



[REGISTER HERE](#)

Description

Join economic and community development colleagues from the St. Croix River watershed on February 16th 9:00-11:00 for a thought-provoking discussion about how we can work together across traditional boundaries to foster economic vitality. This year's conference – the third annual – will couple practical information you can use immediately with the opportunity to forge a vision for the future.

Julie Fox from Travel Wisconsin and Michael Hernandez from Explore Minnesota will keynote the event, describing new resources and examining how the river can unite, rather than divide us. **Sabrina Stoker from the Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area** (Colorado) will share her experiences in using NHA designation to promote this Colorado region. **Rosemary Mansfield, from the St. Croix Valley Regional Tourism Alliance** will provide information about regional marketing and discuss the benefits and challenges of joint marketing with Sabrina.

In this conference you will:

- hear from Minnesota and Wisconsin tourism experts about new resources for promoting heritage and recreational opportunities;
- discuss opportunities for overcoming traditional state boundaries that can impede tourism efforts;
- learn about developments in efforts to designate this region as a National Heritage Area;
- explore practical examples of current joint marketing efforts in our region, and learn how other National Heritage Areas have promoted their region to everyone's benefit; and
- discuss marketing strategies with your colleagues and help to shape tools that highlight the St. Croix Watershed's events and resources.

Sponsors: Art Reach St. Croix (MN/WI), Chisago County HRA/EDA (MN); East Central Regional Development Commission (MN), Explore Minnesota (MN) GPS:45:93 (MN), Great Rivers Confluence (MN/WI), Initiative Foundation (MN), Old Highway 61 Coalition (MN), Pierce County Economic Development (WI), , St. Croix Valley Regional Tourism Alliance (MN/WI), St. Croix Scenic Byway (MN), St. Croix Valley Foundation (MN/WI), Travel Wisconsin (WI), Wild Rivers Conservancy (MN/WI)

2013 “Harnessing the Power of our Watershed” Speakers



Julie Fox is the Northwest Regional Tourism Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. Her role is to connect tourism industry partners to the marketing resources available through the Department of Tourism, including grant programs, customer service training, and other opportunities, primarily for the 18 counties of the Northwest Region, from Bayfield to Trempealeau Counties. Prior to joining the Tourism team in 2016, Julie worked in the Wisconsin State Park System as a Natural Resource Educator. Julie was born and raised in northwestern Wisconsin. She has a degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Julie resides in Siren, her home office and hometown for her sons Ian and Nathan.



Michael Hernandez is one of four Explore Minnesota Tourism industry relations coordinators. As the metro area coordinator, Michael provides regional tourism industry outreach for the 9-county Twin Cities area. He provides industry partners with a broad array of tourism marketing support as well as general representation of Explore Minnesota in public and industry-facing settings. Prior to this role, Michael managed the Meet Minneapolis Visitor Center on Nicollet Mall as well as crossing the river for almost 10 years at Visit Saint Paul. He and his wife Sami now live in Bloomington with their two teenagers and two cats.



Sabrina Stoker, M.A. is the Executive Director of the Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area (Colorado). During her tenure she has focused on implementing strategies to strengthen organizational resiliency, build sustainable capacity and diversify revenue streams. Sabrina partnered with regional and national partners to enact the National Heritage Areas Act of 2023. She is currently leading efforts to rebrand the heritage area to create a more engaging experience for visitors while driving tourism revenue in Northern Colorado. Sabrina has a master’s degree in Human Service Leadership from Liberty University and is a certified Professional in Human Resources.

2013 “Harnessing the Power of our Watershed” Speakers



Rosemary Mansfield is the Marketing Director of the St. Croix Valley Regional Tourism Alliance. The mission of the Saint Croix Valley Regional Tourism Alliance is to increase the impact of tourism in our bi-state member communities through cooperative promotion of the Wild and Scenic St. Croix Valley; in addition the Alliance serves as an educational resource for the cultural, natural resources and history of the lower St. Croix Valley Scenic River Corridor.



Melanie Kleiss, M.S., J.D. is the Co-Chair of North Woods and Waters of the St. Croix Heritage Area. Melanie has experience in small business, finance, nonprofit management, and environmental law and currently manages rental properties and works as Finance & Operations Manager at a Native-led nonprofit. She is Past-Chair of Wild Rivers Conservancy and currently serves on the board of the St. Croix Valley Foundation. In 2021, she led the effort to conduct an economic impact study of National Heritage Area designation for this region. In her free time, Melanie enjoys adventures with her kids, flying a Cessna, and bicycling or xc skiing (depending on the weather!).



Katie Malchow, conference moderator, is the Executive Director for the Chisago Lakes Chamber of Commerce and the Chisago Lakes Tourism Bureau. Within each organization, Katie has worked alongside community, county, and statewide leaders to advocate for local area businesses, develop strategies for economic growth and development, and shine a light on the Chisago Lakes area as an accessible destination for tourism. She is an active member of NWW’s Economic Impact Team. Katie and her husband, Grizzly have called the Chisago Lakes area home since 2005. In her “free” time, Katie can be found transporting her three busy teenagers from any number of sports or activities. Go Wildcats!



2013 “Harnessing the Power of our Watershed”

Agenda

Introductions and Welcome – *Katie Malchow* – *Chisago Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Chisago Lakes Tourism Bureau*

- Conference Overview
- Planning Team & Sponsoring Organizations
- Welcome to Participants and Speakers

North Woods and Waters of the St. Croix Heritage Area – An Update – *Melanie Kleiss, Co-Chair*

- Economic Impact of NHA Designation
- An Update on the Designation Process
- North Woods and Waters Programs and Projects

Resources for Strengthening Partnerships/ Collaboration across the Heritage Area

- Travel Wisconsin – *Julie Fox* – *Regional Tourism Specialist* – *Northwest Region*
- Explore Minnesota – *Michael Hernandez* – *Metro Regional Manager*
- Discussion: Working across the Minnesota/Wisconsin border

Collaborative Marketing Based on Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources: Practical Examples

- Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area (Colorado) - *Sabrina Stoker, Executive Director*
- St. Croix Valley Regional Tourism Alliance – *Rosemary Mansfield, Executive Director*
- Discussion: Benefits and Challenges of Joint Marketing

Discussion – *Katie Malchow*

- Responses to questions in “chat” – directed to presenters.
- Participants’ Reflections
 - What collaborative marketing efforts are you currently doing?
 - What joint marketing avenues would you like to implement and/or learn more about?
 - Out of what you have heard today, how could NWW engage in joint marketing?

Wrap Up – *Katie Malchow*