’s State Trail System, which offers recreationalists and commuters trail experiences throughout Wisconsin.

With a comprehensive RRWT trail plan currently out for public review and a growing cadre of public information about the trail, the RRWT is a project that the public has every opportunity to embrace. And, by all accounts of which I am aware, they are doing so. Support for the trail has been growing steadily, and I am happy to back its nomination for the inaugural round of National Water Trail selection.

Thank you for your consideration of the Rock River Water Trail for National Water Trail designation.

Naturally WISCONSIN
National Water Trails System

Application

SECTION 1: TRAIL INFORMATION

BASIC WATER TRAIL INFORMATION

Water trail name
ROCK RIVER WATER TRAIL

Water trail location
Briefly describe the physical location of your water trail, particularly in relation to landmarks.

From headwaters above the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in south central Wisconsin to the confluence with the Mississippi River at the Quad Cities of Illinois and Iowa.

Directions to water trail
Provide description and latitude/longitude for access points, portages, locks and dams. Example: “From Springfields, take SR 885 west for 6 miles to park entrance. Many access points in River City Marina Park launch (River Mile 94.8, 8844 deg N, -73.8672 deg W), Waterfront Park (River Mile 440, 8773 deg N, -73.8690 deg W),…”

Description and GPS coordinates for 155 access points and 22 dams and portages, as well as highways within the river corridor, are given in the Rock River Water Trail Inventory. Analysis and Plan and maps appended to this application.

City(ies)/Township(s) crossed by the water trail
Eleven counties and 37 municipalities in two states are given in maps in the Rock River Water Trail Plan.

State(s)
Wisconsin and Illinois

Congressional District(s)
WI 1, 2, 5 and 6  IL 14, 16 and 17

Existing water trail website (specifically for this water trail)
www.rockrivertrail.com
Rock River Trail gains National Water Trails status! April 4, 2013

United States Department of the Interior

In recognition of achievements by the Rock River Trail Initiative and Lake Sinissippi Improvement District hereby designates the Rock River Water Trail

as a NATIONAL WATER TRAIL in the National Water Trails System

Authorized by the National Trails System Act, National Recreation Trails and Secretary’s Order No. 2109

Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior

J. Rebecca Blank
Superintendent, National Park Service

the 11th day of March, 2013
Governor Walker Signs the Bill Designating TRRT Scenic and Historic Route in Wisconsin – July 5, 2013

(left to right) Greg Farnham, Kelley Flury, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, Cindy Block, and Rep. John Jagler
The Bill Designating TRRT Scenic and Historic Route in Illinois passes both houses—April 20, 2013

Dec 4, 2013 Governor Pat Quinn autographs the road sign, (left to right) Quinn's assistant Amanda Sutton and Greg Farnham display it in front of the governor's office.
The Rock River Trail
Along the Rock River in Wisconsin and Illinois

A River of Opportunities for All Interests! Drive it. Hike it. Bike it. Kayak it. Canoe it.

Begin your journey at www.rockrivertrail.com for maps and information on:

- **Rock River Water Trail**
  The first National Water Trail in Wisconsin and Illinois to be designated by the US Department of the Interior.

- **Rock River Trail Scenic and Historic Route**
  Established by state legislation, the 320-mile auto route through eleven counties in two states provides the traveler with access to the scenic beauty, natural resources and historic and cultural assets of the Rock River Valley.

- **Rock River Trail Bike Route**
  A designated on-road and off-road bike route along the river with hiking opportunities for the outdoors recreationist.

www.rockrivertrail.com
Dream BIG Conceptualization:
Statues of John Deere and Black Hawk as monuments at the mouth of the Rock River
Conservation Challenges

2030 GOAL: The Rock River is the cleanest major tributary to the Mississippi River.

- Strict monitoring and enforcement actions with stringent water quality standards for municipal waste treatment plants for sewage and storm runoff—the recent problems at the South Beloit treatment plant is a case in point.

- Very significant fines for known point pollution and toxic spills must occur. The largest fish kill in the history of the state occurred on the Kishwaukee River coinciding with a 60,000 gallon ethanol spill by from a Canadian National Railway derailment in 2009, and killed by very conservative estimates at least 72,000 fish valued at $272,000. Tracks and crossing near waterway must be strictly inspected and maintained.

- In 2012, Environment Illinois stated: “Of the dozen waterways ranked highest in the nation for toxic discharges, four are in Illinois: The Ohio River ranked first in the nation with over 31 million pounds, the Mississippi ranked third with over 12.7 million pounds, and the Illinois and Rock Rivers ranked 11th and 12th, respectively.”

- Environment Illinois states: “Tyson Fresh Meats released 3 million pounds of toxic chemical waste into the Rock River, a Mississippi tributary, in 2007, ranking it Illinois’s largest reported polluter of toxic chemicals in 2007—and the twelfth largest nationally.” Missouri-based Triumph Foods should not be allowed to build its proposed hog processing plant on the Rock River in East Moline. It is clearly adjacent to, if not right on top of wetlands and definitely on the shore of the Rock River.

- Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) legislation needs to be coordinated with both the Wisconsin and Illinois legislatures, with a permit process that eliminates the “rubber stamp” syndrome.

- For all of the points above, with strict and low maximum daily load standards, pollution permits should not be issued. Fines should focus on costs and requirements to structurally eliminate the pollution.

- Nitrogen and phosphorus runoff create algae blooms, growing from the source of the Rock River above the Horicon Marsh to the ever-expanding dead zone at the mouth of the Mississippi in our battered gulf. Buffer strips, rain gardens, rain barrels, bioswales should be required in new conservation design building codes and agricultural easements for all cities and counties on the river.

- New four-stroke boat engines (or electric motors) should be required by 2021, finally meeting the 2006 EPA mandated requirements.

- Citizen monitor stations every five miles of the 287 miles of Rock River would only mean 57 stations.

- Eco-tourism and “staycations” offer economic development that is already providing new businesses and jobs, while preserving and protecting the environment of the Rock River and its tributaries. Nobody wants to swim or paddle in dirty water. Just like the EPA has ordered the cleanup of the Chicago River, we should make our own mandate for a sparkling Rock River. In Winnebago County alone, our Convention and Visitor’s Bureau President and CEO John Groh tells us that 3,000 jobs, $300 million in business and $5 million in taxes comes from tourism each year. We have 175 parks in our city and 44 forest preserves in our county. Yet our major asset, the Rock River remains underdeveloped, largely unprotected, and unappreciated by too many deprived of the not-so-secret beauty of its scenery, history and recreation that waits on the roads, paths, timelessness, water and good old fashioned fun of the Rock River Trail.