

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

Comprehensive River Management Plan

Public Meetings
November 2024



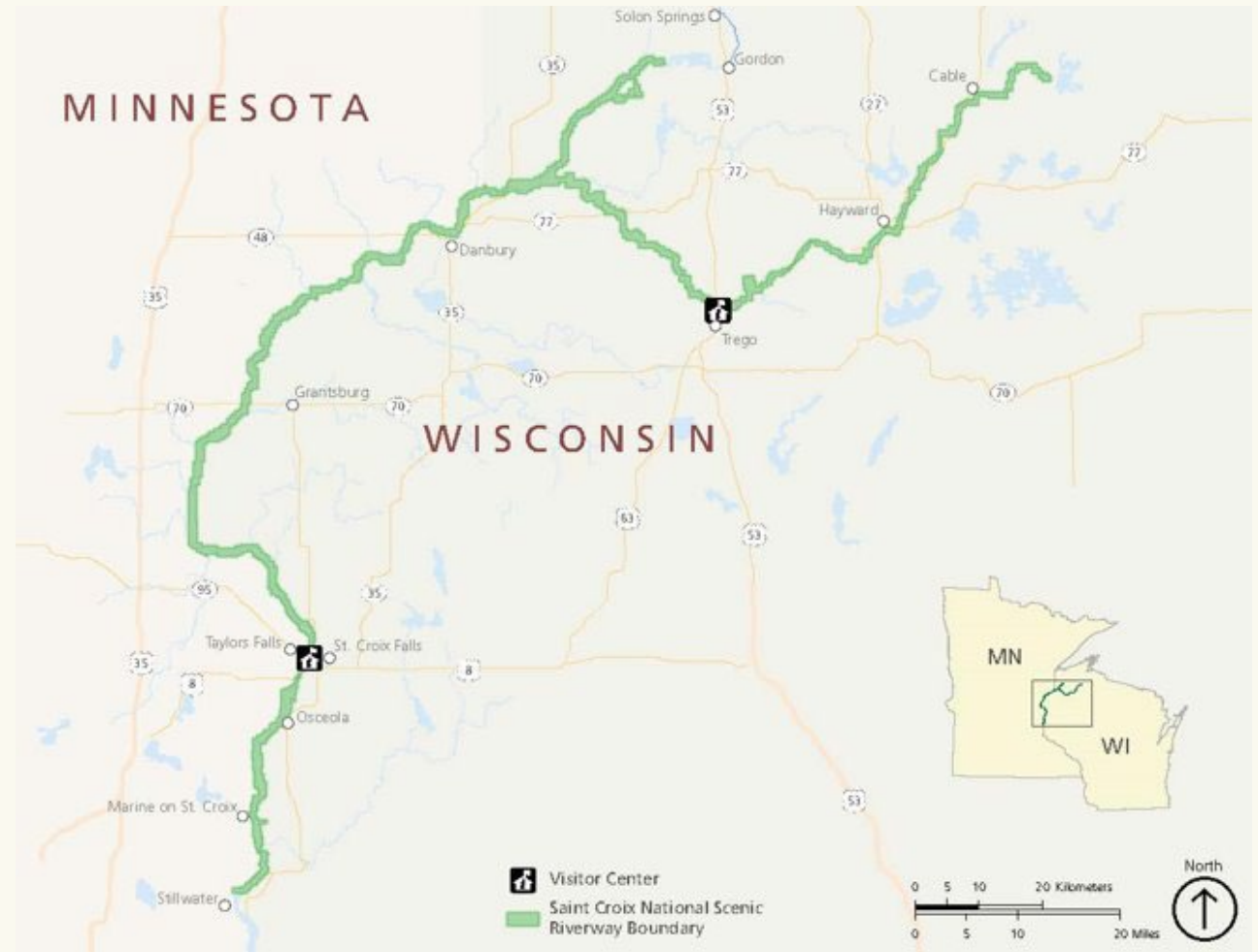


Welcome!



What Is the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway?

- Established in 1968 as one of the original 8 wild and scenic rivers; a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (WSR) and unit of the national park system (NPS).
- Today, 255 miles of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers are protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA), and 230 are managed by the NPS.
- The NPS owns 50 of the approximately 70 landings along the Riverway and manages approximately 150 primitive shoreline campsites.
- ~40 commercial use authorization holders operate on the Riverway.



