

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

Wisconsin, Minnesota

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



2026

St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers Comprehensive River Management Plan





A Guide to This Document

PART I: COMPREHENSIVE RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

This comprehensive river management plan sets the framework for the National Park Service to manage the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. This plan is organized into four chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Background**—Describes the purpose and need for the plan, project area, issues and opportunities addressed, public involvement, and relationship to other planning efforts. This chapter also provides information on the river setting and baseline resource conditions.
- **Chapter 2: Management Direction**—Outlines the general management direction for the park, including desired conditions and management areas. Desired conditions are defined as statements of aspiration that describe resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that an agency strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area.
- **Chapter 3: Management Strategies and Actions**—Identifies management strategies and actions to achieve and maintain desired conditions for the park.
- **Chapter 4: Monitoring**—Identifies a monitoring strategy to measure conditions overtime and evaluate the effectiveness of management actions in achieving and maintaining desired conditions. Identifies the maximum amounts and types of use that the Riverway can accommodate while achieving and maintaining desired resource conditions, visitor experiences, and river values.
- **Chapter 5: Visitor Capacity**—Identifies visitor capacity, which satisfies the legal requirement described in the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the requirements of the 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act (54 US Code 100502) to identify visitor capacity for all areas that this planning effort addresses.

Visitor capacity identification also achieves the goals of identifying user capacities as described in the Interagency Wild and Scenic River Coordinating Council's Comprehensive River Management Planning Process guidelines.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) pathway for this plan falls under categorical exclusion 3.3.B.5: Approval of land management plans where implementation will only result in minor construction activities and resultant increased operation and maintenance activities. Consultation and coordination with appropriate authorities will be conducted with the release of this plan. Further compliance may be needed for site specific actions as design details are finalized.

APPENDIXES

The appendixes provide supporting information, analyses, and management resources for the comprehensive river management plan:

- **Appendix A:** Bibliography
- **Appendix B:** Acronyms
- **Appendix C:** Background Information on St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
- **Appendix D:** Relationship of this Plan to Other Actions and Planning Efforts
- **Appendix E:** Management Actions and Strategies Considered and Removed from Further Consideration

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Chapter 1: Background

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the framework for the entire document – providing foundational information about the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (Riverway) and the content included in this Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP).

It begins with a brief overview of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, describing the Riverway’s legislative history and outlining protections under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The chapter then describes the project area and defines the purpose of why the plan is being prepared and what needs it must address.

Additional contextual information is provided describing the designations and classifications of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and boundary information pertaining to the implementation of the plan. Baseline resource conditions follow, summarizing the characteristics and values for which the Riverway was designated.

The chapter then reviews past planning efforts that informed the development and implementation of the plan. A brief overview of the responsibilities and authorities of various agencies relative to activities within the wild and scenic river corridor follows. The chapter concludes with a summary of the issues and opportunities facing St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and articulates those addressed in the plan.

ABOUT THE ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is a unit of the national park system administered by the National Park Service (NPS). In 1968, Congress established the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, which at that time included the Upper St. Croix River (from Gordon, Wisconsin to Taylors Falls, Minnesota) and the Namekagon River, as one of the original eight rivers and tributaries protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA). The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created

by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Detailed information about the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers System can be found at <https://www.rivers.gov>.

In 1972, Congress added the Lower St. Croix River to the national wild and scenic rivers system; the 27 miles from Taylor Falls, Minnesota downstream to just north of Stillwater, Minnesota were added to St. Croix National Scenic Riverway as a federally administered area. This paved the way for designating the last 25 miles of the Lower St. Croix River as a state-administered wild and scenic river upon request from the governors of Minnesota and Wisconsin in 1976 (NPS 2017). The states of Minnesota and Wisconsin, in coordination with the National Park Service, developed and adopted the *Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan* (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service 2002) and initiated a management and development program for the lands and waters along this segment of the riverway (Kleppe 1976, NPS 2017, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, et al., 2002). This management structure is a unique arrangement for a state-administered river.

In this document, use of “Upper St. Croix River” or “Upper St. Croix” refers to the section of the St. Croix River from Lake Gordon to the dam at St. Croix Falls/

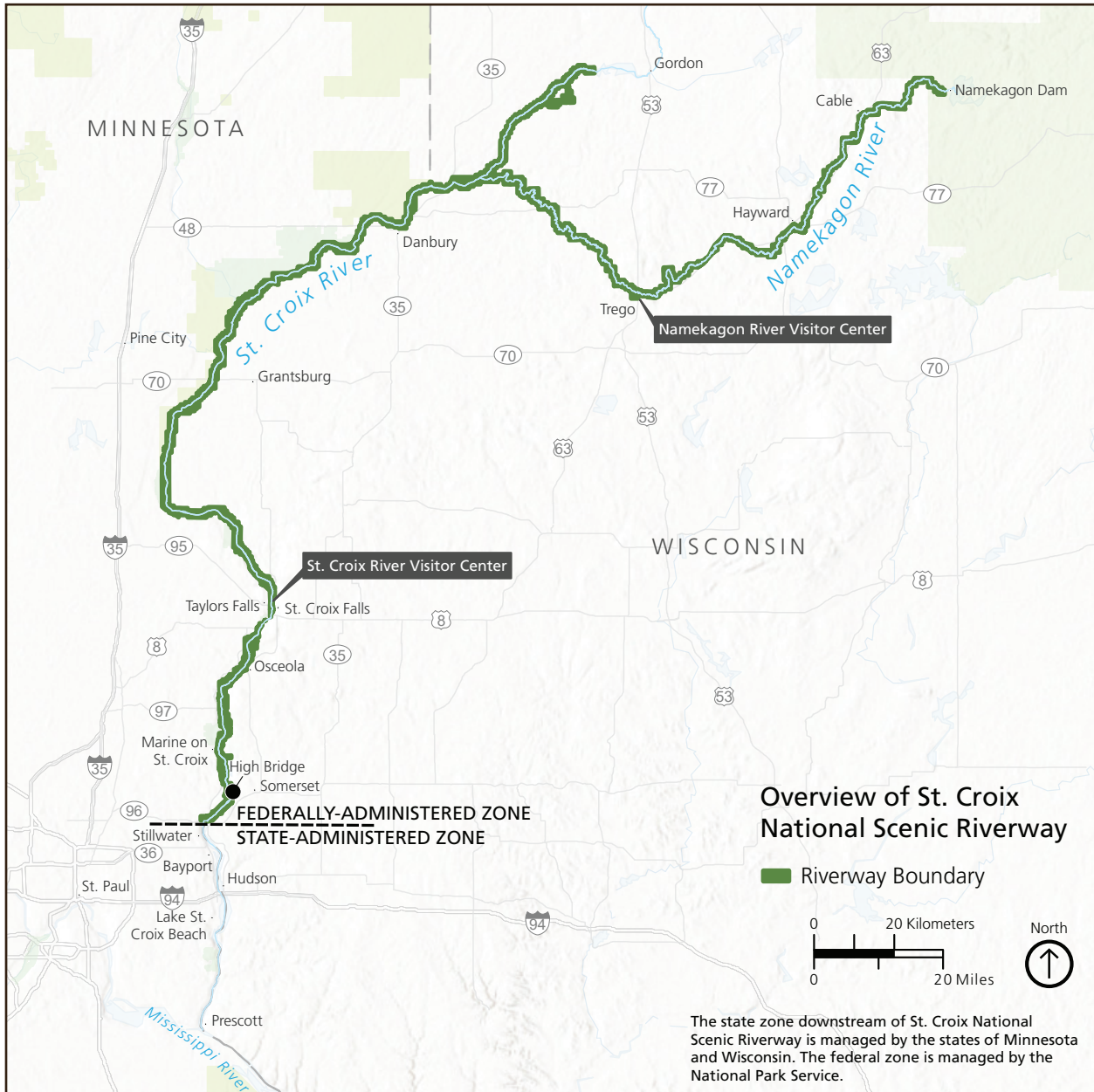
Taylor Falls. Use of “Lower St. Croix River” or “Lower St. Croix” refer to the section of the St. Croix River from the dam at St. Croix Falls/Taylor Falls to the confluence with the Mississippi River at Prescott/Point Douglas.

The NPS manages 203 miles of the Upper St. Croix River (in Wisconsin and on the Minnesota/Wisconsin border) and the Namekagon River (in Wisconsin), and the upper 27 miles of the Lower St. Croix, as well as adjacent land along the rivers, totaling a 230 river-miles-long park unit (also referred to as the “federally administered zone”). The federally administered zone includes the following geographic areas:

- **Upper Riverway:** The Namekagon River and the section of the St. Croix from Lake Gordon downstream to the dam in St. Croix Falls/Taylor Falls, and adjacent lands along the rivers
- **Lower Riverway:** The section of the St. Croix River from the dam in St. Croix Falls/Taylor Falls downstream to the state zone/federal zone line (see figure 1) near the Boom Site at the northern city limits of Stillwater, Minnesota, and adjacent lands along the rivers.

The last 25 miles of the Lower St. Croix, from Stillwater to the confluence with the Mississippi River are administered by the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin (also referred to as the “state-administered zone”). The boundary between the federally administered zone and the state-administered zone is near the Boom Site at the northern city limits of Stillwater, Minnesota (figure 1). While the NPS

Figure 1. Overview of St. Croix National Scenic Riverway



is not engaged in day-to-day management in the lower 25 miles of the Lower St. Croix, the National Park Service is responsible for evaluating and making determinations on federally assisted water resources projects proposed in the state-administered zone under the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The purpose of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is to preserve, protect, and enhance the values of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers and their immediate environment for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations (NPS 2017). The Riverway's free-flowing condition, water quality, aquatic resources (particularly freshwater mussel and fish biodiversity), cultural resources evidencing human occupation of the area that stretches back at least 12,000 years, iconic geology and glacial potholes, recreation opportunities, riparian resources high in biodiversity, scenic-aesthetic values, and rare upland habitats which contribute to the Riverway's scenic and ecological diversity and significance are all fundamental resources and values of the park. Two national historic landmarks are within the Riverway boundary; the St. Croix Boom Site, designated in 1966, and St. Croix State Park, designated in 1997. Both sites are located on land owned and managed by the state of Minnesota. The protection of these resources relies on partnerships (NPS 2017).

The Riverway watershed includes two rivers that are listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory – Sand Creek and Lower Tamarack River. The Nationwide Rivers Inventory lists free-flowing river segments in the U.S. that are believed to possess one or more “outstandingly remarkable” natural or cultural values judged to be of regional significance.

BASELINE RESOURCE CONDITIONS

Baseline resource conditions are those conditions that existed in the year the Wild and Scenic River was designated. They include information on the free-flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs). Baseline resource conditions can be used comparatively with current resource conditions to identify trends or changes since the time of designation, and they can provide a basis for developing desired conditions in planning and management actions (IWSRCC 2018). The baseline resource conditions of the characteristics and values for which the Riverway was designated, summarized in this section, were used to develop the plan's management philosophy; desired conditions; management areas; management strategies and actions; and indicators, thresholds, and triggers for monitoring and visitor capacity. Complete descriptions of the wild and scenic river values can be found in the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Foundation Document (2017).

Free-Flowing Condition

The free-flowing condition of a river is defined by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act Section 16(b), as: “...Free-flowing, as applied to any river or section of a river means existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modifications of the waterway.” The St. Croix River and Namekagon River are the longest scenic riverways east of the Mississippi River. Despite the influence of hydroelectric dams, existing instream structures, remnant logging embankments, and legacy wing walls that once

supported more extensive navigation in the river, the St. Croix River remains one of the last undeveloped, large floodplain rivers in the upper Mississippi system. From the outlet of Lake Namekagon to its confluence with the Mississippi River, the Riverway flows freely throughout most of its reaches (NPS 2017).

The designation as a Wild and Scenic River “shall not be construed as a reservation of the waters of such streams for purposes other than those specified in the [Wild and Scenic Rivers] Act, or in quantities greater than necessary to accomplish these purposes” (Section 13(c)). The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act permits the reservation of federal water rights to some, or all the instream flows as necessary to protect and enhance river values. Flow conditions may change as entities look to the abundant water resources of the Riverway to resolve their water shortage issues, but currently, levels are supportive of river values (NPS 2017).

Water Quality Conditions

Section 1(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act explicitly directs as part of the congressional declaration of policy the protection of water quality in designated rivers. The St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers have excellent water quality throughout their reaches, having received the distinction of “Outstanding Resource Waters” in both Wisconsin and Minnesota. The exceptional water quality supports a diversity of aquatic biota. More than 40 freshwater mussel species, five of which are on the endangered species list, filter water and cycle aquatic nutrients. The Riverway is one of the greatest assemblages of these sensitive aquatic organisms in the United States. A rare example of an intact

river-dependent group of animals, all the mussel species that existed in the corridor before European settlement are present there today (NPS 2017). Water quality conditions are further described in the appendix C of the Riverway’s foundation document (NPS 2017).

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Rivers designated as wild and scenic must have at least one outstandingly remarkable value. These outstandingly remarkable values may include one or more of the following: “scenic, recreational geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values” (Section 1(b)). Designated segments of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers contain aquatic, cultural, recreational, riparian, scenic-aesthetic, and geologic values. Developing an ORV statement is the first step in developing a comprehensive river management plan, and these ORV statements and definitions were initially developed in 2014 and reaffirmed during the creation of the Riverway’s Foundation Document (2017). Outstandingly remarkable values are river-related, contribute to the function of the ecosystem, and/or owe their location or existence to the river—they are among the resources that make the river worthy of designation. Outstandingly remarkable values must also be rare, unique, or exemplary at a regional or national scale. The Riverway engages with Tribal Nations to listen, learn, and work together to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values of mutual interest. See the Riverway’s foundation document at <https://www.nps.gov/sacn/learn/management/foundation-document.htm> for a fuller description of the segments and the ORV categories that they contain.

COMPREHENSIVE RIVER MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Federal agencies administering wild and scenic rivers are required to prepare a comprehensive river management plan for the protection of river values, the development of lands and facilities, user capacities, and other management practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purposes of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The CRMP evaluates and addresses key issues and opportunities and describes the planning actions the NPS will employ to protect and enhance river values. In addition, this plan addresses the statutory requirements for the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 USC 1274(d)(l) and 1281(a)). Director's Order 46 states that each river's CRMP will include, at a minimum, those provisions stipulated in sections 3(d)(l) and I0(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act that outline comprehensive plan requirements. Each CRMP shall provide for the protection of river values and address:

- Resource protection
- Development of lands and facilities
- User capacities (also referred to as visitor capacity)
- Other management practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purpose of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

No federal register notification is required due to the date of riverway establishment (1968).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PLAN

The purpose of this CRMP is to establish an overall management direction to protect and enhance the values for which the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway was designated as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and a unit of the national park system administered by the National Park Service. The CRMP provides a structured framework for NPS management decisions to proactively protect and enhance outstandingly remarkable values. This plan also outlines a commercial services approach that addresses diverse recreational needs in a manner consistent with WSRA anti-degradation and enhancement policies.

The CRMP would ensure the agency's trust responsibilities and commitment to consult with Tribal Nations are being honored and met. Tribal Nations' inherent treaty rights and the Riverway's trust responsibilities to Tribes will remain unchanged. Nothing in this plan is intended to abrogate, alter, or affect Tribal Nations' reserved treaty rights within the Riverway.

The CRMP is needed to:

- Identify desired conditions, user capacities, monitoring and data needs, land and facility development protocols, communication goals, and other management strategies necessary for protecting and enhancing river values and meeting other mandates of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- Enhance the visitor experience, establish amounts and types of recreational use, and ensure resource

protection through capacities, indicators and thresholds, and goals for accessibility through compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act/Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards.

- Outline the types and levels of facility and infrastructure development and management that are compatible with river conditions.
- Project a clear NPS identity with consistent stewardship best practices within the Riverway.
- Establish and maintain productive, positive relationships with Tribal Nations, stakeholders, and partners through proactive communication, engagement, and shared goals.

PROJECT AREA

This CRMP was prepared for St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, which encompasses the federally administered area on the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers.

This CRMP is not applicable to the state-administered zone of the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, which is managed according to the 2002 Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Cooperative Management Plan.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following section describes the issues and opportunities that were identified as priority topics for the Riverway through the planning process, which included analysis of

previous planning documents. Management strategies and actions contained within the CRMP seek to address issues related to visitor use and experience and to protect and enhance the Riverway's ORVs (aquatic, cultural, recreational, riparian, scenic-aesthetic, and geologic).

Visitor use and experience is further broken down into the following issues:

- User Conflicts
- Visitor Behavior
- Commercial Service Guidance
- Camping Management

The actions presented in this plan primarily focus on resolving identified issues related to visitor use and experience. The associated compliance document will address impacts related to this issue.

Additionally, the following three issues affect Riverway management and long-term stewardship of the ORVs. The National Park Service has identified management objectives related to these issues such as monitoring, data collection, and a continued commitment to address them. At this time, the strategies related to these issues are not analyzed as part of the associated compliance document as there is not sufficient detail for analysis at this time.

- Water quality
- Climate change
- Complex landownership and jurisdiction

Visitor Use and Experience

User Conflicts

Riverway staff have limited data on visitation along the 230-mile corridor. There is a need for improved visitation data collection, including the location of use, amount of use, type of use, and related resource impacts.

Most river use occurs from mid-May through mid-October, with the highest volume of use occurring between June and mid-August and on weekends. During high use times, popular areas of the Riverway may experience conflicts among tubers, anglers, hunters, paddlers, and small motorboat users. Conflict may also occur between visitors recreating with personal equipment and visitors recreating through a commercial services vendor. Visitor conflicts can occur on the river and at river landings, as they become congested with multiple users and their equipment.

Visitor Behavior

In some locations, large numbers of visitors can result in littering, crowding, threats to visitor safety, resource damage, and bank erosion. Thoughtful management would benefit both the visitor experience and resource protection. Additionally, new recreational technologies are continually emerging. The Riverway needs to monitor and proactively plan for such changes, as some of these activities may not be appropriate.

NPS Guidance for Commercial Services

Commercial services are provided to visitors by vendors with commercial use authorizations (CUAs). These authorizations typically involve the provision of a specific or limited range of services associated with uses that have been determined to be appropriate for the Riverway. There are also Riverway specific conditions, which can be modified by Riverway staff, that are applied to these commercial use authorizations to ensure visitor safety and resource protection. CUAs are typically issued for a one-to-two-year term and are renewable subject to review by Riverway staff (Public Law 105-391 and NPS *Management Policies* 2006).

Except for the visitation data reported by commercial services vendors, Riverway staff are unable to reliably count visitors along the 230-mile corridor. There is a need for overall visitation data, including the location of use, amount of use, type of use, and related resource impacts. Visitor use data and planning to guide recreation and visitor opportunities are important needs to help resolve this key parkwide issue.

Camping Management

There is a need to evaluate and improve camping management systems to be consistent throughout the Riverway, including permitting and monitoring. Visitors currently need to abide by different rules based on their location within the Riverway; for example, a permit is required for camping south of the St. Croix Falls dam, while camping regulations north of the dam do not require visitors to obtain permits.

Additionally, there is a lack of consistent signage and visitor information at designated camping sites to provide regulatory and interpretive information, which exacerbates enforcement challenges. Increasing erosion is not an issue unique to camping, as social trailing and unauthorized boat launches contribute to bank erosion. In response, Riverway staff have built wooden steps to accommodate visitors at designated campsites, but floods and ice flows exacerbate erosion in these areas, causing adverse impacts on resources.

Water Quality

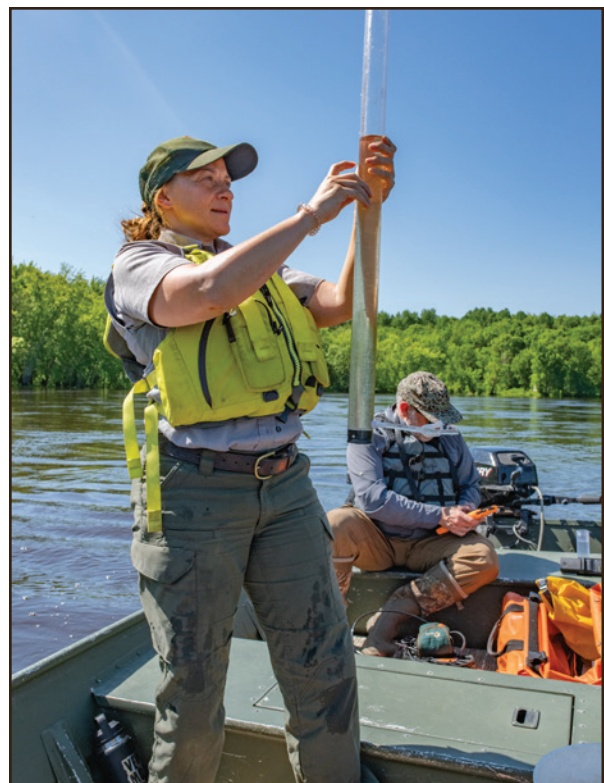
The water quality of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers is a function of watershed health. Most impacts to water quality arise from outside the Riverway boundary from development, agricultural run-off, and other non-point sources.

High phosphorus levels, seen specifically in the section above Lake St. Croix (the stretch of river between Stillwater, Minnesota, and Prescott, Wisconsin), can lead to harmful algal blooms. Blue-green algal blooms thrive in warm temperatures and contribute to eutrophication and hypoxic river conditions. Exposure to harmful algal blooms can also cause adverse health effects in humans and pets. In 2019, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) proposed adding the stretch of river from Taylors Falls to the beginning of Lake St. Croix in Stillwater to the state impaired waters list.

Sediments from runoff and erosion can cloud the water, impact the aquatic ecosystem and negatively impact the visitor experience.

In 2020, sediment levels in tributaries flowing into the St. Croix River from Minnesota were among the lowest in the state (MPCA 2020). However, changes in landscape use in the watershed, coupled with anticipated and ongoing climate change impacts, may result in increased sediment loading into the Riverway.

A trend of declining water quality has been observed, and there are some reaches (32%) that are classified as impaired by more than one pollutant. Entire portions of the St. Croix River have been placed on impaired waters lists in both Minnesota and Wisconsin for various reasons. The state of Minnesota declared the entire St. Croix impaired for mercury and the state of Wisconsin declared parts to be impaired for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).



Finally, there is a potential for visitor uses to impact the water quality of the Riverway, such as improper waste disposal. This is a gap in the Riverway's data, and more information is needed to determine if this is an issue and how it could be addressed.

Relationship management with research partners, private landowners, and city, county, state, and federal agencies is key for understanding and mitigating impacts to water quality. To continue protecting and improving the water quality of the Riverway, the National Park Service must maintain and strengthen current partnerships and continue to establish new relationships with a wide variety of entities that have regulatory or stewardship responsibilities in the watershed. There are also opportunities to enhance water quality monitoring through partnerships with other agencies to inform decision-making processes and to increase education and outreach.



Climate Change

Climate change is a threat to the wide diversity of natural and cultural resources protected by St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, and many impacts are yet to be understood. Current projections for the region include increases in mean annual temperature (+3.5°F–5.5°F by 2070), slight increases in mean annual precipitation (+3%–6% by 2070), increases in extreme heat events, and increases in storm frequency and intensity. Anticipated effects of climate change will have far-reaching impacts on the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, local aquifers, and both terrestrial and aquatic habitats along the Riverway. Increased wildfire frequency, invasive species populations, and flood and erosion events will likely adversely affect natural resources, cultural resources, and facilities throughout the Riverway.

Adapting to the impacts of climate change will require Riverway managers to continuously monitor and review data projections of regional climate models to make the best possible decisions amidst uncertainty. Climate resilience should be incorporated into the design of infrastructure and construction for all new assets and facilities. Many opportunities related to climate change are cross-functional to the topics explored above; leveraging partnerships, tribal engagement, community relationships, and volunteers are all necessary to protect resources amidst a changing climate.

Complex Landownership and Jurisdiction

At this time, the NPS manages 879 scenic easements on privately owned lands within the Riverway boundary. These easements require regular monitoring, meetings with easement landowners, handling of easement violations, and coordination with state and local agencies with zoning authority. The Riverway is especially strained by easement monitoring, which is a critically important but labor-intensive operation given the large geographic scope of the Riverway and the reality that site visits are often the only way to discover when easement holders are in violation of their scenic easement responsibilities. While the total number of easements is stable, there are typically 30-60 landowner changes on existing easements each year: making consistent communications with landowners a challenge for the Riverway.

Emerging issues for easement management include the subdivision of property, which leaves in question the standing of the easement and the increasing popularity of short-term vacation rentals. Commercial aspects are part of the scenic easement terms and conditions, but coordination with the NPS Washington Support Office (WASO) may be necessary to better understand how to manage vacation rentals in the long term.

The geographically dispersed nature of visitation along the linear Riverway and the significant number of “entry points” to the Riverway presents a challenge to conveying the NPS identity. Only a small percentage of Riverway visitors stop at the Riverway visitor centers or engage directly with an NPS employee, limiting visitor awareness and the

ability of staff to educate visitors on uses and regulations. The amount of signage needed to adequately convey NPS identity throughout the long, linear Riverway corridor is significant. Further, current state guidelines limit NPS identity on signage along state highways, presenting a need to explore options to best orient visitors to the NPS presence throughout the river corridor. Because many visitors use outfitters to visit the Riverway, there is a need and opportunity to enhance messaging about the Riverway regulations and resource protection to CUA permit holders and visitors using CUA services.

The complexity of land ownership along the Riverway contributes to confusion regarding property boundaries, applicable regulations, and appropriate recreational uses – especially regarding boating, camping, fishing, and hunting. Lack of properly posted boundary markers can contribute to encroachment onto NPS lands. Likewise, various municipal or state zoning ordinances and noise restrictions are applied and enforced by local governments, sometimes inconsistently, along the river corridor. Examples include slow and no-wake designations and camping rules.

External land management actions on adjacent properties have been identified as an emerging issue along the Riverway. Housing developments, RV Parks, highway and bridge projects, and other new developments outside of NPS boundaries affect resources on NPS property and may adversely impact Riverway resources. As these are new, emerging issues, there is an opportunity to mitigate impacts within the CRMP through new adaptive management strategies and a revisited zoning scheme.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

This section describes the relationship of the CRMP to the 2002 Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan (CMP) and the 1988 General Management Plan (GMP) for the Upper St. Croix. A summary of how this plan relates to other actions and planning efforts can be found in appendix D.

Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan (2002)

The 2002 Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan is a joint plan developed by federal and state river managing agencies. Involved agencies include the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the NPS. The plan sets forth the basic management philosophy for the lower Riverway, and outlines management actions related to cooperation among partners, land use, American Indian treaty rights, Riverway stewardship, natural resources management, management of hunting, fishing, and trapping, recreational use management, and interpretation and education. The plan also establishes land management and water management areas for both the federal and state water zones.

The CRMP would provide additional overarching management direction that would be incorporated into any future work to update the cooperative management plan. In addition, the CRMP would establish land and water management areas for the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. The land management and water management areas

outlined in the cooperative management plan provided the foundation upon which the CRMP land management and water management zones were built. The CRMP was designed to sync with the language and principles outlined in the cooperative management plan as much as possible, to ensure a more seamless interface across management entities. The CRMP would not amend the land management and water management areas applied to the Lower St. Croix in the cooperative management plan.

The CRMP would build upon but does not change management actions outlined in the cooperative management plan. The CRMP would establish indicators, thresholds, monitoring strategies, and visitor capacity as called for by the cooperative management plan. The CRMP also would establish an overnight use reservation system and associated camping for all NPS owned and managed campsites as suggested in the cooperative management plan.

General Management Plan (1998)

The 1998 GMP addresses the four statutory requirements identified in the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (54 USC 100502):

1. The types of management actions required for the preservation of Riverway resources.
2. The types and general intensities of development (including visitor circulation and transportation patterns, systems, and modes) associated with public enjoyment and use of the park, including general locations, timing of implementation, and anticipated costs.

3. Identification of visitor carrying capacities and implementation commitments for all areas of the park; and
4. Potential modifications to the external boundaries of the Riverway—if any – and the reasons for the proposed changes.

The CRMP updates certain elements of the GMP guidance and also carries over planning recommendations that remain relevant. Core elements of the 1998 GMP would be carried over into the CRMP, including the Riverway Mission, Upper Riverway Purpose, Upper Riverway Significance, and Special Mandates.

The CRMP would update management actions required for the preservation of Riverway resources to align with current needs. Specifically, the carrying capacities (referred to as user capacities in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act) and guidelines for providing for visitor use established in the 1998 GMP are not indicative of the updated desired conditions in the CRMP. Carrying capacities would be updated to better reflect desired conditions. The NPS would apply the latest best practices for visitor use management, including visitor capacity, from the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (IVUMC). Management guidelines would also be updated to include additional recreational uses that have emerged since the 1998 GMP publication. However, many of the general actions from the 1998 GMP would be carried forward – such as encouraging visitor use at different times or adjusting management strategies for visitor use as necessary, engaging in proactive management for resources, and monitoring indicators to inform management decisions.

The 1998 GMP defines four management areas: Near-Primitive Northwoods, Northwoods Recreation, Developed Recreation, and Urban Recreation. The CRMP updated these management areas with a new zoning scheme. The zoning scheme directly incorporated the 1998 GMP zones, in addition to the land and water management areas identified in the Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan (2002).

Management objectives being carried forward from the 1998 GMP include cooperation with state parks and forests, coordination with agencies and organizations, relationships with Tribal Nations, natural resource management, preservation of natural scenic values, and cultural resource management. The CRMP would update management objectives related to recreation, visitor experiences, and safety to include more specific, place-based management direction based on updated visitor data and indicators and thresholds.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The planning process was informed by information and ideas solicited during a robust public and stakeholder engagement period in the summer of 2023. The National Park Service hosted five listening sessions in locations throughout the park and collected public comments on desired experiences, issues, and opportunities.

The fall 2024 comment period marked the second round of public and stakeholder involvement. In this comment period, the National Park Service sought public input on two distinct management concepts for how the National Park Service could manage the riverway as well as on draft management areas and potential management strategies. After considering the feedback received during the public comment period, the National Park Service carried forward a single management concept that is presented in this plan and will be evaluated in the associated compliance document.

The National Park Service also engaged Tribal Nations, the Minnesota and Wisconsin state historic preservation officers, and MN and WI Departments of Natural Resources during the planning process. Appropriate consultation would continue as the plan is finalized and implemented and as site-specific planning and design for individual elements are underway.



Chapter 2. Management Direction

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 describes the management philosophy, desired conditions, and management areas that will guide management decisions on the Riverway.

The CRMP management direction would build upon the 1998 General Management Plan (GMP), which describes overall management for the Riverway, and the 2002 Cooperative Management Plan (CMP), which describes management of the Lower St. Croix River. In practice, the CRMP would adapt guidance from both the 1998 GMP and 2002 CMP for the entire Riverway (Upper St. Croix River, Lower St. Croix River, and Namekagon River) and directly retain CMP management guidance for the Lower St. Croix River.

