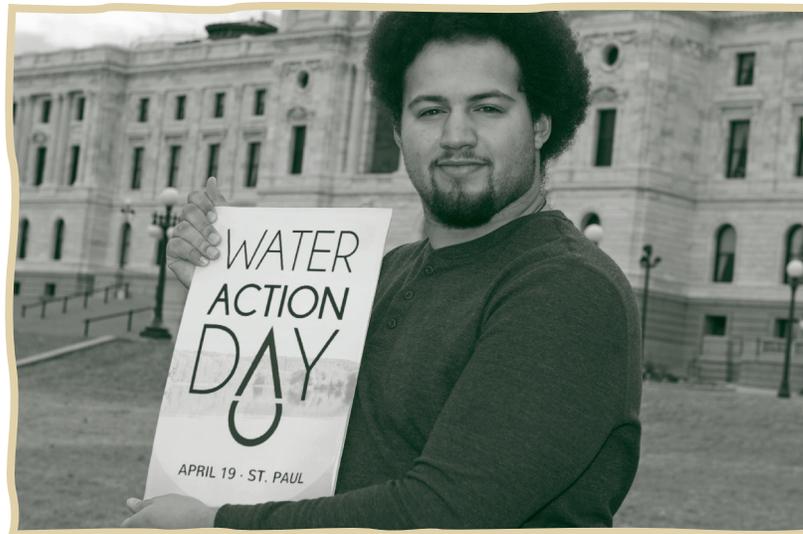


WORKING TO PROTECT THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER
AND ITS WATERSHED IN THE TWIN CITIES AREA

Join us for Water Action Day, April 19

Winona LaDuke, Walter Mondale to headline rally for clean water

by Trevor Russell



We're looking forward to filling the Capitol with voices for clean water Wednesday, April 19. Learn more and sign up for the rally at FMR.org/wateractionday. (Photo by Anna Botz)

Right now many of our basic protections for clean water and the environment are under attack at both the federal and state levels. Here in Minnesota, FMR and our allies are working to defeat an onslaught of legislative proposals that would result in even more pollution to our rivers, lakes and drinking water.

If you've been looking for an opportunity to make a difference, join us for Minnesota Water Action Day, Wednesday, April 19 – a day of public action and advocacy to show lawmakers we care about clean water.

To make a lasting impression on our legislators, Water Action Day will take place at the Capitol during legislative hours. (If you can't be there in person, we'll be emailing all "Mississippi Messages" readers to get in touch with their legislators online.)

Water Action Day, continued on page 6

Big Woods preserved in the heart of Dakota County

by Tom Lewanski

Spanning 420 acres, Hampton Woods is the largest and most ecologically diverse, contiguous oak forest in Dakota County. In a landscape dominated by agriculture, it is the only forest for miles in all directions, providing critical habitat for forest-dwelling animals, especially birds. Now, thanks to an FMR partnership with local landowners and government agencies, the majority of Hampton Woods is permanently protected.

Hampton Woods, continued on page 7

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Protecting the river's future



101 E. Fifth Street, Suite 2000
Saint Paul, MN 55101
651-222-2193
www.fmr.org • info@fmr.org

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

Strength and hope in numbers

by Whitney Clark



Well, as they say, elections have consequences and some of those consequences could be dire for the Mississippi River. Facing serious attacks on our federal and state environmental

protections, FMR is building our strength and fighting back.

With long-time opponent of environmental protection Scott Pruitt at the helm of the Environmental Protection Agency, federal enforcement of the Clean Water Act is at risk. This makes state-level protections more important than ever.

Unfortunately, here in Minnesota an onslaught of reckless and dangerous bills threatens our most critical environmental protections.

As I write this, legislators are seeking to strip our chief environmental agencies of the authority to write environmental rules and regulations, effectively replacing scientific consensus with the whims of politicians.

Should they succeed, all rules not reaffirmed by legislators by 2022 would be eliminated – including the new land-use rules protecting the metro Mississippi River corridor, a major FMR victory just last year (see page 5).

Yet another proposal seeks to repeal Gov. Mark Dayton's law requiring a modest buffer of vegetation along private lands to protect water quality. And still another

allows polluters to write their own environmental impact documents.

What does this mean for Minnesotans? More fish kills, more green lakes, more polluted drinking water.

