



Friends of the Mississippi River

Working to protect the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities area

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Spring 2006

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Stormwater comes out of the closet

How a local problem is becoming a resource and a chance to "do development right" in the Vermillion watershed

By Dave Dempsey

Once upon a time stormwater was a problem that shamed communities.

The product of rains and rapid snowmelts in urban areas, it collected oil, grease, phosphorus, sediments, metals, chemicals and other pollutants from roofs, sidewalks and streets, and was something to be caught like a bandit, rounded up in an artificial pond and flushed away as quickly as possible.

Now stormwater – one of the remaining challenges to the clean water dreams of Mississippi River Basin residents as well as the nation at large – has the potential to become a community asset and actually increase residential property values.

Vermillion River communities in the south metro could become one of the first watersheds in the area to formally embrace stormwater as a community asset, while protecting the health of local groundwater and the river, by adopting development standards that learn from and harness nature's wisdom.

"What comes off a parking lot in Apple Valley can turn up in a drinking water tap in Hastings," observes FMR Watershed Program Director Dan Huff, emphasizing that waters from the Vermillion River actually feed (and can pollute) groundwater that serves as the drinking water source for the city of Hastings, as well as many other city and private residential wells throughout the watershed. "How we treat stormwater can greatly affect human health. And we know now we can treat it in ways that enhance neighborhoods and communities as a whole. Why don't we make that the standard instead of an exception?"

What Is 'Natural Stormwater Management'?

One of the primary techniques in a new school of design called "low impact development," or LID, natural stormwater management is a term referring to approaches that:

- Use soil and vegetation to mimic natural hydrological processes, like filtering through soil and evaporating into air.
- Minimize or disconnect paved surfaces through the use of narrower streets, rain barrels and permeable paving that allows water to infiltrate.
- Preserve natural features such as floodplains through the use of vegetation that can slow, filter and store runoff.



Rain gardens, like this one in Burnsville, are planted in a shallow depression with native vegetation to capture runoff and draw out pollutants. Photo: Barr Engineering

Huff is enthusiastic about the environmental and economic benefits for the Vermillion watershed if its Joint Powers Organization (JPO) sets enforceable standards to require effective "bioretention" (natural stormwater techniques) with new

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Mission

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) advocates a new vision for the Mississippi, especially the river and its watershed in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Through active leadership and education, FMR seeks to preserve and restore the river's fish and wildlife, its vital floodplains and scenic bluffs, its natural and cultural treasures, its beauty and its romance. We envision a river on which small boats are safe and welcome, to which we have clear and easy access and in which we can safely swim and fish. We envision a river that is cleaner, healthier, more alive and more inviting, a river no one can ignore or take for granted.

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From the Director

Mark Twain once said, "If you can't be a good example, then you'll just have to be a horrible warning." And I was thinking about that idea recently with respect to the good citizens of the Vermillion River watershed who just may be the good example if we play our cards right (see also the cover story on page one.)

Residents of the Hastings area have recently received a rude awakening. Pesticides, pharmaceuticals and nitrates have contaminated some of the wells that supply their homes with drinking water. Even more disturbing, the source of the contamination is, at least in part, the Vermillion River. Unfortunately, polluted ground and surface waters are not unique to the Hastings area, and this community's story is an emerging issue that will be repeated over and over in communities throughout the region until we begin to realize that what we do on the land affects the quality of our waters and the health of our citizens.

In survey after survey, Minnesota residents overwhelmingly say that protecting water quality is one of their top concerns. At Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR), we are rolling up our sleeves to see if it is possible to turn this latent public opinion into changes in how we protect and manage our water resources, especially at the local level.

What is interesting (and I think fortuitous) is that most of the important decisions that affect water quality are made at the local level. Because land use is the most critical variable in determining water quality, it is our local planning commissions, city councils and watershed management authorities that have the most direct influence over the health of our water.

Embedded in the perhaps mundane agendas of these local governments are decisions that can have a permanent positive or negative impact on water quality. Where will new developments occur? How protective will new development standards for managing runoff be? What does



Whitney Clark, *Executive Director*

a community's comprehensive plan say about protecting sensitive areas like wetlands, shorelands and groundwater recharge zones?

What's good is that these are not far-off, hard-to-reach bodies made up of professional politicians. These are neighbors and community members who are listening to the concerns of their constituents and who are open to trying new ideas. To a very large extent, if we want clean water these folks can give it to us, but we've got to start asking.