All three plans are consistent with the mandates described in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and its charge to protect and enhance river values for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Specifically, section 10(a) of the Wild and Scenic River Act states: “Each component of the national wild and scenic

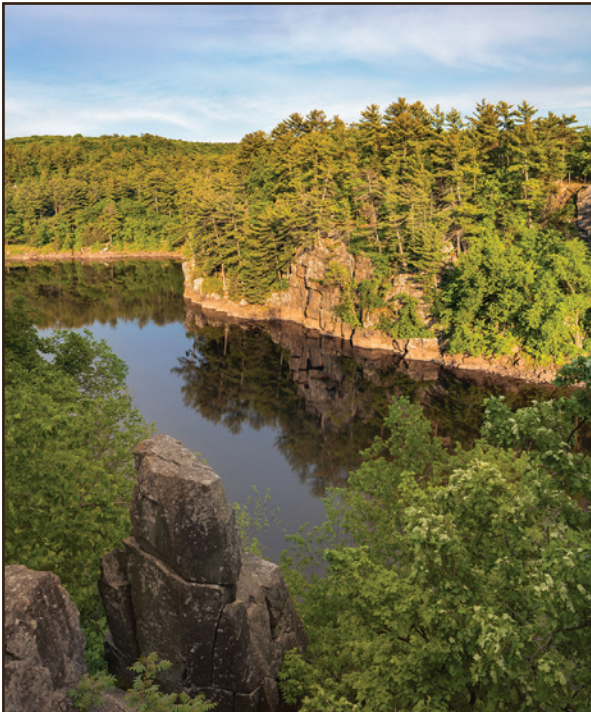
river system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. In such administration primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features. Management plans for any such component may establish varying degrees of intensity for its protection and development, based on the special attributes of the area.”

PARKWIDE MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

The following statements reflect the management philosophy developed for the CRMP planning process. The management philosophy is composed of aspirational statements that the management direction outlined in this plan aims to achieve. The management philosophy applies to the NPS-managed areas of the Riverway, as described in chapter 1.

Collaboration With and Support of Sovereign Tribal Nations

The NPS continually acknowledges and seeks to understand, support, and honor Tribal Nations' connections to the Riverway through mutually beneficial relationships. The continuity of Indigenous cultures and recognition of Indigenous lands and opportunities to connect with and use lands and waters within the Riverway are respected and protected. Treaty rights within the Riverway are celebrated, honored, and are at the forefront of management decisions and actions. Treaty trust resources, including wild rice and sturgeon, are protected and enhanced. Traditional knowledge and perspectives from Tribal Nations are incorporated and embraced in the development of management decisions and implementation of actions.



Natural Resources

The ecosystem within the Riverway is dominated by native species that support healthy flora and fauna populations. Threatened and endangered species are recovered to sustainable population numbers, and degraded natural resources are enhanced. Ecological health, integrity, and resiliency are prioritized in the face of social and environmental challenges. Resource restoration, rehabilitation, and enhancement work incorporates the best available data, traditional knowledge, and monitoring practices available. Whenever possible, the NPS would manage natural resources by pursuing ecologically sustainable solutions and incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Tribal Nations' presence and interaction with the land are integral to an intact ecosystem, as ecosystems support the integrity of the lands and traditional sense of place. Resource regulations would be modified as needed to mitigate and minimize resource impacts from visitor use.

The Riverway's free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values are preserved, protected, and enhanced in a manner consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Recreational activities do not significantly detract from the natural character, health, and ecosystem functions of the Riverway, and water resources are protected from negative recreational impacts. Tributaries, springs, and groundwater sources are free-flowing and contaminant-free, supporting biologically diverse ecosystems that sustain local wildlife and people. Further, all river segments meet or exceed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or

state water quality standards. Nutrient loading in the watershed is reduced over time, and the lack of harmful algal blooms contributes towards a healthy and safe environment for wildlife and Riverway visitors.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are respectfully utilized to inclusively convey the history, diverse stories, and ongoing cultural connections between people and places in the Riverway. Impacts to cultural resources because of visitor access and other factors are mitigated. Cultural resources and access to them provide interpretive value to the visitor experience.

Historic structures and other cultural resource sites that retain qualities making them eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places are protected

and enhanced and are recognized as part of the Cultural ORV by visitors and Riverway staff alike. Visitors have opportunities to experience and learn about historic cabins and other structures. Historic structures are actively used when possible and recognized as both facilities and cultural resources. Similarly, it is important for visitors and staff to understand the value of archeological resources being respected and preserved in place. Disturbances to archeological resources are monitored and mitigations are put in place to protect these resources.

Museum collections and archives, which include both natural and cultural resource items, are in good, stable condition. When possible, museum collections and archives are leveraged to contribute to the public's understanding and appreciation for the history and importance of the Riverway.



Visitor Experience

The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway offers a variety of land and water-based recreational opportunities, accommodating a range of visitor skills and comfort levels - from finding solitude to having a more social experience in a developed setting. Visitor opportunities including hiking, camping, boating, paddling, tubing, hunting, fishing, birding, sightseeing, and photography. Visitors can find opportunities for solitude, reflection, and meaningful connection to nature within the Riverway, including opportunities to enjoy natural soundscapes and dark night skies. Such opportunities are accessible to an economically and culturally diverse visitor population within an hour's drive of the nearby metropolitan areas and beyond. In addition, visitors have opportunities to safely experience a spectrum of challenge and adventure throughout the Riverway.

Accessibility is a priority in all aspects of Riverway operations and services, from trip-planning materials to recreational activities. All visitors feel welcomed and empowered to safely enjoy the Riverway and are inspired to uphold river values and get involved in volunteer, community, and educational programs. Visitors have opportunities to learn a comprehensive and authentic history of the landscape, natural and cultural resources, and the continuity of Indigenous cultures and Indigenous peoples' enduring connection to the land.

Adequate information and resources enable visitors to make informed choices before and during their visit to the Riverway. Information provided by the NPS allows visitors to safely and successfully plan their visits and orient themselves to facilities, regulations, natural features, and experiences. Visitors know they are recreating in a component of the Wild



and Scenic Rivers System and a National Park Service unit. Further, visitors know what level of services to expect regarding facilities and amenities at NPS-owned and managed landings, campsites, and other visitor use infrastructure.

Across land-management ownership and boundaries, visitors have a consistent experience with coordinated regulatory, informational, and wayfinding signage and messaging. Visitors would have abundant opportunities to learn about responsible practices and stewardship, including but not limited to Leave No Trace and collection and consumption regulations, before and during their visit so that visitor impacts on resources are minimized. Visitors are informed such that they are able to make their own decisions about how they experience the Riverway within the parameters of Riverway regulations and resource protection. The outcome of these practices is that the amounts and types of visitor use do not degrade the outstandingly remarkable values consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Lands, Facilities, and Infrastructure

Facilities and infrastructure are sustainably located, designed, and managed. Facilities and infrastructure minimize impacts to natural resources, including supporting water quality and outstandingly remarkable values, and ensure visitors of all abilities have opportunities to safely access and enjoy the Riverway. Facilities support the needs of diverse visitor groups and employees and are made accessible to the extent feasible. Facilities are climate-resilient, welcoming, inclusive, and professionally designed to

blend into the environment and maintain the scenic character of the landscape.

Scenic easement landowners are actively engaged in river stewardship and understand the importance of activities on their private property and the potential effects on Riverway. New development within existing municipalities does not negatively impact ORVs.

Commercial Services

Commercial service operations balance the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural landscapes and values in the Riverway while providing opportunities for diverse land and water-based recreational experiences. Commercial service providers practice and encourage resource protection, user safety, and an understanding of Riverway regulations while providing equitable opportunities for recreational access.

Partnerships and Collaborations

The Riverway is engaged in mutually beneficial partnerships with a diverse array of stakeholders that are key for achieving mission-critical goals for the Riverway. These partnerships include but are not limited to other federal and state government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and communities within the Riverway. These partnerships are maintained to encourage and advance practices that achieve shared goals, protect and enhance river values, and are consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including conserving, protecting, stewarding, and celebrating the Riverway.



The NPS continuously seeks opportunities to broaden collaborative partnership efforts throughout the Riverway, as partnerships are critical for achieving the purposes of the Riverway.

Further, the Riverway works with partners, municipalities, agencies, and private landowners to minimize negative impacts to Riverway resources, including river values, from development outside Riverway boundaries. Relationships with gateway communities support Riverway management goals and help communicate a clear identity of the NPS and other land and water management agencies.

MANAGEMENT AREAS

The 1998 GMP established a management area plan for the Upper St. Croix, while the 2002 CMP established a separate management area plan for the Lower St. Croix. The CRMP takes a holistic look at management areas across the Riverway and provides an updated framework to guide National Park Service management decisions in areas under NPS jurisdiction. Management of the Lower St. Croix will continue to be guided by the CMP in partnership with state and local officials.

CRMP land and water management area descriptions have been updated to describe desired conditions and intended management direction throughout the Riverway more clearly and consistently, as informed by public input and previous planning. Much of the guidance outlined in the management areas section of the 1998 GMP and the management areas of the Lower Riverway section of the 2002 CMP remain and are therefore carried forward within the management areas descriptions in this CRMP. Specifically, the 1998 GMP directly informed desired conditions for management areas in the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, and the 2002 CMP management areas were directly carried over for the Lower St. Croix.

As indicated above, NPS management in the Lower St. Croix Riverway will continue to be administered in partnership with state management entities through existing guidance from the 2002 CMP. The NPS will complement this guidance with the parkwide management philosophy to maintain consistent direction throughout the Riverway.

The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is a dynamic Riverway composed of complex ecosystems with constantly changing environmental and resource conditions. As such, management must be continually proactive to ensure that desired conditions are accurate, appropriate, and useful. Amendments to the following land management area desired conditions descriptions may be needed in future planning as consistent with NPS *Management Policies 2006*.

Desired Conditions for Management Areas

The following section describes the NPS management approach and associated desired conditions for each management area – including the resource conditions, desired visitor experiences, and appropriate level of use and development. Desired conditions describe the resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services the NPS strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area. While the parkwide management philosophy provides general statements for the entire park, the following desired conditions more specifically focus on protecting and enhancing the outstandingly remarkable values (see Chapter 1) in specific management areas of the Riverway.

When future action(s) are being considered in the Riverway, the land and water management areas and associated desired conditions for that location would guide the evaluation of those action(s) to ensure they are consistent with desired conditions. In all cases, the desired conditions for both

the land and water management areas must be achieved and maintained. If a proposed action(s) and its related outcomes could affect both the land and water areas and are inconsistent with either the land or water management areas' desired conditions, those action(s) would not be implemented for that location. There may be instances where action(s) may only influence the land or water areas, and in those instances, the management areas would guide evaluation of the action(s).

As described in the 2002 CMP, private land use within the Riverway boundary between the dam at St. Croix Falls/Taylors Falls and the confluence of the Mississippi River are managed in partnership between states and local governments, the latter of which enforce zoning ordinances based on state standards and law. This partnership management approach will remain unchanged, as the Lower St. Croix will continue to be jointly managed by the NPS, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Descriptions for River Town and Small-Town Management Areas are not included in this plan, as those management area designations are solely used in state-managed lands and waters.

The NPS would manage each management area to its corresponding description, while continuing to strive towards the parkwide management philosophy described earlier in the chapter.

Land Management Areas

This section describes the land management areas for the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers established in this plan and the land management areas for the Lower St. Croix River established in the 2002 CMP.

Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers

Focused Development Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Focused Development Management Area include those described in the Northwoods Recreation and Developed Recreation Management Area in the 1998 GMP. The Focused Development Management Area updates management intent for the Rural Residential Management Area described in the 2002 CMP.]

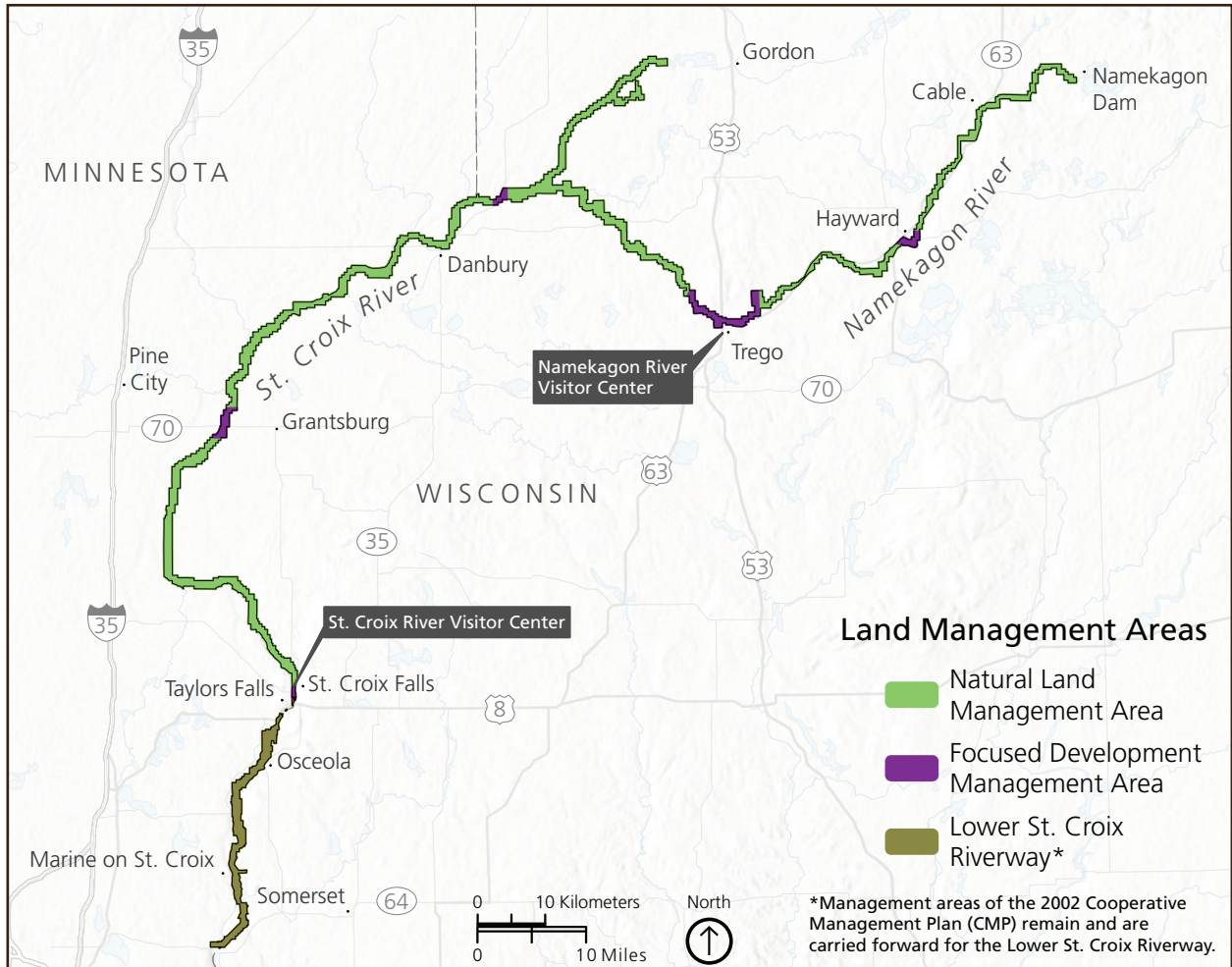
This management area is characterized by planned development that blends with the Northwoods ecosystem. Architectural style, detailing, and color schemes blend into and do not detract from the natural beauty of the area. Development is clustered and sensitively placed to minimally disturb the natural landscape. While the density of development is higher than in the Natural Land Management Area, forest and shoreline management emphasize a minimally disturbed appearance and that development is localized rather than dispersed.

NPS facilities are clustered and intentionally designed to blend with the Northwoods ecosystem and include visitor and environmental education centers, interpretive structures, primitive campsites, camping areas, small and large river access points, and administrative structures. Visitors can expect few opportunities for solitude, as encounters with other visitors and associated noise levels are frequent in this management area.





Figure 2. Land management areas for St. Croix National Scenic Riverway



Natural Land Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Natural Land Management Area include those described in the Near-Primitive Northwoods Management Area description in the 1998 GMP. The Natural Land Management Area updates management intent for the Conservation Management Area described in the 2002 CMP.]

This management area provides visitors with a sense of being in a natural setting. Very few signs of development intrude on this largely undeveloped scene. Like the 2002 CMP conservation management area, architectural style, detailing, and color schemes blend into and do not detract from the natural beauty of the area. Development, including NPS facilities such as landings, campsites, or interpretive structures, are rare, and visitors traverse long stretches of the Riverway without seeing signs of development. The river and surrounding biological communities dominate the visitor experience, though signs of human activity are evident periodically. Forest and shoreline management emphasize an undisturbed appearance.



This management area provides many opportunities to view wildlife, and there are abundant opportunities for angling. Recreational support facilities including small, primitive, and designated trails and river access points may be present and are largely screened by natural vegetation. Temporary restrictions, such as temporary trail closures, are implemented on occasion for resource protection and visitor safety and blend with the natural environment to the extent possible. Visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude.

Lower St. Croix River

Small Town Historic Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Small Town Historic Management Area are pulled directly from the 2002 CMP management area description.]

This management area is developed but it is almost exclusively single-family residences and primarily historic in character. While some dwellings will be obviously newer, the predominant character of the community will be that of a late 19th or early 20th century residential area. A combination of the river, man-made features, and natural landscape elements will shape the Riverway experience in this area.

Encounters with other people will be common, although one will not typically see large crowds. Noise levels within the Riverway boundary may be moderate, typical of those found in a residential area.

Natural vegetation and landscaped environments will be interspersed with the built environment, which will be mostly residential in character. Shoreline areas generally will be a mix of natural vegetation and residential lawns; however, portions of the shoreline will be largely undisturbed. Opportunities for fishing and viewing wildlife will be limited during high use times. Public and private recreational support structures, primarily small docks and boat ramps will be scattered along the river.

Conservation Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Conservation Management Area are pulled directly from the 2002 CMP management area description.]

This management area provides users with a sense of being in a natural setting. Very few signs of development, such as homes, bridges, or agricultural fields, will intrude on this largely natural scene. The river and surrounding biological communities will dominate the user experience. The shoreline will not be disturbed by the few visible signs of development. Forest management will emphasize the undisturbed appearance. This area will provide many opportunities to view wildlife, and there will be abundant opportunities for angling. Access to the river will be limited to a few public carry-in and small craft river access points and very few riparian landowner private docks. Recreational support facilities (e.g. primitive campsites, trails) will be small, limited in number, and largely screened by natural vegetation. With few river access points, visitors can expect small numbers of people and infrequent encounters and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude.



Rural Residential Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Rural Residential Management Area are pulled directly from the 2002 CMP management area description.]

This management area provides a feeling of being on a river in a sparsely developed landscape. As in the small-town historic management area, the river, natural features, and man-made features will shape the Riverway experience. Users will not encounter large concentrations of development or people – small numbers of people will be the rule in this area, with little or no commercial development.

Residential settings will be limited to large-lot development scattered along the shore and/or bluffs at a lower density than the small town or river town management areas. Natural vegetation will cover significant portions of the shoreline, with some stretches being largely undisturbed. Riverway users may anticipate moderate noise levels. The area will offer abundant opportunities to fish and view wildlife. There may be a few small public recreational support facilities (e.g., docks and launches) and some private docks.

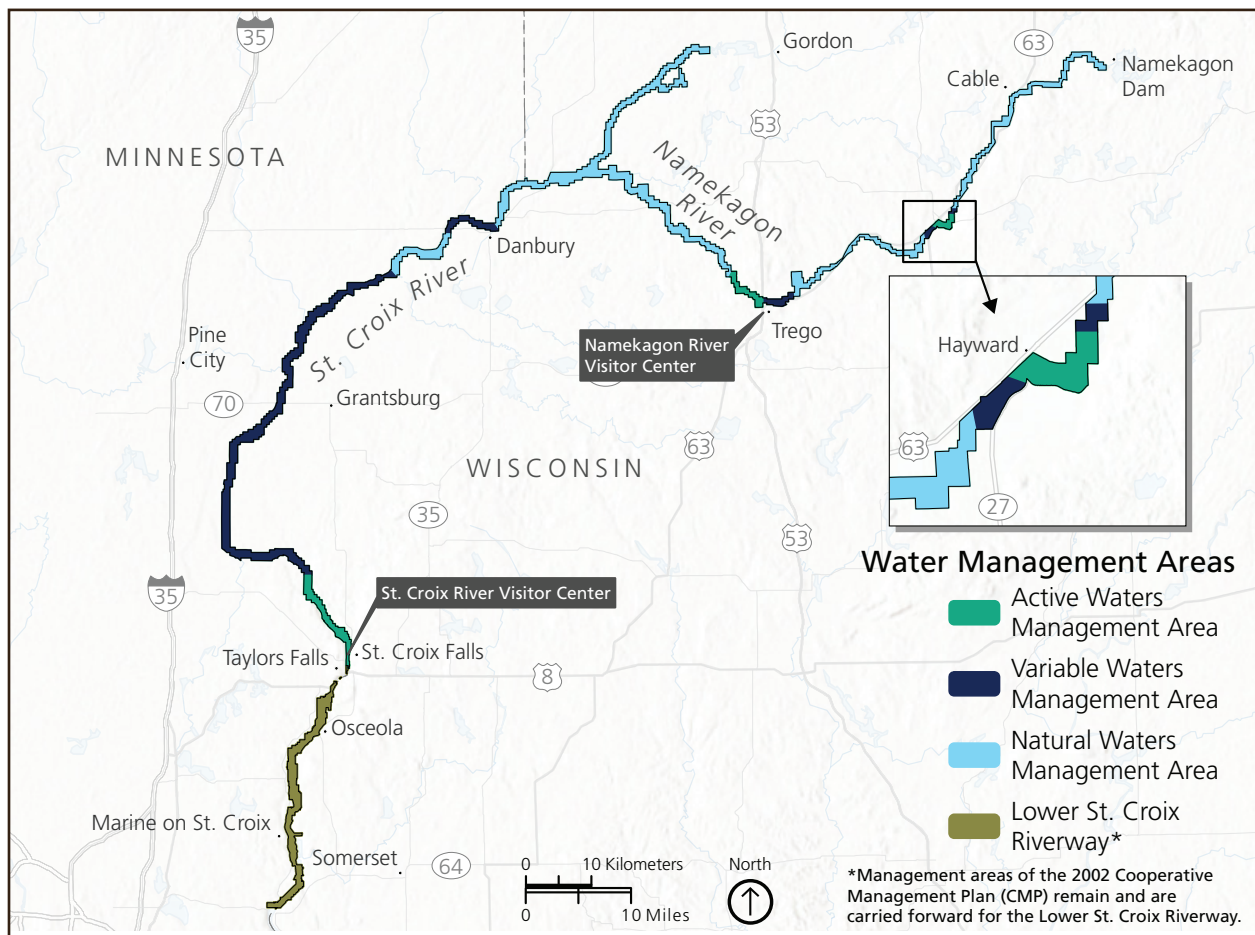


Water Management Areas

This section describes the water management areas for the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers established in this plan and the water management areas for the Lower St. Croix River established in the 2002 CMP.



Figure 3. Water management areas for St. Croix National Scenic Riverway



Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers

Natural Waters Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Natural Waters Management Area include those described in the Near-Primitive Northwoods Management Area description in the 1998 GMP. The Natural Waters Management Area updates management intent for the Natural Waters Management Area described in the 2002 CMP.]

Visitors in this management area experience a sense of peace and quiet and can anticipate opportunities for solitude, especially during low-use times. Most visitors are on foot, paddling, or engaged in other human-powered outdoor recreational activities, although low-speed motorboat travel is permitted. Visitors can expect few encounters with other visitors and motorized watercraft. Noise levels are consistently low. Visitors likely encounter wildlife, and there are abundant opportunities for high-quality fishing.

Hydrologic features and processes, including free-flowing condition, reflect a natural river/stream ecosystem. Designated river segments remain unhindered to promote and enhance outstandingly remarkable values. Physical, chemical, and hydrological properties of the rivers reflect natural water quality conditions, which meet or exceed all applicable water quality standards.



Variable Waters Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Variable Waters Management Area include those described in the Northwoods Recreation and Developed Recreation Management Area in the 1998 GMP. The Variable Waters Management Area updates management intent for the Quiet Waters Management Area described in the 2002 CMP.]

Visitors in this management area can expect to encounter a small number of other visitors engaged in a variety of activities during low-use times. Visitor activities in this management area are assessed by the NPS as generally having a relatively low impact on the river's resource conditions. However, during peak use periods (i.e., summer weekends), large numbers of other users and boats, including low-speed motorboats, may be encountered. Most visitors are on foot, paddling, or engaged in other human-powered outdoor recreational activities.

Ecological integrity and processes, including natural changes and disturbances, remain unimpeded to the extent practical under projected future climate conditions. Fundamental physical and biological processes, as well as individual species, features, and plant and animal communities, function at natural levels of diversity and complexity with minimal human disturbance.

Opportunities for solitude consequently vary as noise levels vary significantly from low during nonpeak times to moderate during peak times. Management is directed toward recreational uses that leave the surface of the river largely undisturbed.

Active Waters Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Active Waters Management Area includes those described in the Urban Recreation and Developed Recreation Management Area in the 1998 GMP. The Active Waters Management Area updates management intent for the Moderate Recreation Management Area described in the 2002 CMP.]

Visitors in this management area encounter moderate numbers of other visitors and watercraft on the water. A variety of boat types, primarily motorized watercraft, may be present. Boats may travel at different speeds but tend toward slower speeds. Management of boat speeds may be controlled in certain places. Hydrologic features and processes, including free-flowing condition, reflect a natural river/stream ecosystem.

Visitors can expect relatively few opportunities for solitude, and noise levels, both from visitors and adjacent areas, may be high during high-use times. There are relatively few opportunities to observe wildlife, but visitors would be able to access fishing opportunities, especially during low-use times. Both motorboats and human-powered outdoor recreational activities are permitted. The area could accommodate a moderate to high level of recreation development.

Lower St. Croix River

Active Social Recreation Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Social Recreation Management Area are pulled directly from the 2002 CMP management area description.]

The user experiences in this management area will vary between peak times (i.e., summer weekends) and nonpeak times. During peak times on this section of the river people often will encounter large numbers of both people and watercraft; opportunities for solitude will be low. Users may experience high noise levels from sources on the water. The surface of the water will more commonly be agitated, with the possibility of relatively large wakes/waves.

Human activity on the river surface will, at times, limit opportunities to fish in this area.

During nonpeak times users will encounter moderate numbers of people and boats; there will be moderate opportunities for solitude. Users may experience moderate levels of noise. The surface of the water will be commonly moderately agitated. However, during nonpeak times the area will offer abundant opportunities for angling.

The types of boats found in this area will vary widely during peak and nonpeak times: while most will be motorized, non-motorized watercraft may be present. Boat speeds will also vary significantly; they will be strictly controlled in some limited areas, but the river's highest boat speeds will be allowed in this management area.



Moderate Recreation Management Area

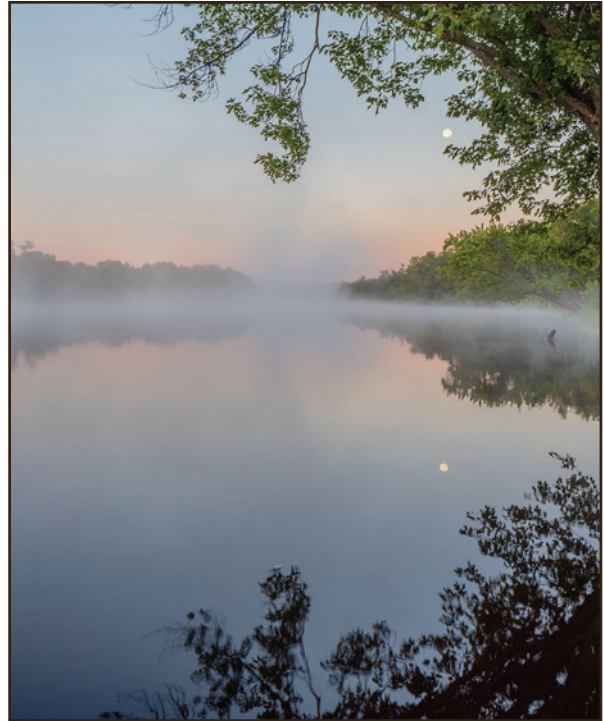
[Desired conditions for the Moderation Recreation Management Area are pulled directly from the 2002 CMP management area description.]

Users in this management area will encounter moderate numbers of people and watercraft on the water. A variety of boat types, primarily motorized watercraft, may be present. Boats may travel at different speeds but tend toward slower speeds. Boat speeds may be strictly controlled in certain places. Noise levels from sources on the water generally will be moderate. The area will offer abundant opportunities for angling.

Quiet Waters Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Quiet Waters Management Area are pulled directly from the 2002 CMP management area description.]

Users in this management area usually will encounter a small number of other people engaged in “low-impact” activities during nonpeak times, but during peak use periods (i.e. summer weekends) large numbers of other users and boats may be encountered. Opportunities for solitude consequently will vary from low opportunities during peak times to moderate opportunities during nonpeak times. Management will be directed toward recreational uses that leave the surface of the river largely undisturbed. Both motorized and nonmotorized watercraft will be able to use this area. Watercraft speeds will be kept low to preserve the river’s tranquil quality.



Noise levels will be consistently low. Abundant opportunities for fishing will be available.

Natural Waters Management Area

[Desired conditions for the Natural Waters Management Area are pulled directly from the 2002 CMP management area description.]

Users in this management area will experience a sense of peace and quiet and may anticipate opportunities for solitude. The numbers of both users and watercraft will be low – users could anticipate a low probability of encountering other people on the water. Watercraft speeds will be kept low to preserve the sense of a remote, backcountry experience. Noise levels will be consistently low. There will be abundant opportunities for fishing.

Summary of Management Areas

The table below summarizes the CRMP land and water management areas for the lands and waters in the Riverway, with checkmarks indicating where each management area is represented in the major segments of the Riverway.

