

Minnesota River Watershed Alliance Quarterly Meeting

Last night a group of citizens, group agency staff and river advocates came out to Hutchinson for the quarterly meeting of the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance. The group heard about the status of a number of initiatives the Watershed Alliance is involved in, a 5-day paddling trip down the Minnesota River this past summer by Darby Nelson and the formation of a new citizens group called the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance by their director Michael McKay. More about the meeting will be forthcoming in the next Minnesota River Weekly Update.

Moose on the loose in Fargo tranquilized – MN Public Radio

Fargo, N.D. (AP) — Law enforcement and animal experts in the Fargo area surrounded a young bull moose at a local hotel, tranquilized it with a dart gun and released it in a wildlife area in northern Cass County.

Thirteen officers with the Fargo and West Fargo police departments and the state Highway Patrol contained the moose Wednesday morning in a courtyard area at the Mainstay Suites in the western part of Fargo.

Fargo Police Sgt. Ross Renner says a local veterinarian, an official from the local zoo and the state Game and Fish Department were called in to help. The moose was painted with white X's so that hunters will know not to shoot and eat the animal, since they could get sick because of the tranquilizer.

Sgt. Jeff Skuza says moose typically follow the Red River, but occasionally they wander into the city. Skuza says Fargo-area authorities deal with moose incidents a couple of times a year. (October 14, 2009)

Woody Biomass Harvester Demo Rescheduled

The Case New Holland woody biomass harvesting demonstration at the University of Minnesota's Southern Research and Outreach Center (SROC) will no longer be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2009. Due to logistical issues, Case New Holland will be unable to transport the machine and prepare for a demonstration by the previously scheduled date.

The demonstration has been rescheduled for **Wednesday, October 28, 2009**, from 12:00pm to 3:00pm. Questions and conversation regarding woody biomass for renewable energy and the New Holland FR9000 / 130FB Header will be conducted at 12:00pm and 2:00pm. The Woody Biomass Forage Harvester Demonstration Field Day will be held in the willow trials at SROC's Agricultural Ecology Research Farm.

Partners for this event include: Case New Holland; University of Minnesota Southern Research and Outreach Center; Rural Advantage; University of Minnesota Extension; Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management; University of Minnesota College of Forestry, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences; and University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources.

Directions to SROC's Agricultural Ecology Research Farm: From State Hwy 14, follow signage for State Hwy 14 West. Immediately look for Co. Rd. 27. It will take you past the Waseca Airport. Follow to Co. Rd. 57 and the road construction. Travel east about 1.0 mile to Agricultural Ecology Research Farm.

Questions or concerns? Contact: Dr. Gregg Johnson – SROC – johns510@umn.edu 507-837-5617 or Jill Sackett – UM Extension and Rural Advantage – sacke032@umn.edu 507-238-5449

Healthy Home Presentation By Clean Water Fund - Make your home safer and avoid everyday toxins

Clean Water Fund invites you to join us for a free Healthy Home Presentation

- Thursday, October 22 at 7:00 PM

- Centenary United Methodist Church - 501 South 2nd Street, Mankato; (corner of 2nd St and Cherry)

Minnesotans are involuntarily exposed to toxic chemicals in everyday consumer products, including toys, baby bottles, plastics, cosmetics, pesticides and food. These toxic substances accumulate in our bodies and pose a significant threat to our most vulnerable-our children. Our presentation will include easy steps to make your home safer and avoid everyday toxins. Everyone is welcome!

Email [Julie Jansen](#) if you can attend or if you have questions. This is part of Clean Water's Healthy Legacy Campaign. For more details on the campaign, see [our website](#).

Prairie Biomass Harvest Field Day at Morris

A field day will be held October 29, 2009, near Morris, Minnesota, to discuss the impacts and benefits of harvesting prairie plants for biomass. The Prairie Biomass Harvest Field Day will be held from 1:00pm to 3:00pm at a local research plot being utilized by Dr. Clarence Lehman, University of Minnesota, and partners.

The field of renewable energy is important to the United States and Minnesota. Minnesota is capable of producing many different types of biomass for the renewable energy sector; one of which is the grasses and forbs that make up our prairies. But how does biomass harvest affect the health of the native plants and animals that call the prairie home? Dr. Clarence Lehman and partners are conducting research in different areas of Minnesota to try to answer that question.

The field day will include discussions on the research being done and the multiple benefits of using prairie plants for renewable fuels. There will also be a chance for attendees to voice any questions they may have. The event will end with a look at the research plots and harvesting equipment. This is an outdoors event. Please dress accordingly.

Partners for this event include: University of Minnesota, Rural Advantage, South Dakota State University, EcoSun Prairie Farms, Minnesota Native Landscapes, University of Minnesota Extension, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture through a Conservation Innovation Grant.

