

Renville Soil and Water Conservation District receives DNR award

Renville County SWCD was honored recently by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for their achievements in water quality improvement and protection. This award is given to just one of the 91 SWCD's in Minnesota. Renville SWCD has been and continues to be a leader in local, state and federal conservation programs. Some of the programs that were mentioned at the awards luncheon included RIM, CREP, CRP, Granite Rock Outcrop protection (LCCMR) Feedlot inspections and upgrades, drainage ditch buffer program, and education efforts. Renville County SWCD is very proud of this award and thanks all the partners and landowners who participate in our efforts to improve and protect water quality in Renville County and Minnesota.

In other news, Dr. Kathryn Kelly, member of the Renville SWCD Board of Supervisors was elected Vice-President of Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District. Loyal Fisher, another member of the Renville SWCD Board received the "Outstanding Supervisor Award" at the MASWCD.

High Island Lake Restoration Project is Underway

The culmination of 6 years of work in the High Island Creek Watershed has yielded a major desired outcome. Drawdown (draining) of High Island Lake for water quality and aquatic habitat improvement began on Friday, October 31, 2008. This is the result of a process which began in 2002 that involved assembling a watershed team, assessing and prioritizing water resources with subsequent identification and creation of potential projects and programs designed to improve existing water quality conditions.

As a result, High Island Lake and High Island Creek are poised to see benefits for years to come from the established and proposed actions that have been planned and undertaken to date. After the lake is, for all intents and purposes, dry and most of the existing aquatic life has been eliminated, the stop logs will then be put back in the dam and the lake will be refilled.

With the lake back to normal water levels, 4 million Walleye fry will be stocked to establish a fish population which will also aid water quality improvement. Walleye will keep the fathead minnow population in check which plays an important role in survival of certain macroinvertebrates which eat algae. Sub-surface aquatic vegetation which is every 5 to 10 years depending upon lake watershed water quality improvements that need to be made. These consist of septic system upgrades and agricultural land management practices designed to improve and control both runoff quantity and quality.

Of course, Friends of the Minnesota Valley will be involved in the design and implementation of several of these, some of which involve cutting edge technologies. (From the Valley Vision Newsletter, Friends of the Minnesota Valley).

"Trip Down the Minnesota River" - Nicollet County Historical Society Annual Meeting

Please join us for the Nicollet County Historical Society's annual meeting will be Sunday, January 18, 2009 at Gustavus Adolphus' Jackson Student Union banquet hall. The dinner service will begin at 1:00 p.m., business meeting at 2:15 p.m., and program at 3:00 p.m.

We are delighted to welcome Free Press photographer John Cross and news reporter Tim Krohn as our featured speakers. The two canoed down the 335-mile river on an 11-day trip, starting at the South Dakota border and ending at the Mississippi River in St. Paul. Ignored by many who live along its banks, today the Minnesota River is cleaner and more scenic than a generation ago. Please join us for this fascinating slide show and discussion of our area's greatest treasure.

Cost for the dinner and this remarkable program is just \$18.00 for members, \$23.00 for non-members, and \$6.00 for those wishing to only attend the program. For details and registration call

St. Peter Community Education at **507-934-3048**. Reservations with payment are due by January 11, 2008. For more information, Jessica Brockberg, Office Manager; Nicollet County Historical Society; (507) 934-2160; museum@nchsmn.org; www.nchsmn.org

Winter Solstice Celebration

December 21, 2008 is the Winter Solstice Celebration sponsored by the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. at 170 Good Counsel Drive in Mankato. Join us for a potluck supper, reflection, fire dancers and the ancient tradition of a community bonfire to celebrate the season. RSVP by December 18th to 507-389-4272 or lcoons@ssndmankato.org

Adopt-a-River Program

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has an excellent opportunity for volunteers to help ensure the long-term health of rivers, lakes, ravines, ponds, ditches and wetlands. The Adopt-a-River Program encourages volunteers to “adopt” a section of a waterbody and conduct cleanups. The program will assist volunteers by supplying: a “how-to” kit, free bags/gloves, recognition materials and other assistance as needed. The cleanups need to be at least done annually but can be more often. Some examples of Adopt groups that have participated are: service organizations, schools, businesses, families, friends and individuals.

When rubbish is not removed from our public water bodies, it may have negative consequences to people both in the vicinity and down stream. Rubbish gets into our flood plains and other public spaces not only from littering and illegal dumping, but also from storm water in the streets, erosion from old river-bottom and ravine dumpsites, construction sites, and the effects of wind-blown rubbish swept from highways, parking lots and other areas. This same rubbish can injure wildlife with cuts, entanglements, strangulations, suffocations, and digestive disorders. Some of it also contains household hazardous wastes, such as motor oil, paint, and solvents.