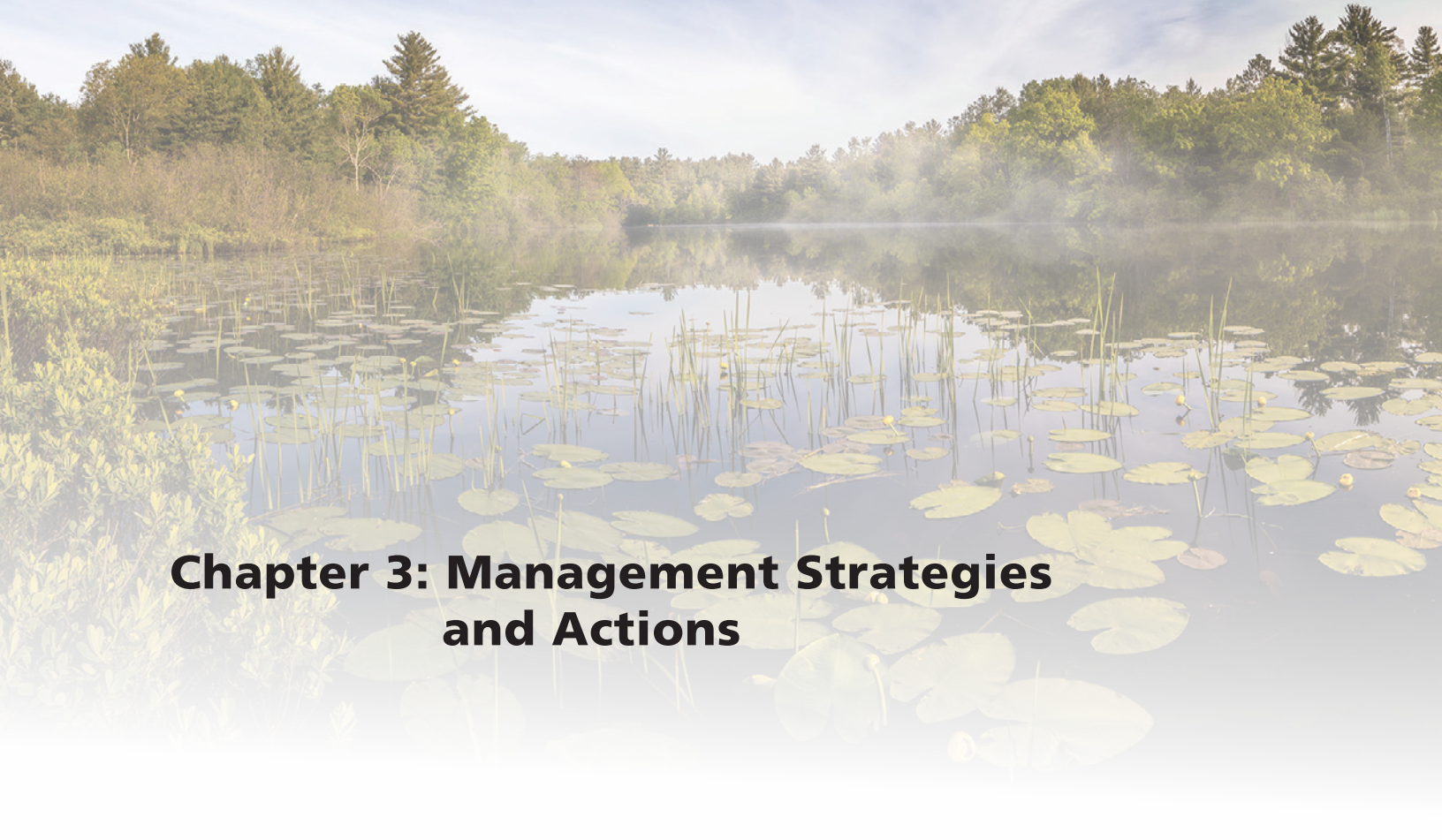
Table 1. Land Management Areas for the Riverway

Management Area	Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers	Lower St. Croix River
Natural Land	Yes	No
Focused Development	Yes	No
Small Town Historic*	No	Yes
Conservation*	No	Yes
Rural Residential*	No	Yes

Table 2. Water Management Areas for the Riverway

Management Area	Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers	Lower St. Croix River
Active Waters	Yes	No
Variable Waters	Yes	No
Natural Waters	Yes	No
Active Social Recreation*	No	Yes
Moderate Recreation*	No	Yes
Quiet Waters*	No	Yes
Natural Waters*	No	Yes

*2002 CMP Management Area carried directly forward into CRMP



Chapter 3: Management Strategies and Actions

OVERVIEW

This chapter identifies management strategies and actions to protect and maintain river values, achieve and maintain the desired conditions described in chapter 2, and address issues described in chapter 1. Actions directed by the CRMP would be accomplished in the years following plan completion and will be updated as needed. There is no guarantee that the actions proposed in this plan will be implemented. Riverway staff will continue to look for creative and diverse ways to leverage funding opportunities for plan implementation. Budget restrictions, requirements for additional data, changes in staffing levels, and competing national park system priorities may prevent implementation of some actions.

Many of these actions will require the collaboration with regional and local partners from a variety of disciplines due to the complex jurisdictions in the Riverway. Riverway staff are committed to working with community partners to achieve shared goals.

PARKWIDE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The National Park Service would continue to protect and enhance the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers' free-flowing character, exceptional water quality, and the aquatic, riparian, recreational, cultural/historic, geologic, scenic, and aesthetic values present in the rivers. This section includes broad-based management strategies and actions that would be applied across the entire Riverway. Monitoring guidelines for each of the river values identified for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway are presented in chapter 4.

Tribal Nation Relationships

The National Park Service would maintain and enhance Tribal Nation relationships through the following actions:

- The National Park Service would continue to work with Tribal Nations with reserved treaty rights to ensure that Tribal subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering rights within the Riverway are available to and appropriately exercised by Tribal members.
- The National Park Service would continue to recognize treaty rights and work with the Tribal Nations, individual bands, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission to ensure that the rights will be honored and that issues of common interest will be addressed.
- The National Park Service would continue to consult with all associated Tribal Nations to identify significant sites associated with each Tribes' history and ensure proper interpretation of the Tribes' use of the Riverway.
- Management of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway would continue to honor the ongoing relationship that multiple Tribal Nations have with this area, to honor the NPS's responsibility to protect Tribal treaty resources and treaty rights, and to work with the treaty tribes as co-managers of the resources.

Natural Resources Monitoring and Protection

Water Quality and Quantity

The National Park Service would uphold water quality and improve Riverway staff and public understanding of water quality, quantity, and hydrological processes through the following actions:

- Add more water level gauges and coordinate with other agencies and organizations who already have gauges in place (e.g., USGS gauges, hydroelectric dams) to provide real time data about stream flows and water quality.
- Continue to monitor and research algal blooms in the Riverway and communicate health and safety information to visitors.



- Collaborate with partners and Tribal Nations on monitoring, research, sharing information and providing education on water quality within the Riverway.
- Evaluate groundwater in the Riverway to better understand its current condition and how groundwater discharge may contribute to river conditions. Assess contaminants in groundwater. Assess where groundwater discharges in the river channel and where the groundwater originates.
- Maintain an understanding of NPS and non-NPS water rights on the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers and identify opportunities to protect and enhance instream flow as river conditions change.

Shoreline Protection and Restoration

The National Park Service would implement a variety of management strategies and actions to facilitate shoreline restoration where shorelines are being impacted. These include:

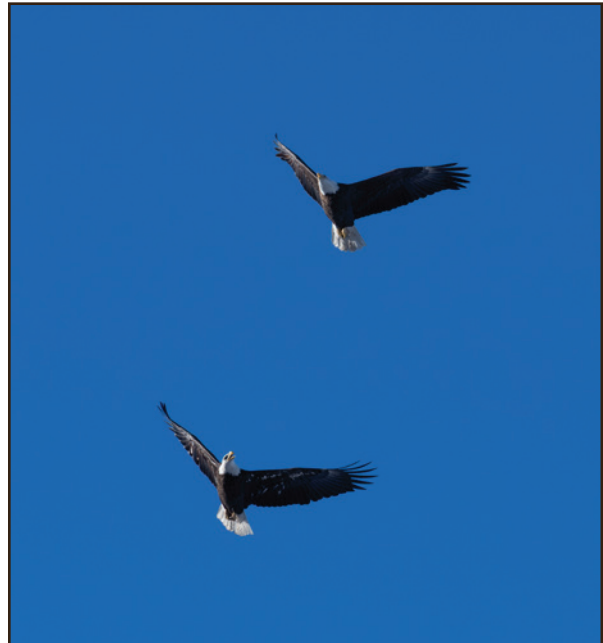
- Identify management actions at campsites to meet desired conditions (see “Campsites” below),
- Identify social trails that should be decommissioned (see “Trails” below),
- Share information with landowners throughout the Riverway (see “Reducing/mitigating stressors on Riverway resources and river values” below), and
- Minimize impacts from vessel wakes (see “Vessel Guidelines” below).

As described in chapter 4, the National Park Service would monitor the number of informal trails branching off from river access points and other sites in high priority areas and implement additional management strategies (e.g., fencing and other natural barriers to maintain visitors on designated trails, education about staying on trail) if desired conditions are not being met.

Ecosystem Management

The National Park Service would strive to maintain, restore, and protect biological resources, habitats, and processes through the following actions:

- Assess, inventory, research, and monitor the habitats of keystone and vulnerable species and use the information to develop strategies to augment and enhance their declining populations.

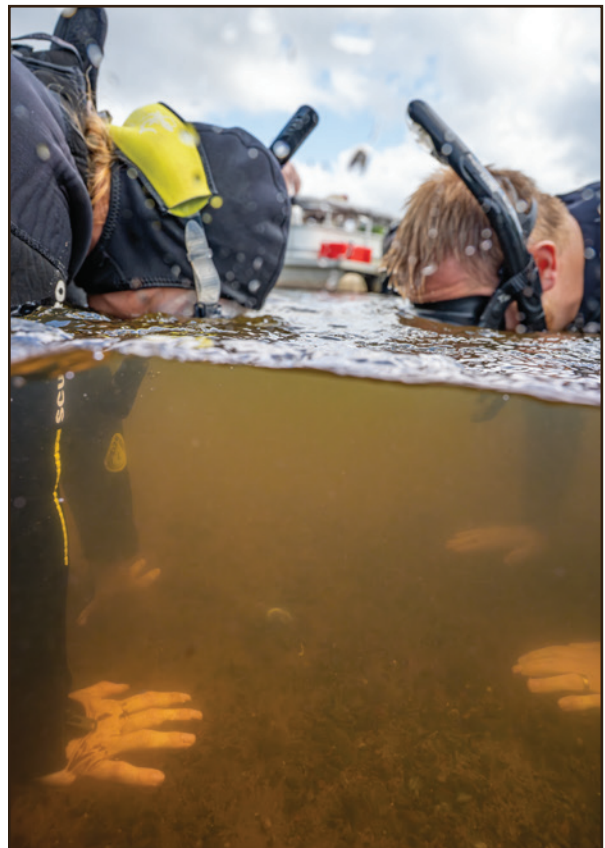


- Identify and implement strategies to establish and promote climate resiliency in native plant and animal species.
- Assess the potential impacts of climate change on sensitive species and identify where managed relocation/assisted migration may be necessary to prevent loss of the species.
- Integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge, including the use of prescribed fire, into the management of fire-adapted habitats.
- Develop a cold-water springs inventory to help inform and prioritize management actions.
- Work with partners to restore cold-water springs using various management techniques (e.g., tree planting along the bank) to provide thermal refuges for species including brook trout.
- Continue to implement projects to restore terrestrial and riparian habitat such as prescribed fire, forest health, and invasive species management
- Enhance public understanding of biological resources and promote stewardship through educational programs, outreach events, and interpretive activities.

Reducing/Mitigating Stressors on Riverway Resources and River Values

The National Park Service would strive to reduce and/or mitigate impacts from resource stressors through the following actions:

- Work with partners to periodically assess and update restrictions related to invasive species such as zebra mussel, purple loosestrife, and Eurasian watermilfoil to reflect current science and understanding of species.
- Work internally and with partners to provide aquatic invasive species decontamination mobile units at landings or other river access points.



- Explore and enhance understanding of authorities (Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Redwood Act, etc.) available to the NPS and build partnership to respond to non-NPS projects that may impact the Riverway's outstandingly remarkable values.
- Collect and analyze soundscape data to identify sources of noise and inform soundscape management; depending on noise levels and sources, identify strategies (e.g., decibel restrictions) to address issues.
- Collaborate with state and federal highway agencies and partners on bridge replacement projects to protect river values.
- Identify appropriate and compatible techniques to address riverbank erosion and shoreline condition-related issues to implement, as needed, and share with landowners throughout the Riverway.

Cultural Resources Protection

The National Park Service would continue to strive to protect and preserve cultural resources in accordance with all applicable laws, policies, guidelines, and plans. The National Park Service would continue to consult with the state historic preservation officers and Tribal historic preservation officers on projects, activities, and programs that can result in changes in the character or use of cultural resources that are listed or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The National Park Service would enhance cultural resources and promote stewardship through educational programs, outreach events, and interpretive activities. When possible, museum collections and archives would be leveraged to contribute to the public's understanding and appreciation for the history and importance of the Riverway.

The National Park Service would consider future treatment options for NRHP-eligible cabins, including but not limited to:



- Maintaining the cabins in their current condition.
- Improving the condition of one or more cabins.
- Completing full restoration of one or more cabins for adaptive reuse

The National Park Service would also explore options to lease NPS-owned NRHP-eligible cabins for commercial services operations (see ‘Commercial Services’ below).

Camping

This plan updates management direction for overnight use throughout the Riverway, including island camping in the Lower St. Croix, effectively superseding the guidance provided in the preferred alternative of the 2007 Lower St. Croix Camping Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for a more consistent visitor experience. See chapter 1 for additional information on the Lower St. Croix Camping Management Plan and Environmental Assessment.

Campsite Definitions

The National Park Service would manage NPS-owned and/or managed campsites within the Riverway using the following definitions:

- **Primitive shoreline individual campsite**—Primitive shoreline campsites are designated individual campsites that can accommodate up to 3 tents and 8 individuals. These campsites can be accessed from the river, with some accessible by land via

foot travel. These campsites are marked with a sign indicating the designated campsite and are geographically located away from other campsites. Each campsite has a cleared area for up to 3 tents and a metal fire ring, while other amenities such as picnic tables, restroom facilities (pit toilet), and potable water vary by campsite.

- **Primitive shoreline group campsite**—Primitive shoreline group campsites are designated campsites that can accommodate up to 6 tents and 16 individuals. These campsites can be accessed from the river, with some accessible by land via foot travel. These campsites are marked with a sign indicating the designated campsite and are geographically located away from other campsites. Each campsite has a cleared area for up to 6 tents and a metal fire ring, while other amenities such as picnic tables, restroom facilities (pit toilet), and potable water vary by campsite.
- **Camping areas**—Camping areas are clusters of primitive shoreline campsites within close geographic proximity of each other, often visibly seen from one campsite to another. Camping areas and campsites within the camping areas can be accessed by land and/or river, depending on the area. These camping areas, as well as the campsites within these areas, are marked with a sign indicating the designated camping area and designated campsite, respectively. Each campsite within the camping area has a cleared area for up to 3 tents and a

metal fire ring. Each camping area has basic facilities that vary by location, including vault (non-flushing) toilets, picnic tables, and potable water.

- **Island camping**—Island camping is permitted on designated islands south of the High Bridge to the Boom Site in the Lower St. Croix. Island camping opportunities on designated islands can be accessed from the river only. Shoreline camping is not permitted; island camping is only applicable to islands designated for camping. No amenities or infrastructure are available.

General Camping Guidance

The NPS would establish and manage all camping reservations for NPS owned and managed sites within the Riverway under one reservation system via Recreation.gov; see “Camping Reservations” below for additional details on camping reservations.

The NPS would seek partnership opportunities with non-NPS land managers that provide overnight opportunities within the Riverway. Partnership entities would collaborate to manage a consistent and cohesive camping experience within the Riverway, regardless of land ownership or responsible management party. This includes improving public communication about camping opportunities within the Riverway.

The NPS would continue to formalize management agreements with the appropriate entity for existing individual campsites located throughout the Riverway on non-NPS land and currently being managed by the NPS.

The NPS would seek new partnership opportunities and renew existing agreements with non-NPS land managers that provide overnight opportunities within the Riverway. The NPS would collaborate with partners to manage a consistent and cohesive camping experience within the Riverway, regardless of land ownership or responsible management party. This includes improving public communication about camping opportunities within the Riverway.

The NPS would not consider partnership management in already developed campgrounds in established recreation areas or parks, and the NPS would only coordinate management of campsites on non-NPS lands if doing so mutually benefits all entities in the partnership.

Camping Reservations

The NPS would implement a zonal reservation system for all NPS owned and managed campsites within the Riverway. A variety of camping options would be available including primitive shoreline individual campsites, campsites within camping areas, island camping, and primitive shoreline group campsites. The zonal reservation system would require visitors to purchase a permit within a designated zone and then select a campsite within that zone upon arrival, with exceptions outlined below. The number of available permits would not exceed the number of campsites available in each zone. The zonal reservation system would balance the freedom and spontaneity of choosing a site while on the river that some visitors enjoy, while also offering the predictability that others are seeking.

If needed, the National Park Service would adjust the number and/or size of camping zones.

Site specific reservations would be required in some camping areas. Examples of camping areas include, but are not limited to, Sandrock Cliffs (S91.4), Earl Park Landing (N41.5), Riverside Landing (S131.7), Howell (N16.9), and Eagle's Nest (S48.5). A site-specific camping area permit would not be valid for other types of campsites within that camping area's zone.

Site specific reservations would be required in areas with primitive shoreline group campsites. Examples of Areas with primitive shoreline group campsites include, but are not limited to, Tennessee Flats (S91.4), Paint Mine (S95.6), and Old Railroad Bridge (S82.0). A site-specific primitive shoreline group campsite permit would not be valid for other campsite types within that primitive shoreline group campsite's zone.

A camping permit would be required for island camping on designated islands south of the High Bridge to the boom site in the Lower St. Croix. Examples of islands in this river segment include Pillar Island (S28.5) and Mile Long Island (S26).

Before any camping management actions are implemented, opportunities for public involvement and engagement will be provided.

Fishing

Fish are an important species group that contribute toward a healthy river ecosystem (aquatic ORV) and a positive visitor experience (recreational ORV). The Riverway's exceptional water quality and largely free-flowing condition provide unique warm and cold-water habitat for over 100 native fish species. However, fish are subject to the effects of a changing climate, the impacts of invasive species, external pressures, public use, and more.



The NPS collaborates with the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources on fisheries-related monitoring, research, restoration, and knowledge sharing on a routine basis to advance our understanding and protection of fisheries where our missions intersect and is committed to continuing this partnership. The NPS would seek funding or collaborative opportunities with the state departments of natural resources when feasible and aligned with the NPS mission.



Due to the overlapping state and federal jurisdictions created by the long, linear nature and complex landownership framework of the Riverway, a collaborative approach to fisheries management and regulations is key for collective success. The current and recommended pathway forward is collaboration with the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources for the creation and enforcement of fishing regulations. This approach maximizes fisheries benefit, collective agency success, public understanding of regulations, and effective regulation enforcement.

When needed and in collaboration with the states of Minnesota and/or Wisconsin, changes to existing or new regulations may be proposed for the health of the fish populations. In addition, public education opportunities may be developed on key fisheries related topics to share about St. Croix and Namekagon fish communities.

Hunting

In general, hunting regulations from the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources apply on NPS-owned property. There are currently limited differences in hunting-related regulations on NPS owned property; these differences address public safety concerns, minimize potential conflicts between hunters and the general public, and include prohibitions on leaving hunting-related equipment (36 CFR 2.22) on NPS property for more than 24-hours. The NPS would align hunting regulations on NPS-owned property with state hunting regulations when missions align, and implementation is practical.



Vessel Guidelines

The National Park Service would continue to manage vessel use. For the purposes of this section, vessels are defined in [36CFR 1.4] as every description of watercraft, or other artificial contrivance used, or capable of being used, as a means of transportation on the water; power-driven vessels are defined in 33 USC 83.03 as any vessel propelled by machinery.

The different terms and slightly different definitions related to wakes have created confusion for various user groups. Going forward and for the purpose of this plan, the National Park Service would use the term “No-Wake” to include areas of flat wake, no-wake, and slow-no-wake speed. The use of the term No-Wake is consistent with the Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan. For background on these terms: Flat wake speed is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (36 § 1.4) as the minimum required speed to leave a flat wave disturbance close astern a moving vessel yet maintain steerageway, but in no case in excess of 5 statute miles per hour. Slow no-wake speed is defined by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as the slowest possible speed to maintain steerage, but no greater than 5 mph. Slow no-wake speed is defined by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as operation of a motorboat at the slowest possible speed necessary to maintain steerage.

The National Park Service would adopt a three-phased approach for power-driven vessels on the Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers:

- **Phase 1:** Implement monitoring to determine if desired conditions are being achieved under current regulations (36 CFR 3).
- **Phase 2:** Implement emergency restrictions/closures through the Superintendent’s Compendium if monitoring determines that desired conditions are not being achieved.
- **Phase 3:** Work with the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources to identify and implement alternate strategies to achieve desired conditions.

Phase 1 would be implemented upon finalization of this plan and the associated compliance document. If desired conditions in a particular river segment are not being met under phase 1, then phase 2 actions would be implemented for that river segment. If desired conditions are not being met in a particular river segment under phase 2, then phase 3 actions would be implemented for that river segment. Potential emergency restrictions/closures that could be implemented in specific river segments under phases 2 or 3 include implementing a no-wake zone within 100 feet of shoreline or implementing a no-wake zone for a specific river segment. Prior to implementing phase 2 and phase 3 actions, the National Park Service would conduct civic engagement and consultation as appropriate and provide public notice of changes. The National Park Service would work with state agencies to ensure consistency of education, communications (including signage), and enforcement regarding boating guidelines.

Lands, Facilities, and Infrastructure

Lands

The National Park Service would address land protection needs and opportunities through the following actions:

- Update the Riverway's 1984 land protection plan to inform the acquisition of lands from willing sellers and address considerations related to the scenic easement program.
- Continue to conduct land surveys and informal monitoring to reinforce boundary maintenance, sign boundaries in priority areas, and engage with landowners near NPS-owned lands.
- Continue implementation of the scenic easement monitoring program.
- Evaluate recent property acquisitions for potential recreational opportunities, river access, and/or educational opportunities.

Facilities and Infrastructure

In the National Park Service, sustainability means ensuring that investments are financially feasible, operationally manageable with existing staff and resources, and environmentally responsible by considering climate risks and minimizing long-term impacts. The National Park Service would improve sustainability of Riverway facilities and infrastructure through the following actions:



- Evaluate the current location, footprint, and condition of existing facilities and infrastructure.
- Identify strategies for Riverway facilities to improve operational efficiency, right-size the facility footprint, enhance visitor experiences, and/or reduce facility impacts on resources. This may include potential facility consolidation, repurposing, relocation, decommissioning and/or closing.
- If new operational and/or storage needs are identified, evaluate appropriate locations for new operations and/or storage and seek funding for solutions and a space plan, as appropriate.
- Remove unnecessary facilities and restore to natural conditions where appropriate.

The National Park Service has identified actions for select Riverway facilities and infrastructure; see the site-specific management strategies and actions below for more details.



The National Park Service would also:

- Identify priority facilities and areas of the Riverway where ADA/ABAAS accessibility upgrades could be made and include ADA/ABAAS as part of any new project design.
- Improve physical security of NPS facilities.

Campsites

The National Park Service would implement the following actions:

- Evaluate all NPS owned and managed campsites to identify management actions needed to meet desired conditions, including the need to maintain, restore, remove, relocate, or close campsites; complete environmental compliance and implement management actions as staff capacity and funding allow.
- Install signage at all NPS owned and managed campsites that identify the type of campsite, and the river mile associated with the campsite's location.

- Install signage at all islands in the lower St. Croix indicating if island camping is permitted or not permitted on the island; see “Camping” section above for more information on island camping. Except for signs, no additional facilities or infrastructure, beyond what already exists, would be provided for island camping in the Lower St. Croix.

The National Park Service would continue to complete cyclic maintenance on campsites as staff capacity and funding allow. This may involve rehabilitating steps or river access points, refurbishing picnic tables, relocating pit toilets, installing new or refurbished fire rings, clearing camping areas of brush and other vegetation, and/or other actions.

Day Use Areas

A day use shelter reservation would be required to use NPS shelters and pavilions between sunrise and sunset. Reservations would be managed through [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).

Signage

Riverway staff would develop and implement a sign plan to optimize the number of physical signs installed, improve consistency, enhance NPS brand identity, and increase visitor familiarity with regulations and laws. Where possible, signage would be removed or redesigned to improve the scenic aesthetic quality of the Riverway and/or reduce annual operations and maintenance costs.

The National Park Service would work with state agencies and local government units to inform the types of signs that are developed, where the signs are located, and what

information they provide. Where possible, the National Park Service would identify signs that could be upgraded using resilient and sustainable design principles. Signs with unclear or out-of-date guidance or regulations would be removed.

River Access Points

The National Park Service would manage the number, location, and design of river access points to blend into the pristine river environment and natural conditions and to provide high quality visitor experiences. Site planning may be completed for individual landings.

The National Park Service would identify, strategize, and coordinate facility improvements, such as locations where shoreline-friendly ramps can replace old, damaged, or uneven river access steps.

The National Park Service would continue to evaluate the condition, use levels and types, and location of landings and decide whether landings should be maintained in a current condition, restored (i.e. rehabilitate site or improve infrastructure), removed, or relocated. Considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Whether the location of the landing and available amenities is consistent with desired conditions for the area, including specific desired conditions for the management area.
- Whether another landing exists within a reasonable distance and meets user needs in the area.
- Whether the landing is extensively and negatively impacting important Riverway resources and values in its current location and condition.



- Whether the landing is financially and operationally sustainable to restore and/or maintain.
- Whether there is the potential to improve visitor opportunities or enhance river values.
- Whether the landing meets a critical emergency access or response need and if related improvements are necessary.
- Whether the landing is subject to changing river conditions that may limit or preclude use of the landing in the future.

The National Park Service has identified actions for select river access points; see the site-specific management strategies and actions below for more details.

Trails

The National Park Service would evaluate the location, condition, use levels and types, and feasibility of maintenance of trails associated infrastructure and decide whether trails should be maintained in a current condition, restored (i.e. rehabilitate or improve infrastructure), removed, or relocated. Considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Whether there is the potential to improve visitor opportunities
- Whether the trail is extensively and negatively impacting important Riverway resources and values in its current location and condition.
- Whether the trail is subject to changing conditions that may limit or preclude use of the trail in the future.

The National Park Service would continue to build and establish partnerships for trail maintenance and monitoring.

The National Park Service has identified actions for select trails; see the site-specific management strategies and actions below for more details.





Docks on Non-NPS Lands

When a public or private dock (or similar in-river structure) project is proposed for non-NPS property in the Riverway, the National Park Service would review the information provided by the US Army Corps of Engineers or project proponents with a focus on protection of free-flowing conditions and outstandingly remarkable values per the Wild Scenic Rivers Act, responsible river access, and providing for a variety of recreational access and water-based experiences.

Each dock project is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. In each dock evaluation, the National Park Service would determine the proposed project location; document and consider the corresponding management area and desired conditions; review the proposed project design, materials, dimensions, and project purpose; and conduct a review of the river values for the river segment in which the dock is proposed. This information would inform the NPS decision on the proposed project.

Commercial Services

Commercial visitor services are defined as any activity or service that occurs in a park for which compensation is made. By law, all commercial visitor services must be authorized in writing by the park superintendent. The two most common mechanisms for delivering commercial services are concessions contracts and commercial use authorizations (CUAs). Commercial services are subject to the provisions of the National Park Service Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998; NPS regulations published at 36 CFR Part 51; chapter 10 of NPS Management Policies; and Director's Order #48A: *Concession Management*.

A commercial use authorization allows an individual, group, company, or other for-profit entity to conduct commercial activities and provide specific visitor services within a national park unit. Authorizations are issued only when commercial activities and services are determined to be an appropriate use of

the park; will have minimal impact on park resources and values; and are consistent with the park purpose, management policies, and regulations. Concession contracts are issued only when commercial activities and services are determined to be necessary and appropriate. The Riverway currently only issues commercial use authorizations. During this CRMP planning process current and potential future commercial use authorizations were analyzed for necessary and appropriate criteria.

- Through the use of commercial use authorizations, the National Park Service would continue to provide commercial visitor services that are necessary and/or appropriate to provide opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment.

The National Park Service would continue utilizing the internal necessary and appropriate determination process to make informed decisions for new and potential CUA requests. Any future expansion of uses beyond the current areas will be contingent upon the completion of further evaluations and compliance measures. Environmental and cultural compliance for CUA activities would be completed and any potential resource impacts monitored and mitigated. Future determinations about necessary and appropriate commercial activities and levels of use would consider resource impacts using regularly monitored environmental compliance information.

The National Park Service would improve communications with commercial service providers through the following actions:

- Integrate commercial services into communications plans. For example, include CUA contacts in communications plans for high/low water or other river conditions so they are informed directly of dangerous conditions or those conditions that pose an increased risk of resource damage.
- Expand the river safety and education materials provided to CUA holders that can be conveyed to clients.

The National Park Service would continue to monitor CUA activities to make sure CUA holders are staying within the conditions of their permit.

The National Park Service would explore adaptive reuse of NPS-owned cabins that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Park Service would create a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) and request for bids (open bidding process) to generate ideas for potential adaptive re-use of the historic cabins, such as overnight stays for visitors (see additional details under ‘Commercial Services’ above). Depending on the proposed adaptive re-use use, the National Park Service would evaluate the appropriateness of that use, explore commercial services operations using the leasing determinations as found in 36 CFR§18.4 and via a concessions contract, and consult with the state historic preservation officer regarding potential effects on historic properties.

In the future, the NPS may evaluate changing from commercial use authorizations to a

concession contracting process if desired conditions for visitor experience, cultural and natural resources, and facilities and services are not being achieved. See section “Long-Term Potential Management Strategies” below.

Partnerships and Collaboration

The National Park Service would continue working with the Wild Rivers Conservancy of the St. Croix and Namekagon, the official nonprofit partner of the Riverway, to accomplish Riverway goals and objectives regarding land conservation, water quality protection, and river corridor and watershed stewardship.

The National Park Service would continue to leverage volunteers to Riverway needs on priority initiatives, such as enlisting the support of River Ambassadors and other volunteers to support labor-intensive campsite restoration and relocation efforts.

The National Park Service would also continue establishing and strengthening relationships with local school districts to increase engagement between students and the Riverway and enlist the support of school-based community service programs for river clean-up, managing campsites, etc.

A partnership strategy would be developed to better define roles, responsibilities, and shared opportunities among Riverway partners. The National Park Service would work with partners to improve NPS brand identity, increase visitor familiarity with regulations and laws, and increase overall awareness of the designated wild and scenic river. The National Park Service would also explore partnership opportunities to open additional river access points on non-NPS lands.

The National Park Service would collaborate with partners and external groups on the following strategies to protect Riverway resources:



- Regularly communicate natural resource-related goals and achievements with the public in a consistent format.
- Improve water quality and aquatic species habitat condition.
- Address issues related to run-off, erosion, and sedimentation.
- Provide information and education on invasive/nonnative species prevention.
- Manage existing populations of invasive/nonnative species to minimize their impacts.
- Engage in forest health and terrestrial habitat restoration projects.
- Prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in the Riverway, such as through decontamination mobile units.
- Address threats to threatened and endangered species.
- Reduce light pollution by installing DarkSky Approved lighting.
- Educate the public and partners on Dark Skies program-related goals.
- Establish and maintain vegetation buffers along waterways to prevent shoreline erosion.
- Minimize visual intrusions, contrast, and changes to scenic vistas and viewsheds along the Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers to the extent possible.



Messaging and Education

The National Park Service would use the following strategies and actions to enhance visitor experiences and reduce impacts to river resources and values from visitor use:

- Update digital and printed materials as necessary to comply with accessibility requirements.
- Provide information about times and areas where there may be crowding to set appropriate expectations and inform visitor decisions regarding trip timing and location.
- Incorporate Tribal Nations' history and culture within interpretation materials and programs.
- Work with partners to develop and implement clear and consistent messaging regarding all landings and points of access within the Riverway, regardless of landowner or management entity.
- Improve information on safety and best practices for visitors.



- Improve management of trash and human waste across the Riverway, with a particular focus on islands, by approaching the issue through education, collaboration with commercial service providers, and potential facility investment.
- Monitor and evaluate social media and information-gathering trends and adapt to them in order to optimize visitor engagement and reach.
- Work with state agencies to develop and implement clear and consistent messaging and signage so that visitors understand when they transition from federal to state waters and vice-versa and relevant changes in regulation.
- Enhance information available to the public regarding current water levels through partnership and increased communication with hydropower operators.

HIGH-PRIORITY SITE-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

This section includes site-specific management strategies that the National Park Service has prioritized for near-term funding in the NPS Project Management Information System. Management strategies would be implemented consistent with the parkwide management philosophy established in chapter 2.

Table 3. High-Priority Site-Specific Management Strategies

Segment	Site	Strategies
Hayward Landing to Trego, WI (Namekagon River)	Stinnett Landing	Evaluate the site for opportunities to enhance river access and/or improve natural conditions.
Hayward Landing to Trego, WI (Namekagon River)	Earl Park Landing	- Redesign the Earl Park Landing driveway and parking area to provide better traffic flow and add additional parking areas. - Repair visitor access steps to maintain access to the river while preventing further soil erosion and degradation. - Create separate river access for commercial users. - Improve the campground and picnic areas to meet ADA/ABAAS parameters.
Hayward Landing to Trego, WI (Namekagon River)	Springbrook Landing	Evaluate the site for opportunities to improve natural conditions and/or enhance river access.
Trego to Riverside Landing, WI (Namekagon River)	Whispering Pines Landing	- Increase parking lot size and improve parking drop off and river access connection. - Improve access road to address congestion with vehicles and trailers. - Improve bank stabilization and retaining wall design to protect the site from erosion while minimizing resource impacts and visual intrusions.
Osceola Landing to the High Bridge, WI (St. Croix River)	Somerset Landing	Evaluate the site for opportunities to improve natural conditions and/or enhance river access.

