

Our 25 Silver Anniversary Accomplishments

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe Friends of the Mississippi River turns 25 this year. From a handful of "river rats" who wanted everyday Twin Cities residents to have a say in important river-related decisions, we've grown to be recognized as the people's voice for the river.

Together, we've banned toxins, created new parks and raised the river's profile. No longer is the metro Mississippi seen as a convenient dumping ground, but as a treasured natural resource central to our health, economy and sense of place.

We encourage you to not only review but take pride in our achievements. From runoff pollution (especially agricultural) to ensuring that our local environmental community is





РНОТО: JIM HUDAK

Water Advocating for the health of the river's waters

- 2 Championed Minnesota's first-in-the-nation law to phase out triclosan, a cleaning additive that harms rivers, now banned by the FDA
- 3 Partnered with our local National Park Service unit to publish two editions of the "State of the River Report," an approachable, award-winning and agenda-setting report on metro river health
- 4 Successfully advocated for the state to set standards for sediment and phosphorus pollution for the metro Mississippi
- 5 Helped establish and lead the Minnesota Environmental Partnership Water Cluster, a coalition of groups that work collaboratively on Minnesota water issues
- 6 Co-created and led Water Action Day, an environmental lobby day at the Capitol involving 44 partner organizations and over a thousand participants from across the state
- 7 Co-created Minnesota's Working Lands Watershed Restoration Program, a new market-based effort to establish profitable perennial crops that benefit farmers while protecting our waters from runoff pollution

River Corridor Promoting and protecting public access, scenic views, natural and cultural features

- 8 Led the successful effort to call upon the state to create new rules to protect the metro Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area with expert and public input
- 9 Co-led the successful campaign to close the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock to prevent the upstream spread of invasive Asian carp
- 10 Helped prevent over a dozen riverfront development projects that would have dramatically degraded the river's health and scenic beauty
- 11 Engaged communities to plan for new parks, trails, economic development and neighborhood access along the river in North and Northeast Minneapolis (much of which is now coming to fruition)
- 12 Established the rapidly growing River Guardians program to help people more easily and quickly speak up for the metro Mississippi
- 13 Recognized as the voice for the river regarding new metro river corridor development and redevelopment



truly welcoming to all, regardless of race, class, gender or origin, our challenges are many. But with strength and persistence, I've been amazed at what we can do.

Thank you. I look forward to our next 25 years of working together for the river—for our communities, our waters and our wildlife.





Whether you're a longtime member or new to FMR, you are part of our biggest accomplishment yet:

1) Building a strong community of supporters to protect, restore and enhance our metro Mississippi River.





Land Protection Protecting and enhancing important habitat and special places

- 14 Permanently protected 2,044 acres at 30 sites in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and led the establishment of seven new Scientific and Natural Areas and wildlife preserves
- 15 Founded the Metro Conservation Corridors Partnership, a coordinated strategic effort to protect a series of connected habitat corridors throughout the metro
- 16 Co-led the first successful countywide open space bond referendum campaign to create the Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas Program
- 17 Restored 2,500 acres at 62 sites to healthier and more diverse native habitat
- 18 Provided habitat for 102 breeding bird species, including 24 Species of Greatest Conservation Concern, and protected 565 acres of habitat for pollinator species at risk of extinction
- 19 Developed natural resource management plans for 9,321 acres at 86 sites to help state, county, city corporate, and academic institutions manage their lands for the health of our waters and wildlife

Stewardship Fostering and supporting our river stewardship ethic

- 20 Created the River Gorge Stewards, a model for engagement that has since grown into a series of community stewards programs reaching from Elk River to Hastings
- 21 Worked with over 51,000 participants who contributed 315,500 hours to restore and protect the metro Mississippi and its watershed
- 22 Engaged nearly 23,000 participants in 520 educational events that foster and support a river stewardship
- 23 Worked with 32,000 volunteers, primarily youth, to stencil 54,036 storm drains—educating residents about our impact on the river while supporting the next generation of river stewards
- 24 Co-launched the innovative Stream Health Evaluation Program, where local volunteers produce professionalgrade, agency-accepted water quality results
- 25 Built strong, long-term collaborations that now include over 90 partners, funders, schools and other organizations to engage local metro communities in the care of their river

WATER

On the porch of a Twin Cities home a quarter-century ago a modest gathering of people decided that residents should have a stronger voice in government decisions that impact the health of our metro Mississippi, and FMR was born.

Since then, we've developed a strong network of local and national water quality experts, government agencies, communities and individuals to weigh in and shape policies that support a cleaner, healthier Mississippi River.



