

# A Proposed “Change for Conservation”



## Mississippi Valley Conservancy's mission and work

Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust based in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Our mission is to conserve native habitats and farmlands, for the health and well-being of current and future generations. From our founding in 1997 to the present, we have protected nearly 20,000 acres of natural land in the beautiful Driftless Area. 4,000 acres of that land are open to the public including our residents, and visitors for hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, photography, and snowshoeing.

Our protected lands span over nine Wisconsin counties with a combined population of roughly 340,000 residents. Every year the Conservancy hosts over 3,000 citizens and visitors on educational hikes and events on our nature preserves. We also provide environmental education opportunities to over 2,500 area school children.

## The Need

Our protected bluffs are an icon of the surrounding communities. When our citizens fly out they enjoy a remarkable view of spectacular undeveloped bluffs and meandering waterways. Visitors are awed by the breathtaking beauty of the Driftless Area no matter the season. Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a donor-supported conservation organization dedicated to protecting our unique and magnificent aerial viewshed. The capacity of our work depends on support from the communities around us.

## Successful Partners in the Past

Looking at it now, you'd never believe the diverse and vibrant 20-acre wetland adjacent to Sugar Creek Bluff State Natural Area (SNA) was, just 11 years ago, a tiled, degraded farm field littered with debris, ranging from tires to televisions to appliances.

Around the time Mississippi Valley Conservancy was looking for funds to purchase this land, the La Crosse Airport and the Department of Transportation Bureau of Aeronautics (BOA) were looking for a degraded wetland they could restore as a mitigation project for filling wetlands for the airport's runway.

The BOA supervised a five-year wetland mitigation project, hauled off the garbage, and removed 50,000 yards of sediment and invasive plant material. These efforts uncovered dormant seeds of native plants as the site returned to its early landscape from 150 to 200 years ago. Native grasses and wildflowers were planted relying on guidance from John Curtis' book, *Vegetation of Wisconsin*.

Today the restored wetland supports 140 native plants, 41 bird species, at least 24 insect species and three mammal species. Whitetail deer browse and bed down in the tall grasses. An otter has been seen and muskrats recently moved in. It has been estimated the site is breeding about 300,000 amphibians annually.

This wetland mitigation project was an exceptional example of successful cooperation between a landowner, and several organizations coming together to accomplish a challenging land restoration goal.

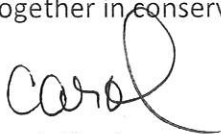
## Change for Conservation

Using the very successful model of the Denver airport, Mississippi Valley Conservancy proposes change collection receptacles be placed at airport security checkpoints. Instead of emptying spare pocket change into a bin at the airport security checkpoint, passengers will have the opportunity to make a difference in preserving the beauty of the Driftless Area by supporting the work of Mississippi Valley Conservancy.

Mississippi Valley Conservancy will be responsible for working with the airport staff and TSA in the placement of the receptacles and collecting the change. We are also willing to create signage for travelers explaining the benefits to the La Crosse area of donating their change.

I am happy to meet to further discuss and work out the details on this program. Change for Conservation has the potential to highlight and elevate the benefits of flying from "home" which is a boost to our local economy.

Together in conservation,



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