I understand that this is depressing, but it's happening and we can't afford to lose heart.

And as FMR fights back – with staff working hard at the Capitol testifying and educating legislators – we're also finding ourselves becoming cautiously optimistic.

Sign-ups for our new River Guardians program to support more grassroots advocates are rolling in (see below). Donations and memberships are up as well; at this rate, we'll double our supporters over the next year!

Registrations are also coming in strong for Minnesota's first Water Action Day April 19 (see cover). We expect a huge turnout of people from all across the state, meeting with legislators and rallying for clean water at the Capitol.

Now I'm coming to believe that this unusual political moment may, in fact, be an opportunity to reinvigorate not only FMR's base but the majority of Minnesotans who care deeply about our river and environment.

So while these serious threats require us to respond with a new level of organization and energy, we are deeply grateful for, and in turn inspired by, each person stepping up with us. Thank you all. And we look forward to seeing you at Water Action Day.

Amplify our impact: Join the River Guardians!

by Alicia Uzarek

As we face greater challenges than ever before, FMR is excited to take our grassroots advocacy work to the next level.

In addition to offering more opportunities to sign petitions, write letters and speak up at meetings, we're coordinating educational and fun happy hours, training sessions and networking events. To better support our growing community of advocates, we're also ramping up communications, with special quarterly email updates and more action alerts and social media posts to share.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Working for Minnesotans' values

by Trevor Russell

While Minnesota legislators debate a torrent of environmental rollbacks, a new poll shows that Minnesotans of all backgrounds and regions want environmental protections strengthened and enforced, not weakened.

This March, the Minnesota Environmental Partnership released a non-partisan statewide poll* showing that nearly three in four Minnesotans (74 percent) are concerned about rollbacks to our land, air and water laws.

MEP is a statewide coalition of more than 70 environmental and conservation organizations, including FMR. (We also serve as the lead on water-related issues.)

Unfortunately, our Legislature has spent much of this session advancing rollbacks to basic water quality protections that directly contradict what Minnesotans want.

Minnesotans' values

The poll results are clear: Minnesotans want clean water and strong environmental protections.

- 62 percent agree that our environmental laws should be tougher or better enforced.
- 70 percent say they would view their legislator less favorably for voting to weaken environmental laws, with little difference between rural (69 percent) and more urban (71 percent) voters.
- 82 percent support Gov. Mark Dayton's buffer law.
- 81 percent are concerned about runoff from farms polluting Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams.

More than three in five Minnesota voters want tougher laws or better enforcement of existing laws according to a new nonpartisan, statewide poll.

Out-of-touch legislation

In addition to attempts to roll back the buffer bill and other environmental laws, many legislators are busy attempting to strip our chief environmental agencies of the power to write basic environmental rules and standards.

Several bills seek to place environmental rulemaking firmly in the hands of corporations and politicians.

If approved, these rollbacks would suspend or eliminate water quality standards (a violation of the Clean Water Act), eliminate public participation in environmental decision-making, eliminate the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, and even let polluters write

their own environmental impact statements.

Clearly, such bills are out of step with the majority of Minnesotans. We care about our environment and want healthy and safe rivers, lakes and streams.

FMR and our allies continue to work with legislators from both parties to defend against these rollbacks and affirm statewide support for bedrock environmental protections.

Learn more via FMR's legislative blog, FMR.org/legiupdates. While you're there, you can also join the River Guardians or sign up for Water Action Day.

*The survey of 502 Minnesotans was conducted February 1-5 by a bipartisan team and includes a 5.3 percent margin of sampling error. Learn more and see more poll results at <http://tinyurl.com/MEPpoll>.

Hundreds of new advocates have signed on since the beginning of the year. In addition to contacting legislators to prevent rollbacks as well as registering for Water Action Day (see page 1), they also helped name the FMR advocacy program via an online survey. We're excited to announce the winning title is "River Guardians," which will be represented by the new icon featured to the right.

We thank all participants for their actions and input, and look forward to being in touch.

Sign up to be a River Guardian at FMR.org/advocate!



Pollinators buzz for restoration work

by Adam Flett

Many native Minnesota pollinators — bees, birds, butterflies, moths and even flies — are in peril. Several factors contribute to their decline, but one major cause is indisputable: habitat loss.

