

Water Resources Center receives recognition from Minnesota State University, Mankato

The Water Resources Center was recognized this past week as the largest external grants and contracts fundraiser on campus. For the reporting period of Feb 2007 – Feb 2008, the WRC had generated \$852,000 in revenue of the approximately \$5.1 million on campus.

Pawlenty won't oppose Big Stone project

ST. PAUL -- Governor Tim Pawlenty won't publicly oppose a new coal-burning power plant on Minnesota's western border, despite a noted scientist's plea. Dr. James Hansen is director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and is one of the nation's most prominent and controversial climate scientists. He is asking that Pawlenty oppose the construction of the proposed Big Stone II power plant in Milbank, S.D.

Hansen has written that phasing out coal-based power is 80 percent of the solution to the global warming crisis. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission is expected to render a decision in July on where in Minnesota the transmission lines that would bring power into the state could be built. (Minnesota Public Radio)

Minnesota River Board Meeting – May 19th (Monday)

Good afternoon everyone – I wanted to personally invite each of you to consider attending the next Minnesota River Board meeting in Minnesota on May 19, 2008. In addition, we are being hosted by the Yellow Medicine Watershed District, who has graciously planned a short tour of several project sites they have been working on. This would be a great opportunity to learn what others are working on – not to mention a terrific opportunity to network with other MN River basin professionals and stakeholders. Please see the attached invitation for the tour. This is an educational experience provided to you at now cost, but seating is limited, and the RSVP clock is ticking. Hope to see many of you in Minnesota and your spring season is going well. Take care, Shannon Fisher, Director

Cleaning up in Lake Emily

Fishing of a different sort is under way this week at Lake Emily. Scuba divers hauled up a heavily dented steel Dumpster on Monday — and that was only the start. Cleanup crews are methodically recovering debris deposited in the lake by a 2006 tornado. “They’re using a forensic grid, just like a crime scene,” Le Sueur County emergency manager Ann Traxler said of the effort, expected to conclude Friday in time for the fishing opener. Cleanup will be done to a depth of 10 feet. The 235-acre Le Sueur County lake near St. Peter has a maximum depth of 37 feet with an average depth of 5 feet. Sonar surveys had identified dozens of debris locations in the south and southwest portions of the lake. Environmentally incompatible items such as computers and lawnmowers will be removed, but biodegradable debris unthreatening to fish habitat will remain. On Monday, the six divers with Schmidt Marine Specialties Inc. also had recovered sheet metal, an aluminum lawn chair, and what likely was a non-tornado item, a fishing reel. (Brian Ojanpa - The Free Press – May 7, 2008)

Pomme de Terre River Watershed Coordinator

The new Pomme de Terre River Watershed Coordinator is Shaun McNally. He can be reached at the Stevens Soil and Water Conservation District at 12 Hwy 28 E Ste 2; Morris, MN 56267; (320) 589-4886 ext. 109; Shaun.McNally@mn.nacdn.net

Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan

Hello from the Minnesota River Board and the Water Resources Center! I have been asked to help get the word out regarding a very important set of meetings coming up regarding the “Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan.” I have been assured by several entities, including our elected officials in St. Paul, member of LCCMR, and people working on the plan, that this plan is not just another effort to guide Minnesota’s funding and expenditures for natural resources planning, but will be THE document that shapes our environmental future. With that

said, I am encouraging all of you to consider reviewing the materials and attending one of the public forums to express your thoughts. Organizers of the event are encouraging young people to get involved too – high school and college students are very welcome. Please consider dispersing this announcement through your networks as well. Thank you for your time – Shannon Fisher

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

Greater Blue Earth River Basin Turbidity TMDL open house.

Mankato, Minnesota – The Greater Blue Earth River Basin Turbidity Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study will host three open houses across the project area. The Greater Blue Earth Watershed includes the Watonwan, Blue Earth and Le Sueur river systems. The open houses will provide information and question and answer opportunities for the general public and interested groups and organizations. This will be an excellent opportunity for local people to present questions and concerns on issues relating to water quality within the Blue Earth River Basin. There will be three meetings across the Greater Basin to make it easier for people to attend. The dates and locations are as follows:

- **St. James – May 27th** at Watonwan County Courthouse (710 2nd Avenue); St. James, MN 56081
- **Waldorf – May 28th** at Waldorf Community Center (109 Main Street North); Waldorf, MN 56091
- **Blue Earth – May 29th** at Faribault County AG Center (U.S. Highway 169, 415 South Grove Street); Blue Earth, MN 56013

