

Gorge Stewards Quarterly

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Gorge Stewards in Action

The Mississippi River Gorge Stewards have been hard at work throughout the spring and summer months, dedicating their time to a variety of activities from invasive species removal to storm drain stenciling. The Gorge Stewards Project has really brought together a committed group of citizens from Longfellow and the surrounding neighborhoods who vol-

unteer for gorge protection and restoration activities centered around this extraordinary ecological treasure - the Mississippi River Gorge.

Unfortunately the gorge is at risk due to an increasing abundance of invasive exotic species, degraded water quality from urban runoff pollution, and erosion of trails and rock formations among other things. Gorge Stewards have begun to respond to some of these threats by getting involved in monthly stewardship projects, ongoing trail monitoring and educational opportunities. The Gorge Stewards first event in the field was a very successful clean-up event on a very rainy Earth Day. Stewards also spent time in May broadcasting native prairie seeds at the Oak Savanna restoration site at 36th Street. During the month of June, Gorge Stewards tackled three invasive species growing throughout the gorge. Incredible amounts of garlic mustard, buckthorn, and sumac were removed from both bluffs and flats within the gorge. Volunteers also gathered on an evening in July to stencil the message "Please Don't Pollute! Drains to River" next to storm drains in the neighborhood and educate residents about urban runoff pollution. In August, Gorge Stewards did a big clean up on the river flats between the rowing club and the railroad bridge. Loads of trash was hauled from the trails and beach areas along the four block stretch of riverfront. Recently, a group of stewards worked at the 36th St. Restoration Site to collect the seeds from native wildflowers in the prairie bowl and subsequently sow them throughout the adjacent oak savanna.

In addition to these monthly stewardship activities many residents have signed up to be trail monitors, tracking a portion of trail and reporting signs of erosion, graffiti, litter and invasive species. Monitors have received information on these threats including how they should best be addressed and contact materials for reporting immediate concerns. The current group of dedicated monitors have picked up endless loads of trash from



the gorge and reported loca-

tions of graffiti and large trash items to the Minneapolis Park Board.

Friends of the Mississippi River would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2001 Mississippi River Gorge Stewards activities. Your help is greatly appreciated, both by residents and neighbors, and the wildlife and plant communities of the gorge. A large round of applause to you all for the incredible amount of work that was done this year! It couldn't be done without you!

Seward Neighborhood Group Joins in Stewardship

The Gorge Stewards has a new partner. Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG) has recently come on as the second neighborhood to join the Mississippi River Gorge Stewards. Many Seward residents have already been participating in Longfellow activities. The new partnership will allow these residents and others to participate in stewardship activities right in their own neighborhood. Furthermore, stewards will be welcome to continue working on projects in both Longfellow and Seward. The Seward Gorge Stewards project will begin in January, 2002. We look forward to having them on board and working with even more volunteers!

Illegal Disposal is Becoming a Bigger Problem in the Gorge

Recently trail monitors from the Gorge Stewards have been finding evidence of illegal waste disposal throughout the gorge. Areas of highest concern are the flats near 44th St. and underneath the railroad bridge. Items including shopping carts and couches, appliances such as an air conditioner, dehumidifier, microwave, and refrigerator have all been found at these sites. Trail monitors have been working hard to keep these areas free of smaller trash and litter, however find it difficult to remove such large materials from the shoreline. Park maintenance staff has been available to help

remedy the removal problem by hauling out this cumbersome and bulky debris in small vehicles. Even so, it can be difficult to access the flats and safely remove such a large volume of materials. Furthermore, hauling the collected waste from the flats can solve the problem in the short-run, but it doesn't stop subsequent build-up of additional trash and debris in the same areas.

Continued...

Illegal Disposal Continued...

This raises a question about possible sources of all this litter. It is known that the trails and flats are often a popular party spot for young people in search of a secluded area. This inevitably leads to the accumulation of lighter trash material such as beer bottles, food containers, and cigarette butts as well as graffiti and fire pits. Park police try to prevent this from happening, but it can be hard for them to reach the flats through the dark, steep trails. The likely source of the large appliances and old furniture waste is simply illegal dumping of hazardous materials from the bridges or banks surrounding the gorge. Careless folks who refuse to pay minor fees for proper hazardous waste disposal may be opting for the thoughtless approach of "out of sight, out of mind."

Obviously this presents a problem for the health and vitality of the river and the wildlife it supports. A simple thing for residents and monitors to do is continue reporting any evidence of dumping. Whether it's accumulated waste or actual littering in progress, reports can be made to the Minneapolis Police Department or Katie Galloway at FMR at 651/222-2193.

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

Thursday, January 24th - Rapids to Reservoirs: A Brief History of the Mississippi River Gorge

Presentation by John Anfinson, Historian for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Becketwood , 4300 W. River Pkwy, 8:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 20th - Gorge Stewards Open House and Seasonal Kick-off

Bethany Lutheran Church, 2511 E. Franklin Ave., 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 6th - Native Plant Communities of the Mississippi River Gorge

Presentation by Karen Schik, Restoration Ecologist for FMR and Longfellow Resident

Longfellow Park, 3435 36th Ave. S., 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 6th - Trail Monitoring Training

Brackett Park, 3800 E. 28th St., 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 20th - Annual Minneapolis Watershed Clean-up

Times and Locations 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**



Friends of the Mississippi River

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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.