October 2005

To Our Partners and Supporters:

It is time to celebrate, time to look back on a planning process that has engaged community leaders, recreational enthusiasts, natural resource managers, and designers. Together, these partners have created a vision for the Red Lake River Corridor that protects and improves the river as a recreational trail and an ecosystem. This common vision incorporates natural and built assets in the communities of Thief River Falls, St. Hilaire, Red Lake Falls, Crookston, Fisher and East Grand Forks as a regional system.

The designs included in this book describe a regional sensibility for the Red Lake River Corridor. They represent the natural and cultural history of the region, as well as the legacy these communities can hand off to future generations. They illustrate how people from the region and visitors to the region can enjoy a variety of nature-based activities.

The Red Lake River is unique in the state in that it traverses the three major biomes in North America. It represents a diverse and productive fishery. It provides water and energy for some communities on its banks. As the Red Lake River meanders through the peat-rich soils at its source to its confluence with the Red River of the North, it cuts through beach ridges formed by Glacial Lake Agassiz. The river ties our communities to one another; it also ties our present day communities to their historic and future counterparts.

This plan demonstrates the possibilities that emerge when people work together. Several access points have been in place for 30 years, but more are needed. The cities and county parks along the Red Lake River provide important nodes for the regional trail system. This plan leverages the assets of the region: the river, city and county parks, the cooperation of community and agency leaders, to present to the state an opportunity for investing in a recreational trail.

So we celebrate the progress we have accomplished together, and we look forward to working together with you all, partners and supporters, in turning our plans into reality.

Sincerely,

Keith Mykleseth, Chairman
Congratulations Red Lake River Communities!

The work you have completed together represents an ideal for the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership. Our mission is to connect and enhance resources of the region with the University of Minnesota to develop a sustainable regional community by education and empowering citizens to explore and act on their ideas. You have enacted every verb in that statement in your project.

Connect – you have connected with one another in this region, and you’ve connected to a great resource at the University, the Center for changing landscapes.

Enhance – your efforts enhance the natural resources of the region as well as the communities.

Develop – you have developed a plan for a future that embraces regionalism and nature-based recreation, a future that can be sustained.

Educate – you have learned from one another, taught each other about your communities, and learned about the power of design.

Empower – you have risen to the challenge of empowering the whole, the joint powers board, as a means of accomplishing great things together.

Explore – you have explored the river environment, agency partnerships, recreational potential and leadership possibilities.

Act – you have taken many steps toward you goal already, and are poised to bring new partners to the table as you move to the implementation phase.

Thank you for working together to make this project a worthy investment. We will continue to support you in your efforts to secure state funds to bring the plan to life.

Sincerely

Jon Evert
Chairman
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

RED LAKE RIVER
CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT WORKGROUP

THE RIVER LAKE RIVER CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT WORKGROUP is a Joint Powers Board of representatives from each of the cities and counties along the Red Lake River, East Grand Forks, Fisher, Crookston, Red Lake Falls, St. Hilaire Thiefl River Falls, the Red Lake Watershed District, and Polk, Red Lake, and Pennington counties are represented. All the Red Lake River corridor governmental units, except Pennington County, have signed the agreement. Pennington County participates in the planning.

ORGANIZATION HISTORY: The Red Lake River Corridor Enhancement Workgroup (RLRCEW) began meeting in March of 2000.

WORK GROUP PARTNERS: The Workgroup has partnered with the Pembina Trail Resource, Conservation & Development Association as a fiscal agent (a 501c3 non-profit) and is closely advised by several federal, state, and local agencies, and several non-profit organizations. The Workgroup routinely consults with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and The Nature Conservancy.

THE RIVER LAKE RIVER CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT WORKGROUP’S MISSION STATEMENT: The Red Lake River Corridor Enhancement (RLRCE) project aims to protect and restore the Red Lake River’s natural corridor to enhance water quality and fish and wildlife habitat that will provide for educational, recreational, and economic opportunities.

WORK GROUP STRATEGY: Group activities have focused on a well-defined strategy for successfully integrating all communities into a recreational amenity approach to natural resources management along the river corridor. This strategy began with a project specifically designed to enhance the interactions of communities and visitors with the Red Lake River. It has produced this document, The Red Lake River Corridor Canoe Trail Design.

FUNDING: All cities and counties along the river corridor have provided some base funding support for these activities. Red Lake Watershed District Board of Directors, the University of Minnesota’s Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, and the Northwest Minnesota Foundation have provided additional grant funds.

RED LAKE RIVER CORRIDOR CANOE TRAIL DESIGN: The Red Lake River Corridor Canoe Trail Design is the RLRCEW’s effort to produce culturally and environmentally sensitive planning and design documents for boat access points, city and county parkland and trails, and a geographic information system analysis focusing on a corridor from the border with the Red Lake Nation to East Grand Forks. It seeks to connect the Red Lake River communities more powerfully and more meaningfully to the river. A community design process led by the Center for Changing Landscapes, University of Minnesota in partnership with the people who live in the Red Lake River Corridor developed it.
INTRODUCTION

RED LAKE RIVER CORRIDOR DESIGN

SCOPE OF WORK & REPORT ORGANIZATION

The Red Lake River Corridor work includes an analysis of the corridor within a regional context, a projection of future development sites, design and planning of the corridor, corridor segments, communities and site locations. Design work also included the creation of a logo and signature elements to be used along the corridor to give it a recognizable identity, and Red Lake River Corridor Brochures were created in conjunction with the RLRC Workgroup that provide the necessary access and river information for canoe, boating, fishing and other recreational uses. A community design process that engaged citizens and officials was used to gather information, select the sites to be studied, and receive feedback on the design work. This report is organized in the following way:

THE REGION: After the introduction section the regional context and the geographic information system analysis are presented. The region was defined as the Red Lake River Watershed Basin. GIS analysis of this extent was conducted to build the necessary information for a planning and design process. Particular attention was placed on relationships to other statewide considerations.

THE CORRIDOR & CORRIDOR SEGMENTS: The corridor scale was developed as that area adjacent to the river course itself for the entire 191 mile length. The effective river buffer was 4 miles and included all communities as well as critical relationships needed for the planning and design of the river corridor. This includes a description of the segment strategy and a character analysis that identifies river segments based on the river character, community locations, and the length of canoe trips. Sites of existing access points, camping sites, and other amenities are identified for each segment, and potential sites for additional ones are suggested.

RLRC COMMUNITIES: The design work for local pedestrian trails, boat launches, picnic areas, campsites, etc. is presented community by community starting with Thief River Falls moving downstream to St. Hilaire, Red Lake Falls, Crookston, Fisher and finally to East Grand Forks.

IDENTITY: These elements were conceived as using the typical style and materials along the entire corridor in order to create a common aesthetic, use recognition, and a regional sensibility among all RLRC communities. The logo, the design vocabulary, and the designs for the signs are presented.

APPENDIX: The brochures, the geographic information system maps, the articles about the trail and other data are in the appendix.
DESIGN FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

- Regional Linear Recreational Systems
- Asset Analysis
- Corridor Enhancement Plan
- Segments
- Identity
- Community Design
- Community Resource Planning
- Park Design
- Site Design