

Diverting the River Recovery for Their Own Purposes?

By Scott Emerson Sparlin

People who live, play, and guide on the Minnesota River are *very encouraged* with the progress they see in the decades-long effort to clean up the state's namesake river. And yet, some people who dwell mostly in the capitol areas of St. Paul seem to go out of their way to cobble together select data and political assertions to insinuate that the river is no better off for our efforts and that we have "nothing to show for it."

I am not sure of why this information is being portrayed in such a negative manner, but I harbor grave doubts that these "professional enviros" have only the river's interests in mind. My plan is to find out the motivation behind it and then share it with the general public, hopefully gaining a greater understanding of why this is being done. In the mean time, I intend to address the data, the money, and finally the culture of the river recovery based on both solid scientific data and first hand personal observations.

Last spring, at the request of some elected officials at the state level, a partial review of Minnesota River water quality data was undertaken by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to study some of the aquatic biota of the Minnesota River.

The so-called "re-visitation" of the data did not include two very important components of the original study; namely, the physical and chemical attributes. According to the MPCA, **Phosphorus levels** in the entire river system over the last 20 years **have declined**. According to MPCA, **suspended sediments** in the river system as a whole in the past 20 years **have declined**. These are the two areas of focus of which the original state initiative was trying to make progress.

Nitrogen levels have remained the same or gone up in some instances. This is definitely not good, however, that was not an initial focus and is being addressed through numerous initiatives today. Furthermore, when you take the amount of funding we have spent on conservation of our rural land mass in the Minnesota River Basin, and divide it by 20 years and then divide it again by the acreage, it comes out to approximately \$1.36 an acre per year over the past 20 years. In the grand scheme of things, that isn't a whole heck of a lot, but contrary to some opinions, we have made significant progress all over the basin and not just in those mind-numbing parts per million figures.

Let's also consider the fish populations in the river. The fact is they have not been as good as they are now for as long as many can remember. MNDNR fisheries have had on-going studies showing results that run counter to that of the MPCA. Blue Suckers have returned to the lower part of the basin. Sturgeon, once a rarity, are now considered quite commonplace. White bass populations have exploded and walleye are being caught in very good numbers and sizes as well. Mudpuppies (aquatic salamanders) that require good water quality are being caught for the first time in a long time on a regular basis. Backwaters that were once plowed and frequently flooded fields are now covered in grass, shrubs and trees which provide excellent spawning habitat for a variety of fishes, including northern pike. Many of these fishes did not exist before CREP at even close to the level they do today.

The Minnesota River has been the focus of a lot of financial resources for more than two decades. It is entirely fair to ask if we are getting anywhere. It is not fair for partially informed people to parrot the phrase "a billion spent and nothing to show for it" and expect to have their simple sound bite go unchallenged.

Let's look at the numbers regarding where the expenditures were made to come up with this billion dollar figure. For starters, a billion is one thousand million (if you are like me and have a hard time fathoming those types of figures in dollars). MPCA states that 700 million dollars (which translates into 70% of the money being referred to) was in the form of loans to address municipal sewage treatment plant upgrades or the **construction of wastewater treatment facilities** where none previously existed. Another large

chunk of money was for the Agricultural Loan Program wherein farmers make improvements to their waste management systems. The loans will be paid back over time. Another 250 million dollars was spent by the federal government for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The state did spend 54 million dollars of ReInvest In Minnesota bonding funds to “leverage” the federal CREP money. That is a program which very few argue we spent our money foolishly, as the program permanently restored most of the river’s floodplain, improved water quality, and created 100,000 acres of wildlife habitat.

One of the most, if not the most important, overlooked, and under-appreciated measures of progress made in the Minnesota River Basin is that of the significant culture shift that has occurred. This shift is due in most part to the work of the grass-roots organizations that are being led by citizens. The attack on “progress” by some has totally overlooked and underestimated the power of what this movement has accomplished over the past 20+ years. We have gone from a cultural climate of apathy and denial, to one today of much greater understanding, citizen participation, and a desire for continued actions to improve conditions in the river system. Were it not for this one existing paradigm that we enjoy today, little would most likely have been done politically in the face of such a daunting task.

In closing I say we have made steady solid progress on our objective, is it worth another buck and half an acre for the next 20 years? I guess that is up to all of us and where we go forward with our focus.

Minnesota River Watershed Alliance meeting on April 24th in Hutchinson

Join the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance) for its quarterly meeting on April 24th (Tuesday) from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Ridgewater College in Hutchinson. This is a great chance for the public to hear what is happening in the Minnesota River Basin.

