



RIVER TALK

THE MINNESOTA RIVER CURRENT

Spring 2007
Vol. I Issue I

A NEW BEGINNING!

Welcome to the debut issue of River Talk – a Minnesota River Watershed newsletter! We envision this communication piece as a venue to update what is happening with Minnesota’s namesake river and all of its tributaries. This newsletter will highlight the efforts of the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance and vast network of partners. Ultimately, we want this newsletter to be a public forum to learn, debate, and speak about diverse issues surrounding the river.

Not only is the Minnesota River a valuable resource to the people who live, work and play here, it can also be said for the state and country. Each day people find a need for this 335-mile river in both large and small ways. Slicing through the heart of southern Minnesota, this river provides us with recreational opportunities, drainage, and for some, a drinking water source. All of us have a connection to the Minnesota River as it flows from Big Stone Lake to its confluence with the Mississippi at Fort Snelling. Let’s embrace it!

Dakota Indians called this glacial river “Minnay sotar,” which has been translated to mean sky-tinted water, smokey-white water or like the cloudy sky water. Amazingly, just a few seemingly innocent words can create a misunderstanding of how the river once looked or even how we view it today. Over the last few decades there has been a passionate debate about the overall health of the river. Despite these differing opinions, each of us needs to take responsibility to protect, improve and restore the Minnesota River for future generations. Let us all be conscience of our own actions!



Minnesota & Mississippi Confluence

Out of a 2005 meeting came the formation of the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance). This volunteer, loosely organized action-oriented group of watershed advocates is open to all citizens, landowners, organizations and agencies in the Minnesota River Watershed. As a result of this dynamic conversation, people from across the Minnesota River Watershed gathered to forge solutions, mobilize grassroots action and speak as a single voice on ecological issues facing this river. Join us!

Over this last year, the Watershed Alliance members have focused on a number of far reaching initiatives. As a group they selected fund raising for permanent protection of sensitive lands as their initial “Clean up the Minnesota River” issue. Success has already come in the form of a \$250,000 grant from the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation. Any level of donation is welcomed. For more information on this issue check out the article on page four. Donate to the cause!

Last August the Watershed Alliance secured funding to hire a communications coordinator to work on innovative communication strategies and products. The overall goal of this position is to serve all stakeholders in the Minnesota River Basin to manage and promote information sharing, strategic plan integration, leadership, media relations, event planning, and program efficiency. Our new coordinator was instrumental in putting together a Minnesota River Stories document, which gave people the opportunity to talk about their experiences and insights with rivers in the watershed. Tell us your own story!

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DID YOU KNOW?

Reintroduction of beavers is being considered on the South Zumbro River to improve water quality in order to meet state pollution standards. As a "keystone species," the actions of beaver affect other organisms by creating new habitat. Dams built by this mammal will slow down the river flow and allow pollutants to settle out into the stream bottom.

Instead of building man-made detention structures to help reduce erosion and prevent flooding downstream, environmental officials think reintroducing beaver in the river will be more cost effective. Beaver ponds also direct more water into wetlands, which remove pollutants like nutrients and sediment from the water.

A New Beginning (continued from page 1),

Finally, members of the Watershed Alliance played a key role in bringing nearly 200 participants from a broad cross section of interests in the watershed for the inaugural Minnesota River Summit. People left the day and half event feeling reenergized to improve the water quality and recreation opportunities throughout the Minnesota River Watershed. For more information about what took place at the Minnesota River Summit read the story on page six.

We are always interested in hearing what all citizens of the Minnesota River Watershed have to say. You can participate in the Watershed Alliance through a number of avenues. As a group we meet four times a year, usually in Hutchinson on the third Tuesday of the month (January, April, July and October). Those interested in staying updated on what is happening with the Watershed Alliance check out our bulletin board at <http://mail.mnsu.edu/mailman/listinfo/mrwa>.

River Talk is published quarterly in conjunction with the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (MinnRivWA) and partners. Thanks to the McKnight Foundation for funding this effort.

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Dee Czech grew up on a farm a couple of miles from the Mississippi River near St Cloud. "This is where my interest with water began," said Dee. Two streams, one spring-fed came together on her family land. After raising her family and teaching in Arlington, Dee has now been able to focus more on her interest in water. In the last few years this included working with Earth Sabbath and more recently on the Minnesota River Summit.

What is the biggest issue affecting quality of life in the Minnesota River Watershed?

There is a real need to understand the interrelatedness of its entire ecosystem and what it needs from humanity to be and remain re-energized for sustaining future generations of life. Today we have the example of our ethanol plants drawing water from bottom aquifers while at the same time a drainage system prevents adequate replenishment of waters mined. There is a way to harmonize our efforts if all understood the essentials an ecosystem needs to stay healthy – and were willing to function within the framework of those needs. We turn our backs on the big picture at our own peril. All is related. Solving issues without accounting for how the solution affects the rest of the ecosystem needs to become obsolete. What will future generations need to deal with because of our decisions today?

