

Minnesota River still ailing by Josephine Marcotty, Star Tribune

After 20 years of cleanup efforts and close to a billion dollars in public spending, the Minnesota River is, well, not much better than it was in 1990, according to a long-awaited assessment released Monday.

Some of the river's headwater creeks have more varieties of fish, and some local streams are providing healthier habitat for wildlife in and around the water, state pollution officials reported. But the tiny insects that make up the bottom of the food chain are still not back, and the fish are as scarce as ever in the main streams and the big river itself, the study found.

The disappointing report card, on a river considered the state's most troubled, is prompting serious questions about whether the state's largely voluntary approach to protecting its waters is working, said both state officials and clean-water advocates.

"We are not getting very much for our investment," said Gene Merriam, president of the Freshwater Society. "We have to circle up and figure out a better way to manage our resources."

For the rest of the article, <http://www.startribune.com/local/121530289.html>

Minnesota River Board Meeting

The next MRB meeting will be held on May 16th in Olivia, MN. Please **RSVP** to susan.carlin@mnsu.edu or (507) 389-6279 to be included in the tour of Renville County and lunch. We look forward to seeing you in Olivia!

Renville County features a wide variety of agricultural crops and products including corn, soybeans, sweet corn, sugar beets, hogs, eggs, fish, and ethanol. On this tour, we'll discuss how land-use decisions impact the environment and hear success stories from conservation professionals and land use managers in the region. Lunch will be served at a local county park and we'll learn about the history of fish and fisheries in the Minnesota River. We'll also visit one of the region's unique Granite Rock Outcrops.

Along the way, this will be an opportunity for MRB staff to talk with delegates about the history and future of the Minnesota River Board and the vital role that delegates serve in the organization's success.

Please RSVP to susan.carlin@mnsu.edu or 507-389-6279. Lunch will be provided to those who RSVP!

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Releases Minnesota River Basin Study on Stream Biological Communities

St. Paul, Minn. — The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has released its study, Revisiting the Minnesota River Assessment Project: An Evaluation of Fish and Invertebrate Community Progress. The objective of the study was to provide an update on the condition of fish and macroinvertebrates (e.g., aquatic insects, snails, and mussels) in streams of the Minnesota River basin.

More than 20 years ago, biological communities in the Minnesota River basin – which is 78 percent agricultural and 22 percent urban, forest and grassland – were determined to be severely to moderately impaired due to a myriad of factors. To address the deteriorating conditions, advisory committees were formed, conservation programs were developed, and best management practices (BMPs) were implemented. The current study replicated previous studies to see if conservation efforts were working, and found slight improvements in fish communities, including the return of smallmouth bass, walleye and pollution-sensitive fish like the blue sucker and sturgeon. However, there were slight declines in macroinvertebrates.

According to Glenn Skuta, MPCA Environmental Analysis & Outcomes manager, "There have been conservation efforts from both government and citizens to improve conditions within the Minnesota River

basin. However, the lack of significant improvement indicates that more and better targeted conservation efforts and water management are needed, as well as ongoing monitoring to track the impacts of projects and BMPs. Bottom line, we simply need to do more to protect and restore the basin.”

Monitoring the progress of Minnesota waters is vital to protecting and restoring these natural resources. The agency is using a watershed monitoring approach that will allow for tracking changes and trends in water quality more effectively over time on an ongoing basis. Also important is working with partners in the Minnesota River basin to develop protection and restoration strategies that build upon and are even more beneficial than past efforts.

To view Revisiting the Minnesota River Assessment Project: An Evaluation of Fish and Invertebrate Community Progress visit www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=15821. Previous information collected on the Minnesota River Basin can be found at <http://mrbdc.wrc.mnsu.edu/mnbasin/trends/index.html>.

CURE to Lead Guided Canoe Trips May 21

Clean Up the River Environment's (CURE's) 20th annual "River and History Weekend" will be held on Saturday, May 21st and Sunday, May 22nd and will feature guided canoe trips of the Minnesota River, the Pomme de Terre River, the Lac qui Parle River, the Yellow Medicine, the Chippewa River and Hawk Creek. The Chippewa County Park at Wegdahl on the Minnesota River, will serve as the headquarters for the weekend and the site of Saturday night story telling, music and discussion programs around the campfire. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call CURE toll free at 1-877-269-2873 or visit: www.cureriver.org

To see all the different paddles offered: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/riverandhistoryweekend.pdf>

City of Winnebago Pays \$12,700 plenty for Wastewater Violations

Winnebago, Minn. — The city of Winnebago in south-central Minnesota has paid a \$12,700 penalty to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for alleged violations at its wastewater treatment plant. The city is taking steps to prevent future violations.