A whole new way for a lawn to be green

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District and Kevin Bigalke are featured in an article about the use of rain gardens to reduce stormwater flow and cost-share funding available to watershed residents. The article can be viewed at: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/wholenewwayforgreenlawn.pdf>

Minnesota PCA to anglers: Please get the lead out

With the Minnesota fishing opener fast approaching, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is encouraging anglers to switch to lead-free tackle. The toxic metal can poison wildlife such as loons, swans and eagles that inadvertently swallow lead fishing tackle. To benefit wildlife and anglers, the MPCA offers these tips:

- Use sinkers and jigs made from nonhazardous materials such as steel, tin and bismuth.
- Never throw old fishing gear into the water or on shore.
- Never put a lead sinker in your mouth or bite down on slip shot. Use a pair of pliers instead.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling lead sinkers or cleaning out your tackle box. (*Duluth News Tribune - 05/08/2008*)

Gas prices push people to seek alternatives

Colin Brodhead doesn't like to see soaring gas prices, but he has to admit it's not bad for business. The owner of Cyclepathic Scooter Co. in downtown Mankato said the mood of customers has changed since last summer. "Last year they'd come in and say, 'It'd be fun to have a scooter.' This year they come in after filling their truck and they're angry. So, they can be angry and have fun too," Brodhead said. With each new record gas price, more people are looking for alternatives, from riding the city bus, to buying fuel-efficient cars and scooters. (Mankato Free Press)

Jobs:

The Pelican River Watershed District is looking to hire a water resource technician for this 120 square mile area found in Becker County. The water resource technician would be responsible for water quality and quantity data collection and analysis, GIS Mapping and database

development, and data management. For more information,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/pelicanriverwaterresourcetech.pdf>

The Minnesota Farm Bureau has a position opening for an Area Program Director. This person will represent the Minnesota Farm Bureau in south-central Minnesota and provide leadership and support for County Farm Bureau leaders and staff. For more information,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/areaprogramdirector.pdf>

Events:

May 15th (Thursday) is the Capitol for a Day at New Ulm. In the afternoon there will be a special "Catfish" event at Riverside Park starting 3 p.m. Come out to see the release of a huge flathead catfish at approximately 4:30 p.m. along with activities for kids, displays and the River Regional History and Interpretive Center will be open. For more information,
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/capitalforadayevent.pdf>

May 17th (Saturday) is a **Minnesota River Bike Ride** starting at 9:30 a.m. from the Memorial Park on the east side of Shakopee to Chaska Ballpark. For more information contact Jerry Hennen at 952-445-1013.

May 17th (Saturday) is the **Bloomington Community Clean-Up for Water Quality**. The clean-up will take place on Nine Mile Creek at 106th Street and go from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For more information www.friendsofmnvalley.org

May 17th and 18th (Saturday & Sunday) is the **16th Annual Rivers and History Weekend** at the Upper Sioux Agency State Park, Granite Falls, MN. CURE is sponsoring this annual family centered event with help from the Granite Falls Historical Society, the Upper Sioux Agency State Park, the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and the EF Foundation for Foreign Study. Come and canoe the area rivers, camp out and learn of the region's rich history. Look for more details in upcoming mailings or by visiting: www.curemriver.org or by calling CURE toll Free at 1-877-269-2873.

May 19th (Monday) is the **Minnesota River Board meeting** at the Minneota Community Center and held in collaboration with Yellow Medicine River Watershed District. The Executive Meeting is at 8:30 a.m., with the full meeting starting at 9:30 a.m. For more information call 507-389-5491.

May 24th (Saturday) is a **Civilian Conservation Corps presentation** starting at 2:00 p.m. at the Fort Ridgely Historic Site commissary. For more information,
<http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/pdfs/fortridgelyeventccc.pdf>

May 26th (Monday) is a **Twilight Prairie Stroll** from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Ney Nature Center, Henderson. For more information, <http://neycenter.org/>

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

Water Quality Articles:

Big Stone II Administrative Judge Ruling

- **Press Release,** <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/bigstone11agruling.pdf>
- **Judge delivers setback to Big Stone II project,**
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/judgedeliverssetbackbigstoneplant.pdf>
- **Judges: Reject Big Stone II project,**
<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/judgerejectbigstoneproject.pdf>