SITE-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

This section includes management strategies that would be implemented at specific sites along the Riverway as funding and staffing are available. The strategies are organized by river section. Management strategies would be implemented consistent with the parkwide management philosophy established in chapter 2.

Table 4. Site-Specific Management Strategies and Actions To Be Implemented as Funding and Staffing Are Available

Segment	Site	Strategy/Action
Namekagon Dam to Hayward Landing, WI (Namekagon River)	Pacwawong Flowage	• Explore opportunities to engage with Tribal Nations to establish education programming. • Increase interpretive opportunities. • Collaborate with partners to enhance access.
Namekagon Dam to Hayward Landing, WI (Namekagon River)	County M Landing	• Enhance river access through improved facilities (e.g., asphalt and new stairs).
Hayward Landing to Trego, WI (Namekagon River)	Lac Courte Oreilles Portage Trail	• Explore opportunities to involve partners and volunteers in maintaining the Trail. • Establish interpretation with local Tribal Nations.
Hayward Landing to Trego, WI (Namekagon River)	Big Bend Landing	• Enhance parking and traffic flow and evaluate the need for additional facilities (e.g., vault toilet).
Hayward Landing to Trego, WI (Namekagon River)	Namekagon River Visitor Center and surrounding NPS complex	• Design and develop a new river access point on NPS land east of the Namekagon River Visitor Center in Trego near the adjacent Highway 63 Bridge. • Replace the visitor contact facility and improve visitor circulation. • Design and implement improvements to the NPS maintenance facility.

Segment	Site	Strategy/Action
Hayward Landing to Trego, WI (Namekagon River)	Trego Town Park Landing	- Partner with the Town of Trego to increase access and enhance experience at the town landing. - Increase wayfinding and informational signage at public and private landings at Trego and Highway 53.
Trego to Riverside Landing, WI (Namekagon River)	County Road K Landing	- Plant vegetative screening near the picnic area. - Explore an improved river access for emergency response.
Trego to Riverside Landing, WI (Namekagon River)	West Howell Landing	Remove landing and restore to natural conditions.
Trego to Riverside Landing, WI (Namekagon River)	East Howell Landing	Evaluate the site for opportunities to improve natural conditions and/or improve facilities (e.g., paved and delineated parking) to enhance visitor experiences.
Trego to Riverside Landing, WI (Namekagon River)	McDowell Landing	Expand parking and improve signage and river access.
Trego to Riverside Landing, WI (St. Croix River)	CCC Bridge	Evaluate the site for opportunities to improve natural conditions and/or enhance visitor experiences (e.g. upgraded amenities)
Trego to Riverside Landing, WI (St. Croix River)	Riverside Landing	- Continue to plant native vegetation and screen facilities from the river and highway. - Provide potable water. - Increase interpretive programming at all landings in this river segment, particularly Riverside Landing.
Gordon Dam Landing to Riverside Landing, WI (St. Croix River)	Moose River Bridge	- Collaborate with North Country National Scenic Trail on shared trail segments including replacing and relocating the bridge. - Enhance visitor opportunities in this area which could include modifications to facilities (e.g., vault toilets), parking, and signage. - Partner with North County National Scenic Trail to promote the Gibson Cabin as a historically significant cultural resource and a point of interest along the long-distance trail.
Riverside Landing to Sand Creek Landing, MN (St. Croix River)	Lower Tamarack Landing	Conduct future site planning to improve the landing for better operations, traffic flow, and resource protection.

Segment	Site	Strategy/Action
Riverside Landing to Sand Creek Landing, WI (St. Croix River)	Norway Point Landing	Evaluate the site for opportunities to improve natural conditions and/or improve visitor experiences.
Sand Creek Landing to Highway 70, MN (St. Croix River)	Snake River Landing	Conduct future site planning to improve the landing for better operations and resource protection.
Sand Creek Landing to Highway 70, MN (St. Croix River)	St. Croix Trail	- Explore partnership opportunities to increase the frequency of maintenance on the trail. - Improve the visitor experience on the trail (e.g., improve parking at trailhead, develop information kiosk and trail map).
Sand Creek Landing to Highway 70, WI (St. Croix River)	Sandrock Cliffs	- Improve parking, traffic flow, the Sandrock Cliffs Trail, and river access. This may include designating an area as canoe/kayak river access. - Coordinate with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on adjacent habitat and forest management. - Create campsites along the Sandrock Cliffs Trail down to Highway 70. - Install better educational and wayfinding signage.
Sand Creek Landing to Highway 70, WI (St. Croix River)	Highway 70 Landing	- Evaluate the site for opportunities to improve visitor circulation and connectivity to other areas, such as improving the trail from the Highway 70 Landing to the south side of the picnic area. - Install better educational and wayfinding signage.
Highway 70 to Highway 8, MN (St. Croix River)	Pearl Springs and Rush Creek (Turtle Island)	Restore the Pearl Springs area to natural conditions.
Highway 70 to Highway 8, MN (St. Croix River)	Stevens Creek and Sunrise Landings	Rehabilitate vault toilets at the landings.
Highway 70 to Highway 8, MN (St. Croix River)	Sunrise Landing	Rehabilitate the gravel parking area and driveway to improve visitor experience.
Highway 70 to Highway 8, WI (St. Croix River)	County Road O Landing	Rehabilitate the gravel parking area and driveway to improve visitor experience.

Segment	Site	Strategy/Action
Highway 70 to Highway 8, WI (St. Croix River)	St. Croix River Visitor Center	Expanding the parking area with a gated NPS-only parking lot for NPS vehicles to reduce the number of NPS vehicles parked in visitor parking spaces at headquarters and increase security of NPS vehicles.
Highway 8 to Osceola Landing, MN (St. Croix River)	Osceola Landing	Rehabilitate the landing after completion of the major bridge rehabilitation project adjacent to the landing. This includes rehabilitation of the existing watercraft landing, parking area, non-motorized river access stairs and retaining wall, as well as revegetation and erosion control.
Highway 8 to Osceola Landing, WI (St. Croix River)	County Road S maintenance facilities	Evaluate the site for opportunities to improve maintenance and storage facilities.
Highway 8 to Osceola Landing, MN (St. Croix River)	Franconia Landing	Explore opportunities to partner with the town of Franconia on future improvements to and maintenance of the landing (e.g., vault toilet, new signage, parking improvements, addressing shoreline issues).
Highway 8 to Osceola Landing, WI (St. Croix River)	Osceola Loop and Ridgeview Trails	- Enhance trail signage; leave trails as undeveloped single track or natural surfaced trails. - Improve parking areas
Osceola Landing to High Bridge, WI (St. Croix River)	Buttermilk Falls	Explore partnership opportunities to enhance resource protection, visitor experience, and signage.
Osceola Landing to the High Bridge, MN (St. Croix River)	Arcola Bluffs Day Use Area	- Improve the parking area and establish a trail system. - Develop and install new media to improve visitor experiences (e.g., trail map, trail brochure, interpretive signage).
High Bridge to Boom Site Landing (St. Croix River)	Boom Site to High Bridge	- Improve signage to promote NPS identity and provide information about regulations and laws. - Assess the efficacy of aquatic invasive closures and identify next steps considering the current science and understanding of aquatic invasive species.
High Bridge to Boom Site Landing, MN (St. Croix River)	Fairy Falls Day Use Area	Integrate management actions identified in the preferred concept from Fairy Falls Day Use Area Site Plan/Environmental Assessment.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES RELATED TO MONITORING

The following management strategies may be implemented if and when monitoring reveals conditions are approaching or exceeding thresholds identified in chapter 4. These management strategies are evaluated in this CRMP and EA. Compliance for potential future management strategies would be completed in the future if they are needed to achieve desired conditions.

Table 5. Management Strategies for Monitoring

Indicator / Monitoring Objective	Management Strategies	Potential Future Management Strategies
People per viewscape (PPV) at river access points and other key destinations	- Develop and implement a public information effort about the desired conditions for the park and actions the National Park Service is taking to achieve those conditions and how visitors can best experience the park. This information could be distributed through direct visitor contact, park publications, wayside exhibits, maps, social media, websites, and park partners. The goal would be to have visitors self-disperse throughout the Riverway and visit during lower-use periods of the day or season to accommodate similar levels of visitor use but without concentrating that use during peak periods. - Provide information on anticipated use conditions to help manage visitor's expectations and better inform their trip planning. Information would include recommendations for visitor destinations based on desired level of recreational use, which varies by location.	- Evaluate appropriateness for new river access. - Evaluate existing river access points, including but not limited to types of use and landing design, to reduce user conflicts. - Transition CUAs to a concession contract.

Indicator / Monitoring Objective	Management Strategies	Potential Future Management Strategies
People per viewscape (PPV) at river access points and other key destinations (continued)	- Commercial use will be regulated and managed through updates to the Commercial Use Authorization operating conditions and guidelines. - Collaborate with managing partners to manage on-land visitor use to achieve and maintain desired conditions for both on-land and on-water visitor experience.	
Number of social trails that branch off designated trailheads, parking lots, and river access points	- Institute an education campaign regarding responsible on-trail use and associated impacts to the visitor experience and resource conditions from off-trail use. Promote the campaign on the park website, social media, printed materials, and incorporate into on-site ranger-led programming. - Install signs to discourage off-trail use, particularly in sensitive areas, closed areas, and/or high use areas. - Clearly delineate designated trails on all printed and digital park materials.	- Install fencing or natural barriers to discourage off-trail use. - Enhance the delineation of the formal facility or infrastructure boundary. - Evaluate the area for possible new trail opportunities and if appropriate, design a sustainable designated trail. - Increase NPS presence in areas with known informal trail use to increase opportunities to learn about appropriate trail use from NPS staff.
Campsite condition class	- Provide education about where visitors can find information about which campsites are available and rules about camping. - Continue to provide information about “pack in pack out” and other best practices to minimize impacts from camping.	- Change the number of camping permits permitted within a zone if condition class is being degraded at multiple campsites within a zone. - The NPS may implement the following strategies in response to campsite conditions: - Rotational system: Install a temporary active closure at impaired shoreline area to deter visitor access to entire campsite or landing. Re-open site or landing once shoreline vegetation has been given adequate time to recover – either through passive rest or active restoration. May rotate closures among priority sites.

Indicator / Monitoring Objective	Management Strategies	Potential Future Management Strategies
Campsite condition class (continued)		- Alternate access development: Create an additional river access point to the campsite site or landing while closing the original access point, to allow opportunity for vegetation to regrow in the original access footprint. - Remove: Remove any existing infrastructure and install permanent closure to restrict visitor use – do not replace site or landing. This action may be taken to address a visitor safety concern, or to allow for rehabilitation through a full closure. This action will likely primarily affect primitive sites accessed only by water. - Relocate: Remove infrastructure and install permanent closure to restrict visitor use – replace site or landing at a new location. This action will likely primarily affect primitive sites accessed only by water. - Passive Restoration: Allow a campsite to return to natural condition without maintenance or active site rehabilitation. Remove from park listing as a designated/active campsite. - Signage: Install signage at areas involving temporary or permanent closures or reroutes.

Indicator / Monitoring Objective	Management Strategies	Potential Future Management Strategies
Parking lot congestion	• Increase education and signage associated with parking in designated areas. • Increased education and information during peak times about where to find available parking. • Increase enforcement of parking outside of designated areas. • Increase public education efforts to encourage voluntary redistribution of use to off-peak times. • Display information on park website and social media and have park staff communicate areas that accommodate higher use when in contact with visitors.	• Where appropriate, delineate parking for passenger vehicles and for vehicles with trailers. • Implement a parking lot permit and associated fee if desired conditions for visitor experience, cultural and natural resources, and/or facilities and services are not being achieved in parking lots. • Implement a river access permit. • Designate some short-term parking spaces at key locations to ensure that parking lot turnovers encourage a large number of people to visit that site over a day but to keep the people per viewscape number within thresholds. • Add off-site parking as appropriate and feasible.
Crowding at river access points	• Develop and implement a public information effort about the desired conditions for the park and actions the National Park Service is taking to achieve those conditions and how visitors can best experience the park. This information could be distributed through direct visitor contact, park publications, wayside exhibits, maps, social media, websites, and park partners. The goal would be to have visitors self-disperse throughout the Riverway and visit during lower-use periods of the day or season to accommodate similar levels of visitor use but without concentrating that use during peak periods.	• Formalize select undesignated river access locations for vessel and/or other recreational river use access. • Designate select river access points by use type or vessel type to improve the overall quality of visitor experience, minimize user conflict, and ensure access is distributed effectively across the river corridor. Designations may include access points prioritized for commercial or public use, or those best suited for particular types of vessels, based on site characteristics and use patterns.

Indicator / Monitoring Objective	Management Strategies	Potential Future Management Strategies
Crowding at river access points (continued)	• Use press releases / media prior to historically crowded weekends to inform the public to be prepared for crowds at key locations. • Commercial use would be regulated and managed through updates to commercial use authorization (CUA) operating conditions and guidelines. • Close undesignated river access locations along the shoreline and close the visitor-created trails leading to the shoreline.	
Visitor safety and use conflict incidents	• Manage locations with barriers and/or signs. • Monitor river access points and other key destinations for safety related concerns. • Design and implement location-specific signage related to safety concerns. • Increase visitor education about hazards, risks, and regulations and their importance.	• Increase law enforcement presence at risk-aware areas. • Increase visitor contacts. • Reevaluate key areas and identify safety hazards, risks, and mitigations.
Shoreline erosion	• Increase visitor education about minimizing impacts to shorelines. • Close undesignated river access locations along the shoreline and close the visitor-created trails leading to the shoreline. • Commercial use would be regulated and managed through updates to CUA operating conditions and guidelines.	

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES RELATED TO VISITOR CAPACITY

The following management strategies may be implemented to manage amounts and types of use identified in chapter 5. These management strategies are evaluated in this CRMP and EA.

Management strategies to implement visitor capacity include:

- Enhance relationships with partners throughout the Riverway.
- Increase NPS presence and visitor interactions.
- Increase education and promote other nearby landings with less visitor use.
- Increase interpretive programming about critical species.
- Collaborate with state parks to manage use in areas in and around the state parks. Develop and implement strategies to manage visitor expectations in this area.
- Require reservations for picnic areas at Osceola Landing.
- Implement a group camping fee for Catfish Slough at Osceola Landing.
- Use limited plowing and physical area closures during winter as needed.
- Collaborate with William O'Brien State Park to manage use in areas in and around the state park. Develop and implement strategies to manage visitor expectations in this area.
- Designate campsites on islands below the High Bridge and require reservations.
- Add floating signage regarding human waste disposal, camping regulations, and other key messages around Mile Long Island.
- Add a floating (or similar) boundary sign so that the public knows where the park boundary is located.
- Explore opportunities to redistribute CUA operations north of Lake Hayward to disperse visitor use.
- Explore opportunities to redistribute CUA operations north of Earl Park Landing to disperse visitor use.
- Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.
- Explore opportunities for partnering to remove aquatic vegetation in Lake Hayward to enhance recreational opportunities.
- Explore opportunities to work with partners to groom cross-country ski trails during the winter and promote other winter recreational activities.
- Improve NPS identity branding and messaging, particularly during special events like the cross-country ski race and lumberjack show and world championships.

- Collaborate with local agencies and county jurisdictions to enhance relationships and increase routine patrols.
- Consider delineating parking in areas with gravel or dirt parking lots.
- Establish a community engagement program to provide visitor support and NPS presence.
- Integrate management actions identified in the preferred concept from Fairy Falls Day Use Area Site Plan/ Environmental Assessment.

The following potential future management strategies may become necessary later if the management strategies presented above are unsuccessful at implementing visitor capacity. Compliance for potential future management strategies would be completed in the future if they are needed to achieve desired conditions. Potential future management strategies to implement visitor capacity include:

- Relocate or remove the Earl Park Landing camping area.
- Remove the Catfish Slough group campsite at Osceola Landing.

LONG-TERM POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

“Long-Term Potential Management Strategies” are potential management strategies that may become necessary later if the management strategies presented above are unsuccessful at achieving desired conditions. These Long-Term Potential Management Strategies are not analyzed for their potential impacts pursuant to NEPA in this EA. Instead, details of long-term management strategies would be developed at the time they are needed to ensure that the most effective approach is implemented, and the appropriate civic engagement and compliance would be completed before their implementation.

- In the future, the NPS may evaluate the implementation of a river use fee if desired conditions for visitor experience, cultural and natural resources, and facilities and services are not being achieved.
- In the future, the NPS may evaluate changing from use of commercial use authorizations to a concession contracting process if desired conditions for visitor experience, cultural and natural resources, and facilities and services are not being achieved.

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Chapter 4. Monitoring

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides information about the monitoring strategy as it relates to the CRMP. Monitoring is the process of routinely and systematically gathering information or making observations to assess the status of specific resource conditions and visitor experiences. Data collected systematically through monitoring shows how conditions change over time, including the rate and magnitude of change. In this way, monitoring provides a much richer and more complete picture to determine whether new management actions are needed to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Without monitoring, managers cannot determine whether their management strategies and actions are effective. Ensuring that management decisions are based on sufficient information results in a higher degree of accountability, defensibility, and transparency.

The chapter includes guidelines for monitoring free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of the Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers, as well as indicators and thresholds related to visitor use impacts and other related monitoring. Identifying indicators, thresholds, and triggers to monitor conditions are key components of the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council's (IVUMC) Visitor Use Management planning framework applied by the National Park Service (IVUMC 2019). Combined with monitoring outlined in the "Other Related Monitoring" and "Monitoring River-Related Values" sections, the indicators and thresholds identified to monitor visitor use impacts satisfies the Interagency Wild and Scenic River Coordinating Council's Comprehensive River Management Plan component to "develop a monitoring strategy specifically related to protecting river's free-flowing conditions, water quality, and ORVs".

The monitoring described below would only apply to NPS owned and managed lands and would inform NPS management decisions. Monitoring would not take place on private property. Monitoring would not take place within the state-managed zone of the Riverway (from near Stillwater, MN downstream to the confluence with the Mississippi River).

MONITORING RIVER-RELATED VALUES

Per Director's Order 46, river managers must monitor the free-flowing character, outstandingly remarkable resource values, and water quality of park rivers to establish baseline information and to provide information on long-term trends. An understanding of the health and condition of a wild and scenic river is essential to fulfilling the mandate to protect and enhance the values that led to a river's designation.

Monitoring the hydrologic condition of a river, including streamflow, water quality, and the aquatic ecosystems and habitats associated with a river, forms the basis for river management. Monitoring also helps the National Park Service make informed determinations of effect for water resources projects as directed by Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Long term monitoring is key to managing and understanding the health and condition of the natural and cultural values associated with each wild and scenic river. Monitoring efforts conducted by NPS can be leveraged by coordinating with state and federal agencies, local friends groups, watershed networks, and other non-government organizations (NGOs), universities, and qualified citizen scientists to assist with data collection.

Monitoring guidelines have been developed for each of the river values identified for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. The following tables include general monitoring guidelines.



Table 6. Monitoring Guidelines for Free-Flowing Condition

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	Although influenced by hydroelectric dams and many existing instream structures, remnant logging embankments, and legacy wing walls that once supported more extensive navigation in the river, the St. Croix River (and its Namekagon River tributary) remains one of the last undeveloped, large floodplain rivers in the upper Mississippi River system. From the outlet of Lake Namekagon to its confluence with the Mississippi, the Riverway flows freely throughout most of its reaches.
Rationale for Monitoring	Free-flowing condition is a fundamental river value for which the river was designated, and its preservation is vital to meeting the mandates of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Streamflow characteristics important to the long-term health and function of a river include the frequency, magnitude, timing, and duration of high and low flows, and the natural seasonal and inter-annual variability of flows, otherwise referred to as a river's flow regime.
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	• The National Park Service (NPS) monitors streamflow at gauges on the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. Streamflow is also currently monitored at the Riverway by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Xcel Energy monitors flow data at three dams. • The NPS maintains an inventory of existing bridges and other structures and has information on historic water control structures. • The NPS would continue to evaluate proposed water resource projects to ensure consistency with the wild and scenic river designation.
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	• The NPS would complete an inventory of shoreline condition and bank stabilization projects and update inventory of historic water control structures.



Table 7. Monitoring Guidelines for Water Quality

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	Water quality on the Riverway is an important river value that has been recognized by both the state of Wisconsin and the state of Minnesota. In Wisconsin, the river has been designated an Outstanding Resource Water from the outlet of the Upper St. Croix Lake to the inlet of the St. Croix flowage. In Minnesota, the entire river is considered an Outstanding Resource Water.
Rationale for Monitoring	Water quality monitoring is used to characterize waters, detect trends, identify emerging problems, determine whether pollution control programs are working, and focus pollution control efforts where they are needed. The protection of the water quality in designated rivers is explicitly directed as part of the Congressional declaration of policy under Section 1(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA). Additional management policies under Section 12(c) of WSRA reinforce the role of the EPA and appropriate state water pollution control agencies in enforcing the Clean Water Act and related water quality standards. The Riverway works in cooperation with the EPA and state agencies to address water quality issues that affect the Riverway as directed by WSRA.
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	- Water quality is currently monitored by the NPS Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network and Riverway staff at multiple sites on the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. Additional water quality monitoring is conducted by the EPA, state agencies, and partners. - Riverway staff and volunteers opportunistically monitor harmful algal blooms as those events occur, generally by using time-lapse cameras and collecting samples.
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	The NPS would periodically assess per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance levels, effects from lead, nutrient loading, and other contaminants in the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, key identified tributaries, and groundwater.

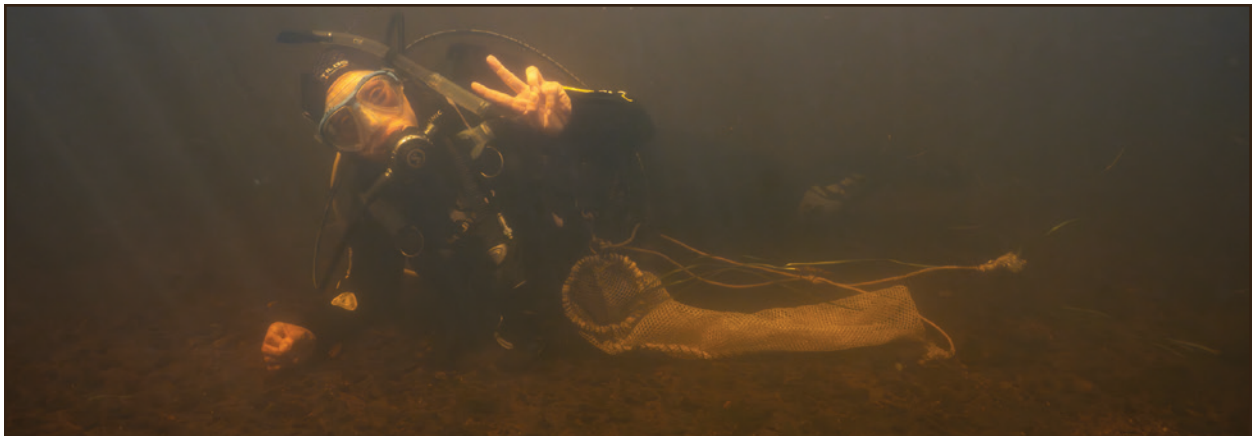


Table 8. Monitoring Guidelines for Aquatic Resources

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	The St. Croix-Namekagon River system provides one of the most extensive and exemplary aquatic species assemblages within the Upper Mississippi River basin and contains healthy naturally reproducing populations of 41 native freshwater mussels and 100 native fish species.
Rationale for Monitoring	Natural resource monitoring helps park managers determine the status and trend in the condition of selected resources to ensure that desired conditions are being met. Monitoring data can be used to assess the effectiveness of management and restoration efforts, provide early warning of impending threats, and provide a basis for identifying and understanding change in complex natural systems.
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	• Native mussels monitoring and research is conducted by NPS, USACE, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). • USGS is leading an effort with NPS, USACE, and MDNR to develop a GIS database of mussels and host fish. • MNDNR and WDNR monitor native fish species of interest (e.g., sturgeon) as well as invasive carp. • The NPS monitors cold-water springs/sources. • The NPS conducts monitoring for aquatic invasive plant species such as purple loosestrife and yellow iris. • The NPS implements early detection and rapid response (EDRR) efforts for current and newly introduced aquatic invasive species and provides education, outreach, and prevention strategies for aquatic invasive species.
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	• The NPS would develop a cold-water springs inventory to help inform and prioritize management actions. • The NPS would develop risk assessment models for invasive mussels to inform future management strategies. • The NPS would continue and expand upon native mussel and native fish research with partners.

Table 9. Monitoring Guidelines for Cultural Values

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	The continuum of human occupation along the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers encompasses diverse cultures and uses. People have lived along the rivers for at least 12,000 years, since the final retreat of the glaciers at the end of the most recent ice age and have continually taken advantage of the abundant natural resources.
Rationale for Monitoring	Monitoring the condition of a river's important cultural resources provides a means to assess the overall environmental and human-caused effects to cultural resources, and to evaluate the adequacy of methods to identify and protect cultural resources.
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	• Archeological sites are monitored on a defined schedule. • National Register-eligible cabins and other historic structures are opportunistically monitored by Riverway staff. • Partners monitor river-related cultural resources such as wild rice and sturgeon.
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	• The NPS would monitor the number of documented incidences of human-caused damage to Riverway cultural resources. • The National Park Service would enhance monitoring of archeological resources, particularly resources at risk of erosion.



Table 10. Monitoring Guidelines for Recreational Values

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	From its headwaters to its confluence with the Mississippi River, the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway offers a diverse continuum of high quality, multi-season recreational experiences within a short drive of a large metropolitan area. Riverway users can easily find opportunities that range from paddling in peace and solitude to outdoor recreational activities with increased social interaction.
Rationale for Monitoring	Monitoring types and levels of visitor use helps park managers determine whether desired conditions are being achieved and maintained for visitor use and experience at the Riverway and helps inform visitor use decisions. Data also help correct potential misperceptions about what is happening with visitor use.
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	• Traffic and trail counters are located in numerous areas of the Riverway to track levels of use, and staff opportunistically track visitor use levels and patterns at different landings, trails, and day use areas. • NPS interpretation and education staff track number of visitors at visitor centers, formal interpretation and education programs, and informal contacts while roving. • The NPS gathers data from CUA holders including number of trips and visitors participating as well as the number of hours per trip and number of days spent in the Riverway. • The NPS Social Science Program has conducted socioeconomic monitoring at the Riverway.
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	• The NPS would monitor people per viewscape, parking lot congestion, crowding at river access points, and visitor safety and user conflict incidents. • The NPS would collect and analyze soundscape data to identify sources of noise and inform soundscape management.



Table 11. Monitoring Guidelines for Riparian Values

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	The riparian zone along the Riverway includes wetlands, floodplain or bottomland forests, and seepage environments formed by surface expressions of groundwater. These distinct areas all contribute substantially to the river ecosystem by lending stability to the hydrological environment and providing habitat for native species, some of which are rare.
Rationale for Monitoring	Natural resource monitoring helps park managers determine the status and trend in the condition of selected resources to ensure that desired conditions are being met. Monitoring data can be used to assess the effectiveness of management and restoration efforts, provide early warning of impending threats, and provide a basis for identifying and understanding change in complex natural systems.
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	• Forest vegetation, songbirds, and landscape dynamics are currently monitored by the NPS Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network. • Invasive plant vegetation is monitored by the Great Lakes Invasive Plant Management Team cooperatively with Riverway staff. • Riverway partners monitor mercury concentrations in dragonfly larvae. • MNDNR staff survey for wood turtles. • The Wisconsin and Minnesota Natural Heritage Inventory databases contain information on locations identified as having riparian resources. • Riverway staff actively conduct rare plant surveys. • Riverway staff monitor forest pests (e.g., emerald ash borer) and other forest health issues (e.g., oak wilt).
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	• The NPS would explore expanding songbird monitoring into areas of proposed restoration work. • The NPS would monitor condition class of select campsites and the number of informal trails at key locations, as described in the "Monitoring Related to Visitor Use Impacts" section below • The NPS would conduct riparian habitat and rare plant inventories



Table 12. Monitoring Guidelines for Scenic-Aesthetic Values

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	Nationally known for their scenic and aesthetic beauty, the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers offer a wide variety of visual experiences. Scenic views from the river include adjacent landscape features such as pine barren forests, wild rice waving in the breeze, the spectacular basalt outcroppings of the Dalles, and the ochre of sandstone bluffs. The view of the river, from landings, bluffs, and the numerous state parks and forests and the scenic byway within the river corridor, are also regionally outstanding.
Rationale for Monitoring	Periodic monitoring of scenic vistas and viewsheds would ensure that their quality remains outstanding, while also protecting ecological, cultural, and recreational values.
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	- The National Park Service conducts scenic easement monitoring on a rotational schedule. - Site-specific visual resource inventories are completed when there are specific projects with potential impacts to scenery.
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	The NPS would conduct a Riverway-wide scenic resource inventory

Table 13. Monitoring Guidelines for Geologic Values

Monitoring Topic	Description
Key Aspects	The ancient basalt rock of the Dalles, formed by lava flowing from the Midcontinent Rift and exposed during the much more recent retreat of the glaciers, and the associated glacial potholes are exemplary in a regional and even worldwide sense. The Dalles is a place where the ancient history of basalt lava flows from the inner earth, sedimentary Tunnel City sandstone, and glacial potholes can all be seen together.
Rationale for Monitoring	Periodic monitoring of geologic resources would ensure that their quality remains outstanding, while also protecting scenic-aesthetic values,
Past and Ongoing Monitoring Strategies	The NPS has digital geologic-GIS maps of the entire Riverway that were produced for the Geologic Resources Inventory Project.
Potential Future Monitoring Strategies	The areas of the river that contribute to the geology ORV are within state lands and not under NPS jurisdiction. The NPS would work with other management partners to opportunistically monitor the geologic resources for human-caused damage.



MONITORING RELATED TO VISITOR USE IMPACTS

Indicators—Indicators are specific resource or experiential attributes that can be measured to track changes in conditions so that progress toward achieving and maintaining desired conditions can be assessed. Indicators translate the broad description of desired conditions into measurable attributes that can be tracked over time to evaluate changes in conditions. Therefore, indicators must correlate directly with desired conditions. In addition, indicators must be capable of being assessed objectively over time, so that managers can determine whether conditions have changed and, if so, how.

The interdisciplinary planning team considered the central issues driving the need for the plan and developed related indicators that would help identify when the level of impact becomes cause for concern and management action may be needed. The indicators described below were considered the most critical, given the importance and vulnerability of the resource or visitor experience affected. The planning team also reviewed the experiences of other park units with similar issues to help identify meaningful indicators.



Thresholds—A threshold is the minimally acceptable condition associated with an indicator. Visitor activities inevitably cause changes in natural or cultural resource conditions or visitor experiences. Proactive management involves determining the acceptable level of change for selected indicators. Thresholds serve this role by establishing the point at which the effects of visitor use on desired conditions are anticipated to become enough of a concern that a management action is needed to achieve and maintain desired conditions. In this role, thresholds serve as a stop sign or a “line in the sand.” The concept of thresholds is well established within the field of natural resource monitoring (Guntenspergen 2014). The term “threshold” in the visitor use or recreation disciplines is synonymous with “standards” or “quality standards.”

