



RIVER TALK

THE MINNESOTA RIVER CURRENT

Summer 2009
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RIVER FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

Minnesota Waters, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to empowering citizens to protect and improve lakes and rivers across Minnesota, recently announced the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance won its annual "River Friendly Community" award.

This award along with three others are given to honor citizen volunteers who are making exceptional commitments to protect their own lake or river. Other award winners for 2009 include the Pelican Lake Association of St. Anna, "Lake Association of the Year," the Cannon River Watershed Partnership as the "Outstanding Citizen Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program," and Chuck Carlson was named "Volunteer of the Year."

According to Minnesota Waters, there was an impressive and heartening number of water quality achievements made by citizen volunteers across the state with the four award winners demonstrating success in collaborating with other individuals and groups. "Partnering with others is key to getting more done," said Marian Bender, Executive Director of Minnesota Waters. "Our winners this year showed they understand how essential it is to reach out to the community, and work together with neighbors, agencies, and other organizations who care about our lakes and rivers."

The River Friendly Community of the Year award spotlights a group that helps a community significantly correct and improve its relationship to its river, supports river-friendly development and zoning laws, involves citizens in active river protection, and conducts successful community outreach and education.

Minnesota Waters picked the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance because it constitutes a community of citizens, public agencies, nonprofits, and private organizations working to improve water quality in the Minnesota River Watershed and engage the public in this effort.

They highlighted the work of the Watershed Alliance have done when it comes to bringing people together to learn, network and plan collaborative action including the Minnesota River Summit in 2007, Conservation Drainage Forums, and the quarterly outreach meetings. Other efforts range from public events highlighting the watershed's cultural and natural value along with environmental-themed education programs.

Each of the winners will receive an honorary plaque, two tickets to RiverNight 2009, and \$1,000 to continue their good work. The awards will be presented at RiverNight 2009 on August 19th, Minnesota Waters' annual gathering of peers and water enthusiasts, aboard the historic showboat *Centennial*, docked at Harriet Island, St. Paul.



Collecting mussels on the Chippewa River

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DID YOU KNOW?

On June 22nd it had been forty years since the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio caught fire from oil-soaked debris floating on the water’s surface. A spark from a passing train most likely ignited the river. Fire crews were able to extinguish the blaze in 30 minutes with only \$50,000 in damage. This wasn’t the first time a fire happened on the river. In 1952, it caused \$1.5 million in damage.

What this fire really sparked was a national debate on the health of our rivers and motivated people to become more involved in protecting the environment. Along with a number of other disasters, the Cuyahoga River fire helped pass the Clean Water Act and creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Before the fire, Cleveland residents already recognized the need for restoring the Cuyahoga River by voting themselves a tax increase to pay for improving water quality. In addition, local industries and a regional sewer district spent billions of dollars to reduce pollution from sewage and industrial waste. Local government leaders credit the dramatic change to citizens working hard for the last 40 years.

Today, the Cuyahoga River supports over 60 species of fish along with beaver, blue herons, and bald eagles. The final forty miles of Cuyahoga River as it flows into Lake Erie is now considered a “recovering system” by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as cleanup work continues.

*Some river!
Chocolate-brown,
oily, bubbling with
subsurface gases, it
oozes rather than
flows. “Anyone who
falls into the
Cuyahoga does not
drown,” Cleveland
citizens joke grimly.
“He decays.”
- Time Magazine,
August 1969*

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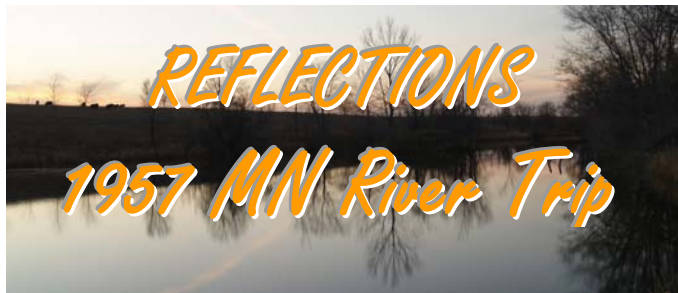
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On June 8, 1957, Clyde and Shirley Ryberg started out from the Big Stone dam for a journey down the Minnesota River. They spent eight days on the river and wrote about their adventure for the Conservation Volunteer magazine. Their mode of travel was two canoes strapped together by a platform of plywood. According to Shirley Ryberg, "We used 29 gallons of gas and a half pint of motor oil for each gallon in a seven h.p. outboard motor."

Wildlife Observations

We saw red foxes climb trees. Beaver and muskrat swam alongside us at different times, always ending their visits the same way – plunk!

