

Stand Up for the Outcrops – Help Protect and Preserve Our Area’s Natural Beauty

Kay and Annette Fernholz, Earthrise Farm

Big Stone County is called such for a reason - it's gorgeous granite outcrops, which greet resident and visitor alike, are prominent features of the landscape there along the Minnesota River. These outcrops are an integral part of one of the most scenic and naturally beautiful places in our part of the state. With its historical, ecological, spiritual and cultural importance, this area must be protected and preserved.

After six years of planning, with the help of Big Stone County officials, Strata Corporation of Grand Forks, ND has applied for a conditional use permit to mine the granite outcrops along the Minnesota River just south of Ortonville, north of the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. The project, slated to continue for the next 130 years, will decimate the outcrops, jeopardize the habitat of our regions rare ball cactus, and destroy one of western Minnesota's most scenic landscapes. The project application finally saw the light of day just six weeks ago. Citizens were caught unaware. Today, a groundswell of local opposition has organized to try to bring the facts of this case out into the open.

We will be attending the next meeting of the County's Planning Commission this Thursday, February 16, beginning at 7:30pm in Clinton, MN. A gathering before the meeting to start at 6pm will include food and plans for the protest. Through our strong yet peaceful presence at this meeting we aim to send the message to the County Commissioners that this project should not be allowed to move forward.

The staff of Earthrise Farm & Education Center believe in the importance and urgency of our collective action to stop Strata from devastating part of what makes our area unique and wonderful. Earthrise Farm will work with those interested in attending the meeting to carpool to Clinton; please contact erfarm@hotmail.com or call 320-752-4700 if you'd like to rideshare or have questions.

Please visit the links below to Anne Queenan's blog "Cardinalis Giganticus", for more information on this matter.

<http://cardinalisgiganticus.posterous.com/93526112>

<http://cardinalisgiganticus.posterous.com/common-ground-and-open-hearts>

Speeding up government: DNR achieves 99 percent permit efficiency

In its latest report on permitting efficiency to the Minnesota Legislature, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reports it has met new targets for expediting permit applications 99.6 percent of the time.

New permit efficiency expectations require DNR permit applications from industry and other entities to be approved or denied within 150 days.

A year ago, Gov. Mark Dayton signed an executive order directing the DNR and MPCA to meet the benchmark to ensure quick response to industry requests. The DNR's nearly 100 percent efficiency delivers on Dayton's promise that DNR should "move at the speed of commerce," as the governor said last year.

"The report shows the DNR is responsive to companies and other entities that require speedy review of their permit requests, while still safeguarding the state's natural resources," said DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr. "In this economic environment, I'm pleased to show that the DNR is not only able to meet expectations, but exceed them."

In many cases, DNR staff was able to render decisions on permits in less than two weeks, and often within a few days.

In addition to Dayton's executive order, the governor signed legislation codifying the 150-day permit decision goal for the DNR. "It's a goal we take very seriously," Landwehr said.

As part of the legislation, the DNR and other agencies are required to deliver semiannual reports to the Legislature on permitting efficiency on Feb. 1 and Aug. 1.

The report examines the efficiency of permitting in the following categories: water appropriations, public waters work, aquatic plant management, endangered species takings, and mining. For any permit that fails to meet the goal, the DNR is also required to report the reasons for not meeting goal, steps it will take to complete action on the application and the expected timeline to meet the goal.

Between July 1, 2011, and Dec. 31, 2011, the DNR received 894 permit applications. Staff deemed 855 permit applications complete and made 891 permit decisions. The DNR missed the 150-day goal on only three permits during the reporting period, but all three permits have since been issued. In all three cases, which involved water appropriation or public waters work, the permit deadline was missed because of a combination of lack of staff and the state government shutdown last summer.

The vast majority of DNR permits during the reporting period involved water appropriations, work that would be done within public waters and aquatic plant management. In most cases, DNR staff made decisions on new permits within a day or two. Public waters work took more time, but staff was still able to make decisions on applications, on average, within two weeks.

Changes to permits took longer, but DNR staff was able, on average, to render decisions on applications between two and four weeks. On an iron ore and taconite mining permit, staff was able to render a decision within 79 days.

Coming soon to a stream near you: The Secchi tube (Waterfront Bulletin)

Beginning in the 2012 monitoring season, the MPCA will be replacing the equipment it uses for monitoring transparency in streams. This change will affect the Citizen Stream Monitoring Program, MPCA staff monitoring, and other activities supported by the MPCA. Currently, stream water monitoring is conducted with a "transparency tube", which measures the maximum depth at which a black-and-white disk is visible through a column of stream water.

The new piece of equipment, called a "Secchi tube" (pronounced "SEK-ee"), functions on the same principle, but works more like a Secchi disk, which is used in lakes

With a Secchi tube, the user lowers a small disk into a tube of stream water until it disappears, rather than draining water from the tube until the disk appears at the bottom.

This change will result in more accurate data and streamlined processes for data reporting. Because all monitoring will be conducted with longer, 100-centimeter tubes, there will be fewer streams in which water quality exceeds the measuring capacity of the equipment. In addition, the new tubes are easier to use, and allow the user to fine-tune their reading without refilling the tube.

For more information about this change, or to see a video of the new Secchi tubes in action, visit the MPCA's webpage, ["Citizen Stream Monitoring Program Introduces Secchi Tube."](#)

National Archives releases historical photos of pollution (Waterfront Bulletin)

The National Archives recently released more than 15,000 environmental images that were part of a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency project from the 1970s. The project, known as "Documerica," was an attempt to document the state of the environment during that decade.

By the time Documerica ended in 1978, freelance photographers from across the country had submitted more than 80,000 pictures. And during the coming year, the National Archives will release a portion of them in a series of traveling displays. Some of those are currently available online, and more than 500 were taken here in Minnesota



The 1973 photo above by Donald Emmerich shows garbage and algae choking the backwaters of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis.

The online gallery of photos can be searched by topic, photographer and geographic location. View these pictures on the [National Archives website](#).

Lincoln SWCD has changed their mailing address:

Could you update your information and send out a group e-mail that Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District's contact information has changed?

- New Address: 328 E George St, Ivanhoe, MN 56142
- Phone #: 507-694-1630 (has stayed the same)
- Fax #: 507-694-1666

Thank you and have a nice day, Pauline VanOverbeke

MPCA invites comments on proposed biofuels plant in Le Sueur

Mankato, Minn. — The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is inviting interested parties to comment on an Environmental Assessment Worksheet prepared for Minnesota Municipal Power Agency's proposed biofuels plant in the city of Le Sueur, which is about 40 miles southwest of the Twin Cities.

The plant, called Hometown BioEnergy, would convert 45,000 tons a year of agricultural and food-processing waste, such as corn silage, into three products: methane biogas that would be burned to create electricity; liquid fertilizer that would be applied to nearby cropland; and a residual solid material that would be converted into burnable pellets. The plant would generate eight megawatts of electricity and deliver it directly to the city of Le Sueur, population 4,000.

The plant's total building area would be 25,500 square feet on a site 35 acres in size. The site is a depleted gravel pit on the south side of Le Sueur surrounded by cropland, an airport, and an operating gravel mine. The nearest home is more than 1,000 feet from the proposed food-waste storage area, byproduct storage area, and main facility. The Minnesota River is 1.2 miles to the west, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is 4.3 miles to the north, and a Le Sueur County wildlife protection area is 4.2 miles to the south.

For this project, the MPCA is the state agency responsible for administering permits for air emissions, stormwater management, above-ground tanks, and land application of industrial byproducts. The city of Le Sueur is responsible for rezoning of the site and permits for building.

The Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) provides basic information about how a proposed project could affect the environment and helps determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement, a more comprehensive environmental review, is needed.

On March 20, from 6:30-9:00 p.m., the MPCA will also host a public informational meeting on the project at the Park Elementary School auditorium in Le Sueur. Comments on the project will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on March 27.

Copies of the Hometown BioEnergy worksheet are available at the MPCA St. Paul office, 520 Lafayette Road N.; or the worksheet may be seen on the MPCA's [Hometown BioEnergy EAW webpage](#).

Send questions and comments on the Hometown BioEnergy worksheet to William Lynott, MPCA, 520 Lafayette Road N., Saint Paul MN 55155-4194. Lynott can also be reached by phone at 651-757-2542 or by email at william.lynott@state.mn.us. Comments can be sent to Lynott through March 27.

In addition to the worksheet, the MPCA's draft Air Emissions permit and State Disposal System (SDS) permit will be available for public comment at a later date. The contact person for the Air Emissions permit is Adriane Lenshek (phone 651-757-2526) and the contact person for the SDS permit is Kate Frantz (phone 651-757-2370).

Take advantage of Take-A-Kid Ice Fishing Weekend Feb. 18-20

Minnesotans who want to introduce a child to ice fishing may want to take advantage of Take-A-Kid Ice Fishing Weekend Feb. 18-20. During those days resident anglers age 16 and older do not need a fishing license if they are accompanied by a child younger than age 16. This weekend is also an opportunity for kids to introduce an adult to ice fishing.

"Many kids now know how to make a jiggle stick and how to use it by attending our clinics or learning from classroom curriculum," said Roland Sigurdson, MinnAqua specialist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "For kids eager to fish, Feb. 18-20 could also be called take an adult ice fishing weekend."

Sigurdson encouraged anglers venturing out on the ice to be extra cautious given varying ice conditions throughout the state. The best way to determine ice conditions is to check with local bait shops or the county sheriff's office. DNR ice safety information is available at www.mndnr.gov/icesafety.

Several Minnesota state parks are offering Take-A-Kid Ice Fishing opportunities during this special weekend. The clinics offer an indoor presentation on ice fishing safety, gear and techniques. Participants should dress for the weather because ice fishing will be among activities at most clinics. Kids will make their own jiggle sticks to take home.

Clinics are offered Saturday, Feb. 18, at Sakatah Lake State Park near Waterville, Scenic State Park near Bigfork, Bear Head Lake State Park near Ely, and Cloquet Middle School in Cloquet. Lake Bemidji State Park offers a Berrrrmidji Kids' Ice Fishing event on Sunday, Feb. 19. Kids ages 8-15 can join the Lake Bemidji State Park naturalist for perch fishing on Lake Bemidji.

Participants must register for events by contacting the appropriate state park or MinnAqua staff at www.dnr.state.mn.us/takeakidicefishing/index.html.

Tips for a successful ice fishing trip are available online at www.mndnr.gov/minnaqua.

An educational podcast about ice fishing featuring Mike Kurre, DNR mentoring coordinator, and Mike "Smitty" Smith of "Ice Team" is at files.dnr.state.mn.us/news/podcasts/KidsAndIceFishing.mp3.

Clean Water Fund investments on track according to state report

St. Paul, Minn. – Minnesota agencies that receive Clean Water Fund dollars released their first collaborative report today, indicating the state is on track with its investments so far, though many challenges remain.

For example, the report found that:

- For every state dollar invested in implementation activities such as improvements to municipal sewage plants and buffers to control agricultural runoff, an additional \$1.45 was leveraged through local and federal partnerships.
- Although the pace of activities to restore polluted lakes and streams is being accelerated by Clean Water Funds, requests for clean-up funds are about three times greater than what is available.
- Drinking water protection efforts are on track, but there is a growing concern about nitrate levels in new wells and in certain vulnerable aquifers.

“This report reflects the acceleration and enhancement of water resource management made possible by the Clean Water Fund,” said Rebecca Flood, assistant commissioner at Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Money in the Clean Water Fund comes from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment that Minnesotans passed in 2008. The Legacy Amendment increased the state sales tax by three-eighths of 1 percent beginning on July 1, 2009 and continuing until 2034. Thirty-three percent of the revenue is distributed to the Clean Water Fund.

Approximately \$152 million was invested in the first two years for water management activities like monitoring, planning and on-the-ground restoration and protection activities.

The report helps Minnesotans understand connections between Clean Water funds invested, actions taken and outcomes achieved in 2010-2011.

The 18 measures in the report provide a snapshot of how Clean Water Fund dollars are being spent and the progress that’s been made. The measures are organized into three sections: investment, surface water quality, and drinking water protection. These measures are part of a larger set that will be used to consistently track and report clean water outcomes over the life of the amendment.

Each measure has a status ranking and trend information. Of the 18 measures, status and trends vary; six measures showed improving trends, 11 showed no trend or were too early to assess, and one showed a slightly declining trend.

“We understand that people want to see immediate results from Clean Water Fund investments,” said Julie Blackburn, assistant director at the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. “However managing Minnesota’s water resources is a long-term endeavor that will take the efforts of many – from state agencies, to local governments to citizens.”

It is important to note that the report does not include information on other ongoing water-related work as it would be impossible to measure everything in one report or project. This report is the beginning of what is to come over the next 25 years in outcome-based water quality data and information.

To view the 2012 Clean Water Performance Report on the web, go to www.legacy.leg.mn. For general questions about the report, contact Jennifer Maleitzke at 651-757-2549.

For more information about the individual measures in the report, contact:

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency: Jennifer Maleitzke, 651-757-2549
- Minnesota Department of Health: Tannie Eshenaur, 651-201-4074
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture: Margaret Wagner, 651-201-6488
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Andy Holdsworth, 651-259-5536
- Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources: Julie Blackburn, 651-297-5617
- Minnesota Public Facilities Authority: Jeff Freeman, 651-259-7465
- Metropolitan Council: Bonnie Kollodge, 651-602-1357
- University of Minnesota Water Resources Center: Deb Swackhamer, 612-625-0279

Local Foods and 3rd Crops Third Crop Producer Meeting

You're invited to join University of Minnesota Extension and Rural Advantage for a 3rd Crop Producer Meeting on "Local Foods and 3rd Crops" on February 27, 2012. This workshop will be held at the Knights of Columbus (920 East 10th Street) in Fairmont, Minnesota. Registration begins at 9:30am. The morning session will be from 10:00am - 12:00pm and the afternoon session will be from 1:00pm - 4:00pm.

The morning session will kick-off with an update from Jeff Jensen on Rural Advantage's Martin County Farm2Cafeteria project which is working to help bring growers and buyers together. Judy Harder with Jubilee Fruits and Vegetables in Mountain Lake will share her experiences with high tunnels, quick hoops, CSA management, and much more. This will be a follow up to the Fall Walk-n-Talk held at Harder's home business. The last speaker of the morning session will be Dr. James Luby with University of Minnesota and the Landscape Arboretum. Dr. Luby will update attendees on what the University's fruit breeding program has been working on. From apples to grapes, he'll have plenty to share.

The afternoon session will start at 1:00pm with the owners of Hall's Across the Prairie, Dan and Terese Hall. Hall's have a grass-fed meat operation that includes cattle, sheep, and poultry. Grape Producer Bob Lau will follow with his experiences getting a vineyard off the ground. Lau will be sharing information on trellis design, crop insurance, pruning, and more. We'll then welcome Lake Crystal businessman Tim Harbo. The Harbo family is owner/operators of Welsh Heritage Farms and Harbo Cider. Harbo will be presenting on value-added apple products such as baked goods and cider. The University of Minnesota's Southern Research and Outreach Center has been conducting research on the disease-fighting chemicals that certain vegetables and fruits contain. Dr. Vince Fritz will discuss his research which is aiming to increase the concentration of these nutraceutical compounds, shown to benefit human health, that are found in common fruits and vegetables. The last topic of the day will be an update on the work being done with hybrid hazelnuts.

For a full agenda, check out the UMN Extension – Conservation Agronomy Facebook page or find event details at: <http://www.facebook.com/events/300259583338848/>

For weather related cancellations, contact the University of Minnesota Extension Farm Information Line at 1-800-232-9077.

Contact for this event:

Jill Sackett, UMN Extension / Rural Advantage, 507-238-5449 or sacke032@umn.edu

Job Announcements:

Watershed Project Intern

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project (HCWP), which includes parts of Kandiyohi, Chippewa, and Renville Counties, is accepting applications for a summer intern. The HCWP is a grant-based clean water partnership with the primary goal of improving water quality in Hawk Creek and several other streams in the Minnesota River Basin. Hawk Creek Watershed Project works towards this goal through education, public awareness, civic engagement, and implementation of Best Management Practices. Water quality monitoring is also conducted by the Project in order to evaluate progress and identify sub-watersheds in need of additional restoration efforts.

To apply, please submit:

1. Cover Letter/Letter of interest that includes:
 - a. school you are attending
 - b. your expected graduation date (month/year)
 - c. estimated start and end dates for internship
2. Resume
3. Contact information for 3 references. Letters of recommendation are not necessary.
4. Transcripts from all colleges attended. Official transcripts are not necessary.

Please submit the application materials to:

Hawk Creek Watershed Project
500 E. DePue Avenue
Olivia, MN 56277

For more information contact Hawk Creek Watershed Project at 320-523-3666 or email cory@hawkcreekwatershed.org or steph@hawkcreekwatershed.org

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Must be postmarked by Feb. 17th

FARM INTERNSHIPS

This year WEI will be able to support up to 6 interns for on-residency farm education and training in organic farming. The internship includes a season-specific curriculum, hands-on skill building, educational classes when Organic Farm School is in session, experience working as a member of the farm crew and at farmer's markets, and a research project. Includes up to 24 hours of direct-paid farm work per week in addition to the educational component of the program. On-site residency at WEI available: Monday evening through Friday afternoon for Spring and Summer internships.

Internships available in 2012:

- Spring Term (April 23 - May 31- one intern)
- Early Summer (June 3 - July 13 - two interns)
- Late Summer (July 16 - August 24 - two interns)
- Autumn Orchard Internships (September 7 - October 14 – one intern; Fri-Sun and local residents only). Farm Interns receive a weekly food basket from the farm to help cover meal costs.

Interest in Sustainable Organic Agriculture

- Availability to work daily on the Farm in Almelund, MN Tuesday-Friday.
- Strong desire to become an organic farmer and/or community gardener and/or organic agriculture educator
- Prefer previous farm work experience or background in farming
- Prefer students with studies relevant to food, farming, environment and social justice.
- Early morning starter; good physical condition. Farming is hard work.
- All interns must have a positive attitude, an ability to receive constructive criticism, and a strong work ethic.
- An emphasis on hands-on physical labor and practice is very important
- Ability to work as a member of team with flexibility in work assignments as needed; and
- Ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences, staff and management.

Please send cover letter and resume along with your application to us at wei@w-e-i.org by February 20th, 2012.

[Application online at http://www.w-e-i.org/2012-farm-internship-application](http://www.w-e-i.org/2012-farm-internship-application)

For more information: Beth Hatch, Executive Assistant; Coordinator, Regional Outreach Training Center; Women's Environmental Institute; PO Box 128; North Branch, MN 55056; 651.583.0705 (o); 651.344.4386 (f); 651.206.0516 (c); wei@w-e-i.org
<http://www.w-e-i.org>

Hydrologic Technician

The Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District (MFCRWD) was established in 2005 for the protection and preservation of water quality of the Middle Fork Crow River watershed. The District is currently looking to fill the position of Hydrologic Technician, one of two technician positions at the MFCRWD.

Core responsibilities: Conduct water quality monitoring using the appropriate data collection procedures/techniques; Conduct flow gauging using the appropriate equipment and techniques;

Download data from field equipment; conduct data entry, analysis and submittal; Assist with grant reporting; Assist with outreach activities, including public meetings; Maintain communication with local agencies/stakeholders; Work with District staff to market and carry out the District's adult and youth education program (workshops for adults, lessons in area schools, etc.); Work with District staff to carry out the District's Best Management Practice (BMP) program; Participate in educational opportunities for the administrative, technical, financial, and/or technological betterment of the District.

Additional responsibilities: Act as District's permitting authority; Inspect District permitted projects, and others to ensure that erosion control BMPs are employed; Carry out the District's annual water quality monitoring program (in conjunction with the Volunteer Monitoring Program); Perform water quality modeling as appropriate; Assist with strategic planning of current and future District projects and programs; Responsible for QA/QC of data submittal requirements; Take direct ownership of certain aspects of the District's BMP program, including scoping visits, design and implementation, with a focus on stormwater management projects, raingardens, agricultural projects, and others as necessary. Work with the Watershed Technician on other BMPs. Perform GIS functions as needed

The Hydrologic Technician is considered to be a non-exempt (hourly), full time, permanent position, with benefits (paid vacation and sick/personal leave, paid holidays, participation in the state's Public Employees Retirement Association, health insurance, others as required). Salary will be commensurate with education and work experience.

The ideal candidate will have a 4-year degree in water resources, biology, environmental science, or a related field of study. An ability to successfully work with the public is imperative, as is the ability to write well. Experience with adult/youth education and outreach, GIS software, water quality monitoring, and water quality modeling is desired, but not required.

How to apply: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/middleforkcrowposition.pdf>

WRC/MRB Internship Opportunities – Summer 2012

Hello colleagues, please see the attached announcements for two internship opportunities being offered this summer through the Water Resources Center and Minnesota River Board.

Your assistance in getting the word out to other faculty and potentially interested students would be greatly appreciated. Thank you – Shannon Fisher, Executive Director; Water Resources Center and Minnesota River Board

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

Water Resource Education Program Manager (ND Project WET)

The State Water Commission is looking for a new North Dakota Water Education for Teachers (WET) program manager.

The position is located in Bismarck, ND, and it requires a Master's degree in education, planning, natural resources management, or a field closely related to the subject matter, and three years of program management experience that includes the design, implementation and evaluation of program components.

The complete vacancy announcement is available for review at:
<http://www.nd.gov/hrms/jobs/7706763.html>.

Grant Opportunities:

Minnesota River Board 2012 Programs Grant

Hello Minnesota River Basin partners! The Minnesota River Board is pleased to release the 2012 Programs Grant application. Individual grants are available for up to \$3,000 and we have a total of

\$9,000 available again this year. The application and details can be viewed under “Notices” at www.minnesotariver.org.

The application deadline is February 29, 2012. I’ve attached a list of previous grant recipients at the bottom of this message. I welcome you to contact me with any questions; Susan D.G. Carlin; Minnesota River Board; 135 Trafton Science Center South; Mankato, MN 56001; 507-389-6279

2011 Recipients:

1. Friends of the Minnesota Valley	Conservation Drainage Outreach Program	\$1,500
2. Redwood Soil & Water Conservation District	Community Engagement in the Pell Creek Watershed	\$1,000
3. Southwest Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees, Area V	Educational Fair for Fifth and Sixth Graders	\$3,000
4. Scott County Clean Water Education Program	Turf Maintenance for Reduced Environmental Impacts	\$1,200
5. Rural Advantage	Our Environment Series: 2011	\$2,300

2010 Recipients:

1. Chippewa Soil & Water Conservation District	Chippewa SWCD Conservation Field Days	\$1,700
2. Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance	Testing Conservation Marketplace of Minnesota (CMM) in the Greater Blue Earth River Basin	\$3,000
3. Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River	Working Together for the Minnesota River	\$3,000
4. Clean Up the River Environment	Annual River and History Weekend & River Signage	\$1,300

Events:

February 15th (Wednesday) is “**The Economics of Happiness**” film showing – at 6:00 p.m. at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (170 Good Counsel Drive, Mankato). The film explores globalization's impact at home and abroad. Join us for organic popcorn and butter! (Donations accepted). For more information contact Lisa Coons at 507-389-4272 or lcoons@ssndmankato.org

February 17th (Friday) to March 18th (Sunday) is **What Sustains Us: considering the hands and the land of rural south central Minnesota photography exhibit** by Kay Herbst Helms in the Lower Level Gallery at the Arts Center of Saint Peter (315 S Minnesota Avenue). Gallery Hours are Tuesday – Friday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/helmsexhibit.pdf>

February 21st (Tuesday) the **Friends of Renville County Park meeting** is at 7:00 p.m. in the Olivia Public Library meeting room. On the agenda is a presentation by Ed Stone, "Thirty Years of Notes and Observations in Vicksburg Park," (Renville County Park No. 2). One of the purposes of the

presentation is to determine projects that volunteers can do in the park. Anyone interested in supporting the parks is welcome to attend the meeting. For more information, contact Ed at valleyhouse@tds.net.

February 21st (Tuesday) is the **Six Years and Sixteen Hundred Miles of Upper Midwest Paddling** presentation by Lloyd Brandon at 7:00 p.m. at Belgrade Avenue United Methodist Church (325 Sherman Street) in North Mankato. The program is sponsored by the Mankato Paddling and Outings Club. For more information, contact Peggy at peggyk@hickorytech.net

February 22nd (Wednesday) is **Make Your Own Non-toxic Cleaning Products~!** starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (170 Good Counsel Drive, Mankato). We will make our own all-purpose cleaner and laundry powder as have recipes for all cleaning jobs! (Bring your own re-usable spray bottle to fill and take home with you. Donations \$10-\$15 (More of you can, less if you can't). For more information contact Lisa Coons at 507-389-4272 or lcoons@ssndmankato.org

February 23rd (Thursday) to May 5th (Saturday) is a **Minnesota Master Naturalist course** in Willmar at the Mid-Central Research & Outreach Center (1700 Technology Drive). Experience the outdoors and watch this prairie grow and change while learning more about the prairies and potholes biome. Class sessions will include topics on grass, animals, water, humans, geology and more. Instructors are Amy Rager and Rob Blair. Class dates and times: Thursdays February 23rd through May 3rd tom 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Field Trips are Saturdays March 24th and April 21st. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/willmarclass.pdf>

February 25th (Saturday) is an **Artists Reception** for the "What Sustains Us: considering the hands and the land of rural south central Minnesota photography exhibit" by Kay Herbst Helms in the Lower Level Gallery at the Arts Center of Saint Peter (315 S Minnesota Avenue). The reception goes from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/helmsexhibit.pdf>

February 29th (Wednesday) is **Learn to Make Self-watering Grow Boxes** starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (170 Good Counsel Drive, Mankato). Donations \$5-\$15 (more if you can, less if you can't). For more information contact Lisa Coons at 507-389-4272 or lcoons@ssndmankato.org

March 4th – 7th (Sunday – Wednesday) is the **Upper Midwest Stream Restoration Symposium** at the Holiday Inn Metrodome in Minneapolis sponsored by the Partnership for River Restoration and Science in the Upper Midwest. To register and for more information, <http://prsum.org/content/registration>. The registration deadline in January 27, 2012.

March 13th (Tuesday) join the **Scott Clean Water Education Program for a free presentation about Blue Thumb, Planting for Clean Water** at 6:15 pm the McColl Pond Environmental Learning Center in Savage. Become inspired to create landscaping features that work to keep our waters clean. See photos of past projects and learn about the benefits of creating a raingarden and stabilizing your lakeshore with native plants. After attending the presentation, you will be able to receive design and installation assistance with creating your beautiful Blue Thumb, Planting for Clean Water raingarden or native shoreline. Some residents may qualify for a grant to help offset the costs of the Blue Thumb project. Registration encouraged. Contact Dan at 952-492-5424 or dmiller@co.scott.mn.us to reserve your spot today!

March 15th (Thursday) join the **Scott Clean Water Education Program for a free presentation about Blue Thumb, Planting for Clean Water** at 6:15 pm at the Spring Lake Township Hall in Prior Lake. Become inspired to create landscaping features that work to keep our waters clean. See photos of past projects and learn about the benefits of creating a raingarden and stabilizing your lakeshore with native plants. After attending the presentation, you will be able to receive design and installation assistance with creating your beautiful Blue Thumb, Planting for Clean Water raingarden or native shoreline. Some residents may qualify for a grant to help offset the costs of the Blue Thumb project. Registration encouraged. Contact Dan at 952-492-5424 or dmiller@co.scott.mn.us to reserve your spot today!

March 17th (Saturday) is **Kids Day** at Earthrise Farm & Education Center (2580 250th Street, Madsion) from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Join us for some Fun on the Farm with activities including Self-guided Farm Tours, Grow-Your-Own Green Clover (in recycled containers), DIY Sock Puppets and seasonal snacks. For more information, 320-752-1700 or erfarm@hotmail.com

March 19th (Monday) is the **Minnesota River Board Meeting** from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the Knights of Columbus Hall (920 East 10th Street) in Fairmont. For information: 507-389-5491 or karnell.johnson@mnsu.edu

March 28th (Wednesday) is the **Green Fire showing** at 7:00 p.m. at Belgrade Avenue United Methodist Church (325 Sherman Street) in North Mankato. This is a biographical film about seminal environmentalist Aldo Leopold. The program is sponsored by the Many Rivers Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts and the Mankato Paddling and Outings Club. For more information, contact Peggy at peggyk@hickorytech.net

March 29th (Thursday) is the **Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Society's annual meeting** in conjunction with the Freshwater Society's day-long conference: "Precision Conservation: Technology Redefining Local Water Quality Practices." Precision conservation effectively and efficiently targets scarce resources to the spots on the landscape where they will do the most good. Learn about the latest technology -- much of it based on LiDAR scanning -- that pinpoints "sweet spots" where runoff, erosion and pollution are disproportionately severe and the potential for improvement is disproportionately great. Speakers include NRCS Chief Dave White; Dr. David Mulla, University Soil Scientist and a pioneer in employing modern LiDAR-based technology in the service of conservation; Dr. Gerald Van Amburg, president of the Buffalo-Red River Watershed Board; and several other Minnesota expert conservationists sharing rural and urban examples. The event will be at Silverwood Park in St. Anthony, MN. Visit the Freshwater Society web site (<http://freshwater.org/>) for a current agenda and registration information. The Chapter annual meeting will follow the conference .

May 21st (Monday) is the **Minnesota River Board Meeting** from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Place and location to be announced. For information: 507-389-5491 or karnell.johnson@mnsu.edu

July 16th (Monday) is the **Minnesota River Board Meeting** from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the St. Peter Community Center, Room 219 (600 South 5th Street). For information: 507-389-5491 or karnell.johnson@mnsu.edu

September 17th (Monday) is the **Minnesota River Board Meeting** from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the Health & Human Services Building Multipurpose Room (2200 23rd Street NE) in Willmar. For information: 507-389-5491 or karnell.johnson@mnsu.edu

November 19th (Monday) is the **Minnesota River Board Meeting** from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Place and location to be announced. For information: 507-389-5491 or karnell.johnson@mnsu.edu

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

Environmental/Conservation Articles:

[Farmers share love for the land](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The Minnesota Food Association's Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference brought together people from near and far interested in growing, connecting and building community.

[With Legacy fund 'backfilling' of budget cuts, Legislature seems to be breaking spirit of the law](#) (MinnPost). In 2008, Minnesotans voted to levy a new tax on themselves. The Legacy Act, as it has

come to be called, was a referendum asking whether Minnesotans cared enough about clean water, parks, trails and the arts to tax themselves even heavier.

[Legacy funds being used to cover cuts in conservation](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Critics say the shift is a misinterpretation of voters' will in passing amendment.

[After decades of warnings and pollution controls, newborns arrive with a burden of mercury](#) (MinnPost). The news that one newborn in 10 along Minnesota's North Shore enters this world with an unhealthy burden of mercury is – well, is what?

[Minnesota conference brings together immigrant and minority farmers](#) (TC Daily Planet). Nearly 500 people came registered for the Seventh Annual Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference.

[Judge recommends alternate route for CapX2020 utilities line](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). A judge has made a route recommendation for a high-voltage power line in southeastern Minnesota.

[Invasive species fight goes too far, some lawmakers say](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Some lawmakers say the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource's plan to slow the spread of invasive species like zebra mussels and Asian carp impinge on the rights of boat owners.

[How much is too much?](#) (Minnesota Outdoor News). How far are we willing to go in the fight against invasive species such as zebra mussels?

[Leader returns to environment advisory group meeting after GOP leaders to have her fired](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). The advisory group for funding of environmental projects with lottery proceeds will meet this morning for the first time since legislators tried to fire the group's executive director.

[Dam modifications restore wildlife habitat, improve safety](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Construction crews in northwest Minnesota are finishing work this week on a unique river project — one that not only restores fish habitat, but could also save human lives.

[Scientists concerned about antibiotic resistance in wastewater](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Scientists gather in St. Paul today to discuss a category of pollution called emerging contaminants — new substances they don't know enough about to label harmful to the environment and human health.

[Commentary: String of crises has one solution: More regulation](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). After months of deceptive prattle from Republican presidential candidates, a central tenet of the party's ideology should be scrapped for all time.

[Attempted firing of Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources boss leads to tense meeting](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). The executive committee of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources pushed back Friday, asserting its authority in a dispute involving the attempted firing of its executive director.

[Minnesota companies aim for greener living through chemistry](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). Lots of entrepreneurs boast about "eating their own cooking," but Doug Ruth takes it to a whole new level.

Life originated in the sea, and about eighty percent of it is still there.- Isaac Aasimov

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 Basin.

Thanks,

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Scott

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Scott Kudelka
Watershed Assessment Specialist
Water Resources Center
184 Trafton Science Center S
Mankato, MN 56001
507-389-2304