



# MINNEOPA

Newsletter of the Friends of Minneopa State Park

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# MESSENGER



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Friends of Minneopa State Park • 20499 555 Lane • Mankato, Minnesota 56001

## SUMMER MEETING OF THE FRIENDS

The summer meeting of the Friends of Minneopa will be held on **Thursday, July 22, 2004**, at **7 p.m.** in the Community Meeting Room of the North Mankato Police Annex Building, 1004 Belgrade Avenue, in North Mankato. The program will be presented by **Norma Carstenson**, Friends member who has won prizes in the Minneopa Photo Contest several times. Norma will show some of her favorite shots and talk about whatever she feels like. This area with special reference to the proposed ethanol plant. There will be refreshments.

## BOARD WILL NOT TAKE POSITION ON LAKE CRYSTAL ETHANOL PLANT

At its regular monthly meeting on April 1, the governing board of the Friends of Minneopa decided not to take a position on the ethanol plant being planned for construction just west of Lake Crystal. Several board members attended talks with representatives of the Broin Company, which is building the plant. The Friends stated their objections to discharging ethanol plant water into Minneopa Creek and believe that the company understood and accepted their reasoning. Therefore, the Board did not consider it necessary to take a formal position. [See also President's Message.]

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Harriet Mason, President of the Friends

Many visitors took advantage of the free entry to Minneopa State Park on June 6, 2004, for the open house. It was heartwarming to have so many people in the park, at the Seppman Mill, on the nature walk, and at Minneopa Creek Falls. All of us wish to thank Professors Win Grundmeier, Merrill Frydendall, and Bob Douglas for their participation.

Once again, I invite all members to attend the board meetings on the second Thursday evening of each month at 7:00 pm. The meeting location is always "to be announced," so do check with a board member if you wish to attend.

Since the last newsletter much has transpired concerning Minneopa Creek and the Northstar Ethanol Plant planned for Lake Crystal. Minneopa Creek is no longer the preferred destination for discharge water from the plant. According to the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), the discharge water will be piped to the Minnesota River, entering the river near Judson. However, surface runoff, including runoff during the construction phase, will pass through two detention ponds into Lily

Lake via county ditches and ultimately into Minneopa Creek. Quality of the water entering the creek is of great concern to us.

Broin officials were asked by a member of the Friends if they were planning to increase the ethanol output beyond 49.9 million gallons per year. They explained that the output of 49.9 million was chosen to avoid the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Since that conversation the Blud Earth County Board has removed the cap of 49 million gallons a year from the conditional use permit for the ethanol plant, citing the new law written just this year (referred to in the Free Press, June 16, 2004). Under the new regulation the plant may produce up to 125 million gallons in a year without undergoing an EIS. As yet, I have seen no published report of the actual annual output planned for the Northstar Plant in Lake Crystal.

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## **PARK MANAGER'S CORNER**

Minneopa State Park, as of March 17, 2004 is again without an Assistant Manager. Elaine Feikema has taken a promotion to the Assistant Park Manager position at Lake Shetek State Park near Curry, Minnesota. This was a promotion for Elaine and her new position is classified Natural Resources Supervisor II. It is also still funded at a full time complement while ours remains at 80%. Elaine will be staying with a sister who lives in Tracy and traveling home to Faribault on days off. Please join me in wishing her success in her new position.

The Division of Parks intends to fill our vacant position immediately and currently it is posted on the DNR web site. Also vacant at this time is a seasonal Buildings and Grounds-worker position and I am actively recruiting candidates to fill that position. If any readers know of qualified people who

might be interested in this position be sure to have them contact the park office.

Division of Parks has reviewed the artwork submitted for the 2005 annual permit [which will feature Minneopa – editor] and a photograph has been selected. The selected photo depicts a winter scene of the falls with water flowing. The upper bridge and picnic shelter are visible in the background. It was determined that a winter scene was most desirable because it had been a number of years since that season had been featured and also because, beginning in 2005, the new permit will go on sale beginning January 1 rather than October 1 as had been past practice.

