

Minnesota River Watershed Alliance Quarterly Meeting

Over twenty people braved the cold and blustery conditions to attend last night's Minnesota River Watershed Alliance quarterly meeting in Hutchinson. Bill Kell and Larry Gunderson of MPCA provided a presentation on the proposal for a Living System Dynamic to be used in the Minnesota River Basin. The participants voted to be part of this effort and lend their support to getting the process off the ground.



Passage of the Legacy Bill by the State Legislature

The bill will put this question to voters in November: "Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to dedicate funding to protect our drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore our wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve our arts and cultural heritage; to support our parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater by increasing the sales and use tax rate beginning July 1, 2009, by three-eighths of one percent on taxable sales until the year 2034?"

- The bill does not need the governor's signature because it involves a proposed amendment to the state Constitution.
- For the amendment to be approved, it must get "yes" votes from a majority of all people who vote in the November general election. Leaving the ballot question blank would count as a "no" vote.
- The money would be divided as follows: 33 percent dedicated for the outdoors; 33 percent for a clean water fund; 14.25 percent for parks and trails; and 19.75 percent for the arts.
- It's estimated that it would provide \$91.1 million a year for the outdoors; \$91.1 million for a clean water fund (including at least \$4.5 million for drinking water programs); \$39.3 million for parks and trails; and \$54.5 million a year to the arts,

Sources: Legislature, Star Tribune research.

- **Outdoors funding bill passes its first hurdle.** Dennis Anderson of the Star Tribune writes, "The state's woods, waters and fields will be the better for this action. But voters must approve the constitutional amendment in November", <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/outdoorfundingfirsthurdle.pdf>
- **Outdoors, arts amendment heads to ballot.** Minnesota voters will decide this fall whether to raise the state sales tax to benefit the outdoors and arts, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/outdoorsamendmentballot.pdf>
- **Plan pledging money for outdoors, arts hits ballot.** The House Senate passage of the Legacy Act guaranteeing money for wildlife habitat, drinking water and the arts is now in the hands of the voters come November, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/planpledgingmoneyforoutdoors.pdf>
- **Voters to decide on funding for arts, environment.** The Legislature has passed a bill allowing residents to decide this fall whether the state sales tax should be increased to dedicated money to wildlife, clean water, arts, etc., <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/votersdecidefundingenvironment.pdf>
- **Dedicated-funding amendment clears Legislature.** Minnesotans will have the opportunity on Nov. 4 to increase their sales tax and dedicate the \$276 million in annual revenue to wildlife habitat, clean water, parks and arts, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/dedicatedfundingamendment.pdf>

- **Editorial: Minnesota should consider Legacy Act.** If the Legacy Act is passed here is the breakdown for what program areas get what, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/legacyacteditorial.pdf>

From Scott Sparlin: *The 3/8ths so-called dedicated funding bill for clean water, fish and wildlife, parks and trails and the arts is headed to the November ballot. To all of you who worked long and hard on this going back and forth to the capitol and meeting after meeting after meeting with the long drives etc. Hats off. It is not perfect, but it is not to supplant any current levels of funding out there and that is why it will be voted in this fall. We will see what the people do I guess and now a different kind of work begins for many of us. I am pretty confident with this one. Everyone stands to gain much for the long term. Stay tuned-Nice work!*

Global Warming

Website provides updated links to materials from both sides on the climate debate: <http://climatedebatedaily.com>

Scott Sparlin YouTube Video

Hi All, I just posted a new song on YouTube about renewable energy, the war, global warming and energy independence which I wrote about 6 months ago. It's called There's a Storm That's a Brewin' and you should be able to access in a day or so by going to the YouTube.com and search Scott Sparlin. It will be the video in the white room I'm wearing black with a straw hat. You can see it at, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilHyFHSZziY>

Big Stone II Proposed Coal Plant

Mary Jo, President of CURE has asked all of its members to weigh in on the Big Stone II water draw down issue and send an e-mail to the powers that be today. Here is what she said in a recent e-mail:

Those who care about keeping Big Stone Lake and the Minnesota River for public use and enjoyment have until February 28 to tell Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) that draining a public water body and groundwater supply to burn more coal places industry wishes over the right of the people to enjoy fishing and recreation--and the right of future generations to an adequate public water supply.

Please add your voice and tell WAPA it is not possible to 'mitigate' or lessen the environmental impact of what Big Stone II will do to Big Stone Lake!

Take action to Say no to more water for Big Stone II:

http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/2155/t/203/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=22889

Recycling Plastic in Minnesota

KARE TV Channel 11 recently did a story on how recycling plastic isn't as easy as we may think, http://www.kare11.com/news/investigative/extras/extras_article.aspx?storyid=492682

Events:

March 5th (Wednesday) is the Hazardous Algal Bloom Workshop from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Best Western Hotel, Mankato. For more information, www.seagrant.umn.edu/news

March 6th (Thursday) Fred Harris, Ph.D., Plant Ecologist/Botanist of MN DNR will be giving a presentation entitled: "Rare Plants in Temporary Rainwater Pools on Bedrock Outcrops: Recent Discoveries on Some of Southwestern Minnesota's Most Scenic and Threatened Habitats." This will focus on rock outcrops in the Minnesota River valley as well as the far SW corner of the state. The presentation will be at 7:00 pm on at the Minnesota Native Plant Society meeting at the

Dakota Lodge in West Saint Paul. For more info and a map of the meeting location, go to the Native Plant Society website at: http://www.mnnps.org/monthly_programs.htm

March 6th (Thursday) is the Chippewa River Watershed Project Annual Meeting at the Starbuck Community Center, 5pm Social/Registration/Door Prizes, 6pm Meal, 7pm Program. It's a Celebration of their 10th Anniversary! It's open to all. The meals are free with pre-registration. The pre-registration deadline is March 3. Contact Jennifer at 320-269-2139 ext120 or jennifer.hoffman@rcdnet.net to make a reservation.