The pelican that flew above us made the skipper sit up in utter disbelief. That was our first lake crossing, Marsh lake, near Appleton. "It can't be a pelican," he said, "It can't be." Then he thought awhile. "It IS a pelican!" he said, long after it was out of a sight.

Brown owls were among the most common of the feathered clan which showed themselves to us. Every few bends in the river another of the big birds would leave a perch in front of us and angle across the river to another tree farther down.

Ducks we saw everywhere, swimming or flying. We never saw any deer at all, although they are supposed to be numerous along the river.

Fish in the Minnesota River

Then there was the fish. Yes, there is fish in the Minnesota river. Judging by the number of fishermen below the dams at Big Stone lake, Marsh lake, and Lac qui Parle, the fishing is very good indeed at those spots. One man at Lac qui Parle lifted his stringer to us to see a fine lot of fat two and three pound walleyes. And we heard about large catches of crappies. At Shakopee we were told about the sizeable number of Iowa tourists who fish there annually for bullheads and carp.

Except for these below-the-dam spots and a few boats on the river at New Ulm, we never saw anybody fishing at all. This is not entirely surprising because of the muddiness of the river.



The River – Water Quality

It's a muddy river from its source in Big Stone lake to its confluence with the Mississippi at Fort Snelling. Its brown color testifies to the millions of tons of topsoil that leave Minnesota farms for good every season. Old Gideon Pond, missionary to the Dakota Indians, must turn in his grave when he thinks of his translation of Wate-paw-mene-sauta as Sky-tinted or Clearwater river.

It was June and high water when we travelled these 330 river-miles, just before the flood that did such serious damage, and we saw all the tributaries enter our watery highway. Some were smooth and oily-looking, some came romping in over rocks and logs, but all carried their burden of migrating farm land.

Huge trees came sailing down the river with most of their branches underwater to catch unwary boatmen in propeller-driven craft. Other trees, still on the bank and most of the dirt washed away from their roots gave promise that they too would soon fall in, and some were already leaning that way. We have often wondered how many kept that promise during the flood that followed us.

The saddest erosion patterns we saw were on the wide sweeping bends of the lower river where crops were cultivated right up to the edge – the present edge, which often changed even as we looked, with soil dropping away in vertical slices, carrying alfalfa or clover with it. It was always the outer edge of the bend which fell. The inner edge where the current is slower keeps building up in useless mud flats with willows growing on them.

Final Thoughts

Muddy or not, the Minnesota is a resource for recreation, transportation and navigation that the people of this state are almost wholly neglecting. Conservation is many things, but most of all it is wise use of present resources.

As the program for holding the raindrops where they fall becomes more effective, our topsoil will stay home, the river will clear, and the fish will multiply. People in search of the wholesome recreation of fishing are multiplying, too!

People who boat the river, either for fishing or cruising, can't help but be impressed with its sense of wilderness, its lack of people, and the variety of wild creatures who live along its banks. Such pilgrims should be naturals to learn the conservation story which they can carry back to their communities and translate into conservation support at the polls on election day.



MINNESOTA RIVER ON THE REBOUND

By Chris Niskanen, Pioneer Press

Granite Falls, Minn. – One of the best parts of this job is “discovering” some unsung Minnesota treasure and singing its praises.

In some cases, the intent is to prod St. Paul policymakers to lift a finger to see that the treasure survives for future generations.

Yet the case already has been made – often – to preserve the Minnesota River. My plea here is for more Minnesotans to consider this river’s fishery. It is truly unsung, amazing and worth improving upon.

Remarkably, paddlefish are returning in these waters, which once were an open sewer for river communities and industry. Another returnee and pollution-sensitive species, lake sturgeon, is increasingly being caught. Giant flathead catfish in excess of 50 pounds are beginning to lure anglers from as far as Texas.

If bottom-dwellers don’t catch your fancy, consider this: On my second cast Wednesday below Minnesota Falls, I landed a 3-pound walleye. I caught a hard-battling white bass on the first.

“This river doesn’t get the respect it should,” said Brad Koenen, a state Department of Natural Resources fisheries technician who took a day off work to show me the river. I’ve hunted and fished all over the Midwest, but the Minnesota River is always one place I go to catch fish.”

Koenen has been monitoring fish in the Minnesota River for 25 years, and he’s one of the river’s biggest fans. Anglers know about the excellent fishing in upper Minnesota River reservoirs like Big Stone Lake, but fewer know that the free-flowing river below Minnesota Falls to St. Paul has worthy – and safely consumable – walleye, white bass and catfish populations.

Koenen was part of a DNR group that tagged 4,000 flathead catfish over a decade and unraveled their elusive migration patterns.