What Is the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway?

- Purpose of the Riverway: 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
- Outstandingly Remarkable Values: free-flowing condition, water quality, aquatic, cultural, recreation, riparian, geology, scenic-aesthetic
- People connect to and use the river in a variety of ways including fishing and hunting, boating and paddling, hiking and exploring, bird watching and photography, and much more



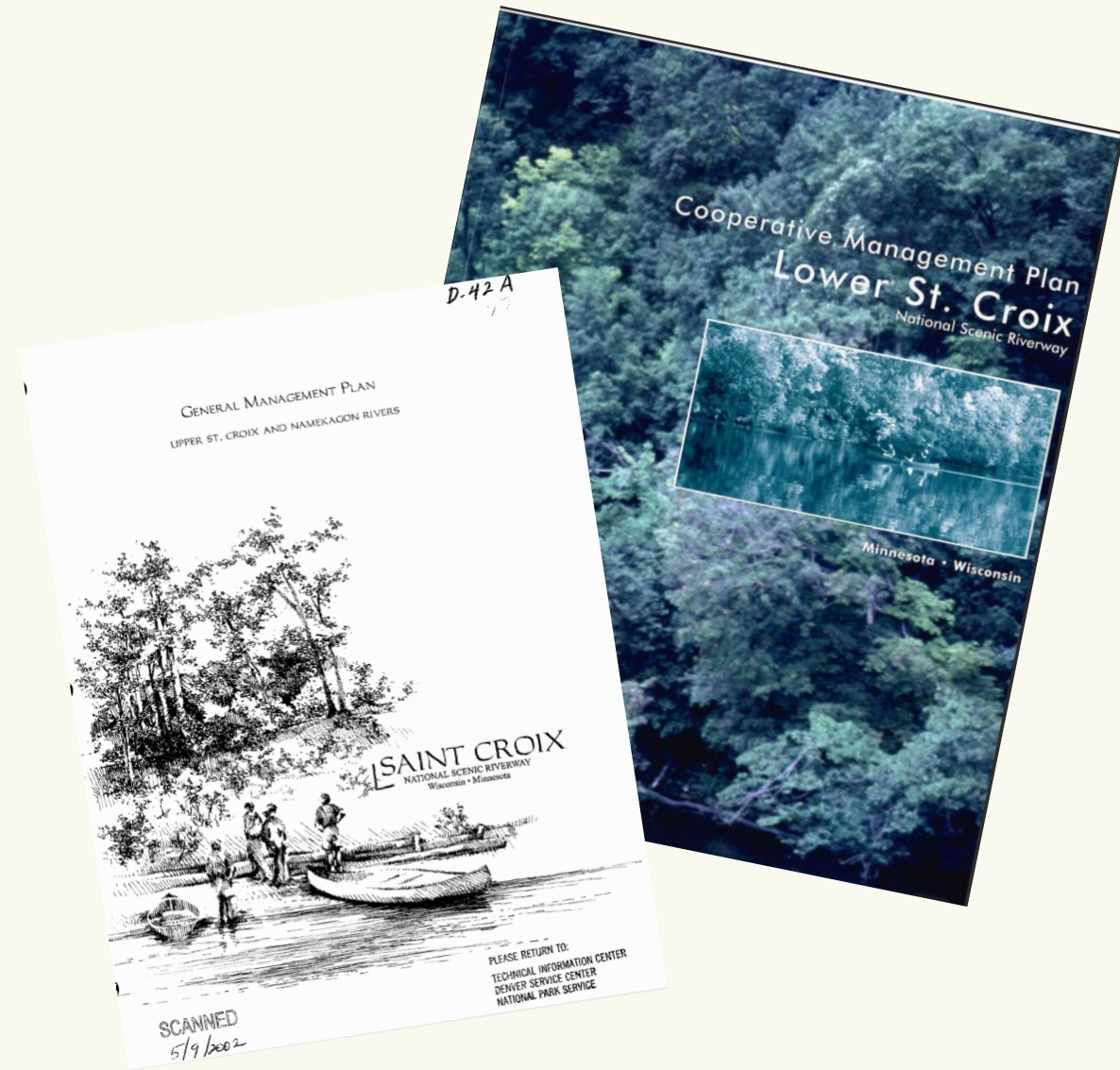
What Is a Comprehensive River Management Plan? Why Do One?