March 27 – 28 (Thursday & Friday) is the Shallow Lakes Forum V – Managing Shallow Lake Habitats and Biota at the Bigwood Event Center, Fergus Falls. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/shallowlakesforum2008.pdf>

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

Water Quality Articles:

Backyard burning can hurt environment. Nearly half of rural residents still burn their trash along with an unknown number of city residents and it's causing harm to the environment, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/backyardburningbad.pdf>

Carbon regulations to cost coal projects, bank says. The Bank of America is estimating federal carbon regulations will cost coal-burning power plants between \$20 and \$40 per ton of carbon emissions, according to the Wall Street Journal, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/carbonregulationscoalprojects.pdf>

County wins national award for light bulb idea. Douglas County earned a national award for promoting energy efficiency through its "Change a Light" campaign, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/countywinsawardforlightbulb.pdf>

Dark Side of Biofuels. Switching from fossil fuels to renewable "biofuels" is supposed to mitigate global warming, not make it worse, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/darksideofbiofuels.pdf>

Katherine Kersten: Ethanol: Is it a miracle cure or another dose of snake oil? How often do you get to save the planet, reduce America's dependence on foreign oil and create an economic boom for Minnesota corn farmers - - all at the same time? <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolmiracleorsnakeoil.pdf>

House proposes farm bill changes. The debate over the next Farm Bill has heated up with MN Congressman Collin Peterson proposing cutting \$8 billion from the legislation passed in the house, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/houseproposesfarmbillchanges.pdf>

Legislature faces some hard choices in fighting global warming. Minnesota has committed itself to cut global warming pollution, reduce demand for electricity and natural gas, and boost the use of renewable fuels, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/legislatureglobalwarmingissues.pdf>

Utilities Commission seeks bids to build two wind turbines. The Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission voted to advertise for bids to build two wind turbines on Willmar School District property, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/twowindturbineproject.pdf>

Wind helps power Duluth government center. Six wind turbines have been installed on the St. Louis County office building to generate up to 6,000 watts of electricity to help run the building's hundreds of computers, lights and elevators. For free, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/windpowersgovernmentcenter.pdf>

Wood pellets heat up forest products industry. A new industry appears to be taking root in northern Minnesota and proponents say at today's prices, wood pellets can heat a home at half the cost of some conventional heating fuels,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/woodpelletsforheat.pdf>

Legislative committee passes tough auto emission standards. The House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources passed a bill on Thursday to adopt California's aggressive emissions standards for cars and trucks,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/tougheremissionstandards.pdf>

Art exhibit seeks to shed light on climate change. A new exhibit at the Bell Museum combines the ideas of art with science to draw diverse crowds,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/artexhibitclimatechange.pdf>

Column: Water management: 'Control the first drop.' This is the first in a 3-part series on controlling stormwater runoff, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/controlfirstdrop.pdf>

Emissions proposal worries rural lawmakers. A plan to implement stricter motor vehicle emissions standards in the state has some legislators worried about its effect on rural Minnesota,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/tougheremissionstandards.pdf>

Not so fast. An editorial in the Owatonna People's Press says it will take much more than the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to roll back 17 years of increases in air pollution before the 2012 deadline, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/notsofast.pdf>

Bears, Climate are in real danger. Polar bears have become the image of climate change as they are shown often swimming in unending open water or standing on tiny ice floes,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/bearsandclimatechange.pdf>

Dennis Anderson: Exhibit brings climate change to life. Dennis Anderson writes about how Minnesota is changing due to climate change and at a faster pace than any of us realize,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/exhibitonclimatechange.pdf>

County to take up wind ordinance issue Tuesday. Lyon County is looking at assuming control over larger wind projects to be decided at the next county commissioner meeting,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/lyonwindordinanceissue.pdf>

Project Energy: Future Of Solar Power Looks Bright. The National Renewable Energy Labs is researching ways to make solar energy more affordable,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/solarenergyfuturebright.pdf>

Corn prices tied to the crude oil rollercoaster. The demand for ethanol fuel seems to be on the upswing and, with a historic spike in grain prices, its take local corn growers with it,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/cornpricetiedcrudeoil.pdf>

Ethanol's environmental impact under debate. A growing contingent of scientists has questioned ethanol's reputation as a cleaner fuel in the fight against global warming,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolimpactunderdebate.pdf>

Aakre: Farm-scale biodiesel plant could be useful someday. If oil prices continue to climb or commodity prices adjust down a farm-scale biodiesel plant could be useful,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmscalebiodieselplant.pdf>

Gustavus in conservation contest. Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter has been a longtime leader on green causes and now in competition for the National Campus Energy Contest, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/gustavusconservationcontest.pdf>

Use of wildlife lottery funds remain topic of debate. Garry Leaf of Bloomington feels the Legislative Commission for Resource Management impact on conservation measures has fallen far short of what most sportsmen expected, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/lotteryfundstopicofdebate.pdf>

“There is growing awareness of the beauty of country . . . a sincere desire to keep some of it for all time. People are beginning to value highly the fact that a river runs unimpeded for a distance . . . They are beginning to obtain deep satisfaction from the fact that a herd of elk may be observed in back country, on ancestral ranges, where the Indians once hunted them. They are beginning to seek the healing relaxation that is possible in wild country. In short, they want it. – Olaus J. Murie, naturalist, writer and co-founder of The Wilderness Society.

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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