



2020 Action Plan for The Confluence

Introduction to the Confluence Region

The Confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers – at the center of the world’s third largest river system – is of national and international natural and cultural importance. Their confluence represents the center of a 3,740 - mile river system that runs through 31 states and two Canadian Provinces, and a watershed that covers 1.2 million square miles, one-eighth the land area of the North American continent. It is the world’s second largest drainage basin, draining 40 percent of the continental United States.

The rivers and watershed of the Confluence region are an essential resource for people, plants and animals providing a bountiful habitat to support life. The people of the St. Louis region rely on the water from the Confluence watershed for drinking water, crop irrigation and livestock production, industrial manufacturing, transportation, and for recreational activities such as fishing, boating, swimming and relaxing. The flora and fauna of the region rely on the watershed for their habitat, including 60 percent of all North American bird species. It is also an important area for many fish species including the endangered pallid sturgeon

More than just a unique physical feature – the union of two great bodies of water –and a crucial natural habitat, the Confluence is also a dynamic intersection of people. Spanning more than 1,000 years, it has seen a confluence of diverse cultures, traditions, customs, beliefs, and folk life, including prehistoric Mississippian to Siouan, Spanish to French, English to American, and many others, making the Confluence a valuable and distinctive part of the heritage of the United States.

As the 20th century unfolded, increased pressure for more farm land, industrial production, urbanization and a reliable, inexpensive water transportation route, combined with a lack of insight regarding their impact, resulted in poor water quality, decreased wetlands and natural habitats and a lock, dam and levee system that has fundamentally changed the shape of the river landscape. As these changes to the rivers were manifesting, the population of the St. Louis bi-state area also began moving away from the rivers and the rivers became a forgotten footnote in our region’s state of mind.

History of Collaboration

The Great Flood of 1993 was a tremendous act of nature that had a profound effect on the landscape and psyche of the St. Louis bi-state region. Damages from the flood totaled over \$15 billion, levees failed and thousands of people were evacuated. A new generation witnessed the might and power of the Great Rivers and realized that floods can occur, despite the protection of 100 + year flood levees. Some members of the community began to understand the importance of river wetlands as a sponge to help absorb excess water during periods of vast rains. As awareness has grown so have new opportunities for conservation along the flood plains of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers

One such opportunity occurred in the mid 1990.s. A number of nonprofit organizations were independently working along the riverfront to increase the amount of public green space and public access to the river. The Confluence Partnering Organization (CPO) began to take shape when the McKnight Foundation of Minneapolis, with a goal to improve water quality, strengthen citizen advocacy and conserve land , asked the groups to collaborate on one large grant request. Five nonprofit organizations, Trailnet, Grace Hill, Greenway Network, Southwestern Illinois Resource, Conservation & Development, and the Trust for Public Land, were awarded a major planning grant in the summer of 1998.



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By April 2001, an ambitious Master Plan for the Confluence region was developed that promoted environmental sensitivity, conservation and stewardship while reconnecting the people and communities of the region to the rivers. It encouraged tourism and economic development, protection of cultural and historic features and proposed means to improve the quality of life. The Plan delineated an overall shared vision of the Confluence region with specific projects and programs that could be implemented by a large diverse group of public and private stakeholders.

The Confluence 2010

Today the Confluence region is a 200 square mile evolving system of conserved open space, parks, museums, heritage sites, and recreational trails along the Great Rivers of the bi-state St. Louis area. By reconnecting the public to the wealth of natural, historic and recreational resources at the heart of the community, this project contributes significantly to regional quality of life and economic competitiveness in the 21st century.

Currently, over \$150 million has been secured or committed by various governmental agencies and non-profit organizations, and the transformation of the riverfronts is well underway. An impressive set of early achievements encourages community residents and tourists to care and protect the land and water in the Confluence region as they reconnect to America's Great Rivers. For a summary and detailed list of accomplishments, please see the attached addendum.

The Planning Process

After ten years of collaborative efforts, the Confluence Partnering Organization (CPO) decided that the Master Plan should be revisited and revised. To update the shared vision for The Confluence, the CPO, with the guidance of consultants from H3 Studio, conducted a series of workshops with members of the Confluence Partnership (this group includes representatives from many local, state and federal agencies, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, corporations and individuals who all work in the Confluence Region and voluntarily coordinate many of their activities). The purpose of the workshops was to review achievements and accomplishments during implementation of the 2001 Master Plan and to develop a collective **vision** for future accomplishments in the corridor for the next 10 years.

Vision

The Confluence Region is a sustainable nationally significant park, open space and trail system focused on the confluence of the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois Rivers which is treasured and cared for by the people of the region.

The Confluence Partnership enhances the quality of life of the region by improving the community's attachment to the nation's Great Rivers, preserving and conserving its natural and built resources, and increasing recreational and development opportunities while interpreting the heritage of "the confluence of People & Place."



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Goals 2010-2020

The overarching goal of the Confluence Partnership is to reconnect people to America's Great Rivers through Conservation, Recreation and Heritage. Over the next 10 years, through the collaborative effort of the many organizations that compose the Confluence Partnership, the specific goals include:

1. Develop a system of riverfront parks, open space and trails.
2. Connect to communities, parks, natural areas and historic sites
3. Promote a unique, authentic river and open space experience that builds upon the historical, cultural, and natural resources of the area.
4. Support strategic open space and land protection to conserve and enhance the natural and ecological resources of the river corridor.
5. Improve the region's water quality by promoting, supporting and engaging in watershed protection planning, projects and programs.
6. Expand and enhance opportunities for interpretation, education, and recreation for area residents and visitors.
7. Foster sustainable economic and community development and region-wide tourism.
8. Create a sense of attachment and identity to foster an ethic of stewardship for the region's Great River's system.
9. Develop long-term partnerships for SUSTAINING THE VISION OF THE CONFLUENCE.