- A process and plan to guide NPS actions and decisions for long-term management of the 230 miles of the federally managed area of the Riverway
- Addresses requirements under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Includes management strategies to address key issues while protecting and enhancing river values

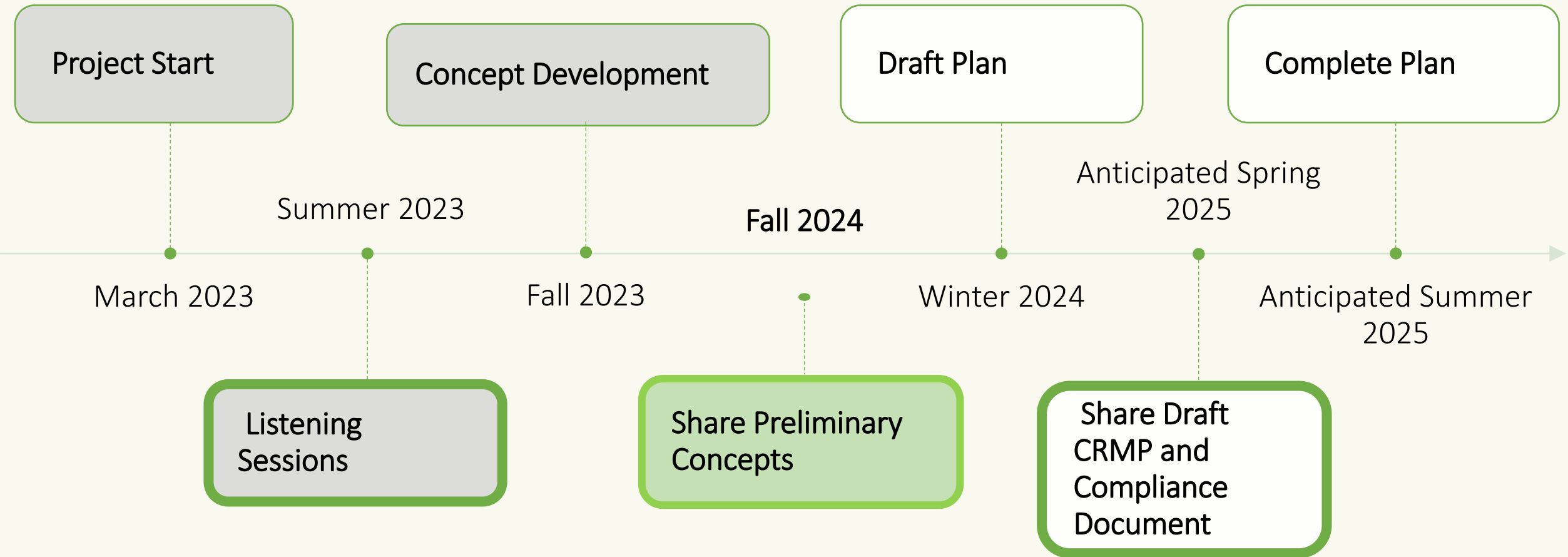


Relationship to Existing Plans

- The comprehensive river management plan (CRMP) for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway will build on existing plans, updating and carrying forward existing guidelines when appropriate.
- The CRMP does not replace the Cooperative Management Plan (2001) but rather provides specific guidance for NPS lands on the Riverway.



Project Timeline and When You Can Participate



Definitions

- **Management areas** – Specific areas within the Riverway, each with defined goals that help guide decisions about resource protection and recreational use.
- **Management concepts** – Two distinct approaches for managing the Riverway, each offering a pathway to fulfill the Riverway’s mission. The final approach may combine elements from both concepts.
- **Management strategies** – Proposed actions the NPS could take to achieve the approaches outlined in the management concepts and within the management areas.



