

**Public Invited to “Raise Your Voice” Literary Event
Friday December 4, 2009 7:30 p.m. Java River Café Downtown Montevideo**

The second annual literary gathering featuring an interchange of college students from the Twin Cities and community members of the Upper Minnesota River Watershed will be held Friday, December 4th from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Java River Coffee house on Main Street Montevideo. The **“Raise Your Voice”** event is free and open to the public and area writers and artists are encouraged to attend.

“Raise your Voice” is being co-sponsored by the Higher Education Consortium on Urban Affairs (HECUA) and Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) as a way to celebrate the arts and their power to impact social issues and create vibrant communities. For more information, contact Patrick Moore at 320-269-2984.

“Last year’s event was a huge success and we want to do it again,” said Julia Frost Nerbonne, Environmental Sustainability Program Director for HECUA. “The collaboration between higher education and community based CURE can have lasting impacts on the students we bring each year to visit the region,” Nerbonne continued. “The sharing of words and ideas combined with visible examples of on the ground work in rural community development is fun, meaningful and eye-opening -- it is a great field trip for our class!”

A total of 22 students and several faculty members will be coming to Montevideo at around 10:00 a.m. on Friday Dec. 4th to get an overview of CURE’s work in the region. On Friday afternoon, the students will have free time to explore the various restaurants and shops of downtown Montevideo. Starting at 7:00 p.m. the students will begin to gather at the Java River Coffeeshouse at 210 South First Street in downtown Montevideo.

Any community members wishing to read at the open mic event are asked to arrive at Java River by 7 p.m. to add their name to the list of performers. After the event, the students will travel to Audrey Arner’s and Richard Handeen’s Moonstone Farm for an overnight slumber party and farm tour on Saturday morning.

Woodpile Newsletter from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

The Minnesota Department Natural Resources (DNR) recently issued the first edition of the Woodpile newsletter. According to the DNR, this newsletter is intended for those people who have management plans for their woodlands. This newsletter is for everyone whether your plan was written by a DNR forester, private consultant, industry forestry, Soil and Water Conservation District forester or another party. The Woodpile will be published somewhat quarterly around the 15th of November, February, May, and August. Send articles/thoughts/comments/questions before those deadlines to katy@paulbunyan.net or Casey.Olson@mn.usda.gov

The first Woodpile edition: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/woodpilenenewsletter.pdf>

More notes from the Watershed Alliance’s Quarterly Meeting on October 20th - MN River Presentation by Darby Nelson

Darby Nelson spoke about his experiences of paddling the Minnesota River this summer with his wife. He talked about how great it is to be among kindred spirits and neat to find out what is happening in the basin. Darby said rivers really matter to him. He was pleased and surprised by the pleasant features of the MN River including the scenic beauty and rock outcrops. They paddled from Montevideo to North Redwood in 5 days. The two of them loved the sandbars where you could tell what creatures had been there, the pelicans as they glided off the river, the impressive bird life and how it wasn’t crowded on the river. Darby said nobody knows about this incredible resource, calling it a hidden treasure. He was also surprised at how many fields had at least a 50-foot setback from the river.

Disappointments for them included the Minnesota Falls dam with the DNR map being wrong about the portage. They found out quickly after spotting a large sign on the left stating – “Not a Portage.” Darby would like to see the dam gone. They also saw a number of black Angus cattle in the river, unloading a lot of phosphorus into the water. This was closer to North Redwood.

Challenges included the DNR canoe campsites. Darby said he felt sorry for the DNR to try maintaining these campsites when the river constantly changes. They had to keep moving when they couldn't find a couple of the campsites. Drinking water can also be a problem if you don't know how much you will need. There also needs to be some type of shuttle service to get people around. There is a need for more public land to develop campsites and signs are important because of all the private land. Darby was impressed with what the Upper Sioux Agency State Park had to offer.

Renewable Energy Research Center to be Built on Campus

By Marti Klinsing, Reporter staff writer

Minnesota State has found a new reason to be one of a kind.