How do we connect the river to the public?

When we begin to see our bodies as a microcosm of the universe, it becomes easier to identify and understand the intricate relationships of and protection for the balance within our ecosystems. Today we know that all life originates from the same material. Connecting the river to the public could make the connection of the water quality of the river in comparison to the blood quality of our bodies. How long could we survive with untreated blood poisoning? And how long can we expect a river to do its appropriate work by charging it with contamination? What about the quality of food? Is our food truly free from materials that contaminate our fish? Will our food supply be more healthy as our waters become more healthy? When our decisions ignore future generations, what are we saying about ourselves?

On the other side: Restoring a river means returning to the connectedness of delight and adventure as we once again freely enjoy its waters for recreation and relaxation.

How do we get the youth involved in the issues affecting the Minnesota River?

Through programs and projects such as adopt a stream, provided background information on ecology of a stream, etc. Promote care for the earth as an expression of how we care for ourselves.

How do we get the different or competing interests to listen to each other in a safe environment?

Find our common ground and go from there. We need to know what we can agree on before we can have a good discussion/debate on what we disagree on. In the discussion each participant has some of what is true. We need to listen for and harmonize the pieces that are true in building our options for action.

What would you like to see as your legacy when it comes to your work with the MN River?

Recognizing our relatedness, we come to harness differences as strength, knowing we are one.

What are the positive aspects of working with a group like Earth Sabbath?

A source of energy and a place to center, working with folks who recognize God's hand in concert with the revelations of the unfolding secrets of the universe, with peace and harmony the ultimate reality.

What are the positive aspects of working the MN River Summit Planning Committee?

The power of momentum working with groups committed to moving conservation forward. The power of concise organization and vision.



Dee Czech (center) participating in the Minnesota River Summit in January

What do you see as the role of the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance when it comes to improving, protecting, and restoring the MN River Watershed?

To provide and promote a safe environment for the discussion and vision of a healthy ecosystem. A home for all stakeholders of the MN River Watershed. A place to be stretched, to be comfortable feeling uncomfortable. A focus for combined action from all the stakeholder groups.

PERMANENTLY PROTECTING OUR SENSITIVE LANDS

Restored native prairie, wetlands and forested areas are only some of the benefits of permanently protecting our sensitive lands. Improvements in water quality and for recreational activities have become the other big winners in the Minnesota River Watershed.

In less than four years, more than 100,000 acres of ecological sensitive riparian land were enrolled into permanent conservation easements across the Minnesota River Watershed through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Today, the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance) Has kicked off a fundraising initiative to raise additional funds to permanently restore and protect critically sensitive land. The donations will be matched by more than a 2 to 1 rate.

In January the fundraising effort started on a positive note with a \$250,000 grant from the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation, Mankato. This private foundation recognized the value of permanently protecting formerly cropped sensitive lands and understands its positive impact on communities up and down the Minnesota River and tributaries.

“This significant donation shows how people feel about permanent land protection of those areas that can affect water quality in profound way,” stated Scott Sparlin, Executive Director of the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River and Watershed Initiative Coordinator for Friends of the Minnesota Valley. “Ultimately, we see this fundraising effort being successful no matter how much money is raised. Any level of a donation - \$50 or \$5,000 helps our efforts.”

In the 1990s, the Minnesota River was declared one of most polluted rivers in the United States. CREP combined the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the state’s Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program to pay farmers to remove marginal cropland from agricultural production. The program targeted frequently flooded cropland along the Minnesota River and principal tributaries. It also transformed cropland identified as major pollution sources and restorable wetland areas back to their native state.

According to Joe Stangel of the Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District there is still a lot of interest by the public to protect sensitive lands that are currently in production.

“People continue to walk in our door looking to enroll land into a permanent easement program,” reported Stangel. “For many it has to do with farmland they struggle year after year to produce a decent crop on.”



The Watershed Alliance is also focusing on educating the public about this endeavor. Ron Bolduan, a well known photographer, naturalist and speaker from New Ulm has developed an educational program on sensitive land restoration and benefits for wildlife. This hands-on program will be offered to all

schools in the Minnesota River Watershed.

Students will observe nature as it is meant to be – wildlife embracing their habitat, flourishing plants, trees and wetlands. An interactive slide presentation will focus on wildlife of the Minnesota River Valley and their effective use of camouflage. The students will also be able to touch some of the natural artifacts (deer antlers, beaver pelts, turtle shells, etc.) that Ron has gathered over his 15 years exploring the Minnesota River Watershed.