"This is what we need if we are going to engage our legislators and make strides in water policy in Minnesota."

 Ann Bancroft, renowned educator and explorer, on the importance of Water Action Day and FMR's work to engage everyday Minnesotans to protect our rivers Through such partnerships, FMR's Water Program has enjoyed many victories, like the banning of triclosan, an ineffective antibacterial that turned into cancercausing dioxin in the river, now banned by the FDA. And through our "State of the River" reports and lead role in Minnesota Environmental Partnership's water cluster, we've long played a fundamental and ongoing (although often behind-the-scenes) role in setting Minnesota's clean water agenda.

In 2017, years of effort to strengthen residents' voice in the health of our metro river culminated into a crescendo, with the first-ever Water Action Day filling the halls of the Minnesota State Capitol and the creation and dramatic growth of our River Guardians program.

Filling the Capitol

"Water Action Day was awesome!" says renowned educator and explorer Ann Bancroft. Ann spoke to and inspired over a thousand Minnesotans who filled the Capitol rotunda to rally for clean water at the inaugural Water Action Day in April 2017.

Participants came from throughout the state to join the rally—which featured Bancroft as well as Winona LaDuke and Gov. Mark Dayton amongst others, attend special training sessions and make sure their representatives knew not only how important clean water was to them, but how they could help.

"This is what we need if we are going to engage our legislators and make strides in water policy in Minnesota," says Ann. "I am so glad FMR got it [Water Action Day] off the ground."

During the spring 2017 (and 2018!) Water Action Day events, many participants learned about and in turn educated their legislators about lower-profile but high-



Cole and Bryan Williams are active River Guardians, and volunteer with their children, Viktor and Veda, to restore habitat with FMR.

impact problems, like agricultural runoff—the biggest source of pollution to the metro river today—and the need to preserve and protect Minnesota's groundwater supply, which, it turns out, isn't bottomless after all. Understanding and addressing such core issues, says Ann, is fundamental to real change.

In addition to protecting rules put into place by Gov. Mark Dayton that called for strips of grass or perennials to buffer or reduce fertilizer-rich runoff from farm fields into our waterways, many Water Action Day participants urged their legislators to support a pair of innovative agricultural diversification initiatives known as Forever Green and the Working Lands Watershed and Restoration Program.

Water Program staff and River Guardians successfully secured further funding for these FMR-supported efforts to develop markets for perennial crops and winter annuals—a long-term approach that could significantly impact how we as an agricultural state manage our natural resources while supporting our rural economies.

River Guardians on the rise

In addition to advocating for clean water during Water Action Day, FMR's growing base of River Guardians took action throughout the year.

River Guardians speak up on behalf of the Mighty Mississippi by contacting their representatives, something FMR program staff strive to make as easy as possible, says FMR Policy Advocate Alicia Uzarek.

In 2017, the first full year of the program, River Guardians sent over 2,600 messages to elected decisionmakers. Plus, there were six times as many River Guardians at the close of 2017 than in the beginning of the year. Now, in spring 2018, we're up to 1,600 active Guardians and counting.

Today, the highly responsive group quickly mobilizes in response to urgent water quality and policy needs. While much of the interaction is online, occasional happy hours and special events help knit together the community.

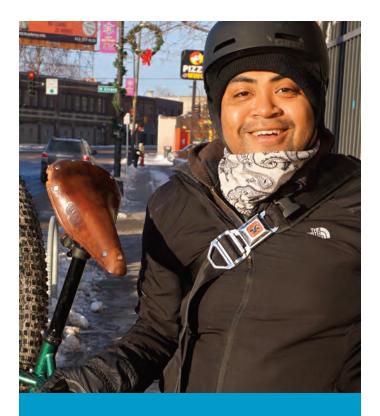
Says Guardian Anne Sherve-Ose, "River Guardians share my exact sentiments on the values of a happy, healthy Mississippi. They make it easy to change my feelings into actions."

RIVER CORRIDOR

ere in the Twin Cities, the Mississippi River passes over the river's only waterfall and grows up into the bluff-lined floodplain river known around the world.

With a river this majestic, who should be allowed a path to walk it? Which people should be allowed to look upon its healing beauty? *Everyone deserves this*, we answer resoundingly!

The river belongs to all of us, and it takes many voices to protect such a special place.



Our River Corridor Program is powered by community members. Alexis Pennie (above) serves on the Above the Falls Citizen Advisory Committee. Together, we're enhancing and improving access to North and Northeast Minneapolis, improved pedestrian and bike trails included.

Ensuring access to the Mighty Mississippi is a pillar of FMR's River Corridor Program, as are preserving scenic views, historically significant sites and natural areas, and ensuring that development fits our river landscape.