While FMR's land conservation and habitat restoration work has long benefited pollinators, we've recently intensified our focus on pollinator-specific plantings.

Like many insects and animals, pollinators coevolved with native plants. Eventually they came to rely on specific grasses, trees and flowers for food and shelter.

To a pollinator, even a park or yard full of beautiful but non-native trees and exotic ornamental grasses offers little to no more sustenance than a parking lot.



Pollinators rely on native plants for food, shelter even reproduction as larva often require specific host plants.

In 2016, FMR volunteers installed several large pollinator patches to bolster nearby restored sites, helping to create pollinator-friendly swaths along the North Minneapolis riverfront, South Minneapolis River Gorge and, working closely with Hastings Environmental Protectors, at three sites in Hastings, Minnesota.

This year we plan to create additional pollinator habitat in Hastings and in a new park in Cottage Grove. We'll also continue to protect existing habitat by keeping invasive species at bay.

If you'd like to help pollinators thrive, check out FMR.org/events to join a planting or invasive species removal near you, or email Amy Kilgore, akilgore@fmr.org, to request notices of FMR workshops to create a welcoming spot for pollinators in your yard or garden.

Ford site: More open space, cleanup needed

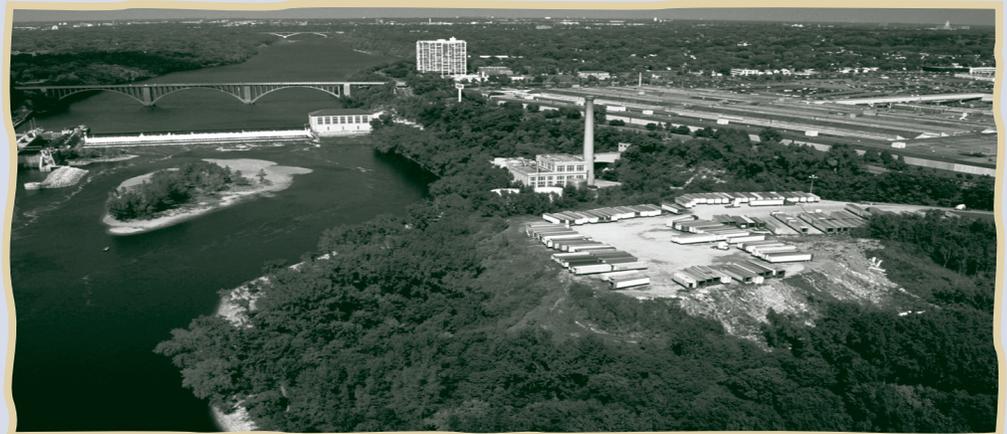
by Whitney Clark

At long last, the St. Paul City Council is set to approve key planning documents laying out the redevelopment of the 135-acre Ford site along the St. Paul river bluff.

While many features of the draft plans are laudable and reflect many of the comments raised by FMR and others over the years (we've been involved in the planning process since 2007), we're urging the city to better address scenic views, open space and long-term environmental contamination concerns.

The draft plans effectively limit structure height to protect the incredible views of and from the river gorge, but we're asking the city to also adopt design standards to minimize new buildings' visual intrusiveness.

Additionally, the existing parkland strip along the bluff and riverward of Mississippi River Boulevard is very narrow, leaving little room for park activities, overlooks, picnic facilities and open space. We're urging the city to move the



Roughly 4,000 housing units and a stream-like water corridor will be built along the bluff near the Ford dam in St. Paul, but open space and pollution concerns linger. The toxic dump known as 'Area C' is featured in the foreground above. (Photo courtesy of the Regents of the University of MN)

boulevard eastward to create a more expansive blufftop park.

Finally, many people are unaware that a portion of the site below the bluff contains a toxic waste dump, a.k.a. "Area C." We're asking the city and Ford to share the results of environmental testing and, if possible, clean up the dump and restore the original floodplain topography.

To learn more, please visit FMR.org/ford.

New rules to protect the river!

By Irene Jones

After more than a decade of work, Minnesota now has official rules to protect the natural, scenic, cultural and recreational resources of the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area.