The interdisciplinary team used past monitoring information, public input, field observations, professional judgment, best available science, and literature reviews to establish thresholds for each selected indicator based on desired conditions.

Triggers—A trigger is defined as a condition of concern for an indicator that is enough to prompt a management response to ensure that desired conditions continue to be maintained before the threshold is crossed. In more complex planning efforts in which there are particularly sensitive resources and/or considerable public interest, triggers may be established in addition to thresholds. A sensitive resource that requires close evaluation may have multiple triggers to ensure appropriate management actions are taken to avoid crossing the threshold.

Establishing a threshold and, if needed, a trigger for each indicator allows managers to determine when a change in management actions is needed to ensure that desired conditions are achieved and maintained. A change in management actions is needed when a threshold for an indicator is at risk of being reached or, if a trigger is established, when a trigger is reached.

Indicators, thresholds, triggers, monitoring protocols, management strategies, and potential future management strategies would be implemented as a result of this plan and are described below. Compliance for potential future management strategies would be completed in the future as they are needed to achieve desired conditions. The three indicators identified in the plan were selected to evaluate changes in conditions related to changing visitor access and visitor use, and associated change in cultural resource, natural resource, and ORV conditions, to maintain and achieve the plan’s desired conditions.

Table 14. Crowding at River Access Points and Other Key Destinations—Indicators and Thresholds

Component	Description
Indicator	People per viewscape (PPV) at river access points and other key destinations.
Threshold	No more than the PPV stated for each monitoring location below, 90% of the sampled time. The below locations are high-priority monitoring locations where monitoring may take place more frequently. <u>River Access Points</u> • Phipps Landing: 20 PPV • Stinnett Landing: 25 PPV • Earl Park Landing: 50 PPV • Whispering Pines Landing: 20 PPV • Howell Landing: 40 PPV • McDowell Landing: 15 PPV • CCC Bridge Landing: 15 PPV • Riverside Landing: 50 PPV • Lower Tamarack Landing: 20 PPV • Thayers Landing: 20 PPV • Norway Point: 30 PPV • Snake River Landing: 30 PPV • Highway 70 Landing: 40 PPV • County Road O Landing: 20 PPV • Nevers Landing: 30 PPV • Osceola Canoe/Kayak Launch: 50 PPV • Osceola Motorized Launch: 50 PPV • Somerset Landing: 30 PPV <u>Other Key Destinations</u> The following monitoring locations are within the Riverway boundary on land managed by other partners. The PPV thresholds apply only to NPS managed on-water visitor use, excluding land-based recreation. • Lion's Park Landing: 50 PPV • Franconia Landing: 75 PPV • Boom Site Day Use Area: 75 PPV

Component	Description
Rationale	Crowding and congestion at river access points and other key destinations can hinder the quality of visitor experience and lead to an increase in user conflicts. Further, crowded conditions have been documented to adversely affect the quality of visitor experience in national parks (Whittaker and Shelby 2010). PPV metrics aid managers in understanding visitor-use density at river access points and other key destinations, allowing the NPS to quantify PPV in a location and compare those numbers to desired conditions. On the Namekagon River, river use is primarily diffuse and low density according to a 2015 visitor survey and use level study. However, a few landings are disproportionately intensively used. Further, the study found that high use density in concentrated-use river sections can lead to reported experiences tending toward crowded during daytime peak season conditions. On the St. Croix River, a 2019 study of visitor perceptions and preferences at Osceola Landing reported that overall, the majority of visitors indicated they were not crowded on or off the Riverway. Further, the majority of visitors indicated that the number of visitors and behavior of visitors did not interfere with their overall experience. However, 19.2% did indicate the number of visitors interfered with their experience and 12.8% indicated other visitors' behavior interfered with their experience. In response to a hypothetical situation where density conditions exceeded acceptable conditions, visitors most frequently responded they would not be displaced and continue with their primary activity in the same area. However, when displacement did occur, 37.0% indicated they would participate in their primary activity at a different location on the river, and 5.7% indicated they would recreate somewhere other than the St. Croix River. Lastly, the 2019 study found that approximately 15.7% of visitors indicated that they felt the number of people at various locations increased risk of injury. PPV is a measure often used by park managers and researchers to quantify visitor crowding (Lawson et al. 2011; Lawson et al. 2009; Manning et al. 2011; Lawson, Newman, and Monz, in press). People per viewscape is not a measure of the total number of people who visit a site; rather it is a measure of use levels across time that can be applied to understanding social conditions related to the visitor's experience (Manning 2007). Research suggests that visitors can identify site-specific standards for crowding (Manning et al. 2011). A study used photo simulations to measure crowding norms at Delicate Arch in Arches National Park and found a strong relationship between the number of people in the photographs and acceptability ratings (Manning et al. 1996); that is, there is a certain point at which the number of people in the photo is no longer considered acceptable or in line with visitor norms. This indicator, or some variation thereof, is in use at many other parks and areas to monitor visitor experience. These visitor-based standards can be used to guide the development of social indicators and thresholds for crowding.

Component	Description
Rationale (continued)	This PPV indicator and threshold are identified and prioritized as important to ensure Riverway staff are able to achieve desired conditions for social experiences without unintended consequences of crowding and congestion that can occur during peak use times. Currently, not all prioritized monitoring locations listed above are achieving desired conditions; however, through implementation of this plan and associated management strategies, this indicator would allow the Riverway staff to track progress towards achieving those desired conditions at all monitoring locations throughout the Riverway. Further, as this is a commonly researched and applied indicator in the field of social science and public lands research, PPV would provide information on impacts on natural and cultural resources from crowding in addition to the density of visitor use occurring at river access points and other key destinations.
Management Strategies and Mitigation Measures	• Develop and implement a public information effort about the desired conditions for the Riverway and actions the National Park Service is taking to achieve those conditions and how visitors can best experience the Riverway. This information could be distributed through direct visitor contact, publications, wayside exhibits, maps, social media, websites, and partners. The goal would be to have visitors self-disperse throughout the Riverway and visit during lower-use periods of the day or season to accommodate similar levels of visitor use but without concentrating that use during peak periods. • Provide information on anticipated use conditions to help manage visitor's expectations and better inform their trip planning. Information would include recommendations for visitor destinations based on desired level of recreational use, which varies by location. • Commercial use will be managed through updates to the CUA operating conditions and guidelines. • Collaborate with managing partners to manage on-land visitor use to achieve and maintain desired conditions for both on-land and on-water visitor experience.
Potential Future Management Strategies	• Evaluate appropriateness for new river access points. • Evaluate existing river access points, including but not limited to types of use and landing design, to reduce user conflicts. • Transition CUAs to a concession contract.
Potential Future Management Strategies	• Evaluate appropriateness for new river access points. • Evaluate existing river access points, including but not limited to types of use and landing design, to reduce user conflicts. • Transition CUAs to a concession contract.

Table 15. Number of Social Trails That Branch Off Designated Trailheads, Parking Lots, and Launch Ramps Entry Points—Indicators and Thresholds

Component	Description
Indicator	Number of social trails that branch off of designated trailheads, parking lots, and river access points.
Threshold	No more than three social trails that branch off of designated trailheads, parking lots, and river access points.
Rationale	Social trails degrade natural and cultural resources, impact visitor experiences, and can create concerns for park managers. From a resource protection standpoint, social trails can create a multitude of issues including but not limited to vegetation loss, increased erosion, and disruption of cultural and natural sites. Consequently, water quality suffers from increased stormwater runoff caused by the soil degradation. Further, visitors experience a degraded landscape resulting from social trails, as the landscape lacks the intended visual quality and may lead to confusion or unease due to the unmarked paths. These social trails can also create concerns for park managers, as they bring visitors unknowingly close to hunting areas where activity is restricted within 100 yards of designated trails. The issue is compounded by visitor use of social trails, including use of social trails to access recreational activities such as fishing opportunities. Further, unauthorized uses such as all-terrain vehicle use create social trails which can be mistaken for designated trails by pedestrian users. Social trails degrade natural and cultural resource conditions and the quality of visitor experience and therefore should be kept to a minimum. The presence of social trails is an indication of many issues of concern, including vegetation trampling, soil compaction, spread of invasive species, habitat fragmentation, impacts on threatened and endangered species habitat, visitor wayfinding and safety, and degradation of cultural resources. Therefore, monitoring the presence of social trails at priority locations is important to ensure park staff are able to achieve desired conditions.

Component	Description
Monitoring Strategy	Park staff would conduct periodic visual observations at designated trailheads, parking lots, and river access points, counting the number of social trails by walking the perimeter of established infrastructure. In addition, photo monitoring would occur simultaneously to illustrate change in conditions related to social trails and serve as data points for density and other crowding issues if and as they occur. The visual observations and one representative photo would be cataloged in an internal photo library where park staff could identify if thresholds are being exceeded. Monitoring would take place at as many different times as practical, ensuring that the busiest days and high-use locations are captured. In the future, the park may change the monitoring strategy and/or data collection as new technology becomes available. Additionally, the park could expand the monitoring beyond the prioritized locations to capture the fuller extent of the network and related condition of social trails. The below locations are high-priority monitoring locations where monitoring may take place more frequently. • Snake River Landing • Sand Rock Cliffs • River Road • Pearl Springs • Stinnett Landing • Fairy Falls Day Use Area • Rush Creek • County S Maintenance Shop Trails / Ridgeview Trails • Trego Nature Trail • Arcola Bluffs Day Use Area
Management Strategies and Mitigation Measures	• Institute an education campaign regarding responsible on-trail use and associated impacts to the visitor experience and resource conditions from off-trail use. Promote the campaign on the park website, social media, printed materials, and incorporate into on-site ranger-led programming. • Install signs to discourage off- trail use, particularly in sensitive areas, closed areas, and/or high use areas. • Clearly delineate designated trails on all printed and digital park materials.
Potential Future Management Strategies	• Install fencing or natural barriers to discourage off-trail use. • Enhance the delineation of the formal facility or infrastructure boundary. • Evaluate the area for possible new trail opportunities and if appropriate, design a sustainable designated trail. • Increase NPS presence in areas with known informal trail use to increase opportunities to learn about appropriate trail use from NPS staff.

Table 16. Campsite Condition Class—Indicators and Thresholds

Component	Description
Indicator	Campsite condition class
Threshold and Trigger	• Threshold: condition class of 4 • Trigger: a 2-step condition class change to a higher condition class number
Monitoring Locations	The NPS would identify a minimum of two representative campsites within each camping zone (described in chapter 3) to monitor condition class; the specific campsites monitored may change over time. Campsites at the following river miles have been identified: • N61.4 • N52.6 • N29.2 • N12.1 • S132.4 • S148.1 • S109.3 • S92.4 • S85.5 • S55.3 • S48.6 • S44.3

Component	Description
Rationale	This indicator assesses impacts to vegetation and soils at campsites caused by visitor use. Overtime, visitor use of campsites can lead to loss of organic litter, soil compaction, and/or soil erosion. Soil loss is ecologically important due to the extremely slow process of soil creation and the potential for secondary impacts from the eroded soils to water resources (Marion et al. 2016). Soil erosion can adversely affect water quality by increasing turbidity, potentially impacting sensitive aquatic species. Loss of organic litter and presence of bare soil can also have an undesirable impact on visitor experience as a campsite, as there is a reduced feeling of being in a natural environment. Soils that have been impacted by visitor use may also be more vulnerable to impacts from climate change (e.g., heavy rain events, flooding). Visitor use of campsites can also result in a variety of impacts to vegetation, including a reduction in vegetation cover, height, and biomass; changes in species composition; and potential decreased tree regeneration (Marion et al. 2016). Loss of vegetation cover and loss of species diversity may decrease the resiliency of park resources to the effects of climate change. At some campsites, live trees may be damaged from attempts to remove branches or cut down trees. Loss of vegetation can also have an undesirable impact on the scenic or visual quality of an area, negatively impacting the landscape character integrity of natural/natural-appearing landscapes (Meyer et al. 2021). Impacts caused by visitor use can occur intentionally and unintentionally, depending on the knowledge, attitudes, and ensuing behavior of visitors. Condition class monitoring is based on observers comparing site conditions to pre-determined descriptive condition classes, and recording the class that most closely matches the condition (Williams and Marion 1995). The system consists of descriptions of six condition states that are based on the extent of vegetation damage, mineral soil exposure, tree root exposure, and erosion. The condition class system is quick, easy to apply, relatively inexpensive, and provides a useful summary of resource conditions (Cole 1989; Williams and Marion 1995). The trigger for this indicator, a two-step change in condition class, was selected as it indicates that the level of use and/or visitor behavior at a particular campsite have changed and may warrant additional monitoring and/or management actions. The trigger and threshold for this indicator would apply across all management areas. The list of campsites chosen for monitoring represents high use and low use campsites across the five camping zones with established campsites. This indicator will help the park achieve desired conditions identified for the Riverway, specifically for protection of healthy flora and fauna populations and the Riverway's water quality. It was selected because it has a direct connection to visitor use, it is reliable and reasonable to monitor, and it is sensitive to change.

Component	Description
Monitoring Strategy	Monitoring would take place at as many different times as practical, ensuring conditions at the beginning and end of peak season are captured. Survey staff should use the condition class descriptors below to determine and record the appropriate condition class for the campsite and the rationale for its selection: • Class 0: Campsite is predominantly on resistant surfaces, so the effects of trampling are difficult to see or assess • Class 1: Campsite barely distinguishable; slight loss of vegetation cover and/or minimal disturbance of organic litter • Class 2: Campsite obvious; vegetation cover lost and/or organic litter pulverized around campfire rings • Class 3: Vegetation cover lost and/or organic litter pulverized on much of the campsite; bare soil exposed around campfire rings • Class 4: Nearly complete or total loss of vegetation cover and organic litter, bare soil widespread • Class 5: Soil erosion caused by visitor use obvious, as indicated by exposed tree roots and rocks and/or gullying. For consistent results, staff should focus on the central portion of the campsite (e.g., around a campfire ring if one is present) when identifying level of disturbance to the groundcover, disregarding satellite disturbed areas. Condition class is not affected by campsite size, presence of trash, or tree damage other than exposed roots. When determining whether the campsite is “barely distinguishable” or “obvious,” staff should focus on disturbance to groundcover and ignore any man-made structures (e.g., campfire rings). Shoreline erosion associated with campsite use would not be monitored under this indicator; instead, it is addressed in the “Other Related Monitoring” section below. Some campsites may be in locations with little natural vegetative cover or organic litter. Although these campsites would be categorized as a class 4, they are still considered to be in acceptable condition.
Management Strategies and Mitigation Measures	• Provide education about where visitors can find information about which campsites are available. • Continue to provide information about “pack in pack out” and other best practices to minimize impacts from camping.

Component	Description
Potential Future Management Strategies	• Change the number of camping permits permitted within a zone if condition class is being degraded at multiple campsites within a zone. • The NPS may implement the following strategies in response to campsite conditions: - Rotational system: Install a temporary active closure at impaired shoreline area to deter visitor access to entire campsite or landing. Re-open site or landing once shoreline vegetation has been given adequate time to recover – either through passive rest or active restoration. May rotate closures among priority sites. - Alternate access development: Create an additional access point to the campsite site or landing while closing the original access point, to allow opportunity for vegetation to regrow in the original access footprint. - Remove: Remove any existing infrastructure and install permanent closure to restrict visitor use – do not replace site or landing. This action may be taken to address a visitor safety concern, or to allow for rehabilitation through a full closure. This action will likely primarily affect primitive sites accessed only by water. - Relocate: Remove infrastructure and install permanent closure to restrict visitor use – replace site or landing at a new location. This action will likely primarily affect primitive sites accessed only by water. - Passive Restoration: Allow a campsite to return to natural condition without maintenance or active site rehabilitation. Remove from park listing as a designated/active campsite. - Signage: Install signage at areas involving temporary or permanent closures or reroutes.

OTHER RELATED MONITORING

In addition to thresholds, managers may establish specific, positive targets or objectives for resource conditions or visitor experiences. Unlike a threshold, an objective is defined as a specific result that an agency aims to achieve within a specified timeframe. If thresholds are markers to prevent negative consequences and unacceptable conditions, objectives are markers to help ensure positive progress toward achieving and maintaining desired conditions (IVUMC, 2019).

Table 17. Parking Lot Congestion—Monitoring Objective

Component	Description
Objective	The goal is for the number of vehicles at one time (VAOT) to not exceed the design capacity of the parking lot 80% of the sampled time. If VAOT exceed the design capacity of parking lots more than 20% of the time (about 2 hours per day or 14 hours per week) during peak use hours (10am to 5pm), the NPS would implement the management strategies and mitigation measures described below. Monitoring data would help park staff better predict and proactively manage conditions at parking lots associated with river access points. VAOT in parking lots associated with river access points will be used to assess access conditions at popular visitor destinations. Parking lots at river access points provide visitors with access to park resources and experiences, including motorized and non-motorized use, fishing, viewing scenery, and more. Monitoring VAOT at one or more parking lots provides a reasonable basis on which overall access conditions at visitor destinations can be inferred.

Component	Description
Rationale	Monitoring and managing visitor use according to this objective helps ensure that visitors have safe and smooth access to river access points and other key destinations by reducing vehicle congestion and conflicts in parking lots. Vehicles at one time (VAOT) is a measure commonly used by park managers and researchers to quantify vehicle congestion in parking lots (Lawson and Kiser 2013a; Manning, Lawson, et al. 2014). It provides an important measure of parking lot conditions in relation to visitor access to popular destinations as well as potential park resource impacts as a result of parked vehicles in unauthorized areas when lots are full. Parking lot capacities provide an ideal threshold on which to base monitoring efforts for VAOT. Instances in which parking lot capacities are exceeded are indicative of vehicle congestion, potential safety concerns, and possible park resource impacts stemming from vehicles parking in unauthorized areas (Lawson, Newman, and Monz, 2017). Monitoring for this objective will allow NPS staff to establish baseline data for future comparative analysis.
Monitoring Strategy	Monitoring would include quantifying the number of VAOT in parking lots and documenting the date and time, as well as occurrences of improper parking (in undesignated areas) and egress issues. Monitoring would take place at as many different times of the day and year as practical, ensuring that the busiest days and high-use locations are captured. Parking lot monitoring locations may change over time. Parking lots that initially will be included in the VAOT monitoring objective are as follows: • Phipps Landing • Stinnett Landing • Earl Park Landing • Whispering Pines Landing • Howell Landing • McDowell Landing • CCC Bridge Landing • Riverside Landing • Lower Tamarack Landing • Thayers Landing • Norway Point Landing • Snake River Landing • Highway 70 Landing • County Road O Landing • Nevers Landing • Osceola Landing • Somerset Landing

Component	Description
Management Strategies and Mitigation Measures	• Increase education and signage associated with parking in designated areas. • Increased education and information during peak times about where to find available parking. • Increase enforcement of parking outside of designated areas. • Increase public education efforts to encourage voluntary redistribution of use to off-peak times. • Display information on park website and social media and have park staff communicate areas that accommodate higher use when in contact with visitors.
Potential Future Management Strategies	• In addition to the management strategies identified above, the interdisciplinary team identified the following potential future management strategies. Based on monitoring of conditions, these strategies would only be implemented when desired conditions are not being achieved. • Where appropriate, delineate parking for passenger vehicles and for vehicles with trailers. • Implement a parking lot permit and associated fee if desired conditions for visitor experience, cultural and natural resources, and/or facilities and services are not being achieved in parking lots. • Implement a river access permit. • Designate some short-term parking spaces at key locations to ensure parking availability for short-term day users. • Add off-site parking as appropriate and feasible.

Crowding at River Access Points

Monitoring—The NPS would quantify the number of vessels actively putting in or taking out of the river at three or more river access points per monitoring season during peak use hours (10am to 5pm), especially during high use season from May through August. The NPS would identify the number of vessels putting in or taking out of the river that achieve desired conditions for each monitoring location. The NPS would implement the management strategies and mitigation measures described below if the number of vessels putting in or taking out exceed the acceptable number that achieves desired conditions. Monitoring the number of allowable vessels putting in / taking out at NPS managed river access points will be used to assess on-river conditions as well as crowding and user conflicts at river access points. Monitoring data would help park staff better predict and proactively manage conditions at river access points. Observational data would be collected for 30 minutes to 1 hour at each site to obtain data points per river access point each day monitored. Utilizing this monitoring system four to six times per year provides enough data points to make informed decisions about the condition of river access points and visitor experiences. Data collection days could be increased if needed in the future. Days selected would include weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Weather, flows, and other factors influencing river use will inform staff which days would be most meaningful to monitor.

Park staff reviewing the data will note the type of vessels to inform the knowledge base of use patterns and distributions. River access points being monitored may change each year, and additional sites may be monitored as time allows. Park staff will analyze the data at the end of the season to make informed decisions about the following summer season. River access points that initially will be included in the number of allowable vessels putting in / taking out at NPS managed river access points monitoring objective are as follows:

- Phipps Landing
- Stinnett Landing
- Earl Park Landing
- Whispering Pines Landing
- Howell Landing
- McDowell Landing
- CCC Bridge Landing
- Riverside Landing
- Lower Tamarack Landing
- Thayers Landing
- Norway Point Landing
- Snake River Landing
- Highway 70 Landing
- County Road O Landing
- Nevers Landing
- Osceola Landing
- Somerset Landing

River access points include NPS managed boat ramps, carry-in-carry-out non-motorized access, landings, and other designated river access locations. Crowding at river access points can hinder the quality of visitor experience and degrade natural resources. The number of allowable vessels putting in / taking out at NPS managed river access points metric aids managers in understanding visitor-use density at key river access points, allowing NPS staff to quantify the number of allowable vessels putting in / taking out at NPS managed river access points and to compare those numbers to desired conditions. “Vessels” is a term used to describe all boat types including but not limited to kayaks, canoes, drift boats, motorboats, stand-up paddleboards, and innertubes. This monitoring objective is distinctly different from the people per viewscape (PPV) indicator because this monitoring objective measures visitors who are actively putting into or taking out of the river and does not include other uses visible on the landscape that are included in the PPV metric, like fishing or picnicking.

Monitoring the number of allowable vessels putting in / taking out at NPS managed river access points would inform desired conditions for visitor-caused impacts on natural and cultural resources, as well as visitor experience. This objective supports the desired condition to provide visitors with opportunities to safely experience a spectrum of recreational challenge and adventure throughout the Riverway and experience the park within the parameters of park regulations and resource protection. It also supports the desired condition that impacts to cultural resources as a result of

visitor access are mitigated, and recreational activities do not significantly detract from the natural character, health, and ecosystem functions of the Riverway, and water resources are protected from negative recreational impacts. Monitoring for this objective will allow NPS staff to establish baseline data for future comparative analysis.

Management Strategies and Mitigation Measures

- Develop and implement a public information effort about the desired conditions for the park and actions the National Park Service is taking to achieve those conditions and how visitors can best experience the park. This information could be distributed through direct visitor contact, park publications, wayside exhibits, maps, social media, websites, and park partners. The goal would be to have visitors self-disperse throughout the Riverway and visit during lower-use periods of the day or season to accommodate similar levels of visitor use but without concentrating that use during peak periods.
- Use press releases / media prior to historically crowded weekends to inform the public to be prepared for crowds at key locations.
- Commercial use would be regulated and managed through updates to CUA operating conditions and guidelines.
- Close undesignated river access locations along the shoreline and close the visitor-created trails leading to the shoreline.

Potential Future Management Strategies

In addition to the management strategies identified above, the interdisciplinary team identified the following potential future management strategies. Based on monitoring of conditions, these strategies would only be implemented when desired conditions are not being achieved.

- Formalize select undesignated river access locations.
- Designate select river access points by use type or vessel type to improve the overall quality of visitor experience, minimize user conflict, and ensure access is distributed effectively across the river corridor. Designations may include access points prioritized for commercial or public use, or those best suited for particular types of vessels, based on site characteristics and use patterns.

Visitor Safety and User Conflict Incidents

Monitoring—The National Park Service would monitor the number and types of incidences that require emergency services to better predict and proactively manage conditions to decrease the number of incidents that occur. The NPS would monitor a variety of emergency services, including but not limited to law enforcement response, emergency medical services such as search and rescue, and fire suppression services.

The number and types of instances requiring emergency services, specifically related to visitor safety and user conflicts among user



groups, is an emerging issue throughout the Riverway as the prevalence of mixed uses and overall visitation increases. Mixed use and overall high levels of use at river access points and other key destinations can lead to increased visitor conflict among user groups and safety concerns requiring response from law enforcement and at times, emergency medical services. Visitor injuries and safety-related conflicts are mitigated as much as possible but can occur due to any number of instances, as millions of visitors recreate in the Riverway's dynamic landscape each year.

Monitoring visitor safety and user conflict incidents would inform desired conditions for visitor-caused impacts on natural and cultural resources, as well as visitor experience. This objective supports the desired condition to provide visitors with opportunities to safely experience a spectrum of challenge and adventure throughout the Riverway and experience the park within the parameters of park regulations and resource protection. Monitoring for this objective will allow NPS staff to establish baseline data for future comparative analysis.

Management Strategies and Mitigation Measures

- Monitor river access points and other key destinations for safety related concerns.
- Increase visitor education about hazards and risks.
- Design and implement location-specific signage related to safety concerns.
- Increase visitor education about hazards, risks, and regulations and their importance.
- Install physical barriers and/or signs to enhance visitor safety and experience.

Potential Future Management Strategies

In addition to the management strategies identified above, the interdisciplinary team identified the following potential future management strategies. Based on monitoring of conditions, these strategies would only be implemented when desired conditions are not being achieved.

- Increase law enforcement presence at risk-aware areas.
- Increase visitor contacts.
- Reevaluate key areas and identify safety hazards, risks, and mitigations.

Shoreline Erosion

Monitoring. The NPS would gain a better understanding of shoreline erosion being caused by heavy visitor use of the shoreline along the riverbanks and islands. The NPS would assess shoreline condition at select locations.

Shoreline erosion is an issue throughout the Riverway. Erosion can be either a natural process brought about by such things as flooding, ice scour, river currents, and wind-driven waves; or it can be brought about or accelerated by human activity such as boat wakes and heavy use of areas which tramples and destroys vegetation. Shoreline studies conducted from 1995 to 2000 indicated that survey sites affected by boat waves and/or foot traffic trampling experienced net erosion while sites not affected by boat waves and without foot traffic experienced net deposition (Griffin 2000 in NPS 2007). Heavy visitor use of the shoreline and islands causes de-vegetation, which exposes soil and leaves it vulnerable to erosion. Erosion carries soils (sediment) into the water, increasing sedimentation and turbidity of water and potentially impacting listed native mussels and other aquatic species (NPS 2007). As sediment settles out of the water, it can damage fish spawning and mussel beds. This monitoring objective is distinctly different from the campsite condition class indicator because this monitoring objective assesses impacts from visitor use along shorelines, including but not limited to at campsites.

Monitoring shoreline condition would provide information on whether desired conditions are being achieved related to visitor-caused impacts on natural and cultural resources, as well as visitor experience. This objective supports the desired condition to provide visitors with opportunities to safely experience a spectrum of challenge and adventure throughout the Riverway and experience the park within the parameters of park regulations and resource protection. It also supports the desired condition that recreational activities do not significantly detract from the natural character, health, and ecosystem functions of the Riverway, and water resources are protected from negative recreational impacts. Monitoring for this objective will allow NPS staff to establish baseline data for future comparative analysis.

Management Strategies and Mitigation Measures

- Increase visitor education about minimizing impacts to shorelines.
- Close undesignated river access locations and close the visitor-created trails contributing to shoreline erosion.
- Explore site-specific shoreline restoration techniques
- Commercial use would be regulated and managed through updates to commercial operating conditions and guidelines.
- Evaluate and implement appropriate vessel guidelines described in Chapter 3.



Chapter 5. Visitor Capacity

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides additional information about visitor capacity identification as it relates to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Comprehensive River Management Plan. Visitor capacity is a component of planning and providing for visitor use and is the maximum amounts and types of visitor use that an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established.

The primary goals of planning and providing for visitor use are to maintain opportunities for high-quality visitor experiences and protect resources. An important component is to consider when and where identifying and implementing visitor capacity is most appropriate and how to address legal requirements of agencies. Visitor capacity is a tool that can aid managers in achieving and maintaining desired conditions. Both the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968) and

National Parks and Recreation Act (1978) direct agencies that manage federal lands and waters to address visitor capacity (also known as carrying capacity, user capacity, and recreational capacity) (IVUMC 2019). This analysis fulfills the requirements of the 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act (54 US Code 100502) to identify visitor capacity for all areas that this planning effort addresses. In addition, this analysis satisfies the legal requirement described in the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as well as achieves the goals of identifying user capacities as described in the Interagency Wild and Scenic River Coordinating Council's (2018, 2019) Comprehensive River Management Planning Process guidelines.

Visitor capacities were identified using best practices and examples from other plans across the National Park Service (NPS) using the following basic guidelines: (1) determine the analysis area, (2) review existing direction and knowledge, (3) identify the limiting attribute, and (4) identify visitor capacity and strategies to manage the capacity.

Once visitor capacity is identified for an area, managers may need to determine appropriate allocations among a variety of uses or opportunities. Allocation is the process of distributing visitor capacity among a variety of uses or opportunities to achieve or maintain desired conditions. This plan identifies commercial allocation expressed as a percent of total use in each analysis area, meaning, the remainder is allocated to non-commercial use (IVUMC 2019).