For more information on this program contact: Ron Bolduan at 507-354-8367 or boldriv@newulmtel.net and preview the program at www.experiencenature.com

THE BENEFITS:

- Restored prairie slows silt-laden runoff from surrounding farmland, allowing it to settle instead of flowing into the river to muddy the water and clog fish-spawning areas.
- Restored wetlands act as giant sponges to suck up spring snowmelt and heavy rains to gradually meter the flow into streams, lakes and other sources of water. Wetlands also filter nutrients and sediment.
- Restored native acres provide habitat for deer, ducks, pheasants and a diverse selection of wildlife and birds.
- Clearer water improves fish spawning conditions and recreational opportunities.
- Permanent easements extend environmental protection well into the future without imposing on tax payers year after year.



Chris Domeier of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is highly respected for his work on fish and wildlife projects and issues in the Upper Minnesota River Watershed. Recently, Chris received the “Good Government Award” from Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) for including citizens and local organizations in his efforts to improve the Minnesota River for everyone. After receiving the award, Chris responded by saying he works for the people of Minnesota, not the government.

“Chris is real good at bringing science to the people, which is what CURE is all about,” stated Patrick Moore, Executive Director of CURE. “He exemplifies what we want to see from our government by allowing everyone to express their opinion and to bring people together. This is especially the case with the future removal of a lowhead dam on the Lac qui Parle River. One of those controversial projects that Chris has been able to get people behind it and see the vision for improving public access and fishing opportunities.”

Born and raised near New Ulm, Chris spent his first 21 years on a diversified farm of livestock and crops in the rural German epicenter of North America - Sigel Township. After receiving a Masters Degree in Environment Studies from the University of Minnesota in Duluth, he began to work for DNR Fisheries first in St Paul and then Walker, Minnesota. In 1991 Chris moved out to work in the Ortonville office. He likes quiet places and this seemed to be a good fit.

Over time, Chris has worked on a number of far-reaching projects. This included the removal of Appleton dam on the Pomme de Terre River and restoring ½ mile of the river. Trails were developed in this restored area to provide easy public access to the green space. They also partnered with the City of Granite Falls to provide a handicap accessible fishing platform along the Minnesota River.

Chris’ biggest challenge working in the public sector is maintaining good communication

with stakeholders. “It’s hard to make sure everyone is reached with timely and accurate information regarding policies and projects such that they are able to get involved and make informed decisions,” replied Chris. “I believe the majority of the public is concerned, but doesn’t have a sense of urgency.”

When it comes to nongovernmental organizations like CURE, Chris said it’s terrific to see strong natural resource oriented groups fighting hard for conservation policies and funding. The support and partnership from these groups make it a lot easier to translate project ideas into completed projects.



Chris Domeier at the CURE meeting in February

Huon Newburg, DNR Regional Fisheries Manager in New Ulm said, “Chris is one heck of a hard worker. He has this great ability for communicating with the public and providing angling opportunities for all ages. In order to accomplish many of these projects we need the support of local groups including financial means and labor. Chris has been able to reach out to those groups and establish a positive working relationship.”

Chris says that his image of the Minnesota River has improved because of the corridor areas enrolled into the Conservation Enhancement Reserve Program (CREP). He believes water quality has improved but also recognizes there is considerable room for more improvement. According to Chris, more people are using the river for recreation since he arrived and as a result treasure the resource more.

Simply put, Chris’ vision of the Minnesota River in 10 years is “to see a narrower, deeper, less turbid river. That would mean we were making substantial progress in storing water in the watershed in wetlands, soil, and vegetation, and the hydrograph was recovering to a more normal state. I hope the river’s ecosystem is much more connected and less fragmented by dams and dikes. I see a substantial increase in recreational use of the river and hope to be working full time on Minnesota River issues and projects.

MINNESOTA RIVER SUMMIT

“For the river – I will do what I can to make it a win-win for the river and all involved,” was passionately spoken by one of the many participants at the first-ever Minnesota River Summit. On January 10th and 11th nearly 200 people gathered for an extended conversation on the Minnesota River Watershed at the Holiday Inn in New Ulm.



This unique event utilized the “large group conversation” technique to give each person an opportunity to share their vision of the Minnesota River Watershed with others of both similar and contradicting perspectives and opinions. Over two days the participants developed ideas toward communicating a shared vision of how to move forward in more powerful and collaborative ways.

In order to facilitate this type of interactive discussion the participants were divided into ten general categories representing agriculture, business, tribal, state & federal government, education, environmental organizations, local government, watershed projects, elected officials and individuals. One member from each of these “groups” sat together to take part in a discussion of multiple ideas, build new networks, and create concepts on how to improve the water quality of the Minnesota River.

