

Community Clean-Ups for Water Quality Wins Governor's Award

Friends of the Minnesota Valley is pleased to announce that our Community Clean-Ups for Water Quality Program has received a 2009-2010 Governor's Award for Excellence in Pollution Prevention in the Partnership Category. The Governor's Award for excellence in Pollution Prevention, Partnership Category, honors superior environmental achievement by collaborations between Minnesota nonprofit organizations, businesses, public agencies and/or institutions for programs or projects that benefit the environment by reducing or eliminating wastes and pollutants at the source.

"We are very excited and proud that the Clean-Ups are being recognized for their innovation and their effectiveness in preventing phosphorus pollution in the Minnesota River Watershed," said Lori Nelson, Executive Director for Friends of the Minnesota Valley. "Clean-Ups are a great civic project, plus they are easy and cost-effective. I think that one of the primary reasons our award application was successful is because we have nearly 40 partners who have helped us over the years, including youth groups, church groups, conservation organizations, civic organizations, companies, foundations, cities, and government agencies. There is such diverse involvement and investment in our program. We couldn't do this without our partners."

Community Clean-Ups for Water Quality are locally-led phosphorus pollution reduction projects. Each year, citizens in communities throughout the Minnesota River Basin participate in clean-ups by raking and bagging organic debris such as leaves, dirt, grass clippings, and branches that collect in and near municipal storm water intake areas. Over the seven-year history of the project, the Friends and our partners have prevented over 8,400 pounds of phosphorus—equal to 8.4 million pounds of harmful algae—and 47,000 pounds of trash from entering the Minnesota River and other water bodies that drain into the Minnesota River.

The Minnesota River is one of the most impaired waterways in the United States. Phosphorus and nitrogen pollution from the Minnesota River are primary contributors to the filling in of Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River and to expansion of the so-called "Dead Zone" in the Gulf of Mexico. The Community Clean-Ups are helping to measurably reduce phosphorus pollution impacts in both the Minnesota River and Mississippi River Basins.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency helped the Friends develop the pollution reduction formula for the Clean-Ups. Five 20-pound bags of organic debris typically contain a pound of phosphorus, which in turn can produce up to 1,000 pounds of harmful, oxygen-depleting aquatic growth.

Peder Sandhei, Coordinator for the Governor's Award Program at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, indicated that the success of the Clean-Ups, combined with the substantial involvement of other partners, figured prominently in the judges' decision to award the program. "The obvious grassroots nature of the Clean-Ups Program is very impressive. This is a program that has the potential to not only help clean up the Minnesota River, but it can be easily replicated in other watersheds throughout Minnesota."

In fact, the Friends have joined with the Freshwater Society to expand the Clean-Ups throughout Minnesota. The two organizations have developed a toolkit that communities or groups in those communities can use to organize clean-ups in their own communities. To obtain a toolkit, contact the Freshwater Society at 952-471- 9773 or at freshwater@freshwater.org.

Friends of the Minnesota Valley works to protect and enhance the natural resources of the eleven-county Lower Minnesota River Watershed, including the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Established in 1982, Friends currently has over 1,800 members. For more information on the Friends, please visit our website at www.friendsofminvalley.org.

Our View: Project will put a trunk in river erosion (The Free Press)

Thumbs up: To Blue Earth County government and the soil and water conservation district as well as other partners for coming up with an innovative way to stop erosion on the Le Sueur River and prevent sediment from draining into the Minnesota River.

With help from Blue Earth County, the soil and water conservation district submitted a grant proposal that garnered almost \$250,000 for an erosion control project that uses mostly natural materials.

The money came from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy fund that was approved a few years ago and comes from an added 3/8 percent sales tax in Minnesota.

The project will use tree trunks embedded into the riverbank filled with mud and sod. Native plants will be used to build a protective buffer between the eroding bluffs and the river. It also is cheaper than traditional rock methods and will provide habitat for fish and wildlife.

And it will help reduce sediment in rivers downstream. Department of Natural Resources officials estimate some 40 percent of the sediment in Lake Pepin is from the Le Sueur River.

While the money will only be enough to help shore up four of 800 eroding banks in Blue Earth County, it will be a good start to stop the large amount of sediment that enters the Le Sueur and subsequently the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers.

Low water levels are exposing lake beds

Even though spring snow melt has caused some Minnesota rivers and streams to flood, many lakes are still experiencing low water levels due to drought conditions from last year.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds shoreline owners that permits are required for control of aquatic vegetation on dry lake beds. This includes cutting, chemical treatment, or other disruption. Removal of emergent aquatic plants without a permit is a misdemeanor and can result in a fine and restoration order.

Aquatic plants growing in lake beds are property of the state of Minnesota, even if the lake bed is dry due to drought or temporary drawdown.

