



# Friends of the Mississippi River

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*Working to protect the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities area*



April 3rd, 2013

President Kathy Lantry  
St. Paul City Council  
15 Kellogg Blvd W.  
St. Paul, MN 55102

President Lantry and Councilmembers,

We are testifying today to once again recognize St. Paul for its leadership in planning for the future of the Mississippi River corridor.

There is so much good to say about this plan – whether that is about a calmed Shepard Road, the new activity center on the Island Station site, or the proposed cultivation of access and amenities at Pig's Eye Regional Park. We are particularly excited by places within the plan that offer the public a chance to engage the riverfront in new and meaningful ways – in particular places like the Island Station site and Watergate Marina.

We'd like to briefly focus on the Watergate marina, because it has been the subject of discussion, and because we have invested many hours as an organization in restoring the lands around the marina. As stewards of the surrounding land, we know it is a focus for biodiversity in St. Paul's river corridor.

Today, Watergate Marina presents a poor public face. We support a refresh of the facilities at Watergate including locating a range of amenities such as equipment rental, a place to buy food and drink, and space to learn about the river. Families and children from an urban center like St. Paul deserve a base from which to learn about nature in an accessible location — not in some distant wilderness, but right in our own backyard.

But, as we have expressed in written comments and many conversations, we think it is essential that new facilities in this location be done sensitively, modestly and within the existing footprint of the marina. The charm and value of this location is its natural, scenic setting, tucked below the sandstone bluffs along a quiet and historic reach of the river. We support this plan with the understanding that this is the intention of the plan.

More than a century after much of St. Paul's riverfront was protected as a public asset, this plan is at long last an acknowledgement that the 17 miles of riverfront in St. Paul comprise a system – a system of people and neighborhoods, a transportation system, a recreational system and an ecological system. The parks, people and places along this river are not isolated points unto themselves, but derive their meaning from being part of a larger whole.

To realize the benefits of those relationships, the plan advances necessary changes to the way the Parks Department structures its work along the river - changes which we support. In looking at and planning for these assets as an integrated whole, the City of St. Paul has again shown its ready to leverage outside resources, and capture the interest and imagination of a wide swath of the public around all this Great River Passage offers today and into the future.

Please don't hesitate to call me at 651-222-2193 x29 with any questions.

Sincerely,

  
Bob Spaulding  
River Planner