This arrangement allowed the participants a rare opportunity to learn from others with diverse perspectives in a safe environment and think outside their usual organizational and social boundaries. Out of this positive atmosphere the group identified a number of critical issues and trends facing the Minnesota River Basin:

- Hydrology – water supply and demand,
- Population Changes – sprawl and uncontrolled development,
- Energy Issues – ethanol and biofuels,
- The Farm Bill,
- Lack of responsibility – leadership

The responses by most of the participants were overwhelming positive and inspiring. People felt reinvigorated after engaging in both group and individual conversations with others of varied backgrounds and experiences. They felt more connected to the Minnesota River than they originally thought and saw most people had a similar vision and passion for protecting this significant state and national resource.

Some of the ideas and thoughts generated from the engaging and diversified conversation at the Minnesota River Summit included:

- Get involved,
- Have a unified voice,
- Lead by example in your community,
- Create new river-friendly programs,
- Celebrate what we have done,
- Listen and share, celebrate the river,
- Need for education. Need for research,
- Be part of the solution, or you are part of the problem,
- More effective work gets done through cooperation.



At the end of the Summit, the participants came away feeling it is now time to begin building upon what had been initiated. They recognized the ideas, slogans and activities developed during this time will help improve water quality in the Minnesota River Watershed. People identified a need to continue joint efforts, utilize community resources and lead by example.

This is only the beginning of an on-going dialogue about the Minnesota River Watershed initiated at the Summit. Members of the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance will continue to expand on this conversation at their quarterly meetings. Check out page 12 for further information about dates and location. In addition, a smaller version of the Summit is being planned for June to further refine on the original ideas and thoughts.



The mission of the Minnesota River Board is to provide leadership, build partnerships, and support efforts to improve and protect water quality in the Minnesota River Basin. As a joint powers board, it is comprised of one county commissioner from each of the counties in the watershed.

In the early 1990s the Minnesota River Basin degradation became a rising point of interest by state and federal agencies, and politicians responded by making calls to improve water quality. As a result, members of 37 counties signed a joint powers agreement in March of 1995 to form this board.

From the beginning, the Minnesota River Board focused on two prevalent viewpoints when it came to working on issues surrounding the basin.

- The desire to collaborate and leverage in a judiciously appropriate manner.
- The desire to assume a leadership role and be more proactive thus focus on a coordinating of efforts at the local level; the outcome would be a return to a 'grass roots' form of government with governing from the 'bottom up,' not 'top down.'

Through collaborations and programs, the Minnesota River Board has catalyzed substantive progress in county water planning, pollution and land management awareness, stakeholder cooperation, along with GIS and database development. In conjunction with other organizations the Minnesota River Board has helped elevate Minnesota River issues from insignificance to the mainstream. One of its major highlights involved initiating the successful Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

In the last couple of years, the Minnesota River Board has reaffirmed its mission, rejuvenated its spirit,



and renewed its energy to build partnerships and provide leadership to make the Minnesota River Watershed a region with improved water quality, successful farms and communities, and high quality of life standards.

Recent Accomplishments:

- Assisted with Clean Water Legacy Funding Coordination and Applications,
- Nutrient Trading and BMP Challenge Promotion and Research, including a workshop for crop consultants, agricultural producers and agencies,
- Conservation Program Fundraising,
- Developed a New Strategic Plan and Reviewed Statutory Requirements,
- Co-sponsored and co-organized the 2007 Minnesota River Summit,



- State Drainage Working Group Promotion and Information Dissemination,
- Communication Initiative in the Minnesota River Basin,
- Partnership Building (more than 110 partners on 11 grants worth \$6.7 million and secured \$750,000 in 2006).

Today, the Minnesota River Board is working with local legislators to reinstate the annual appropriation from the State Legislature. The funds were cut in 2001 due to tightening budgets. An increased budget would facilitate hiring a watershed support specialist, intensifying Clean Water Legacy Act assistance for basin partners, increasing communication and programming efforts, and providing two to three water quality / watershed staff trainings or workshops a year.

According to Scott Sparlin, Executive Director of the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River, "The Minnesota River Board has been a crucial partner and leader in activities, projects and programs that have been successful in accomplishing a number of improvements in the river and its tributaries. Without their participation and leadership capabilities we face the risk of being hampered in our future efforts to restore environmental integrity to the river and all of its tributaries."



Early on March 14th residents of the small community Browns Valley were overwhelmed by intense and disastrous flooding. Melting snow and ice forced the evacuation of about 100 people when rising water hit the town from two sides. From the west it was the ice-clogged Little Minnesota River and then overland flooding from the north.

Residents were surprised by the fast-rising Little Minnesota River as a massive ice jam forced water out of its banks. According to Traverse County engineer Larry Haukos, "The wrong part of town is flooded." The last time a flood originated from west was around 1947. During the destructive 1997 flood this area stayed dry.

