

### **Minnesota River Watershed Alliance Quarterly Meeting**

Over thirty people came out for last night's Minnesota River Watershed Alliance quarterly meeting in Hutchinson. After discussing the five potential initiatives identified at the October meeting, the group picked the Minnesota River Paddle Patch/Decal and River Friendly Label as the "Clean Up the Minnesota River" issue to focus on in 2009.

A number of sub committees have been formed to move the issue forward. More information on Minnesota River Paddle Patch/Decal and River Friendly Label will be forthcoming in the near future. If you are interested in helping out with this 2009 issue please contact Scott Kudelka at 507-389-2304 or [scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu](mailto:scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu).

### **Big Stone II Coal Plant Transmission Line Approved**

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved by a 5 to 0 vote the construction of 112 miles of transmission lines in Minnesota. According to the Utility companies who proposed the Big Stone II Coal-fired plant, this was the last step needed to start construction. The five utility companies behind the project said they couldn't go ahead with the plant construction without new transmission lines in Minnesota.

A number of environmental concerns over this coal-generated power plant have included carbon dioxide and mercury emissions, water usage and coal ash. If construction moves forward, Big Stone II would come on line in 2015 at a cost of \$1.6 billion, which includes the new transmission lines. Five environmental groups opposed to the plant have said they would appeal the PUC decision in court.

More on this story:

- ✓ [Minn. regulators approve power lines for SD plant](#) (Minnesota Public Radio)
- ✓ [Big Stone II coal plant gets PUC's approval](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune)
- ✓ [Big Stone II gets PUC backing, however, some strings attached](#) (West Central Tribune)
- ✓ [Big Stone II is vital to future energy](#) (Fergus Falls Daily Journal)
- ✓ [Ratepayers, Hoot Lake part of Big Stone decision](#) (Fergus Falls Daily Journal)
- ✓ [Big Stone II transmission project gets utility commission OK](#) (Minnesota Independent)
- ✓ [PUC's Big Stone II decision smudges new law to reduce carbon emissions](#) (MinnPost)

### **Wetlands Funding under the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment**

Today, Ducks Unlimited and other interested parties are meeting to discuss priorities for the amendment funding in regards to wetlands. The meeting is being held at the MN Valley NWR in Bloomington from 9a.m. to 3 p.m. They will be soliciting from other groups on what types of programs each group thinks should be funded in regards to wetlands.

For more information contact Ryan Heiniger of Ducks Unlimited at: [rheiniger@ducks.org](mailto:rheiniger@ducks.org) or 952.469.0956 if you want more details.

### **Shopper's Guide to Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs**

Resolving to save money? And the planet? Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs promise a win-win: according to the industry and U.S. government's Energy Star program, which promotes CFL bulbs and other substitutes for energy-hogging incandescents, a CFL uses 75 percent less energy than its incandescent counterpart, lasts up to 10 times longer and prevents more than 450 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere.

Over its lifetime, a single CFL can save the consumer \$80 or more, depending on local electric rates.

But all CFL bulbs aren't equal. Some have lower mercury content than others, and some last much longer. Unfortunately, you can't tell the best of the best by their labels – or the U.S. government Energy Star logo. Some Energy Star labeled bulbs could not be legally sold in Europe due to excessive mercury content.

For the entire article go to, <http://www.ewg.org/node/27220>

### **Greater Blue Earth Alliance Annual Meeting**

The Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA) would like to cordially invite you to attend the GBERBA Annual Meeting to be held on Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> starting at 9:30 a.m. at Farmamerica located near Waseca, MN. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/gberbaannualmeeting09.pdf>

### **Events:**

January 21<sup>st</sup> (Wednesday) is the second “**Community Wealth**” **Lunch Talks** from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m. at the new Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) office on the main street (117 South 1<sup>st</sup> Street) of Montevideo. For more information, [www.curemriver.org](http://www.curemriver.org)

January 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> (Wednesday thru Friday) is the **Radical Abundance – A Theology of Sustainability (39<sup>th</sup> National Theological Conference)** at Gustavus Adolphus College. The full three day conference experience features keynotes live via webcast from New York, and interfaith discussion small groups to consider radical ideas about abundance, sustainability and well being. Cost is \$20 per person and includes printed materials and refreshments. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/trinityflyer.pdf>

January 26<sup>th</sup> (Monday) is the **Minnesota River Board Meeting** starting at 9:00 a.m. in the conference room of the Chippewa County Courthouse. The Full Board packet will be posted on [www.minnesotariver.org](http://www.minnesotariver.org)

January 29<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) is the **Local Energy Security roundtable discussion** from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Wesley United Methodist Church (202 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street) in Marshall. For more information, [www.curemriver.org](http://www.curemriver.org)

February 7<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) is the **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of CURE** from 5 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (meal served at 6:30 p.m.) at the Hollywood Theater on Main Street in Montevideo. Keynote speakers are Dr. Carrie Jennings & Dr. Shawn Schottler talking about “The Real Dirt on the MN River.” For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/cureannualmeeting.pdf>

February 9<sup>th</sup> (Monday) is a **3<sup>rd</sup> Crop Producer Meeting – “Biomass: Production and Uses”** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, Fairmont. Discussion will include biomass, bioenergy, and bio-based products. For more information: Jill Sackett. Rural Advantage, U of M Extension at 507-238-5449 or [sacke032@umn.edu](mailto:sacke032@umn.edu)

February 19<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) is the **Chaska to York Factory in 49 Days presentation** at 7:00 p.m. in the meeting room of the New Ulm Public Library (17 N. Broadway St.). Sean Bloomfield and Colton Witte will talk about their adventure last summer paddling the entire Minnesota and Red rivers all the way to the Hudson Bay.

