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ANNUAL REPORT 2000-2001

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FRIENDS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER



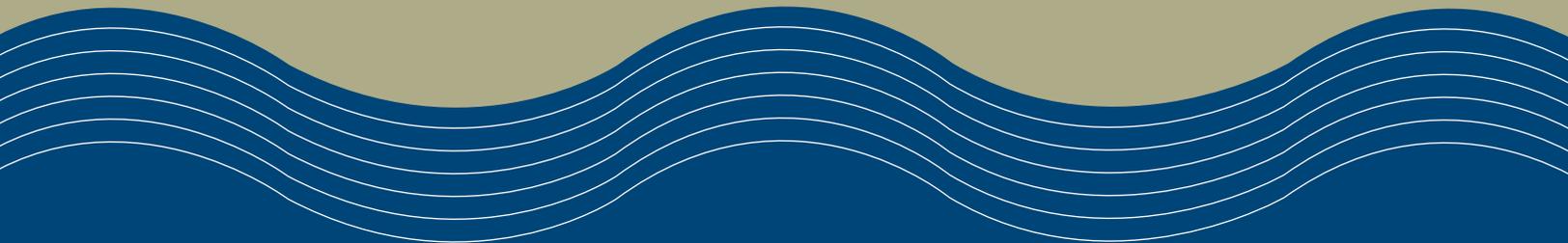
protecting
LOCAL WATER QUALITY



conserving
RIVERFRONT LAND



embracing
OUR RIVER HERITAGE



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

In the Twin Cities, the Mississippi is our hometown river. It is central to our natural heritage, a source of our drinking water, an important recreational asset and a vital environmental resource. The mission of Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is to protect and enhance this great river as it flows through the Twin Cities metropolitan region. 2001 was a year of great progress for FMR as we began implementation of our new, ambitious strategic plan, which has focused our efforts on three interrelated issues:



FMR Board Chair Tina Smith

Protecting water quality. *FMR is respected throughout the region for engaging volunteers to stencil storm drains, providing education on water quality issues and restoring the shoreland vegetation that keeps our rivers and streams clean. In 2002 FMR will build on this grassroots work and use communications and outreach to strengthen people's connection to the Mississippi.*

Conserving riverfront land. *Over the last five years, FMR has made a major contribution to protecting special land along the Mississippi and its tributaries, especially in Dakota County. In 2002 we are expanding our work into Washington County, and continue to work intensively with landowners and local, regional and state government to restore and conserve the bluffs, bottomlands and shores of the Mississippi.*

Embracing our river heritage. *FMR is dedicated to protecting the river's unique cultural, historical and recreational values because we know that when people use and enjoy the river, they become more dedicated to protecting it. In 2002, we will continue our successful educational and interpretive programs and increase our work to help river communities make the most of their connection to the Mississippi.*

Thank you for your support and interest in our work. We look forward to seeing you on the river.

PROGRAM UPDATE

Water Quality Education

All of the stormwater in the Twin Cities eventually drains to the Mississippi River. For this reason, many activities in the metro area have a direct impact on the river's water quality. FMR's Storm Drain Stenciling project fosters public awareness of stormwater pollution by distributing educational materials and marking local storm drains with the message: "Please! Don't Pollute! Drains to Mississippi River." In 2000-2001, nearly 6,000 volunteers helped stencil 14,500 drains and distribute pollution prevention tips to 48,000 homes. FMR has also started presenting educational workshops to help homeowners learn how to prevent runoff pollution through simple landscaping projects and use of native plants.

PLEASE DON'T POLLUTE
 **DRAINS TO**
MISSISSIPPI RIVER



This 110-acre site in Inver Grove Heights includes oak forest, sand gravel prairie and black ash seepage swamp. FMR initiated negotiations with the land's owner and nominated the site for acquisition support from the DNR Metro Greenways Program. Once acquired, the land will become the centerpiece of a new Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area.

Protecting Key Natural Areas

The Twin Cities are home to some rare stretches of undeveloped riverfront – places where bluffs, floodplains and prairies provide critical habitat, improve water quality and offer scenic public green space. Many of our most pristine riverfront lands are located in the fast-growing southern section of the metro area, and FMR is acting quickly to protect vital natural areas before they are lost to development.

There are several ways to permanently protect land, including acquiring the property for conservation, purchasing development rights, or facilitating donated conservation easements. FMR is using these strategies to ensure that key riverfront natural areas are conserved for future generations of wildlife and people. We have set the stage for protecting a number of sites, including a floodplain area near Hastings and several high quality natural areas around Pine Bend Bluffs near Rosemount. The

Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Metro Greenways Program and the Trust for Public Land have been important partners in these efforts, along with other local agencies and organizations.