At the heart of FMR's approach is engaging local citizens in these critical decisions. People may care a lot about protecting water quality but their lives are busy, they're not necessarily experts and they don't have the time to research the issues and follow all the local decisions. What they *will* do is write a letter or make a phone call to their city council member or attend a public hearing, if we provide the necessary information.



Citizen volunteers planting wetlands in the Vermillion watershed.

In two carefully selected sub-watersheds in the Twin Cities area, FMR is actively connecting local citizens to watershed issues by organizing stewardship activities such as stream and wetland health monitoring, river clean-ups and streambank restoration and re-vegetation. In 2005, FMR engaged more than 3,380 people in stewardship activities. These are folks who now have a better feel for their local water resources because they've waded into them!

Will the citizens and their representatives in the Vermillion River watershed use this opportunity to set a shining example of innovation and responsiveness in the face of a very serious issue or will they stay the current course and allow history to serve them up as a horrible warning? Stay tuned.

Program Highlights

Transforming a landscape: Pine Bend Bluffs SNA

If you haven't visited the Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) in the last year, you are in for a big surprise. The 70-acre section of the SNA adjacent Highway 52 has changed in dramatic and wonderful ways.

Removal of exotic shrubs has revealed beautiful vistas and hidden features. A previously hidden pond has now become a central feature, released from the bondage of a dense and impenetrable honeysuckle thicket. The eastern side of the pond is again taking on the appearance of its historic savanna character. A walk along the ridgetop on the eastern edge of the old field in the middle of the site now affords clear views into the beautiful oak forest, revealing steep, dissected ravines and fern-covered slopes. The entire western side of the site offers new views of ancient spreading oak trees and rolling hills.

The long-term plan for the site is to improve and maintain the woodland areas and to restore the old field and some of the western areas to oak savanna. Towards that end, FMR is restoring a two-acre portion of the old field to mesic prairie. Oak trees will eventually be added to achieve the oak savanna. Because this is a Scientific and Natural Area, we use only seed collected from

within 25 miles of the site to ensure the vegetation will readily adapt and flourish. Since such seed is not commercially available, it must be collected by hand.

Nearly 200 very hard-working, dedicated volunteers participated in six events over the last year to make this happen; they learned the fine art of collecting prairie seed, pulling garlic mustard, raking fire breaks and stacking and burning brush.

In 2006 our efforts continue. This spring, the two-acre prairie will be seeded. Fire – one of the most important components of these plant communities, and which has been absent for many decades – will be re-introduced to the site. Much of the oak forest and old field will be burned to reduce exotic species like garlic mustard and buckthorn, and to re-invigorate native species. In early June, we hope to have many dozens of volunteers to help pull garlic mustard in the oak forest. We will also recruit and train volunteers for more seed collection.

We extend our deepest thanks to all the volunteers, contractors and funders who have helped restore this site and make our work possible.



Before and after photos show the change in habitat and view after a dense and impenetrable honeysuckle thicket was removed from this property at Pine Bend Bluffs SNA. The beautiful, once-hidden pond is now clearly visible and native vegetation will thrive in the newly liberated space. Photos by Karen Schik.

FMR Stewards programs expanding

The popular and effective Mississippi River Gorge Stewards has served as a model for the Vermillion Stewards program, successfully launched last summer in the Vermillion River watershed. This year we look forward to expanding both programs, engaging even more citizens in these neighborhood-based programs.

The Gorge Stewards project began in 2001 in the Longfellow neighborhood in Minneapolis. FMR collaborates with local residents, neighborhood organizations, park agencies and other natural resource organizations to plan and carry out activities that promote long-term stewardship, such as removing invasive plant species and planting native varieties, cleaning up trash and learning about the gorge and its value to the community.

The program has expanded nearly fourfold over the last five years to include the Seward, Prospect Park, Marcy Holmes and West Bank neighborhoods in Minneapolis, along with the Merriam Park, Macalester-Groveland and Highland Park neighborhoods in St. Paul.

FMR's Vermillion Stewards program, launched in early 2005 with support from the Vermillion River Watershed Joint

Powers Organization (VRWJPO), engaged citizens of Dakota and eastern Scott counties in protecting and enhancing the Vermillion River watershed. The stewards program successfully involved 230 citizens in a series of stewardship and educational events.

