

Hello all,

As we close out 2007 and look forward to next year, I want to share this passage written by Scott Sparlin in 1991 and I feel is still appropriate today. *The Minnesota River Watershed is very rich with culture and in many cases very misunderstood. It goes without saying that our modern life styles impact this diverse entity in both subtle and not so subtle ways. We as a people have, in most cases, unknowingly, contributed to the degradation of her water quality, to the point that it has become unusable and just plain socially unacceptable. The problem is one that encompasses all of us. It cannot be narrowed down to one source. We are all partners in it, and as partners we are also the solutions.*



I have had feelings like many people, the problem is too big, I'm just one person, I don't know what I can do anyway, I'm not the one doing it, and so on. Most of these feelings come from a lack of knowledge and understanding. I have found that once people are given the tools, they become confident and act boldly, especially when it comes to something where feelings run so deep and culture, heritage and economics are such a large factor.

Mike Appel, who has spent over 32 years working for the SCS/NRCS in the Minnesota River Watershed will be retiring on January 1st. Mike worked in a number of locations throughout the basin including Douglas, Chippewa and Martin counties before becoming an Area Resource Conservationist and finally serving as an Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations since 1990. During his conservationist career, Mike's work centered on promoting conservation tillage, nutrient and pest management, conservation farm planning and helped implement several Ag. waste management systems. Mike has also been part of an effort to network and leverage technical help and dollars with various partners including government agencies, SWCDs, Clean Water Partnerships and local non-government agencies including Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever and CURE to name a few. There has also been the promotion of CRP with the Farm Services Agency that has helped save and restore wetlands, along with taking out some highly erodible cropland.

I asked Mike what he sees for the future of the Minnesota River. I see a greater demand on the federal tax dollar as well as our State budget. The immediate response to greater renewable energy will put a strain on our cropland. We need to make some good judgment calls in this arena. Cellulosic fiber may help but the technology needs to speed up. I worry about climate change in regards to greater variability in rainfall and its intensity. I feel we may be overtaxing our ability to adequately supply water through our rural water systems. I feel that the public is concerned about our environment but are they willing to pay for higher food costs to protect it. The next few years should be interesting indeed.

Thanks Mike for your efforts to improve water quality in the Minnesota River Watershed and we wish you good luck in your retirement.

Check out the new High Island Creek Watershed web site at:

<http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/major/lowminn/subshed/hi/index.html>. The web site covers information on the watershed, implementation project, community, and recreation opportunities. The web site was created by the Water Resource Center in conjunction with the High Island Creek Clean Water Partnership.

Events:

Mark January 17th on your calendar to see Carrie Jennings, Glacial Geologist with the Minnesota Geological Survey present a program on "The Geology of the Minnesota River" at 7 p.m. at the Chippewa County Courthouse Assembly Room in Montevideo.

SWAT Training to be held on January 14 and 15, 2008 at the MPCA offices in St Paul. This first session will be hands-on and exclusively for beginners. The second session on January 16 & 17, 2008 is for advanced users and also held at the St Paul office. For more information to <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/swattraining.pdf>

1st Annual MN Wetland Conference to be held on January 20, 2008 at the Continuing Education and Conference Center in St Paul. This conference will present pioneering and practical information relevant to wetlands in and around Minnesota. The event will also provide an opportunity to discuss current and emerging issues among professionals working in the wetland community. This will be an excellent opportunity for working professionals, researchers, students, scientists, regulators, consultants, and wetland enthusiasts to come together and share their knowledge of wetlands in Minnesota and surrounding regions. For more information, www.mnwetlands.umn.edu/cert/Training/training.htm

On January 28th (Monday) plan to attend the Hawk Creek Watershed Information & Appreciation Meeting at the Kandi Entertainment Center (500 19th Ave. SE, Willmar). The meeting will include presentations related to water quality and land management issues:

- Conservation Drainage
- BMP Challenge & Water Quality Trading
- Fingerprinting Sources of Sediment in the MN River
- Raingardens for Water Quality

Please call Hawk Creek Watershed Project at 320-523-3666 by January 15, 2008 to reserve your meal. The meeting is open to the public.

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

Water Quality Articles:

Rocky dispute in Renville County comes with bill for reclamation. This article comes to us from Patrick Moore of CURE and highlights the ongoing conflict between Renville County and the Duinick Brothers, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/duinickinvoice.pdf>

Winter comes alive as the first snowfall covers the Minnesota Valley. The grey November landscape is transformed with light and activity, urging us to go outdoors. It's not just the exhilaration of skiing or snowshoeing that calls but the beauty of the white landscape and the stories to be uncovered in the snow along the trail. There are trails to explore through floodplain forest, prairie, oak, savanna and marsh. This diversity of habitat means a rich variety of wildlife and for hikers, skiers and snowshoers it offers one of the best opportunities to observe and learn about wildlife (Judy Thomson, Currents magazine, Winter, 1990).

Please register at the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance's bulletin board at: <http://mail.mnsu.edu/mailman/listinfo/mrwa> to receive regular updates on what is happening in the Minnesota River Watershed.

The Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance) is an organized network of citizens, public agencies, and private organizations dedicated to communicating the benefits of an ecology healthy Minnesota River Watershed to others and are actively working towards its improvement and protection. We meet four times a year and encourage landowners and recreational users of the river to be part of the effort. For more information on the Watershed Alliance: www.watershedalliance.blogspot.com

Thanks,

Scott

Scott Kudelka
Minnesota River Watershed Alliance Communications Coordinator