

Gorge Stewards Quarterly

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Buckthorn Busting at the Seams!

Buckthorn removal was a major focus of restoration work this fall in the gorge. We kicked things off with a removal at 46th Street and West River Road in late August. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board coordinated the technical end of this event, bringing two forestry crews and tools to remove the exotic species from the forested region at the southern end of the lock and dam parking lot. With the help of 45 neighborhood volunteers throughout the day, we were able to haul away the dense buckthorn thickets cut down by forestry crews as well as focus some of our attention on hand pulling smaller seedlings. Try to stop by the area and notice how cleared out the understory now appears. Eliminating all of this buckthorn will give more of the native species a chance to grow and thrive. Oak, maple, and basswood seedlings can have a fighting chance and wildflowers will be more abundant thanks to the hard work of these volunteers.

Moving northward up the gorge we worked on a second buckthorn removal in September at 44th Street and West River Road. Approximately 200 volunteers spent a morning hand pulling and hauling buckthorn from a two-block stretch of the gorge. FMR and the Longfellow Community Council worked with Great River Greening and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to coordinate this event. And what a successful project it was! Volunteers worked hard to remove buckthorn from several work sites, restoring the natural balance to plant communities in the area. The group also enjoyed a lunch and program to follow the event, including prize drawings and appearances by local dignitaries. Thanks to everyone who contributed to making this event a success!

For the final stage of the buckthorn work this fall, both Longfellow and Seward coordinated private property removal efforts or “buckthorn busts.” The private property removal process begins with trained volunteers going door to door throughout the neighborhood to look for homes that have buckthorn growing in their yard. Often times these homes will have a thick buckthorn hedge and other times it is a mere shrub of buckthorn that can be the problem. Volunteers leave doorhangers at these homes indicating that they have buckthorn in their yard and explaining what they can do to remove it. Households that decide to participate in the project can then pay a small fee to the buckthorn bust organizers, remove the buckthorn from their yard and leave it for pick up on a designated date. The Seward Neighborhood Group and Longfellow Community Council worked this fall to train neighborhood volunteers and college students in buckthorn identification, giving them the skills to identify houses in the neighborhood that had buckthorn growing in their yard. Volunteers left buckthorn doorhangers at 133 houses in the two neighborhoods, and of those households there were 25 responses. A total of 20 households from Seward and Longfellow participated in the program, removing the buckthorn from their yard and stacking it for pick up.

Volunteers work together to remove buckthorn with a weed wrench at the September 21st Buckthorn removal event at 44th Street and W. River Parkway.

Trail Monitor's Gathering Planned

For all of you active gorge stewards and trail monitors, we will be holding a Trail Monitors' Potluck and Holiday Party on the evening of Wednesday, December 4th. This will be an opportunity to re-convene as a group and share some of your stories from monitoring while enjoying a potluck dinner and friendly conversation. FMR will help to facilitate a follow-up discussion to hear some of the successes of monitoring as well as the struggles and concerns you have been facing. The party begins at 6:00 p.m. and will be held at Bethany Lutheran Church, 3901 36th Ave. S. To sign up to bring a dish and to attend, contact Katie at 651/222-2193 x5.

Gorge Stewards Project is Growing!

Since the Gorge Stewards project started in the fall of 2000 we have worked with 308 volunteers on a total of 26 projects accounting for 1,701 volunteer hours. That's almost equivalent to one person working full time for a whole year! We have been very pleased with the success of the program in the Longfellow and Seward neighborhoods and are excited to announce the future expansion of the program to additional areas. FMR recently received an Environmental Partnership grant from the Department of Natural Resources to expand the Gorge Stewards program to other neighborhoods. The funding will be used to build partnerships with additional gorge neighborhoods, with the goal of bringing Gorge Stewards activities and programming to these areas. Throughout the next few months we will be working with other neighborhoods lining the gorge in both Minneapolis and St. Paul in order to discuss the possibility of partnering in the expansion of the Gorge Stewards project. We are excited about this opportunity to expand on a successful program and work with additional communities!



Continued...

Call for program ideas

Do you have suggestions or ideas about activities that you'd like to see happen for the Gorge Stewards program? Are there previous Gorge Stewards projects or trainings that you'd like to see repeated this year? If you have any thoughts or ideas about Gorge Stewards activities or ways in which the project could be improved, please contact Katie Galloway, at 651/222-2193 or via email at kgallowa@fmr.org. Your feedback is very much appreciated!



Seward resident Lou Ann Keleher removes unwanted species during a Gorge Stewards' Prairie Weeding project in the gorge in September. Seward's planted prairies (located at 24th and 25th Streets) contain all native species, re-creating the natural heritage of the gorge blufftops once dominated by prairie and oak savanna.

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 an Environmental Partnerships grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Gorge Stewards Calendar

*All activities are free and open to the public
Calendar is subject to change (and grow)*

January 30th - Rapids to Reservoirs: A Brief History of the Mississippi River Gorge

Presentation by Dr. John Anfinson, Historian for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Trace the history of the river gorge from its geological origin and discover how it transitioned from an ecological treasure to a working river.

Augsburg College, East Commons Auditorium, 7-8:30 p.m.

March 6th - Safety Issues in the Gorge

Do you ever feel uncomfortable or concerned about your safety while hiking or trail-monitoring in the gorge? Join us for a panel discussion on safety issues in the river gorge, such as possible gang activity, drug use and homelessness. This will be a great opportunity to have some of your questions and concerns addressed by local experts on these challenging subjects.

Brackett Park 3800 28th St. E., 7-9 p.m.

March 13th - Birds of the Mississippi River Gorge

Get ready for spring with a slide presentation on birds of the gorge and the 100+ species that pass through during spring migration. Bob Janssen, author of *Birds of Minnesota*, will provide an orientation to birds of the area and what to look for during spring bird-watching.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2730 E. 31st St., 7-8:30 p.m.

**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
46 East Fourth Street, Suite 606
Saint Paul, MN 55101

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.