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Tuesday, September 16, 2025

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MAPPING INSPIRATION



BENNETT MOGER, PIONEER PRESS

Greg Seitz, local writer and founder of the St. Croix 360 website, stands outside the Pine Needles cabin in Marine on St. Croix on Aug. 4.

Author works to detail St. Croix watershed

MARY DIVINE
Pioneer Press

Greg Seitz was 16 when he took his first canoe trip down the St. Croix River. He and other members of the Bio-Earth Club at Stillwater Area High School put in at the Osceola, Wis., landing and paddled south, through the river's backwaters, to a blue-heron rookery. "The high water of springtime allowed us to float right through the island, drifting between tree trunks below their nests," Seitz later wrote in a blog post about the experience. "We were speechless – intruders in a world we hadn't known existed. We wished for long, flexible heron necks so we could stare straight up forever. Some of the birds stood still and silent on their nests, but most were in motion, hop-

ping around on branches at the top of their silver maples, raising a general ruckus. They had more important things to think about than a bunch of kids in canoes." Seitz, founder of the St. Croix 360 website, has since paddled every inch of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway – 252 miles of the Namekagon and St. Croix rivers. But the 6.4-mile stretch of the St. Croix between the Osceola and Log House landings remains his favorite. "I call it my 'milk run,'" he told the Pioneer Press in a 2018 interview to mark the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. "It's my go-to stretch. It's the one I've been doing the longest, the one I know best." Seitz is writing his first book, "The St. Croix: A Deep Map," which will focus on the river's 7,700-square-mile watershed.

He plans to detail the human and natural history of the region and "explore how ecological processes impact human life," he said. "When people have a deep attachment and strong connection to a place, they're willing to do almost anything to protect it," Seitz said. "It takes sacrifice sometimes, and it takes doing the hard thing, but I also think to realize the long story of this place, stretching back thousands of years, just helps put this moment in perspective." For more than 15 years, Seitz has focused on the St. Croix River, using writing, photography and mapping – primarily through St. Croix 360 – to share the region's natural complexity and beauty.

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Van Orden blames Dems, media for Kirk's death

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Tension between both aisles of the political spectrum have been high since the assassination of conservative political activist Charlie Kirk during a Utah Valley University event. While many political leaders have since denounced political violence, others are fanning the flames. After the announcement of the fatal shooting, Congressman Derrick Van Orden took to X to blame Democrats and media outlets for the death of Kirk. "The left and their policies are leading America into a civil war. And they want it. Just like the democrat party wanted our 1st civil war," Van Orden wrote on X. "The gloves are off. This I will Defend." The comment is among numerous Van Orden posted since the death of Kirk, including posts accusing Congressman Mark

Pocan, Democratic candidate Rebecca Cooke, among others, of being "culpable" for the assassination. Democrats in Wisconsin, including Sen. Tammy Baldwin, U.S. Rep. Pocan, Gov. Tony Evers, and candidate Cooke, all have condemned political violence and the shooting of Kirk. Van Orden's response mirrors President Donald Trump's reaction to blame the "radical left" for political violence. "For years, those on the radical left have compared wonderful Americans like Charlie to Nazis and the world's worst mass murderers and criminals," said Trump. "This kind of rhetoric is directly responsible for the terrorism that we're seeing in our country today, and it must stop right now." Since Kirk's death, many have continued



Cornforth

to denounce all acts of political violence, which have been on the rise, following the recent assassination of Minnesota Democrat Melissa Hortman and her husband, and two assassination attempts against Trump in Pennsylvania and Florida. Others have faced backlash for comments deemed to be insensitive related to Kirk's political stances and agenda. One Facebook post read: "Sorry, make a hobby or career of spewing hateful and harmful rhetoric, bad things happen." La Crosse County Board supervisor Rick Cornforth commented on the post, saying, "Karma?" with an image attached of Charlie Kirk stating, "I think it's worth it to have a cost of, unfortunately, some gun deaths every single year so that we can have the Second Amendment." Cornforth released a statement stating the post has been taken out of context, and he denounces all gun violence.



SASKIA HATVANY, RIVER VALLEY MEDIA GROUP FILE PHOTO
U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden meets with local business, health and energy leaders at Mid-City Steel in La Crosse on April 23.

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