Emergent aquatic plants are extremely valuable to the lake, fish, and wildlife. Emergent aquatic plants protect shorelines from erosion and wave action, stabilize bottom sediments, improve water quality by intercepting phosphorus before it reaches the water, and provides valuable habitat to fish and wildlife. Fluctuating water levels are a natural and important part of lake ecology and emergent aquatic plants, such as bulrush, rely on periods of low water to germinate and re-establish depleted stands. Removal of emergent vegetation destroys valuable habitat and can have negative effects on fish, wildlife, and the lake.

For more information, contact Steve Enger, Aquatic Plant Management Program, 651-259-5092, or your nearest regional fisheries office. Phone numbers are available by calling 651-296-6157 or toll free 888-MINNDNR (646-6367).

Spring melt: DNR urges caution on Minnesota rivers

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is advising boaters and anglers to be aware of flooding and hazardous debris including ice chunks on the Mississippi, Minnesota, Lower St. Croix rivers and other canoe and boating routes throughout the state.

"Flooding inundates the river banks, resulting in hazardous debris in the water," said Tim Smalley, DNR boat and water safety specialist. "This includes both natural and man-made objects that have been swept into the river by high water."

Smalley noted debris often floats just at or below the surface of the water, which means boaters may not be able to see the obstruction until it is too late. Because the water is still frigid, boaters could be subject to hypothermia and cold water shock if they take a spill.

“Current is another threat,” Smalley added. “There is a lot of water flowing through river systems now. This increases both the speed of the river and strength of the current, which makes it more difficult for even an experienced swimmer to stay afloat. This means it is important to wear your lifejacket at all times, now and throughout the year.”

Smalley also suggested that boaters let people know where they are going and when they expect to return from their trip.

River level reports for Minnesota rivers are updated weekly from April through October, and are available on the DNR’s Web site at www.dnr.state.mn.us/river_levels/index.html.

The reports are based on automated river level gauges and gauge readings recorded by volunteers. The DNR cautioned boaters that river levels could change dramatically over a short period of time due to inclement weather conditions.

Information on the state’s 31 water trails, including the North Shore of Lake Superior, totaling more than 4,000 miles of managed canoeing and kayaking routes, is available on the DNR’s Web site at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/index.html>

Southern MN Lakes & Rivers Summit For Citizen Leaders

The Summit will provide a full morning of Networking with your peer citizen leaders along with Professional Presentations and Informative Booths covering the ways you can protect and improve our waters.

Presentations Include

- Shoreland Buffers Panel
- Successful Lake/River Associations: Getting Projects in Motion
- Effective Communications and Membership Development

Saturday May 1st, 2010

9am to 1pm ~ Brunch provided

Rice County Government Services Building - Room 3A & B
320 3rd St. North West—Faribault, MN 55021

RSVP by April 23, 2009

\$10 check payable to MN Waters (mail or pay at the door)

Mail To: Eli Condon

195 E 5th St Unit 2405—St. Paul, MN 55101

Questions? elic@minnesotawaters.org - 218.251.1462 - www.MinnesotaWaters.org

Please forward! Send this e-mail to friends and neighbors or print the flyer found at <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/southernmnsummit.pdf> (print double sided for 4 invitations).

Sponsors:



Job Opportunities:

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) is an independent educational and research organization that received its nonprofit status in 1984. Michael Fields was founded based on the ideals of ecologically-sound farming, biodynamic and resilient agriculture and food systems, enlivened cultural values, and the creation of opportunities for young people in applied agricultural sciences and food systems. Today MFAI has more than a dozen experienced staff programming in an array of initiatives including farm and food education, public policy critique and development, farming and urban agricultural systems, and crop and soil applied research. Work is conducted on-site at several farms and at the office/laboratory/meeting facilities as well as off-site at urban and agricultural settings. MFAI is strategically located in East Troy, WI, a rich agricultural and urban region bridging Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago cultural and economic centers.

The Mission of MFAI is to cultivate the ecological, social, economic, and spiritual vitality of food and farming systems through education, research, public policy and market development.

The Institute seeks an advanced professional with experience and interest related to its mission. Additionally, we seek a leader who has the skills and passion for internal and external relations development and communications as well as collaborative long-term planning of the diverse programming carried on in the Institute.

Key Responsibilities:

- * Engages in short and long-range planning and prioritization of research and educational initiatives in concert with the administrative leaders, staff, and the Board of Directors.
- * Accountable for ensuring financially viable operations. Guides professional staff and program leaders.
- * Solicits and incorporates input and perspective from the broader agricultural and academic communities.
- * Initiates and maintains collaborations and strong professional relationships with researchers, farmers, industry, and policymakers.
- * Evaluates potential contributors and formulates and undertakes a dynamic and aggressive funding program to complement other development initiatives conducted by Institute staff.
- * Actively engages in the dissemination of knowledge to farmers and other stakeholders.
- * Fulfills public speaking engagements to accurately, clearly and professionally present research findings to scientific, farmer, policy, and general public audiences.

