

Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge

2001 Project Summary

Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge is a Confluence Greenway event. Partners in this project included the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and Trailnet.

During the winter, the Mississippi River is host to one of North America's largest concentrations of bald eagles, America's national symbol. The eagles are especially drawn to the open waters of the Chain of Rocks rapids just below the Bridge. This former Route 66 crossing, opened in 1999 by Trailnet through a partnership with the City of Madison, IL as a pedestrian/bicycle bridge, makes a safe viewing platform for children and adults. From the Bridge viewers can watch eagles catching fish, riding ice floes, soaring overhead, or roosting in nearby trees.

This year 1,060 children participated in school field trips to the Bridge. The school program included a pre-trip classroom visit by IDNR and MDC educators. During the public days, held in January, during the second coldest winter on record, 9,000 visitors came to the Bridge to view eagles.

Objectives of the program include:

- 1) Educate bi-state residents about our national symbol, the bald eagle, its habitat, ecology and the need for protection.
- 2) Visitors were able to: identify the differences between an immature and mature bald eagle; construct a food chain involving the bald eagle; list other birds and mammals associated with the habitat where bald eagles are found and understand the concept of *range* as it relates to the historic and present status of bald eagles in North America.
- 3) Participants were able to improve their community by applying conservation measures to expand the habitat for bald eagles.
- 4) Provide a venue for handicapped individuals and inner city, minority youth to view eagles in their native habitat. The Old Chain of Rocks Bridge is handicapped accessible.
- 5) Reacquaint area residents and communities with their river heritage and encourage use of the Bridge as a cultural, educational and recreational resource.

Twenty-five volunteers were needed each day to staff the learning stations during the five-day program. First-time volunteers were required to attend a training held the week prior to the event. Educational components of the training included eagle and Bridge information so volunteers could answer frequently asked questions. Instruction was provided on setting up and using the spotting scopes in addition to reviewing the logistics associated with the program.

Trailnet

Eagle Days on the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge

Project Overview

In our effort to stimulate community interest and involvement in the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, the Confluence Greenway projects and to reacquaint St. Louisans with their river heritage, Trailnet began Eagle Viewing in 1996. Initially area residents and Trailnet's more than 1,000 members were invited to view wintering bald eagles from the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge. Held in early winter when the greatest number of eagles is concentrated along the Mississippi, the one-day event attracted 3,000 people the first year.

In 1998, the program was expanded to include the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and 800 elementary school children from neighboring St. Louis schools. Now in its sixth year, Eagle Days has grown to become Trailnet's flagship event for the winter season. Last year more than 800 fifth and sixth graders participated in the school program and another 6,000 people attended the public program on the weekend.

During the winter months, the Mississippi River and St. Louis area are host to one of North America's largest concentrations of Bald eagles, America's national symbol. Hundreds of eagles flock to the river's open waters below locks and dams and rapids. The eagles are especially drawn to the open waters of the Chain of Rocks rapids just below the Bridge. This former Route 66 crossing, which opened in 1999 as the world's longest pedestrian and bicycle bridge by Trailnet, makes a safe eagle-viewing platform for children and adults. From the Bridge, viewers, young and old, can watch eagles catching fish, riding ice floes, or roosting in nearby trees.

The student field trips to the Bridge include a pre-trip classroom visit by MDC educators who provide students and their teachers with knowledge on eagles. The public venue was expanded to encompass the entire weekend. The MDC staff assisted students and the public in locating eagles through telescopes on the Bridge, as well as providing them with a Native American storyteller who spun tales of eagles and the river from the relative warmth of a tent. A staff person from the World Bird Sanctuary strolled the Bridge with a hand-held eagle giving visitors an up close and personal eagle-eye view.

The program will be expanded to five days in January 2001. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is joining our effort as well. This year, the program will also reach more elementary school children residing in low-income neighborhoods of St. Louis and metroeast St. Louis in Illinois. The school program will be three days, January 17 to January 19, 2001. The public Eagle Day viewing will be January 20 and 21, 2001.

A Bridge history component will be added to the public program this year. There have been so many questions about the Bridge, including: Why is there a bend in it? What are those two gothic towers in the middle of the Mississippi River? Why was the Bridge closed to vehicle traffic? We would like to feed that thirst for knowledge.

Twenty-five volunteers are needed each day to staff the learning stations during the five-day program. Volunteers will be required to attend a training seminar held the week prior to the event. This will enable them to answer frequently asked questions in addition to being able to adjust the spotting scopes used on the Bridge.

Program objectives include:

- Acquainting area school children with America's symbol, the bald eagle, its habitat, ecology and need for protection;
- Reacquainting St. Louisans with their river heritage and encouraging use of the Mississippi River as a cultural, educational and recreational resource;
- Providing area residents and communities with a sense of ownership and involvement in the Bridge project;
- Promoting and encouraging economic development in this depressed area of the St. Louis region.

Following the event, the planning committee will meet to review the public surveys and evaluate the project to make recommendations for next year. Additionally, teachers from the participating schools will be surveyed to make sure the program is meeting their educational objectives.



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Trailnet

Organizational Background

The mission of Trailnet is to develop multi-use trails, conserve greenways, and encourage walking and bicycling in the St. Louis bi-state region.

Since its inception in 1988 Trailnet has been working to develop multi-use trails and greenways in the St. Louis metropolitan region. To date, Trailnet has successfully established a number of trails in the area including Trailnet's most visible project, the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge. Completed in 1929 and closed in 1968 following the opening of a new interstate bridge, this former Route 66 crossing has just been renovated by Trailnet and reopened in June 1999 as the longest pedestrian/bicycle bridge across the Mississippi River.

