

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF RIVER STEWARDSHIP



# FMR at 20 years: A brief history

by Sylvia Bachmann

What began as a single voice in support of the public interest has grown into a leading environmental advocacy organization in just two decades and is now recognized as one of the state's most effective environmental nonprofits.

“Back in 1992, my goal was just to provide a citizen voice during the development of a comprehensive management plan for the new national park – the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA),” says Peter Gove, founder of Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR). “That was the initial focus of FMR. Once the management plan was completed, however, the organization’s focus broadened to the threats and opportunities facing the Mississippi, which we were able to do with funding from the McKnight Foundation.”

Gove believed that with a strong staff and a hard-working, knowledgeable board of directors, a “place-based” organization focused on the Mississippi could reach out to many organizations and area residents that had concerns about water quality, scenic resources, recreational access, invasive species management, and historic preservation. Gove’s vision has become reality over the past two decades, and has taken some twists and turns that even he did not predict.

## Land Conservation

One of the cornerstones of FMR’s work has been to protect and improve the system of interconnected natural areas that form the Mississippi River habitat corridor. These natural areas, which are becoming increasingly rare and vulnerable, provide wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and offer scenic and open-space value.

FMR’s land conservation efforts gathered steam with the hiring of Tom Lewanski, Conservation Director, in 1998. With expertise in land protection, Tom serves as a guide for landowners who are interested in protecting the natural qualities of their properties, helping them explore their options, available programs, and application processes.

Landowners Butch and Ruth Rechtzigel credit Lewanski and FMR with helping them to conserve most of their 102 acres along the river in Inver Grove Heights. “About 20 years ago, the County began talking about putting in a river walk here,” remembers Ruth. “That started us talking about what we were going to do with our land. We knew we didn’t want it developed. Over time, with FMR’s help, we lined up meetings with the County and the DNR to come up with a plan to sell a portion of our property to the DNR to become a permanent

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360 N. Robert Street, Suite 400  
Saint Paul, MN 55101  
651-222-2193 • 651-222-6005(f)  
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

# A voice for the river for 20 years

by Whitney Clark,  
Executive Director



Twenty years ago a small band of river lovers got together to create Friends of the Mississippi River. The year was 1993. The big river was showing its unruly side that year, swelling to historic proportions and flooding riverfront communities throughout the spring and summer. The Twin Cities, which had long used the river for sewage disposal and heavy industry, were just beginning to imagine the possibilities of revitalizing their riverfronts for people, parks, history and housing.

In 1993 plans for revitalizing Minneapolis's riverfront were on the drawing board but the condos and parks were still a dream. The historic Stone Arch Bridge would not open as a pedestrian bridge until 1994, and the Mill City Museum and Mill Ruins Park were still a decade away.

In St. Paul the artist Ben Thompson had produced a drawing that captured his vision of a mighty river flowing through a restored "Great River Park" at the heart of the community. This was an essentially ecological vision that captured the imagination of civic leaders and led to the realignment of development priorities with the Mississippi as the centerpiece. But major improvements such as the movement of the Science Museum to the riverfront would not occur until 1999, and the Sam Morgan Trail and the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary would have to wait until the mid 2000s.

Rivers were also in the news due to pollution. In 1992 Governor Arne Carlson had set a goal of making the Minnesota River — the largest

source of pollution to the Mississippi — swimmable and fishable within 10 years.

Fast forward 20 years. The little start-up non-profit is now a mature organization with 1,700 members and a staff of 19. We're proud of what we've accomplished (see the partial list on pages 7-8) but much more needs to be done.

Yes, the riverfront renaissance is well underway, but major plans such as the Great River Passage Master Plan in St. Paul and the Above the Falls Master Plan in Minneapolis hold promise as the next generation of exciting, river-centered improvements; we plan to put our shoulder to the wheel to bring them to life.

While FMR and our terrific partners have made great progress — to date we've been part of protecting more than 1,500 acres of natural areas and have restored more than 1,300 acres — we've got numerous high-priority sites still under threat of development and more than 8,000 acres (77 sites) underway or planned for restoration. We're just getting started!