The Winnebago facility violated several limits for discharging treated wastewater to the Blue Earth River in the early months of 2010. It failed to keep equipment in working order, to adequately staff the plant, and to control high-strength wastewater from a local industry, Continental Carbonics. Cold weather was also a factor.

One measure of pollutants in the facility's wastewater – carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand – was more than six times its permitted limit in January 2010, indicating that the wastewater lacked enough dissolved oxygen to aid in organic matter decomposition.

The MPCA found that the facility failed to control wastewater from the local business – allowing pollutants to pass through and disrupt the treatment process – by failing to enforce its wastewater agreement with the business and setting only minimal fines.

The city of Winnebago is taking corrective action, such as installing new equipment and writing a new operations manual, as outlined in its stipulation agreement with the MPCA.

The stipulation agreement is one tool that the MPCA uses to achieve compliance with environmental laws. When calculating penalties, the MPCA takes into account how seriously the violation affected the environment, whether it was a first time or repeat violation and how promptly the violation was reported to appropriate authorities. The agency also attempts to recover the calculated economic benefit gained by failure to comply with environmental laws in a timely manner.

For more information, go to the MPCA website at www.pca.state.mn.us.

Minnesota-Crow Watershed Network

We hope to see you at the spring meeting of the Minnesota-Crow [watershed network!](#)

When: 10-3, Thursday, May 12, 2011

Where: Pizza Ranch, Redwood Falls

Program:

10:00-10:15 – Welcome, introductions

10:15-11:00 – Report on watershed worker training held April 12-13.

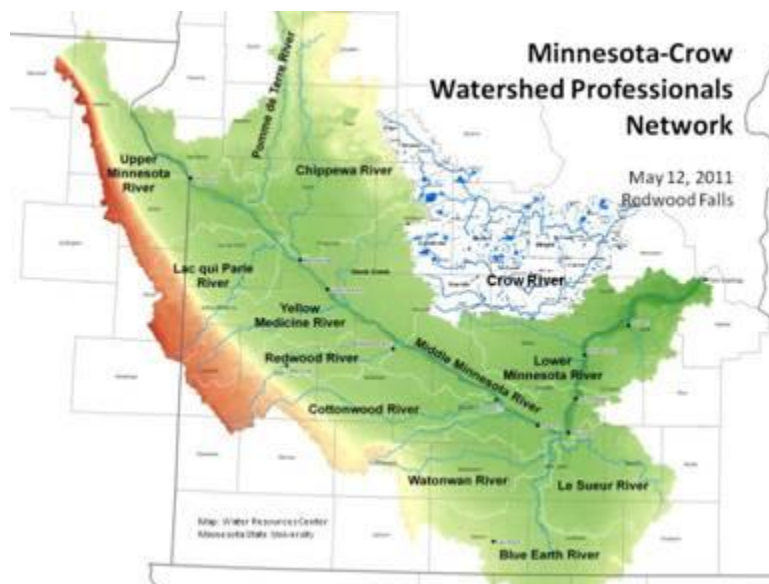
11-11:45 – Pete Fastner, MPCA, grant application tips.

11:45-12:45 – Lunch (at own expense at Pizza Ranch).

12:45-1:00 – Discovery Farms update.

1:00-2:00 – View “Working Together” documentary.

2:00-3:00 – Round robin among organizations – news, events, projects, reports, etc.



Job Announcements:

Wilderness Inquiry Trail Staff and Intern Positions for 2011

Wilderness Inquiry is currently hiring trail staff and interns for 2011. We are looking for people with outstanding leadership and decision-making skills, high energy, and a desire to work hard for the mission of WI. To learn more, see job descriptions and to apply see Wilderness Inquiry's website:

www.wildernessinquiry.org

Each year, Wilderness inquiry operates hundreds of Canoeing, Kayaking and Hiking trips to destinations in Minnesota, across the United States, and around the world for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Trail staff leads inclusive outdoor adventures, leads single-day events and multi-day expeditions, navigates, cooks, tells stories and teaches outdoor skills along with other responsibilities.