At the January quarterly meeting, the group chose to develop and promote a “Mayors Fishing Opening” to highlight the improvement of fish diversity and population in the Minnesota River Basin. The Watershed Alliance will seek the support and participation of communities along the river and throughout the basin to help connect more people to the river and its resource.

The Watershed Alliance also plans to continue promoting the Minnesota River Paddler Program and will be hosting a paddle down in the Henderson area on June 23rd in conjunction with Sauerkraut Days. People will have the opportunity to paddle both a segment of the Minnesota River and either High Island Creek or Rush River.

The April quarterly meeting is being sponsored by the Water Resources Center (WRC) at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Created in 1987, the WRC serves as a regional center for environmental research, citizen engagement and information and exchange.

A broad umbrella of organizations and missions’ falls under the direction of the WRC including the Minnesota River Board which helps sculpt policy making decisions across the basin, the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance promoting communication efforts and citizen-based action in the basin, and finally the Minnesota River Basin Data Center serving as an information clearinghouse. For more information on the WRC, <http://cset.mnsu.edu/wrc/>

This quarterly meeting goes from 6 to 9 p.m. at Ridgewater College (room 141) in Hutchinson. Ridgewater College is located at 2nd Century Avenue SE on the south end of Hutchinson. The Watershed Alliance encourages landowners and recreational users to be part of this effort to improve and protect the Minnesota River Basin.

We begin at 6 p.m. with a social hour and food to give participants time to interact with each other and share stories and concerns about what is happening in their part of the Minnesota River Watershed. At 7 p.m. the formal part of the meeting starts, with the group striving to wrap up all discussion by 9 o’clock.

The Watershed Alliance is an organized network of citizens, public agencies and private organizations dedicated to communicating the benefits of an ecologically healthy Minnesota River Watershed to others and are actively working toward its improvement and protection.

For more information on the meeting, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/aprilmeeting.pdf>

Minnesota River Banquet

Minnesota River Huggers, Mark your calendars for Saturday April 28th for the Annual Minnesota River Banquet in New Ulm at Lola's Larkspur in Downtown New Ulm. Check out the flyer in the file attached. Great program, great food and refreshments, great raffle and prizes and a chance to see your Family of the River. If you like stimulating conversation about all things river and more, this is the night for you. It's also a great chance to catch up on what is on the horizon for actions to improve our watershed and to find out what CCMR will be focusing on. Just respond to this email to reserve a spot. Or you can send a check for \$25 per person to CCMR, P.O. Box 488, New Ulm, MN 56073. If you reserve we ask for payment. If you do a walk in you can pay at the door, but you will be taking a chance that we may be full. We are limited for seating so you will want to act soon.

For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/mnriverbanquet2012.pdf>

2012 Expiring CRP Acres

By Jill Sackett, Extension Educator with University of Minnesota Extension/Rural Advantage

FAIRMONT, Minn. (03/23/2012) – The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program in which landowners can voluntarily receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term plantings. These perennial plants are meant to reduce erosion and help protect surface and ground water. Acres enrolled in this program are often those with highly erodible soils, areas that are too wet for commodity crops, or adjoining rivers/streams/lakes. CRP contracts run for 10 to 15 years.

USDA records show that there will be 291,265 acres of CRP in Minnesota expiring in 2012. If contracts are allowed to expire, the landowners will no longer be required to keep those acres as grassland. With the state of the commodity crop markets, it is understandable why landowners would be thinking of allowing their CRP contracts to expire and planting those acres to row crops instead. However, it is important to remember that those acres were enrolled in a conservation program like CRP for a reason. These lands are still sensitive environmental areas if not managed carefully.

One option to keep these acres as grassland is to re-enroll in CRP. There are also some programs that allow for grazing of livestock and/or harvesting of hay or biomass. Yet other programs offer tax breaks on grassland acres.

If you own CRP acres or are interested in converting to grassland, contact your local Farm Service Agency office. Other programs are offered by: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and private organizations.

University of Minnesota Extension Educator Gary Wyatt is developing factsheets about the various programs available for expiring CRP acres. He will be speaking on the subject at the April 2 Third Crop Producer Meeting at the Knights of Columbus in Fairmont, Minnesota. For more information on the Third Crop Producer Meeting "Bioenergy from Perennials," contact UMN Extension Educator Jill Sackett at the Rural Advantage office. 507-238-5449 - sacke032@umn.edu

For more information about CRP:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp>

Polluted water and our fear to speak the truth – Conservationists: Speak your mind!