Going forward, a major focus of FMR's work will be on improving water quality in the Mississippi River watershed. While progress has been made, Governor Carlson's goal of cleaning up the Minnesota River remains largely unmet. A new generation of policy approaches will be required to finally return our river to health and, FMR hopes to lead the way to that future.

Looking back over FMR's first 20 years, I'm proud of what we've accomplished. We've been a voice for the river in most of the major decisions that have affected it. In many ways the river is responding positively to the changes that we've made. I'm hopeful that the next 20 years will see the fulfillment of our greatest hopes for the great river.

## What an extra \$20 and a gift membership will do for you!

Through our first 20 years FMR has leveraged the collective power of our voice in numerous ways and achieved powerful results. Many important decisions are going to be made in the coming months that affect the river and the health of the communities in its watershed. That's why our collective voice needs to get A LOT louder! Critical Area rules, agricultural run-off issues, acting on the findings of the *State of the River Report* ... all of these things and more require the support of a broad base of citizens.

Help Friends of the Mississippi River be a more effective voice for the river and for a healthy community by giving an extra \$20 this year and giving a gift membership! See your renewal card for details, or visit <http://www.fmr.org/support/donate>. With your help, we can increase the volume of the river's voice, and have an even greater impact in the next 20 years! - Heather Haynes

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

# FMR's State of the River Report widely embraced as key barometer of the Mississippi's health

by Trevor Russell

"So, how is the Mississippi River doing?"

We are always pleased to receive this question, because it reaffirms the public's strong interest in our beloved Mississippi River. However, the size and complexity of the river makes this a difficult question to answer. That is why Friends of the Mississippi River teamed up with the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) to develop the *State of the River Report*.

Released to the public last fall, the *State of the River Report* is a first-of-its-kind report that highlights the status and trends of 13 key indicators of the health of the metro Mississippi River. Developed in partnership with more than 30 scientific and technical advisors from a range of scientific disciplines, the report distills broad scientific information into clear terms that the public can understand.

The report has generated substantial state and national media coverage. In addition, FMR and MNRRA have hosted 30 events, panels and forums in partnership with local and state governmental, nonprofit, educational, and community groups. To date, we have presented our findings to more than 1,300 people, and we have a number of additional presentations planned.

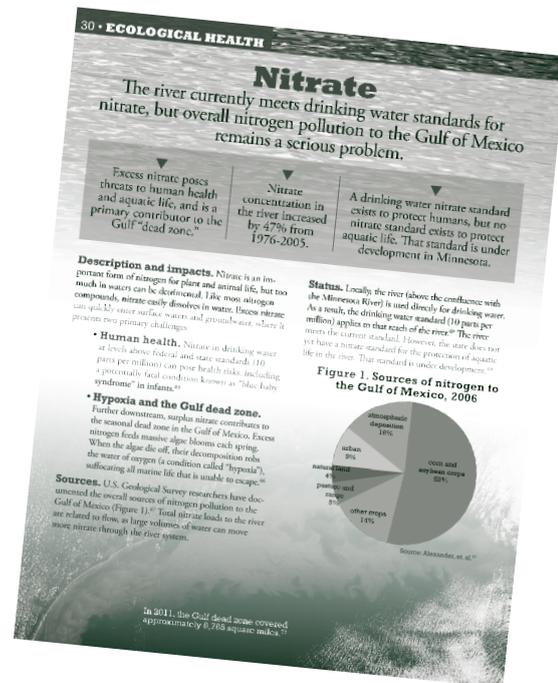
Along with the *State of the River Report* we released a pair of companion documents and our new Stewardship Pledge.

- **Policy Guide:** The Policy Guide offers priority actions that federal, state, and local leaders can take for the river. This top-10 list of policies offers a roadmap for future success in cleaning up the river and its watershed.
- **Stewardship Guide:** The Stewardship Guide provides practical steps that individuals can take in their home, yard, and community to improve the health of the Mississippi.
- **Stewardship Pledge:** The Stewardship Pledge provides practical steps that individuals can take in their home, yard, and community to improve the health of the Mississippi. Pledge to do your part for the river. It's fast, free and easy.

In addition, through our project website ([www.stateoftheriver.com](http://www.stateoftheriver.com)), the report has reached an estimated 15,000 people since October 2012. There, you can view and download the report, visit our companion guides, take the pledge, and find out about upcoming events and presentations.