Howard Ward, manager of Minneopa Park

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directly is the proposal to pump discharge water from the ethanol plant into the creek. Several members of the Friends attended the information meetings given by the Broin Company and also met with company representatives to seek alternative solutions for the discharge water. I personally feel that Minneopa Creek is a delicate ecosystem and adding 200,000 gallons of water a day containing numerous concentrated chemicals will unnecessarily upset that balance. I urge each of you to research this issue for yourself and make your own decision.

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## **FRIENDS NOTES**

**Website.** Kim Musser, who has been putting together the Friends of Minneopa

website, says it should be accessible in the near future. The signal feature will be the virtual map – you click on points on the map of the park and it brings up pictures of that particular area. There will also be information pages about organization history, the bird count and other activities, and even some old newsletters. The address will be: <http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/org/fom/index.html>. Incidentally, if you like the new Messenger masthead, you can thank Kim for that too.

**Volunteer Opportunities.** You can help with Friends' activities. Contact an officer if you would like to lend a hand. Specifically, the Board would like to find a **Historian**, someone to organize our records to file with the Blue Earth County Historical Society. Members are also needed to finish up the plan for the **self-guided nature trail** studied earlier. And the Messenger always needs written material, and welcomes all submissions.

## RAMBLING EDITOR

My wife Vycki and I recently made a looping trip down to Kearney, Nebraska that gave me a chance to visit several non-Minnesota state parks. Each was interesting and enjoyable, and there is always something to learn at other parks.

Niobrara State Park lies at the confluence of the Missouri and Niobrara rivers in Nebraska. Three dollars gets you a ticket that is good for all Nebraska state parks on that day. The park has a small Lewis & Clark interpretive center located near a place where the Expedition camped. From the campsite you look out at the broad rivers and the high sloping hills, which were just turning green when we visited in early April. An impressive sight it was. The park is brimming with new buildings (including a lot of cabins perched on lookout sites) and

roads – no doubt planning to cash in on the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial.

We stopped at Ft. Kearny State Historical Park on the Platte River near the city of Kearney, Nebraska. A ranger in a uniform shirt was happy to talk about the old fort and the nearby pioneer trails for half an hour. But the star was Bob, probably the head ranger but wearing just an old white t-shirt and jeans. At the park entrance was a large sign "Crane Viewing Information Here." And Bob had it; he seemed to know everything about sandhill cranes. A steady stream of visitors gave him all kinds of crane questions, and he answered them all, telling people exactly where to go to see cranes. Not history, but it served the visitors well.

Coming home we certainly had to stop at Lewis & Clark State Park near Onawa, Iowa. I had heard that they had a replica of the keelboat, in fact the one used in the IMAX movie about Lewis & Clark, so I called ahead. A very casual voice answered, "Well, shoot. I dunno...the boats are still in the shed. Oh well, why not. Come on out, we'll take you over there." We came on out and found two men in rumpled work clothes sitting outside a ramshackle building with coffee cups, clearing up the world's problems. They both jumped up and Pete, who was blind, took us on a short walk to the shed where they had beautiful replicas of all three of Lewis & Clark's main boats. He encouraged us to climb up on them for a close look, and I did. He apologized that the builder, (Butch Bouvier, a well-known man in his field) was not around to talk with us too. We left this park feeling like dignitaries. Oh yes, there was no charge at this state park. It was so casual I even forgot to ask.

Each park has its own special features, but they all clearly aimed to welcome visitors.

[For Lewis & Clark buffs, let me mention the interpretive center in the riverfront park in

Sioux City, Iowa too. It has something for everyone: full-size, life-like talking models of Lewis and Clark – Clark keeps trying to catch your eye! -- a 12-minute video about the Expedition “narrated by Clark,” and a lot of graphic and written information. Near the entrance is a big, handsome metal statue of the explorers and their faithful dog Seaman.]