By Kirk Schnitker

So you think you are a conservationist? So you want to make a difference? You can make a difference and it will probably take you less time than many of your other conservation activities. This takes only the courage to speak up about how agriculture land uses in this state are the source of our polluted water, both surface and ground water.

Let me start with a simple premise. Politicians, conservationists, major conservation organization spokesmen, government personnel, watershed board staff and almost all others are afraid at worst and reluctant at best, to call out ag on this topic. It's one of those almost taboo touchy subjects. We turn away and get what we deserve.

For the entire article, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/pollutedwater.pdf>

MN River Corridor Partners Save the Date
Greetings, Upper Minnesota River Valley Enthusiasts!

This is a save the date note from the Minnesota River Corridor Partners Group (a group that would like to grow with your help). If you would like to work towards the vision below, save Thursday, April 12th, from 5 pm to 9 pm for a gathering at the Redwood Falls Community Center.

“An outdoor recreation economy thrives in the upper Minnesota River Valley because local communities and corridor partners embrace a shared recreational and working landscape that provides a legacy of natural, cultural, historical and agricultural resource protection; and public access to diverse outdoor recreation, angling and hunting opportunities. The New Ulm to Ortonville corridor includes Trails that tell tales; unique and family oriented recreational/educational opportunities.”

For additional information or to confirm your attendance, please contact Cathi Fouchi at cathi.fouchi@state.mn.us <<mailto:cathi.fouchi@state.mn.us>> . We look forward to working with you!

Solving the Old Cedar Age Bridge Issue

There is now a solution for restoring the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge across Long Meadow Lake. The City of Bloomington has the money to do a historic renovation of the old bridge provided a new bridge owner assumes responsibility for the bridge once the rehabilitation is completed. Fortuitously, the Three Rivers Park District is now asking for comment on the proposed Intercity Regional Trail that will extend south from Lake Nokomis to the Minnesota River edge at the end of Old Cedar Avenue. Since the bridge is an integral part of that proposed regional trail it should be owned by the Three Rivers Park District. All agencies are afraid of the long-term maintenance costs, but a four party joint-powers maintenance agreement could limit that annually to \$10,000 to \$20,000 per agency.

YOU CAN HELP by sending an email to the Three Rivers Park District at ICRT@threeriversparkdistrict.org and ask the District to assume ownership of the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge across Long Meadow Lake. The District is asking for comments. Also, send an email to council@ci.bloomington.mn.us and ask the Mayor and City Council to see that this happens!

The emails should say something like the following:

"Since the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge across Long Meadow Lake is an integral part of the proposed Intercity Regional Trail that will extend from Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis to the Minnesota River edge at the end of Old Cedar Avenue, the Three Rivers Park District should assume ownership of the bridge following its historical rehabilitation by the City of Bloomington. The City has the funds for the historical rehabilitation and will do the rehab work provided there is a new owner. Since the Intercity Trail is a regional trail, the bridge should be owned by the Three Rivers Park District and maintained through a joint-powers maintenance agreement between the several agencies involved in the Minnesota Valley trails. The City and the Three Rivers Park District should work to accomplish this."

The Minnesota Valley Trail Advocacy Group would appreciate your help! Thank you, Ed Crozier, 952-435-6130

April 2 Third Crop Producer Meeting on 'Bioenergy from Perennials'

Fuel and energy from plants, commonly called biofuel or bioenergy, has been an ongoing effort in the United States. The April 2nd Third Crop Producer Meeting will be focusing on the bioenergy work being done in south central Minnesota. Join University of Minnesota Extension and Rural Advantage on April 2, 2012, for a workshop on "Bioenergy from Perennials." 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 - 3:30pm.

The morning session will begin with Linda Meschke giving an update on the Madelia Model, a bioenergy project headed up by Rural Advantage. The second speaker will be Jim Klienschmit with Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy who will be discussing renewable energy policy in Minnesota and the United States. The last topic of the morning session will be the work being done by the Minnesota State University, Mankato-based International Renewable Energy Technology Institute of Minnesota (IRETI). John Frey, Director of IRETI, will be updating attendees on the testing, research/development, and training being conducted.

