WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we start our second year I want to look back at how far we have come, as well as looking forward to things that we hope to accomplish in the future.

The Friends of Minneopa began on a warm spring evening in April when some 35 people came to a meeting I had called and publicized to “form a support organization” for the park. The turnout and the enthusiastic discussion that evening showed that people valued the park and wanted to work for it. So a second meeting was called in June where we decided on the name “Friends of Minneopa State Park,” adopted as our purpose “to work with the Minneopa State Park management to preserve, manage, and promote the resources of the park,” and chose officers for the organization, me as president.

The organization was formally registered with the Secretary of State as a non-profit corporation on June 29, 1998. This status allows us to conduct business, own property, and receive contributions that will be tax deductible.

From the beginning, Park Manager Howard Ward has welcomed the organization. In early August, member Richard Keir organized and Howard and DNR naturalist Ed Brekke-Kramer conducted a tour of the native prairie section at the park for Friends and guests. Later in the fall, Friends members spent three weekend afternoons collecting native plant seeds for selective placement in other parts of the park, such as on the slope below the mill. Right now gardener-members, led by Secretary Gordon Herbst, are preparing the seeds for spring planting.

At our fall meeting Professor Roy Meyer gave a short review of park history and we discussed various projects that the Friends could work on. Many of these returned again when Howard Ward spoke at the January meeting and presented his official list of park projects, large and small. Among the projects that drew interest were a handicapped ramp to the falls bridge, playground equipment for the falls picnic area, and a connecting trail (with bridge over highway 68) from the falls area to the prairie.

This is the fourth newsletter of the Friends of Minneopa State Park, edited by Treasurer Barbara Jackowell. We hope you have enjoyed it and we continue to distribute approximately 100 copies and hope that this helps to create good will toward the park and the organization.

At the general meeting in January, the 20 members present decided to re-elect the entire slate of officers for 1999. I appreciate that support and take it as both a vote of confidence that we are on the right track and a challenge to make our mark, to do good for the park in 1999.
MANAGER'S CORNER

At the last meeting of the Friends of Minneopa, I explained how projects are funded, how the project evaluation process, or PEP, works, and how projects are submitted, evaluated and eventually ranked on a statewide scale. Now I thought it might be appropriate to learn how “operational” dollars are distributed. Operations dollars are allocated by a process called Parks Minimum Operating Standards. It works like this:

First the physical characteristics of the park are detailed. These include such things as acres of land, miles of boundary, miles of paved roads, miles of trails, number of sanitation units, square footage of all buildings, 3-year average mowing or snow removal hours, etc. You get the picture.

Next the calendar year is broken into “operating periods”: peak one, fall moderate, fall low, winter, spring low, spring moderate and peak two. The number of weeks in each period is based on historic records of attendance and revenue.

All aspects of operations are then broken down into the following categories: Administration and Clerical Support, Training of Staff, Public Contact, Merchandise Program, Security and Enforcement, Interpretive Services, Resource Management, Beach Operations, Garbage Collection, Sanitation and Building Cleaning, Road and Parking Lot Maintenance, Sign and Utilities Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance, Trails Maintenance and Equipment Maintenance. Established minimum operating standards are applied to each area and for each period of operation.

For Example: Cleaning Campground Sanitation Buildings – Clean twice daily during peak periods and once daily during moderate periods, Allow 6 minutes per unit per day during peak period and 4 minutes per unit per day during moderate periods. (A unit is described as one stool, one sink or one urinal).

All the minutes for all the areas and all the periods are then added together. The total number of hours multiplied by the average hourly wage of all the employees in the unit equals the annual operating budget. Although it is a cumbersome process, this method provides an objective way to establish base funding.

Since the inception of this program, Minnesota State Parks have always been funded 30-40% below this established Minimum Operating Standard.

SNOW DAY AT MINNEOPA

On Saturday, February 13, the Friends will be conducting an afternoon of skiing and snowshoeing in the prairie area at the park. Twin River Ski and Cycle and Running “n” Racing are our co-sponsors of the event. The main purpose of the event is to invite people to get out and enjoy the park in winter on skis and snowshoes. A secondary purpose is fund raising. There is a $5.00 charge to participate and the net proceeds will go to the Friends organization.

Snow Day is planned for everyone who enjoys the park in winter. We will have demonstrations and instruction in cross-country skiing and in snowshoeing. John Andersen of Twin River Ski and Cycle will handle the skiing and Derek Lindstrom of Running ‘n’ Racing will demonstrate the snowshoeing. They will also lead tours in the prairie area Races for fun (against the clock?) will be set up as people desire.

