



Minneopa Messenger

Newsletter of the Friends of Minneopa State Park
No. 21, April 2003

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SPRING GENERAL MEETING, APRIL 24

BOB BECK, NATURALIST, TO SPEAK

The spring general meeting of the Friends of Minneopa will be held on **Thursday, April 24, 2003 at 7 p.m.** in the Community Meeting Room of the North Mankato Police Annex Building, 1004 Belgrade Avenue, in North Mankato.

The program for the meeting will be presented by Bob Beck, DNR regional naturalist from New Ulm. The title of the talk is "The Role of the Naturalist in the State Parks." Some members may recall that Bob led a prairie hike and gave a talk for us in the summer of 1999.

We also are hoping to have a recording of the musical piece "Minneopa" to play. As always, there will be coffee, tea, and snacks.

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THE MEANING OF THE FALLS

Minneopa Falls has been honored as the subject of a musical composition based on a work of poetry. The lines below are the opening of the poem "Minneopa." For the full story of the music and the complete poem, see page 3.

Come to the falls
Come to the falls
Shadows lie down there
The cool river calls

(from the poem "Minneopa" by Richard Robbins, see page 3.)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Parks and Trails Friends Group workshop that our Friends group co-sponsored was a success. The six inches of snow predicted for Friday, March 28th did not arrive, but 50 people from all over Southern Minnesota did join us at the Happy Chef meeting room. It was very informative to hear what all the other groups and park people had to say. The projects and services these dedicated people have performed for their parks and trails are very impressive. The upcoming budget cuts were the most discussed issue, though. Here is where we lay people can be most helpful, by contracting our legislators. Park personnel cannot speak out on the budget and how it will affect their area. The best method is a one-page letter. Phone calls are second best, but legislators get so much e-mail it is hard to read it all. And always let them know that you are a voter in their district.

In the House of Representatives publication *Sessions Weekly* I saw this interesting fact. The most significant growth years for the Minnesota state parks system were 1937, 1957, and 1963 according to the DNR. Now I ask you, do you think the people of Minnesota had more money and disposable income in those years than we have today, in 2003? Maybe we have just misplaced our collective public concern over the years.

In closing, here is my Top Ten list of reasons why you should visit Minneopa State Park.

10. The snow has finally melted.

**["President's Report," continued on p. 4]
Park Manager's Corner**

State revenue shortfalls and departmental budget reductions continue to dominate discussion and thought from the legislative level on down to the field stations. After what seems like endless waiting I finally have some news to report and that news is not all bad.

To begin with I should report that the original DNR budget that was presented to Governor Pawlenty was prepared under very short time constraints. Subsequent to that initial document, discussion between Division of Parks Director Bill Morrissey and Commissioner Merriam continued. Mr. Morrissey, with the assistance of many data gathering efforts throughout the division, was able to present a compelling case for Parks operational shortfalls that resulted in the reallocation of some dollars within the department to Division of Parks. These dollars have reduced the number of layoffs that will occur.

Another initiative that will help reduce shortfall impacts is a fee increase package currently being proposed. As this proposal now stands camping fees will increase by three dollars and lodging fees will also increase by an amount that is still undetermined. In addition, the Division is moving towards initiating differential camping fees. Under this scenario prime sites (for example those adjacent to a lake) would be charged a higher fee than the regular site rate. All of these proposals are, of course, subject to legislative passage, but our governor has expressed a desire for state government to be less dependent on general fund dollars wherever possible.

Despite the above measures, staffing hours at Minneopa will be reduced and layoffs within the system will occur. This will result in reduced public service and shortened office hours. To what degree this will occur still remains to be seen.

The final item I report here was released to the field only yesterday. A decision has been made to reduce management hours at a number of

Minnesota state parks. It appears that most if not all Assistant Managers at Level II parks are having their hours reduced to 80%. The bright side of that decision is that vacant Assistant Manager positions in Region IV are being filled. At Minneopa that position will be filled at 80%.