Implementation Initiatives 2010 -2020

To achieve these goals the following Conservation, Recreation and Heritage Initiatives will be pursued.

Conservation Initiatives

1. Expand habitat restoration on public lands, specifically, but not exclusively, including:
 - a. Fort Belle Fontaine Park
 - b. North Riverfront Trail
 - c. Chouteau Island
 - d. East Saint Louis and Vicinity
 - e. Horseshoe Lake State Park
 - f. Cora Island
 - g. Confluence Point State Park
2. Conserve key lands for public use from willing sellers.
3. Expand the existing volunteer habitat restoration and river clean-up programs.
4. Support habitat restoration on private land with willing landowners.
 - a. Collaborate with regional land trusts to develop a farmland preservation program with willing landowners.
5. Develop The Confluence as a major bird-watching destination.
 - a. Promote the development of a Confluence – wide "Birding Trail".



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- b. Support year round birding events such as Eagle Days.
6. Conduct a benchmark study of air, water and habitat condition and quality.
 - a. Support long term water quality monitoring of the rivers.
7. Support and expand the AmeriCorps Rangers into a green jobs training program.
8. Develop an ecological/water focused school curriculum and life –long learning program.
 - a. Expand education partnerships throughout The Confluence.
Develop and support multi-generational models of programming that can be implemented in multiple centers and facilities within The Confluence.
 - b. Develop a watershed and creek signage system to help people understand river systems.
9. Support the integration of public art into conservation initiatives.

Heritage initiatives

1. Gain national and international recognition of specific sites and The Confluence.
 - a. Support efforts to promote the Scenic By-ways and National Road.
2. Facilitate the study and interpretation of the cultural history of The Confluence.
3. Complete Mounds Heritage Trail from Cahokia Mounds to Big Mound & Sugar Loaf.
 - a. Develop a memorandum of understanding with the Osage Nation to collaborate on activities and projects in the corridor.
4. Develop the Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing Underground Railroad site.
5. Preserve and designate historic structures in Fort Belle Fontaine Park.
6. Expand the Route 66 Festival at Old Chain of Rocks Bridge.
7. Create “heritage” tours exploring the art, music and culture of the river.
 - a. Celebrate the river through an all day boat trip which incorporates music, art and educational programming.
8. Include The Confluence in the 250th anniversary of the founding of St. Louis in 2014.
9. Develop an Artist-In-Residency program for The Confluence and promote public art.
 - a. Develop a Public Art Master Plan for The Confluence.
 - b. Support the implementation of Jackie Brookner’s Public Art and Ecology concept into North Riverfront Park.
 - c. Create an Art/Science Barge program in which artists & scientists are in-residence on the river.

Recreation Initiatives

1. Support the continued development of Visitor Centers and a Way-Finding System, including:
 - a. Audubon Center at Riverlands
 - b. Confluence Visitor Center at Laclede Power Building
 - c. Visitor Center on Chouteau Island, II at Old Chain of Rocks Bridge
 - d. Complete the Lock & Dam 27 Visitor Center & Trail connection to Chouteau Island
 - e. Hartford Tower



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- f. Secure land at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge for site improvements to include secure parking, lighting and restaurant complex on Missouri bank.
 - g. Malcolm Martin Memorial Park
 2. Expand special events to attract new audiences to the Rivers.
 3. Expand interpretive programs via web cams and cell phone tours.
 4. Develop trail connections from adjacent communities to the riverfront, including the following:
 - a. McKinley Bridge to Eads Bridge
 - b. Eads Bridge to Metro East Levee Trail
 - c. MetroBikeLink to Memorial Hospital
 - d. Trestle and connection to downtown St. Louis
 - e. Eads Bridge to Malcolm Martin Memorial Park
 - f. Old Chain of Rocks Bridge to Columbia Bottom Conservation Area
 - g. McKinley to Eads to Cahokia/Metro-East Levee Trail Connection
 - h. McKinley to Schoolhouse Trail
 - i. McKinley to Granite City
 - j. Katy Trail to Machens
 - k. Eagle Points Trail phase 2
 - l. Branch street from Riverfront Trail to Old North St. Louis
 - m. Prairie Trail (Phase 1 & 2)
 - n. Investigate options and provide technical support for connecting the Katy Trail to the City of Portage des Sioux
 5. Develop and promote sites for fishing, hunting, boating and riding.
 - a. Support fishing activities in the corridor with emphasis on youth participation.
 6. Support connecting the Katy Trail to the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.
 7. Support the development of river-related attractions in adjacent communities.
 8. Complete and promote multi-use trails that create a bi-state loop system.
 - a. Advocate for additional dedicated and safe bike/pedestrian trails on bridges crossing the rivers and for the improvement of current crossings.
 - b. Provide safe and secure parking at nodes along the entire trail system and in particular along the Riverfront Trail.
 9. Develop and promote a water trail system.
 10. Promote The Confluence region by continuing to participate at pertinent Partnership sponsored events, festivals and programs.
 11. Expand and improve current programming and develop additional festivals, educational programs and special events, such as:
 - a. Water Festivals such as a “Creek Walk” Program; the *Festival of the Confluence or the Meeting of the Waters Festival*; and a *River Regatta*.
 - b. Fishing and Birding events.
 - c. Jazz/Miles Davis festival and/or a River Music Festival.



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- d. Marathon along riverfront.
- e. Attract new, potential River supporters to the Confluence with high-profile performers and additional program components.
- f. Develop events for new facilities including Laclede Power Building, Malcolm Martin Park, Trestle, Eads Bridge, Eagles Points Trail and Mounds Trail.



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Workshop Participants and Commentators:

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