



Friends of the Mississippi River

Working to protect the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities area

www.fmr.org

Fall 2010

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Mississippi River Commons: Protecting the River's Shared Resources for Current and Future Generations

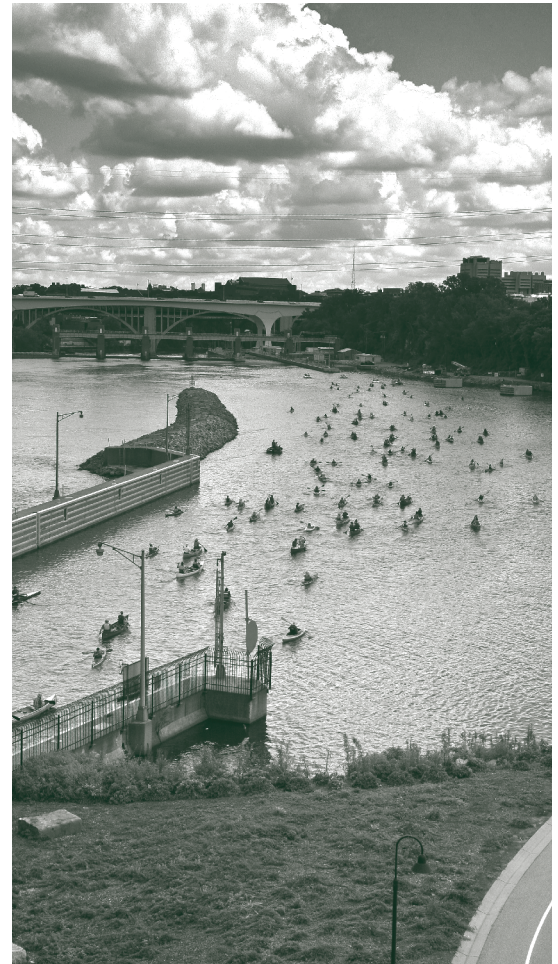
By Irene Jones

The Mississippi River is the quintessential commons of the Twin Cities. Indelibly linked to our region's past, present, and future, the river is one of our greatest assets, and its careful stewardship one of our greatest responsibilities. Our local river is so beloved and significant that Congress has designated it part of our National Park System.

The great river provides many gifts that sustain and enrich our community and nation - but they are not infinite. We share these resources, not just with one another, but also with future generations.

According to OnTheCommons.org, the concept of commons is "a new way to express a very old idea—that some forms of wealth belong to all of us, and that these community resources must be actively protected and managed for the good of all. The commons consists of gifts of nature such as air, oceans and wildlife as well as shared social creations such as libraries, public spaces, scientific research and creative works."

Historically, commons were created to collectively manage shared lands and waters used for hunting, fishing and agriculture. A small, simple system, such as a dozen fishermen sharing a small lake, is a classic example. Since over-fishing the lake reduces everyone's success, it makes sense for the fishermen to define the maximum harvest that can be taken sustainably and then apportion it among themselves. Of course, there will always be some who will want to harvest more than their share. But if every member of the group has a stake in the arrangement, peer-to-peer enforcement holds everyone accountable and ensures that everyone gets a fair share. "We don't play a baseball game or drive down the road without a clear set of rules that everyone understands," says Whitney Clark,



The Mississippi River is a shared resource that supports multiple uses and needs. Parks, recreation, residential and commercial uses must co-exist with the biological and ecological functions of the corridor. Photo: Matt Holland for FMR

FMR's Executive Director, "Why would we try to share our rivers without them?"

The importance of rules to preserve and sustain our commons is foundational in the work of Elinor Ostrom, a leader in modern academic

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Mission

Friends of the Mississippi River engages citizens to protect, restore and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities region.

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Karen Solas, *Stewardship Coordinator*
Bob Spaulding, *River Planner*
Kerry Walsh, *Development Associate*

From the Director

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are people who want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.”

- Frederick Douglass

The other day while listening to a panel of scientists discuss water quality in the Mississippi River I was struck by the thoroughness and quality of the understanding we now have about the problems the river faces. From sediment cores of Lake Pepin we have excellent data about the increasing rate of sediment pollution to the river. We know with a high level of accuracy how much phosphorus pollution is coming from each sub basin in the watershed. We can even tell what percentage of the sediment pollution load to the Mississippi is from farm fields and what percentage is from stream bank erosion.