Changing the river rules

When Minnesota adopted new and improved rules governing metro land use and development along the Mississippi at the tail end of 2016, we cheered. While imperfect, the rules (long sought by FMR) call for exactly the sorts of protections and nuanced approach to riverfront development envisioned by FMR's founders 25 years ago.

In 2017 we also introduced our new River Guardians program to make it easier for everyday residents to advocate for the river, both at the legislature and in their community. Throughout the year, the River Guardians took off, growing from a handful of participants to 1,600 and counting today.

Now, it's all coming together.

In 2018, the 25 metro riverfront cities and townships must identify their valued views and parks and rewrite their river corridor plans and zoning in accordance with the new state rules.

And it is our privilege to bring River Guardians and other community advocates together with city planners and officials—via letters, public testimony and direct conversations—to make the most of these new rules to protect our river corridor.

Expanding our reach

While the new rules are a major victory, their reach is not all-encompassing. The banks of North and Northeast Minneapolis have long been home to industry, with fewer of the parks and trails that grace the rest of the city.



FMR volunteers helped install this pollinator prairie habitat at Ole Olson Park in North Minneapolis.

The new rules alone can't reverse these land uses, but, with a little support, community members can.

Nearly 20 years ago, the Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee, or AFCAC, was formed. Their charge, says Mary Jamin Maguire, an original and current member of the citizen-led group, is to "create and connect paths and natural green areas in North and Northeast Minneapolis and extend this use to the public."

FMR has been involved in the committee since the beginning, says Maguire. And over the years, our work together has taken many forms.

Since, the city closed its port, Upper Harbor Terminal, and we successfully advocated to close St. Anthony Falls Lock to prevent the upstream spread of invasive carp.

These changes reduced the riverfront's attractiveness to industry. And, over the past few years the park board has been acquiring formerly industrial land to expand what's now known as Above the Falls Regional Park.

Today, the committee (FMR staff included) meets monthly to discuss new and potential projects, including transforming the former city port into riverfront parkland and community-benefitting development, plus new parks, pedestrian paths and even a lookout pier.

Alexis Pennie, a newer AFCAC member, enthusiastically recounts the myriad projects in the works, and is also quick to remind everyone of the need to better connect such amenities with the surrounding neighborhoods, especially North Minneapolis, long separated from its riverfront by Interstate 94.

To hear community members' ideas to improve one of the main paths over the interstate to the river, FMR hosted two North Minneapolis walks to the river in 2017.

Many community members were surprised the river was so close to home, said FMR Policy Advocate Alicia Uzarek, and they suggested adding benches, shade trees, planters, pedestrian-scale decorative lighting and a sound and wind barrier to make the route (along Dowling Avenue) more welcoming.

In 2018, FMR is partnering with local organizations to make these ideas reality.

Whether reconnecting to our urban riverfront or preserving our river corridor's majestic bluffs and forests, we look forward to our next 25 years of working with community members to protect our metro Mississippi and make sure it's accessible to all.

LAND PROTECTION

You have a free afternoon. You need to stay close, but would love to find a nature getaway that feels far away.

You pull up a map and see some larger patches of green. Just south and east of St. Paul, there's Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area. A little farther south, the Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Area. Head the other way, northwest, and another natural area beckons—the W.H. Houlton Conservation Area at the confluence of the Elk and Mississippi rivers.



Many native and rare species, like this loggerhead shrike, find habitat in our metro river corridor thanks to FMR's conservation team, partners and volunteers. Whichever you choose, be ready to be delighted—these sites shelter plants, animals and river views seldom found in a metropolitan area. And they are just three of the 37 "green areas" on the map where the FMR Conservation Program has played a pivotal role.

For over 20 years, the FMR conservation team has been bringing people together to protect and restore roughly 2,050 acres, in urban and suburban areas of the Twin Cities metro—providing habitat for wildlife and respite for us humans.

Creating links

Known for its woodlands, wetlands, savanna and bluff prairie, not to mention its stunning river valley views, the 256-acre Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area in Inver Grove Heights is beloved to metro nature lovers.

It's hard to believe this natural treasure may not have been protected from urban sprawl. In 2002, FMR connected landowners and government agencies to plan, protect and designate the initial SNA. Since, FMR has continued to build relationships with local landowners and agencies to expand and restore the preserve, which now provides secure habitat in an important part of the Mississippi River flyway.

"It was a trust level. Everybody looking out for everybody. It was a team," says landowner Ruth Rechtzigel, who worked with FMR's conservation team and public partners to join 87 acres of her property to the SNA in 2011.

