

Farm runoff in 41 watersheds feeding Mississippi

New Orleans (AP) — The U.S. Department of Agriculture says it aims to stop agricultural runoff in 41 watersheds in 12 states (including the Middle Minnesota River Watershed) from ending up in the Mississippi River. The department says it has \$320 million for farmers who want to slow runoff.

The agency is targeting watersheds in Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. In all, those areas make up more 42 million acres, or about 5 percent of the Mississippi River basin's land area.

Agricultural runoff leads to high nutrient and sediment levels in the river. The river's high nutrient load leads to an area of dangerously low oxygen in the Gulf of Mexico every summer known as "the dead zone." (November 24, 2009 – Minnesota Public Radio).

Make Sure Your Voice Is Heard!

The University of Minnesota's Water Resources Center is developing a Water Sustainability Framework for the next 25 years to protect and improve Minnesota's precious water resources. Because the state's surface and ground waters belong to the people, we are gathering public opinion via surveys and listening sessions on a range of water issues.

Use this link <http://www.wrc.umn.edu/watersustainabilityframework/MinnesotansandTheirWater/index.htm> and complete an online survey to make sure your opinions are heard. It's anonymous, quick, and easy. Responses will be incorporated into the Minnesota Water Sustainability Framework that will be presented to the State Legislature January 2011.

While you're on the WRC web site (wrc.umn.edu), you can sign up for regular email updates on the progress of the Framework and find out more about when and where Listening Sessions will be held around the state.

If you're unable to access the survey online, call 612-624-8292 and we'll send you a written copy. Please feel free to forward this message to your colleagues, members, or constituents.

Thank you, Barb Liukkonen; U of MN Water Resources Center; liukk001@umn.edu

Notes from the October 20th Minnesota River Watershed Alliance meeting

Lake Pepin TMDL: Michael McKay of the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance came out to talk about the upcoming Lake Pepin TMDL and how the Minnesota River has a major impact on its success. He provided a commentary on how their group got going. They started out with the science to see what was real and surprised at how helpful the professionals gathering the data were. An overwhelming amount of work has been done in this area. A web site has been developed highlighting a number of different sections including science and law (setbacks and drainage rules). During this process they had to learn how to speak the government agency language. Implementing best management practices has become a major focus of the group.

Everyone around Lake Pepin has become involved in the group including marina owners, cities, townships, etc. The group has grown fast to over 400 people. They try to put out a monthly mailing and get the cities involved and educated. According to Michael, this is a true citizen group and they have been invited everywhere and as a result hold a lot of power. They realize since the science says 80 to 90% of the sediment and phosphorus comes from the Minnesota River they need to slow it down on the landscape otherwise they are wasting their time. The group understands they need to talk with the citizens in the Minnesota River.

Poultry Only Part of Free-Range Model

NORTHFIELD — Age-old wisdom advises against putting all of one's eggs in one basket, however, Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin is going against the flow and recommending just that.

Haslett-Marroquin, director of the Rural Enterprise Center in Northfield, MN, is creator of the free-range poultry program now being implemented by Hillside Farmers' Cooperative at sites in Northfield and Cannon Falls. The aim of the model is to help Latino farmers be successful by pairing them up with Southern Minnesota farmers in a system that is both sustainable and culturally familiar to them.

The idea for the program came to him quite simply. "There's not much to it. You need to have an open mind to everything going on around you," Haslett-Marroquin said. He listened to families and explored the movement to locally grown foods. "There was not one all-enlightening moment, it was a process. You have to think like a farmer."

Poultry farming is in the blood of the Latino farmer, he explains, increasing the potential for success. Because the needed strengths and assets are already in place, profits can be realized quicker. The Cannon Falls project got birds in July and was already harvesting some of them in a matter of weeks. They sold about 100 birds in a single morning according to Haslett-Marroquin.

Free-range poultry is part of a sustainable system, he claims, with the key element being the birds. "You can't really have sustainable agriculture without livestock," he explained. "Biological activity is necessary. You cannot have a sustainable vegetable farm, for example, without livestock."

But the endeavor must also be economically sustainable. Haslett-Marroquin said a project must be arranged so that it doesn't undercut nature's ability to produce. The core of real value-added agriculture, he says, is a symbiotic relationship.