The afternoon session will open with bioenergy research projects. Jacob Jungers with University of Minnesota is part of a research group looking at harvesting restored grasslands for biomass and energy. Past sites were located near Crookston, Benson, and Windom, Minnesota. Jungers will be sharing project results and future plans. Dr. Gregg Johnson, University of Minnesota Southern Research and Outreach Center (SROC), will follow with a discussion on the numerous bioenergy-related research projects being conducted at Waseca-based SROC. Jim Eckberg, also with University of Minnesota, will be presenting information on the potential ecosystem services that can arise from perennials planted as bioenergy feedstocks. Gary Wyatt with University of Minnesota Extension will wrap up the day. Wyatt will be sharing information on different possibilities landowners can do with expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres; one such possibility is harvesting for bioenergy.

The 2012 Third Crop Producer Meetings are free of charge and no pre-registration is needed. Feel free to attend those topics that your schedule allows or stay for the entire day.

For a full agenda, check out the UMN Extension – Conservation Agronomy Facebook page or find event details at: <http://www.facebook.com/events/166495723449585//>

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

Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Department of Agricultural (MDA) is seeking candidates to serve on an advisory committee to help develop the Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program. The committee will be convened and staffed by the MDA with membership from the following:

- 2 farmers or ranchers;
- 2 representatives of general farm organizations;
- 3 representatives of commodity or livestock organizations;
- 1 representative of agriculture-related business;
- 1 representative of crop consultants or advisors;
- 2 representatives of environmental organizations;
- 2 representatives of conservation organizations; and
- 2 representatives of local government units.

The program is the product of a state-federal partnership that includes the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

For more information, <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/awqcprogram.aspx>

Burning restrictions begin March 26 for 35 Minnesota counties, more counties to be added to the list April 2

Burning restrictions begin today (March 26) for 35 counties throughout the state, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced.

The counties include: Aitkin, Anoka, Becker, southern Beltrami (that portion south of Highway 1), Benton, Carlton, Cass, Chisago, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Dakota, Douglas, Hennepin, Hubbard, Isanti, Itasca, Kanabec, Kittson, Manhomen, Marshall, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Pennington, Pine, Polk (that portion south and east of County Road 6 from the Manhomen County line to Minn. Highway 92 east to the Clearwater County line) Pope, Ramsey, Roseau (that portion west of Highway 89), Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, Washington, and Wright. These restrictions are put in place each spring to reduce the occurrence of wildfires, which can damage homes and other personal property.

Beginning April 2, restrictions will also be placed on the following counties: Beltrami (that portion north of Highway 1), Cook, Koochiching, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Roseau (that portion east of Highway 89), and all of St. Louis County.

Due to the continued snowmelt, warming weather, and dry vegetation, much of Minnesota is at increased risk of wildfires. The risk will remain high until green vegetation emerges. Until that time, no burning will be allowed unless a special permit is obtained from a local forestry office.

Special permits will only be written for extenuating circumstances such as time sensitive construction projects and prescribed burning conducted by professional firefighters. The DNR encourages the use of composting, recycling, and chipping as alternatives to burning.

While debris burning will be curtailed, the use of campfires, if smaller than 3 feet in diameter and 3 feet in height, will continue to be allowed unless limited by the local jurisdiction. Statewide permits are not required for this type of fire if it meets the above conditions and is monitored until coals have cooled.

Fire conditions may change quickly over the next few weeks. For more information and maps, and to check fire conditions, visit www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/firerating_restrictions.html

Job Opportunities:

Project Coordinator

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project is hiring a Project Coordinator with a starting salary between \$42,960 - \$52,981 (depending upon qualifications) plus benefits. This is a grant-based position, with funding currently available through June 2015. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to secure additional funding to continue the position and the overall mission of HCWP. The application deadline is April 6, 2012 at the close of business. To apply Send resume with references, and a cover letter stating your interest in the position and your qualifications, to: Wally Strand, President; Prairie Country RC&D Council; 1005 High Avenue NE; Willmar, MN 56201; Phone: 320-231-0008 Ext. 131 or Fax: 320-235-8751

Prairie Country Resource Conservation & Development Council is seeking a Watershed Coordinator to carry out the duties associated with addressing non-point source water quality concerns in the Hawk Creek Watershed. The Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating the multiple goals and objectives of the Hawk Creek Watershed Project (HCWP), including: Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation, water quality monitoring and public outreach (information and education). This entails

the convening and leadership of regular meetings of the Hawk Creek Watershed Committee, Local Work Group and Executive Committee; communicating with County Boards, Local Water Plans and other government agencies throughout the watershed. The Coordinator also provides all grant administration and management duties, including completion of grant work plans, change orders/amendments, budget development, balancing multiple budgets, and reporting requirements. The Coordinator will also supervise all HCWP staff, including annual performance reviews, salary increase approval/denial, staff development, and disciplinary actions. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to seek additional grant funding to support and further the overall HCWP mission. Coordinator supervision and HCWP policy and program direction is received from the Hawk Creek Executive Committee.