FMR Conservation Director Betsy Daub says this team aspect is essential.

"Making ecologically meaningful linkages requires working with a wide array of landowners—homeowners and family farms, municipalities and state and federal government, corporations and universities," says Betsy. "FMR is the catalyst for partnerships and conversations



FMR restores habitat throughout the metro. Above, volunteers help clear out invasive species along the river in Cottage Grove.

among these entities. This allows conservation to happen."

Essential habitat

Home to 14 rare plant and animal species, the 236acre Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Area just south of Hastings contains the largest native prairie in Dakota County.

Its waving prairie grasses and wildflowers weren't protected until 2007, when FMR again served as conservation catalyst, connecting landowners and public agencies.

FMR Senior Ecologist Karen Schik began working with the city to restore native habitat in city-owned parts of the coulee in 2005.

"It's always a delight to visit," she says, "because you never know what you will find— badgers, coyotes, loggerhead shrike, bull snakes or an amazing variety of priarie wildflowers."

Our biggest transformation yet

At the opposite end of the metro, the first prairie wildflowers in over 100 years are sprouting at the former Houlton farm—our largest prairie reconstruction project to date.

Located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Elk rivers, the 335-acre W.H. Houlton Conservation Area opened in 2016. FMR helped broker the connections to preserve it, and is leading the restoration of its floodplain forests and transformation of its riverfront farm fields into prairie.

At our inaugural volunteer habitat restoration event in February 2017 more than 40 souls braved the cold to pile and burn invasive brush to make way for native species, including Michael Schroeder, a conservation steward for the City of Elk River and chair of the Sherburne County Soil and Water Conservation District.

"FMR's help has been critical from the beginning," says Schroeder. "Without FMR, the property would not be in the stage of restoration that it is currently in, and it would not be headed in this direction."

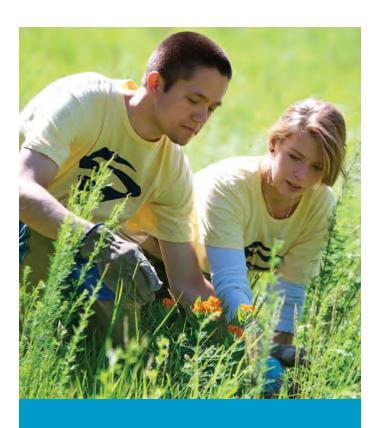
We look forward to seeing the first prairie plants flowering in the 160 acres of former soybean fields this spring and summer, and native shrubs and wildflowers are already returning to the forest understory.

To see this young prairie, directions to Houlton, or any other of our 37 restoration sites in the metro, including many within Minneapolis and St. Paul, please visit fmr.org/conservationmap.

STEWARDSHIP

t takes a village to steward a river, and through volunteer and educational programming the FMR village has been growing steadily for 25 years.

Since 2000 we've been proud to engage over 51,000 participants in activities to restore and protect the river. In 2017, our stewardship team held over 220 events, presentations and outings, involving 5,185 participants. For many, FMR events are their first foray into the environmental arena, helping to forge a lasting connection to our Mighty Mississippi.



"By teaching people about local ecology with hands-on work, FMR really motivates people to see the river as important in a fundamental way."

—Allan Tokuda, pictured with his partner and fellow FMR Super Volunteer Stacy Enzmann

Entry point

It was an event flyer at the University of Minnesota that sparked the interest of Allan Tokuda and Stacy Enzmann. Three years ago, the couple registered for their first habitat restoration event, a Riverside Park buckthorn removal. Now they're FMR members, advocates (a.k.a. River Guardians) and Super Volunteers.*

"By teaching people about local ecology with hands-on work, FMR really motivates people to see the river as important in a fundamental way," says Allan. "Where before it could just be a flower, when you get down on your knees and work, you're invested—it becomes more beautiful as you learn the name of the plant and why it is important."

Through volunteering, says Stacy, the couple has gotten to know beautiful riverfront areas they hadn't realized were so close to home. They enjoy showing their favorite hidden gems, especially the rare oak savanna near West 36th and River Parkway in Minneapolis, to friends, family and neighbors.

The oak savanna happens to be FMR's first volunteer-powered habitat restoration site, part of our inaugural stewardship program, the River Gorge Stewards in south Minneapolis and western St. Paul. Created in 2005, the program offers evening and weekend events that allow everyday people to assist in important ecological restoration work while learning to care for the river in their own backyard.

Now there are Stewards programs for Above the Falls in North and Northeast Minneapolis, Indian Mounds Park in eastern St. Paul, River Oaks Park and other restoration sites in Cottage Grove, along the Vermillion River tributary in Dakota and Scott counties, and Pine Bend Scientific and Natural Area in Inver Grove Heights.