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

Events:

May 12th (Thursday) is a **Meeting on Biogas Digesters** from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the New Ulm Public Library (17 N. Broadway). The agenda includes the following speakers: Amanda Bilek, Great Plains institute; Jake Fischer, The Minnesota Project; Kevin Hennessy, Agricultural Utilization Research

Institute; Bill Lazarus, University of Minnesota, Department of Applied Economics; Bob Peplin, Agri-Waste Energies, Inc.; and David Schmidt, University of Minnesota, Department of Bioproducts and Biosystems Engineering. Learn about what is the current state of development of Biogas digesters in SW Minnesota, Who is doing this kind of work, Who is using biogas digesters in their farms or businesses, How do the economics shake out, and What are the economic incentives. To register and RSVP - <http://sw051211.eventbrite.com/>

May 17th (Tuesday) is a **Tallgrass Prairie Walk** from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Linnaeus Arboretum at Gustavus Adolphus College. Join Blue Earth County Master Gardener Dolly Rye for a prairie walk in the Linnaeus Arboretum's three-year-old Coneflower Prairie. Learn about the various plants that can be found in the restored prairie, reminiscent of the vast expanses of tallgrass prairie that once covered two-thirds of the state of Minnesota. Meet at the Interpretive Center. For more information 507-933-8000.

May 21st (Saturday) is the “**Caring for God’s Creation**” with Jim Gilbert, Minnesota’s most well-known naturalist and former director of the Linnaeus Arboretum starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Arboretum at Gustavus Adolphus College. Bring your walking shoes.

June 16th (Thursday) is an **Open House** for Uruguayan Photographer Federico Estol’s book of local people and local photos: “Hello Montevideo from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Montevideo Public Library.

June 18th (Saturday) is the **Trifesta Celebration** in Montevideo starting at 8:30 at Lagoon Park with a 5k Run, Bike Race, Kayak Race, Canoe Race, Rubber Duck Race, music, food and much more.

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

Environmental/Conservational Articles:

[Case studies focus on sustainable agriculture](#) (Agri News). Sarah Stai couldn't find all the information she wanted while researching how to become a successful farmer. Now she's helping to put together a website for other beginners and those looking for new farming ideas.

[Editorial: Learning from the Legacy Amendment](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). Change is constant. The people we elect today must deal with problems we cannot imagine. The word 'terrorism' appeared exactly once in the three presidential debates of 2000 — we know because searched the transcripts.

[Franken, Klobuchar propose end to ethanol subsidies](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Minnesota's two U.S. senators, along with lawmakers from other corn-growing states, have introduced a bill that would gradually end tax subsidies for ethanol producers.

[Opinion: Polluting the Lake Pepin research pool](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Josephine Marcotty's article "[Strangling our rivers](#)" (April 17) clearly laid out what is now known about the sources of sediment in [Lake Pepin](#)

[EPA focuses on chronic polluter](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). A sugar beet plant near Renville has a long history of fines from the state for draining pollutants into the Minnesota River.

[Editorial: Ag industry has role in river restoration](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Lake Pepin is filling up with dirt, and unless something changes, within decades the top third of that breathtaking sweep of the Mississippi River will become a fetid marsh.

[Dr. M.A. Sanjayan: A storyteller saving nature -- with corporate help](#) (MinnPost). It is a sign of our times that the greatest American conservation biologist's mother tongue is Tamil, that he left Sri Lanka as a child, fleeing war, spent his adolescence in the jungles and savannahs of Kenya, then took his higher education degrees in Oregon and California.

[Minnesota River: Fish are improved, new study indicates](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). An updated study of the Minnesota River shows fish populations doing slightly better but smaller creatures such as aquatic insects, snails and mussels faring worse than two decades ago.

[Little improvement in Minnesota River basin](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). A new study says there's been a lack of significant improvement over the past two decades in the health of aquatic life in the Minnesota River basin.

There is nothing in the world more peaceful than apple-leaves with an early moon. – Alice Meynell

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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