“We’re still getting flathead tags back from anglers, and we stopped the program in 2001,” Koenen said. “We’re finding catfish in the upper end of 30 years old.”

As for walleyes, Koenen said 5- and 6-pounders are common, and 10-pounders occasionally show up.

Some anglers have caught 100 walleyes a day; Koenen and a friend once caught 200 in three hours of fishing.

“You start reading the online blogs and you realize these guys are catching lots of walleyes,” Koenen said. “They’re really starting to target them.”

Koenen slipped his 14-foot Lund into the river below Minnesota Falls, and we sampled a few of his favorite fishing spots. The Minnesota Falls dam is the last dam for the river’s downstream stretch to its mouth at St. Paul and Fort Snelling. Numerous rock outcrops, which are 3.8 billion years old, lay scattered along the riverbank. Koenen pointed out one famous fishing hole that is 35 feet deep.

Fishing from shore with jigs and minnows, we caught walleyes, channel catfish, white bass and sheepshead. Later, we fished from his boat near a spot where Koenen watched anglers catch walleye after walleye a week ago.

“I’m a walleye fanatic,” Koenen said, “and the potential to catch a big walleye, and a lot of them, in the Minnesota River is pretty good.”

The fishery is slowly recovering after upgrades to municipal sewer systems in the 1970s and ‘80s, said Koenen, 52, who grew up near the 330-mile-long river. Failing residential septic systems are still a problem, but they’re slowly being replaced as homesteads and farms are sold.

The biggest problem are the heavy loads of soil sediment that wash into the river, mainly from the heavily farmed agriculture lands.

“The Minnesota River Valley has some of the richest soil in the world, which is a tremendous economic benefit, but those same crops provide us with some huge water-quality issues,” Koenen said.

An extensive agriculture drainage system, continually more efficient with new plastic pipe, causes the river to rise quickly from rain, adding to erosion problems, Koenen said. “The river can jump 2 to 5 feet in a 14- to 36-hour period,” he said.

Larry Gunderson, Minnesota River basin coordinator for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, said “sediment is a problem for the river, in terms of filling in the riverbed and washing downstream to Lake Pepin. Phosphorus is another problem, which



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Burton Tellefsen was a visionary. Decades before there were formal conservation programs, Tellefsen was planting grass buffer strips, creating holding ponds for runoff, planting tens-of-thousands of trees and fought to preserve surface water and water quality.

Tellefsen tragically died in an automobile accident back in 1998. Even though he has been gone for more than 10 years, his work with conservation and nature can be seen across the county and across the state.

On Tellefsen's home farm place, which is on County Road 4 north of Walnut Grove, his great niece, Rachel Landherr and her husband Pete Landherr now occupy the house and land. Both Rachel and Pete have made it a hobby, of sorts, figuring out the man who once walked the land where they there and why he did the things he did.

"Burt was a pretty serious guy," Rachel said. "He was very scholarly. There were thousands of books in here. You could have a conversation with him about anything." It was this love of reading and research that (Pete) Landherr believed led Tellefsen to plant a wide variety of native and some European species on his land.

"Burt really researched the plants that he put out on the land," Landherr said. "They weren't junk plants. They were plants that were originally here. When we moved in we found these cancelled checks from a seed company. We called them up to see what Burt was doing with them. It turns out he was harvesting the seeds from the prairie grasses and flowers and selling them to this company.

"Thanks to Burt's vision, our number one cash crops off of the land is seed we sell to the same company." Landherr is limited, however, in the land he can harvest seed from, as most of the land is enrolled in CREP, which prevents any harvesting of any kind from taking place.

"A lot of the land that he did his seed work was farmland," Landherr said. "He went ahead and put buffer strips around ponds, ditches and streams with all these native plants. He did it all on his own – his own will, his own pocket book. There were no subsidies or programs for doing that. He was just doing it to keep his soil on the land and out of the pond."

Tellefsen didn't just want to do conservation for his own. He wanted other people to be engaged, too. He wanted to get trees, knowledge and desire to others.

"When we moved on to the farm place, a couple of years after Burt's death, people would stop by and ask us if we were going to, 'have all the trees?'" Rachel said. "From what I have heard, he would have hundreds and thousands of trees in his front yard. All the trees were in these little pots. People come and take as many as they wanted."

"The Arbor Day Foundation had sent a letter to Rachel's mom stating that he had ordered 1 million trees from them in his lifetime," Landherr said. "And he had his own little tree operation on the side, too. When we first moved in I was so confused. I would go across the road and see all of these pine trees, but the tops would be cut off. I thought people were stealing them for Christmas Trees.