There's much to look forward to in 2006 as the stewards programs grow and flourish. The Vermillion Stewards has new funding partners including REI and the Beim Foundation, as well as increased support from the VRWJPO. By building new partnerships with funders and expanding community connections, the Vermillion Stewards program will provide even more opportunities to learn about and improve the health of the Vermillion watershed.

The Gorge Stewards project is also seeing increased support this year from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization and the Minnesota DNR, and a grant from Patagonia, offering even more river stewardship projects in its expanded project area.

For information on stewardship opportunities, please contact:

Vermillion Stewards
Katie Galloway at
651/222-2193 x14 or
kgallowa@fmr.org

Gorge Stewards
Elizabeth Storey at
651/222-2193 x16 or
estorey@fmr.org

Thanks to 2005 Volunteers

Volunteers play an integral role in supporting the work of Friends of the Mississippi River. FMR volunteers are involved in every facet of our work and it is their contributions and wide-ranging talents that help make our river protection efforts a success.

This year FMR engaged a total of 3,500 volunteers, who contributed nearly 13,000 hours of their time to projects such as habitat restoration, storm drain stenciling, Gorge and Vermillion Stewards activities, and our Mississippi River Challenge. Volunteers also provided valuable assistance out of the field, with such work as office tasks, research and writing.

To all of our volunteers, a sincere thank you from all of us at Friends of the Mississippi River – your commitment and contributions are invaluable in helping to support our mission of protecting the Mississippi River. Thank you for your continued support and dedication. We look forward to working with you throughout the year and hope to see you at some of our spring events!

Program Updates

FMR helps “Close the Canopy”

In 2005, partners in the Metropolitan Conservation Corridors project, including FMR, received a grant to improve neotropical migratory bird habitat at key sites by increasing canopy coverage and other important habitat components.

Other partners included the Department of Natural Resources and Great River Greening, and the project was funded by the Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership – Neotropical Migratory and Forest Bird Habitat Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

FMR has been working at two private properties in Rosemount and Hastings to improve bird habitat on the land. Both properties are about five or more acres of oak forest and have retained many components of the native plant community, but both were degraded by dense infestations of exotic shrubs. Both properties are also located within a much larger greenway corridor, which includes the Mississippi River.

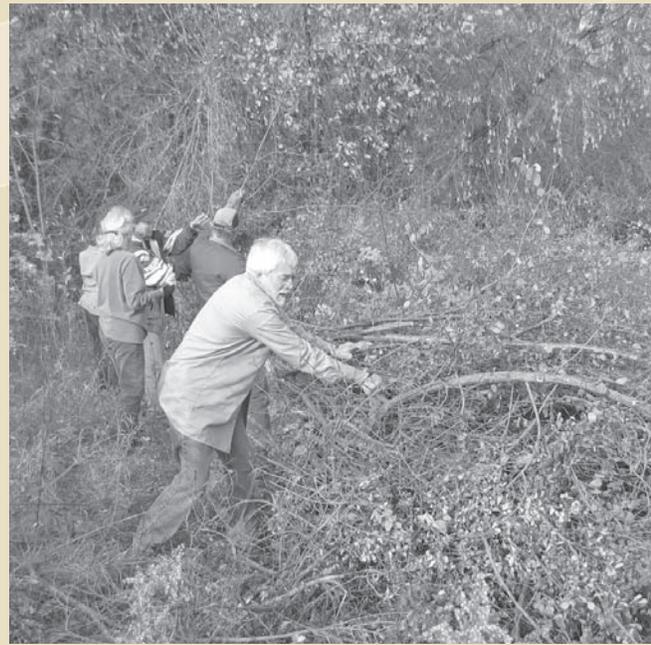
The basic plan for both properties was similar – remove exotic woody species and restore the native complement of woodland plant species. Removal at both sites was a wholesale, one-week intensive effort by crews from Prairie Restorations, who cut and burned the brush, and treated cut stumps with herbicide. To minimize the use of chemicals for follow-up work, the Rosemount site was burned in fall, 2005. Millions of buckthorn seedlings succumbed to the flames, and fire, that all-important component of the plant community, was returned after a long absence.

