

Greater Minnesota Legislative Hearings

Minnesota State Lawmakers will be visiting communities around the state to gather input on the governor's budget recommendations and listen to the public's ideas to address the state's \$4.8 billion budget deficit for the next biennium. Here are some dates for the Legislative Hearings in the Minnesota River Watershed:

- February 19th (Thursday) starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Mankato Intergovernmental Center – Mankato River Room 10 Civic Center Plaza
- February 19th (Thursday) starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Kennedy Elementary School (824 – 7th Street SW) in Willmar
- February 20th (Friday) starting at 2:00 p.m. at the Alexandria City Hall (704 Broadway)
- February 20th (Friday) starting at 2:30 p.m. at Southwest Minnesota State University Lecture Hall (1501 State Street) in Marshall

CURE's 17th Annual Meeting

As always, the CURE staff and volunteers put on a great show at their annual meeting last Saturday evening in Montevideo. Held in the historic Hollywood Theater, the event featured Dr. Carrie Jennings and Dr. Shawn Schottler, the Rock Star Sediment Scientists who gave an interesting and informative talk about sediment from the Minnesota River, potential sources and how it all affects Lake Pepin. The place was packed with people from across the Minnesota River Watershed enjoying the wonderful music, great food and spirited conversation.

CapX2020 Brookings to Hampton Transmission Line

Are you looking to have input on the new transmission line being proposed across Minnesota from Brookings County in South Dakota to the Twin Cities? If you are interested in being on this Advisory Task Force, please contact Scott Ek, Project Manager, 651-296-8813 or Ray Kirsch, Public Advisor, 651-296-7588 and let them know you would like to be considered.

The following is from Minnesota Statute 216E.08 and describes the Advisory Task Force:

“Subdivision 1. **Advisory task force.** The commission may appoint one or more advisory task forces to assist it in carrying out its duties. Task forces appointed to evaluate sites or routes considered for designation shall be comprised of as many persons as may be designated by the commission, but at least one representative from each of the following: Regional development commissions, counties and municipal corporations and one town board member from each county in which a site or route is proposed to be located. No officer, agent, or employee of a utility shall serve on an advisory task force. Reimbursement for expenses incurred shall be made pursuant to the rules governing state employees. The task forces expire as provided in section [15.059, subdivision 6](#). At the time the task force is appointed, the commission shall specify the charge to the task force. The task force shall expire upon completion of its charge, upon designation by the commission of alternative sites or routes to be included in the environmental impact statement, or upon the specific date identified by the commission in the charge, whichever occurs first.”

Mankato Healthy Lawns Team

You are cordially invited to the first regular meeting of the **Mankato Healthy Lawns Team**. The idea for this group has come from our reading about other communities who have started these groups to spread the word in their home communities that growing healthy, organically-maintained lawns, school playgrounds and public parks is possible and preferable to using lots of weed killers/pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

Many Mankato/North Mankato community members have worked with the school district over the last two years on the “Organic Turf grass Project” which, with funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, has done research about the effectiveness of organic methods of maintaining school playing fields and playgrounds. We've learned so much about the unique needs of this geographical area, and

would like to share and learn together with you. Come and learn about the many new ideas for reducing our home lawns' "chemical dependency"!

- **Date: Thurs. FEB. 19th from 7:30 PM – 8:30 p.m. at** Hobart Hall (lower level) Centenary United Methodist Church 210 S. 2nd St., Mankato, MN – Use South Entrance.
- If you have any questions or ideas about this community group that shares ways to make our home, schools' and cities' environments safer and healthier, please call: Alice Maung-Mercurio 345-5051, or contact Mara Natrakul (mara@hickorytech.net).

This comes from Lisa A. Coons; **Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry**; 170 Good Counsel Dr.; Mankato, MN 56001; (507)389-4272; lcoons@ssndmankato.org; www.ssndmankato.org/earth/

The Future of Minnesota's Transportation System

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will hold meetings across the state to determine the future of Minnesota's transportation system. The Statewide Transportation Plan determines the direction of the entire state's transportation policy for the next 20 years and affects all of the ways we travel—by foot, bicycle, transit, rail, or road.

Members of the public can share their concerns about transportation issues, priorities, and funding. You can tell stakeholders and government officials what you think is important—whether it's expanded bus service, better bike lanes, or increased light rail. Help determine Mankato's transportation future by attending the meeting listed below!