"Then, slowly, I would find little bits of charcoal on the ground and bits of burned tree. I pretty sure he was going over there and start a brush fire and use the fire to open the cones. Then he'd rake them around in that sand and they'd germinate the next spring and he's just pull them out of the sand and give them away or plant them someplace else." Tellefsen also planted trees on other people's land, on public land, universities, many, many groves.



"All the trees by the soccer field at Southwest (Minnesota) State University were planted by Burt," Rachel said. "So when I'd be out there playing soccer, he was out there planting trees. There is a nature center behind the college. He planted that, too."

"He also planted the trees and orchard at Lake Laura," Landherr said. "He planted the spruce at Tracy High School. He also planted a lot of trees on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus. When the tornado came through St. Peter, they called him to come plant more trees, but he had just died."

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RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

By Tom Cheroeny
West Central Tribune

Kurt Arner was working on a horse-powered dairy farm near Viroqua, Wis., liked what he saw, and traded in his BMW for his own horses. "It was a good trade," said Arner of his 1978 swap. He's been relying on horsepower ever since.

His seven Belgian and Belgian-cross horses provide the power on his small farm outside of Montevideo, Minn. "I raise my own power," said Arner of his sustainable farming practices.

Yet the teams earn much of their keep in the winter, when they help with the selective harvest of timber in woodlands throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Horses provide the best means of selective harvesting in remote locations and where the owners of the property want to protect the environmental integrity of the land, he explained.

That's exactly what brought Arner and a team of Belgians, named Mike and Joe, to the Lentz Farm property downstream of the Upper Sioux Agency State Park at the end of May.

"It's a powerful place," said owner Gary Lentz of the river bluff property where a small creek begins its tumble to the Minnesota River.

At 160 acres, it's one of the larger native prairie tracts within a 50-60 mile radius, and Gary and his farther want to keep it that way. It holds a diversity of native prairie plants, enough so that a Department of Natural Resources specialist with the Scientific and Natural Area program described it as a prairie of "high statewide significance."

With the exception of possibly a few acres, it has never seen a plow. "They call it Rock Valley for a reason," Lenz said.

The Lentzes have shunned lots of offers from those who would like to build houses to take advantage of its scenic vista.

But a different sort of encroachment has occurred: Red cedar has taken advantage of the absence of fire disturbance and invaded this prairie. Ray Lentz

said the landscape was almost devoid of red cedars until about 20 years ago, but the trees almost seem to have exploded in numbers in recent years.

With help from friend Ron Hanson of rural Sacred Heart, Gary Lentz has taken a chain saw to nearly 11 acres worth of cedar trees.

Hanson and Lentz then hooked the felled cedars by twos and threes with chains. Load-by-load, Arner and his Belgians dragged them to burn piles.

The only sounds were Arner's commands to the horses and the "swoosh" of dried branches being raked through the grass behind the steady pull of the big Belgians. Arner said Mike and Joe weigh 2,000 and 2,100 pounds. Only the friction of the tree branches on the ground kept them from hauling even larger loads than the estimated 1,000 to 2,000 pounds they moved with each load.

The horses haul much heavier loads on the frozen landscapes of winter. In one case, he's watched his horses pull 6,000 pounds of red pine over frozen ground he said.

Lentz has contracted with Great River Greening of St. Paul to develop a management plan for the prairie site. He's also working with the Natural Resource and Conservation Service in Yellow Medicine County and the Department of Natural Resources. He's received some funding help through the conservation service for the cedar removal.

The management plan calls for prescribed burning and offers advice on how cattle grazing can be continued here while protecting the integrity of the native prairie. Lentz is also offering to make the site an outdoor classroom for students.

The horses are being used on the more sensitive areas of the prairie. Much of the landscape is composed of light soils, with hills and steep ravine slopes.

A neighbor with a tractor and hydraulic claw used for hauling round bales has helped move the cedars from those areas that can accommodate heavier machines.

As Arner and his team disappeared over a small hill with yet another load of cedar, Lentz said he was feeling good about the decision to call on their help. "It is respectful for this place," he said.





By Carolyn Lange, West Central Tribune

SPICER — After recouping from pre-dawn conditions that made it difficult to find the way through Sunburg Lake, a team of four canoeing friends made good time Monday and completed their trek across Kandiyohi County in about 13 hours.

“These guys are good. They’re fast,” said Ed Huseby of his teammates, John Hanson, Carsten Bjornstad and Norman Hande.

Huseby had just completed a brisk portage from Nest Lake to Green Lake on Monday afternoon and took a few minutes to catch his breath and chat before he and Hanson hopped in the We-no-nah canoe and paddled across the northern edge of Green Lake.

They paddled at least an extra hour before the sound of vehicle horns from their teammates on the other side of the lake led them in the right direction to the shore.