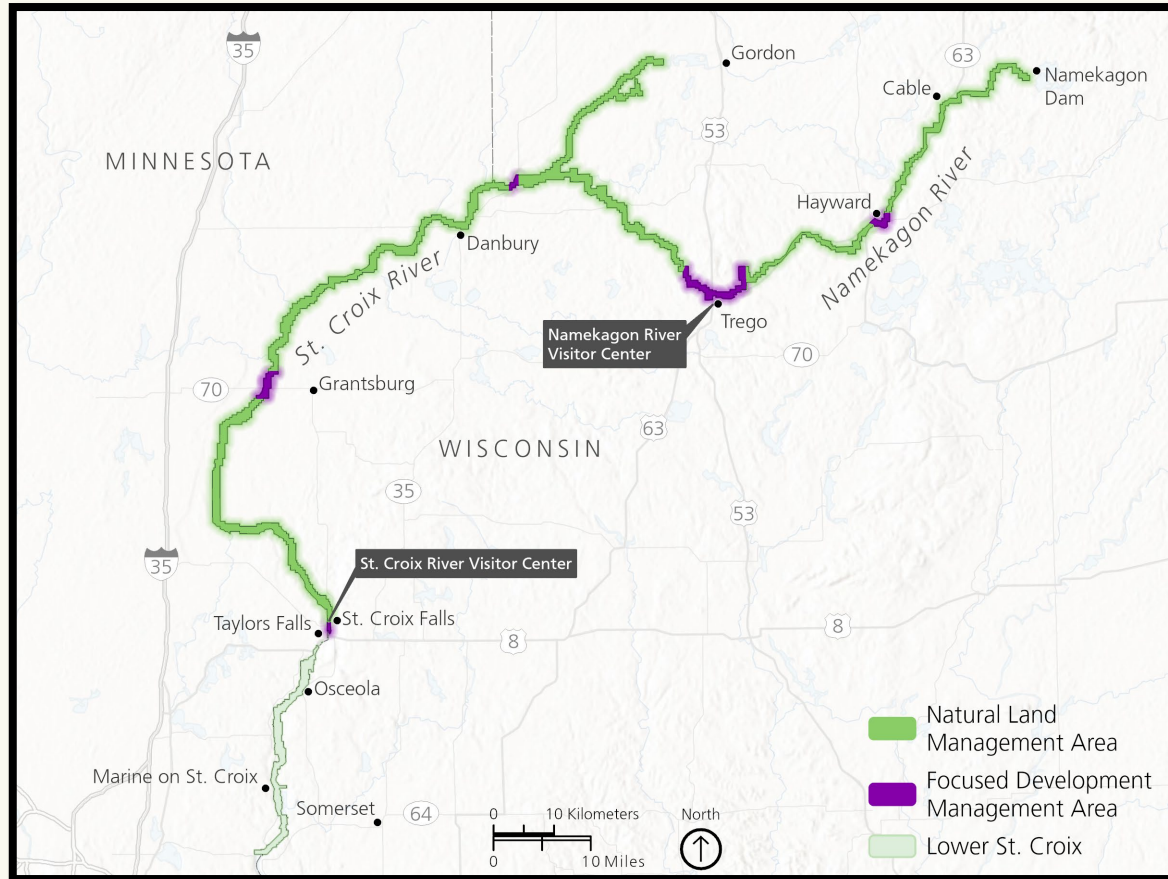


Land and Water Management Areas

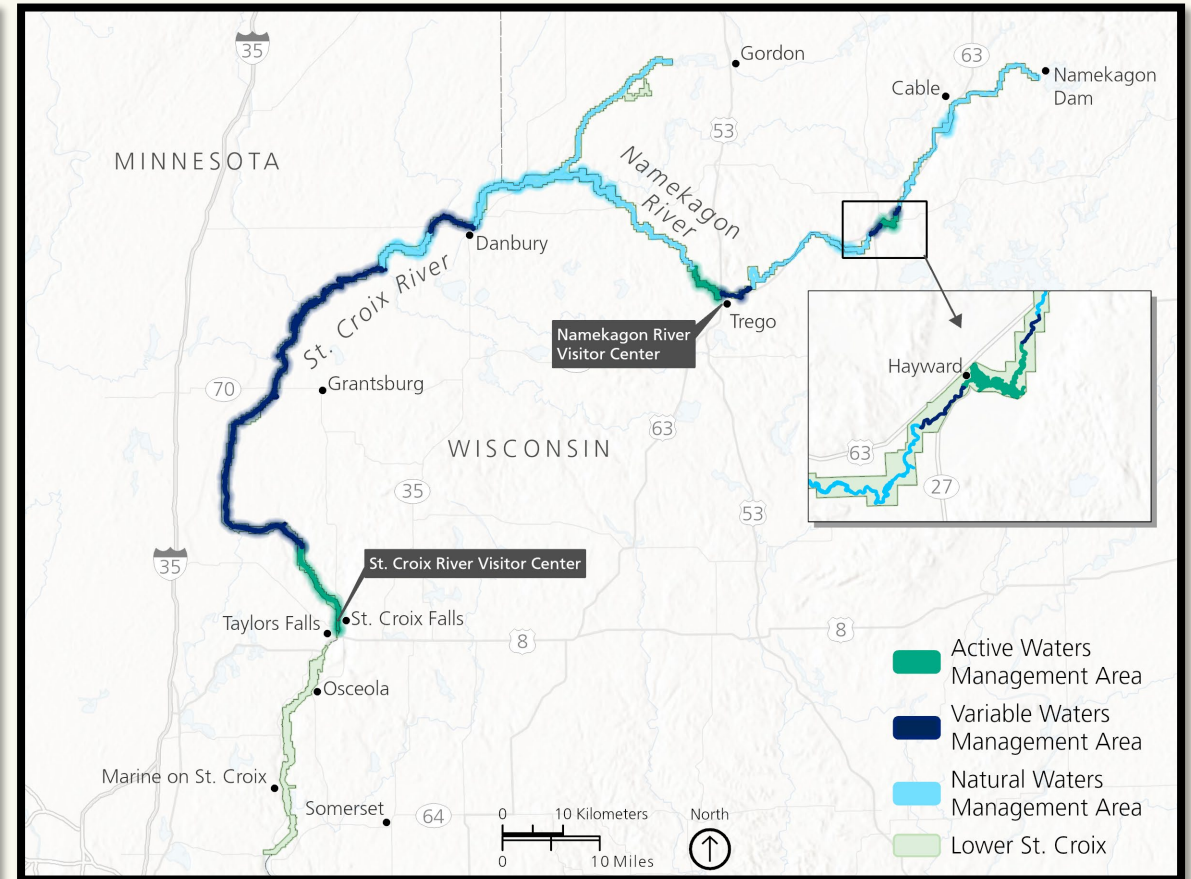


Management Areas

Land Areas



Water Areas



Land Management Areas: Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers

Natural Land Management Area

- Visitors experience a natural setting with minimal signs of development.
- Facilities like landings and campsites blend into the landscape.
- Abundant opportunities exist for quiet solitude and outdoor activities.

Focused Development Management Area

- Thoughtfully planned development blends into the environment.
- The area has a higher concentration of facilities than the Natural Land Management Area.
- A lively atmosphere with more people and activities exists while maintaining harmony with nature.



Land Management Areas: Lower St. Croix River (from 2001 CMP)

Small Town Historic Management Area

- Visitors experience a developed area that maintains a historic character.
- Encounters with other people are common.
- Noise levels are moderate, and crowds are minimal.

Conservation Management Area

- The shoreline is undisturbed by the few visible signs of development.
- Recreational support facilities are small and limited in number.
- Abundant opportunities exist for fishing and wildlife viewing.

Rural Residential Management Area

- Visitors experience a feeling of being on a river in a sparsely developed landscape.
- Visitors no longer encounter large concentrations of development or people.
- Abundant opportunities exist for fishing and wildlife viewing.



Water Management Areas

Active Waters Management Area

- The area has a moderate presence of people and mostly slow-moving, motorized boats.
- Visitors can expect noise from others and nearby activities—this area is not very quiet.
- The area accommodates both motorized and nonmotorized recreational activities.

Variable Waters Management Area

- Generally, few visitors engage in low-impact activities.
- Activities include walking, paddling, and some slow motorboating.
- Noise levels and solitude vary; the area is busier during peak times.