In some places the water rose to neck high and could be seen pouring into the first-floor windows of houses. Other areas only saw a foot of water. The mayor of Browns Valley, Jeff Backer Jr. had up to two feet around his house, along with a basement and car full of water.

More than 140 homes received flood damage, with 50 having significant damage. Some people lost everything. Many of the residents didn't have flood insurance and are elderly with moderate incomes. Other major costs will include repairing damaged roads, sewer lines, culverts and other public infrastructure. According to city officials, they are looking at almost \$300,000 damage and are awash in red ink. Both the Federal and State governments have promised help, including low-interest loans and grants. Governor Pawlenty promised assistance to avoid future floods.

Residents and officials are beginning to talk about reviving a \$900,000 river diversion plan first drawn up in the 1980s. Under this plan the Little Minnesota overflow would be pushed into open farmland and marshland around the head of Big Stone Lake, avoiding Browns Valley. The proposed

project had been abandoned when landowners on the South Dakota side didn't agree with the plans. Currently, county commissioners from both states are working together on a diversion project to keep Browns Valley from flooding again.

Browns Valley has fought flooding for decades because of its unique location on a convex form alluvial fan continental divide. The continental divide is located there today as a consequence of the Little Minnesota River's alluvial fan. Little Minnesota River water comes rushing out of the highlands on the eastern edge of South Dakota and then drops down an

escarpment of the Glacial River Warren spillway (west side) to spread out in all directions across the fan. Thus it is not at all unusual (especially during common occurrence ice jams) for the waters of the Little Minnesota to flow both north and south simultaneously across the continental divide.

Continued on the next page



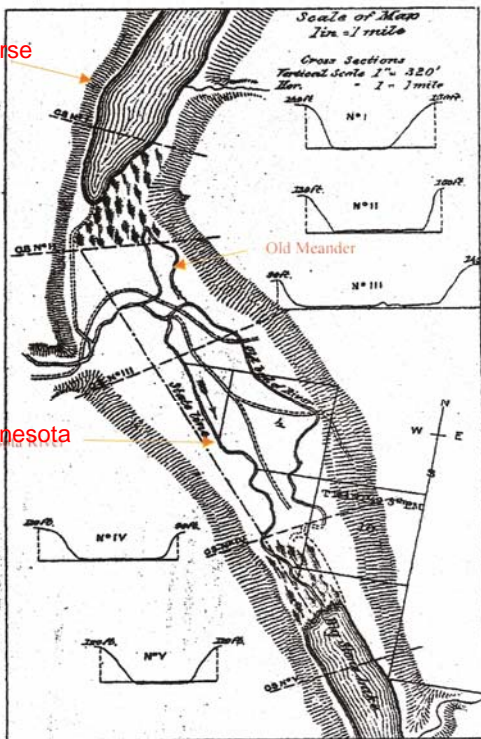
When people went to bed on Tuesday night the water level on Little Minnesota River seemed to have stabilized. In a matter of hours people were awakened by the sound of water rushing into their homes or someone banging on their door or a frantic phone call. Many of the affected residents needed to be evacuated either by boat or heavy equipment.

Browns Valley Flooding (continued from preceding page),

To the north is Lake Traverse, the headwaters of the Red River which flows north to the Hudson Bay. On the other end are channels discharging south into Big Stone Lake and then out letting into the Minnesota River. Since settlement times, the Little Minnesota River channel at normal discharge flows in a southerly direction. Maps from a survey in 1872 show various channels flowing north and south off the alluvial fan continental divide.

Further complicating the flood issue at Browns Valley is the Lake Traverse dike to the north which only allows a moderate amount of northward flowing water to enter whereas in the natural setting without the Lake Traverse dike, north flowing water could easily flow uninhibited into Lake Traverse which was then farther north than at present. The consequence of this north ward flowing water off the alluvial fan not being able to enter Lake Traverse in significant quantities is that the water now flows NNE then NE then E and SE around the alluvial fan and hence into the city from what some people would say is the back side of the city.

Lake Traverse

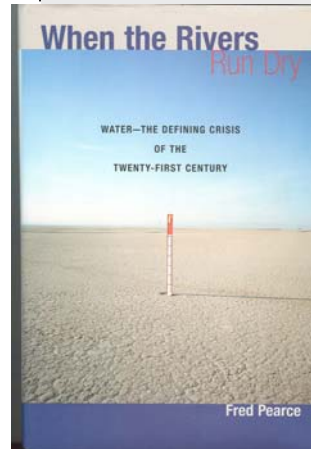


The body of water at the top is Lake Traverse. The Little Minnesota flows into Big Stone Lake. Note the meander of the river that enters the wetland, directly adjacent to Lake Traverse.

