



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

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Three Rivers Park District: Planning  
Mississippi Gateway Regional Park  
3000 Xenium Lane North  
Plymouth, MN 55441-1299  
[MissGatewayMP@threeriversparks.org](mailto:MissGatewayMP@threeriversparks.org)

RE: Draft Mississippi Gateway Regional Park Master Plan

Planning Director Grissman:

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 region. We have 2,300 active members, more than 3,000 volunteers and 1,600 advocates who care deeply about the river's unique resources. FMR has been an active and ongoing participant in planning for the future of the riverfront throughout the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) corridor.

We are writing today with a letter of support for the draft Mississippi Gateway Regional Park Master Plan, including a few comments.

### **FMR Support**

FMR supports this plan because it aligns with our belief that the Mississippi River belongs to all of us and that its ecological, recreational, economic and social benefits should flow equally to all people in our community. This plan, from the vision statement and action goals to the design and implementation, is built to make the park better serve all community members, including new park users. It does this while maintaining a nature focus to the park that will benefit park users as well as the habitat and water quality of the Mississippi River. Additionally, the planning process included a robust, inclusive and comprehensive community engagement process that was clearly used to shape the plan. Staff and consultants should be commended for this excellent work.

### **FMR Comments**

*Park Name* We strongly support the park name change to Mississippi Gateway Regional Park. This name fits well with the plan's vision statement and action goals as well as eliminates confusion with Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park across the river.

*Nature Interpretation Nodes* The nature interpretation nodes sound like wonderful educational tools and a great way to expose visitors to many aspects of our local environment. For the island

node, we encourage plan implementers to keep island access limited to favorable wading conditions or by boat.

*Trail Infrastructure* The trail infrastructure proposed in this plan is exceptional. It creates space for people with varying levels of comfort in nature, improves connectivity to and through the park for pedestrians and bicyclists and even provides a new type of trail. We strongly support the proposed grade-separated crossing of the Rush Creek Regional Trail and West River Road as well as formally extending Rush Creek Regional Trail through the park to connect with the Anoka County parks and trails using the Coon Rapids Dam pedestrian bridge. We appreciate the efforts of all partners involved to better and more safely connect people using all transit modes to the river. The proposed canopy-level trail providing visitors new vantage points to the park with interactive play looks like a wonderful asset. To make this section complete, we would like to see a water trails component included. This could be as simple as wayfinding signage for boaters (page 26).

*Transit* While transit service is limited to the park, there is a bus stop at the park entrance where the 766 bus stops 26 times per day on the weekdays. We encourage Three Rivers Park District to work with Metro Transit to improve transit access, awareness and accommodations to the park. Transit access could be improved by more bus routes stopping at the park entrance as well as the 766 bus making more frequent stops and running on the weekends. Transit awareness could be significantly improved by simply installing bus stop signs on West River Road so users know where the bus stops near the park entrance. Ideally, transit accommodation improvements like a bench and shelter, potentially with park information, would be made at the stops and then a sidewalk or trail would be constructed for people to comfortably and safely walk from the bus into the park (the Rush Creek Regional Trail expansion looks like it could meet this trail need).

*Implementation Section* In the Implementation Section of the plan, we are excited to see that the river access construction project is planned for 2018-2020. We appreciate that this first project improves access to the river for all. It would be helpful to know, beyond this project, what the project priorities are within the plan. What steps are in place to ensure this great plan is implemented? Please include more details about plan implementation in the final version of the plan.

Finally, we'd like to share that our organization has ecologists on staff that partner with government entities to write and implement natural resource management plans, a whole team of stewardship and education professionals who organize river-related educational programming and an advocacy team that would be happy to support funding requests to make plan implementation possible. Please feel free to reach out at any time!

Thank you for your great work on this plan and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Irene Jones  
River Corridor Program Director