If you are interested in participating in the Adopt-a-River Program please contact:

- Paul E. Nordell (651-259-5630) or Megan Godbold (651-259-5620), Trails and Waterways Division of the MN DNR; 820 Lafayette Road; St. Paul, MN 55155 or visit their web site at www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver (written by Beth Kallestad, Cannon River Watershed Project and Megan Godbold, MN DNR).

Giving Vision and Voice to the Minnesota River Valley

This temporary exhibit features a unique combination of photography and literature with never-before-seen images from Anders Bjorling, John Cross, Ann Judkins, Wayne Schmidt, and Jon Smithers as well as the writings of Phil Bryant, Kathryn Christenson, Jan Holte, John Rezmerski, and Janet Neubert Schultz. Fifty photographs, accompanied by literary texts, depict the allure of the Minnesota River Valley. This once-in-a-lifetime exhibition will resurface the breath and bloodline of the Minnesota River Valley and give new insight into its beautiful history.

The exhibit runs from December 4, 2008 through February 1, 2009 at Arts Center of Saint Peter (315 S. Minnesota Avenue – open Tuesday – Sunday 1 to 5 p.m., and open until 8 p.m. on Thursday) and Treaty Site History Center (1851 N. Minnesota Avenue – open Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m.

2009 – Third Crop Producer Meetings

Rural Advantage is proud to announce the dates for our up-coming Third Crop Producer meetings. Each day is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Fairmont, MN. Admittance is free of charge. Speakers will be announced at a later date. Dates and topics for the 5th Annual Third Crop Producer Meetings are as follows:

- Monday, February 9, 2009 Biomass: Production and Uses
- Monday, February 23, 2009 Small Fruits and Grapes
- Monday, March 9, 2009 Rural Entrepreneurship
- Monday, March 23, 2009 Small Grains, Cover Crops, and Soil Health

For more information contact Jill Sackett at sacke032@umn.edu or 507-238-5449.

Job Opportunities:

Research Soil Scientist/Research Agronomist/Research Agricultural Engineer (GS-12/13/14)

The Soil and Water Management Research Unit, St. Paul, Minnesota is seeking a permanent full-time scientist to address the impacts of agricultural management practices on the movement of agricultural chemicals into ground and surface waters, and on net carbon balance. The incumbent will have responsibility to plan, initiate, and conduct research on the mechanisms and processes by which innovative practices, such as companion cropping or tile drainage management, affect offsite solute and water transport, net biomass production, and related environmental and economic metrics. It is anticipated that this will incorporate field and laboratory experiments along with numerical analyses and models, and that it will involve interdisciplinary collaboration with the incumbent scientists in the Unit and elsewhere within ARS, and with other faculty and scientists at the University of Minnesota. The Unit is housed within, and enjoys a close working relationship with, the Department of Soil, Water & Climate of the University of Minnesota. Must be U.S. citizen. Ph.D. is desired. Salary is commensurate with experience (\$68,922 to \$125,903). For further information on the position, contact John M. Baker at 612-625-4249, John.Baker@ars.usda.gov; or view the vacancy announcement (ARS-X9W-0050) at www.ars.usda.gov/careers. For information on application procedures contact Pam Groth at 651-649-5046. Applications must be received by January 26, 2009. USDA-ARS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Events:

December 23rd (Tuesday) is an **Open House Reception in Honor of Commissioner Charles Guggisberg** retiring after serving as District 3 Brown County Commissioner from 1988 to 2008 from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioner's Room 204 of the Brown County Courthouse (14 S. State) in New Ulm.

January 20th (Tuesday) is the **Minnesota River Watershed Alliance's Quarterly Meeting** starting at 6 p.m. with a social hour and food. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. and will take place at the Hutchinson Event Center. For more information contact Scott Kudelka at 507-389-2304 or scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu

Check out additional upcoming events and workshops on the Minnesota River Calendar at: <http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/index.html>

Water Quality Articles

[Agencies studied Big Stone II inside and out](#) (Albert Lea Tribune). Mark Rolfes, manager of the proposed Big Stone II Project writes about the how this project is on track to be built.

[House dedicated funding committee set for session](#) (Outdoor News). While the House of Representatives has reduced its total number of committees for the upcoming session, it has created a new one: the Cultural and Outdoor Resources Finance Division.