The critical area encompasses 72 miles of river-adjacent lands from Dayton to Hastings and is also home to our local national park, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

FMR is grateful for the leadership of Gov. Mark Dayton and the state Department of Natural Resources in creating the new land-use and development rules, but we're especially proud of the dedication of our many river advocates who helped keep the river's ecological and cultural importance front and center over the 10-year process.

Next up: Calling all local advocates for the river

Over the next few years, all 25 cities and towns in the corridor will need to update their ordinances and plans in

accordance with the new rules (provided the Minnesota Legislature does not repeal them, as noted on page 2).



What river views and access points are important to you? Now that the state has overarching rules to guide metro riverfront development, we'll be working with community members to help fill in the details, city by city. (Photo by Tom Reiter)

As part of this, riverfront communities will inventory local river resources and places of value and then establish goals to protect them.

Community members can help city planners by identifying important views, suggesting future river access points, and encouraging the protection of sensitive lands that provide habitat and protect water quality.

This will be a great opportunity for river lovers to engage in their local community to make lasting improvements for the river. If you'd like to participate, let us know!

FMR is currently developing river corridor protection trainings and support materials as part of our River Guardians program (see page 2). Sign up at FMR.org/advocate.

Must-see FMR spring flyway sites

by Alex Roth

Whether it's hiking, biking, or camping, nothing brings Minnesotans outside like the arrival of spring. Likewise, spring also signals the return of many bird species that had been avoiding the Minnesota winter.

In fact, the metro river corridor is a hotspot for birds migrating north to their summer breeding grounds. Many of these species are neo-tropical migrants, wintering in Central and South America before heading back north.

At FMR, a key goal is to protect and restore habitat along the Mississippi River, one of the most important migration corridors on the continent.

Many FMR restoration sites are top-notch birding spots. The Mississippi River Gorge Regional Park, Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific & Natural Area and Gores Wildlife Management Area are all longtime favorites with local birders, offering glimpses of warblers, phoebes, thrushes and other migrants.

FMR has also begun restoration at two newer sites north and south of the Twin Cities: the William H. Houlton Conservation Area in Elk River, and Hampton Woods Wildlife Management Area in Hampton (see page 1).

More than 325 bird species make the round-trip each year along the Mississippi Flyway, including roughly 40 percent of all waterfowl in North America!

FMR members and volunteers can take pride in helping to protect vital habitat for migratory birds like the indigo bunting (right) as well as our year-round metro flyway residents.

(Photo by Jim Hudgins/USFWS)



These expansive sites are now open to the public and are great places to view both migrating and resident bird species.

Visit FMR.org/springbirding to view a map of the places listed here. But don't wait too long, peak songbird migration in the metro occurs between mid-April and mid-May.

Water Action Day

continued from page 1

Our goal is for 500 people to meet with their legislators to urge them to support clean water and to then fill the Capitol Rotunda with 1,000 people for the Clean Water Rally to make sure our voices are heard.

Rally speakers will include voices from throughout Minnesota's environmental community featuring special remarks from Honor the Earth's Winona LaDuke, Vice President Walter Mondale, and former U.S. Senator Dave Durenberger. Gov. Mark Dayton has also been invited.

Winona LaDuke is an internationally renowned activist working on issues of clean water, sustainable energy and food systems. She lives and works on the White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota.

Mondale and Durenberger, a Democrat and Republican, are both strong advocates for protecting the health of the Mississippi River and represent the importance of reaching across the aisle to protect our waters, health and heritage.

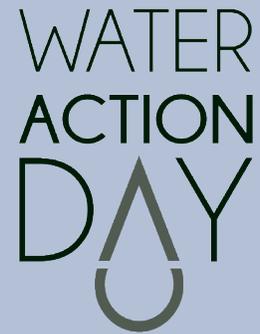


Renowned international activist Winona LaDuke will headline the Water Action Day rally in the Capitol rotunda Wednesday, April 19, 1:30 p.m. Special briefings and opportunities to meet with legislators will also be available throughout the day. Learn more and register at FMR.org/wateractionday. (Photo by Yes Magazine)

Whether red, blue, green or something in-between, now is the time to make your voice heard on behalf of Minnesota's waters.

Sign up at FMR.org/wateractionday!

Note: FMR members and supporters, look for a Water Action Day email with related opportunities to contact your legislators and participate online. Not sure if we have your email? Contact John Briel, jbriel@fmr.org.



