



# A NOTE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR



## DEAR FRIENDS,

Recently I enjoyed a noon-hour stroll across the Stone Arch Bridge in downtown Minneapolis. The bridge and Mississippi riverbanks were alive with people — joggers, bicyclists, chatting friends, even someone casting a fly rod as a small crowd gathered to watch.

It's hard to believe this historic landmark was once blocked off with chain-link fence, its fate uncertain. Now nearly two million people walk here each year. Such is the story of the metro Mississippi: We come together to protect what's neglected — to restore, enhance and then enjoy it.

Looking downstream, I saw the Guthrie Theater, where Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) and Afton Films' documentary, "[Rebirth](#)," premiered in spring 2016. Seen by over 25,000 people, the film traces our metro river's unlikely and inspirational transformation from a convenient dumping ground to a national park, the Mississippi National River & Recreation Area.

Today, thanks to FMR and supporters like you, all 72 miles of our local national park — the metro riverfront, are protected by new land-use rules (see page [6](#)), and state programs are developing long-term solutions to protect the river's waters from their biggest threat: agricultural pollution (see page [3](#)).

Together we continue to protect habitat (see pages [7-10](#)), and not only support the creation of new riverfront parks and trails, but work to ensure equitable community access to them, especially in North Minneapolis (see page [5](#)).

The momentum continues. In 2016, over a thousand people signed up to be advocates or [FMR River Guardians](#), thousands more volunteered to restore river habitat, and over a million people learned about the river's health from the ever-popular "State of the River Report" (see page [4](#)).

Thanks to you — FMR members, advocates and volunteers — we continue to protect the river we love. I hope you enjoy reading about our shared victories and enjoy your own stroll along our Mighty Mississippi soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Forrest M. Flint". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Forrest Flint  
Chair, FMR Board of Directors

**YOU!**  
ALL OF OUR  
SUCCESS IN 2016 IS  
BECAUSE OF YOU.

Healthy habitat.  
Healthy wildlife.  
Healthy river.  
Healthy people.

Healthy communities.

Thank YOU!

# Our people. Our impact. Our river.



“The great Mississippi River is an incredible treasure but it can’t protect itself. Friends of the Mississippi River is a credible and influential voice for the river in forums from city hall to the State Capitol. No organization brings more energy, smart strategy and heart to this important work than FMR.”

—Vice President Walter Mondale



“I came out here [WillowBrook floodplain forest] for the trees and the fresh air — it’s peaceful! — and I like to help.”

— Aliya Mohamed  
Harding High Earth Club volunteer  
[Citizen scientist](#), habitat restorer



## Our national park.

Did you know the Twin Cities stretch of the Mississippi River is a national park? If not, you’re not alone.

To spread the word and honor the self-proclaimed “river rats” who helped win this unlikely designation, Friends of the Mississippi River, Afton Films and Twin Cities Public Television released the documentary “**Rebirth: The Mississippi’s National Park**” in spring 2016. Since its screening at the Guthrie and Riverview theaters (left), roughly 25,000 people have learned the story of how our Twin Cities metro stretch became the river’s first and only national park. Enjoy it at [FMR.org/rebirth!](http://FMR.org/rebirth!)

# WATER

FMR's Water Program seeks to protect and enhance the Mississippi River's water quality. It's a simple goal, but one that requires a flexible, multi-faceted approach.

We maintain strong relationships with local and national water quality experts, helping us identify and focus on the key issues facing today's river. We work with citizens, communities and local governments to shape public policies at the local, state and even the national level. And thanks to robust partnerships and a growing base of FMR members and advocates, we make an impact on essential education and policy efforts.

