Every time we do something ourselves we miss an opportunity to partner with the community and make a bigger impact for the park. This year, we’ve entered into some terrific new partnerships that are helping us to scale up our impact for the river and for our community. A new partnership with Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa is critical to the Plant for the Future Campaign. Youth Outdoors Crews from the Corps are working in the forest nearly every day to complete our goal of planting and maintaining 15,000 healthy trees by 2021.

During the spring and fall, we are capitalizing on the vast experience of retired teachers through the new River Educator program, which is helping elementary school students learn about history, navigation, and the natural world. In addition, our partnership with Northern Lights.mn has inspired captivating public art through Illuminate the Lock at the St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam Visitor Center.

In 2018, the Park Connection supported projects across the Mississippi River with nearly $1 million in donations. This funding is critical to who we have become and essential to what we can be.

It takes a wide and diverse community of friends to accomplish big ideas. When we say “we,” we mean all of us: organizational partners, donors, volunteers, teachers, moms and dads. Through your generosity and passion for the river, Mississippi Park Connection is able to help our park and our partners achieve big goals. Thank you for sharing in our community of river stewards.
“The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area turned 30 years old in 2018. We have come a long way, especially in the past 15 years, but only because of our strong partnerships, many of which Mississippi Park Connection fosters and grows.”

John Anfinson
Thank you to the 5,016 volunteers who gave 17,661 hours of their time and talent to our park.
## Our Growing Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi River Paddle Share</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>2,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coldwater Spring</td>
<td>74,921</td>
<td>159,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam</td>
<td>15,441</td>
<td>18,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi River Visitor Center</td>
<td>45,461</td>
<td>165,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Education</td>
<td>19,753</td>
<td>22,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Plantings</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>2,975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Padelford Riverboats Inspire the Next Generation

When Tammy and Gus Gaspardo started working as deckhands at the Padelford Packet Boat Co. in the mid 1980s, they had no idea that they would be running the Twin Cities flagship riverboat company together thirty years later. It’s a family affair with Tammy’s cousins working in the office alongside their daughter, Sam, and their son, James, who just earned his boat pilot’s license in June. “Believe it or not, we work really well together,” says Tammy. “We’re a tight-knit group.”

The Gaspardo Family has made a huge difference in the lives of more than 80,000 Twin Cities children through their partnership with the Big River Journey program and the National Park Service. “Twenty-two years,” says Gus, “those early kids are adults now!”

Tammy continues, “It always amazes me how many kids out there have heard of the Mississippi, but they’ve never gotten out there. They’ve never been on a boat. And they say, ‘whoa, this is so big!’ and some of them are kind of scared, and so we give them some encouragement.”

Thanks to yearly in-kind donations from the Padelford Riverboats, students from across the metro area are able to travel the river with steep discounts on boat tickets that put the program in reach for schools with small field trip budgets. “Big River Journey connects students to the outdoors,” says Gus. “It’s invaluable.”
“You get the students outside of the classroom and they can actually see it and feel it and be there. It’s like the bulb goes on.”

__________________________
Captain Gus Gaspardo
A New Vision for the Minneapolis Riverfront

The Minneapolis Riverfront is a special place to Paul Reyelts. “Not many city centers have a national park running through them.” Paul, the founding board member of Friends of the Lock and Dam, has a vision: “to develop St. Anthony Falls into a destination visitor and interpretive center.”

“Our vision for The Falls has inspired a strong coalition of support and caused government at all levels to take notice and take action toward developing a world-class park and visitor center at this iconic site.”

Paul Reyelts

“The National Park Service is an incredible resource serving the region. And, of course, the Mississippi River is a globally recognized landmark. St. Anthony Falls, the Stone Arch Bridge and the monolithic structure of the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock are gems that add sparkle to the necklace of wildlife and nature found in the remaining 72 miles of the river park.”

Thanks to Friends of the Lock and Dam and other donors, Mississippi Park Connection has been able to support the National Park Service in operating the visitor center at Upper St. Anthony Falls since 2016. Daily tours and special events like Illuminate the Lock brought 18,015 visitors to the Falls in the last year alone.
This year, Mississippi Park Connection entered into a three-year partnership with Surly Gives a Damn (SGAD) and Dangerous Man Brewing Company Volunteers (DMBC Volunteers) to support our Plant for the Future Campaign. The two groups are hosting volunteer events each spring and fall for three years and have pledged to plant 7,200 trees together by the end of 2020. Surly Gives a Damn has also sponsored a community tree nursery where new trees will grow strong roots over the summer months to prepare them for planting in the fall.

“My utopia idea is that the kids will grow up here and look back and say my mom and dad planted this forest. They will see that its people enjoying each other’s company and craft beer—changing the face of the city and the environment,” says Hilari Bandow, DMBC Volunteers’ coordinator.

“Bigger community, bigger impact. That’s what I want,” says Mary Sellke, executive director of Surly Gives a Damn. “It’s not just about doing the event, it’s also about having people be bigger than themself, bigger than Surly, bigger than Mississippi Park Connection. Together, all boats shall rise. Give them more information, have them do more, experience more, and then they’ll know more. I love being part of a three-year plan because it allows us to look larger scale. Hop on board. Make the change. We want a world right? It’s not that hard. Mississippi Park Connection makes it easy. Go plant a tree.”
“Intentionality is what our volunteers are about. They like to work hard. If they aren’t busy, then they get upset. You’re digging. You’re cutting. You’re in the mud. That’s what makes Mississippi Park Connection so cool.”

Hilari Bandow
Contributors

Contributions of $250,000 and above
National Park Foundation

Contributions of $100,000 to 249,999
National Park Service

Contributions of $25,000 to $99,999
3M Foundation
The Driscoll Foundation
Friends of the Lock and Dam
Minnesota Historical Society
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation
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* In-kind gifts
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We make every attempt to provide an accurate listing of donors. If we have omitted your name or if other changes should be made, please contact us at 651-291-8164 and we will correct your record immediately.
Volunteer of the Year: Elizabeth Heeren

Why do you volunteer?
“I volunteer to help people become aware of and learn about the fantastic natural resources around them here in the Twin Cities metro area, and to personally do a little bit to help maintain and protect those natural resources. [It’s also] a spectacular way to draw attention to the National Park!”

What is your favorite spot along the river?
“The river gorge between the Ford Parkway bridge and the Lake St./Marshall Ave. bridge is my favorite spot along the Mississippi River.”

In May 2018, the National Park Service conducted its first prescribed burn on the 13 acres of prairie at Coldwater Spring.
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Talon Benavides  
Marli Lewis

### Visitor Service Specialists
Jordan Boudreaux  
Jessica Miller  
Mai Ker Thao

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### Financials

#### Expenses

**Program Services** ................................ $944,484  
**Environmental Stewardship** ........ $271,093  
**Community Programs** ................. $484,072  
**Youth Education** ......................... $189,319  
**Fundraising** ................................. $37,727  
**Administration** ............................ $91,987

**TOTAL** ........................................ $1,074,198

#### Revenue

**Foundation and Corporate Grants** ........ $564,122  
**Government Grants** ....................... $79,218  
**Endowment Distribution** ............... $69,210  
**Programs Revenue and Other** ........... $65,497  
**Individual Gifts** ............................ $130,532

**TOTAL** ........................................ $908,579

*Some funds that were raised in 2017 were used for 2018 program expenses.*