



Friends of the Mississippi River

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

www.fmr.org

Fall 2011

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Asian Carp Alert!

Evidence of dreaded fish found near Lock & Dam #1 in Minneapolis

By Irene Jones

The recent discovery of Asian carp DNA in the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers has jolted state officials into action, and Governor Dayton is calling for quick action and inter-state cooperation to stop the destructive Asian carp from invading Minnesota's treasured waters.

"We owe it to future generations to do everything we possibly can to prevent this," said Governor Dayton at a 'Carp Summit' held in early September. Summit participants included congressional staff, state legislators, natural resource agency staff from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Canada, and representatives from the White House Council on Environmental Quality, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Park Service.

Asian Carp, continued on page six



One species of invasive Asian carp, the silver carp, is famous for jumping from the water when disturbed. Silver carp have been caught in the Mississippi River between Iowa and Illinois.

Photo Credit: Todd Lawrence, Great Lakes Fisheries Commission

FMR Expands Watershed Program

By Trevor Russell

Almost four decades have passed since the Clean Water Act became law. In that time, Minnesotans have made great progress towards achieving the goal of passing on fishable, swimmable waters to the next generation. But a closer look at the Mississippi River reveals a lot of work left to be done.

The confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers – near Fort Snelling State Park – offers a glimpse of some of the most pressing pollution challenges facing the Mississippi River.

Some of these issues are visible to the naked eye: excessive sediment and dangerously high flooding plague the Mississippi River on a regular basis. The Minnesota River's 30-year average annual flow has doubled, while today's sediment loads are roughly ten times their pre-settlement rate.

But beneath the surface here, other troubles are harder to see, and even harder to ignore. Recent USGS studies show nitrate pollution in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed has increased 76% since 1980 – leading to wide spread hypoxia in the Gulf's "Dead Zone."

Elevated bacteria counts make portions of this river unsafe for some forms of recreation. Excess phosphorous – from urban and rural sources, feed algae blooms that impair aquatic life and recreation in Lake Pepin. A host of pollutants, including pharmaceuticals, are appearing in surface water and groundwater throughout the state, as well.

In response to the many challenges facing Mississippi River communities, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is expanding our Watershed Program.

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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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From the Director Minnesota's Foundation of Environmental Protection Under Attack



Whitney Clark,
Executive Director

I recently saw a sensational YouTube video of huge Asian carp flying through the air, smacking boaters in the head, landing in their laps, and creating general mayhem. Wow! The genie's out of the bottle now. I'm reminded of the insightful quote by the great John Muir who said "when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

I believe that really is true, but even more so with rivers and watersheds. Rivers connect us to one another, make us dependent upon, and responsible to one another.

In Minnesota we're at the top of our watersheds – it's all downhill from here. From here, water flows to three continental watersheds Hudson Bay, the Atlantic Ocean and, of course, the Gulf of Mexico via the Mississippi River.

I spend a lot of time talking to policymakers and others about all the downstream impacts of our decisions and actions here in the headwaters. In our pursuit of cheap food and big profits for agribusiness, we've dramatically altered our rural landscapes. We've plowed up our prairies and drained our wetlands. One of the results of that is that a massive river of pollution — sediment, nutrients and farm chemicals — flows out of Minnesota and is bestowed on our downstream neighbors. Beautiful and iconic places — like Minnesota's own Lake Pepin — are being degraded and permanently changed, and each summer we witness a huge dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, where all aquatic life is extinguished.

But recently we're also learning that not all problems run downhill. Asian carp, imported

for another kind of farming — fish farming in the 1960s and 1970s in the southern United States —

escaped into our rivers and are making their way upstream (see article on page 1). These voracious eaters threaten to profoundly alter the balance of our prized aquatic ecosystems, degrading recreation, commerce and water quality. This isn't speculation; in the Illinois River, Asian carp now make up 80-90% of the fish biomass.

But back to Muir's observation that any one thing is hitched to everything else. Here's another crazy twist of fate: because of this very serious threat of Asian carp invading Minnesota's rivers and lakes, we may need to take some very dramatic and decisive steps to prevent their passage on the Mississippi River. One of those steps may be to close the locks at dams upstream of the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, summarily ending commercial navigation to Minneapolis.