"Volunteers definitely help stretch limited resources



Artist Gustavo Lira (left) and FMR Youth Coordinator Kate Clayton (right) at St. Paul's first mural for water quality.

and expand our reach," says FMR Volunteer Coordinator Amy Kilgore.

Stacy agrees, noting that "Not only are we taking care of spots that FMR picked out, but also our own land. And our involvement inspires others to get involved."

The next generation

Since 2000, FMR has been stenciling St. Paul storm drains primarily with school and youth groups. Some 950 outings and 30,950 participants later, many young adults in the Twin Cities today first made the connection between our streets, backyards and the health of our river by marking storm drains with the educational message: "Keep 'em Clean, Drains to River!"

Over the last few years, our work with youth has expanded to integrate schools in St. Paul, Elk River and Hastings with nearby FMR habitat restoration projects, allowing youth to grow and learn in a living laboratory.

On St. Paul's East Side, FMR has been working with Harding High Earth Club to restore Indian Mounds Park and Willowbrook natural area.

Like Allan, Earth Club participant Vue Pao Her says he likes "getting to know about plants, both invasive and native, where they came from and their names."

Vue and the club put this plant knowledge to good use, developing research plots to study which invasive plant removal methods and native seed mixes worked best in Willowbrook's floodplain forest floor. Their findings—that wild rye, a native grass, performed exceptionally well—help to inform and guide FMR's larger restoration efforts.

New directions

In 2017, the outreach team ventured into more new territory, working with artist Gustavo Lira and St. Paul's Como Park community to install a stunning street mural connecting our actions and our waters.

The mural's colorful clean water message depicts snapping turtles, fish and birds whirling in wide swaths of brilliant blue water, and is currently on display along Como Lake (near Lakeview Avenue West) for your enjoyment.

"Art is a powerful tool for social and environmental change and education," says Gustavo.

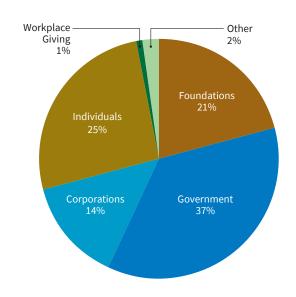
We couldn't agree more. Look for a second clean-water mural in 2018!

*Super Volunteers contribute 20 hours or more over the course of a year.

2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

Revenue Report*

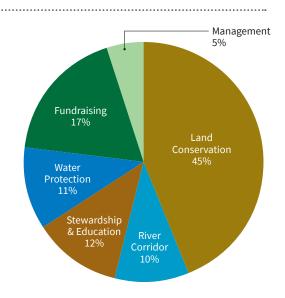
Total Revenue	\$2,239,309
Other	39,981
Workplace Giving	29,686
Individuals	559,124
Corporations	313,615
Government	822,472
Foundations	\$474,431



Expense Report*

Programs

Land Conservation	\$999,386
River Corridor	219,443
Stewardship & Education	265,782
Water Protection	244,618
Fundraising	368,710
Management	122,809
Total Expenses	\$2,220,748



Balance Sheet**

Assets Liabilities & Net Assets

Total	\$1,946,543	Total	\$1,946,543
Fixed & Other Assets	655,318	Net Assets	1,789,050
Current Assets	\$1,291,225	Current Liabilities	\$157,493

^{*}Calendar-year 2017 unrestricted amounts **Includes both restricted and unrestricted amounts at 12/31/2017

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.

Mary Adamski Claire Anderson Laurie Anderson Jason Anderson Amy Anderson John Anfinson Nate Arthur Gary Averbeck Joe Beattie Rachel Beise Fred Bertschinger Michele Bevis Michael Bischoff Barbara Bor Anna Botz **Ronnie Brooks** Laurie Bruno Ralph Butkowski

Elizabeth Carls **Edward Carroll** Alexandra Carroll Jeanne Caturia Crystal Colby Mulry Lindsay Coleman **Stewart Crosby** Joshua Davis **Chad Dayton** James Dorsev Annie Dubner George Dunn Gary Ellis Stacy Enzmann Ted Ericson Jeff Evans Forrest Flint Alex Franzen Valerie Galajda Barbara Ann Gibson Julie Glanton Peter Gove Linda Grundtner Michael Hagedorn Diane Herman

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Bea Schneider

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Friends of the Mississippi River extends our deepest thanks to everyone that made a contribution in 2017. You are our inspiration and the driving force that makes our work possible. Together, we're protecting, restoring and e nhancing 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 2017 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.

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