What we don't seem to be able to do is anything about it.

Don't get me wrong. Data is good. Science is good. We need to understand a problem before we can craft an effective solution. That said, we can study the problems forever but at some point we are going to need to make some investments in the hard work of advocating for changes to current policies

and practices or the problems aren't going to be solved.

At some point we are going to need to make some investments in the hard work of advocating for changes to current policies and practices or the problems aren't going to be solved.



Whitney Clark,
Executive Director

Friends of the Mississippi River was founded to do just that. Each day decisions are made that will have a real impact — for good or ill — on the health of the river. At city hall or the State Capitol we need strong, effective voices to advocate on behalf of the Mississippi River that can't speak for itself.

Change doesn't usually come easily. People become invested in the status quo and the will to change doesn't come about until the pain of staying the course exceeds the pain of doing something different. Advocating for changes to our policies regarding, for instance, runoff pollution or riverfront development sometimes requires us to overcome our aversion to conflict. But the progress we've made in improving the health of the river didn't come without conflict and future improvements won't either.

Let's continue to study and better understand the river and its watershed but let's not forget how change comes about — advocating for it.

Give FMR a Long-Lasting Gift!

By Heather Haynes

You can leave a lasting legacy to the Mississippi River by making a planned gift to Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR). A planned gift can be as simple as a bequest in a will or the donation of a life insurance policy. You can also make a gift through trusts, annuities or other planned giving vehicles. Making a planned gift to FMR gives us the ability to continue our long-term commitment to protecting your local land and water resources, while ensuring a healthier Mississippi River for future generations.



Talk with your financial or estate planner, or call Heather today at 651-222-2193 x20 to learn more about making a gift to the river with lasting impact and how to become a member of the Mississippi River Legacy Society.

Program Highlights

FMR Launches new Blue Star Award

By Trevor Russell

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is proud to introduce their brand-new award program for communities that excel at protecting water quality from urban runoff pollution: The Blue Star Award for Excellence in Community Stormwater Management.

The Blue Star Award is Minnesota's only award for communities that exceed minimum standards and make the extra effort to protect our waters. The award is designed to offer communities that excel in stormwater management the positive public recognition that they deserve, while giving other communities a goal to strive for.

In partnership with Emmons and Olivier Resources, Inc. and other local partners, FMR created the Blue Star Award program, which is free to any Minnesota community.

The program rates key community indicators such as city development codes, site-design guidelines and post-construction stormwater management standards. Any community that scores high enough automatically earns the Blue Star Award for Excellence in Community Stormwater Management.

Is your community a Blue Star community?

The award is also a fast and easy way for Minnesota citizens to understand what their community is doing to protect their water.

In the first eight weeks of the program, more than twenty cities have registered at <http://www.bluestarmn.org> and taken their self-assessments. To date, eight communities have won the award!

Grand Rapids, long-known as a clean water community, is the runaway leader so far. Other communities to win the Blue Star Award are Plymouth, Blaine, Hopkins, Victoria, Woodbury, Stillwater, and FMR's home city of Saint Paul. Congratulations to all the Blue Star cities!

If your community is a Blue Star community - congratulations! Help spread the word about the great work your leaders are doing to protect Minnesota's waters.

If not, it's time to ask your city to take the challenge and earn their Blue Star!

For more information about the Blue Star Award, visit <http://www.bluestarmn.org> or contact FMR's Blue Star Program Coordinator and Watershed Program Director Trevor Russell at (651) 222-2193 x18 or trussell@fmr.org.



THE
**BLUE STAR
AWARD**

Recognizing Excellence in
Community Stormwater
Management

Saint Paul Charts Future of Key Riverfront Parks

By Bob Spaulding

Three concurrent park planning efforts promise to dramatically strengthen Saint Paul's riverfront parks, and Friends of the Mississippi River is contributing to each.

A group of Lilydale Park users is helping to guide realization of specific aspects of this scenic natural park. The group is currently focusing on two key components: how to reroute Lilydale Road through what was once a low-lying city, and how to shape a picnic and gathering space along the edge of the lovely Pickerel Lake.