Directions: The field day site is near Glacial Lake State Park. From Morris travel east on State Hwy 28 for about 19 miles to the city of Starbuck. Travel south on State Hwy 29 out of Starbuck for about 2 miles. At curve of State Hwy 29, continue traveling south on Co Rd 41 about ¾ mile. Travel east on Co Rd 74 about 2 miles. Turn south on Co Rd 13 about 1 mile. Site will be near the intersection of Co Rd 13 and 255th St.

Field days will be held rain or shine. However, difficult traveling will be call for cancelation. For weather related cancellations due to snow or ice, please contact: 763-234-3846

IN COLD AND FLU SEASON, BE PREPARED, NOT SORRY: REPLACE MERCURY THERMOMETERS WITH DIGITAL ONES

St. Paul, Minn. -- It's 3 a.m. Your two-year-old is crying. Her forehead is hot and you fear she's running a fever. You rush to get a thermometer. You grab one, but in your haste, you drop it. It breaks, and mercury beads shoot across the bathroom floor. Now you've not only got a sick kid, but a potentially health-threatening mercury spill to deal with, too.

"Lately we've been advising more people on how to clean up spilled mercury from broken fever thermometers, probably because they're using them more with the advent of cold and flu season," said Lisa Yantachka, an emergency responder with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). "But running the risk of compounding your problems by having a mercury thermometer in the house at all just doesn't make sense."

While the vapor given off from spilled mercury is a neurotoxin that can be health threatening if it is inhaled at a high enough concentration or over a long period, mercury spills in the home almost always can be cleaned up so that they do not pose a danger. However, cleaning up a spill properly will take time and considerable care. And cleanup can be expensive; if the mercury is spilled on a carpet, the contaminated portion will have to be cut out and discarded. If it is spilled on a mattress or upholstered chair, the mattress or chair will have to be thrown away. Larger spills or widespread contamination may even require the services of an environmental contractor.

"Digital thermometers are now the standard in the health care industry," Yantachka said. "They are as accurate as mercury thermometers, but unlike mercury thermometers, they can't create a health and environmental hazard."

Yantachka urges people to replace all the mercury thermometers in their homes - fever and cooking - with digital thermometers and to take their mercury thermometers to their local household hazardous waste facility for proper disposal. Contact information for Minnesota's county household hazardous waste facilities may be found at www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/hhw/hhw-localprograms.html or by calling the MPCA at 651-296-6300 or 1-800-657-3864.

If you break a mercury fever thermometer, you can probably clean up the spilled mercury, but you'll need to exercise considerable care, Yantachka said. Immediately after the spill:

Isolate the spill and ventilate the area. Keep all people and pets away from the spill area. Open windows and exterior doors. Close all doors between the room where the spill occurred and the rest of the house. Close all cold air returns so that mercury vapor is not carried throughout the house. Turn down heaters and turn up window air conditioners. Turn off central air conditioning. Turn off fans unless they vent to the outdoors. Use fans to blow mercury-contaminated air outside.

If mercury has touched your skin shoes, or clothing, stay still and have someone bring you a plastic trash bag and wet paper towels. Wipe off any visible beads of mercury with the wet paper towels and put them in the trash bag. Check your shirt pockets for mercury. Remove contaminated shoes and clothing and place them in the trash bag. Seal the bag and put it in the trash. Shower well. If you feel you've inhaled a lot of mercury vapor, call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Decide whether you can clean up the spill yourself, which you may be able to do if the spill involved a single fever thermometer on a hard, smooth surface. Call the Minnesota Duty Officer at 1-800-422-0798 to report the spill, any time, day or night. The Duty Officer will put you in touch with an MPCA emergency responder who will advise you on cleaning up the spill.

For more information on cleaning up a mercury spill, see the MPCA fact sheet, "Cleaning up spilled mercury in the home," at www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/hhw-mercuryspills.pdf. If you break a fluorescent light, see the "Fluorescent Light Bulbs: Use Them, Recycle Them" fact sheet at www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/w-hhw4-30.pdf.

Powering up on Canola

ROSEAU — A crop known mainly as healthy cooking oil is making a name for itself in a different arena: fueling trucks and tractors.

According to Steve Dahl, canola is being used to create biodiesel fuel. On-farm tests show pickups running on canola fuel worked well; other tests provided similar results in tractors.

Dahl farmed canola in Roseau beginning in the early 1990s. He raised about 500 acres annually before retiring three years ago. Canola is an important crop in Canada where more than 10 million acres are cultivated each year, but in the U.S. canola acres have dropped from 200,000 acres to about 12,000.

While the crop's popularity lagged, its use as biofuel could be an opening for renewed interest in developing winter canola better suited to warmer climates.