Thank you to the 30+ partners and sponsors working hard to make Water Action Day possible:

1 Mississippi, Alliance for Sustainability, Anglers for Habitat, Audubon Minnesota, Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop, Clean Water Action, Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River, Conservation Minnesota, Environment Minnesota, Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance, Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota, Friends of Pool 2, Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, Honor the Earth, Izaak Walton League, Land Stewardship Project, League of Women Voters, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, MN Environmental Partnership, MN350, MN Interfaith Power and Light, MN River Congress, New Ulm Area Sports Fishermen, Save Our Sky Blue Waters, Save the Boundary Waters, Sierra Club North Star Chapter, St. Croix River Association, Sunnyside Marina (St. Croix River), WaterLegacy

Welcome, Daurius!

With so much energy, enthusiasm and experience, Daurius Mikroberts is already making an impact as FMR's new outreach assistant, both in the office and at our outdoor volunteer and education events.

Hailing from St. Paul's East Side, Daurius discovered his love of the outdoors and the natural world through the Boy Scouts. Now he majors in biology at St. Paul College and enjoys introducing and engaging others in environmental stewardship.

Daurius previously led youth groups on educational Mississippi River canoe trips with the National Park Service and assisted with volunteer coordination, community outreach and event planning at Great River Greening.

Be sure to say hello to Daurius at Water Action Day, the Earth Day cleanup or our other spring events! (See insert or FMR.org/events.)



Daurius Mikroberts is the newest member of the FMR outreach team. The crew of four coordinates roughly 200 outings and public events annually for approximately 5,000 people. (Photo by Anna Botz)

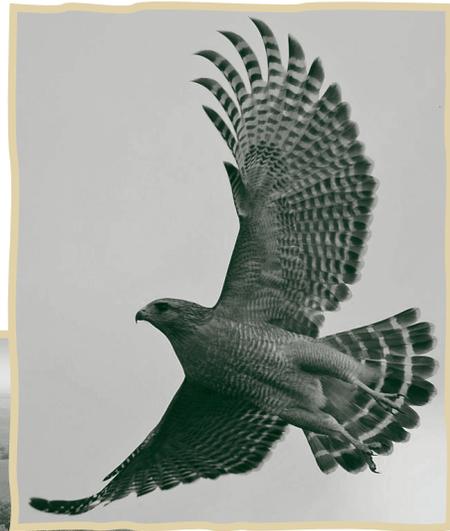
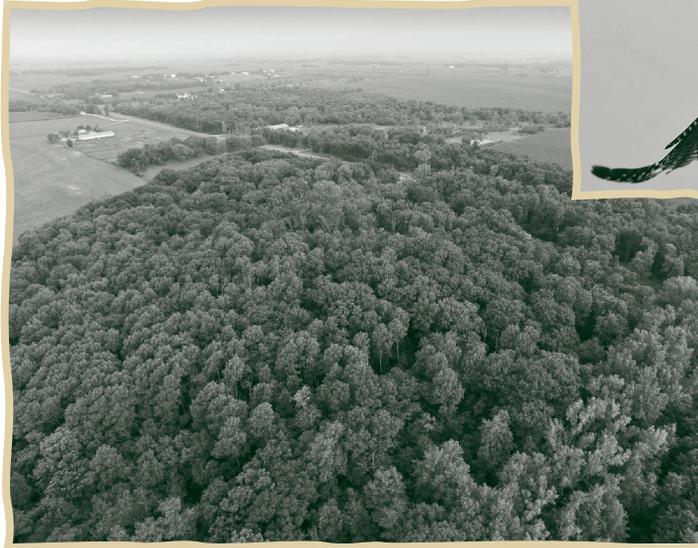
Hampton Woods

continued from page 1

Woods with a history

Located roughly a half-hour southeast of St. Paul, the forest is reminiscent of the Big Woods that once covered much of central Minnesota. As settlers transformed the surrounding prairie into farmsteads, they relied on the forest for timber and firewood.

Originally, the woods were communally owned, split between several local farm families. Over the years, many woodlots were transferred or consolidated. Eventually, Ed Kuntz, an avid birdwatcher, came to own much of the site. His son Greg has been working with FMR's conservation staff since 2012 exploring options to permanently protect it.



