



# Minneopa Messenger

Newsletter of the Friends of Minneopa State Park  
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## ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 16

### NEW OFFICERS TO BE CHOSEN!

The winter general meeting of the Friends of Minneopa will be **Thursday, January 16, 2003** at **7 p.m.** in the Community Meeting Room of the North Mankato Police Annex Building, 1004 Belgrade Avenue, in North Mankato. Under the Friends By-Laws this is the annual meeting where new officers are chosen. The offices to be filled are president-elect and secretary, each for a term of two years. The Governing Board, acting as Nominating Committee, will present candidates for the two offices. In addition, members of the organization may nominate other candidates at the annual meeting.

The program at the meeting will again be presented by New Ulm photographer Ron Bolduan. His special new slide show is called "Minnesota River Valley Birding Trail," and features the flora and fauna of our valley. Those who were at Ron's program last summer will remember that the lack of full darkness in the meeting room took something away from the pictures. In January that will be no problem.

A special feature at this meeting will be a display of the top 20 photographs from the 2002 Minneopa Photo Contest. There are some fine pictures again this year (see story on page 4).

As always, there will be coffee, tea, and snacks. We hope to see you there!

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here is wishing everyone Peace on Earth, Be Good to Mother Nature, and Happy 2003. Again it's that time of the year for the President to give his "State of the Nation" report, the Governor to give the "State of the State" report, and the Mayor to give his "State of the City" report. Thus, I feel that I should enlighten you with my "State of the Park" report. The Friends of Minneopa had a fairly active 2002. In the beginning the park had just hired a new Assistant Park Manager, Joel Groebner (Dec. 5, 2001) after Gary Teipel left to become the Park Manager at Flaundrau State Park in New Ulm. However, this was short lived when Joel got an advancement to Park Manager at Rice Lake State Park (June, 2002) near Owatonna. It doesn't look good for a new assistant to be hired to replace Joel, at least not in the near future.

Gordon Herbst continues to gather information about the history of Minneopa for his writing of the "History of Minneopa State Park." If you have any historical information concerning the park, please get in touch with Gordon. I understand that he is nearing the point where he will be touching the quill to the paper for a near future publication.

The Friends have had several other activities highlighting the park during the past year. We sponsored the fourth annual photo contest. Again we had many great photos entered and the first place winner was Deb Gruhlke; incidentally she was the winner of our first contest in 1999. Wipe the dust off your camera

**[See "President's Report," p 3]**

## Manager's Corner

As we enter a new calendar year the overall prevailing feeling in Minnesota State Parks and Minnesota government in general is uncertainty. Who will be our new Commissioner? Will our newly elected legislators be supportive of State Park's mission? How much of a budget reduction are we facing on July 1? Will we be forced to place dedicated staff on layoff? Will our campgrounds remain open? Will the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources be reorganized again? Will the Division of Parks & Recreation become part of the Minnesota Department of Tourism? If so, will natural resources be sacrificed to promote numbers and economic considerations? Will some park operations and maintenance elements be privatized? These and a myriad of other questions weigh heavily on the minds of park management and staff. At this time all we can do is wait and see, and hope for the best.

Meanwhile your Park Manager continues to peck away at the mundane December tasks: an annual activity report, the annual vehicle permit audit, an annual nature store inventory, the annual enforcement activity report, an operating standards update, position description revisions, the annual fleet inventory inspection, resource management project planning, and the list goes on. I list these not to bemoan the fact but only to answer the most frequently asked question of all time, "What do you do in the winter". If the business of America is business, the business of government is accountability!

Changing to a totally different subject, I would like to make readers aware of a new book we will soon be offering in our park nature store. Stories In Log And Stone by Dave Benson is filled with stories and many wonderful photos of structures being built in Minnesota State Parks in the 1930's by WPA and CCC employees. Selling at \$18.95 it should be on the wish list of anyone having an interest in the history of our Minnesota state parks.

May your holidays and the New Year be filled with peace and joy.

Park Manager Howard Ward

## DNR Parks Director Morrissey Sees Greatly Reduced Services

Bill Morrissey, director of Minnesota State Parks for the last 15 years, is deeply troubled by the potential impact of the state budget deficit. He states his concerns in an e-mail letter to holders of reservations at the state parks in 2003. He has to notify them -- their reservations are threatened. In his letter Mr. Morrissey writes:

"If this estimate [of the deficit -- \$3 billion when he wrote, now \$4.5 billion] becomes a reality and the state budget is balanced entirely through spending cuts, Minnesota State Parks may need to cut its budget by an additional \$9.77 million in FY04. This anticipated reduction will mean even deeper cuts in all services. If this happens, only 12 state parks would be able to offer camping and lodging starting July 1, 2003. That means 54 state parks would not have the funding available to offer any camping or lodging."