- **Where and When:** Blue Earth County Library (100 East Main) Mankato, Minnesota
Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2009 9:30 a.m. – noon

Spread the word; many concerned citizens can really make a difference in our area on the options available to and from or even within our expanding community. Best regards, Jeff Brand; Minnesota Environmental Partnership; Mankato / St. Peter Field Organizer; 201 West Park Row, Suite D; St. Peter, MN 56082; (507) 934-4821

Minnesota River Watershed Bill

A bill which basically updates the organization of the Minnesota River Board and is sponsored by Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm, was up before the Senate's Local Government Committee on Friday, February 6th. "The law was written in '96, and the organization has evolved and changed a little, The bill accommodates that change," Frederickson, who also serves as president pro term of the Sate Senate, said.

"The board is to hold information and educational forums about the Minnesota River watershed [which impacts 37 counties] to coordinate cleanup and promotional efforts between 13 major watersheds that are in the Minnesota River watershed and to help pursue grants and cleanup efforts for the river," he explained, "Also, this bill changes an advisory committee to a technical committee. This is not exciting stuff, but it's important for the organization." (New Ulm Journal – by Ron Larson – February 7, 2009)

Intern Opportunities:

Chippewa River Watershed Project Intern

The Chippewa River Watershed Project (CRWP) is accepting applications for a summer intern. Internship responsibilities include but are not limited to: stream transparency data collection; collecting water grab samples for lab analysis; operating basic water quality monitoring equipment; taking stream flow measurements; assisting with data entry and analysis; macroinvertebrate sampling and identification; assisting with shoreline restoration plantings; preparing newsletters and brochures; and attending/participating in meetings, workshops, events through the education/outreach program of the CRWP.

For more information <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/chippewaintern.pdf> or contact Jennifer at 320-269-2139 ext. 120 or Jennifer.hoffman@rcdnet.net

Events:

February 14th (Saturday) is a **Hiking the Superior Trail with Earl Gransee presentation** at 9:00 a.m. as part of the Ney Nature Center's Saturday Morning Coffee Series. Come, listen, view slides and discuss the trail with someone who has hiked the full 200 plus miles of the Superior Hiking Trail. For more information, <http://neycenter.org/calendar/>

February 15th (Sunday) is the **X-Country Ski and Snowshoe Challenge** from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. at the Ney Nature Center. Let us challenge you! Ski our groomed trails and answer MN and Nature Trivia at the various trivia stations along the route. Bring back the answers for prizes. Not a skier? Snowshoe or hike the NNC (staying off the ski trails) using a handheld GPS unit (provided by the NNC) to find the trivia stations and answer the MN and Nature questions. Other out-door activities to participate in include: sledding, skiing, snowshoeing, and skating on the pond. Minors must be accompanied by an adult. Please RSVP by contacting Becky (507-248-3474 or rebecca@neycenter.org)

February 19th (Thursday) is the **Chaska to York Factory in 49 Days presentation** at 7:00 p.m. in the meeting room of the New Ulm Public Library (17 N. Broadway St.). Sean Bloomfield and Colton Witte will talk about their adventure last summer paddling the entire Minnesota and Red rivers all the way to the Hudson Bay. For more information, <http://mrdbc.mnsu.edu/calendar/pdfs/hudsonbay%20flyer.pdf>

February 23rd (Monday) is a **3rd Crop Producer Meeting – “Getting Fruity”** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Fairmont. Discussion will include aronia, grape, Saskatoon, and apple production as well as starting a winery, bee keeping, and using high tunnels. For more information: Jill Sackett. Rural Advantage, U of M Extension at 507-238-5449 or sacke032@umn.edu

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

Water Quality Articles

[Bumblebees may be good option for pollinating](#) (Agri News). John Wolf of Koppert Biological Systems was encouraging fruit and vegetable growers to do just that at the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference in St. Cloud last month.

[Ralph Lentz says grazing cattle and streams can co-exist](#) (Agri News). Ralph Lentz says cattle, under proper grazing management, and streams can co-exist. He should know. The Lake City farmer has been grazing cattle along a stream on his farm for about 40 years.