Analysis Areas

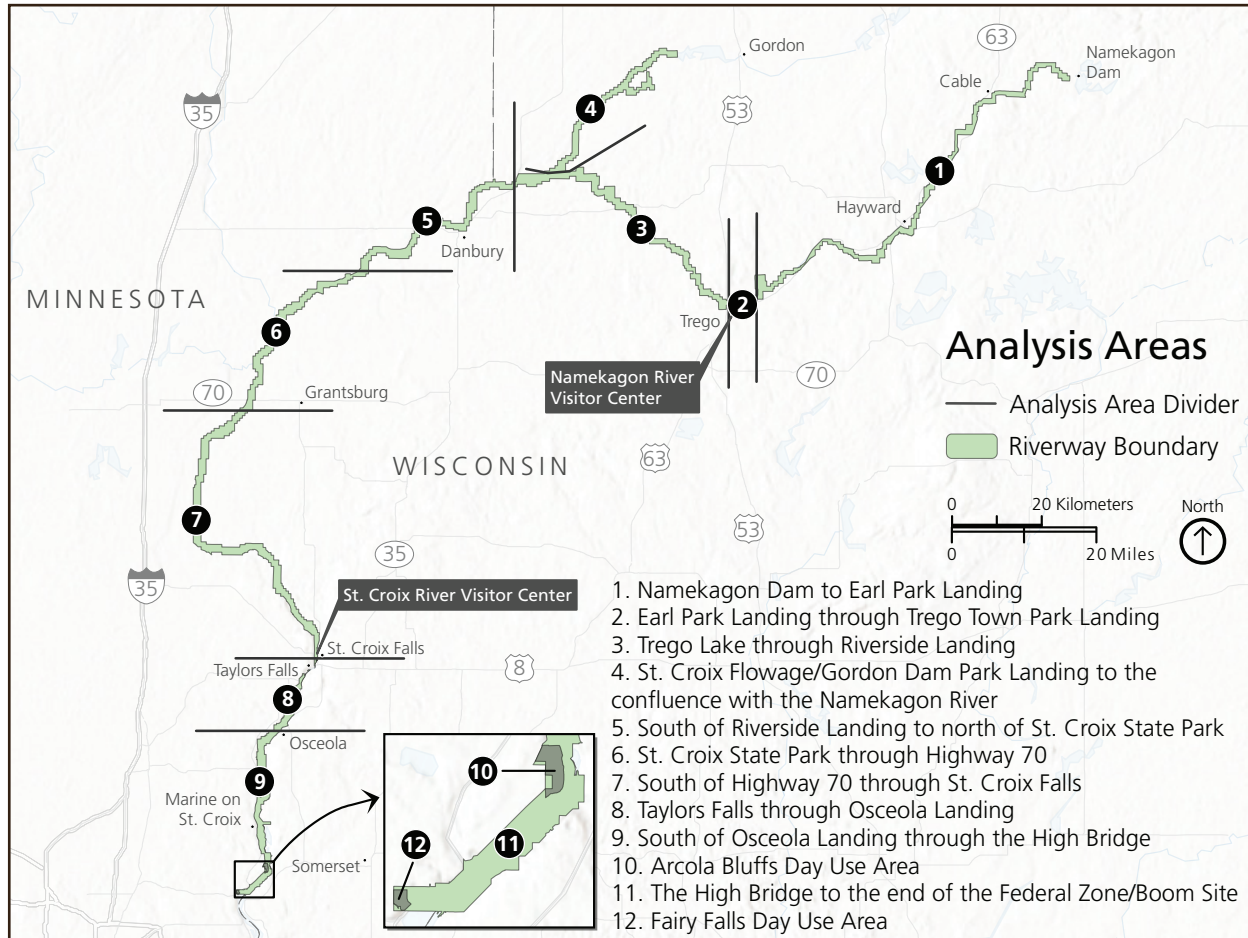
This guideline has a far-reaching effect on identifying visitor capacity because it involves identifying (1) where geographically the visitor capacity will be implemented, (2) displacement or other unintended effects of managing visitor use levels, and (3) the effect of managing allocation(s) of visitor use within the analysis area(s). To determine the appropriate analysis area(s), the interdisciplinary team sought to understand the relationship between existing and potential visitor use patterns and desired conditions, and identified the following as analysis areas for visitor capacity identification:

- Namekagon Dam to Earl Park Landing (Namekagon River miles 100 – 41.5)
- Earl Park Landing through Trego Town Park Landing (Namekagon River miles 41.5 - 36.5)
- Trego Lake through Riverside Landing (Namekagon River mile 36.5 - 0, through to St. Croix River mile 131)

- St. Croix Flowage / Gordon Dam Park Landing to the confluence with the Namekagon River (St. Croix River mile 155 – 135.5 / Namekagon River mile 0)
- South of Riverside Landing to north of St. Croix State Park (St. Croix River miles 131 – 109.5)
- St. Croix State Park through Highway 70 (St. Croix River miles 109.5 - 88.5)
- South of Highway 70 through St. Croix Falls (St. Croix River miles 88.5 - 53.5)
- Taylors Falls through Osceola Landing (St. Croix River miles 53.5 - 44.5)
- South of Osceola Landing through the High Bridge (St. Croix River miles 44.5 - 29.5)
- Arcola Bluffs Day Use Area
- The High Bridge to the end of the Federal Zone / Boom Site (St. Croix River miles 28.5 - 25.25)
- Fairy Falls Day Use Area

Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge

This guideline of the visitor capacity process involves a review of existing direction and knowledge, including (1) applicable law and policy, (2) prior applicable planning and guidance, (3) existing conditions in the analysis area, (4) existing indicators, triggers, thresholds, and objectives, (5) applicable existing management strategies and actions, and (6) use patterns for commercial and other allocation categories if relevant.

Figure 4. Visitor capacity analysis areas

For this plan, the interdisciplinary team developed desired conditions, indicators, and thresholds, with particular attention to conditions and river values that must be protected and are most related to visitor use levels. The amount, timing, and distribution of visitor use throughout the Riverway influence both resource conditions and visitor experiences. An overview of visitor use issues and current use levels are provided for each analysis area below.

This plan evaluates amounts and types of use on NPS owned and managed lands and waters throughout the Riverway and specifies visitor capacities for both land and water use. The analysis is informed by existing data, guidance, and NPS managers' professional judgment. Visitor capacities have been identified based on the best available information and could be reviewed and updated in the future with additional information and planning.

Data Analysis Considerations

To identify the maximum amounts and types of use for each analysis area, a variety of data were reviewed to understand current conditions compared to desired conditions. A visitor study was conducted in 2015 by Southern Illinois University to understand river use and experience trends over time (by comparing to 1999 and 2002 data) and is described below. A 2017 Observational Research for St Croix National Scenic Riverway staff paper, prepared by the Department of Forest Resources at University of Minnesota, researched visitor use and proportion of non-commercial visitors, use patterns by time of day, and visitor behavior issues at Osceola, Earl Park, and Whispering Pines Landings, and is described in the associated analysis areas below. Similarly, a visitor study was conducted in 2019 by University of Minnesota to understand visitor perceptions and preferences at Osceola Landing and is described in the associated analysis area below. Since 2019, a new motorized boat launch was added at Osceola Landing. Additional parking, a paved walking path, a new orientation/waiting area, new vault toilets, and upgrades to the comfort station and other amenities were also part of the project. In 2024, a visitor study was conducted to assist park managers in understanding current utilization and visitor perception of park resources; preliminary results from the study were considered during the planning process.

Observational data, including visitor counts and types of use, from a 2023 monitoring effort were reviewed to understand current amounts and types of use at landings. Extensive river access point and parking lot data collected in summer 2024 were used to

estimate use levels at prioritized monitoring locations described in the people per viewscape indicator in chapter 4 of this plan. The data were collected by park staff and volunteers and included time of day, weather, and related visitor information including but not limited to people per viewscape, number of vehicles in parking lots, and number of allowable vessels putting in and taking out at river access points. Number of parking spaces per parking lot and campsite type were also confirmed as part of the 2024 monitoring effort to inform current parking lot and overnight capacities. Vehicle counts were converted into the number of people per vehicle by applying the park's 2.3 people-per-vehicle multiplier. Number of allowable vessel counts were converted into the number of people per vessel by applying the park's 2.1 people-per-boat multiplier. Similarly, the number of people observed at landings were multiplied by 6, since the average length of stay at landings is 6 hours per the park's visitor counting and reporting instructions. Lastly, parking lot capacities and the people per vehicle multiplier were used to estimate how many people in one day (PIOD) each lot could accommodate, assuming a 12-hour day for day use and a 2.5 time per day lot turnover rate. Complete Park Visitor Use Counting Procedures, which includes information on the multipliers described above, can be found on IRMA at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/FileDownload/33177>.

To understand current commercial use, 2023 data reported by current CUA holders were reviewed, and included information on the number of trips, number of hours, and number of days commercial operators provided services for visitors.

Visitor Use on the Namekagon River

■ Amounts of Use

A 2015 Namekagon River Use Levels and Visitor Survey study found that river use along the Namekagon River is primarily diffuse and low density, however a few landings are disproportionately intensively used. Overall, recreational use on the Namekagon River is unevenly distributed throughout the river, with tight clustering of river use into a few places and times. In this observational study, less than one hundred out of more than seventy-seven thousand observations noted a combined use level (putting in, taking out, and passing by) of more than ten craft within a fifteen-minute period. Just three periods of fifteen minutes each during the entire summer were observed to have between 40 and 60 total craft within 15 minutes. However, given the uneven distribution of use throughout the river, this result does not imply the absence of congestion. The study showed that some sections of the river are lightly used while more popular sections of the river must accommodate a large majority of overall river use on the Namekagon river (NPS 2015).

Further, the 2015 study found that 99.4% of all 15-minute observations indicated no human presence of any kind at the landing or passing by on the river, meaning that several of the less popular landings did not have any use during the 15-minute observations across several days throughout the summer. This result further demonstrates that most of the use along the Namekagon River occurs in a few popular sections, concentrating visitors into high-density use locations and

times of day and week. Table 1 below shows the average daily total river use from river access points during periods of high use (weekend days) observed in the 2015 study. These data are also incorporated in the Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge guideline in the associated analysis areas below (NPS 2015).

The comparatively high use density in sections of the river with concentrated use, such as at Earl Park Landing and Trout Run Landing, can lead to crowding, congestion, and user conflict, especially during peak use times of day and week. Crowding, congestion, and user conflict are exacerbated when water levels are low and there is less available area to disperse visitor use, resulting in even higher density of use in certain sections of the river.

The 2015 study also compared peak total watercraft per river mile (use density) with use density data from 1999 and 2002 to identify use trends over time. The study found that overall, use on the Namekagon River has remained similar to use levels observed in 2002 and have increased relative to 1999 levels. Areas where use has increased compared to both 1999 and 2002 use levels are concentrated in downstream sections, specifically from County K Landing to Namekagon Trail Landing. Areas where use has decreased compared to both 1999 and 2002 use levels are concentrated in upstream sections, specifically from Earl Park Landing to Namekagon Dam Landing, with the exception of the area in and around Earl Park Landing which remains a standout high use density area (NPS 2015).

Table 18. Average Daily Total River Use by River Access Point and by Vessel type

Day Type	River Access Point Sampling Site	Average Daily Total Craft	Average Daily Total Private Craft	Average Daily Total Commercial Operator Craft
Weekend day	Big Bend Landing	0.0	0.0	0.0
Weekend day	Cap Creek Landing	2.0	2.0	0.0
Weekend day	County Road K Landing	5.5	4.5	1.0
Weekend day	County Road M Landing	2.0	2.0	0.0
Weekend day	Earl Park Landing	122.0	13.0	109.0
Weekend day	Fritz Landing	1.0	4.0	0.0
Weekend day	Groat Landing	1.0	1.0	0.0
Weekend day	Larsen Landing	0.0	0.0	0.0
Weekend day	McDowell Bridge Landing	21.0	10.0	11.0
Weekend day	Namekagon Dam Landing	0.0	0.0	0.0
Weekend day	Namekagon Trail Landing	12.0	9.0	3.0
Weekend day	North Springbrook Landing	0.0	0.0	0.0
Weekend day	Phillipi Bridge Landing	1.0	1.0	0.0
Weekend day	Phipps Landing	1.0	1.0	0.0
Weekend day	Springbrook Landing	6.0	4.0	2.0
Weekend day	Stinnett Landing	0.0	0.0	0.0
Weekend day	Trout Run Landing	27.0	3.0	24.0
Weekend day	Whispering Pines Landing	54.0	34.0	20.0

■ Types of Use

The 2015 Namekagon River Use Levels and Visitor Survey study analyzed daily activity information from 2002 and 2015 to identify trends and changes in types of visitor use. In areas where 2002 data was available, the 2015 study found that canoeing had diminished at 7 landings along the Namekagon River: Phillipi Bridge, Stinnett, Groat, Earl Park, Whispering Pines, McDowell, and Namekagon Trail Landings. In 2015, canoeing had decreased by half at the Namekagon Trail Landing compared to canoe use in 2002 and is less than 20% of 2002 rates at Whispering Pines Landing (in 2015) (NPS 2015).

The 2015 study further found that compared to use levels documented in 1999, use of tubes and rafts increased at Earl Park, Stinnett, and Whispering Pines Landings in 2015. In this study, “rafts” refers to individual tubes lashed together, light pool rafts, and rarely larger multi-person rafts. The study also found that unlike canoeing, kayak use increased slightly at most sites and replaced canoe traffic levels. Boating, including personal watercraft and johnboats, decreased at three sites since 2002 to only one observed boat in 2015. Table 2 below compares use levels by type in 2002 and 2015 (NPS 2015).

Table 19. Average Daily Watercraft by Types and Landing, 2002 vs. 2015

Landing	Canoes (2002/2015)	Tubes & Rafts (2002/2015)	Kayaks (2002/2015)	Boats (2002/2015)
Phillipi Bridge Landing	6.00 / 0.28	0.00 / 0.00	2.00 / 0.00	0.00 / 0.00
Stinnett Landing	3.00 / 1.71	0.00 / 3.14	1.25 / 4.57	0.00 / 0.00
Groat Landing	15.40 / 0.57	15.40 / 0.00	2.20 / 0.57	3.60 / 0.00
Earl Park Landing	16.72 / 2.28	1.72 / 52.5	4.45 / 4.85	0.00 / 0.00
Whispering Pines Landing	17.5 / 2.85	0.83 / 12.42	1.50 / 4.71	0.16 / 0.28
McDowell Landing	7.00 / 2.57	0.27 / 1.42	1.72 / 4.57	0.00 / 0.00
Namekagon Trail Landing	10.88 / 4.28	0.33 / 0.00	0.77 / 1.42	0.11 / 0.00

■ Visitor Experience

The 2015 Namekagon River Use Levels and Visitor Survey study asked visitors about their experience recreating on the Namekagon River. One of the primary research questions of the survey centered upon understanding potential conflicts experienced by river users on the Namekagon River. Of the 35 campers asked, 0 reported having direct, onsite conflict with other campers during their trip. Of the 33 visitors asked, 0 reported having conflict with other river users, however surveys were not conducted in the area between Earl Park Landing and Trego Town Park Landing, which has the highest amount and density of use.

In order to assess perceptions of crowding from additional, perhaps more robust perspectives, visitors were asked about their perceived ideal river use level conditions. Half of respondents indicated the use level they encountered on the Namekagon River matched their ideal trip while 47.1% indicated their ideal trip would involve fewer encounters on the river. These responses imply that an ideal day on the Namekagon River would involve the same or slightly lower perceived use levels. Research on crowding perceptions suggests some visitors may unconsciously revise their expectation of encounter rates with other river users in a process of rationalization. This effect would tend to shift reported expectations toward the most neutral “as expected” middle response (NPS 2015).

Identify the Limiting Attribute

This guideline involves identifying the attribute(s) that most constrains the analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use. The limiting or constraining attribute(s) may vary by analysis areas based on specific resources and desired conditions of the area. The interdisciplinary team considered all potential attributes that would constrain the analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use and identified the specific limiting attribute(s) most meaningful in guiding the analysis for each analysis area. Further, the interdisciplinary team identified the most relevant indicators related to the limiting attribute(s) to ensure desired conditions are achieved or maintained.

Identify Capacity

Outputs from guidelines one through three were reviewed to understand current conditions compared to desired conditions to identify the maximum amounts and types of use for each analysis area. This review included applying any relevant and available monitoring data, visitor use patterns, research, lessons learned from comparable management areas, and professional judgments to inform the visitor capacity identification process. Through this analysis, the interdisciplinary team identified the maximum levels of visitor use that will maintain and achieve desired conditions in each analysis area. As visitor capacity is based on the conditions of the analysis area, visitor capacity varies by location. Similarly, as commercial allocation is based on the conditions of the analysis area, commercial allocation also varies by location.



The interdisciplinary team identified the most meaningful metric to manage visitor capacity and commercial use in each analysis area. Visitor capacity metrics used in the analysis include people in one day (PIOD). Commercial allocation metrics used in the analysis include percent of total use. Lastly, management strategies and actions have been identified to implement visitor capacity and commercial allocation in each analysis area.

Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity in all analysis areas include:

- Enhance relationships with partners throughout the Riverway.
- Increase NPS presence and visitor interactions.

VISITOR CAPACITY IDENTIFICATION BY ANALYSIS AREA

Earl Park Landing through Trego Town Park Landing

Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge

The analysis area encompasses Namekagon River miles 41.5 - 36.5, spanning from east of Earl Park Landing (just east of North Road) to just west of Trego Town Park Landing (east side of Highway 53).

Primary use in this analysis area includes camping, fishing, hunting, swimming, photography, picnicking, canoeing, kayaking, tubing and drift boating. The Earl Park Landing area is especially popular for day use, and the parking lot is often full during weekends in the summer months. When the parking lot is full,

visitors park along the road in undesignated areas and walk to the day use area. This increases the risk of pedestrian vehicular conflict and poses a safety risk, particularly for visitors walking in the roadway. This analysis area also includes the Namekagon River / Trego Visitor Center. Monthly visitor center use is highest in the summer months, with an average of 22 PIOD in July 2024 (IRMA).

Commercial services include tube, canoe, and kayak rentals, as well as guided fishing. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 75% of total use in this analysis area.

Visitors can access the Namekagon River via 2 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2015, 2017, 2023, and 2024 studies and monitoring efforts, it's estimated that up to 5130 PIOD could use the landings in this analysis area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. However, using observational data and assuming a 2.5 time per day parking lot overturn rate, it's estimated that just under 1000 PIOD visit this analysis area on average.

A 2017 Observational Research for St Croix National Scenic Riverway staff paper, prepared by the Department of Forest Resources at University of Minnesota, found that Earl Park Landing sees overall moderate visitor use, with visitors present in 42% of observations. At the time of observation, the average number of visitors at one time was 3, reaching 58 visitors at one time during higher use periods. Of the total number of visitors observed, commercial users accounted for up to 83% of total use between 10am and 2pm.

Tube use was most popular (46%), followed by relaxing (19%) and launching canoes (10%) (NPS 2017).

There are 12 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 104 PIOD for overnight use. Of the 12 campsites, 11 are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each, and 1 is a group campsite that can accommodate up to 16 people.

NPS staff estimate current use levels average 1500 PIOD in this analysis area.

Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators

The attributes that most constrain this analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use are the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding and congestion; and natural resources as it relates to soil erosion and habitat degradation. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area include visitors can expect fewer opportunities for solitude, as encounters with other visitors and associated noise levels are frequent in this management area. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in this analysis area include visitors can expect to encounter a small number of other visitors engaged in a variety of activities during nonpeak times, and during peak use periods there may be large numbers of other users and boats, including low-speed motorboats. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety, user conflicts, and encounter rates. Further, as density of use increases, the risk of user

conflicts increases as user groups compete for space on the water. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. Additionally, the natural topography of the river constrains the area's ability to accommodate use, particularly in areas where the river is narrow and there is less space to disperse use. When water levels are low, there is less available area to disperse visitor use, which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use. As water levels fluctuate and areas become challenging to navigate and/or impassible, impacts including soil erosion and habitat degradation increase as visitors drag their watercraft along the shoreline to access navigable waters. Therefore, the natural topography of the river and water level fluctuations are secondary limiting attributes related to the quality of visitor experience.

The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are people per viewscape (PPV), number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.

Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies

Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 1500 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experience, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities to encounter a small number of other visitors engaged in a variety of activities during nonpeak times, and during peak use periods there may be large numbers of other users and boats, including low-speed motorboats.

The National Park Service would develop a new river access point on NPS land east of the Namekagon River Visitor Center in Trego near the adjacent Highway 63 Bridger, helping to disperse use and enhance the visitor experience in this highly used section of the Namekagon River. The National Park Service would also redesign the Earl Park Landing driveway and parking area to provide better traffic flow and add additional parking areas, also helping to disperse use and enhance visitor access and experience. Though these actions would provide additional opportunities for river access in this analysis area, it would not result in changes in the amounts and types of use that could be accommodated while achieving desired conditions, since use could still be dispersed in a way that mitigates impacts to the quality of visitor experience with the addition of these opportunities. These actions primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 2000 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 55% of total use.

Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include:

- Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.
- Increase education and promote other nearby landings with less visitor use.

Potential Future Management Strategies

- Relocate or remove the Earl Park Landing camping area.



Taylor's Falls through Osceola Landing

Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge

This analysis area encompasses St. Croix River miles 53.5 - 44.5, spanning from the St. Croix Falls Hydroelectric Dam, through Osceola, to river mile 44.5.

Primary use in this area includes fishing, canoeing, kayaking, camping, hiking, hunting, picnicking, sunbathing, and motorized boating.

Commercial services include canoe and kayak rentals, and motorized and paddleboat tours.

Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 50% of total use in this analysis area.

Visitors can access the St. Croix River via 4 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2017, 2023, and 2024 studies and monitoring efforts, it's estimated that up to 7000 PIOD could use the landings in this analysis area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. However, using observational data and assuming a 2.5 time per day parking lot overturn rate, it's estimated that up to 3500 PIOD visit this analysis area. Data from studies and recent monitoring show that the immediate area in and around Osceola Landing is by far the most used area throughout the entire analysis area.

A 2017 Observational Research for St Croix National Scenic Riverway staff paper, prepared by the Department of Forest Resources at University of Minnesota, found that Osceola Landing sees the highest levels of visitor use when compared to Earl Park and Whispering Pines Landings, with visitors present in 64% of observations. At the time of observation, the average number of visitors at one time was 6, reaching 60 visitors at one time during higher use periods. Of the total number of visitors observed, commercial users accounted for up to 69% of total use between 10am and 6pm. Relaxing was the most popular use (43%) followed by taking out canoes (14%). Many visitors were observed to be waiting for shuttle pick up, indicating a high percent of commercial users as reflected in the data above (NPS 2017).

A 2019 Visitor Perceptions & Preferences at Osceola Landing staff paper, prepared by the Department of Forest Resources at University of Minnesota, found that visitors primarily engage in boating-related activities, with 86.6% of visitors launching or landing a boat. Canoes (62%) and kayaks (34.4%) are the most common watercraft used. Similar to the 2017 study, commercial users accounted for up to 64.1% of total use. Crowding perceptions are generally low, as most visitors did not feel crowded at the boat ramp, landing area, or parking lot. A small percentage of visitors (12-20%) reported that the number or behavior of other visitors interfered with their experience, with the most commonly impacted experience being solitude. About 10% of visitors reported witnessing or experiencing unsafe conditions, primarily on the river or while landing boats. Overall, this data suggests visitor perceptions of crowding are meeting desired conditions for the quiet waters management area, which states visitors usually will encounter a small number of other people during nonpeak times, but during peak use periods (i.e. summer weekends) large numbers of other users and boats may be encountered. Since 2019, a new motorized boat launch was added at Osceola Landing. By separating the launching and landing of motorized and nonmotorized watercraft, the project addressed safety issues and congestion among pedestrians, motorized boaters, and non-motorized boaters. Additional parking, a paved walking path, a new orientation/waiting area, new vault toilets, and upgrades to the comfort station and other amenities were also part of the project.

There are 5 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 40 PIOD for overnight use. All of the campsites are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each.

NPS staff estimate current use levels average 2400 PIOD in this analysis area.

Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators

The attributes that most constrain this analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use are the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding, congestion, and visitor safety; and natural resources as it relates to sensitive species. Desired conditions for the area in and around St. Croix Falls to Taylors Falls (Focused Development and Natural Waters Management Areas) include visitors have less opportunities for solitude and more frequent encounters with other visitors. Desired conditions for the on-river experience include visitors experience a sense of peace and quiet and can expect few encounters with other watercraft. Desired conditions for the Conservation Land Management Zone throughout the rest of the analysis area, with the exception of the Small Town Historic Management Zone in and around Lower Lake, include visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude. Desired conditions for the on-river experience throughout the rest of the analysis area (Quiet Waters Management Area) include visitors usually will encounter a small number of other people engaged in "low-impact" activities during nonpeak times, but during peak use periods (i.e. summer weekends) large numbers of other users and

boats may be encountered; and, opportunities for solitude will consequently vary from low opportunities during peak times to moderate opportunities during nonpeak times.

Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience throughout this analysis area. Further, the shallow depth of the river throughout the analysis area, specifically near Folsom Island and in the area from Taylors Falls through the Dalles, constrains the area's ability to accommodate both motorized and non-motorized use. In these shallow areas, there is less available area to disperse visitor use which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use. As density of use increases, the risk of user conflicts increases as user groups compete for space on the water. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. Further, the area from Taylors Falls through the Dalles is extremely rocky and often makes this area impassible for canoes and kayaks, a challenge that is exacerbated when water levels are low. Therefore, the natural bathymetry of the river and associated water levels are secondary limiting attributes related to the quality of visitor experience.

In shallow areas of the river, and/or when water levels are low, sensitive mussel habitat is exposed to impacts from visitor use. Visitor foot traffic and boat trampling affects this already imperiled species. As use levels increase, impacts to mussel populations increase from the increase in boat launching and visitor foot traffic. Therefore, sensitive natural resources constrain this area's ability to accommodate use.

In the area around Osceola Landing (Conservation Land and Quiet Waters Management Areas), desired conditions include visitors can expect to encounter a small number of other visitors engaged in a variety of activities during nonpeak times, however large numbers of other users may be encountered during peak use times. Though higher encounter rates are expected here, crowding, congestion, and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety, user conflicts, and encounter rates. The dynamic bathymetry of the river with frequent flooding that moves sediment can both affect the types and amounts of access that is available throughout the year. The movement of sediment can move the thalweg, or deepest part of the river, modifying the area where motorboats can navigate when water levels are low. Further, the movement of sediment often creates new sandbars in some areas and removes them in others. In this way, the movement of sediment frequently changes the bathymetry of the river, which changes where different types of use can be accommodated or accessed. Overall, the attributes that most constrain this area's ability to accommodate use is the quality of visitor experience and the bathymetry of the river.

The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.

Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies

Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can be maintained at current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 2400 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experience, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities to encounter a small number of other visitors engaged in a variety of activities during nonpeak times, and during peak use periods there may be large numbers of other users and boats, including low-speed motorboats.

The National Park Service would explore opportunities to partner with Franconia on future infrastructure improvements at Franconia Landing, and complete rehabilitation of Osceola Landing after completion of the major bridge project adjacent to Osceola Landing. These actions would enhance access and experience in this analysis area. The National Park Service would also expand parking at Ridgeview Trails, helping to disperse use and enhance the visitor experience. Though these actions would provide additional parking in this analysis area, it would not result in changes in the amounts and types of use that could be accommodated while achieving desired conditions, and use could still be dispersed in a way that mitigates impacts to the quality of visitor experience with the addition of these opportunities. These actions primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and

congestion and contributing to desired conditions. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 2400 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 50% of total use.

Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include:

- Increase interpretive programming about critical species.
- Collaborate with Wisconsin and Minnesota Interstate State Parks to manage use in areas in and around the state parks. Develop and implement strategies to manage visitor expectations in this area.
- Require reservations for picnic areas at Osceola Landing.
- Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.
- Implement a group camping fee for Catfish Slough at Osceola Landing.
- Use limited plowing and physical area closures during winter as needed.

Potential Future Management Strategies

- Remove the Catfish Slough group campsite at Osceola Landing.



South of Osceola Landing through the High Bridge

Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge

This analysis area encompasses St. Croix River miles 44.5 - 29.5, spanning from just south of Osceola Landing to just south of the High Bridge.

Primary use in this analysis area includes motorboating, swimming, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, camping, fishing, bow fishing, and hunting.

Commercial services include tube, canoe, kayak, and paddleboard rentals, a marina, and guided fishing. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 20% of total use in this analysis area.

Visitors can access the St. Croix River via 4 river access points. Using visitor counts from 2023 and 2024 monitoring efforts, it's estimated that up to 170 PIOD use the landings in this analysis area when length of

stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. This analysis area has many private river access points, including private boat launches and undeveloped launching areas on private property.

There are 15 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 120 PIOD for overnight use. All 15 campsites are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each.

NPS staff estimate current use levels average 250 PIOD in this analysis area.

Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators

The attributes that most constrain this analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use are natural resources as it relates to water quality. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area include there will be small numbers of people, and the river and surrounding biological communities will dominate the user experience. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in this analysis area include recreational uses leave the surface of the river largely undisturbed.

Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for water surface. As use increases, so does the disturbance of the surface waters. Further, the natural topography of the river constrains the area's ability to accommodate use, particularly in areas where the river is narrow and there is less space to disperse use. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. In these narrow and/or shallow areas of the river, foot traffic, canoes, kayaks, and motorized boats can churn up sediments, suspending particles that would otherwise settle (increasing turbidity). In addition to surface water disturbance, crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety and user conflicts. As density of use increases, particularly in narrow areas of the river, the risk of user conflicts increases as user groups compete for space on the water. Therefore, the natural topography of the river and the quality of visitor experience are secondary limiting attributes, in addition to natural resources.

The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are people per viewscape (PPV), number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.

Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies

Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions.

Current use levels of 250 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for natural resources, and current conditions allow for the river and surrounding biological communities to dominate the user experience.

The National Park Service would evaluate Somerset Landing for opportunities to improve natural conditions and/or enhance river access. Though these actions would enhance river access in this analysis area, it would not result in changes in the amounts and types of use that could be accommodated while achieving desired conditions. Similarly, upon the state's completion of construction of a new accessible launch at William O'Brian State Park the current visitor experience would be enhanced by dispersing use throughout the analysis area with the addition of an accessible launch, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 350 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 30% of total use.

Additional management Strategies to implement visitor capacity include:

- Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.
- Collaborate with William O'Brian State Park to manage use in areas in and around the state park. Develop and implement strategies to manage visitor expectations in this area.



The High Bridge to the End of the Federal Zone / Boom Site

Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge

This analysis area encompasses St. Croix River miles 28.5 - 25.25, spanning from the High Bridge to the end of the Federal Zone. This analysis area does not include the Arcola Bluffs Day Use Area, or the Fairy Falls Day Use Area.

Primary use in this analysis area includes motorboating, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, water-skiing, camping, fishing, bow fishing, hiking, hunting, picnicking, and scenic viewing. Ice climbing and ice fishing are popular winter activities.

Commercial services include canoe and kayak rentals and guided fishing. There are two marinas that provide services such as slip rental and fuel for motorized boats. Paddleboat tours originating in Stillwater,

MN, south of the federal zone, sometimes venture north into the federal zone for a brief duration of the tour when water levels allow. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 40% of total use in this analysis area.

Visitors can access the St. Croix River via 2 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2023 and 2024 monitoring efforts, it's estimated that up to 1000 PIOD could use the landings in this analysis area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. However, using observational data and assuming a 2.5 time per day parking lot turnover rate, it's estimated that around 750 PIOD visit this analysis area on average.

There are no designated campsites in this analysis area, however camping is permitted on islands. Large groups have been observed camping on the islands, with some visitors leaving camping gear on the island to "reserve" their camping site. NPS staff estimate that current overnight use reaches up to 200 PIOD during peak season.

NPS staff estimate current use levels average 750 PIOD in this analysis area.

Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators

The attributes that most constrain this analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use are the quality of visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety and user conflicts; and natural resources as it relates to soil erosion

and habitat degradation. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area include small numbers of people, and Riverway users may anticipate moderate noise levels. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in this analysis area include users will encounter moderate numbers of people and watercraft on the water, a variety of boat types may be present, and boats may travel at different speeds but tend toward slower speeds. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety, user conflicts, and encounter rates. As density of use increases, the risk of user conflicts increases as user groups compete for space on the water, particularly motorized and non-motorized users. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. NPS staff have observed high presence of motorized users can displace non-motorized users due to wakes. Visitor safety is compromised when several motorboats travel at high speeds, creating hazardous wake conditions for non-motorized users.

On land, particularly in areas popular for island camping, human waste poses a safety concern for visitors and diminishes the quality of visitor experience. Further, high levels of visitor use in popular camping areas causes soil erosion and can lead to tree die off, creating potentially hazardous conditions for visitors camping near snags, or dead trees. These visitor-caused impacts result in damage to natural resources and can compromise visitor safety, diminishing the quality of visitor experience. Therefore, natural resource protection constrains the amounts and types of use this analysis area can accommodate.

The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.

Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies

Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 750 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experience, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities to encounter moderate numbers of people and watercraft on the water. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 1000 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 40% of total use.

Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include:

- Designate campsites on islands below the High Bridge and require reservations.
- Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.
- Add floating signage regarding human waste disposal, camping regulations, and other key messages around Mile Long Island.
- Add a floating (or similar) boundary sign so that the public knows where the park boundary is located.