On Friday, November 13, ground was broken for a new, renewable energy research center on campus near Wiecking Center. The \$1.8 million, 6,300-square foot building will be the Center for Renewable Energy Research and Technology Transfer. Within the center, 1,500-square feet will be dedicated for the International Renewable Energy Technology Institute and 4,800-square feet will be dedicated to an emissions laboratory.

Before taking their gold plated shovels to the ground, President Richard Davenport, Director of Business and Industry Partnerships John Frey, automotive engineering technology chairperson Kirk Ready, and numerous other faculty, legislators, trustees, and donors gathered in "Johnny's Garage," right next to the groundbreaking site, to give thanks and discuss what will come with the new center.

For the entire article:

<http://www.msugrads.com/s/57/index.aspx?sid=57&gid=1&pgid=282&cid=1045&ecid=1045&crd=0>

Mankato Convening on Climate Change

Climate change is a concern for low-income communities and proposed solutions can create new opportunities. Learn more about issues and opportunities important to nonprofit, labor and faith organizations. Speakers include:

- Pat Benson, Minnesota Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy
- Leah Gardner, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Southeast Area Labor Council representative

Details: Date: Thursday, December 3rd

Time: 1:00-3:00 PM

Location: Blue Earth County Historical Society, 415 E. Cherry St, Mankato

Directions and map: [Directions and Google Map](#)

Fee: Free, but please RSVP online.

To RSVP:

[RSVP online now - by logging in \(password assistance available\) and selecting "RSVP for Free Events, Briefings and Convenings](#)

Poultry Only Part of Free-Range Model

NORTHFIELD — Age-old wisdom advises against putting all of one's eggs in one basket, however, Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin is going against the flow and recommending just that.

Haslett-Marroquin, director of the Rural Enterprise Center in Northfield, MN, is creator of the free-range poultry program now being implemented by Hillside Farmers' Cooperative at sites in Northfield and

Cannon Falls. The aim of the model is to help Latino farmers be successful by pairing them up with Southern Minnesota farmers in a system that is both sustainable and culturally familiar to them.

The idea for the program came to him quite simply. “There’s not much to it. You need to have an open mind to everything going on around you,” Haslett-Marroquin said. He listened to families and explored the movement to locally grown foods. “There was not one all-enlightening moment, it was a process. You have to think like a farmer.”

Poultry farming is in the blood of the Latino farmer, he explains, increasing the potential for success. Because the needed strengths and assets are already in place, profits can be realized quicker. The Cannon Falls project got birds in July and was already harvesting some of them in a matter of weeks. They sold about 100 birds in a single morning according to Haslett-Marroquin.

Free-range poultry is part of a sustainable system, he claims, with the key element being the birds. “You can’t really have sustainable agriculture without livestock,” he explained. “Biological activity is necessary. You cannot have a sustainable vegetable farm, for example, without livestock.”

But the endeavor must also be economically sustainable. Haslett-Marroquin said a project must be arranged so that it doesn’t undercut nature’s ability to produce. The core of real value-added agriculture, he says, is a symbiotic relationship.

He sees that relationship played out in the free-range poultry model. For example, if grain were grown, the poultry waste could be used as fertilizer. But the waste is high in nitrogen so grass is needed to balance the field chemistry. The resulting hay, as well as some grain, would feed the birds. Further strengthening the symbiotic relationships, hazels could be added as protective cover benefiting from manure and providing food to the birds. The poultry-hazel combination also addresses non-productivity in the bushes during their first years.

“That’s how sustainable thinking needs to happen,” he exclaimed.

Haslett-Marroquin is full of that kind of thinking. Allowing poultry to roam in apple orchards is another of these sustainable symbiotic relationships. Apples are allowed to drop with some harvested for cider and the rest left for the birds, increasing health through better digestion and producing a specialty bird that tastes better because of its feed.

“It’s all natural and balanced in chemistry and nutrition,” he said. “You don’t need to bring in carbon, fertilizer...”

One thing Haslett-Marroquin says cannot be overlooked is an understanding of the process. “Anything we do must be understood by the people who do it,” he explained. “Our success is in the joy of the farmer who is doing it. The farmer has to understand it to be engaged.”