Please continue to express your support for Minnesota State Parks to our legislative leaders. I will continue to keep members informed of operational changes as they develop. I look forward to another busy summer season and seeing you in the park.

Park Manager Howard Ward

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ORGANIZATION NOTES: OFFICERS

New Officers: As the masthead says, the Friends of Minneopa have two new officers. The new President-Elect is Harriet Mason, and Richard Keir has taken the two-year secretary's job. Both Harriet and Richard are original, "charter" members of the Friends, having attended the organizing meeting at the Benco building on April 22, 1999, five years ago.

Harriet grew up in Grinnell, Iowa and has lived in St. Peter for many years, where she, with her husband Charles, has been responsible for the Gustavus Arboretum, the Nature Conservancy's Ottawa Bluffs restoration project, and more.

Richard is also originally from Iowa, the town of Spencer. In his career he has been a rehab counselor, a teacher of English and rehab counseling, and a flight instructor. Having "retired," he now attends MSU and promotes biking as transportation. He says, "I still haven't figured out what I'll be when I grow up."

Treasurer position vacant: After more than a year in the job, Norm Petersen had to resign as Friends treasurer to concentrate on other priorities. We thank Norm for his cheerful, able service. But now we need a new treasurer. The term of office runs until January 2004. If you can balance your checkbook you can do this job. We need a volunteer. Contact any officer if you are willing to help with this.

[For technical reasons this page must be displayed separately. See file "Minneopa, the Poem and the Music"]

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

- 9. The daylight hours are longer now.
- 8. A feeling of spring is in the air.
- 7. The days are not too hot, nor too cold -- they are just right.
- 6. No bugs yet.
- 5. Unplug the kids and yourself from the computer and the TV and get some fresh air.
- 4. We all need more exercise, even the dog -- but put him on leash.
- 3. Take a friend or new neighbor and introduce them to the park.
- 2. Visit the great gift shop and pick up some clothing, note cards, or books.
- 1. Get your 2003 park sticker and buy some more for gifts. This is a gift that will keep on giving all year all over the state. WHAT A BUY!

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MORE ORGANIZATION NOTES:

Mailing List Will Not Be Shared: The Friends recently got a request from the Parks and Trails Council to share our mailing list with them. After discussion the Governing Board voted not to do it. Although the Parks and Trails Council is a very good organization and even a kind of "parent" to this Friends group, the Board felt that this was a matter of protecting the privacy of persons on our mailing list.

Contact the Parks and Trails Council: At the same time, we encourage anyone on our mailing list who wants to know more about the Parks and Trails Council (PTC) to contact the PTC directly at 1-800-944-0707 or 275 East 4th Street, #642, St. Paul MN 55101. The PTC works in many ways to promote and improve parks and trails in Minnesota. It sponsors and supports Friends organizations around the state,

it has a full-time lobbyist at the Capitol to speak for parks and trails, and it has done some impressive work in acquiring properties privately and turning them over to the State Parks. If you want to support Minnesota parks and trails, maybe you should be a member of this group.

Photo Contest: The 2003 Minneopa photo contest is underway. Entries must be recent photographs taken in the park by amateur photographers. The contest runs until Nov. 30. If you have questions about it, call contest director Merrill Frydendall (388-7249).

No Open House: The Governing Board has decided not to conduct activities for the public on State Park Open House Day this year. The falls pavilion, where we had put up our displays in past years, was rented for a private party on that day, Sunday, June 1.

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Springtime Calendar

Woodcock viewing, Wed., May 7, 8:30 p.m. at the picnic area parking lot on the prairie side, a famous prairie spectacle, Merrill Frydendall -- 388-7249.

Bird Banding, Sat., May 24, 6:30 a.m.-noon, at the picnic area parking lot on the prairie side, drop in any time, Merrill Frydendall -- 388-7249.

Fifth Annual Minneopa Bird Count, Sat., June 7, 7-11 a.m., at the picnic area parking lot on the prairie side, teams walk the park to identify and count the birds, Brand Frentz -- 947-3268.

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