In Mounds Park atop the bluffs east of downtown, Saint Paul is planning for a variety of improvements to a long-established urban park that is home to Indian Burial Grounds and some of the most iconic views of the city's core.

Finally, the Great River Park Master Plan is the city's overarching effort to put detail into the citywide master planning efforts. The plan seeks to create a park that is "more urban, more natural and more connected", and will help shape some of the large-scale transportation, recreational, and ecological systems.



A Task Force is hard at work identifying a long-term plan for Mounds Park, which presides over an iconic blufftop location along the Mississippi River. Photo: MNRR

Program Updates

Restoration Begins at Minneapolis' Riverside Park

By Karen Solas

Riverside Park, Minneapolis's first park, has been buzzing with energy and activity! A restoration and management plan written by Carolyn Carr, an ecologist for Ecological Strategies, highlighted the rich cultural history of the park, and proposed a restoration plan. Using this plan as a guide, community members gathered at the park in mid-May for the first of many volunteer events, helping to remove invasive species like garlic mustard and buckthorn. In early fall, a volunteer group from Aveda Corporation, joined by members of Friends of the Mississippi River's Gorge Stewards Leadership Team, helped prepare a section of the park to be planted with native species. After their hard work removing the invasive plants that had been dominating the area, volunteers were able to plant a variety of native shrubs, flowers, and grasses in mid-October as part of an effort to improve species diversity, wildlife habitat, and slope stability. Plans for the next steps in the restoration of this community treasure are underway, so look for more opportunities to be part of this exciting project in 2011!

Thanks to the West Bank Community Coalition and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board for their involvement in the project!

RIGHT: Volunteers pose proudly next to the pile of buckthorn they removed from Riverside Park on May 15th. Photo: Karen Solas/FMR



ABOVE: Volunteers from Aveda Corporation removed invasive plants from a section of Riverside Park to prepare it to be planted with native species, September 29, 2010. Photo: Karen Solas/FMR



Critical Area Rulemaking Update

By Irene Jones

After working successfully to help pass important Critical Area reform legislation in 2009, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) has spent much of 2010 working to influence the state rulemaking process for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA), which runs from Dayton to Hastings. The new rules will delineate and define new districts within the critical area corridor and establish minimum guidelines and standards for development within these districts. FMR staff were appointed to the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) Stakeholder Advisory Committee, which gave us a chance to provide feedback during the rule drafting process.

In general, we have mixed reviews of the current draft rules. Highlights include:

- The DNR mapped the bluffs and steep slopes in the corridor, but failed to use best technology available. The definition of bluffs and blufflines has been a source of controversy in the past, and the credibility

of the map is a key component to successful bluff protection.

- Proposed new districts for the MRCCA provide some improvements over the current system, such as a district specifically for parks. However, the DNR based the districts primarily on land use, instead of natural river features.
- The standards and guidelines offer a number of improvements, including open space protection requirements, bigger setbacks from the river, stricter height limits, and vegetative buffering for more places in the corridor. Many of our concerns about the standards and guidelines could be resolved if the boundaries and/or intent of the MRCCA Districts were modified.

Public hearings about this important rulemaking process will begin next year. In the meantime, view FMR's comments in response to the DNR's plans and learn more at http://www.fmr.org/news/current/mrca_reform_fact_sheet-2009-02.

2010 Mississippi River Challenge Sets New Fundraising Record!

By Christine Lee

The 2010 Mississippi River Challenge was a success by many standards: high participation, beautiful weather, and a fundraising record! Nearly 400 paddlers and 200 volunteers came together on July 24th and 25th to experience the Mississippi River firsthand, all while benefiting Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR). Our hard-working participants, coupled with our generous sponsors, helped raise over \$120,000 to benefit the river! Thank you to everyone who was a part of the successful, fun weekend by volunteering, paddling, or pledging!

This event would not be possible without the help of all of our generous sponsors:

Above the Falls Sports, American Canoe Association, Aggregate Industries, Aveda, Big River Magazine, Cardinal Realty, Friends of Bruce Vento, Historic Fort Snelling, Hoigaard's, Midway Party Rental, Midwest Mountaineering, Minnesota Monthly, Mississippi Market, National Park Service, Northwest Canoe Company, Patagonia, Pioneer Press, REI, Surly Brewing Co., Thousand Hills, Underground Printing, Wenonah Canoe and Current Designs Kayak, Wild River Outfitters, and Wilderness Inquiry.