Helping Landowners Become River Stewards

Because so much of our riverfront is privately owned, FMR is reaching out to the owners of key properties and involving them in our Heritage Land Registry, an honor role of landowners who are taking steps to improve the natural features on their land. As a result of our efforts, nearly 2,000 acres were enrolled by the end of 2001. FMR's staff provides participating landowners with the technical assistance they need to conserve and restore their land's natural qualities. Involved landowners proudly mark their property with a sign (pictured at left) and are joining forces with their neighbors to establish a network of restored habitat along the river.

FMR's Prairie Stewards project is one example of our successful efforts with riverfront landowners. In 2000, we worked with owners of rare bluff

prairie in Ravenna Township, and restored three important sites by clearing woody vegetation and conducting controlled burns. The effectiveness of this work, and the importance of the prairie ecosystem, led to the expansion of our efforts to an area south of Hastings. Here, we have been working with eight families who own contiguous property in the Sand Coulee — the largest prairie, and the only sand prairie, in Dakota County. FMR completed a stewardship plan for the area, and found that there are seven rare or endangered plant species and two species of threatened animals. By the end of 2001, these landowners had agreed to take action to improve the ecological value of their land. Work is expected to begin during the 2002 field season.

“ FMR provided technical, financial and muscular assistance in restoring a five-acre upland prairie on my property in Dakota County. As a result, the prairie exploded the first year with big bluestem and Indian grass. The direct experience with creating and maintaining the prairie ecosystem was exhilarating and profound. ”

Scott Robinson
Riverfront landowner and member
of FMR's Heritage Land Registry

Restoring Critical Habitat

Songbirds, waterfowl and other wildlife depend upon our rivers as migration corridors. Unfortunately, many riverfront areas have lost much of their native vegetation and face other problems such as invasion of exotic plant species and stream bank erosion.



In 2001, FMR and the Big Rivers Partnership involved 120 volunteers in planting 800 trees and shrubs at the Carpenter Nature Center.

installing vegetative buffers on shorelines that are eroding or otherwise affecting water quality. There is strong support for this effort from landowners and local governments and by the end of 2002 we plan to have installed buffers on at least two miles of riverfront. FMR is also working to restore other key riverfront areas, including Spring Lake Park Reserve, Empire Wastewater Treatment Facility on the Vermillion River, Katharine Ordway Natural History Area at Pine Bend Bluffs, Hastings' Riverfront Park, and Carpenter Nature Center.

FMR is taking action to improve a number of riverfronts areas. In the Pine Bend Bluffs area, for example, FMR created a management plan and started restoration work on bluff forest and prairie owned by Flint Hill Resources (FHR). The company owns some of the most pristine natural areas that still exist along the river. In 2000, more than 300 volunteers turned out to help make the land even better by removing invasive buckthorn and planting native prairie. In 2001, we expanded our work by writing a natural resource management plan for an additional 2,500 acres that will buffer high quality habitat along the river from the effects of nearby industrial areas.

Another FMR initiative involves providing natural resources assistance to landowners along the Vermillion River, a key Mississippi tributary. Our work focuses on



Creating Riverfront Greenways

When protected land areas are linked into long greenways it maximizes habitat and water quality benefits. FMR has made great progress in working to create a riverfront greenway running through the cities of Hastings and Rosemount, and Ravenna, Marshan and Nininger townships. Using a GIS mapping system, FMR, the DNR Metro Greenways Program and Dakota County determined sensitive areas that include wetlands, rare species and steep slopes. We mapped out plans to protect and link sensitive areas and held public meetings, where we achieved widespread commitment to the goals of the plan. The cities and municipalities are endorsing the plan, and determining long-term funding commitments.

“ As an elected official, I appreciate how FMR has been able to assist the City of Rosemount in preserving and protecting our most valuable resource — our environment. Because of FMR's dedication and commitment, the Mississippi Greenway Plan is part of Rosemount's Open Space and Parks Plan, which will be a guide for our city and impact future generations. ”

Cathy Busho
Mayor, City of Rosemount



Families improved the health of the Mississippi River gorge at a 2001 event focused on removing invasive exotic plants.

Stewarding the Mississippi River Gorge

Minneapolis and St. Paul are home to the only true gorge along the entire length of the Mississippi River. Created by a receding waterfall, the gorge area includes hardwood forests, springs and remnant prairies. The steep cliffs that line this natural oasis, just north of Minnehaha Park, offer ideal habitat for many nesting birds and other wildlife.

Communities on both sides of the river care deeply about the gorge. In 2000, FMR and the Longfellow Community Council created the Gorge Stewards project

to channel citizen concern into effective action. FMR is helping Longfellow residents gain new technical skills, and coordinating gorge clean-up efforts, ecological restoration work, monitoring, and educational events. Using our Longfellow neighborhood partnership as a model, FMR started work with the Seward community in 2001 and in the near future we plan to expand the program to other neighborhoods around the gorge.

In 2001, FMR also helped gorge-area citizens get involved in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's re-licensing of Ford Motor Company's hydro-electric power generating station. This power station has an enormous impact on the river. Twelve neighborhood organizations took part in FMR's workshops that outlined specific concerns and how they can be addressed through the re-licensing process.

“ Spending time along the river reminds me of my responsibility. Whether it's picking up trash or pulling garlic mustard, the river needs my help. ”

Kate Smith
FMR Volunteer and Member

Revitalizing our Urban Riverfronts

The Mississippi is the premier recreational and cultural asset for the Twin Cities' urban communities. Unfortunately, past land uses — which include heavy industry and roads — have failed to make the most of our beautiful riverfront. There is a growing emphasis on reclaiming degraded riverfronts, and FMR is at the forefront of many of these efforts in the Twin Cities. For several years, FMR has worked to help draft and promote the Upper River Master Plan, which advocates a shift from industry to parkland along the Mississippi in Minneapolis north of St. Anthony Falls. FMR was recently selected to serve on the Upper River Citizen Advisory Committee, which will oversee implementation of the plan.

In South St. Paul, FMR is working with the city to plan redevelopment of a large riverfront site at the base of the Interstate 494 bridge. FMR and co-sponsor, American Rivers, held a public workshop and we have made recommendations on how to create a mix of parkland, restored wetlands and business development on the land. Because community involvement and ecological planning are taking place during the very first phases of the project, this effort is an exciting model for proactive riverfront planning.



This concept plan for the riverfront near the Wakota Bridge is part of FMR's efforts to help South St. Paul reconnect to the Mississippi.



FMR's Mississippi River Canoe Adventure offers a water-level look at the river — and a fascinating trip through Lock #1.

River Outings and Events

A day out on the river is one of the best ways to inspire commitment to this wonderful natural resource. FMR sponsors an array of fun events that teach people about the Mississippi's ecology and history while encouraging river stewardship. Our biggest event, the Mississippi River Canoe Adventure, brought 400 paddlers to the river in 2000, and nearly 500 in 2001. FMR's Special Places Tours, which include birding hikes, small group paddling trips and history tours, provide a more in-depth look at the river. These popular events have expanded each year, and more than 400 people have taken part in the past two years of successful programs. In 2001 FMR added new programs on stream health and other water quality issues. We plan to expand our water quality education efforts in 2002.

“ I've enjoyed all of FMR's programs. They are fun AND educational and you really get to learn something. I think FMR events are a great way to get people interested in what's going on with our river. ”

Jeanette Juba
Participant in FMR's Special Places Tours and Canoe Adventure

Forging Partnerships and Developing Policies

FMR plays an important role in some of the region's most effective partnerships, including American Heritage Rivers and the Metro Greenways Program. As host of the bimonthly River Leaders Forum, FMR helps forge new partnerships by creating ongoing opportunities for government, industry, development corporations and citizens to talk, strategize and develop a common vision for the river. FMR also partners with other groups to promote holistic river improvement policies at the state legislature. For several years, FMR has led a major effort to establish a new statewide program to protect shoreland resources.



FMR is working to increase state investment in protecting Minnesota's shorelands.

“ FMR excels at bringing together a range of stakeholders committed to improving the health of the Mississippi River. It has contributed to a deepened public appreciation of the importance of the river to the livability of the Twin Cities. And it has emerged as a clear, strong voice for the river in public policy deliberations. ”

Rip Rapson
President, The McKnight Foundation

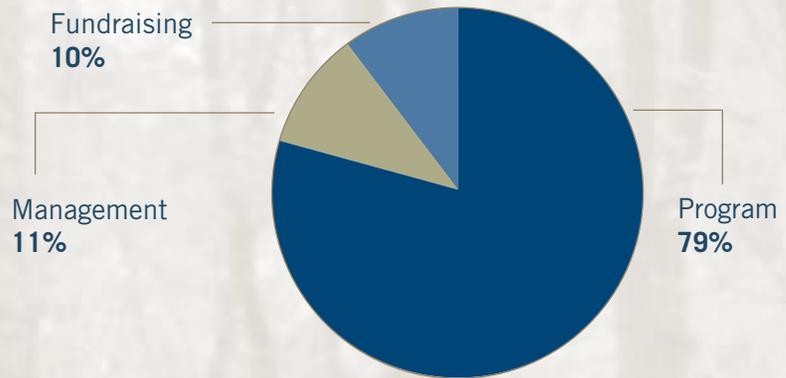
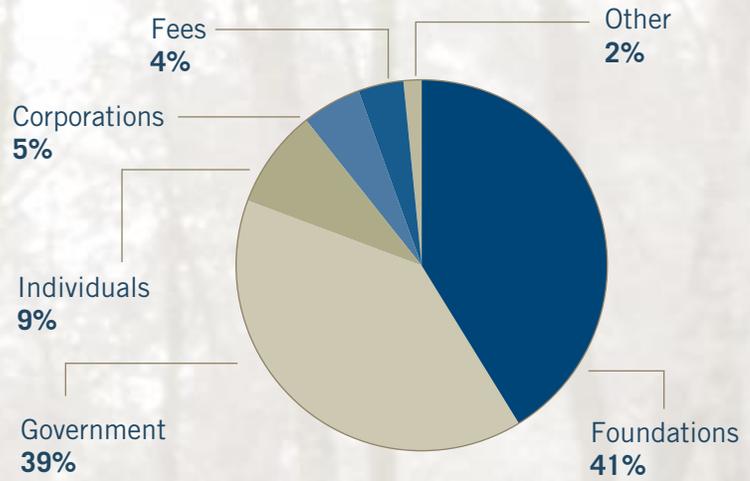
2000 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2000 REVENUE

■ Foundations	\$143,560
■ Government	\$137,509
■ Corporations	\$18,000
■ Individuals	\$30,124
■ Fees	\$13,709
■ Other	\$5,514
Total	\$348,416

2000 EXPENSES

■ Program	\$305,443
■ Management	\$40,127
■ Fundraising	\$39,829
Total	\$385,399



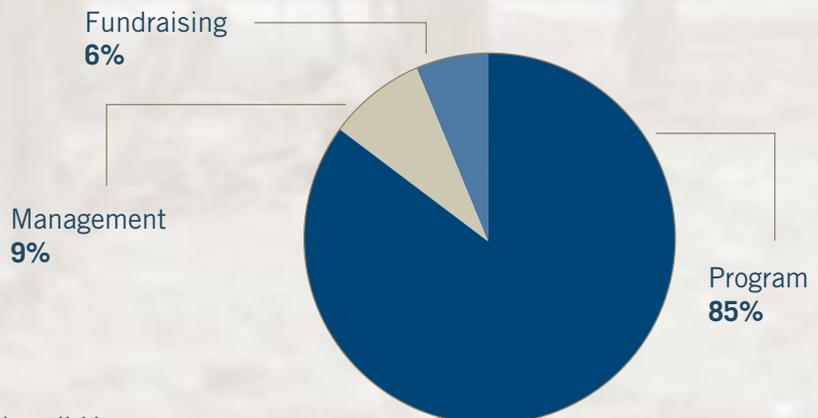
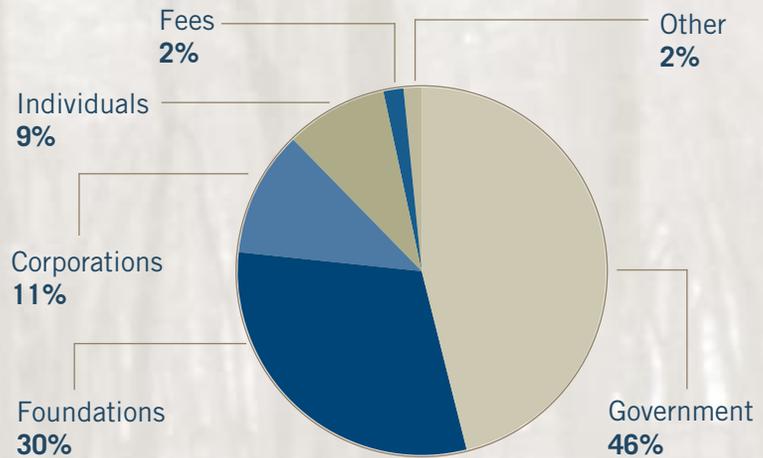
2001 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2001 REVENUE

■ Foundations	\$161,819
■ Government	\$243,688
■ Corporations	\$58,405
■ Individuals	\$47,403
■ Fees	\$9,394
■ Other	\$8,468
Total	\$529,177

2001 EXPENSES

■ Program	\$437,526
■ Management	\$43,461
■ Fundraising	\$31,896
Total	\$512,883



A complete copy of FMR's audited financial statement is available upon request.

FMR has been reviewed by the Charities Review Council of Minnesota and meets all accountability standards.

Thank You 2000-2001 Individual Donors

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