Dahl, along with the University of Minnesota – Crookston, crushed canola seeds to extract the oil. The oil was then processed into biodiesel. About a ton of canola was pressed daily producing 70-80 gallons of fuel. He reports the biodiesel worked well in his trucks.

After mastering the process of crushing the oil and processing biodiesel they re-evaluated the system and decided to investigate using straight vegetable oil (SVO) instead of biodiesel, "Now they aren't even converting it to biodiesel. They are using straight oil in an older tractor and it seems to be working," Dahl explained.

Presently the only plant making biofuel from canola on a large scale is in North Dakota. However, Dahl said there is quite a bit of interest in using small-scale presses to extract the oil for use on the farm and then using the meal for feed. "Some smaller specialty crushers in Wisconsin are running the oil in their tractors and feeding the meal right to their cattle," Dahl said.

The primary canola markets are oil - 90 percent - and meal. Canola is a great biofuel option because of its high oil-to-meal ratio. Most oil goes to two plants in North Dakota and Manitoba, Canada.

A \$175 million processing plant is in the works at Hallack, MN, but completion is uncertain. Markets aren't a problem for farmers near these plants and with the Internet farmers can even market directly to buyers or elevators.

Canola grows well in the northern tier of the U.S. but if temperatures become too high when the crop flowers it can be disastrous. Efforts are underway in places like Georgia, Kansas and Nebraska to create a winter canola. In Kansas it's touted as an alternative to winter wheat helping to get another crop in the rotation

Dahl was heavily involved in canola development in the U.S. for about 12 years through farming, education and involvement in the U.S. Canola Association where he was president.

He advises interested farmers to try canola, though he admits soybeans are tough competition, especially in areas that haven't had it before. Caution is important. "Plant, but do your research," he said.

"The future is winter canola," Dahl predicted. "We can raise winter wheat, why not winter canola?"

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.

Job Opportunities:

Coon Creek Watershed District Operations & Maintenance Coordinator

This position exists to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Coon Creek Watershed through the management of the public and private water conveyance system within the District to the maximum extent practicable. The objectives of this position are:

- To ensure efficient, safe, and reliable operation of the conveyance system of the watershed
- To supervise the performance of routine maintenance so that the system can operate in an economical, safe, and reliable manner.
- To be cognizant of the overall condition and performance of the hydrologic system of the watershed
- To preserve the location, character and extent of the District's ditch and conveyance systems.
- To inspect, maintain and restore, where needed, riparian lands and buffers.
- Compensation: 31,500 - 46,500
- Hours: 40 hours per week

- Deadline: Friday, November 06, 2009
- Visit our website for more info, including a full description www.cooncreekwd.org

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Annual Inspections to assess the general condition of the entire drainage system for identification of maintenance needs.
2. Issues and Complaints/Non-Routine Maintenance to investigate and respond within 5 business days to unanticipated and unplanned circumstances, events, or conditions that may affect the water and related land resources of the watershed. Ensure the flow of water in a manner that does not create threats to the public, health, safety, or welfare.
3. Construction - Coordinate construction of bank stabilization devices, water control structures or drainage facilities, or the increase in capacity of existing systems.
4. Routine Maintenance and Repair - Coordinate scheduled maintenance activities of CCWD-owned or operated portions of the drainage and stormwater system. Coordinate restorative construction work typically involving forestry practices or heavy excavating equipment.
5. Evaluation of Operations and Maintenance Practices - Annually review operational and maintenance procedures and performance to minimize expenses.
6. Coordination of Demonstration Projects – Demonstration projects involve the application, construction, or installation of new or innovative practices to treat water quality. The District will encourage and may contribute funding to such projects.

Minimum Requirements – a B.S. degree in natural resource management, watershed management, hydrology, soil or water resources or engineering.

1. Familiarity with land management, description, and regulation
2. Experience with operating and working with GPS units
3. Experience in working with CAD & GIS
4. Experience in illicit discharge detection and elimination
5. Experience with agricultural drainage and municipal stormwater management
6. Experience with STS & BMP construction and maintenance
7. Water quality and wetland delineation experience preferred.
8. Good record keeping, and computer and public relations skills.
9. Good communication and public relations skills.
10. Shows initiative, can work under deadlines and as part of a team.
11. Valid drivers license; is willing to use personal vehicle for District work and be reimbursed for mileage and expenses

Desirable Training and Experience

1. Courteous and tactful in dealing with the public and representatives from other agencies.
2. Service-oriented.
3. Willing to learn and to try new methods in performing tasks.
4. Team-oriented. The landowner as well as local, federal, and state agencies can be both constituents and colleagues depending on the circumstances.
5. Awareness of long and short term consequences of decisions.
6. Open and truthful communication.
7. Business-oriented.