Qualifications: Applicants must possess excellent leadership and communication (verbal and written) skills, as confident and effective public speaking is a vital component to this position. Proven fund-raising and grant writing skills are necessary. Knowledge of current water quality issues is required. Knowledge of agricultural production practices and current agricultural issues in West-Central Minnesota is required. Applicant must be willing to attend/organize various meetings throughout the watershed, including some evening meetings. Knowledge of the infrastructure and jurisdiction of various government agencies (MPCA, DNR, BWSR, NRCS, SWCD, County Government, etc.) is very beneficial. Basic computer aptitude (i.e. Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Publisher) is important. Excellent organization skills and the ability to work independently, with limited supervision, are essential. A full Position Description is available upon request. For further information, please contact Stephanie Klamm at 320-523-3673 or steph@hawkcreekwatershed.org

Strategy & Business Development Specialist

The Institute for Local Organic Food Systems Education, Inc, (ILOFSE) is a new non-profit organization working to help organic producers navigate paths to successful organic processing. We will strive to be a 'one-stop' service for producers, community leaders, and economic development groups needing organic processing information. We will offer assistance to processors interested in adding a line of organic to their existing conventional operation, and coordinate open houses and processing tours for producers and prospective organic processors. Our website is under development and is expected to go live some time in May.

The Institute for Local Organic Food Systems Education, Inc. is looking for an experienced business development specialist to work with organic farmers, producers and processors. This is a new fulltime position and will be based in the Institute's office in Middleton, WI.

Position Summary: The Strategy & Business Development Specialist work focuses on:

- developing and refining strategies and programs to expand organic processing opportunities in the Upper Midwest, and
- working with producers and processors to accomplish this.

The Specialist works in partnership with the Executive Director (ED) to develop policies and programs to increase the availability of organic processing and enhance local food systems. This position is also responsible for monitoring and interpreting trends and emerging issues of relevant industries, i.e. processing, food safety and regulatory programs. The Strategy & Business Development Specialist will seek partnership opportunities with organic farmers and food industry specialists in an effort to leverage resources to expand program impact.

Knowledge, Skills & Abilities: The ideal candidate will possess many of the following skills:

- Excellent writing skills including the ability to interpret and synthesize technical information and present it in ways that are understandable to the layperson.
- Excellent verbal communication skills and ability to give formal presentations, training, public speaking, and consensus building.
- Skills to research and perform trends analysis of FDA, USDA, state programs regulating food safety, production, processing, and organic certification requirements.
- Knowledge of the underlying principles of Food Safety, HACCP, and GAP.
- Knowledge of organic agriculture issues, structure (i.e. certification), and Midwest resource organizations.

- Knowledge of supply chain economics.
- Ability to analyze government policies and programs and propose and negotiate improvements.
- Microsoft Office and Apple OS.
- Ability to work both independently but also as part of a team and develop constructive and cooperative working relationships with others and maintaining them over time.

Compensation: Competitive salary and benefits and the opportunity to make a significant contribution to expanding organic processing in the Upper Midwest.

Application Process: Email a (Word or PDF document) cover letter summarizing the candidate's interest, qualifications, and compensation requirements along with a current resume to: Carla.organic@gmail.com with "Employment Inquiry" in the subject field.

Inquiries from candidates are welcome, and should be directed to Carla Wright at Carla.organic@gmail.com or by phoning 608/833-5370.

Trail Staff, Internships and Urban Wilderness Boat Captains

Wilderness Inquiry is now accepting applications for Trail Staff, Internships, and Urban Wilderness Boat Captains for summer 2012. We're looking for people with outstanding leadership and decision-making skills, high energy, and a willingness to work hard.

If you know of someone who would be good and interested, could you please send them our way? They can apply for the positions by going to: www.wildernessinquiry.org/jobs

Please distribute the following announcement flyers as you see fit:

Trail Staff Flyer: <http://fmp.wildernessinquiry.org/doclib.php?doc=3028>

Internship Flyer: <http://fmp.wildernessinquiry.org/doclib.php?doc=5343>

Events:

March 29th (Thursday) is a **Conference on Precision Conservation**, the science and philosophy of putting conservation practices at the places on the landscape where they will do the most good in preventing erosion and improving water quality. NRCS Chief Dave White is keynote speaker. Sponsored by the Freshwater Society and a number of partners. To learn more and register: www.freshwater.org.