Qualifications

- * Experience with sustainable agricultural and food systems programs including policy, public education, and national research needs and priorities.
- * An advanced degree preferred but not required.
- * Superb written and verbal communication skills.
- * Experience with developing and managing budgets for diverse programs.
- * Dedication to the mission of the MFAI.

Applicants should send a detailed resume and the addresses/telephone numbers of three reference contacts to William C. Liebhardt, Interim Director, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, email address is director@michaelfieldsagainst.org. Final application date is April 26, 2010.

Events:

April 17th (Saturday) is the **3rd Annual Fun Shoot (Clay Pigeon Shoot)** at the River Ridge Gun Club, Courtland sponsored by the Twin Valley Boy Scout Association. Check in is at 12:30 and the Shoot starts at 1:00pm. Go to www.twinvalleybsa.org to print off a registration form or for more information.

April 20th (Tuesday) is the **Minnesota River Watershed Alliance meeting** at the Hutchinson Events Center starting at 6:00 p.m. with a social hour and the formally meeting beginning at 9:00. For more information <http://www.watershedalliance.blogspot.com/>

April 24th (Saturday) is the **2010 Minnesota River Banquet** with the social hour starting at 5 p.m. in the lower level of Turner Hall in New Ulm. The dinner starts at 6:30 and program at 7:30 with an update on Minnesota actions, issues and advocacy opportunities for the public. It will also feature a startling snapshot look at the phenomenal fisheries in the backwater area of the river near New Ulm and Minnesota River Jeopardy will be back. For those who wish to come early and pay a visit to the Regional River History and Information Center the doors will be open starting at 2 PM until 4:30. The center is the big brick building located in Riverside Park at 1st South and Front St. This event is in its 21st year and as always is being hosted by the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River. Pre-registration is open and can be done by email providing a name and the number attending to yasure@lycos.com or by sending a check for \$20 per person to CCMR P.O. Box 488 New Ulm MN 56073 notating banquet tickets on the check. CCMR is a basin-wide non-profit 501 c 3 federal tax exempt organization. All donations are tax deductible deducible.

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

Water Quality Articles:

[John Crisp: Ever think about dirt? You should.](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Dirt isn't something that most of us spend much time thinking about.

[Clean energy jobs grow 6 times faster than other jobs](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Minnesota's clean energy jobs grew at about six-times the rate of overall jobs over the last decade, according to a new study from the Pew Charitable Trusts.

[Legislator says DNR failing to protect wetlands](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). The Department of Natural Resources is failing to protect wetlands, according to some legislators.

[Group wants state agencies to stop using bottled water](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). A public interest group is urging state agencies in Minnesota to stop using bottled water.

[Popular SAFE acres program is going, going, almost gone](#) (Minnesota Outdoor News). Demonstrating again the popularity of conservation programs in Minnesota, federal officials say landowners in the state are on the fast track to enroll a new allocation of "SAFE" acres made just a couple weeks ago.

[A culture clash on the St. Croix](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Some people decry the DNR for heavy-handed regulation, but it has approved most St. Croix building decisions.

[Chris Niskanen: The state Legislature has \\$60 million in outdoors projects to review, and the path to approval won't be easy](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). The state Legislature has \$60 million in projects to review. The path to approval won't be easy.

[Dennis Anderson: Politicians creating false land crisis](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Legislators just don't want to share power with the citizens on two advisory councils.

[Erosion threatens Garden City neighborhood](#) (Mankato Free Press). That same stretch of river that provides a quaint backdrop for the Blue Earth County Fair every summer has been keeping Pat Hasher from sleeping at night this spring.

[Conservation hits home](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). Utilities — under pressure to reduce consumer energy demand — are zeroing in on residential use. They're getting creative — sending teams to tune up homes, inciting neighborhood competition and otherwise waging war on waste.

[Opinion: Proposed legislation weakens state control over factory farms](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). two bills that are being proposed in the Minnesota State Legislature that would effectively lower the environmental standards for the state's largest factory farms.

[Editorial: Cooperative efforts needed to combat erosion](#) (Mankato Free Press). Dick and Pat Hasher know as well as anyone how the rivers in the Minnesota River Basin have changed.

[Mapping a fragile geology's underground water routes](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). When snow is melting in the woods and fields of southeastern Minnesota, Jeff Green wants to know where it's going.

Humanity is exalted not because we are so far above other living creatures, but because knowing them well elevates the very concept of life. – Edward O. Wilson

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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