



## 2016 PRESS RELEASE ON VOYAGE FORWARD TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

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The Voyage Forward Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Stewards are still talking tourism at our Voyage Forward Meetings. Collaboration and brainstorming among the diverse stewards of the Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Destiny Driver has resulted in successes in three strategic areas:

- **Better internet presence of our tourism assets** such as public boat launches, docks, parks, beaches and related businesses. In the age of the smart phone, Google Mapping the Voyage Forward region's assets is crucial! To achieve this goal, this group suggested a workshop on Google Maps which the l'Falls Chamber of Commerce hosted this fall. Additional workshops are planned. One of the stewards is a Google Maps Host who has spent countless hours on Google Mapping numerous public assets. Local businesses are encouraged to update their Google Map information. *Prior to working on this project, Koochiching County looked like a vast wasteland on Google Maps!* The stewards continue to work on Google Mapping the entire Voyage Forward area. Another important site is the Heart of the Continent Partnership highlighting communities on the Ontario/Minnesota border. <http://www.heartofthecontinent.org/>
- **To organize an ATV chapter.** Members of the Tourism Driver worked to align with an existing ATV club - Voyageurs Country ATV; an important step in linking the Voyage Forward communities with safe, legal well-marked trails.
- **To support underutilized recreational assets** such as biking, hiking, birding, canoeing, kayaking and winter sports. The stewards have provided letters of support to Big Falls for its campground expansion and are supporting plans for a boardwalk in the Tilson Creek Ski Trail area for hiking, biking and birding in non-winter months. The stewards have met with local birders on developing birdwatching tourism. Additionally, the stewards have met with the Minnesota Historical Society regarding the reopening of the Grand Mound and continue to support those efforts.

The Economic Adjustment Strategy Report for Koochiching County written by the Newmark Grubb Group identified many areas to guide a growing, sustainable, and diversified economy for all of Koochiching County. One of the key assets identified was TOURISM. A core group of around 20 dedicated individuals from all over Koochiching County have been meeting and strategizing. It is invaluable when individuals coming together from all parts of the county to discuss projects and opportunities! Let's Voyage Forward! [www.voyageforward.org](http://www.voyageforward.org)

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