- **Judges deliver major setback to Big Stone II project,** <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/judgesdelivermajorsetbackbigstone.pdf>
- **Major Setback For Planned Coal-Burning Plant,** <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/majorsetbackforplannedcoalplant.pdf>
- **A reversal for coal plant,** <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/reversalforcoalplant.pdf>
- **Six utility companies to challenge judges report on Big Stone II proposal, local MUC GM reports,** <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/sixutilitycompaniesbigstone.pdf>

The Farm Bill & Presidential Veto

- **Ag. Secretary: President will veto farm bill.** It now appears the only way there will be a new farm bill this years is if Congress overrides a presidential veto, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/agsecretarypresidentwillvetofarmbill.pdf>
- **Farm bill faces veto.** The euphoria Thursday over congressional agreement on a new five-year federal farm bill quickly dissipated as the Bush administration indicated it would veto it, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmbillfacesveto.pdf>
- **Farm bill negotiators say they have tentative agreement as Bush continues to object.** Negotiators on a five-year, \$300 billion farm bill say they have reached a tentative agreement on the legislation and it will be considered by the House and Senate, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmbillnegotiatorsbushobject.pdf>
- **Farmers, food banks want farm bill passed soon.** Congressional negotiators announced a final agreement on a \$300 billion farm bill, but local farmers, food banks and conservationists still aren't at ease, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmersfoodbankswantfarmbill.pdf>
- **Farm bill finished, but veto threat looms.** As the House and Senate work together to pass a new Farm Bill, a veto still threatens from the President, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmbillfinishedvetolooms.pdf>
- **Forum editorial: A farm bill veto would be mistake.** According to the Fargo Forum, the bill is a good one for farmers and the nation, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmbillvetowouldbemistake.pdf>
- **Farm bill frustration.** Possibly going to vote as early as today, the farm bill has its supporters, but there are others with concerns regarding the legislation, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmbillfrustration.pdf>
- **Veto: doing the right thing for farm policy.** According to the Pioneer Press, the farm bill should be vetoed and it should be welcomed to anybody who cares about responsible use of taxpayer dollars, about defensible farm policy, and, ultimately, about farmers, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/vetodoingrightfarmpolicy.pdf>

An up-river battle. Chaska High School seniors following Severeid's 1930 journey to Hudson Bay find themselves in an up-river battle, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/anupriverbattle.pdf>

Times Writers Group: Forget shopping, conserve. Americans rank among the world's worst energy hogs, consuming roughly double the amount per capita of residents of other nations enjoying a similar standard of living, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/forgetshoppingconserve.pdf>

Free bike use to be offered during GOP convention. People worried about getting around Twin Cities during the Republican National Convention may have an answer – free bike use, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/freebikeusegopcovention.pdf>

Gary Ferguson: 'The devil's dog.' Wolves make it off the endangered species list, only to face an angry enemy: The human being, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/grayfergusondevilsdog.pdf>

Put your PC to sleep to go green. The quiet box on your desk or in the living room, that thing that helps you work and buy airline tickets and watch funny clips on YouTube-it's also burning fossil fuels, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/gogreenputpctosleep.pdf>

Minnesota Capitol to get free energy audit from Wal-Mart. Minnesota's State Capitol among those selected by Wal-Mart for energy audits, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/mncapitolfreeenergyaudit.pdf>

Ohio farmer uses 6 wind generators, other technology in push for renewable energy. When he was laid up in the hospital recovering from knee surgery, farmer Ralph Dull picked up a thick notebook dropped off by a friend that detailed how wind generators produce electricity, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ohiofarmergoinggreen.pdf>

Oil, caribou, hot air and green-addled, gullible us. Gasoline prices are up. Isn't that thrilling? We haven't caught Western Europe yet, where they're shelling out \$7 a gallon. It's going to take a lot lousier policymaking to get there, but we can do it, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/oilcarbouhotairandus.pdf>

Rain barrel puts resource to use. Several rain gutter downspouts are redirected into a 1,060-gallon tank where the water is collected and used for watering newly planted grass at Hawkeye Food Service in Fairmont, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/rainbarrelputsresourcetouse.pdf>

Renville County looks to improve recycling, service. Renville County is interested in working with Redwood County to increase recycling, and also looking for improved service from its contracted hauler for recycled items, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/renvillecountytoimproverecycling.pdf>

Letter: Soaring gas prices require action. Across Minnesota, May marks the beginning of "Lake Season," a time when people start thinking about camping trips, lake cabins and launching their family boats, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/soaringgaspricesrequireaction.pdf>