Pairing the farmers strengthens the potential for success by maximizing components of entrepreneurial development through a mentoring relationship from which the Latino farmer can eventually branch off on his or her own.

What advice does Haslett-Marroquin have for anyone considering a free-range poultry program? Drop everything you have read and go with instinct. “It is a labor intensive process and we know that labor intensive systems don’t always work. Challenge traditional poultry systems. There is nothing complicated about the project. If you want to change the system, talk to us or start from scratch,” he said.

Rural Advantage is a nonprofit corporation based in Fairmont, Minnesota. Their mission is to promote the connections between agriculture, the environment and rural communities in order to improve ecological health, economic viability and rural vitality. Their work centers around efforts to reduce agricultural nonpoint source pollution with major programming focused on the 3rd Crop Initiative, ECoPayPack development and building the Madelia Model concept. Contact them at 507-238-5449 or visit their website at www.ruraladvantage.org for more information.

Grant Opportunities:

SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES 41 WATERSHEDS TO TAKE PART IN MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN INITIATIVE *Initiative Will Provide Approximately \$320 Million in USDA Assistance In Basin Area*

WASHINGTON, November 23, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that 41 watersheds in 12 states, known as Focus Areas, have been selected to participate in a new initiative to improve water quality and the overall health of the Mississippi River Basin. The selected watersheds cover over 42 million acres, or more than 5 percent of the Basin's land area.

"The USDA is committed to working cooperatively with agricultural producers, partner organizations and State and local agencies to improve water quality and the quality of life for the tens of millions of people who live in the Mississippi River Basin, the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative will help" Vilsack said. "Today's announcement is another step toward achieving this goal, and I encourage as many eligible participants as possible to join us in this major conservation effort."

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI), which was announced on September 24, 2009, will provide approximately \$320 million in USDA financial assistance over the next four years for voluntary projects in priority watersheds in Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin. MRBI will help producers implement conservation and management practices that prevent, control and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages the initiative. NRCS State Conservationists from the 12 watershed states selected the watersheds with guidance from State Technical Committees and state water quality agencies. Selections were based on the potential for managing nitrogen and phosphorus -- nutrients associated with water quality problems in the Basin -- while maintaining agricultural productivity and benefiting wildlife.

Next, smaller watershed projects will be selected through a competitive process under NRCS' Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI). NRCS assistance will be leveraged with contributions from partners, expanding the capacity available to improve water quality throughout the Basin.

Three requests for project proposals will be announced in the next several weeks, including one for CCPI. Funding for CCPI projects will come from NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program.

Two other requests for proposals will fund projects through the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program and Conservation Innovation Grants. For information about these programs, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

U.S. EPA Accepting Applications for Environmental Education Grants

U.S. EPA is accepting grant applications for a total of \$3.4 million in funding for environmental education projects and programs. EPA expects to award approximately 100 grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$200,000 and will accept applications until **December 15, 2009**.

The purpose of the Environmental Education Grant Program is to promote environmental stewardship and help develop knowledgeable and responsible students, teachers and citizens. The grants provide financial support for innovative projects that design, demonstrate, or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques. **Projects should involve environmental education activities that go beyond disseminating information.**

The Environmental Education Grant Program provides funding to local education agencies, **state education or environmental agencies**, colleges or universities, not-for-profit organizations, or

noncommercial educational broadcasting entities. Tribal education agencies, which are controlled by an Indian tribe, band, or nation, may also apply, including a school or community college.

More information is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/enviroed/grants.html>.

Minnesota Waters grant applications due Dec. 11

Applications for Minnesota Waters Conservation Partnership grants must be post-marked by Dec. 11, 2009. Seven \$5,000 grants will be awarded. Grants provide funding for citizen-led lake and river improvement projects across the state, including, but not limited to:

- Shoreland habitat improvement projects
- Shoreland restoration projects
- Inventorying and assessment projects
- AIS prevention projects
- Outreach and education projects benefitting lake and stream health

Download Conservation Partnership grant criteria and application at: <http://www.minnesotawaters.org>
Contact Erica LeMoine at erical@minnesotawaters.org for more information.