February 23<sup>rd</sup> (Monday) is a **3<sup>rd</sup> Crop Producer Meeting – “Getting Fruity”** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Fairmont. Discussion will include aronia, grape, Saskatoon, and apple production as well as starting a winery, bee keeping, and using high tunnels. For more information: Jill Sackett. Rural Advantage, U of M Extension at 507-238-5449 or [sacke032@umn.edu](mailto:sacke032@umn.edu)

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

### **Water Quality Articles**

[Green Acres changes upset some landowners](#) (Agri News). Changes to Minnesota's Green Acres program have some farmers getting ready to plow up wetlands that are now too expensive to keep in conservation.

[Energy saving bulbs impacting Lupus patient](#) (KSTP TV). They can help save money and the environment, but some say energy saving light bulbs are making them sick.

[Brownton council finds frustration with wind project](#) (McLeod County Chronicle). Nearly two years ago - in February 2007 - the city of Brownton learned that it would be getting a wind turbine to produce electrical power through its membership with the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA).

[Minnesota spends too little on anti-smoking efforts, lung association says](#) (Pioneer Press). Minnesota gets an F for the amount of money it spends on smoking prevention and control, according to the American Lung Association, which branded a state that pioneered workplace smoking bans with a failing grade.

[GOP governors urge action on global warming](#) (Politico). Republican governors, battling climate change in their states and fed up with the GOP's inability to organize in Washington, are urging their congressional colleagues to start the new Congress with unprecedented dedication to addressing global warming.

[New LEED for old project](#) (Finance and Commerce). Excelsior and Grand may be among first certified by LEED program honoring neighborhood projects.

[Buffalo Lake meat processor to pay \\$40,000](#) (Associated Press). A meat processor in Buffalo Lake has agreed to pay a \$40,000 civil penalty for alleged violations of wastewater, permitting, and other hazardous waste rules.

[Bill Boyne: Farmers who don't get subsidies often need them most](#) (Rochester Post-Bulletin). Another serious defect in the U.S. farm program involves the distribution of federal farm subsidies.

[Xcel brings its first wind farm online](#) (Rochester Post-Bulletin). Xcel Energy's 67-turbine Grand Meadow Wind Farm is now adding to the company's growing total of kilowatts produced by wind. And there are no plans of stopping.

[Feds remove protection for gray wolves in 2 Northern Rockies states, Great Lakes region](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The Bush administration on Wednesday announced plans to remove gray wolves in the western Great Lakes and northern Rocky Mountains regions from the federal endangered species list.

[City of Granite Falls focuses attention to KK Berge building](#) (Marshall Independent). A lot has changed along Prentice Street in Granite Falls the last few years. Buildings have been demolished and new ones have taken their place, and a group of residents from the Granite Falls area is trying to give new life one of the last original buildings on the street.

[Then, and now: the joys -- and truths -- of urban chicken-raising](#) (MinnPost). Three cheers – and a hearty cock-a-doodle-doo – to the Burnsville boy who persuaded the City Council to relax its animal control ordinance and allow the keeping of chickens in town.

[Roundtable report: Senator says Fund protection needed](#) (Outdoor News). With the state legislative session just under way, there's already been whispers about the new dedicated outdoors funding - and how that funding might free up other money, according to conservationists and legislators.

[How Minnesota stays green even in the white of winter](#) (MinnPost). Minnesota has been a leader in conserving the environment and protecting our 10,000 lakes. Here, Gov. Tim Pawlenty and other state leaders showcase the ways in which Minnesota is using renewable energy to reduce emissions and create a greener state, even when its covered with the white of winter.

[Audit again faults DNR over use of public funds](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The agency could not document whether revenues from its Game and Fish Fund were spent properly.

[Snowy owls find home near airport runways](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). To a snowy owl, the runways looks like home: the tundra of northern Canada.

[Larger, greener Seward Co-op opens](#) (MN Daily). At a time when many businesses are downsizing, the Seward Co-op Grocery and Deli has taken a step to create more than 50 jobs en route to opening at its new location.

[Low sulfur levels affect crops](#) (Fairmont Sentinel). Efforts to clean up the air have had an unexpected effect on crop growth. Sulfur, a nutrient vital for successful plant production, used to be absorbed directly from the air by crops but reductions in coal and diesel exhaust have dramatically reduced the sulfur available.

[The mystery of carp](#) (Sauk Herald). Once thought to be a valuable addition to lakes, the lowly carp could be cause of some of the problems in Sauk Lake.

*The grand circle of movement of water from ocean to atmosphere to continent and back to ocean is essential mechanism that allows organisms – including humans – to emerge, to develop, and live on Earth. – Luna Leopold*

**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>**

Thanks,

Scott

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