



Welcome to the **First Edition** of the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway Newsletter! The goal of this newsletter is to inform you of the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway, and to update you of the work that is progressing on this exciting project!

## **WHAT IS THE FOX-WISCONSIN HERITAGE PARKWAY?**

### ***Background***

The Fox and Wisconsin rivers stretch approximately 275 miles from Green Bay southwest to Prairie du Chien. The waterway consists of three segments- the Lower Fox-Lake Winnebago Pool, the Upper Fox-Wolf-Lake Winnebago pool, and the Lower Wisconsin River- connected midstream by the historic Portage Canal. Made famous by the 1673 discovery route of Marquette and Joliet, the Fox and Wisconsin rivers served a critical role in the opening of the Northwest Territory. This historic event opened up the Midwestern part of what would later become the United States of America. Additional historic eras include early Native American and European settlements, as well as the rivers' many industrial uses.

### ***Purpose of the Heritage Parkway***

Establishing the Heritage Parkway will tie the current landscape with the history which brought us to it and allows for that history to come alive. It will allow residents and visitors to roam the area by power boat, canoe or kayak along the water trail, by foot or wheel along the many walking and biking trails, or by car on a driving tour. As they roam they will encounter pieces of the many stories that have occurred here. Whatever the historic era, we all have the river in common. Therefore, each of our stories is the same story and to tell them, to keep them alive, to enhance the pride we already feel in our home ... that is what the Parkway is all about.

### ***Previous Work***

In early 1982, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced their intent to abandon the Lower Fox River Navigational System. The Friends of the Fox was organized to help alert the public and advocate for a positive solution to this threat to East Central Wisconsin. It was felt that the abandonment of the Navigational System would be detrimental to the historic and recreational importance of the river.

In 1990 the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission led a broadly based community coalition effort involving the Friends of the Fox, Community Foundations, Convention and Visitor Bureaus, State and Federal agencies, and many local community leaders, to propose the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway to help showcase this navigation system and tie it together with the larger history of the waterway. This Heritage Corridor was recognized in 1990 when it received a national nod as one of four pilot projects in Wisconsin selected to participate in a heritage tourism initiative to showcase the rich heritage of the Midwest. In 1997 the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission created a concept plan that dealt with describing the idea of a Heritage Parkway and what would need to be done to create it.

### ***Current Work***

Our current work is focused on achieving National Heritage Area designation for the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway. The Friends of the Fox organization has partnered with the East Central Wisconsin RPC, and with the financial support of several Community foundations have begun a three year project which will update the Heritage Parkway concept plan and work on plan implementation, which will include establishing an ongoing management structure and preparing the nomination for a federal Heritage Area Designation. The four critical steps outlined by the National Park Service staff are as follows:

- Completion of a suitability/feasibility study;
- Document public involvement in the suitability/feasibility study;
- Demonstration of widespread public support among heritage area residents for the proposed designation; and
- Commitment to the proposal from key constituents, which may include governments, industry, and private non-profit organizations, in addition to area residents.

## **WHO ARE WE, AND WHY ARE WE INVOLVED?**

### ***Friends of the Fox***

Friends of the Fox (FOF) is not-for-profit advocacy group established to work toward preservation and development of the environmental, cultural, historic, economic, and quality of life assets offered by the Fox River.

The Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway was a founding vision of FOF and embodies each piece of our mission. Refurbishing and reopening the historic lock system was seen as the first step in repairing the infrastructure, the base on which the Parkway would build. Now that so much progress has been made toward reopening the waterway we have the opportunity to broaden our efforts to the support of historic and recreational sites along the corridor.

FOF looks forward to partnering with the residents of our corridor to preserve, commemorate and most especially celebrate the unique story of our Fox-Wisconsin Rivers. It is a multi-layered story which has yet to be told; one that is rich, interesting, and brings with it more pride and understanding of our home.

### ***East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission***

The East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) is comprised of planning and technical specialists that are responsible for intergovernmental planning and coordination for the physical, social and economic development of the East Central region. ECWRPC supports and is actively involved in the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway for the following:

- The Heritage Parkway will provide increased public access and recreational opportunities along the river for local residents.
- The Heritage Parkway will add to the quality of life that will make it easier for businesses to attract quality professionals and personnel.
- Establishing a Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway will provide an opportunity to draw in more people to expand our tourism economy.

### ***Why the Newsletter?***

The Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway project has always been founded upon broad based community support and input. We feel that your input and help is critical for the success of the Parkway. The Heritage Parkway Newsletter is also an exciting opportunity to share information on projects that are new and innovative up and down the Parkway. Communities from Green Bay to Portage have developed better ways to use the River from land and water. Land uses are changing from industrial to recreational. We intend to highlight these unique projects so that we all can enjoy our river. Some recent projects include the Trestle Trail crossing in Menasha, Green Bay's River Walk, Oshkosh's Leach Amphitheater and Trolley Square in Appleton. Each community along the river has improved access and opportunities to enjoy the waterfront and we want to share information about these efforts. We feel that this will help us realize that we all have the river in common, but at the same time each community's vision is unique. Lastly, we encourage all communities in the Parkway area to submit their upcoming Parkway related events. These dates will be posted in future newsletters.

If you have comments or questions, please e-mail;

[fox-wisconsin\\_heritage\\_parkway@live.com](mailto:fox-wisconsin_heritage_parkway@live.com)