Hampton Woods is an oasis of habitat rising up from the farmfields, and part of an evolving green corridor that will ultimately connect to the nearby Vermillion River and the Mississippi at Hastings. (Aerial photo by Tom Reiter)

A number of forest-dwelling birds rely on the woods, including several species in decline, like the ovenbird, blue-winged warbler, rose-breasted grosbeak and red-shouldered hawk (above).

“Our father Ed always had an attraction to the woods,” said Greg Kuntz. “He loved the trees and animals and birds that lived in them. Our family is very happy that the same things our father loved will be able to still be there.”

Partnering for protection

FMR brought the Kuntz family and other local property owners together with our longtime land protection partners, Dakota County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Al Singer, Dakota County's land conservation manager, said the site had long been a top priority, describing it as one of the highest-quality natural areas remaining in the county.

After it was purchased with funding from Dakota County, Minnesota's Outdoor Heritage Fund, and the FMR River Lands Legacy Fund, Hampton Woods was transferred to the state Department of Natural Resources. The DNR recently designated it a Wildlife Management Area, meaning it will be managed for hunting, trapping and wildlife-watching activities.

To date, just over half of the larger forest (214 of 420 acres) has been purchased and FMR continues to work with nearby landowners to expand the protected area.

FMR is also working with the DNR to restore the woods to

preserve the habitat they provide. Funded by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, the restoration will begin with removal of invasive species like European buckthorn that threaten to overtake the forest.

Creating ribbons of habitat

Hampton Woods is part of an evolving patchwork of protected areas that FMR and our conservation partners are working to bring together to form a green habitat corridor. Through adjacent protected parcels, the woods connect to the Vermillion River, which then connects to the Mississippi in Hastings.

As the metro area continues to grow, such ribbons of habitat are increasingly important for wildlife. Likewise, it's increasingly important for government agencies, nonprofits like FMR, and local landowners to pool our resources and come together to preserve our natural heritage.

We'd like to thank our members and supporters for helping to make such partnerships in preservation possible, and hope you have a chance to enjoy Hampton Woods this spring!

Hampton Woods Wildlife Management Area is not yet on the map but is located on Collier Court along the south side of East 220th Street in Hampton Township. Watch carefully for signage, which we expect to be posted by the DNR later this spring.



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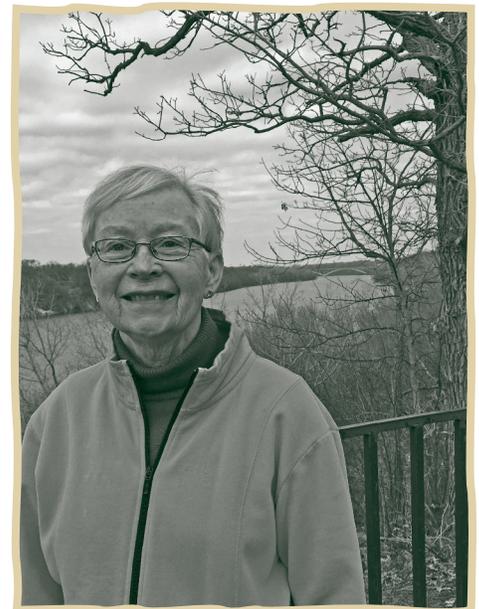
by FMR donor *Kathy Stack*

For many years I've been privileged to live on the Mississippi River. I enjoy regular outings of discovery along it with my grandchildren, treasuring its solace amidst the rush of urban life.

I feel strongly that along with this privilege comes a responsibility to protect and advocate for the river. The most effective way for me to do this has been to support FMR – undoubtedly the most powerful organization protecting the river and its watershed in the Twin Cities region.

I make an annual gift to keep FMR strong today, but because I know there will always be challenges, I also established a legacy gift by including FMR in my estate plan. My legacy gift ensures that FMR will remain an effective and powerful voice for the river for future generations.

To learn more about how you can leave a lasting legacy of river protection, contact Jeanine Holden, senior development officer, jholden@fmr.org or 651.222.2193 x22.



Longtime supporter Kathy Stack along the Mississippi River Gorge. (Photo by Jim Hudak)



Get the FMR event calendar and river news in your Inbox! Sign up for our twice-a-month e-newsletter "Mississippi Messages" at www.fmr.org.



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