But I have to say that the best thing on the Nebraska loop was not a park, or a museum. It was the wildlife. We stood at sunset on the Paultz Platform by the Platte River, a sturdy old wooden viewing structure along a county road. Someone in the gathered crowd said, “There they go!” We heard the clamor and watched in awe as a huge primeval swarm of cranes rose off the water into the blazing orange sky, their gabbling growing to a loud roar. For half an hour afterward the air was alive with flocks moving in all directions, calling and cooing. When it was too dark to see them, we could still hear them. Everyone who loves nature should be there to see and hear the cranes rise off the Platte River in Nebraska.

## **FRIENDS NOTES**

**2004 Photo Contest** is now underway. The procedures and prizes are the same as in past years. Photos must be recent and taken within the boundaries of Minneopa State Park. Amateur photographers only may submit up to five 8 x 10 prints to 20499 555 Lane, Mankato 56001. The prizes are \$50, \$30, or \$20. The contest runs until November 30, 2004. Taking pictures can be a lot of fun. It sharpens your eye as you walk outdoors. And if you happen to get a good one, share it. Enter the Sixth Annual Minneopa Photo Contest this year!

**DM&E Still Struggling.** The threat of the DM&E Railroad expansion still hangs over Minneopa. Approval was given to the project by the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) a couple of years ago, but since that time there have been several

legal challenges. Despite this, the DM&E has been going ahead confidently with preparations and side deals. In March the federal appeals court vacated (canceled) the approval for the Wyoming part of the route and ordered the case reopened with greater attention to environmental issues. Now as that review goes forward, a national political campaign is underway that could bring a change in administrations, which would normally mean a new appointed director of the STB, probably one with a different attitude. We can still hope that the project will be stopped and that Minneopa will be spared.

**PUZZLER -- MINNEOPA LAKE.** Have you heard of it? The lake is a popular hiking and biking destination in southwest Montana, with a trailhead some 12 miles north of Dillon in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. The obvious question is: where did they get the name “Minneopa”? Do they have some kind of water falling twice? Out of a lake? Any information would be welcome -- contact the editor.

## **2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**April 15, Thursday, 7. p.m. Spring meeting of the Friends of Minneopa, program -- Leo Getsfried.**

**April 28, Wednesday, 8:30 p.m. Woodcock viewing. Meet in prairie side picnic area parking lot, Merrill Frydendall in charge.**

**May 15, Saturday, 7-12 a.m. Bird Banding with Merrill Frydendall. Prairie side picnic area.**

**June 5, Saturday, 7-11 a.m. Annual Resident Bird Count, meet in prairie side picnic area parking lot, Brand Frentz in charge.**

**June 6, Sunday, afternoon. State Park Open House Day, free admission all day, Friends of Minneopa will have photo display in pavilion, and three programs: 1 pm, visit Seppman Mill with historian Wyn Grundmeier, 2 pm, walk the Bluebird Trail with Merrill Frydendall, 3 pm, hear about the geology of the falls and gorge from Bob Douglas (tentative).**

June 13 [corrected date], Sunday, 3 pm, “Birds and the Bluebird Trail,” walk on the prairie with Merrill Frydendall. Meet at prairie side picnic area parking lot.

June 19, Saturday. Parks & Trails Council 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration bike ride starts at Minneopa. More info, contact a Friends officer.

July 15, Thursday, 7 p.m. Summer meeting of the Friends of Minneopa, details later.

August 15, Sunday, 3 pm, “Vegetation and Animal Life,” walk on the prairie with Merrill Frydendall, meet at prairie side picnic area parking lot..

October 21, Thursday, Fall meeting of the Friends of Minneopa, details later.

November 30, Tuesday, 2004 Minneopa Photo Contest entries must be postmarked by this date.

**Note: The Friends’ Governing Board meets monthly, normally on the second Thursday.**

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*The Minneopa Messenger, 20499 555 Lane, Mankato MN 56001, 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.*