Students unveil solar-powered car. Thursday morning was appropriately sunny for a group of University students, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/studentsunveilsolarpowercar.pdf>

Think this spring has been tough? Consider the songbird. A lot of us are frustrated with the chilly weather we've been having. People going out for the fishing opener this weekend are facing iced-in lakes in some places, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/thinkspringhasbeentoughsongbirds.pdf>

Ethanol vs Food Debate

- **Ethanol producers come under fire in Congress.** The growing backlash against ethanol arrived at the U.S. House. Ethanol consumes about one-fifth of the U.S. corn harvest. And some groups blame ethanol for pushing up food prices, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolproducerscomeunderfire.pdf>
- **Forum Editorial: GOP attack on ethanol worrisome.** Midwestern farmers and ethanol producers should be alarmed by an organized attack on ethanol by Senate Republicans and the oil industry, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/gopattackonethanolworrisome.pdf>
- **Oil vs. ethanol: What's riskier?** The price of crude oil broke through the \$120 a barrel barrier earlier this week. In part, the price increase is influenced by political unrest in Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/oilvsethanolwhatsriskier.pdf>
- **Our View – You can't eat ethanol.** According to the Mankato Free Press – Political leaders in the U.S. are finding out that when you play with the laws of supply and demand, you may get burned, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ourviewcaneatethanol.pdf>

- **Food crisis provides opening for array of ethanol opponents.** The global rise in food prices is giving political ammunition to opponents of the country's ethanol policy and creating some uncertainty for the burgeoning and heavily subsidized biofuels industry, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/foodcrisisprovidesethanolopponents.pdf>
- **Ground zero in the debate over ethanol.** There's a political cartoon making the rounds on editorial pages and websites: A well-fed guy, filling a very big car with ethanol, is shrugging at a small child with a distended belly and empty bowl, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/groundzeroindebateethanol.pdf>
- **Nathanael Greene and Lee Lynda: The land can provide both food and biofuels.** With smart and honest strategies, there's no need for the two to compete, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/landcanprovidebothfoodbiofuels.pdf>

Editorial: California emission plan must be rejected. According to the West Central Tribune, Minnesota has been on the forefront of embracing new alternatives in energy and environmental issues based on the needs of Minnesotans, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/californiaemissionplanrejected.pdf>

Citizen council gets legislative approval. Minnesota lawmakers last week gave a boost to a fall ballot measure dedicating a portion of Minnesota's sales tax to the environment and the arts, supporters say, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/citizencouncilgetslegislativeapproval.pdf>

Counterpoint: Appetite for energy from any source, at any price, can't last. Former Republican Senator, Dave Durenberger says producing our way out of this crisis with energy is not the answer, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/appetiteenergycantlast.pdf>

Ethanol plant proposal divides Eyota. A Minnesota company wants to build an ethanol plant in Eyota, a suburb of Rochester. To some, the site has everything an ethanol plant would want. Opponents say it's an environmental disaster waiting to happen, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolplantproposaldivideseyota.pdf>

Judith Rodin: Gas-tax talk drives a necessary conversation. Outmoded U.S. transportation policy is harming the economy and the environment, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/gastaxtalknecessaryconversation.pdf>

From the driver's seat, more stops than go. The Great Commuter Challenge and its setup offered challenges galore, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/greatcommuterchallenge.pdf>

3 Lake Minnetonka bays to get a dose of invasive-weed killer. Homeowners helped raise the \$180,000 to control milfoil and curly-leaf pondweed, and the results will be closely watched, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/minnetonkabaysinvasiveweedkiller.pdf>

Report says wind can produce a fifth of nation's electricity needs by 2030. Two decades from now Americans could get as much electricity from windmills as from nuclear power plants, according to a government report, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/reportsayswindfifthelectricity.pdf>

Student plan for trail seen as realistic possibility. It's been nothing more than a pleasant vision for St. Peter riders for a new year: a paved bike trail running through the scenic Minnesota River valley to Mankato, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/studentplantrailpossibility.pdf>

Cities buying up open space now, asking questions later. After voters approve funding to preserve land, cities such as Blaine must decide what to do with it, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/citiesbuyingupopenspace.pdf>

Water, like religion and ideology, has the power to move millions of people. Since the very birth of human civilization, people have moved to settle close to it. People move when there is too little of it. People move when there is too much of it. People journey down it. People write, sing and dance about it. People fight over it. And all people, everywhere and every day, need it. – Mikhail Gorbachev, President of Green Cross International

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

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

Thanks,

Scott

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