March 29th (Thursday) is the **Chippewa River Watershed Project Annual Meeting** starting at 5 p.m. at the Starbuck Community Center. The meal begins at 6 p.m. and program to follow. There is also an opportunity for displays. The watershed effort works best when we all work together, so it's great to share and show the accomplishments and opportunities from across the basin. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/chippewaannualmeeting.pdf>

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 .

April 10th (Tuesday) is the **Le Sueur River Watershed “Map Party”** from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Main Street Plaza and Community Center in Pemberton. The public is invited to this free event designed to share maps and information about the waterways and historic landscape of the Le Sueur River watershed. The event is free and participants will be welcome to come and go as they please. Refreshments and hot beef sandwiches will be served. For more information call 1-877-269-2873. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/lesueurmapparty.pdf>

April 12th (Thursday) is the **Second Annual Ice Out/Loon In Fundraising Event** sponsored by the Minnesota Freshwater Society from 5:30 to 8:30 at the Lafayette Club in Minnetonka Beach. The event will include Exciting silent auction items Including...Twins Suite behind home plate for 14 guests with food and drink; kayaking around Split Rock Lighthouse; silver loon pendant on a silver chain; a sightseeing cruise on Lake Minnetonka; a week at a resort near Steamboat Springs and much more! Emcee is Paul Huttner, MPR Meteorologist and there will also be a raffle, hilarious loon calling contest, great music, food and beverages. For more information click [here](#), or contact Diane Lynch at 952-314-8134 or dlynch@freshwater.org

April 24th (Tuesday) is the **Minnesota River Watershed Alliance Quarterly Meeting** in Room 141 Ridgewater College, Hutchinson MN starting at 6:00 p.m. with a social hour and food. The formal meeting starts at 7 p.m. and we will wrap up the discussion by 9 o'clock. We will be focusing on planning a Mayor's Fishing Opener.

April 28th (Saturday) is the **Ney Nature Center Spring Fling – Benefit Dinner & Silent Auction** starting at 5:30 at the Montgomery American Legion Post 79 (102 Elm Avenue SW0 in Montgomery. Featured guest speaker is Don Shelby, an environmental journalist, nature lover, one of the most decorated and honored local television journalists in the country, and recently WCCO-TV News Anchor. For more information call or email Becky at the Ney Nature Center – 507-248-3474 or info@neycenter.org

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://mrfdc.mnsu.edu/calendar>

Environmental/Conservation Articles:

[The price of severe weather](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). This whacky weather, as beautiful as it is, is a reminder that we live in interesting times, climate wise.

[Peterson: Ryan budget means no farm bill in 2012](#) (MinnPost). The [Republican budget proposal](#) introduced Tuesday virtually guarantees there will not be a farm bill in 2012, Minnesota Democrat Collin Peterson said.

[Winona residents praise ban on sand mining](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). About 60 people attended a public hearing Monday on a city council's decision to approve a one-year moratorium on new silica sand mining within city limits.

[Time to pay more attention to impact of low doses of hormone-altering chemicals](#) (MinnPost). When it comes to the dozens of hormone-altering chemicals that have become a ubiquitous part of our everyday life — such substances as [bisphenol A](#), found in certain plastics and other products, and [atrazine](#), a pesticide used mainly on corn — the scientific, medical and regulatory communities have long operated under the paradigm that “the dose makes the poison.”

['Farm to School': Moving from pink slime to purple beets](#) (MinnPost). Consider the following three items: school lunches and pink slime; school children living in “food deserts” and obesity among our youth.

['Pink slime' backlash may hurt Cargill](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Kroger Co. on Thursday joined two other national food retailers in saying it will no longer sell hamburger with finely textured beef, a move that could hurt Minnetonka-based Cargill Inc.

[Minnesota House passes bill to streamline permit procedures for businesses](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). The Minnesota House on Thursday, March 22, passed legislation further streamlining permit procedures for businesses.

[Minn. lake associations sue over zebra mussels](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Three western suburban lakes associations are suing the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources over zebra mussel boat inspections.

[As gas prices soar, drivers buy less](#) (St. Paul Pioneer Press). Americans have pumped less gas every week for the past year.

If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are. – Wendell Berry

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,

Scott

Scott Kudelka
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