But, stay with me here, there's one more possible turn to this tale. If the locks are closed it may well facilitate something that fifteen years of planning couldn't: a major transformation of land use from heavy industry to parks and new residential neighborhoods along the riverfront in the so-called "Above the Falls" reach in North and Northeast Minneapolis.

Yes, the river brings us together. Sometimes in good ways, sometimes in bad but almost always in ways that are unexpected and unintended.

Planned Giving: Mississippi River Legacy Society

By Heather Haynes

The Mississippi River has been here for generations, and will be here for many more. But the health of the river has varied over the years, and even though Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is working to put long-term protections in place for this mighty community asset, the Mississippi River will always need friends. Including FMR in your estate plans is one way you can help ensure that

the river will always have friends to steward, organize and speak on its behalf. And by becoming a member of the Mississippi River Legacy Society (by letting us know you have included us in your plans), you encourage others to do so as well.

Visit http://www.fmr.org/support/planned_giving or call Heather at 651-222-2193 x20 for more information. Thank you for considering your river legacy today!

Program Highlights

As Sand Coulee Grows by 105 acres, More Prairie Restored

By Tom Lewanski

2011 has been a very successful year for the Sand Coulee prairie near Hastings. Friends of the Mississippi River's (FMR) efforts, in partnership with Dakota County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), resulted in an additional 105 acres of prairie and associated woodland being added to the Hastings Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Area, (SNA) which has now grown to over 265 acres. Additionally, FMR developed an Adaptive Management Plan for this new addition to the SNA, serving as a guide for managers in restoring and enhancing the natural communities and rare species found there.

The Sand Coulee was first formally recognized as biologically significant was in 1995, when the DNR conducted the Dakota County biological survey. Today, the Sand Coulee contains the largest native prairie in Dakota County and is home to 14 rare plant and animal species. For nearly a decade, FMR has been working with the landowners in the Sand Coulee, both public and private, to protect and improve the native prairie that is found there. From assisting private landowners in managing the native prairie on their property and guiding them in permanently protecting their land to organizing community and school stewardship events, FMR has been leading the effort to ensure that this prairie is in existence for generations to come.

This year, an 80-acre parcel of land owned by a private individual and a 25-acre parcel owned by the City of Hastings were purchased by the DNR and added to SNA. Both acquisitions were the result of outreach conducted by FMR staff, in conjunction with Dakota County. In the case of the private landowner, William Holst, FMR did the initial outreach and brokered several meetings with the DNR. For the City of the Hastings project, FMR linked city officials with the DNR and conducted the appraisal for the property.

FMR's land conservation program strives to stay engaged with ecologically important land, regardless of who owns it. We want to ensure that the ecological values of the land are pro-

ected and enhanced well into the future. With this strategy in mind, FMR has also been a strong and consistent partner with the DNR in the ongoing work of restoring and managing the natural communities found within the Hastings Sand Coulee SNA. Utilizing multiple funding sources including the Environmental Trust Fund recommended by the Legisla-

tive Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, FMR has managed the removal of many acres of trees, shrubs and invasive species from the prairie, conducted several prescribed burns to enhance the prairie and woodlands of the SNA and replanted prairie in highly degraded areas. Hundreds of volunteers have helped by collecting prairie seed, removing invasive species, and installing plants.

FMR is currently beginning a significant new restoration project on the newly acquired SNA property, funded by the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant. Starting this fall, a 50 acre prairie reconstruction will begin in the northwest part of the SNA. Since less than 0.5% of native prairie remains where it once covered a third of the state, creating prairie at every opportunity is a priority. The Hasting Sand Coulee SNA provides an outstanding opportunity to reverse the trend of prairie loss. Fifty acres is a relatively small

area, but combined with the other prairie habitat of the site it creates an excellent opportunity for many prairie animals to thrive, including declining bird species such a loggerhead shrike, grasshopper sparrow, and field sparrow. FMR conducted a breeding bird survey of this site in June 2011 so that we will be able to document the difference in bird species use of the site.

In the future, we will continue to reach out to other landowners in and adjacent to the Sand Coulee. This area warrants our involvement because it is such a significant natural area and because it serves as an important component of a corridor that links it and other natural areas to the Vermillion and Mississippi Rivers. We will also be coordinating the restoration and enhancement on these new additions to the SNA. Everyone at FMR is very excited to see the Sand Coulee SNA continue to expand and add valuable native prairie habitat.