Natural Waters Management Area

- Visitors enjoy peace, quiet, and solitude.
- The area has low noise levels, with few other visitors or boats.
- The area has great wildlife viewing and excellent fishing.



Water Management Areas: Lower St. Croix River (from 2001 CMP)

Active Social Recreation Management Area

- The visitor experience varies between peak and nonpeak times.
- During peak times, large numbers of people and watercraft are present
- During nonpeak times, moderate opportunities exist for solitude.

Moderate Recreation Management Area

- Visitors encounter a moderate number of people and watercraft.
- Boat speeds may be strictly controlled in certain places.
- Noise levels will be moderate. Abundant opportunities exist for fishing.

Natural Waters Management Area






- There is a low number of both users and watercraft and maximum opportunities for solitude.
- Noise levels are consistently low.

Quiet Waters Management Area

- Experiences vary between peak and nonpeak times.
- Watercraft speeds are kept low to preserve the river's tranquil quality.
- Noise levels are consistently low.



Management Concepts

	Concept A 	Concept B 
Camping 	Manage the expansion of campsites and do not expand camping opportunities, to maintain fewer visual intrusions and a pristine environment.	Consider additional campsites throughout the Riverway.
Landings 	Manage the expansion of the number and footprint of landings and river access points to protect natural conditions.	Consider enhancing landings throughout the Riverway.
Winter Use 	Maintain the existing opportunities for winter use activities.	Explore additional opportunities for winter use activities (e.g. snowshoeing, cross-country skiing) in locations such as Riverside and Trego Lake.



2023 Listening Session Concern: Camping Management



Camping Management

- **Difficulty securing campsites** – Significant issues finding available campsites.
- **Noncompliance with regulations** – Concerns about visitors not following camping regulations, negatively affecting the environment and overall visitor experience.
- **General sentiment** – The current state of camping management has led to a less-than satisfactory experience for visitors.



Public Feedback Received During Listening Sessions

- Implement a reservation and fee system.
- Develop additional shoreline campsites.
- Install registration boxes.
- Increase law enforcement presence.
- Create more separation between water and land access campsites.



CRMP Management Strategy: Camping Management

Reservation System

- Launch a reservation system and associated fee via Recreation.gov for all NPS-owned Riverway sites
- This system would help campers secure spots, provide consistent education on park rules, and support maintenance of NPS sites



Camping Zones

- Visitors would secure a spot within a camping zone
- This approach allows for flexibility and spontaneity to find a spot, while ensuring fair site usage



2023 Listening Sessions Concern: Boating Guidelines



Boat Speed and Wake Size

- **Safety and environmental concerns:** Boat speeds are raising serious issues for the Riverway, including concerns about boats not following existing wake laws.
- **Expanded use in less-traveled areas:** The presence of larger, more powerful motorboats in previously less-traveled areas is a concern.



Public Feedback Received During Listening Sessions

- Prohibit motorized travel on the Namekagon River
- Limit motor size and boat speed
- Expand nonmotorized zones
- Regulate access to manage increased boat traffic and protect less-traveled areas



Management Strategy: Boating Guidelines

Concepts for Consideration

- **Namekagon River** (excluding flowages): No-wake zones, horsepower limits, and/or restrictions on motorized travel
- **Upper St. Croix** (Riverside to Gordon): No-wake zones, horsepower limits, and/or restrictions on motorized travel
- **Lower St. Croix River** (within 100 feet of shoreline from Taylors Falls to Arcola Sand Bars): No-wake zones



2023 Listening Sessions: Crowding and Visitor Experience



Crowding and Visitor Experience

- **Public feedback:** There are concerns that the large crowds accommodated by current usage strain the Riverway's infrastructure, resources, and visitor experience to an extent that cannot be sustained in the long term.