Hande said he was afraid they had “sabotaged” the group’s efforts to complete the trip in one day. Calm winds on the lakes made for fast travel early in the day.

By 2 p.m. they were ahead of schedule but a little nervous about the final segments of river canoeing down the Middle Fork of the Crow River, where they’d been warned about downed trees over the river.

“The last two legs of the trip were the very worst,” said Huseby in a telephone interview shortly after they pulled the canoe out of the water. “There were trees completely covering the river.”

The men had to pull the canoe over the trunks and limbs of trees for about a mile and a half to get to clear water. “We’d go 20 more feet and we had to do the same thing over again,” said Huseby.

Huge cottonwood trees and willows made thick barricades for the canoeists.

“It really was a lot of struggling and not a lot of canoeing,” said Hanson. “We each pulled over forests of trees.”

Canoeing on the river “would’ve been fun except for the dead falls,” said Hanson.

While Hande said that portaging down County Road 40 and enjoying the astonished looks of motorists was the highlight of the trek, Hanson said seeing the bridge at the Meeker County Line was “definitely the most exciting” part of the day for him.

Despite the taxing end to the experience, Hanson said the trip was “quite an adventure” and the group completed what they set out to do.

Lange Huseby and John Hanson gather momentum as they depart from a dock on Green Lake.



The four rural Kandiyohi County men were attempting to cross the county in one day by paddling across lakes, down streams and portaging down roads — and across a corn field.

They started at the western border of Kandiyohi County, where Sunburg Lake drifts into Swift County. They were hoping to reach the eastern border with Meeker County before night fell.

Hande wasn’t so sure that was going to happen after he and Bjornstad couldn’t find the correct channel through the maze of tall grass in Sunburg Lake in the early morning darkness.

“We missed our channel in the dark,” said Hande.



Ed Huseby carries a We-no-nah canoe Monday as he and partner John Hanson, not pictured, prepare to paddle across Green Lake. The two, as well as Carsten Bjornstad and Norman Hande, crossed Kandiyohi County in one day by paddling across lakes, down streams and portaging down roads.



Scott County contacted Jay and Lauren Picha on January 29 and invited them to a little sit-down. It was about the creek that runs across their 167 acres between Shakopee and Jordan.

It seems that at times, too much water is racing down it too fast, carrying sediment and perhaps pollution into Sand Creek, and then into the Minnesota River, which is not so pure to begin with.

"They sat me down and talked to me about their thoughts on the future," said Jay, a cabinetmaker with a business on Hwy. 169. "They were very pleasant. They think they will have money next year to 'rebank' my creek," shoring up the sides and creating new bends back and forth, "so it doesn't keep eroding the banks, which fall into the bottom and eventually into the river."

Welcome to a new approach to cleaning up the water in Scott County.

The latest annual report from water quality officials, reviewed this week with the county board, announces a few and more assertive approach to dealing with problem areas.

In the past, said Paul Nelson, the county's natural resources program manager, government officials have tended to "wait for people to become interested and apply" when gullies developed, for instance, on their land, gushing toxin-laden topsoil into streams, rivers and lakes.

"What this does is say, 'We've done a lot of studies now, and as a result we have a better idea of where our conservation dollar will provide the most benefit. Let's go out and target those locations: contact those people and see if they're interested rather than wait for them. We're not pointing fingers. But we know where the public monies are better spent.'"

Nelson and his colleagues were also offering financial help, and Picha says that's only fair. The problems with his stream are not his fault.

"The erosion winds up costing a lot to be dredged out of the river," he said. "I'm excited when someone is interested in sharing the cost, because even though the Department of Natural Resources calls this little tributary 'natural water,' I don't 100 percent agree. A hundred years ago, there was no tiling into the creek" -- that is, farmers weren't pushing quantities of water into it artificially, to keep their crops from flooding -- "and no problem with the creek. But now there is, and it should be a shared cost."

It's often the case that a section of creek bank on someone's land is causing problems because of nearby development or other factors, said Pete Beckius, district manager for the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District. But at times it's more internal to that person's own land. Among the common solutions:

- Creating "filter strips" between crops and the stream, planting grass to stop erosion.
- Creating small dikes in a field to capture runoff and let sediment filter out before the water leaves.
- Stabilizing stream banks so they aren't eroding. "Sixty to 70 percent of pollutant loads in streams come from stream bank

erosion itself," Beckius said.

The favored solution these days, he added: bioengineering, meaning strategic plantings, versus the old-school approach of throwing a lot of concrete into the battle. "It used to be all 'hard armor, hard armor,' but today we try to use more natural methods.

The government's gingerly handled interventions aren't always well received, officials agree. And when there's resistance -- when a landowner feels there's little in it for him or her -- they may need to step back.