Above: A fall view of the Sand Coulee prairie from a recently acquired parcel of land.

At right: Looking south into the Sand Coulee SNA from the former Wildlife Management Area property that was recently transferred to the Scientific and Natural Area Program.



Photo Credit: Karen Schick/FMR

Photo Credit: Karen Schick/FMR

Program Updates

In Minneapolis, Momentum Builds for a Refined Vision for 'Above the Falls'

By Bob Spaulding

Big changes are coming to the Minneapolis riverfront upriver from downtown, an area known as "Above the Falls."

Over the last year, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, working with partners like Friends of the Mississippi River, has worked to envision the future of the area in an effort known as the Minneapolis Riverfront Development Initiative (MRDI).

That vision includes new park spaces along much of both sides of the river, including:

- A new park at the Scherer Brothers Lumber site, just north of Boom Island and Plymouth Avenue, an area the Park Board acquired earlier this year. The park would include a new beachfront and a restored Hall's Island;
- New connections to the river, including a possible land bridge across I-94 to facilitate movement from Farview Park in North Minneapolis to the riverfront;
- A new park, restored riverfront wetlands and related redevelopment on and around the site of the City-owned Upper Harbor Terminal; and
- A designated network of on- and off-road trails throughout the area, which over time, as acquisition would allow, would increasingly be transitioned to a continuous green edge along the riverfront.



The proposed Scherer Park just northeast of the Plymouth Avenue Bridge will feature a sand beach, food and equipment vendors and recreated Hall's Island.

The MRDI's visioning work is being undertaken as a complement to the Above the Falls Master Plan, a ten-year-old Master Plan adopted by the City and Park Board. The City is working to update the Above the Falls Plan to reflect the results of this visioning work and other changes that have taken place over the last ten years.

Not only will the Above the Falls Plan be updated, but the City expects to implement a number of the zoning changes that will be recommended in the plan. These zoning changes will encourage some of the riverfront industrial property to shift eventually to other uses, and facilitate the sort of complementary riverfront redevelopment recommended in the plan becoming reality.

2011 Mississippi River Challenge a Success!

By Christine Lee

The 2011 Mississippi River Challenge was another triumphant event! Despite many pre-event challenges, including the Minnesota government shutdown which threatened our beloved Night at the Fort festivities, the 8th annual event was wildly successful. Over 350 paddlers and nearly 200 volunteers came together on July 30th and 31st to experience the Mississippi River firsthand, and were met with beautiful weather and calm waters. One paddler said, "I thought the river was gorgeous, the people were friendly, the logistics were top-notch, the food was delicious, and the rest stops were educational!" while another paddler added, "If it were any easier, you'd do the paddling for me."

Our hard-working participants, coupled with our generous pledgers and sponsors, helped raise over \$140,000 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: the American Canoe Association/Subaru, Aggregate Industries, Aveda, Big River Magazine, Estuary Bath & Body, Friends of Bruce Vento, Historic Fort Snelling, Hoigaard's, Midway Party Rental, Midwest Mountaineering, Minnesota Monthly, Mississippi Market, National Park Service, Patagonia, Pioneer Press, REI, RBC Wealth



Paddlers celebrate accomplishing the 2011 Mississippi River Challenge.

Management, Skylark Dry Cleaning, Surly Brewing Company, Thousand Hills Cattle Company, 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 2012 Mississippi River Challenge: July 28th and 29th. 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.

FMR Welcomes Sue Vento to the Board of Directors

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is proud to welcome Sue Vento to its Board of Directors. Sue is a longtime FMR member, supporter and volunteer with a lifelong history of community service and civic engagement. A former elementary school teacher, Sue worked on behalf of teachers for many years as a staff member and leader of the Minnesota Education Association which later became Education Minnesota. She says that she “allegedly retired in 2010, but failed miserably.” She is currently the director of outreach for the Church of the Assumption in downtown St. Paul. Sue is a native of Chatfield, MN, near the headwaters of the Root River where her love of rivers may have sprung. “The calm and tranquility that a river brings can’t be taken for granted” she said, “I am honored to join the Friends in their advocacy for our treasured Mississippi River and for all rivers. The Mississippi River played a critical role in our state’s past as it does today. We must ensure that it will continue to be a treasure for future generations.”

FMR Welcomes Joe Walton to our Land Conservation Team

The Board and Staff of Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) are pleased to announce the addition of Joe Walton to the land conservation team. Joe is an ecologist and forester who has extensive training and over 10 years of experience in natural resource management. Prior to joining FMR, Joe was involved in planning and managing habitat restoration projects in the Twin Cities as well as planning and implementing stormwater best management practices including rain gardens, infiltration swales, sedimentation basins and wetland buffers. He has also served as a forester for several north metro communities.



Photo Credit: Karen Schick/FMR

Joe’s training and natural resource management experiences have broadened and deepened the services that FMR’s land conservation can offer. As an ecologist with FMR, Joe will be developing natural resource management plans, conducting resource inventories and managing habitat restoration and enhancement projects. In his short tenure at FMR, Joe has already had a large impact and we are proud that he has joined us in our

Asian Carp, continued from cover

The dreaded fish has been a threat for a while, but now that it’s a reality, turning potential strategies into decisive action has become a top priority for protecting our lakes and rivers, and Minnesota’s billion-dollar recreational fishing economy.

“The presence of Asian carp in the heart of the Twin Cities should be a wake-up call for everyone who values our river ecosystem, or enjoys fishing and boating in Minnesota,” said John Anfinson of the National Park Service. “Now is the time to get serious about researching, funding and implementing redundant barriers to prevent this harmful species from invading the Mississippi River and its watershed.”

Ecosystem Destroyers

Asian carp includes four individual carp species—Bighead, Black, Grass and Silver—that were imported to the southern U.S. from China to control snails and other small organisms in fish farms. Some escaped into the Mississippi River and their fast-growing populations caused major disruption of aquatic ecosystems. In the Illinois River, where the infestation is extreme, 90% of the fish biomass is Asian carp.



Photo Credit: Todd Lawrence, Great Lakes Fishery Commission

The invasive silver carp, up-close.

Asian carp consume copious amounts of plankton and other small organisms, toppling the ecosystem food pyramid and out-competing native fish species. Black carp feed on snails and other mollusks, presenting a dangerous threat to Minnesota’s healthy native mussel populations. Dramatic changes to the Mississippi River ecosystem could also impact migratory birds and other wildlife that depend on the diversity of aquatic species in the river and its floodplain.

River recreation activities are also threatened by the Asian carp invasion. Silver carp can jump as high as ten feet and have injured boaters. The potential of Asian carp to discourage boating and displace Minnesota’s prized fisheries could have serious economic consequences. Minnesota communities depend on a healthy recreation economy, and cities along the Mississippi River are investing heavily in their riverfront parks, culture and recreation.

Asian Carp in Minnesota

DNA test results released this fall provided evidence that Asian carp have advanced up the Mississippi River into Minnesota — exposing new entry points where the harmful species can spread to state waters and Lake Superior. Although the DNA results do not indicate the number of fish present, Asian carp DNA was found in 28% of the water samples collected on the Mississippi below the Ford Dam and in 44% of samples collected from the St. Croix. Additional DNA test results are forthcoming, and commercial anglers have been hired to try and catch Asian carp in the areas sampled.

Taking Action

As the Asian carp invasion makes its way upstream, Minnesota state officials are calling for swift action to stop them before it’s too late, and Minneapolis city officials have signaled their approval of lock closure, if it becomes necessary, to prevent the dreaded fish from invading the rivers and lakes of the upstream Mississippi watershed.

At the Carp Summit in September, Governor Dayton released a plan outlining critical first steps. In addition to calling for a cooperative effort with state and federal partners, he urged immediate action to secure the federal authority required to close Lock #1 or Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock if Asian carp are found nearby. He also called on Congress *Continues >*

Groundbreaking River Sediment Control Plan Released for Comment

By Trevor Russell

The south metro reach of the Mississippi River (from the Minnesota River confluence to Lake Pepin) is clogged with dirt and soil particles (sediment) that harms aquatic life and recreation along the river. This sediment is also filling in Lake Pepin, the upper third of which will be gone this century if no action is taken.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), along with key stakeholders, has spent several years developing a groundbreaking river clean up plan to address this problem. The plan - called a TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) - includes sediment pollution reduction goals for each of the major watersheds that drain to the Mississippi River, including:

- 60% from the Minnesota River during high and very high flows and 50% during average and low flows;
- 50% from the Cannon River;
- 20% from the Upper Mississippi River;
- 25% from urban runoff; and
- 20% from smaller tributary rivers and streams in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The MPCA has indicated its plans to release the Draft South Metro Mississippi River Sediment TMDL for public comment in November 2011.

Look for a special FMR announcement, complete with comment guidelines, sample comments and additional information, in the coming weeks. We hope FMR supporters will take this opportunity to let their voices be heard on this important issue.

Mississippi River Critical Area Repeal Effort Fails in Legislature

By Irene Jones

It's official: The effort to repeal rulemaking authority for the Mississippi River Critical Area has been defeated!

The bill sought to roll back vital environmental protections for the Mississippi River Critical Area — a 72-mile corridor from Dayton to Hastings. Despite never having a public hearing in the House, the repeal bill made its way into the budget bill that passed in the House and Senate during the regular legislative session. Governor Mark Dayton vetoed this original budget bill, and the repeal did not make it into the final, compromise budget bill passed during the special session.

The Mississippi River is a profoundly important ecological, cultural, recreational and economic asset. State rules that would update minimum standards for development in the corridor are needed to ensure these assets are protected for future generations. Fortunately, the Minnesota DNR has nearly completed a draft of the updated Critical Area standards. A repeal would have wasted this important effort, squandered a half-million dollars of Legacy funds and left our great river without these improved protections.

The next steps for the rulemaking process are not yet clear. A deadline to publish the draft rules within 18 months of the original authorization was missed at the end of 2010 and could prevent the DNR from moving ahead without additional legislative authorization.

Thanks to everyone who contacted their legislators and Governor Dayton — your efforts made the difference!

Indian Mounds Park Stewards Restore Vegetation By Iconic Overlook

By Erika Frost

One of the most photographed river scenes in the metro area is about to become even more beautiful. The Indian Mounds Park Stewards recently began a project to restore the Carver's Cave overlook at Plum Street in Mounds Park.

The group, comprised of students from the Harding High School Earth Club, will be involved with the project until May 2012, experiencing the process of prairie restoration from start to finish. Students first visited the area in September to learn more about restoration and the impact of invasive species at the site. FMR worked closely with Saint Paul Parks and Recreation to coordinate the removal of invasive plants, shrubs, and trees at the overlook. In October, the student group returned to the site to haul brush. One student explained, "It's hard work, but it makes you proud of what you did." In May, the students will return to help plant approximately 50 species of native plants, enhancing the bluff habitat, improving water quality and bolstering community pride. Students are



The Indian Mounds Park Stewards stop for a photo in front of the pile of brush they removed from the site.

excited to see the results and to share this beautiful place with others.

Community members interested in becoming involved in the project will have the chance to join the Indian Mounds Park Stewards for a public volunteer restoration event and public tour in Spring 2012.

This project was made possible through a grant from the McNeely Foundation.

*Watershed Program,
continued from cover*

Here are some of the highlights you can expect to see from our Watershed Program efforts in the next two years:

■ **The State of the River**

Report: Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) and The Mississippi National River & Recreation Area (MNRRA) are partnering to develop The State of the River Report. The report will communicate trends in key indicators of river health to a broad audience in an easily accessible way. Due for release in June 2012, the Report will serve to increase public awareness about the range of factors affecting river health, while building public support around priorities for action to protect the river and its watershed.

■ **Agricultural Water Quality**

Campaign: Working with state and local partners, FMR will advance scientific understanding of the relationship between current agricultural practices and water quality impairments in the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. By focusing public attention on both the causes of and solutions to agriculture-related water quality impairments, FMR will harness public support for policies and practices that enhance water quality throughout the watershed.

■ **Statewide Clean Water Act Advocacy:** FMR will remain committed to protecting and enhancing state and regional policies, rules, and regulations that protect and enhance water quality. This work will focus on implementing strong river clean up plans for the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. Additionally, FMR will continue to advocate for the establishment of state and local water quality standards, rules, and permits – including long overdue standards for phosphorous and nitrogen pollution in the Mississippi River.



Implementing modest changes to farming practices can substantially improve water quality in the Mississippi River. In the example above, an Iowa farm protects water quality by creating terraces and protecting vegetative buffers next to the waterway.

Photo Credit: Lynn Breen, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

■ **The Blue Star Award For Excellence in Community Stormwater Management:** FMR will expand the innovative Blue Star Award - an award program that offers communities that excel in protecting clean water the positive public recognition that they deserve. By offering a recognizable public incentive for strengthening municipal stormwater management performance, the Blue Star Award can help cities overcome the obstacles to protecting our water resources through better stormwater management.

■ **2012 Farm Bill Advocacy:** As Congress prepares for the 2012 Farm Bill, look for FMR and our partners to host educational forums and events that help Minnesotans from all walks of life understand how they can help ensure that strong conservation programs are at the heart of the bill.

■ **Communications Campaign:**

Starting in 2012, FMR will begin development of a coordinated statewide communications campaign to increase public awareness about the factors affecting the health of the Mississippi River ecosystem, and build public support for action to protect the river and its watershed. This work, including forums, workshops, media events, and the launch of the State of the River Report, will focus on the relationship between agricultural practices and water quality in the Mississippi River.

While these projects represent an exciting new chapter in FMR's efforts to protect and restore the Mississippi River, it's clear that we can't do this work alone. FMR counts on our members, volunteers, partners, and funders make this vital work possible.

We look forward to working with many of you in the coming months to help make our shared dream of a healthy and restored Mississippi River a reality.

Asian Carp, continued from previous page

to authorize a study of the economic and environmental impacts of closing the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock to create a permanent Asian carp barrier. Other recommended actions include sonic or bubble barriers, improving native fish habitat and testing various methods to eradicate Asian carp populations if and when they arrive.

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is working closely with a coalition of non-governmental groups led by the National Wildlife Federation to help government agencies progress on the issue, educate the public, and advocate for specific short- and long-term actions. The coalition is pleased

the State of Minnesota is moving quickly to embrace many of the same actions advocated by the coalition, but it is also calling for a greater emphasis on finding and implementing solutions downstream from the Twin Cities.

According to FMR Executive Director Whitney Clark, "It will require federal action to achieve the needed support and authority to protect Minnesota's lakes and river from the threat of Asian carp. And that means we need to work together with Wisconsin, Iowa and other Mississippi River states."

For more information on Asian carp, the Governor's Action Plan and coalition efforts, please visit FMR's website or contact Irene Jones at (651) 222-2193 ext. 11.



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

FMR named a '2011 Top Non-Profit'!

By Heather Haynes

In the current issue of MNSights, a publication of Minnesota Philanthropy Partners, Friends of the Mississippi River was rated by 178 local experts as one of eighteen high-impact non-profits in Minnesota and the one to give to if you care about water.

A significant percentage of our funding comes from community members like you – and this enables us to be a strong advocate for the river in your community. Your gift before the end of the year will play an important role in helping FMR to keep the momentum going and realize our shared goal of a cleaner, healthier river.



PHILANTHROPIA

You can use the envelope provided in this newsletter, visit <http://www.fmr.org/support/donate>, or call Heather at 651-222-2193 x20.

Gifts of \$35 or more are eligible to receive a year's free subscription to *Big River Magazine* – please indicate whether or not you'd like a subscription when you make your gift.



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

Thank You, Volunteers!

By sue rich

As the outdoor event season comes to a close, we'd like to take a moment to thank the 2,500+ people who have helped restore and protect the Mississippi River through Friends of the Mississippi River events and programs this year. Volunteers turned out in full force, helping to:



Our smallest, yet very hard working volunteers.

Photo Credit: Michelle Kopp

- 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 St. Paul;
- Support the Mississippi River Challenge;
- Monitor stream health in the Rice Creek Watershed; and
- Assist with essential office work.

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 doggedly and quietly for the environment and for that we salute you. FMR's restoration, education, and recreational programming would not be possible without you.

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

Photos from many FMR 2011 cleanups and restoration events are available on our Flickr page, www.flickr.com/friendsmissriv.