Please visit www.MississippiRiverChallenge.org for more information about our sponsors and the event. Mark your calendars for the 2011 Mississippi River Challenge: July 30th and 31st. We hope to see you there!

Stay up to date on the Mississippi River Challenge by becoming a fan on Facebook and by following @MissRivChall on Twitter.



Two paddlers congratulate each other for successfully finishing the 2010 Mississippi River Challenge. Photo: Matt Holland

Phase IV of Metro Conservation Corridors Project Complete

By Tom Lewanski

Since 2003, Friends of the Mississippi River has been a member of the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership, the goal of which is to protect, restore and enhance a system of interconnected natural corridors within the Twin Cities metro area. These corridors have multiple benefits: they provide wildlife habitat, help protect water quality in our streams and lakes, and provide open space and recreational opportunities for the residents of the area. A map of these corridors can be viewed at: <http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/nrplanning/community/metroconservationcorridors/map.pdf>

During Phase IV of this project, which went from July 2008 until June 2010, FMR restored and enhanced a total of 295

acres at 11 different sites. Our work included removing exotic invasive plants from the Pine Bend Bluffs and Hastings Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Areas, planting permanently-protected prairie on private land along the Vermillion River, and installing woodland plants in Saint Paul Park along the Mississippi River.

FMR, along with its partners, will continue the important work of improving habitat in the Twin Cities metro area through the upcoming Phase V of the Metro Conservation Corridors project.

Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) and other sources.

Shoreline Stabilization Along the Vermillion River

By Karen Solas

Since the spring of 2009, Friends of the Mississippi River's (FMR) volunteers have played an important role in a streambank stabilization project along the Vermillion River, a tributary of the Mississippi River and important trophy trout stream. In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the University of Minnesota Extension, and the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, FMR volunteers have participated in several shoreline tree planting and willow staking events.

Due to previous land use, stretches of the Vermillion River have become overly wide and shallow, resulting in warmer water temperatures and poor habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

The DNR has worked to solve this problem by re-sloping the banks and re-vegetating with species better suited for anchoring soil and stabilizing shoreline. FMR volunteers helped plant a mixture of riparian tree species, including silver maple, cottonwood, black willow, swamp white oak, burr oak, and black walnut. As these native trees and shrubs mature, their roots will help hold the streambank in place, preventing it from eroding into the stream and impairing water quality and habitat. They will also help filter and absorb polluted run-off, provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, and shade and cool the stream, enhancing and protecting the river's coldwater trout fishery.

study of the commons, and a recipient of the 2009 Nobel Prize for Economic Science. Her principles for governing the commons include:

1. Clearly Defined Boundaries - the need for a clearly defined boundary so there is no confusion about what the common resource is;
2. Rules Based on Science - the importance of a scientific basis for the rules so they actually work to manage the health of the resource;
3. Collective Rule Making - inclusion of all stakeholders in establishing the rules because parties left out of the equation will have no interest in following or supporting the rules; and
4. Monitoring and Enforcement - the need for effective monitoring and enforcement of the rules so nobody cheats.

These principles offer helpful guidance as we think about setting state policy in two areas of great importance to the Mississippi River: developing new land use rules for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area and decreasing the massive load of runoff pollution entering the river from both farm fields and urban areas.

The Mississippi River Critical Area

An opportunity to participate in commons rulemaking in action is currently underway for the Mississippi River Critical Area. Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is working to bring a citizen voice and perspective to the process, and to make sure the shared values of the river are protected for the benefit of the all.

Established by the Minnesota Legislature, the Critical Areas Act of 1973 lays out the clear purpose of protecting the commons:

§116G.02. The legislature finds that the development of certain areas of the state possessing important historic, cultural, or esthetic values, or natural systems which perform functions of greater than local significance, could result in irreversible damage to these resources, decrease their value and utility for public purposes, or unreasonably endanger life and property. The legislature therefore determines that the state should identify these areas of critical concern and assist and cooperate with local units of government in the preparation of plans and regulations for the wise use of these areas.