Benefits: In addition to salary, the District will provide the employee with the following benefits: Holidays (11 per year), Personal Time Off (PTO), Health, Dental, Medical, Long-term Disability and Life Insurance, Retirement, Mileage, Expenses

Send resume to: Coon Creek Watershed District; 12301 Central Ave NE, Suite 100; Blaine, MN 55434 or email to: tkelly@cooncreekwd.org

Events:

October 26th – 27th (Monday and Tuesday) is the **Water Resources Conference** at RiverCentre, St Paul. The Minnesota Water Resources Conference presents innovative and practical water resource management techniques and highlights research about Minnesota's water resources. For more information, <http://wrc.umn.edu/waterconf/index.htm>

October 29th (Tuesday) is **Mike Lynch Minnesota Starwatch** at 7 p.m. at the Ney Nature Center outside of Henderson. Spend the night with the stars, constellations, planets, star clusters, galaxies, and nebulae. We start off with an indoor orientation followed by quality time outside under the heavens. Get to know the constellations and the great stories behind them. We'll also use large reflecting telescopes, including a giant 20" reflector, one of the biggest mobile telescopes in Minnesota for close up views of star clusters, nebulae, galaxies and other celestial treasures in our skies. You're invited to bring lawn chairs to make yourself comfy! Dress for outside weather! **Register with Community Education** <http://lesueur.registryinsight.com/>

November 7 (Saturday) is the **Crisis as Opportunity: Redesigning the Good Life Conference** from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the School Sisters of Notre Dame Mankato Provincial House Conference Center (170 Good Counsel Drive. For more information: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/thegoodlife.pdf>

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

Water Quality Articles:

[Cargill using soybeans to lower oil use in foam](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Have you ever felt soybeans in your couch, or mattress? Well they might be there, even if you can't feel them.

[A chicken in every yard? St. Paul City Council to vote on loosening restrictions](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). The St. Paul City Council votes today on a proposed ordinance that would loosen restrictions on owning chickens.

[Weatherization help available](#) (Mankato Free Press). Minnesota Valley Action Council can help qualifying homeowners seal some cracks and save money on their energy bills.

[New Ulm 'bullying' its way to wind energy, landowners say](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). For the first time in Minnesota, the powerful government tool known as eminent domain could be used to take property rights in a wind energy project.

[British explorers say within a decade North Pole summers will be virtually ice free](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). British explorers say within a decade North Pole summers will be virtually ice free.

[EPA releases finding on greenhouse gases suppressed by Bush administration](#) (Rochester Post Bulletin). The Environmental Protection Agency on Tuesday released a copy of a long-suppressed report by officials in the George W. Bush administration concluding that, based on the science, the government should begin regulating greenhouse gas emissions because global warming posed serious risks to the country.

[Specialty-crop growers get federal funds](#) (MinnPost). Specialty-crop growers in Minnesota will be getting a \$578,000 boost from the federal government to increase competitiveness, according to Senator Amy Klobuchar.

[In schools, even chemistry is going green](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Remember working with toxic chemicals in your high school or college chemistry lab? Well, chemistry professors these days are trying some new approaches to minimize the amount of hazardous substance students are exposed to.

[Pheasant opener factors: corn, cold](#) (Minnesota Outdoor News). For those hunters who stepped into the frosty morning that was the 2009 pheasant hunting opener, it seemed more like late November than mid-October; snow fell over most of southern Minnesota the previous night, and winds gave the cold added teeth.

[Arctic Ocean meltdown: Say goodbye to the Arctic ice cap](#) (MinnPost). It's been another lean summer for the Arctic Ocean's sheath of summer sea ice.

[Businesses clash with U.S. chamber over climate change legislation](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Some Minnesota businesses are opposing the U.S. Chamber of Commerce position on climate change legislation.

[Cargill recalls more than 5,500 pounds of beef tongue](#) (MinnPost). Cargill is recalling more than 5,500 pounds of beef tongue because the tonsils might not have been completely removed.

[Bicyclists pedal climate message](#) (Mankato Free Press). Reed Aronow is on a 350-mile bike trek to depoliticize one of the most politically divisive of issues — global warming.

[Editorial: Unglamorous but important work](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Carver County septic system case raises questions about fairness.

[Does air pollution trigger appendicitis?](#) (MinnPost). A report in the Canadian Medical Association Journal suggests some cases of appendicitis in adults may be triggered by short-term exposure to air pollution.

[Yard waste bags are going green](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Black plastic yard bags are on their way out. State law will require compostable bags for most of the metro area.

[Target to begin paying for reusable shopping bags](#) (MinnPost). Target will begin paying customers next month to bring their own shopping bags from home.

Nature chose for a tool, not the earthquake or lightning to rend and split asunder, not the stormy torrent or eroding rain, but the tender snow-flowers noiselessly falling through unnumbered centuries. – John Muir

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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