



ALEXANDRA JABBARPOUR



# 2025

## ANNUAL REPORT

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[www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org) • [info@fmr.org](mailto:info@fmr.org)

### 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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2025 FMR staff and board

### Dear friends of the river,

As you know, 2025 was a tumultuous year. Many of our hallowed places and environmental protections came under attack and are still being threatened. In these times, we can anchor ourselves to what we do locally. In doing so over the past year, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) provided a much-needed outlet for those who care deeply about this great river and all the life that depends on it.

With innovative science, collaborative partnerships and dedicated volunteers and staff, FMR demonstrated that we could improve habitat for our pollinators and make strides towards reducing agricultural runoff through sustainable aviation fuels. Seemingly small actions — like planting and restoring habitat, stenciling storm drains, monitoring stream health and writing letters to state and federal legislators — have had a tremendous, cumulative impact.

Many of FMR's endeavors take time, and we are committed to achieving long-term goals. It took 19 years, but we have finally succeeded in supporting all 25 cities and townships in the 72-mile Mississippi National River and Recreation Area corridor in adopting critical area rules. And, through our Environmental Stewardship Institute, we are nurturing the next generation of environmental advocates.

All of these accomplishments — and our hope to continue advancing them — depend upon you, our advocates, volunteers and donors. I want to extend a special thanks to all who helped us reach our special campaign goal of \$6 million. Your generosity makes this vital work possible.



With gratitude,

**Dr. John O. Anfinson**

**2025 Chair, FMR Board of Directors**

**Get the full report: [fmr.org/AR2025](http://fmr.org/AR2025)**



# Improving habitat through research

## Conservation by the numbers

**47**

ACTIVE RESTORATION SITES

**2,333**

ACRES RESTORED

**29**

THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES FOUND

**2,924**

POUNDS OF NATIVE SEED PLANTED

**2,330**

NATIVE PLANTS PLANTED

**286**

ACRES MANAGED W/ PRESCRIBED FIRE

### SPOTLIGHT:

## FMR launches new pollinator monitoring program

There's no way our staff could check 6,616 milkweed plants for monarchs in one summer. But that's what 35 committed volunteers did as part of our new Pollinator Evaluation Program. In this participatory science initiative, volunteers monitor FMR restoration sites for monarchs. Our team contributes data to a national research database, and FMR uses the data to improve our habitat restoration efforts, since prairie corridors along the metro Mississippi River are vital for monarchs. One of our smallest sites has welcomed an abundance of butterflies this past year following specific enhancement efforts that appear to be working.

Through another research project, we've found more than three times as many bumble bees in restored prairies as in remnant prairies, a sign our restorations are providing important resources for bumble bees. We also found the federally endangered rusty-patched bumble bee at four FMR restoration sites in 2025. Our cameras at Pine Bend Bluffs gives us further data about wildlife using our sites.

What's good for the monarchs, the bumble bees, the egrets and the coyotes is good for the river. A healthy prairie's deep roots act as sponges for runoff, holding the land in place and protecting water from erosion and pollution.





# Pushing for stronger river protections

## SPOTLIGHT:

### All 25 metro riverfront cities adopt updated, improved development rules

Some good things take time. Better safeguards for the metro river took 19 years. But now FMR and our supporters get to celebrate.

The original Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area designation in the 1970s came with some safeguards, but they were often inconsistently applied and hard to enforce. In 2007, FMR began to push alongside communities and decision-makers for stronger, more protective riverfront rules for the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities.

We've been working toward better rules ever since. At the end of 2025, after much advocacy, St. Paul finally passed its new critical area ordinance. It was the last river city to do so. But its ordinance passage means that all 25 cities and townships along the metro river have now adopted clearer, science-based regulations for development. These regulations protect the river from harmful erosion, bluff and shoreline degradation and outsized development. They include measures in some areas for habitat preservation, public access and open space.

Critical area rule reform is one of the biggest accomplishments for the river since its founding. And it wouldn't have been possible without your support.



#### Advocacy by

**1,898**

RIVER GUARDIANS

**15**

ADVOCACY EVENTS

**6,636**

ADVOCATE  
MESSAGES SENT

**242**

DECISION-  
MAKERS REACHED  
ABOUT RIVER AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ISSUES



PHOTO CREDITS: MIKE DURENBERGER (ALL BUT FAR LEFT)



# Taking initiative on complex policy

## the numbers

**60**

NEWS STORIES  
CITED FMR  
ON RIVER ISSUES

FMR WORKED ON

**27**

POLICY ISSUES  
ON THE STATE OR  
FEDERAL LEVEL AND

**26**

LOCAL PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECTS

### SPOTLIGHT:

## FMR leads as a voice for the river in the sustainable aviation fuel arena

FMR was the only water quality organization at the North American Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Conference this past fall. Our staff presented on the promise of clean-water crops like winter oilseeds to lower greenhouse gases without harming air, land or water. Many attendees said that, until talking to our staff, they hadn't considered water quality in the push for lower-carbon fuel.

FMR has also brought together a wide range of stakeholders to agree on environmental guardrails for SAF in Minnesota. We co-wrote a Star Tribune commentary in April to urge state decision-makers to seize the opportunity to responsibly transition to sustainable jet fuel and clean up our waters. At the federal level, we're playing defense to try to block the most harmful sustainable aviation fuel changes of this administration.