[Make decisions as if amendment money weren't there](#) (Pioneer Press). There's always the fine print. In the case of the constitutional amendment Minnesota voters approved last fall, the fine print says the money raised by the amendment "must supplement traditional sources of funding for these purposes and may not be used as a substitute."

[Reality Check: Energy Efficiency Of Ethanol](#) (WCCO TV). At one of Minnesota's [370 ethanol pumps](#) in St. Paul on Tuesday, the price for a gallon of E-85 is [40 cents less](#) than a gallon of gasoline.

[U of M raises a stink over lack of recycling](#) (KARE 11TV). Walk across the U of M campus on any given day, and you're likely to see an occasional piece of trash. Wednesday morning, it was more like a sidewalk full.

[U raises a stink today as part of recycling promotion](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Students at the University of Minnesota decided to make a big stink about the fact that only about one-third of recyclable materials from university buildings actually are recycled.

[Ag census shows number of state farms holds stable](#) (Associated Press). The traditional family farm is getting more scarce and large farms are producing more and more of our food. That's one of the findings of the 2007 Census of Agriculture, released today by the U.S. Agriculture Department. But the census also indicates there's still hope for smaller operations.

[In era of fewer farms, Minnesota stands out](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Farm census shows big farms growing, tiny ones multiplying and the middle getting squeezed.

[Coffman sidewalk turns into landfill](#) (MN Daily). The sidewalk in front of Coffman Union was turned into a temporary landfill Wednesday after a garbage truck dumped more than six tons of waste there as part of the kickoff for RecycleMania, a national recycling competition.

[Water plant update: Cheapest choice is \\$25M](#) (Fairmont Sentinel). Fairmont's water treatment plant is 80-some years old, with outdated equipment and wiring that no longer meet today's standards, and certainly not the ones coming down the pipe.

[Dennis Anderson: Beware of legislators bearing funds](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). When lawmakers heap unsolicited windfalls on select conservation groups, it makes you question whether they can be trusted with your money.

[Jill Burcum: No death knell yet for Big Stone II](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Was recent action by the Environmental Protection Agency a project killer for the controversial proposed Big Stone II coal plant?

[Water, water everywhere: 369 quintillion gallons to be exact](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). 369,820,250,000,000,000,000 - That's how many gallons of water are on the planet Earth, enough to fill Lake Superior 119,000 times.

[DNR, other agencies, face big budget cuts](#) (Outdoor News). State General Fund support for the DNR's Fish and Wildlife Division would be eliminated completely under the budget proposal Gov. Tim Pawlenty unveiled last week.

[Outdoor fund is for habitat, not 'jobs programs'](#) (Pioneer Press). On Dec. 1, Minnesota House speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher gave a fairly impassioned speech at the first meeting of the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council.

[For two problems, one simple solution](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The Minnesota State Capitol is a showcase for meeting heating needs by using a waste product: Wood.

[Probe: Did 3M firefighting foam contaminate water?](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). 3M foam was used for years in firefighting training, the chemicals possibly contaminating wells.

[City council kills urban chicken notion](#) (Mankato Free Press). Chickens scratched. Fowl won't be soon be gracing Mankato's backyards after the City Council stopped an "urban chicken" proposal on a 4 to 3 vote.

[Proposals pour in for spending on prairies, wetlands](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The \$95 million in projects exceeds what the Legacy amendment is expected to take in, and fish and wildlife haven't even had a crack at it yet.

[New study praises corn as source for ethanol](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). A Nebraska report contradicts one from Minnesota. Its supporters say reports to the contrary used outdated data.

[Robins in winter -- in Minnesota](#) (Twin Cities Daily Planet). Some of our robins decided not to migrate south this winter. I wonder if they're having second thoughts.

[Highways, bike trails and rails are 'shovel-ready' in Minn.](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Money from a promised federal stimulus package ranging from \$800 to \$900 billion is but a gleam in the eye of Minnesota's transportation boosters. However, their wish list is very real.

To protect what is wild is to protect what is gentle. Perhaps the wilderness we fear is the pause within our own heartbeats, the silent space that says we live only by grace. Wilderness lives by this same grace. – Terry Tempest Williams

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>

Thanks,

Scott Kudelka
Minnesota River Watershed Alliance
Communications Coordinator
Water Resources Center
184 Trafton Science Center S
Mankato, MN 56001
507-389-2304
scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu
<http://watershedalliance.blogspot.com>