## -2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS-

### ADDRESSING FARM POLLUTION FUNDING TO BENEFIT RURAL COMMUNITIES & THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Because of our strong network of citizen advocates and allies — including clean water organizations, local government units, and farm and commodity groups — Minnesota invested in two key programs to develop solutions to the biggest threat to the health of today's river: agricultural runoff pollution. For eight months of the year, many farm fields sit barren, prone to erosion and runoff. The **Forever Green Initiative** at the University of Minnesota and the **Working Lands Watershed Restoration Program** (which FMR helped bring into being) are working to develop and create markets for perennial crops that reduce pollution while boosting farmers' bottom lines and our rural economies.



### TRICLOSAN BAN KICKS IN MINNESOTA LEADS THE NATION

In late 2012 FMR and the National Park Service's first "State of the River Report" shone the spotlight on an emerging contaminant known as triclosan. Then common in antibacterial products, the additive was found to break down into cancer-causing compounds in the river, and to offer no cleansing benefit beyond that of washing with regular soap and water. In the following state Legislative sessions, FMR led the successful effort to ban triclosan in consumer products. Just a few months before the Minnesota ban went into effect, January 1, 2017, the FDA followed suit. As a result, the rest of the nation is scheduled to follow Minnesota's lead in fall 2017, and the ban has been widely heralded as an example of how changes can start at a local level.

1,350

PEOPLE  
attended a 'State of the  
River Report' presentation

6.9

MILLION READERS  
of articles about or inspired  
by the 'State of the River Report'



Photo by Tom Reiter

## STATE OF THE RIVER REPORT

### PUTTING WATER QUALITY FRONT OF MIND

Seeking to answer the common question, “So how is the Mississippi River?”, FMR first partnered with the National Park Service to create the award-winning “State of the River Report” in 2012. In September 2016 we released the long-awaited update.

Written for nonscientists, it examines the status and trends of 14 key indicators of the river’s health, including bacteria, phosphorus, nitrate and sediment levels, as well as the river’s viability for recreation and wildlife.

Since its release, the report has received a great deal of media attention, carrying its key messages through the metro and beyond. It also inspired coverage of new or emerging contaminants of concern, such as microplastic fibers and chloride from road and sidewalk salt.

In addition to the popular policy and stewardship guides that accompany the report, the new version also includes a companion teacher’s guide helping to bring the report into the classroom. Learn more at [StateOfTheRiver.com](http://StateOfTheRiver.com).

## LOOKING AHEAD:

FMR is amping up our citizen advocacy program and working hard to defend against environmental rollbacks at the Minnesota Legislature. In the first half of 2017, hundreds of have signed up to take action as River Guardians ([FMR.org/advocate](http://FMR.org/advocate)), and over a thousand people participated in Water Action Day, Minnesota’s first day of public action and advocacy to let lawmakers know we care about our water and how they can help protect it. For updates visit [FMR.org](http://FMR.org) and sign up for our e-newsletter, “[Mississippi Messages](#)”.



“I have come to appreciate the ‘State of the River’ reports as clear, concise summaries of the metro Mississippi’s condition that are also highly reliable, not just

in the matter of factual accuracy but in the trustworthy reasonableness of the authors’ perspective. I refer to them over and over to check my memory about an issue they address, and am impressed all over again by the beautiful design, the accessible format, the conversational style and above all, perhaps, by the measured tone. There is passion here, yes, but no stridency.”

— Ron Meador, MINNPost reporter and veteran journalist

# RIVER CORRIDOR

In the 1970s, we lived near a different river. Pollution laws were lax and land-use guidance minimal. But as the nation began to change course, so did Minnesota. In 1976, the state designated the lands along the 72-mile metro-area stretch of the river as the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area and set up a program to guide development within it.

Since that time, this 72-mile stretch of the river has been designated a national park and many communities and developers have come to recognize its worth as both a cultural amenity and economic driver. However, as we move to embrace the river and capitalize on its exceptional value, we risk degrading or even destroying the very qualities we seek to enjoy.

Strong state standards and community-based advocacy for a healthy and vibrant River Corridor are now more important than ever. On a regional and state level we work to strengthen state Critical Area standards. Locally, we partner with residents and institutions to support river-positive development, helping people protect the river's unique cultural, scenic and natural features as our communities turn towards the Mighty Mississippi.

## -2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS-

### STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

#### EXPLORING & BRIDGING BARRIERS BETWEEN NORTH MINNEAPOLIS AND ITS RIVERFRONT

FMR has long worked to help transform the industry-dominated Minneapolis riverfront north of St. Anthony Falls. Now a majority of riverfront lands are publicly owned, and new parks, trails and habitat restoration sites have been created or are in the works. However, much of North Minneapolis remains cut off from the river by Interstate 94, remaining industries and societal barriers. Throughout 2016, FMR worked with North residents and organizations to identify and prioritize ways to reconnect to the river. Together, we explored everything from how to make traveling to the river safer for bicyclists and pedestrians to the need to address gentrification concerns upfront and make potential parklands more welcoming to members of all communities. In 2017, we shift from research to advocating for these community-supported solutions.



### A HOLISTIC APPROACH MORE THAN PRESERVING PRETTY VIEWS

The river belongs to all of us. As sections of the urban riverfront transition between uses, FMR advocates for river-friendly development to benefit both the region as a whole and the surrounding neighborhoods. In 2016, for example, discussions began about what to do with a particularly large riverfront site — the closed port of Minneapolis, a.k.a. the Upper Harbor Terminal. FMR successfully advocated that affordable housing, transportation and equitable access to the river be included in the city's goals for the redevelopment.

**72**  
MILES  
of metro river corridor  
protected by new rules



Photo by Jim Hudak

## **NEW METRO RIVERFONT RULES! LONG-SOUGHT METRO RIVER CORRIDOR PROTECTIONS PUT INTO PLACE**

At long last, Minnesota officially adopted a new set of rules to govern land use and development along the metro stretch of the Mississippi River, a.k.a. our local national park, in late 2016.

The new state Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area rules provide a set of clear, consistent and effective standards and guidelines to ensure that the most valuable resources in the 72-mile metro corridor are protected and preserved while supporting appropriate development. FMR worked for the rules for nearly 10 years, leading the Legislative effort calling for their creation, ensuring that citizen voices were heard during the rulemaking process, and working with Gov. Mark Dayton’s administration to close a legal loophole that threatened to derail the rules at the last minute. We look forward to working with riverfront communities to update local ordinances accordingly over the next few years.

## **LOOKING AHEAD:**

In addition to working with riverfront communities to update local ordinances or land-use rules (see above), FMR will continue to weigh in on the redevelopment of significant riverfront sites (including Upper Harbor Terminal in Minneapolis [opposite page] as well as the former Ford manufacturing site in St. Paul). We’re also keeping a close eye on the Riverview Corridor light-rail line and continuing to support and build our incredible base of citizen advocates, now known as the River Guardians. Visit [FMR.org/advocate](http://FMR.org/advocate) to learn more and become a River Guardian.



“I’ve been working to improve my neighborhood for many years. Partnering with FMR, we were able to prevent the construction of an oversized building along the river bluff by advocating at city hall and influencing state river rules.

Throughout this process, our community has come together and developed a strong value for the river. We really can thrive with the river as long as we take care of it.”

— Laura Nichols  
St. Paul resident  
[River Guardian](#)

# LAND PROTECTION

From government agencies to families, FMR partners with landowners to protect, restore and enhance important natural areas throughout the metro-area Mississippi River watershed.

Many local landowners want to care for the health of their land and our waters, but need support and guidance through the complex protection and restoration process. FMR not only helps them understand their protection options — often resulting in new conservation, wildlife and park areas — but also oversees the planning and restoration of protected sites to return them to a state of ecological health.

Caring for both the land and the relationships that support it, FMR's approach is unique and highly successful. Since our founding, FMR has assisted in the protection of more than 2,300 acres; developed management plans for over 9,300 acres at 86 sites, and conducted restoration on over 2,800 acres at 69 sites.

## -2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS-

### **FUTURE CONSERVATIONISTS** ENGAGING YOUTH IN RESTORATION RESEARCH

Continuing to expand our citizen science programming, FMR now partners with four Twin Cities area high schools to research and monitor our restoration sites. Whether surveying plant and insect diversity, documenting populations of non-native earthworms, tracking water quality changes, or researching garlic mustard control, students gain valuable experience in the scientific process while providing useful data that can help shape FMR's current and future restorations. Projects for 2017 include actively involving students in growing, planting and tracking native prairie species in a restored prairie.

**69**

**SITES BEING RESTORED**  
to native prairie and woodlands

### **FROM FARM TO PRAIRIE** LARGE-SCALE RESTORATION COMMENCES

At long last, restoration began on the 335-acre William H. Houlton Conservation Area in Elk River in fall 2016. The city-owned site, which FMR helped permanently protect, is located at the confluence of the Elk and Mississippi rivers with more than 2.5 miles of riverfront land. Phase one of the restoration focused on removing invasive shrubs on 90 acres of savanna and floodplain forest, the first step in transforming the highly degraded site to one where native species will flourish. FMR began phase two – restoring native prairie on 160 acres of agricultural fields – in early 2017.





Photo by Karen Schik

Since FMR secured its protection as a state Scientific & Natural Area in 2002, Pine Bend Bluffs has been a perennial favorite amongst our habitat restoration volunteers.

## HAMPTON WOODS PROTECTED!

FOREST PROVIDES ESSENTIAL HABITAT IN THE HEART OF DAKOTA COUNTY

In a landscape dominated by agriculture, Hampton Woods rises like an oasis of habitat in the heart of Dakota County. Reminiscent of the Big Woods that once covered much of Minnesota, the oak forest is home to red-shouldered hawk, ovenbird and several other bird species in decline.

Thanks to an FMR partnership with local landowners and government agencies, nearly 200 acres of Hampton Woods were permanently protected in late 2016.

In 2017, they'll become a state Wildlife Management Area and FMR will begin working with the Department of Natural Resources to restore and preserve the critical habitat they provide, as we continue to work with nearby landowners to expand the protected forest.



"Our part of Hampton Woods had been in our family since 1897. The woodland was used to heat the family home between Hampton and Hastings. (The homestead is still

called the Halfway Farm.) Now, thanks to FMR's help, the Geifer family is happy to honor our grandparents and preserve the land for public use."

— Joan Geifer Uselmann  
Dakota County landowner  
Conservation partner

## LOOKING AHEAD:

We look forward to installing 160 acres of prairie near the river at Houlton Conservation Area and documenting the transformation from farm fields to wildlife habitat. FMR ecologists will also be working with volunteers at 26 public habitat restoration events in 2017. Visit [FMR.org](http://FMR.org) and sign up for our e- newsletter, "[Mississippi Messages](#)," for updates.

# STEWARDSHIP

Many people care about the river, but how can we actively help restore and protect it? The FMR Outreach and Stewardship team organizes events and outings for people who want to restore important natural areas or make their homes or yards more river-friendly, for teachers who want to engage students in water quality issues, and for youth who want to educate local community members about water pollution.

All volunteer and education events benefit the river and are directly tied to our program areas. Hands-on volunteers work in special places being protected, restored and enhanced by FMR Land Conservation and River Corridor staff. Presentations and workshops educate individuals to reduce polluted runoff and embrace river-friendly practices.

In turn, volunteers and education participants are provided additional ways to stay involved in local river protection work. And with every rain barrel and native plant installed, we use our social influence to encourage more neighbors and communities to protect the river.

## -2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS-

### CONNECTING PEOPLE & THE RIVER VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

FMR is proud to have engaged 6,220 participants in 217 river stewardship events in 2016. Through 88 presentations and workshops, 3,358 people learned to better connect their actions in their homes, yards and streets to the river. Another 3,276 people pitched in at 129 volunteer outings — marking storm drains, monitoring water quality, cleaning up litter and restoring habitat for our local wildlife and waters.

### BREAKING GROUND SITES ADDED, PROGRAMS EXPANDED

Between Elk River and Hastings, FMR volunteers are helping to restore over 20 habitat restoration sites as well as learning about actions they can take to improve the health of the river at home and in their communities.

In 2016, a trio of volunteer restoration sites were added along the Inver Grove Heights riverfront, and FMR increased our educational offerings throughout the Minnehaha Creek subwatershed, partnering with the city and watershed district respectively.

**6,220**

**PEOPLE**

learned about, restored,  
cleaned up and helped  
protect the river

**3,399**

**YOUTH**

engaged in outings and hands-  
on river-service projects



Many thanks to all of our river stewards who help us restore habitat (like at Indian Mounds Regional Park, above) and educate our communities about how our storm drains connect to the Mississippi: “Keep ‘em Clean – Drains to River”!

## SUPPORTING TOMORROW’S LEADERS DEEPENING YOUTH PROGRAMS

In 2016, FMR continued to expand our youth programs. Throughout 2015 we’d successfully increased the number of schools we work with. In 2016, we focused on strengthening these connections between educators, youth and the Mississippi River.

In addition to offering [storm drain stenciling](#) and clean-up outings, we integrated select classrooms and youth groups into local FMR habitat restoration projects, including developing a new citizen science initiative. In 2016, 133 students from four high schools gathered data to help us monitor animal and plant life and collect other data to inform FMR restoration efforts at Indian Mounds Regional Park, Crosby Farm Regional Park and Willowbrook floodplain forest in St. Paul and Houlton Conservation Area in Elk River.



“I enjoy Earth Club and working with FMR because I get new experiences, and I get to help people and clean up the river. I want a better life for our children.”

— Chao Xiong  
Harding-High Earth Club volunteer  
Citizen scientist, habitat restorer

## LOOKING AHEAD:

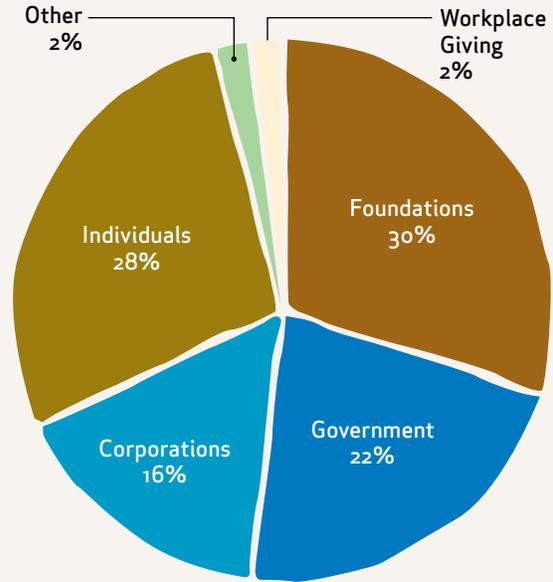
In addition to continuing to offer over 200 high-quality volunteer and educational outings annually, we’re working to develop a new citizen science monitoring program for all ages.

To find out about opportunities of interest to you, contact Volunteer Coordinator Amy Kilgore at [akilgore@fmr.org](mailto:akilgore@fmr.org) or 651-222-2193 x31. Or sign up for our e-newsletter, “[Mississippi Messages](#),” at FMR.org to receive calendars of upcoming river stewardship events.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

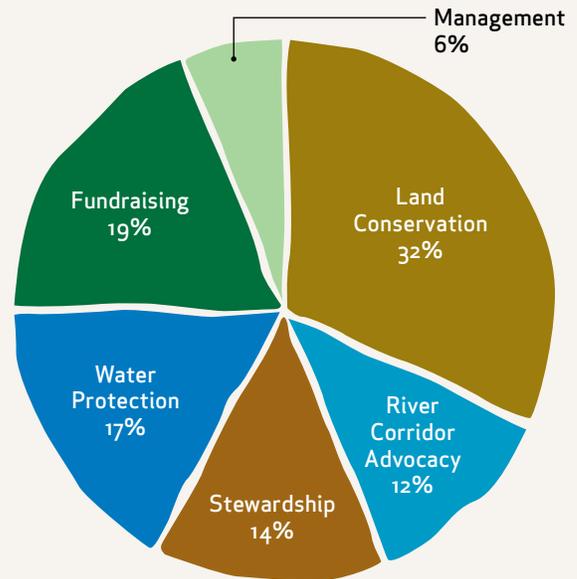
## INCOME REPORT

Foundations	\$594,434
Government	443,275
Corporations	310,187
Individuals	561,844
Workplace Giving	26,677
Other	31,216
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,967,633</b>



## EXPENSE REPORT

<b>PROGRAMS</b>	
Land Conservation	\$583,203
River Corridor	217,932
Stewardship	268,897
Water Protection	311,625
Fundraising	345,832
Management	106,723
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,834,212</b>



## BALANCE SHEET

### Assets

Current Assets	\$1,048,418
Fixed & Other Assets	796,455
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,844,873</b>

### Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities	\$155,969
Net Assets	1,688,904
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,844,873</b>

# BOARD, STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

## SuperVolunteers

Those volunteers who restored habitat at four or more hands-on events or otherwise contributed 20 hours or more of volunteer time.

Landon Acre-Kendall  
 Mary Adamski  
 Amy Anderson  
 Claire Anderson  
 Jason Anderson  
 Laurie Anderson  
 Gordon Andersson  
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 Edward Oliver  
 Pat Olson  
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 Jackie Prince  
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Tom Reiter  
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 Ricco Venterea  
 Susan Vento  
 Maggie Voth  
 Steve Wardell  
 Deanna Wiener  
 Bryan Williams  
 Cole Williams  
 Susan Young  
 Tom Ziegler

## CONTACT US:

### Friends of the Mississippi River

101 East Fifth Street  
 Suite 2000  
 Saint Paul, MN 55101  
 Phone: 651-222-2193

[www.FMR.org](http://www.FMR.org)  
 "FriendsMissRiv" on social

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*Ecologist*  
*Water Program Director*  
*Senior Ecologist*  
*Policy Advocate*

# OUR DONORS

Friends of the Mississippi River extends our deepest thanks to everyone that made a contribution in 2016. You are our inspiration and the driving force that makes our work possible. Together, we're protecting, restoring and enhancing the Mississippi River for this and future generations. Please know that every gift you send is valued and directly benefits our mission, and we've worked hard to ensure the accuracy of this list of 2016 donors. If you identify errors or omissions, please let us know by contacting Sara at sdekok@fmr.org.

## Mississippi Riverkeepers

Mississippi Riverkeepers is a special group of individuals and families who contribute an annual gift of \$1,000 or more to FMR. We're grateful for their leadership and investment in the protection of our treasured river and its watershed.

### RIVER CONSERVER (\$20,000+)

Anonymous  
Chad & Maggie Dayton  
Peter & Mary Gove  
Karen Sternal & Lowell Pickett

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James T. Nystrom Foundation  
Amy & Chip Pearson  
Thomas Reiter & Sharon Miyamoto  
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John Shepard & Suzanne Brust  
The Longview Foundation - Ellie Crosby  
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Deanna Wiener & Jim Tilsen

### RIVER ENTHUSIAST (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Alberta Adams in memory of James T. Adams  
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## Mississippi River Legacy Society

Thank you to the following donors who have provided a future gift to FMR through their estate plans.

Whitney & Sarah Clark  
Francine Corcoran  
Sara & Sean DeKok  
Peter & Mary Gove  
Mary L. Hilfiker  
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Ardes M. Johnson  
Patricia L. Koors  
Dwight Malcom\*  
Kathy Stack  
Deanna Wiener & Jim Tilsen  
Helen C. Wilson\*  
Richard Zgodava\*

## 2016 Office Relocation Capital Campaign

FMR is deeply grateful to the donors whose vision and generosity helped to build the foundation on which we protect, restore and enhance our great treasure, the Mississippi River.

The Katherine B. Andersen Fund of The Saint Paul Foundation  
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Julia Kaemmer Fund of HRK Foundation  
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\*In remembrance

## 'Rebirth' Funders

FMR is grateful to the following donors who provided support for the making of our documentary film, "Rebirth: The Mississippi's National Park."

### MAJOR FUNDING PROVIDED BY

Bruce F. Vento Science Educator Scholarship Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation  
The Katherine B. Andersen Fund of The Saint Paul Foundation  
Thomas J. Reiter & Sharon K. Miyamoto Charitable Trust

### ADDITIONAL FUNDING

#### PROVIDED BY

Ruth & John Huss  
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, National Park Service  
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A P R O U D M E M B E R O F



# WHAT'S NEXT

## Join the River Guardians

FMR is taking our grassroots advocacy work to the next level. Over 1,000 people have signed on as River Guardians, ready to take action and speak up when the river needs us the most.

If you'd like to receive our most important (but quick and easy) action alerts as well as invitations to educational and fun happy hours, training sessions and networking events, sign up at [FMR.org/advocate](http://FMR.org/advocate).



## Learn about the river

### How's the health of the Mississippi River?

Find out in the "State of the River Report" at [StateOfTheRiver.com](http://StateOfTheRiver.com). From bald eagles to agricultural runoff, the highly regarded report quickly and approachably covers the most important indicators of our river's health. Companion policy, teacher's and stewardship guides are also available to help us all take action to protect our river.

### Is the metro Mississippi really a national park?

Indeed it is! Learn the story of this unlikely designation and our river's even more unlikely transformation from a convenient dumping ground to a beloved community asset in "Rebirth: The Mississippi's National Park." The half-hour documentary aired on TPT and is available online at [FMR.org/rebirth](http://FMR.org/rebirth).

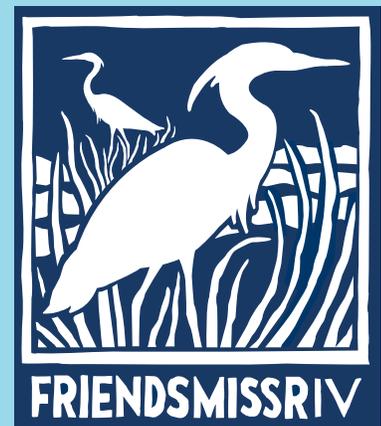


## Get your hands dirty

From native prairie plantings to rain barrel workshops, FMR offers over 200 high-quality volunteer habitat restoration and educational activities a year. Most are weekday evenings or Saturday mornings, all-supplies-provided, family-friendly, and in beautiful parks and preserves important for our waters, wildlife and communities.

No experience is required and it only takes an email to sign up, but please note that FMR events fill quickly. Activities are listed at [FMR.org/events](http://FMR.org/events) and announced in our twice-a-month "Mississippi Messages" e-newsletter, sign up at [FMR.org](http://FMR.org).

Educators: FMR also organizes over 100 outings for youth and school groups annually. Learn more at [FMR.org/volunteer](http://FMR.org/volunteer) or contact Kate Clayton, [kclayton@fmr.org](mailto:kclayton@fmr.org).



### STAY IN TOUCH & BOOST OUR SIGNAL!

Subscribe to our e-newsletter, "[Mississippi Messages](http://Mississippi Messages)," at [FMR.org](http://FMR.org). On social, look for FriendsMissRiv!





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