Public Feedback Received Listening Sessions

- **Manage the number of users, which could include changes to commercial operators.**
- **Explore options for dedicated commercial use landings and access areas:**
Establish dedicated river entry points for commercial use to prevent land damage, reduce traffic jams, and address public health concerns



Management Strategy: Crowding and Visitor Experience

Maintain Current Operations for Commercial Services

- Any potential expansion of new or existing commercial services will be evaluated to understand potential impacts before proceeding

Improvements to Park Infrastructure

- Enhance boat landings to separate commercial and non-commercial use when feasible to improve visitor experience and safety



2023 Listening Sessions: Concerns about Hunting and Fishing Regulations



Hunting and Fishing Regulations

- There are concerns about various aspects of hunting and fishing regulations, including the use of live bait, lead, and specific fishing practices like take limits and catch-and-release limits.
- Users across both Wisconsin and Minnesota seek balanced regulations that protect natural resources while providing fair opportunities for recreation.



Public Feedback Received During Listening Sessions

- **Ban on lead and live bait:** Immediately prohibit lead and live bait, as done in many other NPS waters.
- **Better catch management:** Implement measures to manage fish populations more effectively, including banning treble hooks and barbed hooks, and reduce bag limits.
- **Control deer feeding:** Work with the Departments of Natural Resources to regulate deer feeding near the Riverway.



Management Strategy: Hunting and Fishing

Coordination with WI and MN Departments of Natural Resources (DNRs)

- The National Park Service will collaborate with the Wisconsin and Minnesota DNRs to ensure a collaborative approach to fisheries and wildlife management and regulations across state and federally managed lands and waters.



Why Are We Exploring This Approach?

- **Ensure consistency:** Coordination with state DNRs provides consistent regulations, reducing user confusion and enhancing enjoyment.
- **Balance recreation and wildlife management:** Close collaboration helps align recreational activities with effective wildlife management practices.



We Want To Hear from You!

- Use the comment sheet in the room today.
- Comment online at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/sacnriverplan>.
- Send comments via US Mail:

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
(Attn: Superintendent)
401 N. Hamilton Street
St. Croix Falls, WI 54024



How to Comment Online

- Visit <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/sacnriverplan>.

The image displays three sequential screenshots of the National Park Service (NPS) website, illustrating the steps to comment online on the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway Comprehensive River Management Plan. The website header includes the NPS logo and navigation links: Find a Park, Discover History, Explore Nature, Get Involved, Working With Communities, Teachers, Kids, and About Us. The main navigation bar lists: PEPC Home, Documents by Park, Policy/Guidance, Park Planning, and Search Documents.

Step 1: The first screenshot shows the 'PROJECT LINKS' section on the left, with 'Open For Comment (1)' circled. An arrow points to the 'Open For Comment (1)' link in the 'Document List' section. The main content area displays the 'St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Comprehensive River Management Plan' and a 'Document List'.

Step 2: The second screenshot shows the 'Documents Open For Comment' section. The 'SACN Comprehensive River Management Plan Newsletter' is circled. An arrow points to the 'SACN Comprehensive River Management Plan Newsletter' link in the 'Document List' section.

Step 3: The third screenshot shows the 'SACN Comprehensive River Management Plan Newsletter' document. The 'Comment Now' button is circled. An arrow points to the 'Comment Now' button. The document content includes a 'Comment Period' of Jul 7, 2023 - Aug 8, 2023, and a list of 'Topic Questions'.



Breakout Stations



Breakout Stations

- Break from the large group.
- Go to a station to ask questions or have a conversation.
- Comment online at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/sacnriverplan>.
- Send comments via US Mail:

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
(Attn: Superintendent)
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St. Croix Falls, WI 54024



Questions to Consider

1. What thoughts do you have about the descriptions and ideas the National Park Service has shared about the future of the Riverway?
2. Two management concepts are being proposed for how the National Park Service would manage NPS campsites, landings, trails, and facilities. What information do you think the planning team should consider when analyzing these ideas and strategies?
3. Under each management concept, the National Park Service is exploring changes to how camping is managed, including camping reservations and fees. What information do you think the planning team should consider when analyzing these ideas and strategies?
4. Under each management concept, the National Park Service is considering modifications to boating guidelines. What information do you think the planning team should consider when analyzing these ideas and strategies?
5. Based on your desired experiences at the Riverway, which of the management concepts and related strategies do you think best achieve your desired experiences and the purpose of the plan?



Thank you



Please contact Craig Hansen or Lisa Yager with questions.

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