Mr. Morrissey does suggest a solution, as follows: "The Minnesota DNR has joined with other state natural resource and environmental agencies to support the need for long-term stable funding if the state is to maintain its outdoor heritage and quality of life. Dubbed 'Half Cent for Nature,' the proposal calls for dedicating half a cent of the sales tax to take care of Minnesota's natural environment. These funds would replace the money currently received from the state's general fund and provide a more stable funding source. This proposal would require a constitutional amendment that would go on the ballot in 2004 and would take effect in 2006."

This proposal is expected to be before the state legislature this year, but they will no doubt focus on the deficit: whether to cut state services in general; if so, which ones, and by how much?

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### Mission Statement of the Minnesota State Parks

*"We will work with the people of Minnesota to provide a state park system which preserves and manages Minnesota's natural, scenic, and cultural resources for present and future generations while providing appropriate recreational and educational opportunities."*

**["President's Report," Cont. from p. 1]**

lens, get out and start taking pictures so that you can enter the 2003 photo contest. From some of the pictures entered in the contest the Friends have produced note cards which are for sale at the Minneopa Park Contact station.

On June 2, the organization again got involved with the annual State Parks open house and held various activities at the park. We had many of the photo contest pictures displayed at the falls picnic shelter, the Seppman Mill story again presented by Win Grundmeier, and nature walks. If you would like to get involved with this in the future, please get in touch.

On Saturday June 8, we held our annual Minneopa Park bird count where we spend a morning identifying as many species as can be found, and counting the total number of individuals of each species. This last year we added three new species to our list and had a 40 percent increase in the total number of individuals counted. Look for the date that this event is held in '03 and join in the fun.

The organization again co-sponsored a booth at the Blue Earth County Fair with the Mankato Bird Club during the first part of August. This year we had an electronic bird identification board which attracted a lot of kids, young and old. We had 121 entrants for a giveaway of a bluebird house from the Mankato Bird Club, won by Merlin Zarn of Amboy and Minneopa Notecards from the Friends of Minneopa, won by Erin Oberle of Mankato.

At the present we are starting to make plans for a centennial celebration of Minneopa in 2005. If you want to become a part of this please let the board know. Also, enjoy the park. There can be nothing more relaxing than a quiet walk on one of the trails, enjoying nature at its best.

I want to thank everyone for helping make the past year enjoyable while I was president of the Friends. I will now turn over the helm to the ever capable LaVonne Craig, our incoming president, to direct the organization to all points of the compass for 2003.

Merrill Frydendall  
**DEB GRUHLKE DOMINATES PHOTO CONTEST**

The results are in from the 4th annual Minneopa Photo Contest, and the winner for the third time is Deb Gruhlke of rural Mankato. The panel of three local judges, all of whom are involved in photography professionally, studied the 20 top photographs carefully. There was no identification of the photographers, but somehow they not only selected Deb's striking study of a yellow lady's slipper against a black background for first place, but also chose her pictures for second and third too! Nothing like this has happened in the history of the contest. For her sweep of the top three places, Deb will receive all the prize money -- \$100. Congratulations, Deb!

There were four Honorable Mentions awards, and three of them went to Jason Miller, whose photographs showed the play of soft pink and mauve skies behind the falls and gorge. The fourth was won by -- Deb Gruhlke again. This picture by Deb was notable as the first winning picture in four years that included human beings.

The Judge's Awards went to Friends member Norma M. Carstensen, who entered some very interesting plant photos, Friends President Merrill Frydendall for his closeup of a red oak leaf, and Elizabeth L. Grams, who has entered winning pictures in past years as well.

Once again the eye and skills of our local photographers show us the beauty that can be found in Minneopa State Park. Thanks to all who entered. The 2003 Contest is now underway.

The top 20 photographs, identified by photographer and awards, will be on display at the Blue Earth County Library until the week of January 13, and then will be brought to the Annual Meeting of the Friends on the 16th. Come and look at them. You won't be disappointed!

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*The Minneopa Messenger is edited by Brand Frenz, who is responsible for any unattributed material. If you have comments or questions or want to submit material, call Brand at 947-3268.*