Trailnet works cooperatively with government agencies, citizens and other trail and open space advocates in the 8-county bi-state St. Louis region sharing resources, providing technical advice, professional planning services and encouraging community involvement. Trailnet's projects have sparked public enthusiasm and spurred local municipal and county governments to undertake their own greenway and trail projects, some of which will connect to Trailnet initiatives and form the framework for a regional trails network.

As a result of these successes, Trailnet has grown from a strictly volunteer organization twelve years ago to one with twelve full- and part-time employees, a \$800,000 operating budget and more than 1,400 members. Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge is one of several events held annually.

Confluence Greenway - The Bridge is a key element in the creation of a 40-mile greenway and trail system extending from the Gateway Arch north on both sides of the Mississippi to the confluence of the Illinois River at Grafton. Known as the Confluence Greenway, the project and the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge are expected to spur economic development and tourism in the area and should have a major impact on efforts to rejuvenate St. Louis's urban core, making it a more attractive place in which to live and work. The project is one of eleven projects chosen by St. Louis 2004 for implementation by the year 2004, the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Eads Bridge - Most recently, Trailnet led a six-month campaign to raise \$1 million for improvements to Eads Bridge including the addition of historic railings and the creation of a pedestrian/bicycle promenade on the Bridge for weekend use. The campaign successfully concluded on September 1st, 2000 with \$1,012,250 raised.



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The Confluence Greenway Summary

Mission

The Confluence Greenway project seeks to restore the Mississippi River as the focal point of the St. Louis region's ecological, economic and social vitality. Creation of the Greenway will protect fragile riparian habitats and waters, increase outdoor recreational opportunities and reconnect our region to its river heritage. The Confluence Greenway is a 40-mile riverside park on both sides of the Mississippi River extending from the Gateway Arch in St. Louis past the confluence of the Missouri River to the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers in Grafton, Illinois.

Partners

The Confluence Greenway is a collaboration of not-for-profit organizations and government agencies. Project partners are: Gateway Parks and Trails 2004, Grace Hill Neighborhood Services, Greenway Network, New Spirit, Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation and Development, Trailnet and The Trust for Public Land. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and other local, state and federal agencies are lending expertise and resources to the Confluence Greenway effort.

Demonstration Projects - Phase I

- **Old Chain of Rocks Bridge** - Renovations, including structural work, connecting feeder trails, amenities and river environment displays of this historic Route 66 bridge. It is open free to the public on weekends.
- **Riverfront Trail** - Bicycle patrols, prairie restoration, neighborhood involvement programs, and maintenance of this new, 12 mile multi-use trail from the Gateway Arch to Old Chain of Rocks Bridge. The Phase 2 master plan will address habitat restoration, neighborhood connections, trail amenities and public art.
- **East St. Louis Heritage Trail** - Link downtown East St. Louis and surrounding neighborhoods to the riverfront including ecological enhancements such as native plantings and interpretative signage.
- **Laclede Power Building** - Convert an historic industrial building into a trailhead / visitors' center in downtown St. Louis. Center for educational/outreach programs as well as visitor services.
- **St. Charles Floodplain** - Conserve floodplain between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and identify environmentally sustainable economic opportunities.
- **Chouteau Island Nature Area** - Create a major recreation and nature area on 5000 acre island in the Mississippi with extensive non-motorized access.
- **Eads Bridge** - Improve planned pedestrian and bicycle facilities on historic bridge across the Mississippi River as part of downtown revitalization efforts in St. Louis and East St. Louis.

Gateway Parks &
Trails 2004

Grace Hill Neighborhood
Services

Greenway Network, Inc.

New Spirit

Southwestern Illinois
Resource Conservation
& Development, Inc.

Trailnet

The Trust for Public Land

Eagle Days 2001

Expenses

Vendor		Date	Invoice	Amount
Sterling Food	lunch for volunteers	1/18	60515	\$216.00
Sterling Food	lunch for volunteers	1/18	60514	\$210.00
Vandalia Bus Lines	shuttles			\$1,080.00
Cash	gratuity for shuttle drivers	1/22		\$50.00
Harlan Co.	snow removal	1/9	3649	\$1,770.00
Signs Now	2 banners	1/11	5078	\$380.00
Gateway Golf Cars	2 golf cars	1/22	35686	\$334.00
Discovery Expedition	Re-enactors			\$400.00
Heritage America	Storyteller			\$400.00
Econ-O-John	Toilets	1/17	6238	\$590.00
Kathi	donuts/ice/film/cups/soda	1/22		\$51.78
Admiral Rentals	Tents/Chairs		MDC	\$2,113.00
Aggreko	Generators		MDC	\$1,512.44
EI-Mel	Straw		MDC	\$280.00
BMW Entertainment Svc.	Security		MDC	\$1,152.00
World Bird Sanctuary	Eagle		MDC	\$800.00
Alpine Shop	Hand Warmers		MDC	\$176.00
Propane			MDC	\$132.00
Atlantic Express	Illinois school children			\$250.00
Trailnet labor				\$9,342.43
			Subtotal	\$21,239.65

Income

Donations	\$1,826.00	
Parking	\$4,600.00	
Rotary	\$400.00	
Kerr-McGee	\$500.00	
IDNR	\$1,000.00	
MDC	\$5,000.00	
	Subtotal	\$13,326.00

Total

-\$7,913.65