Vermillion Watershed standards coming together

For over two years, FMR has been closely involved in planning for the Vermillion River watershed, and a ten-year comprehensive plan to guide development in the watershed was adopted last November. The plan outlines ways for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization to improve the river through incentives and capital projects and to protect it through regulation. A framework of regulatory standards and rules is currently in the works.

As part of these standards, FMR and other conservation groups are pushing for a rule that requires establishing a vegetated buffer or protected greenspace along all streams and tributaries of the Vermillion when new development occurs. In order to be effective in protecting water quality and wildlife habitat, buffers must be 100 feet wide. We are also promoting stormwater standards that protect the river from the increased volume of polluted runoff from houses, streets and parking lots during rainstorms. For example, FMR is encouraging the use of innovative stormwater management techniques, such as rain gardens, that reduce the quantity and improve the quality of stormwater runoff.

The Vermillion Standards should be completed in early summer.



Volunteers stack brush cleared from an overgrown property in Rosemount. The brush and cleared area was then burned to make way for native species to take root.

This site was hardly recognizable by the end of the year. What had appeared before only as a wall of buckthorn had been transformed into an open woodland, with deep views of the rolling woods, two ponds and large old oak trees. The other site was equally spectacular, with new views of the Mississippi River suddenly apparent.

It appears our efforts have already paid off, based on a preliminary breeding-bird survey at one site in 2005. Several of the targeted bird species were present, including ovenbird, red-eyed vireo, veery, and eastern wood pewee. A yellow-billed cuckoo, a species not commonly seen, was also present.

New designs promote dialogue at River's Edge

FMR and the University of Minnesota Metropolitan Design Center teamed up again recently to take a closer look at development design within the Mississippi River Critical Area at River's Edge. On January 12, University landscape designers presented two new design concepts to a room filled with local citizens and elected officials that detailed how parks, trails, natural areas, open spaces and residential development might occur with minimal impact to the protected river corridor.

As proposed by developer D.R. Horton, River's Edge would include over 1,900 new residences in St. Paul Park and Grey Cloud Island Township, including over 650 units in the state-protected Mississippi River Critical Area. The critical area portion of the site includes a small backwater bay, oak savanna and shoreland habitat, limestone cliffs, seeps and springs, and floodplain islands on the Mississippi River.

Community members appreciated the Design Center's handiwork, and were enthused by information presented by Tom Lewanski, FMR's conservation director, about land protection

programs and funding sources available to local communities. "Finding funds to permanently protect parkland along the river is an important step in this process," said Lewanski. "The community seems very interested in pursuing this option, and we're happy to help."

A healthy dose of debate and controversy over the size and scope of this development has been underway for several years in these quiet riverfront communities. FMR is optimistic that contributing solid ideas to the dialogue will lead to a housing development and riverfront park that will respect the unique qualities of the river and the local community.

The Design Center has also shown a keen interest in the site, contributing three full weeks of work in 2005 towards this project. "The River's Edge project offered us a unique opportunity to look at a really large development on the river and find creative ways to achieve higher density while protecting the natural resources," said Ann Forsyth of the University.

Zoning on the river

The City of Saint Paul arguably has one of the most spectacular Mississippi River landscapes in the country. High on the bluff, the city overlooks the river's grand entrance from an ancient gorge to an even more ancient expansive floodplain river valley. These unique features give St. Paul a dramatic geography and firm sense of place that is celebrated by poets and builders alike.

FMR is working alongside hundreds of citizens to protect St. Paul's grand river views and scenery from being marred or blocked by the construction of tall buildings that seek to capitalize on those very same views. Protecting sense of place is a hot issue in St. Paul that heats up more with each new building proposal.

Last year, FMR worked successfully with citizens to prevent a 12-story tower from going in on the West Side Flats, and we continue to organize opposition to the controversial proposal to build 12- and 30-story towers as part of "The Bridges of St. Paul." In Merriam Park, local citizens won an appeal that knocked a 50-foot building down to 40 feet, and collected signatures to file a petition for environmental review on a proposed 7-story building on Marshall Ave that will tower over the river gorge. Many of the efforts involve working across neighborhood lines to gain broad-based citizen support for holding the line on building height in the river corridor.

The city's zoning code for the river corridor – currently being updated and which must meet state standards for the Mississippi River Critical Area – has been central to our efforts. For the past 18 months, a citizen task force has been grappling with how to codify many noble goals of the plan, such as protecting views of the river and bluffs, preserving trees and native vegetation, minimizing erosion of steep slopes, and ensuring that the river shoreline is accessible to the public. Once a document is drafted, it will be open to public comment before it goes to the city council for adoption.

If you would like to stay informed and get involved, please contact Irene Jones at 651/222-2193 x11 or ijones@fmr.org.

Dakota County tackles unseen menace

The Vermillion River can make you sick. In fact, some kayakers paddling the river have come down with an intestinal illness nicknamed the "Vermillion Flu." The culprit? Viruses and bacteria found in fecal matter, which has been found at high enough levels in the Vermillion River that the federal government has determined it is not safe for swimming. Although there are many sources of fecal contamination, including feed lots, manure application and wildlife, perhaps the most dangerous source is from failing septic systems.

Because septic systems are underground, they often go unnoticed and unchecked. Most people assume that if their toilets still flush and there is no visible seepage, their septic system is functioning properly. However, inspection is the only way to ensure that a septic system is working properly.

After the Vermillion River was listed as polluted with fecal bacteria, Dakota County and the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization began looking for solutions. They developed a septic system inspection and abatement program, hiring licensed personnel to inspect septic systems within the watershed and requiring owners of failing systems to upgrade or repair them.

Contact with untreated human waste is perhaps the largest disease-causing factor in the world. As Vermillion kayakers will tell you, this is not a problem relegated to the less developed world. The program is a great step forward to protect the river and the health of those who use it.

development. These techniques increase pollution treatment, reduce stream flooding, help sustain the river's unique urban trout fishery, beautify communities and actually cost less in maintenance over the long run. The fast-growing Vermillion watershed is not only on the brink of promulgating the new standards, but is also naturally suited to their use, according to experts.

"To me, it makes sense to maximize infiltration of stormwater in areas that have sandy soils conducive to infiltration. Many parts of the Vermillion fit that description," says Kurt Leuthold, a civil engineer who has worked for the past 18 years at

Barr Engineering of Minneapolis. Leuthold says the large proportion of sandy soils in the Vermillion watershed makes it ideal for bioretention techniques that percolate stormwater into the ground.

Bioretention is growing in popularity across the country, Leuthold says, "because it serves multiple purposes. It has been proven to be an effective stormwater management technique and at the same time it incorporates landscape materials that are good for wildlife and is visually attractive."

Gary Oberts, a senior environmental analyst for Emmons and Olivier Resources (EOR), Inc., in Oakdale, and a co-author of the new State

of Minnesota Stormwater Manual, says of the Vermillion opportunity, "The big message is that there are ways to develop that can actually protect a trout stream."

Leuthold agrees, noting that natural stormwater techniques "clean and cool runoff" – by filtering pollutants through soil, taking pollutants up in roots and discharging runoff to the ground where it cools – and can protect streams that have high-quality assets, like the Vermillion's trout waters. "You can remove up to 100% of the nutrients and sediments through infiltration," he contends.

Half a dozen watershed districts and management organizations in the region are beginning to promote so-called best management practices, or BMPs, that emphasize natural stormwater management.

BMPs, such as rain gardens, supplement, and in many cases replace, the engineered stormwater ponds with which many urban residents are familiar. A product of the 1980s, when routing stormwater quickly to artificial lagoons and then flushing it away seemed the height of pollution technology, stormwater ponds offer benefits, but are neither as effective in removing pollutants nor as attractive as lushly vegetated rain gardens.

Asked why the new natural techniques have not been previously adopted on a widespread basis despite their effectiveness, Huff says, "Stormwater ponds were what we did. Our grandparents recycled, the next generation threw everything away, and now we're getting back to recycling and waste reduction. We're now realizing the benefits of managing water the way people, and nature, did it a long time ago."

He adds, "It's like the shift from anything that's accepted to something new. Stormwater ponds were familiar and easy; they were a cookie-cutter approach. Bioretention is something different – it's more complex; it involves living organisms. It takes a while for people to adjust."

To understand how natural stormwater management could benefit communities in the Vermillion watershed, FMR asked Oberts' firm, Emmons and Olivier Resources (EOR), to do a mock-up of how standard development in Lakeville, involving retail and residential construction and a large church, would have differed had it been designed to treat stormwater with bioretention techniques.

The results were startling. "There wasn't much space to work with, and we didn't even have the best soils there," Oberts said. But the alternative design provided park space, offered links to pedes-

What Are Some Specific Natural Stormwater Management Techniques?

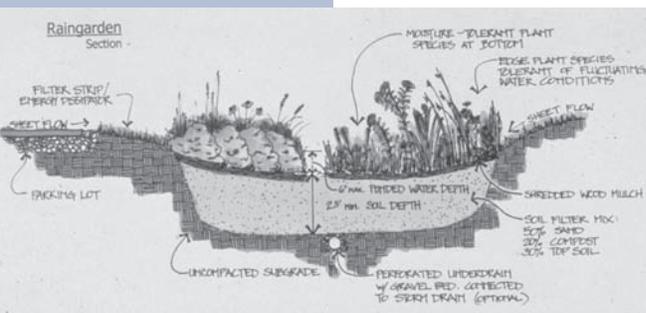
Bioretention A general term for the use of shallow depressions filled with soils or sands conducive to infiltration of water and plant growth.

Rain gardens Small areas that capture runoff and allow it to infiltrate in soils, using mostly native vegetation to take up pollutants while achieving an appealing appearance.

Urban stream buffers Strips of trees and vegetation that separate streams and rivers in urban areas from developed, usually paved areas. The trees and grasses lock soil into place, reducing erosion from stormwater runoff while filtering sediments and other pollutants, and provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

Infiltration basins Simple "end of pipe" vegetated depressions that capture and hold stormwater runoff and permit infiltration over a period of days.

Porous pavements Paved surfaces that allow water to pass through and recharge groundwater as pollutants are filtered. The four main types of porous pavement are pervious concrete, porous asphalt, grass pavers and grid pavers. Grass pavers are interlocking blocks that fit together and leave space for grass. Grid pavers use plastic material rather than blocks, and are often used on uneven surfaces because of their flexibility.



The diagram at left shows the construction of a rain garden, a natural stormwater management technique that is fast becoming popular in the Twin Cities metro area and around the country. Rain gardens are both attractive and effective at filtering stormwater runoff before it enters lakes, rivers and streams.

trian/biking trails, reduced pondage, increased native vegetation and had equal or greater developable land. Translation: developers could make more money, the city would receive greater tax revenues and residents and shoppers could enjoy a more pleasing environment while pollution was reduced.

In Burnsville, where the city (with help from a Metropolitan Council grant) and Leuthold's firm cooperated to install rain gardens in dozens of residential yards, both the environmental and the social results were pleasing. Through neighborhood meetings, project proponents successfully addressed the concerns of homeowners who worried that the rain gardens might be eyesores or cause problems like mosquito breeding, and achieved 80% participation in the project. Monitoring showed dramatic reductions in runoff volume in local storm sewers and no pondage in the yards.

Homeowners were pleased, too. "It exceeded my expectations," says Beth Mayer, whose family enjoyed their rain garden for two years before the family moved to Lakeville. It was a real enhancement aesthetically. It generally drained well. When there was a problem, the city took it very seriously. They'd come by and check. And it looked beautiful."

Mayer says there was an educational benefit to the project, too. Opting for natural vegetation in their rain garden, the Mayers learned about native perennial vegetation.

One of the pleasant surprises about bioretention techniques is that they appear to work well in winter as well as summer. Although some engineers had speculated that cold temperatures and frozen ground would limit or halt infiltration, Leuthold says real-world examples prove otherwise.

Leuthold recently inspected a metro rain garden after precipitation, a thaw and a freeze. "There was a quarter inch of ice on the top, but no water underneath. It all infiltrated," he said. "You'd expect it to be full of ice if there was no infiltration. These techniques can work year-round."

Bioretention techniques are not optimal in all areas, even in the metro, Leuthold points out. Areas with a large proportion of clay soils, which prevent or minimize infiltration, or with steep slopes, are not likely to enjoy as much success with some natural stormwater methods. And while long-term maintenance is likely to be slightly less expensive than maintenance of conventional stormwater ponds (which frequently are not maintained at all), sediments will eventually accumulate in rain gardens and need to be removed. This proves they are working, collecting sediment that would have been dumped into our rivers, lakes and streams.

