

# Gorge Stewards Quarterly

Published by Friends of the Mississippi River • Volume 1 Number 2

Spring 2002



## “River Relief” Coming to the Gorge

This summer the Gorge Stewards will be participating in what will likely be the largest river clean-up event of the summer. The Mississippi River Relief – Big River Clean-Up is a week-long series of clean-ups along a forty-mile stretch of the Mississippi from Hastings to St. Anthony Falls. An estimated 1,000-1,500 area volunteers will have an opportunity to roll up their sleeves and participate in the clean up during the week of June 22<sup>nd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>. The project is a unique coordinated effort of civic and nonprofit organizations, corporations, municipalities, government agencies, foundations and citizens. With the help and inspiration of nationally recognized Chad Pregracke and his Mississippi River Beautification and Restoration Project, the coalition of agencies began planning in early January and is looking forward to a successful and memorable clean-up.

Chad Pregracke grew up along the banks of the Mississippi River in the Quad Cities. Throughout his young adulthood he lived on many islands of the Mississippi, in turn noticing the amount of garbage that polluted the river. He decided that he would do something about it and subsequently began the Mississippi River Beautification and Restoration Project. In 1997 Chad single handedly cleaned 100 miles of Mississippi River shoreline, collecting over 45,000 pounds of debris from the Quad City area.



Gorge Stewards Scott Vreeland (front) and Alan Schneider

After two summers of cleaning the river Chad realized that his growing project needed to be coordinated under an official nonprofit organization. Consequently in 1998 he created Living Lands and Waters with a mission “To aid in the protection, preservation and restoration of the natural environment of the nation’s major rivers and watersheds.” His work on the Mississippi River continued in full force, expanding the project to cover 435 miles of the river. Since that time Chad has completed innumerable projects on not only the Mississippi River, but also the Illinois and Ohio Rivers. Thousands of volunteers have been involved in his one-of-a-kind events, collecting and loading tons of garbage onto barges to be recycled or properly disposed of.

All of Chad’s hard work has had a tremendous impact on the health and landscape of some of our nations largest rivers. Stretches of shoreline have been cleared of trash and contaminants like never before. Chad and Living Lands and Waters have also been nationally recognized, with featured interviews appearing on morning news shows and a myriad of magazine and newspaper articles. If you’d like to read more about Living Lands and Waters visit the website at <http://www.cleanrivers.com>.

Mississippi River Gorge Stewards as well as other Longfellow and Seward residents will be excited to know that we have chosen a day dedicated to cleaning up the gorge area. This is an exciting opportunity for three reasons:

1. Volunteers and residents will have an opportunity to get out and clean up the river flats in the gorge, but also be able to leave the collected litter on boats to be hauled away by river opposed to carrying the trash up steep trails.
2. Chad Pregracke will be on site, so everyone will have a chance to meet him and hear some interesting stories as to how he began these large river clean ups.
3. All participants will be invited to a final celebration event on Harriet Island to recognize all of the work that was accomplished and get a look at the piles of collected refuse.

Mark your calendars for the evening of Thursday, June 27<sup>th</sup>. We have chosen to do an evening clean-up from approximately 5:00-8:00 p.m. Volunteers may arrive at any time and pitch in for a couple of hours. We are tentatively planning to meet at the Rowing Club below the Lake Street Bridge. Gloves and garbage bags will be handed out as volunteers arrive. Groups will then disperse out to various locations throughout the gorge and clean up the trails and shoreline areas. This will prove to be a much-needed opportunity to more easily remove the garbage that accumulates in certain areas throughout the gorge. Trail Monitors can help ahead of time by scouting areas where large items or amounts of trash have accumulated so we know exactly where to target our efforts. Sign up in advance by calling Katie Galloway at 651/222-2193 x5. Groups are welcome – the more hands the better!

Volunteers are also needed for other river locations during the week. If you’d like to get involved in clean-ups on Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> or Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, contact Katie for more information.

## Winter in the Gorge

Thank you to everyone who participated in the winter educational Gorge Stewards activities. The three programs held during the winter showed a great turn-out of participants and proved to be a successful way to enhance the program.

The Geology Hike in December, led by Craig Larson and Lyndon Torstenson, was incredibly well attended. Residents were drawn from not only Longfellow and Seward but the other side of the river as well. In January John Anfinson from the National Park Service presented an informative talk about the history of the Mississippi River Gorge. The talk was held at Becketwood, offering an educational program for both the Becketwood Environment Committee and residents from gorge neighborhoods. Our final program of the season was a presentation by Karen Schik, highlighting

*Continued...*

### ***Winter in the Gorge Continued...***

the native plant communities of the gorge area. Karen gave a very interesting overview and history of the ecology of the gorge area and explained some of the threats facing these rare native plant communities.



We are glad that the winter programs were so well received and hope that everyone enjoyed them. Thank you again for your participation. If you have any ideas or suggestions for programs you would like to see happen in the future, please contact Katie at 651/222-2193 x5.

---

*The Mississippi River Gorge Stewards is a neighborhood approach to protecting, restoring and interpreting a natural sanctuary in the heart of the Twin Cities. The project is co-sponsored by Friends of the Mississippi River, Longfellow Community Council and Seward Neighborhood Group. Funding is also provided by a Gannett Foundation grant as recommended by KARE 11 and the Irwin Andrew Porter Family Foundation.*

---

## ***Gorge Stewards Calendar***

All activities are free and open to the public

### **Saturday, May 4th - Garlic Mustard Pull**

West River Parkway & 35th St., 10 a.m. - noon

### **Thursday, May 9th - Water Quality Monitoring Training**

Longfellow House, Minnehaha Park  
5:15 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

### **Wednesday, June 12th - Woody Species Removal**

West River Parkway & 36th St., 6-8 p.m.

### **Thursday, June 27th - Shoreline & River Flats Clean-up**

Minneapolis Rowing Club, 5-8 p.m.

### **Sunday, July 14th - Storm Drain Stenciling**

Longfellow Street Fest - FMR Table  
Lake St. & 27th Ave., 1-4 p.m.

### **Saturday, August 4th - Water Quality Issues & Storm Drain Stenciling**

Matthews Park, 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

### **Saturday, August 17th - Plant ID Training**

West River Parkway & 36th St., 10 a.m. - noon

### **Saturdays, August 24th and September 21st - Buckthorn Removal**

West River Parkway - locations and times TBA

**For more information about the Gorge Stewards Project or to get involved, please contact Katie Galloway at Friends of the Mississippi River  
651/222-2193 or [kgallowa@fmr.org](mailto:kgallowa@fmr.org)**



**Friends of the Mississippi River**  
**46 East Fourth Street, Suite 606**  
**Saint Paul, MN 55101**

**[www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org)**

*Friends of the Mississippi River is a leading citizen organization working to protect and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities area.*