

### Minnesota River Watershed Alliance 2010 Action Plan:

We have decided to work together to promote, celebrate and communicate through

- \* Launching the Minnesota River Paddler Program at the Rapidan Dam on June 12th,
- \* Participating in the making of the Minnesota River Documentary with Ron Schara,
- \* Sponsoring a Bus Tour of Conservation Practices in the Minnesota River Basin for Lake Pepin area residents and
- \* Advocating for holding a future Governor's Fishing Opener on the Minnesota River.

### Biomass Establishment 3rd Crop Producer Meeting

The first of four 3<sup>rd</sup> Crop Producer Meetings will be hosted by Rural Advantage on Monday, February 8, 2010. A variety of speakers will be presenting on "Biomass Establishment" from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm and from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Time for further discussion and questions will be available starting at 3:00 pm.

10:00 am: Dr. Craig Sheaffer from University of Minnesota will start the day off by sharing information on biomass fertility and yield trials. These trials have been an on-going research project of Dr. Sheaffer's that have been looking into fertilization requirements for prairie plants grown specifically for biomass purposes.

10:45 am: A short presentation on prairie biomass establishment and maintenance will follow Dr. Sheaffer and be presented by Jill Sackett, Extension Educator - Conservation Agronomist with University of Minnesota Extension and Rural Advantage.

11:00 am: Gary Wyatt, Extension Educator – Natural Resource Management with University of Minnesota Extension, will present on woody biomass establishment and maintenance. The species he will be focusing on are hybrid poplar and hybrid willow. He will share information on planting techniques and coppicing.

11:30 am: Dr. Dean Current from University of Minnesota's Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (CINRAM) will wrap up the morning session by speaking on both biomass production and ecosystem services from agroforestry systems.

1:00 pm: Following the lunch hour (on your own), Dr. Arvid Boe will share prairie biomass research information from South Dakota State University (SDSU). Dr. Boe has been involved in a number of prairie biomass research projects at SDSU as well as being involved in the non-profit corporation EcoSun Prairie Farms.

1:45 pm: Greg Anderson with Farm Service Agency will be updating attendees on the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP). The Collection, Harvest, Storage, and Transportation of Eligible Material (CHST) matching payments portion of BCAP is currently underway. BCAP payments for crop establishment and production will soon follow. If you have questions regarding BCAP, this is the presentation to attend.

2:30 pm: The last speaker of the day will be Linda Meschke, President and Founder of Rural Advantage. Meschke will be discussing further options for bioenergy crop establishment programs.

All 2010 Third Crop Producer Meetings will be held at the Knights of Columbus Hall (920 East 10<sup>th</sup> Street) in Fairmont, Minnesota. Pre-registration is not necessary and there is no cost. Registration opens at 9:30 am with the first speaker at 10:00 am. There will be an hour break for lunch on your own. If you are interested in carpooling from the metro area, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) will have a van available. Contact MISA at 1-800-909-6472 or [misamail@umn.edu](mailto:misamail@umn.edu). For further

information regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Crop Producer Meetings contact Jill Sackett, Extension Educator – Conservation Agronomist, at the Rural Advantage office: 507-238-5449 [sacke032@umn.edu](mailto:sacke032@umn.edu).

### **Mankato Chicken Coalition Meeting**

In an attempt to get existing ordinances changed in the city of Mankato to allow backyard hens, a meeting of the Mankato Chicken Coalition will be held on February 5th (Friday) starting at 6 p.m. at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry at the SSND (directions below).

The list of cities in Minnesota that allow backyard hens continues to grow and we want to add Mankato to that list! We will do introductions and then get into discussion on how to go about approaching the issue again with the city. Please bring any ideas you have. We will also be looking for someone able to step up and lead the group. Much of the background work is done already, but we need a spokesperson and general organizer. Persistence seems to be the key to success in other cities.

Feel free to pass this along to anyone you think may be interested in assisting or supporting our efforts. Many hands make light work.

The Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry is located at 170 Good Counsel Drive. Turn east onto Good Counsel Drive off of Riverfront Drive. Travel to the top of Good Counsel Hill and go to the stop sign. Turn right and park. Enter the main doors under the big white and blue canopy; go up the stairs to the reception desk.

