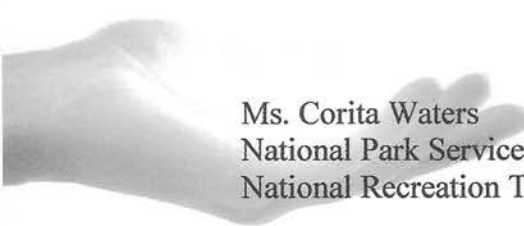


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Ms. Corita Waters
National Park Service
National Recreation Trail Coordinator

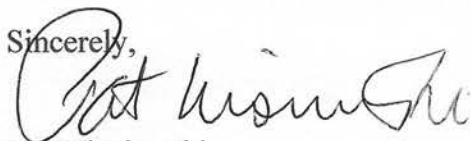
Dear Ms. Waters,

As one of the Producers of the Emmy nominated documentary, *Everglades of the North: The Story of the Grand Kankakee Marsh*, I wish to express my support for the designation of a National Water Trail along the Kankakee River in Indiana and Illinois.

When I first began researching the story of the Kankakee River, I was in absolute amazement of the incredible cultural and environmental history of our nation that was encapsulated here. What was once one of the largest inland marshes in North America sat at the heart of the Kankakee River and covered a large portion of northern Indiana and Illinois. It was home to an immeasurable amount of wildlife with waterfowl so thick they were said to have "blackened the sky." In addition to the phenomenal ecological value of the marsh, the rich cultural stories of the people who migrated through the area down the Kankakee River were astounding. From early Native Americans leaving artifacts that are 10,000 years old, to French fur traders and early new world explorers such as Rene-Robert Cavelier Sieur de LaSalle, who traveled down this river in search of the route to west, the river is steeped in rich cultural history. Presidents such as William Henry Harrison and Grover Cleveland, along with civil war General Lew Wallace (author of Ben Hur) would come to hunt and fish along the shores of the Kankakee.

Today, restoration efforts have brought back over 26,000 acres of marshland to the river system and bi-state recreational activities are showing new uses for this historic river. Yearly festival such as the Voyageur Festival and Aukiki Festival are held along the river giving the communities an education of an earlier time in American history. The Northwest Indiana Paddling Association along with representatives from Illinois are working together to apply for National Water Trail designation. This would be a wonderful addition to this already scenic river, which is well used for kayaking, fishing, tourism, education and simply general outdoor family recreation. I hope that you will support this effort.

Sincerely,



Pat Wisniewski
Everglades of the North – Producer
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