**So, how is the Mississippi River?** It's a river that has improved in both water quality and ecological health over time, but there are also some distressing trends and emerging concerns.

- Positive trends in our **bald eagle, mussel, and fish populations** are signs of a restored river that is once



The report investigated the health of the river across 13 key indicators, including this section on nitrate.

again home to healthy and abundant wildlife. Many of these advances are the result of critical policy and infrastructure investments made over the last 50 years. Improvements in wastewater treatment, urban and industrial pollution controls, and the removal of key contaminants such as the pesticide DDT have played important roles in improved aquatic life and health. These indicators are evidence that the promise of the Clean Water Act can be fulfilled in our mighty Mississippi River.

- The report reaffirms some major concerns facing the river. Excess **sediment** and **phosphorus** remain a problem and can compromise aquatic habitat and recreation in the Mississippi River, including downstream in Lake Pepin. Some portions of the river are impaired with **excess bacteria**, while **site-specific fish consumption guidelines** are in place throughout the river due to elevated levels of **PFOS, mercury, and PCBs**.
- **River flows** and **nitrate** concentrations are increasing at an alarming rate, with serious impacts on the Gulf of Mexico. **Asian carp** continue to move upstream, with potentially devastating impacts on aquatic health, recreation, and our local economy. **Emerging contaminants**, like **triclosan** and others, present potential risks to the river that we do not yet fully understand. These issues deserve the full attention of state and local leaders, and represent an opportunity to river lovers to take action to protect the river and its watershed.



## PROGRAM UPDATES

# Strategy coalescing to stop invasive Asian carp

Five Asian carp have been caught in Minnesota in the past 12 months – that’s five times more than any previous year when the average was 0-1 fish caught per year. Invasive Asian carp pose an enormous threat to the Mississippi River ecosystem because they disrupt the foodchain and out-compete native species. So far, we are finding only the “pioneers” that scout and invade new habitat, but once Asian carp begin to breed, they quickly become almost impossible to eradicate.

FMR and the Stop Carp Coalition ([stopcarp.org](http://stopcarp.org)) are working to convince local, state and federal officials to take action to prevent the carp from invading Minnesota’s lakes and rivers. The Coalition is asking for closure of Lock #1 and the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock, and that Minnesota work in earnest with neighboring states to install deterrent technology at locks downstream.

The DNR completed a feasibility study for installing deterrent technology at Lock #1, but it arrived with a hefty \$13-19 million price tag. Federal legislation to close the locks has been introduced with bi-partisan support.



**Bighead carp**  
*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*



**Black carp**  
*Mylopharyngodon piccus*



**Grass carp**  
*Ctenopharyngodon idella*



**Silver carp**  
*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*

*Three of the four species of Asian carp (bighead, grass and silver carp) have shown up in Minnesota.*

“FMR believes that deterrents such as electric barriers, which are not 100% effective, should be deployed at downstream locks that cannot be closed due to the high volume of barge traffic,” said Whitney Clark, FMR executive director. “We don’t support a deterrent at Lock #1 because it doesn’t make sense to invest millions of dollars in a lock that can and should be closed.” - *Irene Jones*

## Conservation easement permanently protects Macalester College’s Field Station at Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area

*150 acres of undeveloped Mississippi River bluffland in Inver Grove Heights has been permanently protected and will be set aside for ecological research.*

In partnership with Dakota County and FMR, Macalester College placed a conservation easement on 150 acres of the Katharine Ordway Natural History Study Area (KONHSA) in June 2012. KONHSA is Macalester’s educational and research field station adjacent to the state-owned Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific & Natural Area along the Mississippi River in Inver Grove Heights. It features native prairie, oak savanna, oak woodland, floodplain forest and wetlands, and serves as the northern boundary of the larger Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area – 1,300 acres of beautiful bluffs dissected by numerous ravines, home to stunning views as well as critical wildlife habitat along the river.

“This easement permanently protects an important part of the Pine Bend Bluffs and helps ensure that more critical habitat along the Mississippi River will remain available for the migratory birds that utilize the Mississippi flyway and the animals that live here throughout the year,” says FMR Conservation Director Tom Lewanski, who helped develop the partnership and the plan to permanently protect KONHSA.