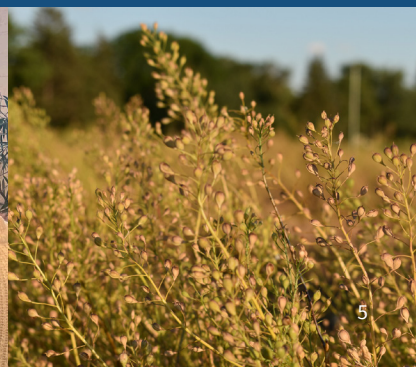
Now is the time to shape the future of SAF, which could worsen water quality — or help us drive down the river's biggest source of pollution. FMR is at the table, a voice for the river to ensure sustainable aviation fuel is truly sustainable.



CHLOE PIEKOLA & DANIELLE  
PIEKARSKI / BBI INTERNATIONAL



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# Connecting the next generation

## Stewardship & Education by the numbers

**2,275**

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS

**6,370**

SERVICE HOURS

**2,301**

STORM DRAINS STENCILED

**2,193**

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

**41**

ESI YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

### SPOTLIGHT:

## Summer youth program participants explore environmental careers

Ollie, a youth Environmental Stewardship Institute (ESI) fellow, researched air pollution's effects on the human body for his capstone project through our summer program for high school youth. "I want to be a nurse. I was inspired to do this project because air pollution and air quality is very prevalent right now and has a big impact on individuals' health," he said. Ollie wasn't the only one who researched environmental intersections with a career pathway. In our eight-week ESI summer program, 22 high school fellows met to explore careers and connect with the natural world and each other.

Fellows contributed to field research, learned about culturally significant river sites, hiked, kayaked and canoed. They collected temperature data for a forest climate change study and inspected milkweed for monarch eggs for FMR pollinator surveys. They met with a naturalist, a park ranger, artists and more. Through career chats, experiential learning and capstone projects, fellows were exposed to many different ways to contribute to environmental work. Some participants shared that they didn't know such diversity in environmental jobs existed. We look forward to seeing these young leaders become colleagues in the environmental field.







# Our River Campaign raises nearly \$6 million

Thanks to your incredible generosity and commitment, we surpassed our \$5 million goal, raising a remarkable \$5.86 million. This success is a testament to what we can achieve when we come together for a shared vision. Your contributions are already making a difference:



T. LAWRENCE / GLFC

## Safeguarding our waters against invasive carp

Campaign funding strengthened FMR's advocacy capacity, enabling us and our Stop Carp Coalition partners to secure state investment for an invasive carp deterrent.



## Youth & community engagement

FMR has been able to double youth ESI participation, broaden leadership opportunities and deepen connections to the river through weekly outings and hands-on partnerships.



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## Agricultural landscape change and water quality

The campaign has allowed us to increase our lobbying capacity and hire experts in both communications and sustainable biofuels as we address pollution at its source.



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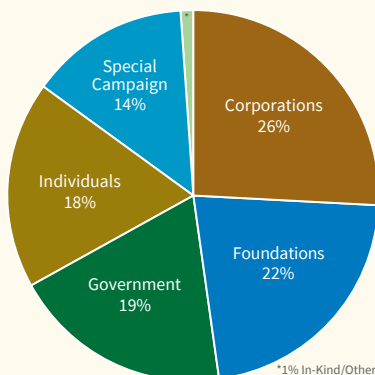
## Land conservation & restoration

With the addition of new staff, our team is tackling more projects than ever before. We've also launched initiatives to ensure our work protects the river and the wildlife that depends on it.

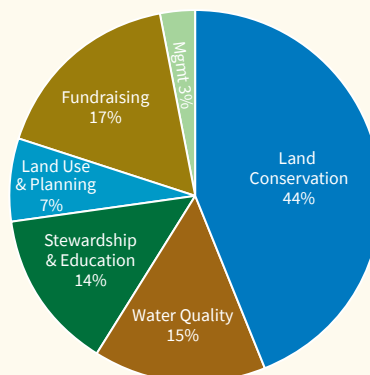
**Thank you to more than 550 donors who participated.**  
**See the full list: [fmr.org/our-river](https://fmr.org/our-river)**

## 12-MONTH STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

**REVENUES: \$4,314,669\***



**EXPENSES: \$4,284,269\***



**\*This data is from the unrestricted income for the 12-month period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. See our full 2024-2025 financial report and more at [fmr.org/AR2025](https://fmr.org/AR2025).**





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MIKE DURENBERGER



DAVID WHEATON



MIKE DURENBERGER



# THANK YOU

To those who show up to gather prairie seeds or to clean up trash from the riverbanks. To those who send messages to decision-makers and who speak up at town halls. To those who donate and sustain our work — thank you. Your generosity gathers like thousands of tributaries into a great river. FMR's board and staff remain honored to steward the metro Mississippi River with you.

Inside, find highlights from the accomplishments you made possible in 2025. And be sure to enjoy the full, interactive version of our annual report, plus our list of generous supporters and donors at [fmr.org/AR2025](https://fmr.org/AR2025).

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