But Nelson considers the overall response so far to be "tremendous."

"We started this winter with potential projects all along Sand Creek and Porter Creek and sent out 120 invitations for people to come in and spend time with conservationists, and 45 people RSVP's. And all but one wanted some follow-up."



Minnesota River on the rebound continued

can come from waste water treatment facilities and farm fields.”

The conservation group American Rivers named the Minnesota River one of America’s 10 most endangered rivers in 2008.

Yet improvements to the Minnesota River’s dissolved oxygen levels (mostly through sewer and industry cleanup) have brought back fish populations. The discovery of paddlefish, with their long plankton-detecting snouts, has been especially surprising.

“They were once unheard of in the river, but now we get multiple reports every year,” Koenen said.

Koenen and I trailered the boat and drove downstream, visiting several public accesses and parks operated by Renville County. Forked sticks, used as props for fishing poles, were prominent at every landing. We wandered a sandbar in search of ancient bison and elk bones. Koenen brought along two bison horns he found years ago.

“You never know what you’ll find on these sandbars,” he said. “It’s a great place to bring a kid to look for shells and bones.”

We fished for channel catfish below Patterson Rapids. Jim Gackstetter, of Marshall, and his buddy Paul Ganske were sitting in lawn chairs on the bank, waiting “to catch anything that bite,” Gackstetter said.

“I’ve caught walleyes, sturgeon and flatheads,” Gackstetter said. “I came here to catch fish and I don’t care what kind.”

Gackstetter was among a half-dozen anglers we saw Wednesday. The Minnesota River is no longer the polluted system shunned by anglers, but more work is needed to clean up its turbid waters.

“It would be neat if more people realized what we have here,” Koenen said, “so they could take more ownership of the Minnesota River and its future.”

Outdoors editor Chris Niskanen can be reached at cniskanen@pioneerpress.com

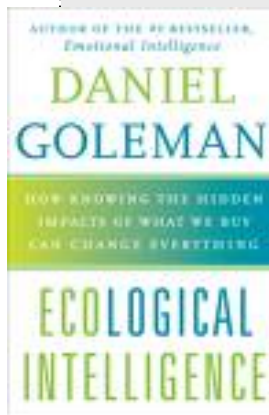
ARE MINNESOTA RIVER FISH SAFE TO EAT?

The latest Minnesota Department of Health fish consumption advisory has two standards: one for the “general population” and another more restrictive standard for pregnant women (and those who intend to become pregnant) and children under age 15.

For the Minnesota River below Minnesota Falls, the consumption advisory is “unrestricted” for walleyes, crappies and sunfish for the general population. Pregnant women and children under age 15 should eat only smaller walleyes (shorter than 17 inches) once a week and bigger walleyes once a month from the Minnesota River. Check out the web site at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/>

Book Review: “Ecological Intelligence” by Daniel Goleman

Every item we buy has a hidden price tag: a toll on the planet, on our health and on the people whose labor provides those goods. Each man-made thing has its own web of impacts left along the way from the extraction or concoction of its ingredients, during its manufacture and transport, through its use in our homes and work-places, to the day we dispose of it. These unseen impacts are incredibly important. For instance, an ingredient in sunscreen primes the growth of a deadly virus in coral reef. Four thousand to 6,000 metric tons of sunscreen wash off swimmers each year worldwide. The dangers are greatest, of course, where the most swimmers are drawn to the beauty of coral reefs.



The best selling author of *Emotional Intelligence* and *Primal Leadership*, Daniel Goleman reveals the hidden environmental consequences of what we make and buy, and shows how market forces can drive the essential changes we all must make to save our planet. *Ecological Intelligence* draws on cutting-edge research to reveal why “green is a mirage,” illuminates inconsistencies in our response to the ecological crisis, and introduces new technologies that reveal with “radical transparency” the eco-impact of products we buy, with the potential to drive consumers to make smarter decisions and companies to reform their business practices.

As shoppers, we finally have sound ways to gauge the hidden consequences of what we buy. By switching to brands that have better profiles, we can shift market share toward ecological benefits. As we tell our family, Twitter our friends and post on Facebook what we have learned, the power of our individual decision multiplies.

Virtually everything we make today was invented or designed in a more innocent time, one when shoppers and industrial engineers alike had the luxury of paying little attention to the adverse impacts of what was made. Instead they were understandably pleased by the benefits: cheap, malleable plastics made from a seemingly endless sea of petroleum; a treasure chest of synthetic chemical compounds; lead powder to add luster and life to paints.

They were oblivious to the costs to our planet and its people of these well-meaning choices. Now that those costs are clear, we need to reinvent just about everything. That vast innovative opportunity gets richer if each of us votes with our dollars. Then doing good becomes synonymous with doing well.