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Other Locations

Table 20. Visitor Capacity for Other Locations

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
Namekagon Dam to Earl Park Landing Namekagon River miles 100–41.5	The analysis area encompasses Namekagon River miles 100 – 41.5, spanning from the Namekagon Dam east through the town of Hayward, to east of North Road (just east of Earl Park Landing). Primary use in this analysis area includes fishing, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, tubing, drift boating, and hunting. Commercial services include tube, canoe, kayak, and paddleboard rentals, and guided paddle and guided fishing. Cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are popular winter activities. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 50% of total use in this analysis area. Primary visitor use on Lake Hayward, specifically, includes fishing, picnicking, canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding, and motorized boating. Cross-country skiing, ice fishing, and snowmobiling are popular winter activities. Commercial services on Lake Hayward include canoe, kayak, paddleboard, and motorized boat rentals. The boat launch on Lake Hayward is owned by the town of Hayward, and private landowners have docks and river access on the lake. Special events in this analysis area, particularly in the area in and around Lake Hayward, include the American Birkebeiner Cross Country Ski Race (“Birkie”), Lumberjack World Championships, and Musky Festival. The Birke attract tens of thousands of visitors to the area, though it’s estimated up to 15,000 PIOD actually visit NPS owned lands and waters, and use is spread out throughout the day. Visitors can access the Namekagon River via 18 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2015, 2023, and 2024 studies and monitoring efforts, it’s estimated that up to 770 PIOD could use the landings in this analysis area. There are 26 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 288 PIOD for overnight use. Of the 26 campsites, 16 are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each, and 10 are group campsites that can accommodate up to 16 people each.	The attribute that most constrains this analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding, congestion, and visitor safety. Desired conditions for this analysis area, with the exception of the area in and around Lake Hayward, include visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude; and that visitors experience a sense of peace and quiet. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area’s ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety, user conflict, and encounter rates. Further, the natural topography of the river constrains the area’s ability to accommodate use, particularly in areas where the river is narrow and there is less space to disperse use. When water levels are low, there is even less available area to disperse visitor use, which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. When water levels are high, bridges become a hazard to visitor safety as there is less available space to safely navigate under the bridges. Further, naturally occurring stretches of rocky rapids pose a greater risk to visitor safety during periods of high water. Therefore, the natural topography of the river and water level fluctuations are secondary limiting attributes related to the quality of visitor experience. In the area in and around Lake Hayward, desired conditions include less opportunities for solitude and more frequent encounters with other visitors. Though higher encounter rates are expected here, congestion and concentration of high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area’s ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety. Therefore, the attribute that most constrains this area’s ability to accommodate use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to congestion and visitor safety. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels while achieving and maintaining desired conditions. Current use levels of 1200 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experience, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities for quiet and solitude. The National Park Service would increase interpretive opportunities at Hayward and Pacwawong Flowage. Though river access steps at Springbrook Landing would be removed, a new river overlook would be established for day use and access to both Pacwawong Flowage and Eagle’s Landings would be enhanced. These actions primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use and use types throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions The National Park Service would provide additional hiking and/or interpretive opportunities at Cable and Phipps Landings. Further, parking would be expanded at Big Bend Landing. Though these actions would provide additional opportunities for recreation in this analysis area, they would not result in changes in the amounts and types of use that could be accommodated while achieving desired conditions, and use could still be dispersed in a way that mitigates impacts to the quality of visitor experience with the addition of these opportunities. These actions primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 2400 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 40% of total use. Up to 30,000 PIOD could be accommodated in the area in and around Lake Hayward during the Birkie with additional park staff and partner support to manage use and mitigate impacts to the experience.

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
Namekagon Dam to Earl Park Landing (continued) Namekagon River miles 100–41.5	A 2015 Namekagon River Use Levels and Visitor Survey study analyzed data to understand how river use has changed along the Namekagon River, quantified by the number of watercrafts per mile. The study concluded that from Big Bend Landing to Trego Town Park Landing, use density has continued to increase rapidly while areas downstream (Whispering Pines Landing to Namekagon Trail Landing) and upstream (Earl Park Landing to Stinnett Landing) showed much slower growth or even slight decreases in use density (note Trego Town Park Landing and Earl Park Landing is not included in this analysis area). In 1999, Stinnett Landing to Earl Park Landing averaged 3.3 watercraft per mile. In 2015, a smaller section upstream of Stinnett was surveyed, from Big Bend Landing to Earl Park Landing, and averaged 31.1 watercraft per mile, a use density increase of 942% compared to 1999; meaning, in 2015, Stinnett Landing to Groat Landing had overall low use density, while just downstream from Stinnett Landing at Big Bend Landing to Earl Park Landing, use density has grown sharply since 1999 (NPS 2015). NPS staff estimate current use levels average 1200 PIOD in this analysis area.		Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: • Explore opportunities to move CUA operations north of Lake Hayward to disperse visitor use. • Explore opportunities to move CUA operations north of Earl Park Landing to disperse visitor use. • Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented. • Explore opportunities to collaborate with partners to groom cross-country ski trails in the winter season. • Explore opportunities for partnering to remove aquatic vegetation in Lake Hayward to enhance recreational opportunities. • Explore opportunities to work with partners to groom cross-country ski trails during the winter and promote other winter recreational activities. • Improve NPS identity branding and messaging, particularly during special events like the cross-country ski race and lumberjack show and world championships. • Collaborate with local agencies and county jurisdictions to enhance relationships and increase routine patrols.
Trego Lake through Riverside Landing Namekagon River miles 36.5–0, then St. Croix River miles 135.5–131	This analysis area encompasses Namekagon River miles 36.5 to St. Croix River mile 131, spanning from just west of Trego Town Park Landing through the confluence of the Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers, and south through Riverside (just south of Riverside Landing). Primary use in this analysis area includes fishing, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, tubing, and hunting. Commercial services include tube and kayak rentals, guided paddling, and guided fishing. Snowmobiling is a popular winter activity. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 10% of total use in this analysis area. Primary use on Trego Lake includes canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding, and motorized use, UTV/ATV use. Snowmobiling is a popular winter activity. The topography of the river in the Trego Lake area and water level fluctuations can make it challenging to float during lower water conditions as some sections of the river have a rocky bottom and are shallow.	The attribute that most constrains this analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding, congestion, and visitor safety. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area, with the exception of the area in and around Trego Lake and Riverside Landing, include visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in this analysis area include visitors experience a sense of peace and quiet and can expect few encounters with other watercraft. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area’s ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience throughout the analysis area, regardless of management area, as it relates to visitor safety, user conflicts, and encounter rates. Further, the natural topography of the river constrains the area’s ability to accommodate use, particularly in areas where the river is narrow and there is less space to disperse use. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. When water levels are low, there is even less available area to disperse visitor use, which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use. When water levels are high, bridges become a hazard to visitor safety as there is less available space to safely navigate under the bridges. Therefore, the natural topography of the river and water level fluctuations are secondary limiting attributes related to the quality of visitor experience.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can be maintained at current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 1400 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experience, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities for quiet and solitude. The National Park Service would increase the parking lot size at Whispering Pines Landing to provide additional parking for day use and remove infrastructure at West Howell Landing. Though river access would be removed at West Howell Landing, additional opportunities for day use would be provided through the parking expansion at Whispering Pines Landing, and the existing watercraft ramp would be replaced thereby enhancing the ability to access the river at Whispering Pines Landing. These actions primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions.

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
Trego Lake through Riverside Landing (continued) Namekagon River miles 36.5–0, then St. Croix River miles 135.5–131	Visitors can access the Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers via 9 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2015, 2023, and 2024 studies and monitoring efforts, it's estimated that up to 2100 PIOD use the landings in this analysis area during peak use times when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. However, using observational data and assuming a 2.5 time per day parking lot overturn rate, it's estimated that just under 1500 PIOD visit this analysis area on average. There are 41 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 424 PIOD for overnight use. Of the 41 campsites, 29 are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each, and 12 are group campsites that can accommodate up to 16 people each. A 2015 Namekagon River Use Levels and Visitor Survey study analyzed data to understand how river use has changed along the Namekagon River, quantified by the number of watercrafts per mile. In 2002, the Earl Park to Jack's section of the Namekagon River had a use density more than twenty times greater than the next most-dense section, County K to Whispering Pines, of 113 craft per mile. Density here increased from just 2.9 craft per mile observed in 1999, just three years prior to 2002. Combining inputs at Earl Park Landing with upstream inputs of craft passing by the landing, the 2015 study estimated maximum possible total river user density from Earl Park Landing to Jack's at 826.0 craft per river mile (186.7 private, 640.2 outfitter). This would represent about seven times as much more total river use for this section than observed in 2002 during peak times of the day and week (weekend days, midday). On the busiest days, field staff observed craft were launching at rates of up to several per minute for hours at a time at Earl Park Landing and noted that "Earl Park (landing) was far too busy in 2015 to verify outfitters (vs. private users)." (NPS 2015) NPS staff estimate current use levels average 1400 PIOD in this analysis area.	In the area in and around Trego Lake and Riverside, desired conditions include less opportunities for solitude and more frequent encounters with other visitors. Though higher encounter rates are expected here, congestion and concentration of high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety. In addition, there is a higher risk for user conflict, particularly with passive land recreation users and ATV use. Therefore, the attribute that most constrains this area's ability to accommodate use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to congestion and visitor safety. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.	The National Park Service would increase interpretive opportunities, particularly at Riverside Landing, and expand parking and river access at McDowell Landing. Though this action would provide additional opportunities for river access in this analysis area, it would not result in changes in the amounts and types of use that could be accommodated while achieving desired conditions, since use could still be dispersed in a way that mitigates impacts to the quality of visitor experience with the addition of these opportunities. These actions primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 1400 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 20% of total use. Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: • Consider delineating parking in areas with gravel or dirt parking lots. • Collaborate with local agencies and county jurisdictions to enhance relationships and increase routine patrols. • Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
St. Croix Flowage / Gordan Dam Park Landing to the confluence with the Namekagon River St. Croix River miles 155–135.5; Namekagon River mile 0	This analysis area encompasses St. Croix River miles 155 – 135.5, spanning from the St. Croix Flowage near Gordan Dam Park Landing to just north of the confluence of the Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers. Primary use in this area includes fishing, canoeing, kayaking, camping, hiking (primarily on North Country Trail), hunting, UTV/ATV use, picnicking, and dark night sky educational programs. Commercial services include canoe and kayak rentals, guided paddling, and guided fishing. Winter use includes snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 10% of total use in this analysis area. Visitors can access the St. Croix River via 6 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2023 and 2024 monitoring efforts, it's estimated that up to 30 PIOD use the landings in this analysis area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. There are 7 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 80 PIOD for overnight use. Of the 7 campsites, 4 are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each, and 3 are group campsites that can accommodate up to 16 people each. NPS staff estimate current use levels average 150 PIOD in this analysis area.	The attributes that most constrain this analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding, congestion, and visitor safety; and natural resources as it relates to soil erosion and habitat degradation. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area include visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude. Desired conditions for the on-river experience throughout this analysis area include visitors experience a sense of peace and quiet and can expect few encounters with other watercraft. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety and encounter rates. Further, the natural topography of the river constrains the area's ability to accommodate use, particularly in areas where the river is narrow and there is less space to disperse use. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. When water levels are low, there is even less available area to disperse visitor use, which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use. Low water levels can also lead to impassible and unsafe areas of the river when large rocks and boulders are exposed. When water levels are high, bridges become a hazard to visitor safety as there is less available space to safely navigate under the bridges. Therefore, the natural topography of the river and water level fluctuations are secondary limiting attributes related to the quality of visitor experience. Desired conditions for this analysis area also include shoreline management emphasizes an undisturbed appearance. As water levels fluctuate and areas become challenging to navigate and/or impassible, impacts including soil erosion and habitat degradation increase as visitors drag their watercraft along the shoreline to access navigable waters. Therefore, natural resource protection constrains the amounts and types of use this analysis area can accommodate. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 150 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experiences, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities for quiet and solitude. The National Park Service would upgrade amenities at the CCC bridge, which would enhance current visitor experience. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 300 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 20% of total use. Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: • Collaborate with local agencies and county jurisdictions to enhance relationships and increase routine patrols. • Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
South of Riverside Landing to north of St. Croix State Park St. Croix River miles 131–109.5	This analysis area encompasses St. Croix River miles 131 – 109.5, spanning from just south of Riverside Landing to just north of the confluence of the St. Croix and Clam Rivers. Primary use in this area includes camping, canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding, picnicking, fishing, hunting, ATV/UTV/OHV use, tubing, and hiking, as well as motorized boating and drift boating. Commercial services include tube, canoe, and kayak rentals, guided paddling, and guided fishing. Winter use includes snowmobiling and ice fishing. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 30% of total use in this analysis area. Visitors can access the St. Croix River via 6 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2024 monitoring efforts, it’s estimated that up to 140 PIOD use the landings in this analysis area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. There are 7 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 72 PIOD for overnight use. Of the 7 campsites, 5 are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each, and 2 are group campsites that can accommodate up to 16 people each. NPS staff estimate current use levels average 200 PIOD in this analysis area.	The attributes that most constrain this analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding, congestion, and visitor safety; and natural resources as it relates to soil erosion and habitat degradation. Desired conditions for the on-land experience this analysis area include visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in the Natural Waters management area include and that visitors experience a sense of peace and quiet. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in the Variable Waters analysis area include visitors can expect to encounter a small number of other visitors during nonpeak times and can expect to encounter higher numbers of other visitors during peak times. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area’s ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety. Further, when water levels are low, there is less available area to disperse visitor use, which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. Low water levels can also lead to impassible and unsafe areas of the river when large rocks and boulders are exposed, especially for motorized users. When water levels are high, fast flowing currents in areas of the river with tributaries can make the river challenging and at times hazardous to navigate for both motorized and non-motorized users. Therefore, water level fluctuation is a secondary limiting attribute related to the quality of visitor experience. Desired conditions for this analysis area also include shoreline management emphasizes an undisturbed appearance. As water levels fluctuate and areas become challenging to navigate and/or impassible, impacts including soil erosion and habitat degradation increase as visitors drag their watercraft along the sandy shoreline to access more navigable waters. Therefore, natural resource protection constrains the amounts and types of use this analysis area can accommodate. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 200 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experiences, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities for quiet and solitude. Actions implemented in this analysis area would maintain and enhance current visitor opportunities. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 300 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 40% of total use. Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: • Collaborate with local agencies and county jurisdictions to enhance relationships and increase routine patrols. • Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
St. Croix State Park through Highway 70 St. Croix River miles 109.5–88.5	This analysis area encompasses St. Croix River miles 109.5 - 88.5, spanning from just north of the confluence of the St. Croix and Clam Rivers to south of Highway 70, just north of Raspberry Landing. Primary use in this area includes camping, canoeing, kayaking, picnicking, fishing, hunting, ATV/UTV/OHV use, tubing, and hiking, as well as motorized boating and drift boating. Commercial services include tube, canoe, and kayaks rentals, guided paddling, guided fishing, and guided hunting. Winter use includes snowmobiling. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 10% of total use in this analysis area. Visitors can access the St. Croix River via 10 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2023 and 2024 monitoring efforts, it’s estimated that up to 210 PIOD use the landings in this analysis area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. There are 19 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 168 PIOD for overnight use. Of the 19 campsites, 17 are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each, and 2 are group campsites that can accommodate up to 16 people each. NPS staff estimate current use levels average 450 PIOD in this analysis area.	The attributes that most constrain this analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding, congestion, and visitor safety; and natural resources as it relates to soil erosion and habitat degradation. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area, with the exception of the Focused Development management area in and around Highway 70, include visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude. Desired conditions for the on-river experience throughout this analysis area include visitors can expect to encounter a small number of other visitors engaged in a variety of activities during nonpeak times, however large numbers of other users may be encountered during peak use times. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area’s ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety and encounter rates. Desired conditions in the Focused Development management area include visitors can expect less opportunities for solitude and more frequent encounters with other visitors. In addition to crowding and/or high levels of visitation, the natural topography of the river throughout the analysis area constrains the area’s ability to accommodate use, particularly in areas where the river is narrow and there is less space to disperse use. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. When water levels are low, there is even less available area to disperse visitor use, which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use. Low water levels can also lead to impassible and unsafe areas of the river when large rocks and boulders are exposed, especially for motorized users. Fast flowing currents and rapids such as in the area near St. Croix State Park can require a higher skill level to safely navigate the river. High water levels can exacerbate these already challenging conditions for both motorized and non-motorized users. Additionally, when water levels are high, bridges become a hazard to visitor safety as there is less available space to safely navigate under the bridges. Therefore, the natural topography of the river and water level fluctuations are secondary limiting attributes related to the quality of visitor experience. Desired conditions for this analysis area also include shoreline management emphasizes an undisturbed appearance. As water levels fluctuate and areas become challenging to navigate and/or impassible, impacts including soil erosion and habitat degradation increase as visitors drag their watercraft along the sandy shoreline to access more navigable waters. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 450 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experience, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities for quiet and solitude. The National Park Service would enhance visitor opportunities via infrastructure improvements at Sandrock Cliffs. The National Park Service would also provide additional overnight opportunities by creating campsites along the Sandrock Cliffs Trail. The National Park Service would increase the frequency of maintenance and improve the visitor experience on the St. Croix Trail, which could include an improved parking lot, defined trailhead, or information kiosk with a trail map. Though this action would provide additional recreational opportunities in this analysis area, it would not result in changes in the amounts and types of use that could be accommodated while achieving desired conditions, and use could still be dispersed in a way that mitigates impacts to the quality of visitor experience with the addition of these opportunities. Actions implemented in this analysis area primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 550 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 20% of total use. Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: • Collaborate with local agencies and county jurisdictions to enhance relationships and increase routine patrols. • Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented. • Collaborate with St. Croix State Park to manage use in areas in and around the state park. Develop and implement strategies to manage visitor expectations in this area to anticipate higher levels of use, as the area in and around the state park would be managed for higher amounts of use compared to other areas within the analysis area.

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
South of Highway 70 through St. Croix Falls St. Croix River miles 88.5–53.5	This analysis area encompasses St. Croix River miles 88.5 - 53.5, spanning from just north of Raspberry Landing through the St. Croix Falls Hydroelectric Plant. Primary use in this area includes camping, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hunting, and swimming, as well as motorized boating and drift boating. Winter use includes snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Commercial services include canoe and kayak rentals, guided paddling, and guided fishing. There is a marina that offers services such as slip rentals. This analysis area also includes the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Visitor Center. Monthly visitor center use is highest in the summer months, with an average of 80 PIOD in July 2024. Using 2023 data reported by commercial operators, in addition to observational data, NPS staff estimate current commercial use to be around 10% of total use in this analysis area. Visitors can access the St. Croix River via 13 river access points in this analysis area. Using visitor counts from 2024 monitoring efforts, it's estimated that up to 325 PIOD use the landings in this analysis area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. There are 30 campsites in this analysis area, accommodating a total of up to 264 PIOD for overnight use. Of the 30 campsites, 27 are individual campsites that can accommodate up to 8 people each, and 3 are group campsites that can accommodate up to 16 people each. NPS staff estimate current use levels average 650 PIOD in this analysis area.	The attributes that most constrain this analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to crowding, congestion, and visitor safety; and water levels as it relates to the shallow depth of the river above Nevers Dam and as it relates to the water flow controlled by the Dam. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area include visitors can expect small numbers of people, infrequent encounters, and ample opportunity for quiet and solitude. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in the Variable Waters Management Area in analysis area include visitors can expect to encounter a small number of other visitors engaged in a variety of activities during nonpeak times, however large numbers of other users may be encountered during peak use times. Desired conditions for the on-river experience in the Active Waters Management Area in this analysis area include visitors may encounter moderate numbers of visitors on the water and can expect relatively few opportunities for solitude. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area's ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety and encounter rates. Further, the shallow depth of the river throughout the analysis area above Nevers Dam constrains the area's ability to accommodate both motorized and non-motorized use, as there is less area to disperse use and an increase in shallow or exposed hazards. Downed trees may present obstacles, especially in narrow stretches of the river. When water levels are low, there is even less available area to disperse visitor use, which leads to small areas with high concentrations of use and a higher potential for user conflicts. Low water levels can also lead to impassible and unsafe areas of the river when large rocks and boulders are exposed. Further, varying water flow from dam draw down operations can make trip planning and on-water navigation challenging. Therefore, water level fluctuation is a secondary limiting attribute related to the quality of visitor experience. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV, number of informal trails, campsite condition class, and other related monitoring.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 650 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experiences. The National Park Service would remove access at Pearl Springs and would enhance the visitor experience at County Road O and Sunrise Landings via infrastructure improvements. Campsites would be added along the Sandrock Cliffs trail. This action may slightly increase the amounts of visitor use in the analysis area but wouldn't drastically impacts the amounts of use the area could accommodate since campsite capacities are identified. These actions primarily enhance the current visitor experience by dispersing use throughout the analysis area, reducing incidents of crowding and congestion and contributing to desired conditions. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 800 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 20% of total use. Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: Evaluate the need to revise CUA conditions as actions in the plan are implemented.

Analysis Area	Review of Existing Direction and Knowledge	Limiting Attribute(s) and Relevant Indicators	Visitor Capacity and Implementation Strategies
Arcola Bluffs Day Use Area	This analysis area encompasses the Arcola Bluffs Day Use Area located just north of Stillwater, Minnesota and off Arcola Trail North. Primary use in this area includes hiking, hunting, and access to the High Bridge. Winter use includes cross country skiing and snowshoeing. There are no commercial operations in this analysis area. Visitors can access the Arcola Bluffs Day Use Area by land via Arcola Trail North Road. Using visitor counts from 2024 monitoring efforts, it’s estimated that up to 85 PIOD use the area when length of stay and people per vehicle / vessel multipliers are applied. There are no overnight opportunities in this analysis area. NPS staff estimate current use levels average 50 PIOD in this analysis area.	The attributes that most constrain this analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use is the quality of visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety; and natural resources as it relates to sensitive vegetation. Desired conditions for the on-land experience in this analysis area include visitors will encounter no large concentrations of development or people (small numbers of people will be the rule in this area), and natural vegetation will cover significant portions of the shoreline with some stretches being largely undisturbed. The nature of the terrain in this area, including high bluffs and steep slopes, present safety risks for visitors who traverse the challenging terrain. These risks are exacerbated during high levels of visitor use and when use is concentrated to small areas. The natural terrain, combined with crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time, would compromise the area’s ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience as it relates to visitor safety and encounter rates. Further, impacts to sensitive vegetation, including trampling of threatened and endangered species, increase as visitors seek more level terrain where these species are present, and/or when visitors seek less crowded areas. Therefore, the presence of sensitive vegetation is a limiting attribute related to natural resources. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV and number of informal trails.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 50 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experience and natural resources, and current conditions provide visitors opportunities for low encounter rates. The National Park Service would improve the parking area and establish a trail system, providing additional recreational opportunities in the analysis area. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this area is 75 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 20% of total use. Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: • Establish a community engagement program to provide visitor support and NPS presence. • Collaborate with local agencies and municipalities to enhance relationships and manage the area.
Fairy Falls Day Use Area	This analysis area encompasses the Fairy Falls Day Use Area, a 54-acre natural area located in Stillwater Township on the St. Croix River. It is located near the Boom Site landing. In 2024, the park completed an Environmental Assessment to maintain safe access to Fairy Falls waterfall and the day use area, while retaining its natural and cultural character and providing a range of visitor opportunities (NPS 2024). Primary use in this analysis area includes hiking, nature viewing, hunting, photography, and occasional ice climbing. Visitors access the area via Fairy Falls Road, just northwest from Minnesota State Highway 95. Currently, there is limited parking and no trail connectivity with neighboring lands. Challenges with illicit activities such as graffiti, littering and trash disposal, pose risks to human safety and sensitive cultural resources. There are no commercial operations in this area. There are no landings or river access points in this analysis area. There are no overnight opportunities in this analysis area. NPS staff estimate current use levels average 40 PIOD in this analysis area.	The attributes that most constrain this analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use are the quality of visitor experience as it relates to safety and the protection of the viewscape; and protection of cultural resources as it relates to the Tribal connections and significance. Desired conditions for this analysis area, via the vision statement in the Fairy Falls Day Use Area Environmental Assessment (EA), include the site retains its natural character and cultural resources while providing visitors with opportunities to safely view the waterfall; NPS focuses on managing natural resources, sharing connections to the history of the site; and the NPS provides safe access for visitors (NPS 2024). Desired conditions per the 2002 CMP include visitors will encounter no large concentrations of development or people and small numbers of people will be the rule in this area. Crowding and/or high levels of visitation at one time would compromise the area’s ability to achieve desired conditions for visitor experience and natural resources throughout this analysis area. In addition, the presence of important cultural resources in this analysis area constrains the area’s ability to accommodate high levels of use, as risk of damage increases as visitation increases. Further, the natural topography makes the area somewhat challenging and unsafe. Steep slopes and dense trees prevent trails from being added to accommodate use. The most relevant indicators to monitor conditions are PPV and number of informal trails.	Given existing conditions and limiting attributes, park staff identified that visitor capacity can increase from current use levels to achieve and maintain desired conditions. Current use levels of 40 PIOD are achieving and maintaining desired conditions for visitor experiences, natural character, and cultural resources. Actions implemented in the preferred alternative of the Fairy Falls Day Use Area Site Plan / EA would provide designated hiking opportunities to view the waterfall and other parts of the area. Once funding is obtained and design, compliance, and permitting are fully considered and complete, a parking lot may be developed to accommodate approximately 10-12 vehicles for daytime use. These actions would enhance current visitor experience and increase recreational opportunities. Therefore, the identified visitor capacity for this analysis area is 75 PIOD. Commercial use would not exceed 20% of total use. Additional management strategies to implement visitor capacity include: • Integrate management actions identified in the preferred concept from Fairy Falls Day Use Area Site Plan/Environmental Assessment.

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APPENDIX B: ACRONYMS

General Terms

- **CRMP:** Comprehensive River Management Plan
- **GMP:** General Management Plan
- **CMP:** Cooperative Management Plan
- **NPS:** National Park Service
- **ORV:** Outstandingly Remarkable Value(s)
- **IVUMC:** Interagency Visitor Use Management Council
- **WSR:** Wild and Scenic River(s)
- **DOI:** Department of the Interior
- **Riverway:** St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (including the Upper St. Croix River, Lower St. Croix River, and Namekagon River)

Agencies and Organizations

- **EPA:** Environmental Protection Agency
- **USGS:** U.S. Geological Survey
- **USACE:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- **USFWS:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- **MNDNR:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- **WDNR:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- **NGOs:** Non-Governmental Organizations

Monitoring and Management

- **PPV:** People per Viewscape
- **PIOD:** People in one day
- **VAOT:** Vehicles at One Time
- **CUA:** Commercial Use Authorization
- **EDRR:** Early Detection and Rapid Response

APPENDIX C: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY

Classifications and Designations of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

Wild and Scenic River Classifications

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, segments of designated rivers are classified as either wild, scenic, or recreational.

- **Wild River:** A river or segment of a river that is free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.
- **Scenic River:** A river or segment of a river that is free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
- **Recreational River:** A river or segment of a river that is readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along its shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past (National Wild and Scenic Rivers System n.d.).

The St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, managed by the NPS, are primarily classified as scenic with some recreational segments under the wild and scenic river classifications. The upper 10 miles of the Lower St. Croix are classified as scenic; the lower 42 miles of the Lower St. Croix are classified as recreational. Thus, the

NPS-managed portion of the Lower St. Croix (27 miles) has two classifications, scenic and recreational. The portion of the Lower St. Croix managed by Minnesota and Wisconsin is classified as recreational.

State Designations

Several portions of the rivers are designated as Outstanding Resource Waters or Exceptional Resource Waters by the state of Wisconsin, meaning that those segments contain surface waters that provide outstanding recreational opportunities, support valuable fisheries and wildlife habitat, have good water quality and are not significantly impacted by human activities. In addition, the entire length of the St. Croix River has designated by the state of Minnesota as an “outstanding resource value water” for its exceptional characteristics. These designations carry various protection standards for the river (NPS 2017).

Riverway Boundaries and Land Ownership

The 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act set the boundaries for rivers included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as:

The boundaries of any river proposed in section 5(a) of this Act for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System shall generally comprise that area measured within one-quarter mile from the ordinary high-water mark on each side of the river. In the case of any designated river, prior to the publication of boundaries

according to section 3(b) of this Act, the boundaries also shall comprise the same area. This subsection shall not be construed to limit the possible scope of the study report to address areas which may lie more than one-quarter mile from the ordinary high-water mark on each side of the river. (P.L. 90-542)

On September 19, 1975, the original boundary for the entire riverway was published, consistent with the requirements of section(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

In 1984, a land protection plan for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway was created. The 1993 addenda, documents the 1991 purchase of the Northern States Power Company property along the St. Croix River in Polk County, Wisconsin of approximately 10 river miles and nine scenic easement tracts from the north city limits of St. Croix Falls to the old Nevers Dam area. Several small privately owned parcels were also purchased, and the necessary title and appraisal updates were ordered on the remaining unprotected tracts in Polk County, Wisconsin. In 1992, 9.6 miles of prime Namekagon River frontage (a total of 1,130 acres) was purchased from Northern States Power Company in Washburn County, Wisconsin and 5 miles of frontage (623 acres) from Northern States Power Company property in Chisago County, Minnesota was also purchased. These five miles of frontage run from the north city limits of Taylors Falls, Minnesota, upstream to the south boundary of Minnesota's Wild River State Park. With this purchase, acquisition of all Northern States Power Company property within the Riverway boundaries was completed either by donation

or purchase, except for the hydropower dams and their hydroelectric pool areas at St Croix Falls/Taylors Falls and at Trego, Wisconsin (NPS 1993, 1984).

Other changes in boundaries and land ownership have occurred since designation, including:

- The 1980 amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, (P.L. 96-580) authorized the acquisition of the one-thousand-three-hundred-and-eighty-acre portion of the area commonly known as the Velie Estate, located adjacent to the St. Croix River in Douglas County, Wisconsin (P.L. 96-580). The Velie Estate was acquired in 1989. Forty-two acres were acquired in fee in 1989 and the remainder of the estate property at 1300+ acres NPS purchased a scenic easement interest (Hojem pers. comm. 2024).
- In 1977, some islands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management were withdrawn from entry according to a 1968 letter signed by the Secretary. In 1986, some of these islands were transferred to the NPS.
- Additions and deletions were made in 1983, creating a net increase of 82 acres.
- In 1990, a boundary change was made in Prescott, (Pierce County) Wisconsin (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, et al. 2002).

The Riverway protects a total of approximately 94,000 acres. The NPS holds title to approximately 25,000 acres within the current boundaries of the Riverway. Approximately 700 acres are owned by other federal agencies, and approximately 14,500 acres are privately owned with scenic easements purchased by the NPS that prevent future development of this land inconsistent with protecting viewsheds and scenic values. Approximately 36,500 acres are private, state, or other public lands managed by counties or townships. The public land managers, nonprofit land conservancies, private owners, and municipalities in and adjacent to the park's boundary are partners in the Riverway's resource protection (NPS 2024, 2017).

Agency Responsibilities and Authorities

Differing environmental regulations, economic priorities, and political landscapes across multiple jurisdictions can create significant hurdles to comprehensive and effective Riverway management. By working collaboratively, agencies can identify common ground, pool resources, and implement collaborative solutions to address issues. Strong partnerships foster trust, facilitate information sharing, and can lead to more efficient use of water resources, improved water quality, enhanced ecosystem health, and increased resilience to climate change impacts.

The following summarizes the responsibilities and authorities of various agencies relative to activities within the Riverway.

Treaty Rights and the Federal Trust Relationship

The NPS is entrusted with the management of over 85 million acres of Federal lands and waters that are the ancestral homelands of American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, and Native Hawaiians that predate the National Park System. As stewards, the NPS is entrusted to conserve these resources for future generations, including resources, sites, and vistas that hold significance to Indigenous peoples who have lived on and cared for the land since time immemorial. In managing Federal lands and waters, the NPS is required to honor its treaty and trust responsibilities to protect Tribal interests, pursue an open and collaborative relationship with American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, and provide access to Riverway resources and places so American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes can maintain their cultural and spiritual practices (NPS 2022).