We plan to have the center of activities in the Visitor Parking Lot on the prairie, with trails and events beginning there. The entrance fee includes simple refreshments – coffee, cider, and bagels. We will also have a warming area.

The event is open to the public and members of the Friends are especially welcome. In fact, we need some volunteer help on the day of the event and hope that we will hear from members willing to help make things run smoothly. Call Brand Frentz at 947-3268 if you can help. See you there!

TURKEY'S GALORE!

Members R.D and Mary Zender saw a flock of some 20 wild turkeys in the woods east of the park office in late January. The birds crossed the railroad and Co. Road 169 and went into the trees near where the creek enters the long tunnel. A friend told them that he had seen a similar flock on the Frost-Beno hill earlier this month.
At the January 7, general meeting, the question was raised whether people who paid dues for the partial year of 1998 owe another year’s dues starting in January 1999. The governing board of the Friends met on January 14, and decided the question. The answer is NO. Dues are $5.00; $10.00, and $15.00 for student, individual and family members respectively. Anyone who has paid dues since the organization formed in June, 1998 is considered paid through December 31, 1999. If you have not paid, are still enjoying this newsletter and feel good that the Friends organization is working for Minneopa State Park, now is the time to pay up.

**FLORA AND FAUNA**

Did you know we have orchids in the park? Hiding in the woodland and occasionally seen on the prairie are a variety of Cypripedium, more commonly known as the Lady Slipper, and the Orchis spectabilis, or Showy Orchis.

The Lady Slipper is a name for about 12 varieties of related wildflowers of the genus orchids. They share the characteristics of large, ridged leaves and one or more slipper-shaped flowers on stalks above them. The large Yellow Lady Slipper (Cypripedium calceolus), which has been seen in wooded areas in the park, grows up to 2 feet tall with the flowers having an inflated yellow lip. The lip is typically 1.25-2” long and has purple-brown sepals. This plant occurs in a broad band from southeastern to northwestern Minnesota.

The Chippewa Indians used the roots of one type of Lady Slipper (Cypripedium hirsutum Mill) as a remedy for toothaches.

In the fall, when their seeds are maturing, the Lady Slipper secretes an oil which can be irritating to the skin. It is best to look and not touch.

Yellow Lady Slipper

The Showy Orchis, has pink to pale purple sepal and lateral petals with a white lip. It is a smaller plant, usually 6-8 inches tall. It typically has a cluster of flowers on the stem. In Minnesota, the plant occurs mostly in the southeast but is now rare.

Showy Orchis
MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Our next General Meeting is tentatively set for Thursday, April 22. We are hoping to have Merrill Fryendahl speak to us on the Birds Of Minneopa.
More about this later but save the date.

CONTEST UPDATE

We are still trying to pick an official name for the newsletter and a logo for the organization. We have received very few logo suggestions but have a good number of proposed names. The final decision will be made in April but I want to let you know some of the possibilities presented. This newsletter will list the names and the next will have the logos.

Minneopa Meanderings
Minneopa Monitor
Minneopa Messenger
Minneopa Watch
The Word from Minneopa
Friends of Minneopa News
Friends of Minneopa Bulletin
Howie's Hooyah
The Phantom Buffalo
Minne-inne-opa/Water Falling Twice

PrairieTalk
Big News on the Little Prairie
Call of the Coyote
Waterfall Whisperings
Prairie Banter
The Gathering
Blowing Grasses
Prairie Wind
Seed & Roots
Prairie Falcon

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I believe that the name of the park should be changed to Minneopa Falls State Park. The other Minnesota state park based on a waterfall, Gooseberry Falls, certainly uses the word “falls” in its name to direct attention to this special feature. I suspect that many of the thousands of people who drive by on Highway 60 and see the distinctive brown state park sign for Minneopa State Park do not even know that it is a park with two lovely falls. Minneopa Falls is the finest waterfall for many miles and it should be known. It is especially noteworthy in this flat prairie country where we live. So it should be included in the official park name.

Brand Frentz

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Your dues and contributions are Tax deductible
SNOW DAY at MINNEOPA
Get out in Nature

XX-Skiing Snowshoeing

* Demonstrations - 1:30 and 3:00
* Instruction - 2:00 and 3:30
* Tours (on and off trail) - Each hour
* Fun Races - All afternoon

Saturday, February 13, 1-5 PM
Minneopa State Park
Prairie Area (Highway 68)
Registration - $5.00 (includes all park fees)

For more information and pre-registration, contact Derek at 345-2111

Sponsored by:
Friends of Minneopa State Park
Running-n-Racing
Twin River Ski & Cycle

All proceeds to benefit:
Friends of Minneopa State Park,
a non-profit organization