



St. Croix again named one of America's Most Endangered Rivers

Stripping Wild and Scenic protections to build massive bridge would impact Riverway, create harmful precedent

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Washington, DC – Rolling back longstanding Wild and Scenic protections on the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway would gouge taxpayers, harm the river, and create a harmful precedent for Wild and Scenic rivers nationwide. This risk earned the St. Croix a spot on the annual list of America's Most Endangered Rivers™ – a report issued by the conservation group American Rivers. The St. Croix last made the list in 2009.

The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, one of our nation's original Wild and Scenic Rivers, provides a wealth of beautiful scenery, recreation opportunities for paddlers and anglers, and a haven for wildlife, all within a short distance from the Twin Cities metropolitan area. But a proposal to replace the Stillwater Bridge with a massive four-lane freeway-style bridge would harm the river's scenic and recreational values and would cost taxpayers up to \$690 million at a time when Minnesota and Wisconsin have many higher road and bridge repair priorities.

Representative Michele Bachmann's legislation to essentially strip the river of its protections to allow construction of the massive bridge project would also set a precedent exposing Wild and Scenic rivers nationwide to harmful development and pollution.

American Rivers and its partners called on Congress to reject any legislation that weakens the river's Wild and Scenic protections. They also urged Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to develop more viable, cost-effective bridge alternatives.

"The current bridge proposal would scar the river and create a harmful precedent for Wild and Scenic rivers nationwide," said Jessie Thomas-Blate of American Rivers. "We need to explore other bridge alternatives that meet the region's transportation needs and protect the priceless character of this river loved by so many."

"The massive and costly new bridge that is currently proposed threatens the qualities for which the St. Croix was protected by Congress 40 years ago. The Sierra Club supports a new crossing that is less expensive and intrusive on the river, and strongly opposes weakening the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act," said Margaret Levin, State Director, Sierra Club North Star Chapter.

"Our organization recognizes the need for a new bridge in Stillwater, but the current proposal is no longer affordable from an economic perspective. Amending the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to allow the current proposal to be built is not the right decision for this important river

landscape and would be a dangerous precedent for all protected rivers across the United States,” said Deb Ryun, Executive Director of the St. Croix River Association.

The St. Croix River begins in northwest Wisconsin and flows south, forming the border of Minnesota and Wisconsin and joining the Mississippi River near the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway was established in 1968 as one of the original eight Wild and Scenic Rivers and the lower section was designated four years later. The river – the only Wild and Scenic river in Minnesota, and one of only two Wild and Scenic rivers in Wisconsin -- provides a unique and much-needed wild experience for outdoor recreation opportunities in a growing metropolitan area.

About America’s Most Endangered Rivers

For 26 years, American Rivers has sounded the alarm on 360 rivers through our America’s Most Endangered Rivers report. The report is not a list of the “worst” or most polluted rivers, but is a call to action for rivers at a crossroads, whose fates will be determined in the coming year. Over the years, the report has helped spur many successes including the removal of outdated dams, the protection of rivers with Wild and Scenic designations, and the prevention of harmful development and pollution.

American Rivers’ staff and scientific advisors review nominations for the following criteria:

- A major decision that the public can help influence in the coming year
- The significance of the river to people and wildlife
- The magnitude of the threat, especially in light of climate change

For the third consecutive year, America's Most Endangered Rivers™ is sponsored by The Orvis Company, which donates 5% of their pre-tax profits annually to protect nature.

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