The majority of the Riverway falls within the 1837 Ceded Territory associated with the 1837 Treaty of St. Peters (Treaty with the Chippewa Nation of Indians 1837). The Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) was formed in 1984 by eleven Ojibwe Tribes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan to represent their reserved Treaty rights in the Ceded Territories of the 1836, 1837, 1842, and 1854 Treaties (GLIFWC 2018, n.d.a, n.d.b). GLIFWC has conveyed to the NPS that there are ten federally recognized Tribal Nations that were signatories or are considered successors-in-interest Tribal Nations of the signatories of the 1837 Treaty of St. Peters. Therefore, ten Ojibwe Tribes have reserved Treaty rights for hunting, fishing,

and gathering within the Riverway (Moore pers. comm 2024). These tribes are: Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Mashkii-ziibing), Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Nagaajiwanaag), Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (Gakiwe'onaning or Wiikwedong), Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Odaawaa-zaaga'iganing), Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Waaswaaganing), Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Gete-gitgaaning), Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (Misi-zaaga'iganiing), Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Miskwaabikong), Sokaogon Chippewa Community of Wisconsin (Zaka'aaganing), and St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin (Wezaawaagami-ziibing) (GLIFWC 2018, Moore pers. comm 2024).

The NPS considers supporting the exercising of these Treaty rights as one of its most important responsibilities.

Lands and waters within the Riverway contain cultural and natural resources of ongoing significance and value to Tribal Nations and their citizens, including sacred religious sites, burial sites, wildlife, and sources of traditional foods and medicines. Sturgeon and wild rice have special significance to Ojibwe people, and because of this, sturgeon and wild rice contribute to the Riverway's outstandingly remarkable cultural values. The Minnesota and Wisconsin DNR programs actively manage sturgeon, including reintroduction efforts. The Riverway consults and collaborates with Tribal Nations and GLIFWC on the long-term stewardship of treaty resources and to ensure the Riverway's values are protected and enhanced. Finally, approximately 136 acres of the reservation of

the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin are within the boundaries of the Upper Riverway near Danbury, Wisconsin (NPS 2017, 1998, 2002, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin n.d., Milwaukee Public Museum 2024, Moore pers. comm 2024).

The NPS reaffirms the government-to-government relationship to ensure the protection of these treaty rights. The NPS acknowledges that the Riverway is culturally significant to Ojibwe, Dakota, Ho-Chunk, Iowa, and other Tribal Nations. The NPS affirms its commitment to consult with all Tribal Nations with historical and cultural connections to the Riverway to ensure their perspectives and interests are considered in the long-term stewardship and management of this culturally significant place.

Federal Agencies

■ National Park Service (NPS)

The NPS is one of four federal agencies with wild and scenic river management responsibilities. As a river-administering agency, the NPS is solely responsible for upholding the anti-degradation and enhancement policy under WSRA Section 10(a) within the federally administered zone. The National Park Service is also responsible for making WSRA Section 7(a) evaluations and determinations of effect over federally assisted water resources projects in both the federally administered and state-administered zones. The National Park Service approves all proposed water resources projects in the Riverway and sometimes on tributaries, regardless of if they are proposed by an outside entity or by the NPS, under the authorities of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

■ US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The Riverway secures USFWS concurrence on actions that may impact threatened and endangered species. The two agencies partner on education efforts and threatened and endangered species recovery efforts (freshwater mussels, bats, etc.), and addressing species out of place (NPS 2017).

■ US Geological Survey (USGS)

The NPS partners with the USGS in research and restoration efforts on a variety of projects and topics (NPS 2017) and on actions that may affect the Riverway's management and use. The USGS maintains several flow gauges on the St. Croix River and Namekagon River that monitor water levels and temperature.

■ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

The Riverway provides the WSRA Section 7(a) determinations for USACE permitting actions, and the agencies partner as needed on a variety of projects. Currently, agreements are in place between the Riverway and the USACE for work on research and monitoring zebra mussels and related work.

■ U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)

Designation of the Lower Riverway required a joint development plan with the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota, allowing continued maintenance of navigational aids by the U.S. Coast Guard or the Secretary of the Army (NPS 2017). USCG laws apply, and the National Park Service coordinates with the U.S. Coast Guard as necessary.

■ U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

The Riverway partners with the USFS for wildfire management, recreation, and law enforcement, and the USFS owns fee title to roughly 700 acres within the Riverway's boundary between the Namekagon Dam on the Namekagon River and the County M Landing.

■ Other Federal Agencies

The Riverway engages with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on actions that may affect the Riverway's management and use. The Riverway has collaborated with the Natural Resources Conservation Service on bank stabilization projects. The Riverway collaborates with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as needed on highway and bridge projects within the Riverway. Hayward and Trego dams are Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)-licensed hydropower dams within the Riverway, and Riverway engages with them on an as needed basis for the active relicensing process. All three dams impact the free flow of the river (NPS 2017).

State Agencies

■ Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

The NPS and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) have a long history of working together as managing partners on the Lower Riverway. Even in the federally managed zone, there can be significant overlap in jurisdiction, requiring the managing agencies to cooperate to

effectively manage the Riverway. Minnesota has the same on-water law enforcement authority and the same oversight over private land use in both NPS-managed and state-managed Riverway sections.

State agencies manage the state-administered zone of the Riverway under 2(a)ii of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The MN DNR has primary management responsibility in this section for the state, with the NPS as a partner. The 2002 cooperative management plan between the NPS and the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin is in place to promote consistent management of the Lower Riverway. State-managed portions of the Riverway do not require foundational statements or comprehensive river management plans. However, they do require the development of river values statements for section 7(a) issues under WRSA, which is the responsibility of the NPS (NPS 2017).

The MN DNR manages state parks and Scientific and Natural Areas within the Riverway, as well as hunting and fishing regulations within the Riverway and state. The MN DNR works with the National Park Service on wildfire preparedness, emergency response, and law enforcement. The Riverway Lands Program works with the MN DNR in cooperation with local zoning authorities as part of the scenic easement program.

The Minnesota DNR has certification authority over local ordinances, ordinance amendments, and variances. The Department of Natural Resources also provides regular training for local government officials on land use management.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Much like with the state of Minnesota, the NPS and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR) also have a long history of working together as managing partners on the Lower Riverway. Within the federally managed zone, there can be significant overlap in jurisdiction, requiring the managing agencies to cooperate to effectively manage the Riverway. Wisconsin has the same on-water law enforcement authority and the same oversight over private land use in both NPS-managed and state-managed Riverway sections.

State agencies manage the state-administered zone of the Riverway under 2(a)ii of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The WI DNR has primary management responsibility in this section for the state, with the NPS as a partner. The 2002 cooperative management plan between the NPS and the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin is in place to promote consistent management of the Lower Riverway. State-managed portions of the Riverway do not require foundational statements or comprehensive river management plans. However, they do require the development of river values statements for section 7(a) issues under WRSA, which is the responsibility of the NPS (NPS 2017).

The WI DNR sets hunting and fishing regulations for the state of Wisconsin and owns and operates Wisconsin state parks.

The Wisconsin DNR has objection authority over local ordinances, ordinance amendments, and variances.

The Department of Natural Resources also provides regular training for local government officials on land use management.

Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office

In partnership with communities, organizations, and individuals, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) works to identify, interpret, and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations. The Riverway seeks consultation with the Minnesota SHPO in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR Part 800) on federal undertakings that require their concurrence.

Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office

In partnership with communities, organizations, and individuals, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) works to identify, interpret, and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations. The Riverway seeks consultation with the Wisconsin SHPO in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR Part 800) on federal undertakings that require their concurrence.

Minnesota Department of Transportation

The Riverway partners on highway and bridge projects as needed with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

The Riverway partners on highway and bridge projects as needed with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

State Parks and State Forests

In the federally managed Riverway, there are four state parks and three state forests within or adjacent to the Upper Riverway boundary. These include Minnesota Interstate Park, Wisconsin Interstate Park, Wild River State Park, St. Croix State Park, Governor Knowles State Forest, St. Croix State Forest, and Chenqwatana State Forest.

- The Minnesota Interstate Park (MN) partners with the Riverway on education programs, and natural resources fieldwork, and provides river access used by the public and CUA holders. There is no formal relationship or agreement in place with the Riverway.
- Wisconsin Interstate Park (WI) is a Riverway partner on a variety of issues such as education and research within the state park. The public and CUA permit holders use the state park for Riverway access.
- The Wild River State Park (MN) provides camping and river access to the public and CUA holders, and partners with the Riverway on education programs as appropriate. There are no formal agreements or partnerships in place between the park and the Riverway.

- William O'Brien State Park provides camping, hiking, and river access to the public and CUA permit holders.
- St. Croix State Park (MN) provides camping and river access for the public and CUA permit holders. There is no formal partnership or agreement between the park and the Riverway.

There is no current formal partnership with the Governor Knowles State Forest, however, the NPS owns a scenic easement interest in some of the forest's newest land acquisitions. The forest maintains and manages several miles of trail which crosses Riverway fee property. An old agreement between the NPS and the state forest regarding trails should be reviewed, updated, and formalized to protect access to recreation and scenic interests. The current relationship between the forest and the NPS consists of communication surrounding current and proposed management and identifying overlapping management goals and objectives for organizational efficiency.

Chengwatana State Forest recently acquired acres along the St. Croix River from Xcel Energy. These acres border NPS lands, and the NPS owns scenic easement interest in several acres of the new state property.

The NPS would continue to foster relationships with these parks and forests because of their proximity and similar missions.

■ Other State Agencies

The Riverway works with the state tourism offices of Minnesota (Explore Minnesota) and Wisconsin (Travel Wisconsin) as needed though there are no formal agreements or partnerships in place. The Riverway also maintains working relationships with both states as needed for fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and search and rescue efforts.

Local Agencies

There are many agencies, organizations, and individuals both within and outside the Riverway that affect its management and use. Local governments maintain zoning laws based on state standards for regulating structures, buildings, and development densities, protecting property rights, limiting nuisances, promoting health and safety, protecting resources and setting, minimizing erosion, preventing water quality degradation, preventing negative visual intrusions, and providing for Riverway access. The NPS coordinates and collaborates with these groups.

The Riverway passes through 11 counties. In Wisconsin, it passes through Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, St. Croix, Sawyer, and Washburn as well as Pierce County in the state zone of the Riverway. In Minnesota, it passes through Chisago, Pine, and Washington (NPS 2017). The counties manage county lands (including county forests) within the Riverway. Local governments are required to adopt and enforce ordinances based on the states' rules. As also noted above, the DNRs have objection (in Wisconsin) or certification (in Minnesota)

authority over local ordinances, ordinance amendments, and variances, and they provide regular training for local government officials on land use management.

There are many other local agencies including police departments and fire departments that have working relationships with the Riverway, and the services provided by these relationships vary by year.

Multiple Agency Groups

This section provides examples of multi-agency groups where the Riverway is a formal partner. This section is not intended to be comprehensive, as Riverway involvement in multi-agency groups is subject to change over time.

Established in 2002, the Mussel Coordination Team: Upper Mississippi River and Tributaries (MCT) works jointly with federal (USFWS, USGS, USACE, USCG) and state agencies (IL DNR, IA DNR, MN DNR, WI DNR, St. Croix Watershed Research Station (SCWRS)) to conserve native mussels and control nonindigenous mussels.

Other groups comprised of multiple agencies and businesses include the Upper St. Croix Management Commission, comprised of the MN DNR, WI DNR, the Riverway, and Xcel Energy, which was established by a policy resolution, and the Lower St. Croix Management Commission (LSCMC), consisting of the MN DNR, WI DNR, and the NPS. The Lower St. Croix Partnership Team serves an advisory role to the LSCMC, and its membership is by LSCMC invitation. The LSCMC advises on state land use rules,

and state water surface rules, and conducts post-decision review of local land use actions for consistency with the cooperative management plan (NPS 2017).

A memorandum of understanding between the MN DNR, WI DNR, and the NPS has been in place since 1998 to cooperate and coordinate in the management, protection, and study of fisheries and Riverway aquatic resources (NPS 2017). The parties involved with fisheries management participate in annual meetings and collaborate on grant applications, research and fieldwork, and habitat projects.

Non-Profit Partners

The Riverway works with a variety of nonprofit partners, both formally with partnership agreements and memoranda of understanding, and informally, for the protection and management of the Riverway. Nonprofit partners are critical in supporting resource protection, conservation, water quality protection, celebration of the Riverway and its history, operations, and visitor experience and understanding of the Riverway.

Associated NPS Units and Programs

The Riverway is supported by various NPS programs. The Riverway has an agreement to host the Great Lakes Invasive Plant Management Team (GLIMPT), an NPS team that travels throughout the Great Lakes area to assist parks with restoration and invasive plant management. The Riverway coordinates with the GLIMPT on annual work plans. The Great Lakes Inventory and

Monitoring Network (GLKN) also conducts long-term monitoring of critical resources within the Riverway, and Riverway staff assist GLKN with related fieldwork.

There are two National Scenic Trails (NST) that pass through the Riverway boundary. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail (IATR) goes through a small portion of the Riverway near and through St. Croix Falls, WI., and sections of the IATR align with Riverway trails such as

along the Indian Head Trail north of St. Croix Falls. The North County National Scenic Trail (NOCO) also runs through the Riverway boundary along the Upper St. Croix River and near Gibson Cabin. The Riverway partners with the IATR and NOCO, as needed.

Finally, the Riverway partners with the Mississippi National River & Recreation Area (MISS) for research, prescribed fire, training, and other activities for mutual benefit.

APPENDIX D: RELATIONSHIP OF THIS PLAN TO OTHER ACTIONS AND PLANNING EFFORTS

Existing Guidance

Superintendent's Compendium (Updated Annually)

The compendium identifies visiting hours, closures, permit requirements, and camping regulations and prohibits certain recreational activities (paintballing, geocaching) within the boundaries of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. The compendium also outlines the allowable types and methods of fishing and hunting within the Riverway in specific areas and outlines appropriate river uses. The Superintendent's Compendium is updated annually, and recent changes have addressed the need to make this document more usable and understandable by the public and Riverway staff.

Fairy Falls Day Use Area Environmental Assessment (2024)

The 2024 Fairy Falls Day Use Area Site Plan Environmental Assessment evaluated improvements and enhancements to an approximately 1-mile natural surface loop trail in the Fairy Falls Day Use Area and to developing a parking lot to provide safe, off-street parking for visitors. The CRMP would not identify new management actions for Fairy Falls Day Use Area; however, future management actions in this area should be consistent with the CRMP's management philosophy and zoning of this area.

Arcola Bluffs and Fairy Falls St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Cultural Landscape Assessment (2018)

The 2018 cultural landscape assessment for Arcola Bluffs and Fairy Falls provided an overview of the historical development and use of each area, a summary of the existing conditions, and an analysis of landscape characteristics. The cultural landscape assessment also provided treatment alternatives, and recommendations for management to enhance protection of cultural resources, identified areas of further research for guidance on integrating improved site interpretation and new recreational facilities such as trails and parking. The assessment noted that these day-use areas attract many visitors along well-used social trails, but these areas lacked defined purposes, did not appear in NPS literature, did not have NPS designated or maintained trails or visitor amenities, and had little to no interpretive signage. The plan noted that the Riverway did not have a cohesive vision or long-term management strategies for resource protection or visitor access and experience in these areas. Where this report noted areas of improvement, these areas are also opportunities for improved visitor experience, access, and education as well as resource protection. The CRMP would not identify new management actions for Arcola Bluffs or Fairy Falls, and the CRMP would not formalize the treatment alternatives for the areas as described in the cultural landscape assessment. The CRMP, however, would formalize the Riverway's management philosophy and zoning of these areas.

Foundation Document (2017)

The Foundation Document describes the park, its purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, related resources, and interpretive themes. This document provided the purpose carried forward in this chapter and outlines some issues addressed in the CRMP. Since the completion of the foundation document, new issues at the Riverway have emerged. The CRMP would identify management strategies to both address the issues identified in the foundation document and these new issues that have emerged. The outstandingly remarkable values described in appendix C of the Foundation Document (NPS 2017) are the most recent and are referenced for guidance. These may be updated over time to reflect changes in resource condition and to recognize improvements.

Lower St. Croix Camping Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (2007)

The 2007 Lower St. Croix Camping Management Plan analyzes impacts to the environment for a range of alternatives addressing lack of toilet facilities, litter, camping use conflicts, island and shoreline erosion, and damage to natural resources. The preferred alternative designates campsites, including backwater campsites, and permits boat tie-ups for overnight use. The preferred alternative also provides some first-come first-serve campsites and requires an overnight use pass. This CRMP would update management direction for overnight use throughout the Riverway, including designated camping in the Lower St. Croix, effectively updating and replacing

the guidance provided in the preferred alternative of the Lower St. Croix Camping Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for a more consistent visitor experience.

Long Range Interpretive Plan St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (2005)

The 2005 Long Range Interpretive Plan, developed by Riverway staff and the Department of Interpretive Planning at Harpers Ferry Design Center, described visitor experience goals and recommended ways to achieve those goals through interpretive media, facilities, education programs and personal services. The plan guided Riverway staff; however, is currently outdated. The management actions of this CRMP would seek to expand on the 2005 interpretive themes to incorporate more Tribal Nation's history and culture within interpretation materials and programs. The CRMP management actions would also seek to achieve 2005 visitor experience goals of trip planning, orientation, access, and safety by updating trip planning resources and information on Riverway orientation, access, and safety in digital and printed materials. The CRMP additionally would recommend evaluation of frequently used social media to optimize engagement with and connect to more visitors and exploring connections with nearby national scenic trails. Social media and connections with national scenic trails were not considered in the 2005 long range interpretive plan but are frequently used to connect with visitors.

Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan (2002)

The 2002 Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan is a joint plan developed by federal and state river managing agencies. Involved agencies include the MN DNR, the WI DNR, and the NPS. The plan sets forth the basic management philosophy for the lower Riverway and outlines management actions related to cooperation among partners, land use, American Indian treaty rights, Riverway stewardship, natural resources management, management of hunting, fishing, and trapping, recreational use management, and interpretation and education. The plan also establishes land management and water management areas for both the federal and state water zones.

The CRMP would provide additional overarching management direction that would be incorporated into any future work to update the cooperative management plan. In addition, the CRMP would establish land and water management areas for the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. The land management and water management areas outlined in the cooperative management plan provided the foundation upon which the CRMP land management and water management zones were built upon. The CRMP was designed to sync with the language and principles outlined in the cooperative management plan as much as possible, to ensure a more seamless interface across management entities. The CRMP would not amend the land management and water management areas applied to the Lower St. Croix in the cooperative management plan.

The CRMP builds upon but does not change management actions outlined in the cooperative management plan. The CRMP would establish indicators, thresholds, monitoring strategies, and visitor capacity as called for by the cooperative management plan. The CRMP also would establish an overnight use reservation system and associated camping for all NPS owned and managed campsites as suggested as a future management strategy in the cooperative management plan.

General Management Plan (1998)

The 1998 general management plan (GMP) addresses the four statutory requirements identified in the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (54 USC 100502):

1. The types of management actions required for the preservation of Riverway resources;
2. The types and general intensities of development (including visitor circulation and transportation patterns, systems, and modes) associated with public enjoyment and use of the park, including general locations, timing of implementation, and anticipated costs;
3. Identification of visitor carrying capacities and implementation commitments for all areas of the park; and
4. Potential modifications to the external boundaries of the Riverway— if any – and the reasons for the proposed changes.

The CRMP updates certain elements of the GMP guidance from 1998 and also carries over planning recommendations that remain relevant. Core elements of the 1998 GMP would be carried over into the CRMP, including the Riverway Mission, Upper Riverway Purpose, Upper Riverway Significance, and Special Mandates.

The CRMP would update management actions required for the preservation of Riverway resources to align with current needs. Specifically, the carrying capacities (referred to as user capacities in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act) and recreation and visitor experience management guidelines established in the 1998 GMP are not indicative of the updated desired conditions in this plan. Carrying capacities would be updated to better reflect desired conditions. The NPS would apply the latest best practices for planning and providing for visitor use, including visitor capacity, from the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (IVUMC). Management guidelines would also be updated to include additional recreational uses that have emerged since the 1998 GMP publication. However, many of the general actions from the 1998 GMP would be carried forward – such as encouraging visitor use at different times or adjusting management strategies for visitor use as necessary, engaging in proactive management for resources, and monitoring indicators to inform management decisions.

The 1998 GMP defines four management areas: Near-Primitive Northwoods, Northwoods Recreation, Developed Recreation, and Urban Recreation.

The CRMP updated these management areas with a new zoning scheme. The zoning scheme directly incorporated the 1998 GMP zones, in addition to the land and water management areas identified in the Lower St. Croix Cooperative Management Plan (2002).

Management objectives being carried forward from the 1998 GMP include cooperation with state parks and forests, coordination with agencies and organizations, relationships with Tribal Nations, Natural Resource Management, preservation of natural scenic values, and Cultural Resource Management.

The CRMP would update management objectives related to recreation, visitor experiences and safety to include more specific, placed-based management direction based on updated visitor data and indicators and thresholds.

Previous Studies and Assessments

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway has completed several studies and evaluations to better understand the issues and opportunities related to paddling, tubing, boating, and visitor experiences. These studies and evaluations helped inform the understanding of conditions, issues and opportunities within the Riverway. They helped guide the development of desired conditions and management strategies in the CRMP.

Density & Depreciative Behavior: Assessing Select Namekagon River Segments of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, University of Minnesota (2020)

This study provides baseline data to inform planning for on portions of the Riverway. Visitor and vessel density, depreciative behaviors, and Riverway conditions were of interest along three segments: Stinnett landing to North Springbrook landing, Big Bend landing to Earl Park landing, and Earl Park landing to Trego Town landing.

Social Media and Safety Messaging: Needs and Opportunities for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, University of Minnesota (2020)

This study sought to understand the on-river and online environment for paddling visitors to the Riverway and the potential for improved safety messaging to reduce the occurrence of unsafe behavior. The study focused on five landings between Hayward and Trego, Wisconsin, and observers noted unsafe or incorrect paddling activity. Social media posts were analyzed, particularly Facebook posts, which was the most widely used social media, and few posts emphasized safety. Website analysis indicated that improvements could be made to emphasize connections, safety, organization, and rules/regulations for visitor trip planning and orientation. The study included example messaging to increase knowledge and emphasize engagement around safety for padding visitors. The CRMP contains an action to evaluate frequently used social media platforms to optimize engagement with and connect to more visitors.

This action is not limited to safety messaging. Since this 2020 study documented the social media accounts held by the Riverway, commercial operators and the St. Croix River Association, evaluated engagement around safety messaging, and provided example messaging, this study provides a strong starting point for the CRMP's actions related to engaging visitors.

Visitor Perceptions & Preferences at Osceola Landing, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, University of Minnesota (2019)

This study analyzed observational research from 2017 on location-specific visitor use patterns, behavior issues, and proportion of non-commercial visitors at three landings, including Osceola, and visitor perceptions of their experiences and conditions from the summer of 2018. As of 2018, the landing and river conditions were acceptable to most visitors who participated, and did not identify feeling crowded, visitors' numbers or behavior interfering with their experience, or doing any pre-trip planning to avoid crowded conditions. Most respondents indicated they would remain at the Riverway doing their same activity if they encountered more crowded conditions than anticipated. The CRMP contains an action to provide outreach to visitors about times and areas where they may be crowding to set appropriate expectations and inform visitor decisions regarding trip timing and location and crowding at river access points and other key destinations are indicator topics for adaptive management strategies and monitoring for visitor capacity.

Observational Research for St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, University of Minnesota (2017)

This study analyzed observations at Osceola, Earl Park Landing, and Whispering Pines landings with respect to visitor use and proportion of non-commercial visitors at the landings, use patterns by time of day, and visitor behavior issues during the summer and early fall of 2017. Visitor density and commercial activity varied by location, time, and month, with the highest visitor density and issue occurrence at Osceola. Crowding at river access points and other key destinations are indicator topics for adaptive management strategies and monitoring for visitor capacity within the CRMP.

River Use Monitoring of the Namekagon River, Southern Illinois University Carbondale (Park 2016)

Researchers counted the number of river users and the number and types of vessels on the Namekagon River and measured visitors' perceptions of conditions through short exit interviews between May 2015 and August 2015. This data was compared to results from surveys beginning in the 1990s. The study found that weekend densities increased more than four-fold between 1999 and 2002, and weekend densities between 2002 and 2015 were relatively stable. Types of use have shifted, as canoeing use has reduced by half in some areas while the use of tubes and kayaking has grown along the Namekagon. Minor conflicts among user groups were noted in lower-density river zones.

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Visitor Study, University of Idaho (2000)

This study provides demographic information about visitors including their ages, gender, state of residence, whether they were first-time visitors, how long they spent at the Riverway, and the season of their visit. The study also provides information on the most common activities, where they received information before their visit, and whether the Riverway was their primary destination.

Study of Island and Shoreline Recreational Use in the Federally Managed Portion of the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, University of Minnesota (1996)

This study provides an overview of island and shoreline visitors and their behaviors. This study includes characteristics of visitor trips, visitor characteristics, visitor behaviors (concerning campfires, trash, and disposal of human waste), and problems encountered by visitors. The study also provides visitor perception of management actions on the river, visitors' reasons for visiting the area, and perceptions of crowding.

APPENDIX E: MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES CONSIDERED AND REMOVED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

The following management options were considered but not proposed, as they were reviewed and found to:

- Not address existing issues as efficiently as the proposed action and/or,
- Not satisfy the Purpose and Need of the CRMP
- Not achieve Desired Conditions for the CRMP in the same way the proposed action does and/or,
- Need more information to evaluate.

Camping Reservations

The following actions related to camping reservations were considered and removed from further consideration after evaluation found that they do not address existing issues and do not achieve desired conditions as efficiently as the proposed action. The NPS considered actions related to camping reservations at other NPS units, as well as for state-owned and managed areas, to understand the feasibility of implementing the following actions, and determined these actions are not feasible at this time and/or do not meet the purpose and need of the CRMP.

- The NPS would issue prospectuses for some or all campsites to be managed by concessioners. This option has been evaluated and is not financially viable.

- The NPS would collaborate with other camping and land managers within the Riverway to establish one camping permit/reservation system for all campsites within the Riverway. Under this option, the NPS would not use Recreation.gov to manage camping reservations for NPS owned or managed sites.
- A site-specific camping reservation would be required for designated campsites with X# of first come first serve campsites.
- A camping permit and associated fee (permit) would be required for visitors to camp at a designated campsite. Camping would be on a first come first serve basis, as the permit would not be associated with a site-specific reservation.
- Camping from the High Bridge to the Boom Site would be designated sites, and a site-specific camping reservation would be required for all designated campsites (all campsites). Under this option, all NPS campsites within the Riverway would be designated, and therefore site-specific reservations would be required for all campsites.
- A site-specific camping reservation would be required for all currently designated campsites (this would not include the segment of river from the High Bridge to the Boom Site).

River Use Fees

The following actions related to river use fees were considered and removed from further consideration after evaluation found that they do not address existing issues and do not achieve desired conditions as efficiently as the proposed action. The NPS considered actions related to river use fees at other NPS units, as well as for state-owned and managed areas, to understand the feasibility of implementing the following actions, and determined these actions are not feasible at this time and/or do not meet the purpose and need of the CRMP.

- A fee would be required at NPS river access points that offer a higher level of visitor services and developed facilities, including Osceola Landing and Earl Landing.
- A parking fee would be required at NPS parking areas within the Riverway.
- A river access fee would be required for visitors wishing to access river-based recreational opportunities.
- A Riverway entrance fee would be required for visitors to access the river and land-based trails.
- The NPS would require a river access permit and associated fee (permit) at all NPS launch/river access sites.
- The NPS would require a group fee for commercial tours, vehicle tours, and noncommercial groups such as girl scouts, boy scouts, and church groups.
- A river access fee would be required to launch a private vessel on the river.

Docks

The following actions related to docks were considered and removed from further consideration after evaluation found that they do not address existing issues, do not achieve desired conditions as efficiently as the proposed action, and/or are not within the authority of the National Park Service to implement. The NPS considered actions related to both Minnesota and Wisconsin DNR regulations, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and other NPS units in which docks are present, to understand the feasibility of implementing the following actions, and determined these actions are not feasible at this time and/or do not meet the purpose and need of the CRMP. There are an unknown number of docks within the federal and state-managed zones of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. The NPS does not currently have a dock monitoring program.

- The National Park Service would not allow any additional docks or landings to be installed along the Riverway.
- The National Park Service would identify areas where additional docks could be permitted.
- The National Park Service would only allow docks in the flowage areas

The NPS would allow private residents to offer public access to their docks, if desired. The NPS would offer education to private residents about potential impacts from allowing public access. Any public access to private docks would be allowed through a permitting system.

Visitor Experience

The following actions related to visitor experiences were considered and removed from further consideration after evaluation found that they do not achieve desired conditions as efficiently as the proposed action. The NPS considered actions related to visitor experience at other NPS units, as well as for state-owned and managed areas, to understand the feasibility of implementing the following actions, and determined these actions are not feasible at this time and/or do not meet the purpose and need of the CRMP.

- The National Park Service would eliminate tubing.
- The National Park Service would limit tubing rentals to only in the natural waters management area.
- Establish regulations related to the use of live bait.

Historic Cabins

After evaluation as part of this planning process, Riverway managers decided not to carry forward commercial services under a CUA as an option for potential future use of the historic cabins, as the CUA program does not achieve the desired conditions for the use of the historic cabins. The Riverway is considering commercial services via leasing, using the leasing determinations as found in 36 CFdR§18.4 and via concessions contract using the necessary and appropriate internal processes. The adaptive reuse leasing program is already established, whereas building concessions takes multiple years. Both the leasing program and the CUA program provide opportunities to commercial service entities.

Thus, commercial services under a CUA were determined as not feasible at this time and does not meet the purpose and need of the CRMP.

No Wake Regulations and Zoning

The following actions related to No Wake zones were considered and removed from further consideration after evaluation found that they do not address existing issues and do not achieve desired conditions as efficiently as the proposed action. The NPS considered actions related to No Wake zones at other NPS units, as well as for state-owned and managed areas, to understand the feasibility of implementing the following actions, and determined these actions are not feasible at this time and/or do not meet the purpose and need of the CRMP.

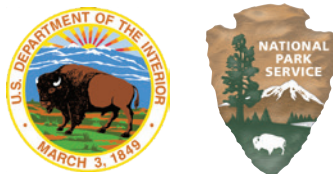
- The NPS would implement a No Wake zone regulation on weekends in the area from the High Bridge to the Swing Bridge. Under this option, the No Wake zone regulation would not be required on weekdays in the area from the High Bridge to the Swing Bridge.
- The NPS would implement a year-round No Wake zone regulation throughout the Riverway except in areas with flowages.
- The NPS would implement a year-round No Wake zone regulation throughout the Riverway when water levels are above the ordinary high-water mark.

- The NPS would implement year-round speed regulations and/or horsepower limitations in all natural waters and/or quiet waters zones throughout the Riverway.
- The NPS would implement year-round No Wake zone regulations in natural waters and quiet waters zones in the lower St. Croix. Under this option, zones with moderate recreation water zones would not have a No Wake regulation.

Management Concepts

The National Park Service sought public input in 2024 on two distinct management concepts for how the National Park Service could manage the riverway as well as on draft management areas and potential management strategies. After considering the feedback received during the public comment period, the National Park Service combined the two management concepts into one and carried forward a single management concept that is presented in this plan.

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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