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## For Immediate Release

### Smithsonian Exhibit Debuts in Minnesota: Connects Communities Through Water and the Humanities

**August 24, 2015—ST. PAUL, Minn.**— Minnesota is the Land of 10,000 Lakes. Water is a part of our identity, our culture, and our history. *Water/Ways*, a new and exciting exhibition and community engagement tool from the Smithsonian’s ‘Museum on Main Street’ (MoMS) initiative in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center, will be touring greater Minnesota communities in 2016-2017. The initiative is designed to reconnect Minnesotans to our water and the need to become more actively involved in its protection by using, in addition to science, the tools of story, history, faith, ethics, and the arts.

Minnesota is one of only five states chosen by the Smithsonian to launch this new traveling exhibit. Beginning in June 2016, the *Water/Ways* tour will start in New London/Spicer. Six greater Minnesota communities will explore the meaning of water – by telling their local water stories and collectively envisioning their water future. The Minnesota host sites for *Water/Ways* are:

- **New London/Spicer (Kandiyohi County)** Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. June 25 – Aug. 7, 2016
- **St. Peter (Nicollet County)** Nicollet County Historical Society. Aug. 13 – Sept. 25, 2016
- **Red Wing (Goodhue County)** Goodhue County Historical Society. Oct. 1 – Nov. 13, 2016
- **Sandstone/Pine City (Pine County)** Audubon Center of the North Woods. Nov. 19, 2016 – Jan. 1, 2017
- **Lanesboro (Fillmore County)** Lanesboro Arts. Jan. 7 – Feb. 19, 2017
- **Detroit Lakes (Becker County)** Becker County Historical Society. Feb. 25 – Apr. 9, 2017

“*Water/Ways* is a conversation about water, a series of events in our host communities, and a collection of educational resources. It encompasses the community of communities through our shared resource—water,” stresses David O’Fallon, President of the Humanities Center. “This is not just an exhibit.”

*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. The MoMS program is a partnership of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and state humanities councils. MoMS engages small town audiences by bringing Smithsonian traveling exhibits like *Water/Ways* to their communities. Through a year-long



engagement process before the Smithsonian exhibit arrives, communities will convene leadership across sectors, create companion exhibitions, and conduct local story-collecting initiatives. Host communities will also create media projects to facilitate community-wide conversations and develop high-profile programs, events, and stewardship projects about water and its value to the community and the state. The support and dedication of *Water/Ways*' key local partners—the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS), and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)—will frame and continue the discussion and community involvement around water long after *Water/Ways* has visited.

“Minnesota’s water quality has come a long way from the days when raw sewage flowed untreated into rivers, but there is still a lot of work to be done,” said Britt Gangeness of the MPCA. “Protecting water is a complex problem but when people work together using scientific knowledge, local solutions and community networks we can make progress. The community networks and cultural perspectives that are a part of the *Water/Ways* project are crucial steps for getting there.

*Water/Ways* will tour Minnesota from June 25, 2016 through April 9, 2017. For more information about exhibit host sites, tour dates, and community activities visit [mnhum.org/waterways](http://mnhum.org/waterways).

**About the Minnesota Humanities Center:**

Founded in 1971, the Minnesota Humanities Center is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with organizations and individuals to develop programs that facilitate and frame community conversations, deep connections, and bring into public life the authentic voices of all people, especially those that have often been left out or marginalized. The Humanities Center is a resource of the state of Minnesota and affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Humanities Center works to build a thoughtful, literate, and engaged society through education, partnership, and public programs.

**About the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency:**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is working to protect and improve our environment and enhance human health. The MPCA monitors environmental quality, offers technical and financial assistance and enforces environmental regulations. The MPCA finds and cleans up spills or leaks that can affect our health and environment. Staff develop statewide policy, and support environmental education. The MPCA works with many partners — citizens, communities, businesses, all levels of government, environmental groups, and educators — to prevent pollution, conserve resources, and to help ensure pollution does not have a disproportionate impact on any group of people.

**About the Minnesota Historical Society:**

The Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) is a non-profit educational and cultural institution established in 1849. MNHS collects, preserves, and tells the story of Minnesota’s past through museum exhibits, libraries and collections, historic sites, educational programs and book publishing. Using the power of history to transform lives, MNHS preserves our past, shares our state’s stories and connects people with history. Visit us at [www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org).

**About the Minnesota Department of Health:**

Minnesota’s public health system is known as one of the best in the nation. It is built upon a strong partnership between the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), local public health agencies, tribal governments, and a range of other organizations. The department’s mission is to protect, maintain, and improve the health of all Minnesotans. Visit MDH at: [health.state.mn.us](http://health.state.mn.us)

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