



Minnesota
Humanities
Center



For Immediate Release

New Smithsonian Exhibit Will Visit Lanesboro
Water/Ways Connects Communities Through Water and the Humanities
Exhibit Opens at Commonweal Theatre on January 7, 2017

December 28, 2016—ST. PAUL, Minn.—The Minnesota Humanities Center is pleased to announce the new Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition—*Water/Ways*—will open in Fillmore County at the Commonweal Theatre in Lanesboro on Saturday, January 7, 2017. The *Water/Ways* Lanesboro Opening Ceremony will be held from 7:30-8:15 p.m. on Saturday, January 7 at Commonweal Theatre in Lanesboro. *Water/Ways* is a traveling exhibit that focuses on the relationships between people and water—how water connects story, history, faith, ethics, the arts, and science, all through community.

Water/Ways reveals the central nature of water in our lives by exploring how Americans use water, how water unites communities, how water affects every element of life, and how Americans care for our water and protect this valuable resource for the future. As Governor Mark Dayton mentioned in his 2016 Water Summit speech, “we have critical water quality problems in Minnesota . . . we cannot ignore them. We have to face up to them and work together, to solve them.” *Water/Ways* addresses water resource issues while seeking active solutions to real water problems in the host communities and our state.

Minnesota is one of only five states chosen by the Smithsonian to launch this new traveling exhibit. Developed as part of the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program, *Water/Ways* is a unique collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, state humanities councils across the nation, and local host institutions.

“Lanesboro can be a leader in forming a new water ethic,” said David O’Fallon, President of the Humanities Center. “*Water/Ways* offers exhibits, events, scientific information, and, most of all, opportunities to meet in community and strengthen our shared commitment. I applaud Commonweal Theatre and Lanesboro Arts for hosting *Water/Ways* and bringing together an array of Lanesboro-area partners.”

The *Water/Ways* exhibit is specially designed for viewing in smaller, rural communities and will visit six Minnesota communities in 2016 and 2017. Through the *Water/Ways* traveling exhibit each host community will tell its local water stories and envision the future of water. The upcoming host sites for *Water/Ways* are:

- **Lanesboro (Fillmore County)**, Lanesboro Arts. January 7 – February 19, 2017
- **Detroit Lakes (Becker County)**, Becker County Historical Society. February 25 – April 9, 2017

Water/Ways has already visited these host sites in Minnesota:

- **New London/Spicer (Kandiyohi County)**, Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. June 25 – August 7, 2016

- **St. Peter (Nicollet County)**, Nicollet County Historical Society. August 13 – September 25, 2016
- **Red Wing (Goodhue County)**, Goodhue County Historical Society. October 1 – November 13, 2016
- **Sandstone (Pine County)**, Audubon Center of the North Woods. November 19, 2016 – January 1, 2017 audubon-center.org/event/smithsonian-waterways-exhibit/

“The process of organizing and planning for Lanesboro’s six weeks as a Water/Ways host site has been an incredibly rewarding and inspiring exercise in community building,” shared Adam Wiltgen, program director at Lanesboro Arts. “Many local programs and events developed in Lanesboro will utilize the arts and the humanities—*individual human stories and experiences*—to make complex, varying, and, at times, divisive water issues more relevant and accessible by focusing on how we are connected,” added Wiltgen.

As a part of *Water/Ways*, a companion exhibit, *We Are Water MN*, has been developed in conjunction with the Humanities Center’s *Water/Ways* partners, which includes the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Minnesota Section of the American Water Works Association, to tell the Minnesota story. This interactive, story collecting exhibit focuses on individuals’ relationships with and responsibilities to water.

“Water is an important aspect of life in Minnesota. Lakes, rivers, and groundwater affect many things within the state, from tourism, to business, to simple leisure time,” said Britt Gangeness, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Outreach Specialist. “*We Are Water MN* provide a place to listen to--and share--experiences, reflections, and images of Minnesota water to highlight this shared identity.”

The Minnesota *Water/Ways* exhibit tour began on June 25, 2016 in New London/Spicer and ends on April 9, 2017 in Detroit Lakes. The public can participate in the conversation to raise awareness of water on social media at [#wearewatermn](https://twitter.com/wearewatermn). Minnesotans can enter the **#WeAreWaterMN Instagram Photo Contest** to win a variety of prizes (details at pca.state.mn.us/wearewatermninstagram). For more information about exhibit host sites, the Lanesboro Opening Ceremony, tour dates and hours, and community activities visit mnhum.org/waterways. To learn more about the nationwide *Water/Ways* tour and other MoMS traveling exhibitions, visit MuseumonMainStreet.org.

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