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River group seeks greater protections for St. Croix River headwaters

The lower section of the St. Croix River was named Wisconsin's first-ever designated national scenic riverway in 1968. The upper (eight-mile) headwaters segment, which was not included in the riverway, lacked protections and current water-quality monitoring data. A local grassroots organization, the Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters in Gordon, is using an \$8,460 grant from Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to contract with the Center for Watershed Science and Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP).

According to Nancy Turyk, a water resource scientist at the center, this is not the first local watershed organization seeking the center's expertise. "The center has lent its water quality and monitoring expertise to many watershed or lake association groups throughout Wisconsin," said Turyk. "The headwaters of the nationally renowned St. Croix River is a prime example of local citizens taking stock of their own backyard river and working toward greater watershed management consensus and protections. Our goal will be to supply this organization with some baseline data on the headwaters and subsequently assisting local volunteers to help obtain an advanced water quality monitoring system and the data that they need to make educated decisions."

Last year the Friends of the St. Croix began monitoring the headwaters, from Upper St. Croix Lake to the St. Croix Flowage at Gordon, using the state's Water Action Volunteers monitoring program and now want to increase their ability to monitor and assess water quality along these eight miles of stream. The advanced monitoring data will help to assess the current water quality conditions in the river, identify any areas that may exhibit poor water quality, and may be used to obtain special designation of this stretch of river to help maintain its wild state.

"Our members have a passion for the upper St. Croix River, and want to protect and preserve its natural beauty, and to honor its great cultural and historic significance," said Scott Peterson of the Friends of the St. Croix. "We greatly value our partnerships with the DNR, UW-EX, and UWSP as they enable us to build our capacity to gather local support by helping everyone to better understand this great resource."