Friends of the Mississippi River

360 North Robert • Suite 400 • Saint Paul, MN 55101 • 651/ 222-2193 • www.fmr.org

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

June 14, 2011

Louis F. Jambois
President
Saint Paul Port Authority
Suite 1900 Landmark Towers
345 Saint Peter Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mr. Jambois,

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a local non-profit community-based organization that works to protect and enhance the natural and cultural assets of the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities. We have 1,400 active members, and 3,000 active volunteers who care deeply about the river's unique resources.

In 2008, the St. Paul Port Authority (SPPA) proposed a set of improvements to its Southport facility on the City's West Side. These improvements would have required that Upper River Services, a local barge servicing operation, move from its current home at a site known as Barge Terminal #2 to the Southport Facility. For many years, Upper River Services has operated out of leased SPPA land at Barge Terminal #2, a 2.69 acre site under the Lafayette Freeway Bridge, across from Lowertown, just east of the end of the current West Side riverfront esplenade.

In August 2008, the SPPA sought to move Upper River Services to the Southport area. Zoning variances to move forward a set of related improvements to the Southport area were approved by the St. Paul City Council. But some individuals then and now made a strong case that the new proposed Southport site was a less efficient and environmentally friendly place for Upper River Services, in part because it would have caused barges and towboats to travel further between fleeting locations and the company's home base, expanding travel time and fuel usage.

In part to address this, an agreement has been struck that we believe achieves two core aims:

- it would allow for Upper River Services to remain at their preferred location at Barge Terminal #2; and
- it would provide a net enhancement to the Mississippi Riverfront in St. Paul, over and above that which the SPPA had agreed to as part of their August 2008 Council resolution.

The original City Council resolution from August 2008 approved variances and a site plan for the site, but in so doing imposed several conditions on the Port Authority, one of which was to donate the existing Barge Terminal #2 land.

We agree with the St. Paul Port Authority and others that we should eliminate the requirement that the St. Paul Port Authority donate the Barge Terminal #2 site (line 332 of the August 20th, 2008 Council Resolution). In its place, we also agree with Port Authority that a revised City Council resolution require the donation of other specific parcels to the City of St. Paul, in lieu of the land that had originally been committed:

- The 1.75 acre River Bend parcel near Island Station will likely in the long-term provide an important sheltered access point to the river for smaller watercraft.
- The 1.85 acre Northport Outlots near the Pioneer Press production facility and Float Plan Harbor at Holman Field provides important river frontage at an increasingly public node along the river, along with the potential to create riverfront trail access along this portion of the river connecting back toward the Lafayette Bridge.
- The .91 acre parcels at Southport, near the end of the runways is a nice, if long-term gesture toward providing future public access to the riverfront, a reasonable means of fulfilling the requirement that the Port "assist with" providing riverfront access in the Southport area. Upon review, we believe the provision of additional access in the area is complicated by anticipated MAC airport zoning restrictions and practical limitations based on the uses of the riverfront parcels in the area.
- The .61 acres of trail connections at the Southport site help build a critical off-road connection between existing trail in South St. Paul's Kaposia Park and southward, and the current and anticipated trail system within St. Paul's West Side. That trail connection, for which the City of St. Paul is already seeking funds, would for the first time ever complete a continuous off-road trail connection from one end of St. Paul's river corridor to the other, and kint our trails together with the extensive network along South St. Paul's riverfront.
- The Red Rock sites, though very remote from most likely park users, provides access between existing city riverfront property and Red Rock Road, as well as a connection between the more scenic northern end of Red Rock Road and the US61/Red Rock Rail corridor.

Instead of donating the 2.69 acres of land at Barge Terminal #2 as a condition of approval, the Port Authority proposes donating a substitute 15.97 acres (5.9 times as much acreage), for a total County-assessed value of $1.6142 million (4.4 times the assessed value of the land originally proposed for donation.

Keeping our mission of riverfront protection and stewardship squarely in mind, we wholeheartedly endorse this change to the conditions of the variance at the Southport facility. We believe that with the 15.97 acre land exchange proposed by the Parks Department and SPPA, the quality of St. Paul's riverfront is undoubtedly enhanced by the Port Authority's proposal.

Please don't hesitate to contact me or River Planner Bob Spaulding at 651-222-2193 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Whitney L. Clark
Executive Director

cc: Lee J. Nelson, Upper River Services

WEST SIDE CITIZENS ORGANIZATION
127 West Winifred Street
Saint Paul, MN 55107

June 2, 2011

Saint Paul Port Authority
Kelly Jameson
Vice President of Property Development
345 Saint Peter Street #1900
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Kelly,

On behalf of the West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO), I would like to offer support for the Saint Paul Port Authority's efforts to retain Upper River Services at Barge Terminal #2. In addition, the Riverfront and Development Committee has reviewed the results of the Community Design Workshops and the specific parkland donations to the City of Saint Paul and find both to be satisfactory.

The above support is contingent on WSCO continuing to work with the Saint Paul Port Authority to implement the 2008 City Council resolution pertaining to improving trail connections and access to the River.

Thank you for your continued efforts to engage the West Side in this important decision making process.

Sincerely,

Elena Gaarder

Elena Gaarder
WSCO Executive Director