*An additional 150 acres of native prairie, oak savanna, oak woodland, floodplain forest and wetlands are now permanently protected.*

Dakota County purchased the conservation easement with funding assistance from the Outdoor Heritage Fund and FMR. The easement is the culmination of years of planning, collaboration and negotiating amongst Macalester, Dakota County, FMR and the City of Inver Grove Heights.





## Water quality in the spotlight at the Minnesota Capitol

Alongside our partners in the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, FMR actively identifies and promotes river protection strategies through the Minnesota legislature. While there are a number of bills of interest this year, FMR is most closely following three primary pieces of clean water-related legislation:

- This year, the legislature will decide the best way to invest the next two years' worth of the Clean Water Fund money raised through Minnesota's Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. FMR is working to ensure that the clean water fund is not raided to pay for programs previously funded through pesticide, fertilizer, and manure management fees.
- Triclosan is an antibacterial agent added to a variety of household products, most notably liquid antibacterial hand soap. Unfortunately, triclosan makes its way through the wastewater treatment system and into our lakes and

ivers, where it is contributing to an alarming build-up of dioxins in our environment. Following the Governor's executive order banning triclosan use by state agencies, FMR has worked with legislators to advance legislation phasing out triclosan for non-medical use in consumer goods in Minnesota.

- The Clean Water Legacy Effectiveness Act is designed to require state and local water clean-up plans to identify pollution sources, and include specific pollution reduction goals, timelines, milestones, and priority funding plans for implementation. By requiring that clean-up plans specifically target priority projects, we can invest taxpayer funds in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

FMR and our partners will continue to make sure that the legislature honors the wishes of Minnesotans by protecting water quality and public health throughout the state. - *Trevor Russell*

## FMR expands stewardship to Above the Falls area and south Washington County

One of FMR's great accomplishments has been to cultivate and engage thousands of community volunteers to help protect and restore the river's natural areas, public parks and water resources. Two areas in which FMR is launching new stewardship programs are north and northeast Minneapolis and south Washington County. Both areas have traditionally had limited public access to the Mississippi River because so much of the riverfront is privately owned. That's all changing with several new parks and many more planned.

FMR recently completed a report, "Above the Falls: Natural Area Scoping," that identifies opportunities to improve riverbank and upland habitat in Minneapolis. In Washington County, FMR has done management planning for important greenway connections to the river, such as the Cottage Grove Ravine. In both of these new programs, FMR seeks to build healthier communities with strong river connections by engaging local residents in protecting and restoring local resources.

For more information on stewardship events, visit our events calendar at [fmr.org](http://fmr.org). Funding for Above the Falls steward-



Local volunteers play a critical role in ensuring the health of riverfront natural areas and parks.

ship is provided by McKnight Foundation, Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation, REI, and Xcel Energy. The Washington County program is funded by 3M Foundation. - *Irene Jones and Tom Lewanski*

## After hiatus, Legislature may allow Critical Area rulemaking to proceed

The 72-mile metro corridor of the Mississippi River, from Dayton to Hastings, is a National Park and a State Critical Area. Yet there is no legally binding framework in place to ensure that the Critical Area's assets are preserved for future generations. FMR has been working to change that.

In 2009, FMR and a broad coalition of stakeholders worked with state legislators to pass a law directing the DNR to update standards for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. It passed with bi-partisan support and was signed by Governor Pawlenty. Rules were drafted by the DNR; however, the DNR was not able to meet the state mandated deadline to officially publish the draft rules within 18 months. As a result, the nearly completed rules have sat idle for the past three

years. An effort to repeal the state rulemaking authority was attempted in 2011, but it failed thanks to Governor Dayton's veto. Now the stars are finally aligned to move forward with reauthorization for new rules.

"The Critical Area rules drafted in 2010 went through extensive community review and did a fair job of balancing the interests of private development with the goals of protecting the ecological, historical, scenic and recreational resources and functions of the river," said Bob Spaulding, FMR River Planner. "We're ready to see the new rules move forward through the formal review process and implementation at the local level." - *Irene Jones*





### FMR at 20 years, continued from page one

natural area. We love our land, and we are really happy with the decisions we've made for it."

