November 22, 2019 - Introduced by Senators SCHACHTNER and SMITH. Referred to Committee on Senate Organization.

Relating to: supporting efforts to establish the North Woods and Waters of the St. Croix National Heritage Area.

Whereas, the U.S. Congress has designated 55 national heritage areas to commemorate, conserve, and promote important natural, historic, and recreational resources; and

Whereas, legislation has been recently introduced to designate the St. Croix River watershed region, covering all or part of 18 counties in northwest Wisconsin and east central Minnesota, as the North Woods and Waters of the St. Croix National Heritage Area; and

Whereas, the scenic St. Croix watershed region, which links the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River through the St. Croix River and its tributaries, has a rich geological, cultural, and industrial history that exemplifies the Upper Midwest; and

Whereas, designating the St. Croix watershed region, with its abundant wildlife and white pine forests, as a national heritage area would increase awareness...
and understanding of important geographic locations and events in the region that represent key developments in American history; and

Whereas, the designation would allow diverse cultural groups who have influenced the area, including the people of the four sovereign Ojibwe Nations who have ancestral lands and ceded territories in the region, to share their stories with a wider audience; and

Whereas, the designation would also create new opportunities for local historians, scientists, artists, and others to interpret the nationally important stories of fur trading and, later, logging that brought development and prosperity to the central plains states but also left the land in the North Woods forests devastated; and

Whereas, that devastation in turn fostered the rise of a conservation ethic led by, among others, Gaylord Nelson, who grew up in the St. Croix watershed region and went on to found Earth Day, inspiring millions of people around the world to become good stewards of the land; and

Whereas, designation as a national heritage area would help conservationists showcase forestry and agricultural practices now operating in the region that are national models for sustainable resource management; and

Whereas, the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, the watershed’s existing national park, established when the St. Croix River, along with its major tributary, the Namekagon River, was designated as one of the nation’s first congressionally recognized wild and scenic rivers in 1968, would gain greater recognition for its natural beauty and plentiful recreational resources if the area is designated; and

Whereas, the proposed legislation recognizing the scenic and historical significance of the St. Croix River watershed would bolster the local economy by
bringing more paddlers, hikers, campers, ice climbers, and generally curious tourists
to the region; and

Whereas, designation as a national heritage area would not only increase the
St. Croix watershed region’s competitiveness in seeking grants, donations, and
sponsorships to conserve and promote the area but also bring a new sense of regional
identity and deserved pride to people living in the area; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the senate, the assembly concurring, That the Wisconsin
Legislature supports the efforts to establish the North Woods and Waters of the St.
Croix National Heritage Area in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

(END)