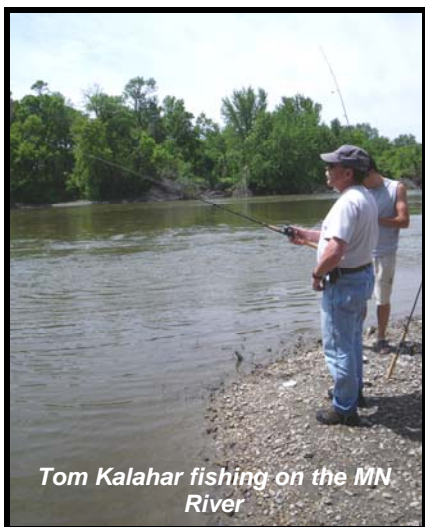
RIVER RAMBLINGS

by Scott Kadelka



Is the Minnesota River getting better when it comes to water quality? One person to ask is Tom Kalahar of Renville Soil and Water Conservation District. Tom has spent close to thirty years working with farmers and landowners to put conservation practices on the ground and been able to see the results of those efforts to protect our water resources.

On June 3rd the staff of the Water Resource Center at Minnesota State University of Mankato took a paddle trip down the Minnesota River with Tom and two reporters John White and Tom Cherveney. The day turned out to be a perfect one as we floated down a stretch flowing through Renville County. This is



Tom Kalahar fishing on the MN River

considered one of the scenic spots on the river with large granite outcrops, Patterson Rapids and many sandbars.

Tom talked about how much the fishing has improved on the Minnesota River since he arrived in the area. All along the seven mile stretch Tom showed us some of his favorite spots to catch fish and talked about how this is a great place to come because very few people have discovered the river's beauty and recreation opportunities. We were very fortunate to have Tom as our guide and all of us came away impressed with his knowledge of the Minnesota River.

A vision for conservation continued from page 5

One of the more dramatic projects that Tellefsen took on in his lifetime was landscaping a section of river bluff to prevent soil erosion, and create a place for wildlife. "I think one of the coolest things that Burt did was on the south place," Landherr said. "There is the Cottonwood River down there, an upper field and a lower field. There are a range of hills there set back from the river.

"I think what happened was in heavy rains, you'd get some of the gullies washing from the upper field to the lower field. He went in there everywhere there was a gully and dug in a series of holding ponds. And in a couple of them he let the farmer next to him run his tile line into the ponds."

Landherr said that Burt then ran a dike along the whole bottom of the hill, so that instead of just running out in the Cottonwood River, the water had to go through yet another holding pond before it made its way into the river. "It really takes all the stuff out of the water," Landherr said. "It is clear water by the time it makes it down to the river. And there is so much wildlife in there."

Tellefsen also used rock, large rocks and small rocks, to help with erosion and create environments for plants and animals. "Burt love to play with rocks too," Landherr said. "I think it was kind of his way of making his own little monuments. On the Radtke place, which is just a mile away, or so, he has a huge rock garden. I think what it was is that it was just a great place to work, so he made some work there. He dug a huge ditch for water to travel down before it headed into the lake.

"Then he lined the ditch with massive rock and planted all sorts of water loving plants and trees along and in the ditch." Tellefsen loved planting those pine trees. On the land at the Radtke place and where he has his series of holding ponds, Tellefsen planted thousands of Norway, Scotch, White, Juniper, Spruce and a variety that grows almost like the moss over the top of rocks.

One of the more interesting things Tellefsen did with rocks was to create a series of four large rock monuments along the ridge of Cottonwood River. All four moments are in perfect alignment from east to west. The rock was brought in from different areas and placed there by Tellefsen himself.

"People used to ask Burt, 'Why are you playing with all those rocks?'" Landherr said. "He would always answer them, 'To confuse future geologists.' I'm not sure why he did a lot of the things he did. But I love coming out here and walking and looking and learning. "Burt may be gone, but by observing the way he did things, I've learned a lot about how nature works and how to do great conservation."



Redwood River designated as Water Trail

This major tributary of the Minnesota River is the latest designated water trail by the MN Department of Natural Resources. There are currently over 30



water trails across the state including the entire 335 miles of the Minnesota River, along with the Cottonwood River, Chippewa River and the Pomme de Terre River. Every June, the Redwood Cottonwood Rivers Control Area (RCRCA) sponsors a

paddle from County Hwy. 6 Bridge to Perk's Park on Redwood Lake. This is just a little over seven miles in length and passes through a diverse landscape

New water treatment plant at St. Peter

The St. Peter City Council approved a new \$16.8 million drinking water improvement plan that covers digging new wells, construction of a new treatment plant and improving the St. Julien Street Plant's filtration system. According to Public Works Director Lew Giesking, this should help the city from making any major improvements on the water system beyond the 20 years it takes to pay off the improvement project. The current water treatment system isn't keeping up with demand as water use in the city continues to grow.