He sees that relationship played out in the free-range poultry model. For example, if grain were grown, the poultry waste could be used as fertilizer. But the waste is high in nitrogen so grass is needed to balance the field chemistry. The resulting hay, as well as some grain, would feed the birds. Further strengthening the symbiotic relationships, hazels could be added as protective cover benefiting from manure and providing food to the birds. The poultry-hazel combination also addresses non-productivity in the bushes during their first years.

"That's how sustainable thinking needs to happen," he exclaimed.

Haslett-Marroquin is full of that kind of thinking. Allowing poultry to roam in apple orchards is another of these sustainable symbiotic relationships. Apples are allowed to drop with some harvested for cider and the rest left for the birds, increasing health through better digestion and producing a specialty bird that tastes better because of its feed.

"It's all natural and balanced in chemistry and nutrition," he said. "You don't need to bring in carbon, fertilizer..."

One thing Haslett-Marroquin says cannot be overlooked is an understanding of the process. "Anything we do must be understood by the people who do it," he explained. "Our success is in the joy of the farmer who is doing it. The farmer has to understand it to be engaged."

Pairing the farmers strengthens the potential for success by maximizing components of entrepreneurial development through a mentoring relationship from which the Latino farmer can eventually branch off on his or her own.

What advice does Haslett-Marroquin have for anyone considering a free-range poultry program? Drop everything you have read and go with instinct. "It is a labor intensive process and we know that labor

intensive systems don't always work. Challenge traditional poultry systems. There is nothing complicated about the project. If you want to change the system, talk to us or start from scratch," he said.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND PERMIT FOR ASPHALT CEMENT FACILITY NEAR GRANITE FALLS IS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is seeking comments on a revised Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) and a draft Above-ground Storage Tank (AST) permit for the proposed Asbury Asphalt Cement Bulk Storage Facility about four miles north of Granite Falls.

An EAW for the proposed project was prepared and put on public notice in February 2009 (as the Asbury Bulk Facility). Due to subsequent modifications made by the project proposer related to water use and wastewater disposal, a revised EAW has been prepared and is being re-noticed for review and comment on the modifications. The 30-day public comment period for the revised EAW runs Nov. 30 through Dec. 30, 2009. The public comment period for the draft AST permit runs from Nov. 30, 2009, through Jan. 15, 2010.

A public information meeting on the draft AST permit will be held Jan. 7, 2010, at 7 p.m., in the Granite Falls City Council Chambers, 641 Prentice St. The MPCA will provide information about the project's draft AST permit and environmental review staff will be available to answer questions about the EAW.

Duininck Inc. proposes to build a storage tank and associated equipment to load, store and unload asphalt cement, with the possible addition of up to three more tanks in the future. The revised EAW includes new information about the installation and use of a well on site, wastewater disposal, and updated information on the air-emissions control system.

Copies of the revised EAW are available for review at the MPCA offices in St. Paul, 520 Lafayette Road N.; Willmar, 1601 E. Highway 12; and Marshall, 1420 E. College Drive, Suite 900; and on the Web at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/news/eaw/index.html>. Or a copy of the revised EAW may be requested by calling 320-214-3786. Questions about the revised EAW should be directed to Karen Kromar at 651-757-2508 or 800-657-3864.

Comments on the EAW should be submitted to the MPCA in writing by 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 30, 2009, to Karen Kromar, MPCA, 520 Lafayette Road N., Saint Paul, MN, 55155-4194, or they may be e-mailed to Karen.Kromar@state.mn.us

The MPCA has drafted an AST permit, which includes requirements addressing air emissions, secondary containment, overflow alarms, corrosion protection, and inspection and maintenance of the tank and piping. The draft AST permit is available on the Web at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/news/>. The draft AST permit and permit application will also be available for public inspection and copying from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays at MPCA offices in St. Paul, Marshall and Willmar. A copy of the draft AST permit will be mailed to anyone who requests one in writing or by calling the MPCA. For additional information, contact Sandra Johnson at 651-757-2469 (TDD 612/282-5332; outside the Twin Cities metro area, TDD 800-657-3864).

Comments on the draft AST permit should be submitted in writing by 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 15, 2010, to Sandra Johnson, MPCA, Industrial Division, Land Permits Unit, 520 Lafayette Road N., Saint Paul, MN 55155-4194, or they may be e-mailed to Sandra.Johnson@state.mn.us. Comments must include a statement of your interest in the revised EAW or draft AST permit; a statement of the action you wish the MPCA to take, including references to specific sections; and specific reasons supporting your position. The MPCA will use these comments to evaluate the potential for significant environmental effects from the project, to decide if an Environmental Impact Statement, a more comprehensive environmental review, is needed, or to decide if additional permit requirements are necessary, or a contested case hearing for the permit is warranted.

Data Interpretation Workshop

Minnesota Waters is excited to offer a Data Interpretation workshop for water quality professionals in early 2010. With the increased focus and funding for water quality assessment monitoring in our state, water quality professionals find a lot of their time is spent on summarizing and interpreting water quality data. Analyzing and reporting data results is a challenging task. A one-day interactive workshop will provide skills to help participants learn how to access, manage, analyze and interpret their data results. As part of this workshop participants will work through a case study to understand how to use assessment and citizen volunteer data to assess and report on river and lake conditions. Workshop participants will have a chance to practice condensing data into manageable chunks, creating Pivot Tables to make data manipulation easier, calculating basic statistical summaries used for data analysis, creating easily understandable charts and graphs, understand and develop findings and conclusions, and review reporting and presentation techniques. This workshop will be held on February 16, 2010 at Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College in Cloquet, MN. Please sure to register early to reserve your seat! If you have any questions or would like to register please contact Courtney Kowalczyk at 218-343-2180 or courtneyk@minnesotawaters.org

Grant Opportunities:

Minnesota Waters is pleased to offer its members Conservation Partnership grants for the third year in a row. This grant program is funded with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Michelob Golden Draft Light. Conservation Partnership grants offer funding to support projects initiated and managed by our state's most effective local water resource managers-citizen groups working to protect Minnesota's lakes and streams.

Conservation Partnership grants provide funding for citizen-led lake and river improvement projects across the state, including, but not limited to:

- Shoreland habitat improvement projects
- shoreland restoration projects
- inventorying and assessment projects
- AIS prevention projects
- Outreach and education projects benefitting lake and stream health

The 2009-10 grant application cycle is now OPEN. Please note, due to funding delays, we have a shorter deadline this year: Applications must be postmarked no later than December 11, 2009. Please download Conservation Partnership grant criteria and application at: www.minnesotawaters.org.

Conservation Partnership grants are available to all Minnesota Waters members and affiliates. Seven \$5,000.00 grants will be awarded. Funded projects will be short-term (12 months) in duration to demonstrate quick, tangible results for implementation during 2010. Please contact Erica LeMoine at erical@minnesotawaters.org with any questions.

Job Announcements:

Farm Bill Assistant – Yellow Medicine SWCD

Starting at a wage of \$14.50 to \$15.00, the Farm Bill Assistant position with the Yellow Medicine Soil and Water Conservation District is full-time with benefits and grant funded. This position performs in a primary technical capacity to carry out the Soil and Water Conservation Districts' programs and provide assistance to administer the Federal Farm Bill. Duties will include promotion of the continuous and/or general signup of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Rock Outcrop Program, Working Land Initiative Program and/or any other easement programs. This position will also provide assistance to landowners installing conservation practices using a wide array of programs. Duties will include, but are not limited to, conducting status reviews, assisting in developing farm plans, assisting with the district's ongoing programs. Performs related activities as required by the District Manager.

For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ymfarbillassistant.pdf>

Events:

On December 3rd (Thursday) is the **Mankato Convening on Climate Change** from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at Blue Earth County Historical Society (415 E. Cherry Street) in Mankato. Please join Minnesota Environmental Partnership member groups, Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy of MN and MN Council of Nonprofits, for this event. Climate change is a concern for low-income communities and proposed solutions can create new opportunities. Learn more about issues and opportunities important to nonprofit, labor and faith organizations. Speakers include:

- **Pat Benson**, Minnesota Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy
- **Leah Gardner**, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Southeast Area Labor Council representative

Fee: Free, but please RSVP online. **To RSVP:** log in to

https://online.mncn.org/mcnssa/ssauthmain.login_page

(password assistance available) and select "RSVP for Free Events, Briefings and Convenings."

December 4th (Friday) is the **"Raise Your Voice" Literary Event** starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Java River Café Downtown Montevideo. The **"Raise Your Voice"** event is free and open to the public and area writers and artists are encouraged to attend. **"Raise your Voice"** is being co-sponsored by the Higher Education Consortium on Urban Affairs (HECUA) and Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) as a way to celebrate the arts and their power to impact social issues and create vibrant communities. For more information, contact Patrick Moore at 320-269-2984.

December 8th (Tuesday) is **Progressive Power: Owing it in the Upper Minnesota River Watershed** special session starting at 7:00 p.m. at the Clean Up the River office in Montevideo. Progressive Power means promoting and capturing the economic and environmental benefits of energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy as smart ways to create sustainable rural communities and energy independent homes. For more information <http://www.cureriver.org/events.html>

Check out additional upcoming events and workshops on the Minnesota River Calendar at:

<http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/index.html>

Water Quality Articles:

[Battery research aims to store renewable energy](#) (MinnPost). The biggest chemical battery in the United States is located near Interstate 90 in Luverne, Minn.

[Southwest Minnesota residents have questions about proposed powerline](#) (MinnPost). Questions from residents about the safety, and ultimate route, of a proposed high-voltage power line project that will run through southwestern Minnesota.

[DNR says number of deer killed this season down 12%](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). The number of deer killed by hunters has dropped by about 12 percent in Minnesota, as expected by state officials.

[PUC gives nod to water plant](#) (Fairmont Sentinel). No one is comfortable spending \$31 million on a new water plant, but the alternatives aren't any more appealing to the officials making the decisions.

[Minnesota leads nation in speeding stimulus spending on water quality](#) (MinnPost). More than 96 percent of stimulus funds allocated for water quality projects in Minnesota are invested in projects that have already broken ground.

[Study finds chemicals widespread in Minn. waters](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Minnesota scientists say it appears endocrine-disrupting chemicals and pharmaceuticals are found in even the most pristine lakes in the state.

[Minnesota Clean Water Action introduces Ripple Effects campaign](#) (Twin Cities Daily Planet). "Pesticides are everywhere...most people do not even know that -cide means 'to kill,'" said Becky Sheets of Staples, Minnesota. Sheets shared her story as part of Minnesota Clean Water Action's newly launched Ripple Effects campaign.

[Harvest complete at Growing Green Mini-Farm](#) (New Ulm Journal). The folks involved with the Growing Green Mini-Farm had a good deal to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.

[Ethanol's boom goes bust](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). It's a big week for the slumping ethanol industry: The EPA might raise the 10% cap on fuel blends.

[Plastic recycler aims to build Mankato factory](#) (Mankato Free Press). Genesis Poly Recycling seeking public subsidies; says company will create 115 jobs within two years.

[MPCA turns back bid to burn more trash without public hearing](#) (Minnesota Independent). Stymied by citizen resistance, the operator of Hennepin County's incinerator in downtown Minneapolis tried - in vain - this month to get the state's OK to burn more trash with an administrative end-run around a public hearing.

[U students push for recycling law](#) (Minnesota Daily). A proposed city ordinance being pushed by University of Minnesota students could change the way Minneapolis businesses handle their bottles and cans.

[MN loses 61K acres of Conservation Reserve Program in '09](#) (Minnesota Outdoors). The slow drain on the federal Conservation Reserve Program continued this fall in Minnesota - and nationwide - as the state lost an estimated 61,000 program acres, according to the USDA's Farm Service Agency.

[Opinion: Climate change or not, ducks aren't here](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). The possible effect of climate warming on duck migration is a controversial topic among waterfowl managers and duck hunters alike.

[Digging in to save the environment](#) (Farmington Independent). How far are you willing to go in the name of recycling? Would you separate your cans and newspapers from the rest of your trash? Or start a compost pile in your backyard?

Nature teaches more than she preaches. There are no sermons in stones. It is easier to get a spark out of a stone than a moral. – John Burroughs

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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