### **WE'RE MOVING AHEAD WITH MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND LAKE PEPIN RESTORATION**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) will soon begin the **public notice period** for a proposed site-specific standard for Total Suspended Solids (TSS) and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) for the south metro Mississippi River - extending from the confluence with the Minnesota River at Ft. Snelling to upper Lake Pepin near Frontenac.

The public process is expected to begin on February 11th and to extend for 45 days. During this period of time, the MPCA will take various steps to inform interested parties and the general public about the proposed standards. In cooperation with the MPCA, the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance will host a meeting addressing site-specific standards on Tuesday, February 23rd at the St. James Hotel in Red Wing. We will post information about the time and program details on our website.

THE LAKE PEPIN LEGACY ALLIANCE BELIEVES THE TIME IS NOW TO PRESS AHEAD WITH A THREE-PART STRATEGY TO BEGIN REDUCING MINNESOTA RIVER SEDIMENT LOADS THAT ARE CHOKING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND FILLING IN LAKE PEPIN AT A RATE 10 TIMES WHAT WOULD OCCUR UNDER NATURAL, PRE-SETTLEMENT CONDITIONS.

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

### **Sustainable Ag: Balance Brings Benefits**

KERKHOVEN - While the nation becomes increasingly more diverse, agriculture has gone the opposite direction. Farming has become very specialized and the loss of balance isn't a good thing. Jim VanDerPol and his family operate Pastures A Plenty in Kerkhoven. The operation combines a mix of crops, livestock and pastures for a balanced approach to sustainability.

When VanDerPol talks diversity, he practices what he preaches. The bulk of his property is for grazing. He also rotates hay, corn, soybeans and barley. Add to that, dairy, beef, a farrow-to-finish hog operation, poultry and it's obvious he is committed to his methods. To have good, sustainable agriculture, VanDerPol says livestock must be involved. Perennial crops are important, but with the decline of dairy herds crop rotations have deteriorated to mostly corn and soybeans. Which forms the question in his mind: Is it possible to keep land lost from dairy producing as well as before?

That's where pasturing his livestock comes in, especially his Berkshire cross hogs. Gestating sows pasture almost all the time with some farrowing in pens, not crates, on the pasture in the summer. Feeding is done in hoop houses on the yard. Numerous benefits come from pasturing he said. Sows are in better shape from walking around, for example. Foraging gives sows larger stomachs so when farrowing time comes they have tremendous appetites and do better coming into their milk. Grazing hogs also eat more roughage, improving their diet. "We have no problems with mastitis... chalk it up to being in better shape and roughage," said VanDerPol. Another benefit of using pastures is that it gives buildings time to dry over the summer – and that's good for breaking diseases, VanDerPol added.

Customers tell him his meat tastes and smells better than commercially produced pork, which VanDerPol also attributes to grazing the livestock. He admits not being a fair judge in the matter because he only eats pork from his farm. "The customers say it smells better," he said, "so there must be something to it." It's common for a hog farm to receive complaints about smell, but pasturing and bedding the hogs in straw keeps the place smelling better. "Customers drive up and wonder where the hogs are," VanDerPol said.

The farm is certified organic, except for the hogs, which get some non organic feed. The Pastures A Plenty brand is marketed throughout the state with its main market being food coops in the Twin Cities. Add to that a number of restaurants, including up-scale establishments, several places in Duluth, the University of Minnesota Morris and a network of area convenience stores and VanDerPol has many opportunities to get his product to customers.

As for sustainability, he says nobody understands the subject well. Sustainability requires economic feasibility; be repeatable without damaging land, farmer or customer; last into the future and make (the environment) better, he stated. "The goal never arrives," he explained. "Cropping and animals together, diversity, is better. We use pasture as much as possible for the cattle and take advantage when we can with pigs."

Pastures are perennial with manure from livestock improving. Hay is also good because it's a perennial plant holding soil together and providing biodiversity because more wildlife can use hay than corn. Also livestock can be pastured then fed hay later. The crop rotation is "kinder and gentler" than just corn and beans.

So, is it possible to keep land that is lost from dairy to producing similarly? VanDerPol believes in trying. "Sustainability has to do with starting another generation of farming," he said, "sustainable to the family and the rest of the community."

### **Community Wind Forum**

Please join us... R9 Renewable Energy Task Force will be hosting a Community Wind Forum in Kiester on Monday, February 1st from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Kiester Community Center. This Forum is open to any person interested in learning about creating a local community wind development project. The Forum highlights will include models of successful community wind projects and the legalities and economics of developing a community wind project.

Registration will begin at 4:30 p.m. with a lite supper served. There is no cost to attend, but registration will confirm supper. Please RSVP to Sarah at [sarah@rndc.org](mailto:sarah@rndc.org) or (507)389-8880.

R9 Renewable Energy Task Force is a partnership of small businesses, local units of government, educational institutions, non-profits and citizen leaders who have come together to focus on renewable energy development opportunities within the region.

Sponsored by Region Nine Development Commission, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Kee Town and Country Centre and Gustavus Adolphus College. There will be a similar forum in Mapleton on Monday, February 8, from 6-8 PM at the Token BQ, with registration and light supper beginning at 5:30 PM. In the event of bad weather again, all those pre-registered will be notified of rescheduled meeting.

## **Energy Efficient Housing Expert to Speak on February 4th at Montevideo Community Center at 7 p.m.**

There is the old adage that “poor people cannot afford to buy cheap things” -- meaning that an investment in quality up front leads to saving money in the long run. The same principle applies to home construction for those of us living on a budget. Why waste money on lost heat energy in the long run when you can build it tight in the first place? Energy efficient home construction is not just for the wealthy anymore. It is becoming the new standard for homes built for the working poor because it makes so much economic sense.

Molly Berg, the Sustainable Building Specialist for Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota will speak to a community wide meeting on Thursday, February 4th from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Montevideo Community Center. The purpose of Berg’s talk is to share what Habitat for Humanity is learning about new energy efficient home construction methods that can help save money and energy at the same time. The event is free and open to the public. Anyone who is thinking about building or remodeling their home is especially encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served. For more information, call 320-269-2984.

Berg works with the 33 Habitat for Humanity affiliates in the state to spec and build highly efficient and healthy homes. Prior to her post at Habitat, Molly was the Construction VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) with Habitat for Humanity of West Central Minnesota, Willmar office. Before joining Habitat for Humanity, Molly built with her father, a contractor/carpenter in Minneapolis.

Berg’s visit is being sponsored by a local coalition of groups that are working to develop knowledge and experience around energy efficient home and building construction techniques. The partnership includes ISD # 129, Habitat for Humanity, the City of Montevideo, local business owners and CURE (Clean Up the River Environment). The partnership grew from the Southwest Minnesota Initiative Foundation’s Connected Community Partnership process and has received funds from the U.S. Department of Labor through the MNREM-WIRED consortium and from the West Central Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Team.

The goal of the consortium is to promote community wide energy efficiency awareness by working with local contractors and high school students to build an energy efficient home for a Habitat qualified family.

That project is currently underway and more information can be found by visiting

[www.hillgroceryhouse.org](http://www.hillgroceryhouse.org).

For more information on how to get involved with the Montevideo Energy Efficient Housing Demonstration project, contact Patrick Moore at CURE: 320-269-2984

## **Job Announcements:**

### **Half-time Coordinator**

The Minnesota Council of Non Profits is starting up a St. Cloud Chapter, and is looking for a 1/2 time coordinator. The job description is attached. They tried hiring someone last spring but couldn't find the right person, so they're leaving the position open until they find the right person.

The “right person” will be self-motivated, very outgoing, experienced in planning events, service-oriented, experienced with non-profits, and comfortable working half time, with flexible hours –MCN is not planning on making it a full time position in the future. It would be a great job for someone who wants more time at home with the kids, or who kind of wants to retire but not quite yet! Please forward this to anyone you know who might be interested.

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

### **Summer 2010 On-Farm Internship**

Moonstone Farm is looking for a summer intern to join their farm team in multi-species planting and care, with both native and adaptive species to foster a perennial polyculture. This person will learn fencing/trellising techniques, vineyard, paddock and grazing management. There will be different projects to work on every day including ones revolving around prairie and woodland, crops and cattle, human-scale and machine-assisted. In addition the position will offer the opportunity to integrate and apply strategies of permaculture design and holistic management. You will have access to library, river, social network, music, art, local-organic livelihood and sustainable community.

To apply and for information: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/moonstoneinternship2010.pdf>

### **9 Vacancy Announcements in Minnesota**

NRCS-MN-2010-1020(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Crookston, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85476547>

NRCS-MN-2010-1021(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Perham, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85477233>

NRCS-MN-2010-1022(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Little Falls, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85477399>

NRCS-MN-2010-1023(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Montevideo, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85477547>

NRCS-MN-2010-1024(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Preston, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85477734>

NRCS-MN-2010-1025(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Waite Park, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85478023>

NRCS-MN-2010-1026(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Duluth, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85478202>

NRCS-MN-2010-1027(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Goodhue, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85478392>

NRCS-MN-2010-1028(A) - Soil Conservationist (CSP) GS-5/7/9 - Fairmont, MN - Opening date: January 07, 2010 - Closing date: February 08, 2010 - Status announcement: <http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=85478482>

For more information: Germil Lewis; Human Resources Specialist; Natural Resources Conservation Service; 375 Jackson Street, Suite 600; St. Paul, MN 55101-1854; Phone 651-602-7898; Fax 651-602-7919

### **Events:**

February 3<sup>rd</sup> (Wednesday) is the **Hawk Creek Watershed Project Annual Meeting** starting at 8:30 a.m. with registration and going to 12:30 with a meal for those who send a RSVP email to [hawkcreeksteph@redred.com](mailto:hawkcreeksteph@redred.com) before January 29<sup>th</sup>. The annual meeting will be held at the Kandi Entertainment Center (500 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue) in Willmar. For more information <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/hawkcreekannualmeeting.pdf>

February 18<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) is **Nutrients in Our Environment: Past, Present, and Beyond Conference** from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Verizon Civic Center in downtown Mankato. To register please call

651-201-6141. A \$10 registration fee includes lunch and refreshments. For additional information go to <http://www.upstreamheroes.org/nutgmtconf.php>

February 20<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) is the **Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) Annual Meeting** starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Hollywood Theater in Montevideo. For more information <http://www.cureriver.org/events.html>

March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> (Thursday and Friday) is the **Minnesota Erosion Control Association's Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Conference & Trade Show** at the Holiday Inn & Suites in St. Cloud. Network with stormwater and erosion control professionals from around the Midwest and learn about cutting edge projects, innovative designs and products. For more information: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/mecaannuaconf.pdf>

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

### **Water Quality Articles:**

[Lessard-Sams chairman Kilgore sees conservation capacity as future challenge](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The ability of public agencies, the Department of Natural Resources in particular, to undertake and complete habitat and other fish and wildlife projects might be a limiting long-term factor in spending money from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, according to Mike Kilgore, chair of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

[Chris Niskanen: We need to 'protect' amendment money](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). When voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in 2008, they read the ballot language and no doubt felt the constitutional language provided a safety net for how the money was spent.

[Newly installed wind turbines idled by Minnesota's winter](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). Last year, about a dozen Minnesota communities dreamed of clean, green energy: spinning windmills powering hundreds of homes. Now, months after the deadline, the windmills stand largely immobile, and communities are still waiting for the power to flow.

[Cleanup of problematic Excel Dairy may be far off](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency says it won't re-issue a permit for the Excel Dairy farm in northwestern Minnesota, in effect shutting it down, but that doesn't mean the foul-smelling and overflowing manure pits will be cleaned up anytime soon.

[MPCA moves to close odiferous Thief River Falls dairy](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The state agency has begun the process to shut down Excel Dairy, which has repeatedly violated pollution rules.

[Opinion: Atrazine needs a scientific study](#) (Winona Daily News). During the past half-century, atrazine has become one of the most widely used herbicides in Minnesota and the rest of the Midwest.

[Northfield man raises organic, free-range chickens year round with solar-heated "hoop house"](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). A Northfield man hopes to bring an ambitious plan linking sustainable farming, low-income immigrants and health-conscious consumers home to roost.

[DNR grants \\$3.4 million to improve trails and parks](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Twenty-one trails and parks from Walker to Redwood Falls are getting improvements or expansions from Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment dollars.

[Minn. DNR talks trash about fish house litter](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is talking trash about anglers who leave the ice littered.



*A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers but borrowed from his children. - Audubon*

[Target hits a greener bullseye](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Target announced today that it is eliminating the sale of farmed salmon in all of its stores and replacing it with wild Alaskan salmon.

**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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