But in the fast-growing Vermillion watershed, there is no question that natural stormwater techniques can work. "We have a real opportunity with areas that are not yet built," says Huff. "But the marketplace is not yet doing this. We need to put the requirements and incentives in place, through design standards, to make it happen."

Dave Dempsey is a freelance writer who has authored two books on the environmental history of the Great Lakes region.

Board Update

A warm welcome...

John Linc Stine

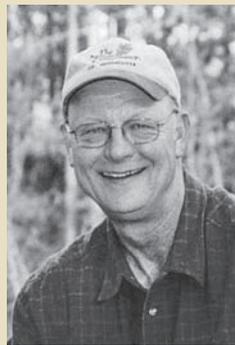
FMR is pleased to welcome John Linc Stine to its board of directors. As acting director for the Environmental Health Division of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Stine is responsible for managing the state's role in safe drinking water and well management, in assuring the environmental safety of food, beverage and lodging establishments, and other environmental health programs that address asbestos, lead and radiation.

Prior to joining the MDH, Stine spent 25 years with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, working primarily as a hydrologist specializing in water law and regulation. He was responsible for implementing zoning statutes and rules for Shoreland, Mississippi Critical Areas, Flood Plain and Wild and Scenic Rivers, as well as permits for water alterations and use throughout Minnesota.

Stine has lived in the Twin Cities his entire life. "I have always enjoyed the [Mississippi] river's natural beauty, its historic significance and its spectacular outdoor geologic classroom," he says. Stine will serve on the Policy and Planning Committee. *Welcome, John!*

And a fond farewell...

Ron Nargang



FMR bids a fond adieu to Ron Nargang as he leaves the board after seven years of excellent service, a period of rapid growth for FMR. Nargang brought extensive knowledge of Minnesota conservation and resource management issues – as well as in-depth political understanding – to the organization. He served as Chair of the Policy and Planning Committee.

Over the years, Nargang has been a key player in decision-making related to the river. Currently he is director of the Minnesota Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and previous to that he served as a deputy commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. He chaired the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) Commission, which developed the initial plan for the 72-mile stretch of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities.

Nargang's departure from the board coincides with his retirement from The Nature Conservancy, set for this summer. He joined FMR's board because of his "deep affection for the Mississippi as a river and as a resource." And we express our deep affection and gratitude to him for his considerable contribution to FMR. *Thank you, Ron!*



Mississippi River Challenge

August 5 & 6, 2006

Paddle it. Protect it.



Not too soon to start planning for this year's Minnesota Chiropractic Association Mississippi River Challenge! We are lining up sponsors (and food!), a kick-off event at Summit Brewing Company, fundraising workshops, and interpretive elements to make the event more fun than last year.

2006: a one-day paddling option to accommodate busy schedules, personal fundraising web pages, and a drawing for a Current Designs kayak or a Bell canoe when you get \$500 in pledges!

So save the date and visit the web site today to register, set up your fundraising page, and see which sponsors are on board again! Contact Kay at 651-222-2193 x19 or kyanisch@fmr.org for more information. **Happy Paddling!**



Anoka County Parks • Bending Branches
Brookdale Health • CenterPoint Energy
Current Designs/Wenonah Canoe • French Meadow Bakery and Cafe • Historic Fort Snelling
Midwest Mountaineering • Peace Coffee • Premium Waters • Sisters Sludge Coffee Cafe • Summit Brewing Company • Thousand Hills Cattle Company

www.MississippiRiverChallenge.org



Friends of the Mississippi River

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Visit FMR's web site for the most current information on events and programs... www.fmr.org

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A little goes a long way....

By giving monthly, you can now make your gifts to FMR add up and go farther for the river – both upstream and down. Take advantage of this wonderful opportunity by April 10 with a gift of \$15 per month (or more) and get a free FMR canvas tote bag or coffee mug in addition to your regular premium. These items, embossed with FMR's beautiful logo, always come in handy – or make great gifts!

\$10, \$15 or even \$20 a month is a lot less than some of us spend on coffee or candy bars – but monthly gifts really add up and support a lot of work to protect the Mississippi River, its watershed and your quality of life!

Please contact Heather today at hhaynes@fmr.org or 651-222-2193 x20 to set up a monthly giving plan through either your checking account or a credit card. It's a great new giving option that will make a real difference for your river and your community!



FMR is proud to be a member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund (www.mnenvirofund.org)

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