To make things even more complicated the main roads that enter Browns Valley from the east block these now south flowing waters causing deeper water in the northern part of town than would otherwise be the case. Mother Nature and humans have unwittingly concocted one of the most complex flood situations every imagined at Browns Valley. Actually there is quite a bit more to the story but I can imagine you have had about enough and you really do need to visit the town and canoe the Little Minnesota to appreciate the uniqueness of this area.

Book Review: "When the Rivers Run Dry, Water - The Defining Crisis of the Twenty-First Century" by Fred Pearce

Throughout history, rivers have been our foremost source of freshwater both for agriculture and for individual consumption, but now economists say that by 2025 water scarcity will cut global food production by more than the current U.S. grain harvest. In this groundbreaking book, veteran science correspondent Fred Pearce focuses on the



dire state of the world's rivers. He provides our most complete portrait of the growing world water crisis and its ramifications for us all.

Pearce traveled more than thirty countries while researching "When the Rivers Run Dry," examining the current state of crucial water sources like the Indus River in Pakistan, the

Colorado River in the United States, and the Yellow and Yangtze rivers in China. Pearce deftly weaves together the complicated scientific, economic, and historic dimensions of the water crisis. He shows us its complex origins - from waste to wrong-headed engineering projects to high-yield crop varieties that have saved developing countries from starvation but are now emptying their water resources.

Fred Pearce has been writing about water issues for over twenty years. "Rivers so often define our world. Some of the greatest human adventures have been along rivers." This is what he discovered while researching this book:

- Israel is draining the Jordan River into pipes before it reaches the country bearing its name.
- There has been a drought on the Ganges, because India has sucked up the holy river's entire dry-season flow.
- Wells have been drying up, too. Half a century of pumping on the Great Plains of the United States has removed water that will take two thousand years of rain to replace.

The situation is dire, but not without remedy. Pearce argues that the solution to the growing worldwide water storage is not more and bigger dams but greater efficiency and a new water ethic based on managing the water cycle for maximum social benefit rather than narrow self interest.



Hello! I want to thank you for taking the time to read this brand new communication piece of the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance). We are a fairly new organization trying to make a difference in the Minnesota River Watershed. The Watershed Alliance welcomes all who want to participate and have their opinion heard concerning a healthy Minnesota River.

My job as the communications coordinator is to provide a unifying voice to what is happening throughout the Minnesota River Watershed and beyond when it comes to water resource issues. For the MinnRivWA this is new territory and we hope you will be patient as we thrust our foot in the water.

April 17th (Tuesday) is the next meeting for the Watershed Alliance. To help with travel issues we meet in centrally located Hutchinson at the New Century Charter School at 45 W. Highland

Park Dr. NE on the campus of Hutchinson Technology Inc. We start with a social hour at 6 p.m. and usually jump into a two-hour formal meeting by 7 o'clock. Please come to check us out. For more information about the Watershed Alliance please call me at 507-389-2304 or check out the blog site.

I want to share with you some tips to reduce Global Warming, a topic that doesn't seem to have any middle ground. From most people's viewpoint you either believe it or don't. I am not looking to debate this issue but offer another thought when it comes to our natural resources. There is only so much out there and why not try reducing our impact on the earth. Here are a few ways we can help out and save a little money too.

- Reduce fuel consumption by combining driving trips, turn off the engine if idling more than a minute, keep tires well inflated, drive 55.
- Buy locally produced products from local businesses.
- Turn down thermostat by 2 degrees in the winter, 10 degrees at night or if gone all day.
- Use more natural landscaping for mowing less lawn and reduce use of leaf blowers.
- Buy energy efficient light bulbs and turn off lights when not needed.

MINNESOTA RIVER CALENDAR

The Water Resources Center at MSU, Mankato has updated its calendar on the Minnesota River Basin Data Center web site. This calendar highlights activities, meetings, workshops, job postings and other topics related to the Minnesota River and beyond at: <http://mrdbc.mnsu.edu/calendar/index.html>

A Few Upcoming Events:

- April 21st – Earth Day Event at the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center
- April 28th & 29th – Lac qui Parle Outdoor Expo at the Lac qui Parle County Fairgrounds in Madison, MN
- May 19th & 20th – River History Weekend
- May 21st – MN River Board Annual Meeting & Area II Project Tour at Lyon County
- May 28th – Paddle on the Lac qui Parle River
- June 28th – CURE's Geology Walk
- July 17th – Minnesota River Watershed Alliance Quarterly Meeting in Hutchinson.

To post an event please contact Scott Kudelka at scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu or 507-389-2304.

