

Great River Ride – Day 1

By Paula Beckman

I can tell it's going to be a beautiful day! The sun is shining and it's a little cool this morning as we gather at Kwik Trip in Platteville to begin the Great River Ride. Before we get started, many thanks to Jim, Marcy, Mike and MJ for making this event possible. Thanks also to Al & Patty for relaying messages between the lead and sweep cars!

After a brief driver's meeting, 19 cars began the drive along the Great River Road, with many side trips among the twisty roads through SW Wisconsin's driftless area (you might read more about this on day 3).

We took a brief break in Cassville to stretch our legs and take care of business, then on to more glorious roads to Prairie du Chien for lunch. We had 4 restaurants to choose from. Ron & I joined Marcy & Jim at the Backwater Bar & Grill, where we enjoyed the food, conversation, and the view from the 2nd floor outdoor patio. The breeze was lovely, as was the view of the backwaters of the mighty Mississippi.

Following lunch, we drove through several small river towns, like Ferryville and Victory, to the National Fish Hatchery and the Great River Road Interpretive Center in Genoa. Construction of the hatchery was completed in 1937 as a back to work project during the Great Depression. Currently, their focus is on recovering endangered aquatic species such as freshwater mussels and restoring threatened fish species such as lake sturgeon. They are even rearing the endangered Hines emerald dragonfly!

The Interpretive Center includes hatchery tours, aquariums, historical exhibits, and walking trails. It was a great place to stop and learn about the history of the area and to see the work that they are doing at the hatchery.

After that we continued north to our hotel in La Crosse. We had time to unpack and relax a bit before heading to dinner at David Reay's in Onalaska. A storm system was moving in, so a few of us decided to leave early for dinner, in hopes of beating the rain. Unfortunately, it was pouring by the time we arrived. After waiting for a bit of a lull in the rain, we shared an umbrella and made it to the restaurant without getting drenched. Those who waited until the scheduled time to leave missed most of the rain! We enjoyed the dinner and the time to visit with our table mates.

After returning to the hotel, we called it a night. What a great day! Wonderful roads, beautiful scenery, and an interesting stop. Well done to all that made this event possible!