When Governors Anderson and Quie, along with the Minnesota Legislature, identified the 72 miles of the Mississippi River corridor through the Twin Cities as a State Critical Area, they recognized that the river was a resource of state-wide significance that would require special management to retain its health and vitality. "They understood," said Clark, "that with more than two dozen cities and townships with land-use authority along the river, some over-arching guidelines would be necessary to avoid a death by a thousand cuts," — the steady degradation of the very qualities that make the Mississippi River such a treasure.



Mounds Park in Saint Paul. The 19th Century planners in the Twin Cities recognized the value of the Mississippi River as a commons in need of protection. The public parks and parkways along the river and bluffs have provided a beloved community treasure that is accessible to all.

Photo: Metropolitan Design Center. ©Regents of the University of Minnesota. Used with permission.

Most of us recognize that our shared planet needs to support healthy populations of fish, birds and wildlife. As more of the urban landscape is developed, river corridors offer the habitat continuity and connectivity critical to sustaining diverse flora and fauna. The Mississippi River's importance as a habitat and migration corridor is profound, supporting 40% of waterfowl and 60% of neo-tropical bird species in North America. In order to protect Minnesota's habitat commons, river corridors often get priority for land protection and ecological restoration.

These healthy natural areas also support all kinds of fish and wildlife, which are highly valued by local residents and many different kinds of recreational users. Fishing, boating, canoeing and kayaking, birdwatching and hiking are popular outdoor activities for which the Mississippi River is a world-class destination, drawing both users and economic activity from well beyond the corridor communities.

Private land, including homes, businesses, and industry, are also prevalent along the river, and those landowners have a significant stake in how the river is managed. "Property values along the river are significantly higher than surrounding parcels," says Bob Spaulding, River Planner at FMR, "but those riverfront lots also come with added responsibility. Land at the river's edge can have a significant impact, for good or ill, on the health and scenic values of the resource that we all share".

Because beauty is in the eye of the beholder, it can often be challenging to regulate scenic resource commons. However, the Mississippi is known around the world for its majestic scenery and the Twin Cities has some of its finest vistas. From the Falls of St. Anthony to the white sandstone bluffs of Saint Paul, the river gives our communities a sense of place and a visual stature that few cities can match. Frequent river users know the value of a beautiful river, but so do millions that see it only on their daily drive across a bridge. These scenic views belong to all of us, and so in key places, common sense standards to regulate height limits, structure

setbacks, and vegetative screening are needed to protect this fragile scenic quality.

As new development and re-development happens along the river, the state rules that are currently being developed will, if they're done well, provide a framework for protecting the long-term health of the river commons through the protection of bluffs, slopes, shorelines, canopy trees, and native vegetation, while still allowing for growth and private land uses in the river corridor.

Water Commons

The river provides many public goods, but water is the most important resource that we share. Everyone benefits from clean water. More than 20 million Americans get their drinking water from the Mississippi River, including those who live in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The river receives our treated wastewater, and a variety of pollutants that are washed into the river from our farm fields, lawns, rooftops and streets. Clearly, it is vital to have common rules for a resource that doubles as a waste receptacle and the supply of our most basic need for survival. However, rivers are inherently difficult to manage as a commons because they don't have clearly defined boundaries, so successfully implementing those rules is still a challenge. Rules designed to maximize the benefit for just one town do not necessarily protect the rights of those downstream. Therefore, we need state and federal rules that apply to all.

When Congress established the Clean Water Act in 1972 with the explicit purpose to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters" they laid out a framework to determine what the sources of pollution were and assigned "load reductions" that could be enforced through permit limits. Like the example of the fishermen, a scientific analysis is made to determine how much pollution the resource can bear and still be healthy. When that is established, all of those who are contributing pollutants can be required to keep their share of the load below a certain maximum. In this example of managing our commons, users are "sharing" the natural capacity of the waters to assimilate pollution.

Unfortunately, the way the Clean Water Act was drafted doesn't follow one of Ostrom's key principles — inclusion of all stakeholders — because the largest source of pollution, agricultural runoff, is not subject to regulatory authority. "We're not going to solve the problem until we find more effective ways to address agricultural runoff," says Trevor Russell, Watershed Program Director at FMR. "The current system relies on strictly voluntary pollution control measures for field agriculture — and not all farm operators are willing to participate," He argues for a new approach that doesn't exempt certain sectors from responsibility for keeping our waters clean. "It's a shared resource and everyone has to do their part," adds Russell.

The Federal Clean Water Act and the State Critical Areas Act were both established nearly 40 years ago. The enduring impact of these laws is a testament to the importance of protecting our commons. As our communities grow, the demands for our commons also grow, and the need to protect them becomes even more important. As it has in the past, it will require the thoughtful and dedicated work of many to make sure our Mississippi River Commons has a healthy and sustainable future.

FMR Welcomes Three New Directors

By Whitney Clark

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is pleased to announce the addition of three new members of our Board of Directors in recent months.

Dee Moore

Upon meeting Dee Moore, you immediately notice her energy and passion. Dee joined the Board of Directors this summer with the intent of contributing her energy and passion to help improve the river. She brings a wealth of knowledge and connections with over 20 years of experience in the financial services industry. Originally from Panama, Dee grew up in New York City and recently moved from Sioux City, Iowa to Edina. After a few months as a director she said, "I've really been impressed by what FMR accomplishes. I'm proud of the real difference we're making for the river and for the community. We actually walk the walk".



Faye Sleeper

With her extensive knowledge of both the technical and social aspects of watershed stewardship, Faye Sleeper is an outstanding addition to FMR's Board of Directors. Faye is the Co-Director of the University of Minnesota's Water Resources Center and a veteran clean water advocate. Faye led the impaired waters program at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and has played a key role in developing and implementing Minnesota's water quality policy. Welcome, Faye!



Mary Adamski

Mary Adamski grew up in Wausau, Wisconsin along the banks of the Wisconsin River, where she learned to love rivers and understand their impact on communities. An avid kayaker, Mary says she's "a huge believer in preserving and making better what nature has given us". She got involved with FMR by paddling the annual Mississippi River Challenge. In her professional life, Mary is a Senior Vice President and Financial Consultant with RBC Wealth Management. Asked why she wanted to serve on the FMR Board of Directors, Mary says "the Mississippi River is a big deal and since we're the headwaters state, we have a huge responsibility to make sure it's clean and healthy".





Friends of the Mississippi River

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Visit FMR's web site for the most
current information on events and
programs... www.fmr.org

Thank You, Volunteers!

By sue rich

As the event season comes to a close, we'd like to take a moment to thank the nearly 3,000 people who have contributed 9,000 hours towards the health and welfare of the Mississippi River through Friends of the Mississippi River this year.

Volunteers turned out in full force, helping to:

- Restore habitat and improve water quality in the River Gorge and Vermillion watershed,
- Educate people about watershed health by distributing informative materials and stenciling "Please don't pollute! Drains to Mississippi River!" next to storm drains in Saint Paul,
- Supporting the Mississippi River Challenge,
- Monitoring stream health, and
- Assisting with essential clerical work.



Vermillion Steward Ashley Tabery tending the Hastings River Flats.

We'd like to thank each individual here, but we know you'd prefer that we not use so much ink and paper. We also understand that many of you prefer to work earnestly, quietly for the environment — and for that we salute you. We couldn't do this work without you.

To volunteer with FMR, visit www.fmr.org or contact Volunteer Coordinator sue rich at srich@fmr.org or 651-222-2193 x14.

Help FMR Even More in 2011!

By Heather Haynes

As 2010 begins to come to a close, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) members, volunteers and supporters should take this time to reflect on all the amazing work that has been accomplished this year for the health of the Mississippi River. It's also a time to prepare for all of the challenges we will face in the coming year.

As an FMR member, you understand the value of a clean and healthy Mississippi River. Please show your support for FMR's work with a tax-deductible year-end contribution that will go right to work for your river and your community. A reply envelope is enclosed for your convenience. You can also donate online at <http://www.fmr.org/support/donate>, or by contacting Heather Haynes at 651-222-2193 x20. Thank you in advance for your support!

We know that this has been a challenging year, but a gift of any size will make a huge impact on the river next year! And, in recognition of a gift of \$40 or more, you will receive a set of beautiful FMR notecards, perfect for the upcoming holiday season! Please help ensure a healthy, pristine, beautiful Mississippi River for future generations by donating today.



FMR is proud to be a member of the
Minnesota Environmental Fund (www.mnenvirofund.org)