WANTED: LANDOWNER PROFILES

Interested in being interviewed? We are seeking long-time Minnesota River Valley residents who would be willing to share their stories about the Minnesota River and tributaries with us. In particular, we're interested in collecting stories about how the river has changed over time related to water clarity, water quality, water depth, fishing as well as landscape changes such as channel meanders and land use change. If you are willing to be videotaped and feel comfortable sharing your stories in printed material and/or on the web, please contact us to set up an interview.

Do you have any old photographs of the Minnesota River that you'd like to share? We're collecting historic photographs of the rivers in the Minnesota River Basin. If you have any that we can borrow, scan and return, we would appreciate it. We would like to use the photographs to create a "then" and "now" profiles of places along the rivers and streams.

- scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu or 507-389-2304
 - kimberly.musser@mnsu.edu or 507-389-5307
- MSU Mankato Water Resources Center



Moonstone Farm Wins CURE River Keeper Award

Audrey Arner and Richard Handeen of Moonstone Farms in rural Montevideo were presented the River Keeper award at CURE's (Clean Up the River Environment) 15th annual meeting. The couple has been active promoting sustainable agriculture, environmental protection, family farms and locally grown foods for 34 years.



- www.prairiefare.com/moonstone/

Cheryl Heide leaves DNR Position

Thanks to Cheryl Heide for her 13 years of dedicated and accomplished service to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff, citizens, and resources of Minnesota as DNR Southern Region Director. In this position, Cheryl had the ability to be a bridge between government way of doing things and recognizing the desire of citizens to be involved in the process. She was able to effectively work with competing interests among citizens and government.

Lake Crystal Project Receives 319 Clean Water Partnership Grant

An implementation grant for \$210,000 has been awarded to Lake Crystal from MPCA's Clean Water Partnership program. Lake Crystal is on the impaired waters list (303d) for excessive nutrients. The project has also received nearly \$80,000 from the Clean Water Legacy funds to improve water quality.

TO OPEN: Regional River History & Information Center

This new facility will open soon to provide a citizen's access to the Minnesota and Cottonwood River watershed basins including online data, along with area historical and cultural artifacts. The Regional River History and Information Center is located on the Minnesota River in the old schoolhouse at Riverside Park in New Ulm.

- For more information contact Scott Sparlin at 507-359-2346 or yasure@lycos.com

Friends Of The Minnesota Valley Move To New Office

- 9633 Lyndale Avenue South, Suite 200
Bloomington, MN 55420-7034
- 612-370-9122 (General Number)
- www.friendsofminvalley.org/default.htm

U.S. EPA Approves Chippewa River Fecal Coliform TMDL Report

The U.S. Environmental Pollution Control Agency (EPA) has approved a report addressing bacterial pollution in the Chippewa River, paving the way for water quality improvement projects. The report, known as a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study, was prepared and submitted last fall by the Chippewa Watershed Project and MPCA, and focuses on fecal coliform bacteria from animal and human wastes. A number of other Fecal Coliform Bacteria TMDL studies in the Minnesota River Watershed will end soon, including the Blue Earth, along with the High Island and Rush River watersheds.

Winnebago Ethanol Plant Adds Wind Turbines

Two wind turbines are being constructed at the Corn Plus ethanol plant in Winnebago. A combined 4.2 megawatt power will be generated to provide about 45% of the plant's electrical needs. It is the second major project Corn Plus has taken to reduce its dependency of outside energy. This project is being developed by the Corn Plus Cooperative, Renewable Energy Solutions and John Deere Wind Energy. In addition the facility installed a fluid-bed reactor to burn biomass for steam generation to operate the plant. Burning byproducts of the ethanol process like corn syrup reduces the facilities' natural gas consumption. The equivalent of 4.2 megawatts of energy would provide enough power for 1,000 homes.

Mary Mueller Serves On Legislative Council Of Minnesota Resources

Mary Mueller of rural Sibley County has been appointed to the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). As the owner of Mueller's Habitat Restoration, Mary operates a farm near Winthrop with portions of the land enrolled in a variety of conservation program efforts. Mary is also involved with a number of conservation organizations including Pheasants Forever. She has a degree in ecology and agricultural research from Minnesota State University, Mankato and University of Minnesota. Her term on the LCCMR board ends January 4, 2010.





ALDO LEOPOLD

“Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land. By land is meant all of the things on, over, or in the earth. Harmony with land is like harmony with a friend; you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left. That is to say, you cannot love game and hate predators; you cannot conserve waters and waste the ranges; you cannot build the forest and mine the farm. The land is one organism. Its parts, like our own parts, compete with each other and co-operate with each other. The competitions are as much a part of the inner workings as the co-operations. You can regulate them – cautiously – but not abolish them.” (Round River)

How amazing is it to think that Aldo Leopold has been gone for well over a half of a century and yet his words still resonate with us. Today we call Aldo Leopold the father of conservation and still look to his book “A Sand County Almanac,” as our guide for the modern land ethic.

