



The Heritage Initiative



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Media Contacts:

Jill Shannon, St. Croix Valley Foundation: 715.386.9490, jshannon@scvfoundation.org

Myron Schuster, Northwest Regional Planning Commission: 715-635-2197, mschuster@nwrpc.com

Coordinating Entity Selected for Potential National Heritage Area in St. Croix River Region

Northwest Regional Planning Commission chosen to facilitate partnership

Hudson, Wisconsin — The St. Croix Valley Foundation is pleased to announce that the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) has been selected to serve as the Coordinating Entity for a proposed National Heritage Area in the St. Croix River region of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The NWRPC is a multi-county venture formed in 1959 and operating in 10 counties and five tribal nations of northwestern Wisconsin. As the Coordinating Entity of a possible National Heritage Area (NHA), the NWRPC would work with local partners on the creation and implementation of a long-range plan for a Heritage Area.

“NWRPC has the experience and relationship-building skills needed to ensure a successful community effort,” said Jill Shannon, director of community partnerships at the Foundation, which has facilitated the Heritage Initiative to this point. “This experience will strengthen our region’s reputation nationally and internationally as a National Heritage Area.”

The selection of a future Coordinating Entity is a key milestone in the process to seek designation of the region as a National Heritage Area. The St. Croix Valley Foundation is now finalizing a written Feasibility Study and its public review, which will happen in early 2014. NWRPC is assisting that process and will take the reins when completed.

“With a region so rich in heritage resources and values, there are a lot of people, businesses and organizations involved in heritage activities,” said Myron Schuster, NWRPC executive director. “We look forward to reinforcing these local efforts in a coordinated fashion, and seamlessly melding these efforts under the umbrella of a future National Heritage Area.

As Coordinating Entity, NWRPC’s job will be to bring voluntary partners together to plan and implement regional projects that will create a climate of sustainable economic development built on

the region's shared heritage. It will also seek to create awareness and interest in the region's culture and heritage among residents and tourists by working with its local partners.

"NWRPC stands out because of its track record of economic development," said Marty Harding, chair of the Heritage Initiative task force. "They are well-positioned to support small business growth, while also increasing the understanding of our region's special historic, natural and recreational qualities to visitors and residents alike."

The Heritage Initiative task force, made up of volunteer members throughout the region, has been leading a public engagement process for the past two years to determine if there is regional support for heritage area designation. This process included three rounds of public meetings, to collect stories, identify historic, cultural and natural resources and consult with experts in history and culture. At the Heritage Summit in May of 2013, participants gave enthusiastic support for future designation. Completing a written Feasibility Study and selecting a coordinating entity were the next steps coming out of that gathering..

There are currently 49 National Heritage Areas in the United States, though there are none in either Minnesota or Wisconsin. Heritage Areas celebrate places with important connections to our country's culture and history.

Learn more about the Heritage Initiative at www.stcroixheritage.org. Visit the Northwest Regional Planning Commission's website at <http://nwrpc.com/>.

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The Heritage Initiative seeks to explore our communities in the St. Croix River region and their contributions to the American story. The Initiative is facilitated by the St. Croix Valley Foundation and led by a task force of interested citizens from throughout the region. Contact Jill Shannon at the St. Croix Valley Foundation at 715-386-9490 or jshannon@scvfoundation.org