UMM Biomass Gasification System

The University of Minnesota at Morris (UMM) has been building an experimental biomass gasification system to offset 80% of the University's fossil needs on their way to becoming energy self-sufficient and carbon neutral by 2010. The \$9 million project uses corn stover as fuel and looking to use dense, compressed biomass "logs," which could create a new biomass industry. UMN wants to operate the first gasifier that incinerates the fuel at temperatures of 1,000 degrees or lower to produce gas for their steam system and also preserve minerals in the ash to be used as a soil nutrient.

New Blue Earth River Canoe Landing

Blue Earth County is building a new landing and parking lot this summer at the County Road 90 bridge over the Blue Earth River. This new landing will replace the one at Jones Ford (County Road 33) a little over a mile downstream because the steep path and no parking area makes for dangerous conditions. Plans call for a 500 foot trail on the southeast side of the river and a small gravel parking lot. According to local paddlers, one of the most popular paddling adventures is on the Blue Earth River from below the Rapidan Dam down to Jones Ford just beyond a series of rapids.

Farm in The City

A new summer program for kids has been started by South Central College in North Mankato to teach kids about sustainable living through hands-on activities. Targeted for the ages of 7 - 12, the kids are learning about gardening and cooking along with writing about their experiences, going on field trips and working with technology. A \$20,000 grant from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation got the three week program up and running.

Redwood River Cleanup

Close to 100 volunteers from Southwest Minnesota State University and Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) came out on a chilly day in April to clean up trash along the Redwood River in Marshall. The group found a refrigerator, water heater, 55-gallon drum, part of a TV, chicken wire, foam and shingles. Both of the organizations are part of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource's Adopt-A- River Program - a 3 mile stretch of the Redwood River.

Kicking Mule Farm

Out in Redwood County a Community Supported Agriculture program has been started by Steven and Molly Suss along with their two children. The goal of this program is have local people buy produce including eggs, chickens, fruits and vegetables from a local grower. A price is paid ahead of time to provide a guaranteed income to the producer and let



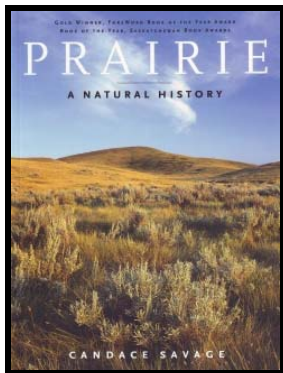
the consumer enjoy a diverse selection of products right off the land. Both Steven and Molly worked with other food co-ops and have even set up their own web site at www.kickingmulefarm.blogspot.com. The name of their farm came from an incident where their daughter got kicked in the face by their black mule.



PRAIRIE – A NATURAL HISTORY

“The prairies have often been described as a landscape reduced to the barest essentials of land and sky – place where the eye is lost to distant horizons and nothing much happens. But what this depiction misses is the color and excitement of the prairies seen close-up and the rewards that come with a little knowledge and observation.

“The key to everything that happens on the prairies lies trampled under our feet. Although grasses may look humble, they are actually versatile and tough, capable of growing under the widest possible range of conditions. Anywhere plants can grow, grasses are likely to be on the scene, whether coexisting with cactuses in a desert, poking up among lichens on the Arctic tundra, or hiding in the leafy understory of a forest. And when circumstances are especially favorable for them – for example, when the climate strikes just the right balance between precipitation and drought – grasses can assert themselves to become the dominant vegetation.



The wild prairies are, in the deepest sense, a manifestation of the climate. From the ground up, the living world is attuned to wind and rain, sun and snow, seasons of death and seasons of growth. As these basic realities are altered, everything will be touched and change will ripple and ricochet through the ecosystem.

“There is an unseen dimension to the far-and-away spread of the prairies, and that dimension is time. At first glance, one might mistake this for a place that time and change have somehow overlooked. These level plains and soft, rolling hills seem to have settled here quietly, their surface unmarred by signs of geological strife. But appearances can be deceiving. The great grasslands of central North America have been shaped over the past three or four billion years by the same forces that raised the Rockies and excavated the Grand Canyon. Their surface has been seared by the sun, scoured by ice, blasted by blowing sand, and buried in deep drifts of gravel. As a result of immense energies beneath the surface of the Earth, the plains have been raised up, forced down, drowned by oceans, and blanketed in ash. They have experienced every shudder and wrench as continents have collided and torn away from each other, only to collide and tear away again.”

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; 507-389-2304 or scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu