

# THE LOWER ST. CROIX VALLEY TRAIL

## AN AFFILIATE FOUNDATION PROJECT



**W**hat happens when an area made up of several small cities shares in a decaying community resource owned primarily by the County, utilized by locals, and needed to enhance area tourism? Well, nothing.

That's what board members of Lower St. Croix Valley Community Foundation (LSCVCF) found when the state of the area's bike trail, including a badly deteriorating bridge, was brought to their attention. As an affiliate of St. Croix Valley Foundation, LSCVCF responds to locally-identified needs through local fundraising, local connections and local expertise.

LSCVCF board members soon understood the barriers to addressing needed improvements – municipalities along the trail did not have the resources to fund or coordinate the project, and Washington County was not going to initiate the project without local support. "So we took a deep breath and decided to take on the Lower St. Croix Bike Trail Project," explains Robert Craggs, LSCVCF Board Chair. "Rebuilding the bike trail became our exclusive, and sometimes exhausting, focus for over three years."

Grounding the project in specific construction needs and hard numbers required LSCVCF to commission an engineering study. Repaving, bridge repair, standardized signs and ADA improvements would cost more than \$450,000. LSCVCF took those findings to each of the five cities along the trail (Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, Lake St. Croix Beach, St. Mary's Point and Afton). Initially cities viewed the trail solely as "the piece that runs by my front door." But LSCVCF showed how the whole trail connects the cities into one region. In the end, board members garnered a city council resolution of support for rebuilding the trail from each municipality.

With local support in hand, LSCVCF began a series of meetings with Washington County Parks and Transportation Departments to reinforce the value of rebuilding the trail. County Commissioner Gary Kriesel became an important advocate for the project. The County agreed to fund up to \$350,000 of the project, which left LSCVCF volunteers to raise the remaining \$100,000+.

People become donors when they feel a strong connection to a project. LSCVCF helped that process by hosting community gatherings where they shared the vision for the trail, provided progress updates and made funding requests.

On a beautiful summer day, the rebuilt Lower St. Croix Trail opened to bikers, walkers and stroller-pushers. The success of this vastly improved regional asset is a credit to LSCVCF's hard work and dogged determination. The trail now connects five communities along the St. Croix River and will be linked (in future) to a region-wide network of trails.

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**St. Croix Valley Foundation provides support to ten volunteer-driven affiliated foundations.\*** That support includes 501(c)3 credentials, fiduciary expertise, board and committee guidance, office and staff support and, most importantly, a shared understanding of and love for The Valley.

**\*In Wisconsin :** Amery Area Community Foundation, Hudson Community Foundation, New Richmond Area Community Foundation, Northwest Alliance Community Foundation (Burnett and northern Polk counties), Prescott Foundation, River Falls Community Foundation, Somerset Community Foundation

**In Minnesota :** Chisago Lakes Area Community Foundation, Lower St. Croix Valley Community Foundation, Stillwater Area Community Foundation



# FILLING THE VALLEY