

Chisago Lakes Water Trail Summit – May 7, 2016

Over 30 local residents met together on Saturday morning, May 7th to learn more about water trails in general and the Chisago Lakes Water Trail.

The benefits of water trails include:

- Promotes our area and encourages visitors
- Economic impact and tourism
- Protects our water resources – desire and best practices to keep water unimpaired for the future, conserves scenery
- Improves our quality of life – local enjoyment for present and future generations
- Increased understanding of ecology.

1. Julie Galonska, officer for the National Park Service – specifically the St. Croix Scenic Riverway. She explained the history of the St. Croix Riverway.

- She explained some of their programs such as Paddle With a Ranger that introduces novices to canoeing and kayaking..
- Suggested we could connect with hospitals and clinics to encourage healthy outdoor recreation by providing information and incentives.
- Vets on the river program for veterans.
- Active trails passport – kind of a bingo for outdoor experiences
- Use the arts to promote the water trail.
- Importance of waterway etiquette, garbage and litter, safety tips and regulations. Their handouts are comprehensive so we wouldn't have to invent something new.

2. Erik Wrede – Mn DNR and Kurt Schneider from Chisago County Parks and Trails Both were so encouraging and will be excellent resources for our water trail. The DNR's focus is recreation, conservation and education. They have an "I Can Paddle" program. He suggested maybe scouts or churches could create a local version to introduce local kids to paddling canoes and kayaks.

- water quality is a huge issue in MN – explained the new law requiring perennial land cover buffers for all public lands but so far not "required" on privately owned land.
- Iowa is very progressive in developing water trails and have lots of great websites and information. Research their water trails.
- Paddling Theater – volunteer actors and musicians along the trail route.
- Bed and Breakfasts can promote the water trail – maybe have canoes or kayaks for guests to use.
- Emphasized the need to build exploration into our trail – geocache, land marks, art, technology
- Need to have a cell phone tour and map developed.
- Winter camping, fat tire bike race for Celebration of the Lakes
- State trail designation versus Regional Trail designation (follow the money)
- Conservation corps – reasonably priced labor
- Concert for kids on an island that they canoe to – a promotional idea

3. Conclusions

- We need a lot of enthusiastic people to make this happen and we need to get started immediately
- We need to be very mindful of private property owners, garbage and littering, safety,
- Consider strategic rest rooms
- Cell phone map, website, gps the trail
- Signage – maybe sponsored by businesses. Need a solid price for a sign map and installation from Peter Osterberg. We need at least one sign up soon in a very visible place.
- Need a great map – distances and loops
- Racks at strategic locations so people can lock up their canoe or kayak and go eat or shop.
- Brochure with a map and safety tips.
- Need to have a place or two to rent a canoe, kayak or stand up paddleboards
- Need to build exploration into our trail - creative ideas
- Like the idea of island concert for teens or ice bike race during celebration of the lakes
- Trash bins, garbage bags (whatever you take in – take out!)
- Albert Lea did build some environment education into their maps
- Rental kiosks are expensive but would start a buzz. What else could draw attention from highway 8?

Next Meeting?