Events:

December 1st (Tuesday) is a Chippewa River Watershed Stakeholder Meeting starting at 1:00 p.m. at McKinney's on Southside in Benson (300 14th Street South). For more information <http://www.chippewariver.com/>

December 1st and 2nd (Tuesday and Wednesday) is the **Growing the Bioeconomy: Solutions for Sustainability Conference** at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center. Agricultural producers, landowners, community and business leaders, citizens and students interested in economic development and biorenewables are encouraged to attend and identify ways they can participate in agriculturally-based and forest-based solutions to the global climate change and energy supply issues facing Minnesota. Details and registration at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/biorenewables>

December 8th (Tuesday) is **Progressive Power: Owning it in the Upper Minnesota River Watershed** special session starting at 7:00 p.m. at the Clean Up the River office in Montevideo. Progressive Power means promoting and capturing the economic and environmental benefits of energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy as smart ways to create sustainable rural communities and energy independent homes. For more information <http://www.cureriver.org/events.html>

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

Water Quality Articles:

[Public sounds off on CapX 2020 project](#) (Marshall Independent). A proposed high-voltage power line project has taken another step forward in the planning stages, and the Office of Energy Security was accepting public comments on CapX 2020 Tuesday in Marshall.

[Trouble with Minneapolis Water Plant](#) (Fox 9). The City of Minneapolis says its new water plant produces some of the cleanest water in the country. But the FOX 9 investigators discovered that plant has had problems from the get go and will now be shutting down for the next eight months.

[Lawmakers question Lake Pepin water-quality evaluation](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). A pair of Minnesota lawmakers expressed frustration Monday with a developing plan to evaluate pollution problems in Lake Pepin, a widening of the Mississippi River between Minnesota and Wisconsin.

[Klobuchar's food safety bill headed to Senate floor](#) (MinnPost). A food safety bill meant to improve the Food and Drug Administration's food-borne illness prevention, detection and response in the wake of the widespread salmonella outbreak that killed at least three Minnesotans this year is headed to the Senate floor for a vote.

[Prof dedicates career to environment](#) (MN Daily). There's really no such thing as a typical day for University of Minnesota Professor Deborah Swackhamer.

[Thinking small is BioCee's big idea](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). U spinoff BioCee aims for a big energy impact by growing microscopic organisms.

[Birds migrate by 'seeing' Earth's magnetic field](#) (MinnPost). When birds migrate over long distances – sometimes thousands of miles – they usually end up exactly the same place year after year.

[Heritage council will hear \\$148 million in proposals](#) (Minnesota Outdoor News). The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council will hear nearly \$148 million worth of requests as it assembles funding recommendations for the second round of dedicated funding.

[Xcel execs fly high in leased jets, at ratepayers' expense](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Xcel Energy Inc. has taken heat for charging Minnesota ratepayers for lavish entertainment expenses, but it also operates costly airplanes that ferry around top brass and other employees almost daily, primarily between Denver and St. Paul -- with ratepayers picking up the tab.

[S.D. dairy producer cited for pollution violations](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). South Dakota environmental officials have cited the operation for allowing manure ponds at two dairies near Minnesota to fill up.

[Asian carp may have invaded Great Lakes](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Federal officials say the despised Asian carp may have breached an electronic barrier designed to prevent it from invading the Great Lakes and jeopardizing the \$7 billion sport fishery industry.

[Dreaded carp near Lake Michigan](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Asian carp are close to Lake Michigan, raising 'code-red' alarms to keep the fish out of the Great Lakes.

[Are too many forests being cut down for biomass?](#) (Associated Press). Forests are a treasure trove of limbs and bark that can be made into alternative fuels and some worry the increasing trend of using that logging debris will make those materials too scarce, harming the woodlands.

[Bending the waters of Nine Mile Creek](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Hopkins will have a prettier, cleaner creek when Nine Mile Creek is restored and rechanneled.

The human spirit needs places where nature has not been rearranged by the hand of man. – Author Unknown

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

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