“There will always be pigeons in books and in museums, but these are effigies and images, dead to all hardships and to all delights. Book-pigeons cannot dive out of a cloud to make the deer run for cover, or clap their wings in thunderous applause of mast-laden woods. Book-pigeons cannot breakfast on new-mown blue berries in Canada. They know no urge of seasons; they feel no kiss of sun, no lash of wind and weather. They live forever by not living at all.” (A Sand County Almanac)

Aldo Leopold died on April 21, 1948 on his beloved farm in Wisconsin while helping to fight a trash fire on his neighbor’s property. He disappeared into the marsh with a water pump and suffered a massive heart attack. In the fall of 1949 his book A Sand County Almanac first appeared in print.



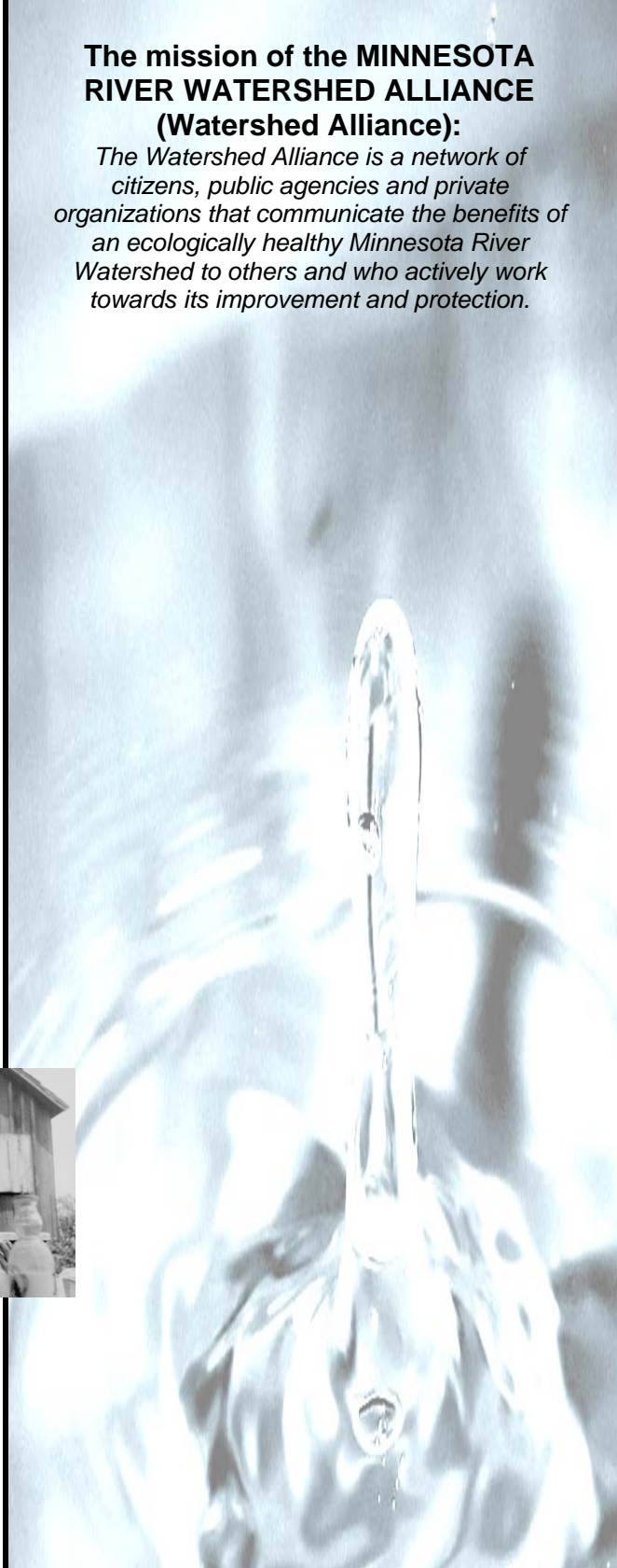
“It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a higher regard for its value. By values, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.” (A Sand County Almanac)

The work of Aldo Leopold still lives on in his words and the land ethic educational program “Leopold Education Project,” developed by Pheasants Forever.

“A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn, reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity” (A Sand County Almanac) Check out the web site www.lep.org

The mission of the MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE (Watershed Alliance):

The Watershed Alliance is a network of citizens, public agencies and private organizations that communicate the benefits of an ecologically healthy Minnesota River Watershed to others and who actively work towards its improvement and protection.



Questions and comments on the River Talk newsletter can be directed to: Scott Kudelka; Water Resources Center; 184 Trafton Science Center S; Mankato, MN 56001; 507-389-3529 or scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu