



## Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota

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**Members of the House:** Sheldon Johnson (DFL – 67B) – Chair; Branden Petersen (R – 49B) **Members of the Senate:** David Senjem (R – 29); Patricia Torres Ray (DFL – 62) **State Agency Appointees:** Paul Hugunin – Agriculture, Frank Pafko – Transportation, Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Tourism, Keith Parker – Natural Resources, Andrea Kajer – Historical Society **Regional Appointees:** Jim Lucachick – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River, Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings, Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border **Member at Large:** Mark Anderson

June 20, 2012

The Honorable Mark Dayton  
Governor of Minnesota  
130 State Capitol  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

The mission of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota is to promote, preserve and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. The potential for rapid expansion of silica sand (frac sand) mining is of significant concern related to this mission, as it would directly affect the Mississippi River Valley and Great River Road. Issues have been noted by both Commission members and stakeholders. We believe that further study is warranted prior to permitting new mining operations in order to preserve the unique qualities of the southeastern Minnesota Mississippi River Bluffs Region and evaluate potential cumulative impacts on the Great River Road.

The Great River Road has achieved the esteemed designation of a National Scenic Byway because it possesses characteristics of regional and national significance demonstrating intrinsic qualities in each of the following areas – archaeological; cultural; historic; natural; recreational; and scenic. It is imperative for our state to protect the byway, its intrinsic qualities and the river it celebrates for current and future residents and byway travelers. The Great River Road is a National Scenic Byway through ten states. Activities on the Minnesota side of the river also impact the Wisconsin Great River Road – and vice versa - since the scenic and recreational experiences of travelers cross the entire river valley and include the majestic bluffs on both sides of the Mississippi.

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota requests that cumulative impacts of silica sand mining be studied, specifically including potential impacts to the Great River Road and the Mississippi River. Until the study is complete, we recommend a statewide moratorium on new silica sand mining operations along Minnesota Scenic Byways. This approach would help preserve not only the resources of the Great River Road but also other areas of the state similarly affected by potential silica sand mining; and would provide consistent information to be used by the various jurisdictions involved in decision making.

Topics to be addressed include:

- Landscape and cultural resource degradation
- Increased road and bridge pressures and potential damage
- Road and shoulder safety
- Pedestrian and bicycle conflicts
- Air and water quality
- Noise
- Reduced tourism activity and related economic losses
- Cumulative impacts on the Great River Road National Scenic Byway

We appreciate your consideration. Our Commissioners and Technical Advisors are available to provide further information as appropriate, and we would also welcome the opportunity to provide a representative to serve on a committee and/or assist with the cumulative impact study. We look forward to hearing from your office on its position on this issue. I can be reached via phone at 651-442-4658 or email at [rep.sheldon.johnson@house.mn](mailto:rep.sheldon.johnson@house.mn), or through the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Office at 651-341-4196 or [info@mnmississippiriver.com](mailto:info@mnmississippiriver.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheldon Johnson" followed by a stylized flourish.

For the MN-MRPC  
Representative Sheldon Johnson, Chair

cc: Minnesota Great River Road Bluffs Region (Hastings to Iowa Border) Cities, Counties and Townships  
Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission