



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

**Celebrating 30 years of
protecting, restoring and enhancing the river**



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Mission
 Friends of the Mississippi River engages people to protect, restore and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities region.

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TIMELINE PHOTO CREDITS: MIKE DURENBERGER (PINE BEND), ANNA BOTZ (SOTR), USDA (HANDWASHING), DODD DEMAS (SILPHIUM)



DAVID WHEATON

Fellow friends of the river,

Celebrating and reflecting upon Friends of the Mississippi River's 30th anniversary throughout 2023 gave us an opportunity to recognize how far we've come towards realizing our mission of a cleaner river for all and to appreciate how significantly, meaningfully and impactfully the organization's scale and scope has grown.

This year we again made significant progress engaging people and furthering programs to protect, restore and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed. At the Capitol, FMR advanced important initiatives on safer drinking water, the integrity of St. Anthony Falls, invasive carp and much more. Our youth council shaped policy as well, making recommendations on park access and supporting our work in communities. Pollinators are better off thanks to our habitat restoration and monitoring. And we continued to grow the emerging market for clean-water crops.

Annual reports usually focus on just the past year, but we included in this report an overview of some of the incredible accomplishments since our founding. Check out our timeline to look back on some highlights from the past 30 years.

We are building, growing and transforming this organization together, and these accomplishments — and those that are on the horizon — belong to us all. Thank you for giving what you can to the life-giving river we love.

With gratitude,

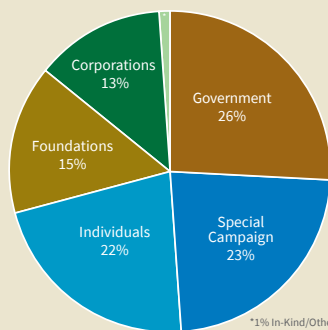
Chad Dayton, 2023 Chair of FMR's Board of Directors



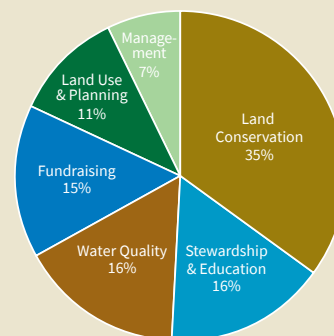
2023 FMR staff and board

12-MONTH STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES*

REVENUES: \$3,458,218



EXPENSES: \$3,429,670



*In 2022, FMR moved to a July-to-June fiscal year calendar. The above data is for the unrestricted income for the 12-month period July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. See our full financial report at fmr.org/AR2023.

30 YEARS FOR THE RIVER

In 2023, we celebrated our 30th anniversary and all we've accomplished with our supporters. Here are 10 highlights since our founding in 1993.



1999: Launched the Mississippi River Challenge



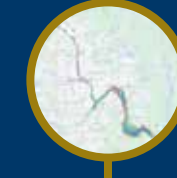
2000: Organized our first volunteer stewardship project, in the river gorge



2002: Co-led referendum to create Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas Program



2003: Completed our first land protection project, at Pine Bend Bluffs



2009: Initiated the process to develop new riverfront development rules for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area



2012: Published the first State of the River Report



2014: Championed the nation's first phase-out of toxic triclosan



2015: Co-led campaign to close the Upper St. Anthony Falls lock against invasive carp



2018: Piloted our career pathways program for youth, the Environmental Stewardship Institute



2019: Co-founded the Forever Green Partnership to advance clean-water crops

Engaging people in stewardship and learning

Improving habitat in the metro watershed



1,874
VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS

132
EVENTS

5,654
SERVICE HOURS

1,498
STORM DRAINS STENCILED

1,081
YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

30
ESI YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

We're grateful to the many individuals and organizations who give their time to steward the health of our metro riverway through our volunteer events and programs like our BIPOC River Stewards, Above the Falls Stewards, River Gorge Stewards and Vermillion River Stewards. Our education program partnered with young river stewards through hands-on classroom lessons, service-learning outings, volunteer opportunities, community science partnerships and our career pathways program.



"I had an incredible experience as an assistant intern. We had the opportunity to create environmental curriculum related to the Mississippi, racial justice and Indigenous practices. Working on a diverse, passionate team has shifted my visions for our future!"

—**Riya Stebleton,**
Environmental Stewardship Institute (ESI)
council member and assistant intern



Our ecologists actively restored and maintained 34 sites across the metro region — creating wildlife habitat, improving water quality and strengthening climate resiliency.

34
ACTIVE RESTORATION SITES

1,343
ACRES RESTORED

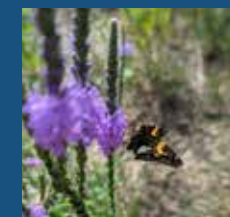
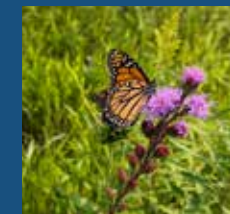
2,984
INDIVIDUAL POLLINATORS RECORDED

42x
POLLINATORS FOUND ON NATIVE PLANTS 42x MORE OFTEN THAN INVASIVES



SPOTLIGHT:
Supporting pollinators through restoration and research

You've seen the reports of worldwide pollinator decline. Our Land Conservation team works to counteract that trend, focusing on pollinator habitat in all of our restoration efforts. In 2023, we monitored for impact, applied innovative methods to break up monocultures of invasive species, and increased our capacity for research and community science.



"Over the past five years, FMR has worked with our neighborhood to save 8-acre River Heights Park in Inver Grove Heights and restore prairie there with native plants. Together we've planted the seeds, created a small demo garden and conducted pollinator surveys. I'm grateful that FMR made it possible for me and my neighbors to be a part of this process, from habitat protection to restoration and monitoring."

—**Karen Meyman, FMR Volunteer**

1,219
POUNDS OF NATIVE SEED PLANTED

374
NATIVE PLANTS PLANTED

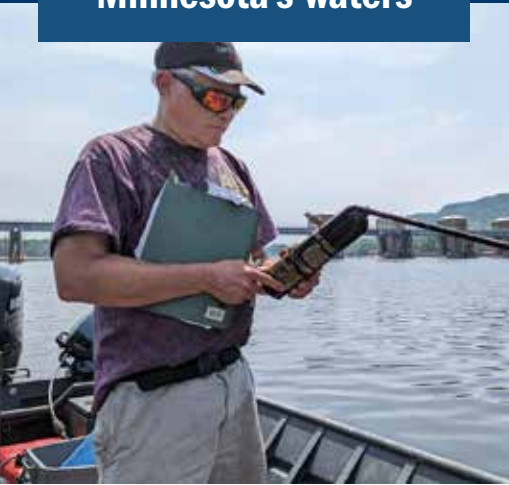
38
ACRES OF PRAIRIE BURNED



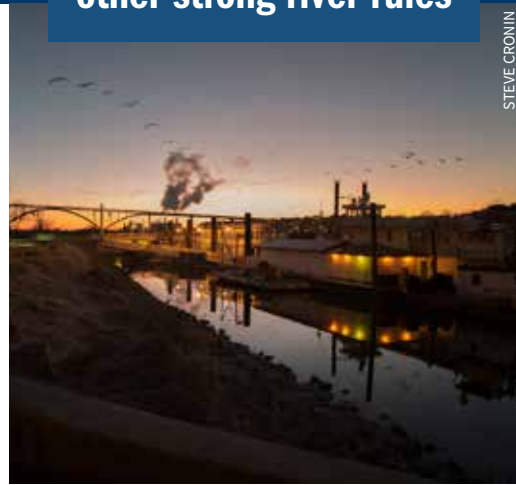
Advocating for the river and our communities

In 2023, our Land Use & Planning program participated in planning and development projects at 28 metro sites from end to end of the national park corridor, including:

Stopping the spread of invasive carp into Minnesota's waters



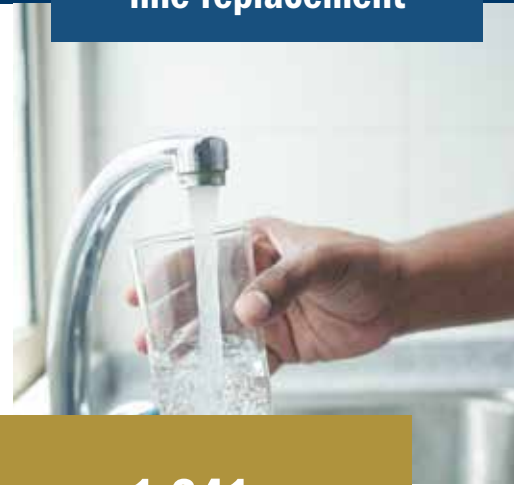
Pushing for a bird-safe St. Paul riverfront and other strong river rules



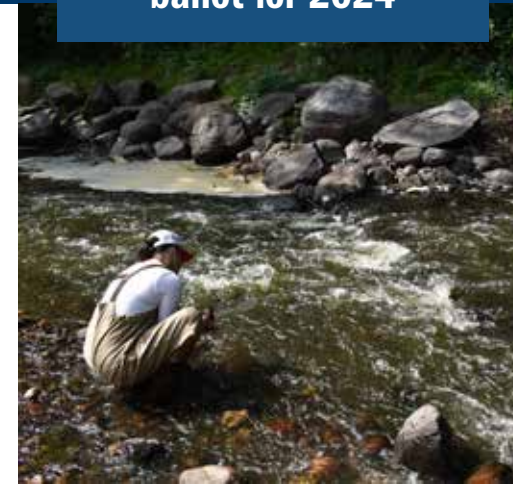
Asking the right questions about Twin Cities dam removal



Safer drinking water through lead service line replacement



Getting lottery fund rededication on the ballot for 2024



Cleaner transportation: the first steps toward a new standard



"Friends of the Mississippi River is a tireless advocate for the Mississippi River. At the state Capitol, they're taking leadership on big issues that affect the river, our environment and our state. From clean water policy to invasive carp to climate change, FMR's integrity and sharp analysis have won them respect and success from many legislative leaders."

—Senator D. Scott Dibble, Minnesota Legislature

28
LOCAL PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS FMR
WEIGHED IN ON

53
NEWS STORIES
FEATURING FMR ON
RIVER ISSUES

1,341
2023 RIVER GUARDIANS

2,904
MESSAGES SENT BY
RIVER GUARDIANS

190
DECISION-MAKERS
REACHED



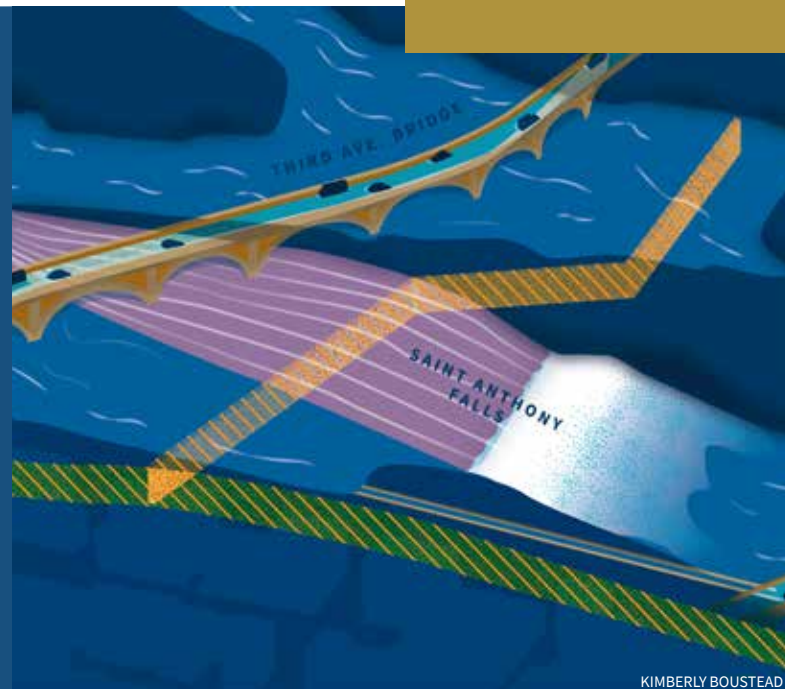
"By working to create supply chains for more environmentally friendly and equitable ways of farming, FMR is helping organizations like ours underline the ways that agriculture can support people *and* nature. Together we are able to amplify opportunities to create regenerative relationships between our land-use and waterways."

—Diane Christofore, Executive Director of Regenerative Agriculture Alliance, state value chain grant recipient

SPOTLIGHT:
Leading the charge to investigate the wall holding up St. Anthony Falls

Without FMR's leadership, we wouldn't have a plan to determine the condition of the 1,850-foot-long cutoff wall 40 feet beneath St. Anthony Falls. We do know that if the wall were to fail, it could compromise our water supply and threaten nearby roads and bridges.

In 2023 we led the campaign to educate the public and decision-makers about this hidden hazard, and it paid off. The Legislature awarded \$1 million to investigate the wall — a first step in protecting our cities and the only waterfall on the Mississippi River.



KIMBERLY BOUSTEAD

SPOTLIGHT:
Growing the market for clean-water crops through value chain development

FMR and our partners designed a state investment program to develop value chains for clean-water crops. Thanks to legislative wins in 2022 and 2023, businesses could apply for grants last spring. Companies like Perennial Pantry can scale up their operations, and groups like Regenerative Agriculture Alliance can facilitate advancements for small farmers. That means you'll be able to buy more Kernza baked goods, hazelnut snacks and other tasty products soon. Minnesota will see more acres of these crops on the land and cleaner waters as a result.



DODD DEMAS



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THANK YOU for powering our work to protect the river that sustains us all



Your contributions — whether volunteering, advocating or donating — have been instrumental to the significant progress we've made toward our vision of a protected river and watershed in 2023.



DAVID WHEATON



Inside, explore a snapshot of the impact you made possible. And be sure to enjoy the full, interactive version of our annual report and our list of more than 2,000 generous donors at fmr.org/AR2023.

FMR.ORG

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