[New form of hydropower arrives](#) (Hastings Star Gazette). "Delicate" probably wouldn't be the first word one would use to describe something the size of a backyard swimming pool that weighs about as much as 14 Hummers.

[Moose Summit examines the declining population](#) (Outdoor News). Grand Rapids, Minn. - Minnesota's declining moose population was the topic of a Moose Summit held in Duluth on

Monday. Biologists from Minnesota, as well as nearby states and provinces, shared information about their own moose herds, their population trends, and threats to moose survival in a warming climate.

[Target Center green roof to cost \\$5.3M](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The green roof expected to be approved today for the Target Center in Minneapolis represents a bet by city leaders that the arena will remain viable beyond the city's lease with the Timberwolves.

[DNR considers options for big budget-crunch](#) (Outdoor News). The state of Minnesota's current economic hard times likely won't affect the DNR much - at least not yet, according to officials.

[Solving the electric car conundrum](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Electric cars -- if they're charged with renewable energy like wind or solar -- have the smallest carbon footprint of any currently-available transportation technology. But there's the chicken-and-egg problem: who would buy an electric car if there's no place to charge it? And why would anyone invest in charging stations if there aren't many cars out there?

[Synthetic motor oil is the greener choice](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Synthetic motor oil is the greener choice.

[Environmental groups launch studies of Mississippi River](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Four conservation and agriculture groups said Monday they'll launch a new three-year partnership to study reducing agricultural runoff into the Mississippi River.

[Tom Taylor talks about value of locally grown food](#) (Agri News). A bad hip forced Chef Tom Taylor to give up his professional cooking duties, but it led to a new career in foods.

[Deficit leads to questions about newly approved amendment](#) (KSTP TV). Now that Minnesota is facing a \$5.2 billion budget deficit, many are questioning a sales tax increase approved last month to fund the arts and outdoors.

[Now is the time to invest in clean energy](#) (Rochester Post-Bulletin). In response to the Dec. 1 column by Phil Araoz in opposition to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's green jobs initiative proposal, there has never been a more important time to invest in our future.

[Minnesota without moose? It could happen](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Is climate change killing off Minnesota's moose? That appears to be the case, according to scientists and wildlife managers meeting here to talk about the dramatic decline in the state's moose population in recent decades.

[Edina will start recycling organics through winter](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Edina is piggybacking on an innovative organic recycling program in Carver County, expanding collection of compostable materials like food, yard waste and even pizza boxes year-round.

[Bakk: Time to look at all levels of state government](#) (Mesabi Daily News). The chairman of the state Senate Tax Committee believes everyone needs "to have some skin in the game" when it comes to resolving the projected massive Minnesota budget deficit — and that means state government, too.

[Gas spike over, metro riders still hopping on the bus, train](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Twin Cities transit use continues to rise, despite cheaper gas, higher fares and rising unemployment; indeed, the system shows signs of strain due to its popularity.

[Monsanto commits \\$5 million for major water quality effort](#) (Agri News). The Monsanto Company announced Monday that it will commit more than \$5 million to support projects focusing on water quality improvement in the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico.

[1970s: Social and environmental causes awaken](#) (Rochester Post-Bulletin). Social and environmental issues -- as well as the weather -- dominated the news in Minnesota and Rochester during the 1970s. It was a decade that would open with the first Earth Day in 1970, before spiraling into less earth-friendly events.

[Ethanol producer hopes to create biomass market](#) (West Central Tribune). Weather conditions made it very difficult to harvest this year's corn crop, but they didn't stop the Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company from gleaning corn cobs along with the yellow grain from roughly 2,500 acres.

[Ancient cave rocks reveal impact of climate change](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Two University of Minnesota researchers have literally gone back in time, in a cave in western China. They came out knowing that changes in the global climate can bring about great prosperity or destroy entire civilizations.

[A rough spot for recycling](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Prices for paper, metals and plastic have plummeted, forcing recycling firms to make adjustments to weather the market.

I feel no need for any other faith than my faith in the kindness of human beings. I am so absorbed in the wonder of earth and the life upon it that I cannot think of heaven and angels. – Pearl S. Buck

The Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance) is an organized network of citizens, public agencies, and private organizations dedicated to communicating the benefits of an ecology healthy Minnesota River Watershed to others and are actively working towards its improvement and protection. We meet four times a year and encourage landowners and recreational users of the river to be part of the effort. For more information on the Watershed Alliance: <http://www.watershedalliance.blogspot.com>

Please register at the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance's bulletin board at <http://mail.mnsu.edu/mailman/listinfo/mrwa> to receive regular updates on what is happening in the Minnesota River Watershed.

Thanks,

Scott

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