As projects like these developed FMR realized they would need additional private resources to help leverage state and local funds for riverfront land protection. In 2008 FMR launched its Riverlands Legacy Campaign which thus far has raised more than \$1.2 million from individuals and private foundations for this purpose.

FMR has also helped large industrial landowners be better stewards of their riverfront land. For example, in 2003, the 3M Cottage Grove facility hired FMR to complete a natural resource management plan for some of the land surrounding its facility. The following year, restoration work began, and it continues to this day. And FMR played a key role in helping Flint Hills Resources restore their portion of the ecologically vital Pine Bend Bluffs area near their refinery. Starting with a natural resource management plan that was developed by the Minnesota DNR and FMR in 2000, and with assistance from Great River Greening, FMR has restored more than 120 acres of prairie, oak savanna and woodlands on the site.

"The land around our refinery at Pine Bend Bluffs has river access, beautiful vistas and significant native plant species," notes Don Kern, Facilities and Engineering Manager at Flint Hills Resources. "We thought it was important to use the land for something that's beneficial to not only the human community but also the wildlife community. FMR was the catalyst behind our whole conservation program."

### River Corridor Land Use, Policy & Advocacy

In addition to working with private landowners, FMR has partnered with government agencies, citizens and other non-profit organizations to influence land-use practices in the river corridor and its watershed, and to ensure that long-term stewardship is planned.

During the late 1990s, FMR was part of a task force that put together Minneapolis' Above the Falls Master Plan, an award-winning vision for redevelopment of the river in north and northeast Minneapolis that emphasized continuous public parkland and trails on both sides of the river.

As a voice for the river in these and many other plans and policy decisions, FMR also led or contributed to the development of three local greenway plans from 1998 to 2002: Northern Dakota County Greenway; Washington County Conservation Plan; and the Mississippi River Greenway Strategic Plan, which began in 1998 with a greenway plan for the City of Hastings developed by FMR and the Hoisington Koegler Group Inc. (HKGi).

"FMR 'gets' this stuff," says Bruce Chamberlain, Assistant Superintendent for Planning, Minneapolis Park and Rec-

reation Board, who was the lead landscape architect on the Upper Harbor Terminal Redevelopment Study and the Mississippi River Greenway Strategic Plan. "They have an organizational DNA that allows them to weave a path through incredibly complex issues that must be overcome to make our river healthier and our region better."

FMR worked with HKGi and the cities of Hastings, Rosemount and the surrounding townships to identify the key natural assets and the green corridors that would connect them. In 2002, the plan won an American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award for Analysis & Planning. These community-based planning efforts built support for implementation; in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, FMR advocated for the 2002 Dakota County Farmland & Natural Areas Program bond referendum, which passed, providing the county with an initial \$20 million for open-space acquisition. This was the first successful county-wide open space measure in Minnesota.

"FMR brought knowledge, information and volunteers to the referendum campaign," says Nancy Schouweiler, Dakota County Commissioner, District 4, "And campaign funds and fundraising opportunities. I remember going to events where FMR staff were getting the word out, recruiting volunteers and accepting checks."

### Bringing the Ecological Perspective to River Planning

FMR's efforts to shape development along the river have not been limited to local actions. From 1997-2005, FMR served on the executive steering committee of the DNR's Metro Greenways program, which was established by the Minnesota legislature to preserve and enhance natural resources in the metropolitan area.

"FMR's executive director Whitney Clark recognized the need for an ecological focus," recalls Harland Hiemstra, the primary author of the Metro Greenprint, which served as the report to the legislature on the Metro Greenways. "It's not just about preserving some open space for people. It's also about seeing how all these pieces fit together, and recognizing that they are part of an ecosystem. That's one of the things that FMR brought - the ecological perspective."

In addition, in 2007-2008, FMR was contracted by

the Minnesota DNR to engage diverse stakeholders in an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area program, a state land-use program designed to provide protection of the river's natural, cultural and scenic assets while allowing for appropriate riverfront development. In 2009, FMR worked with legislators of both parties to pass the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Reform legislation that directed the DNR to craft rules for managing the area. Since then, the DNR's rulemaking authority has expired without the rules being adopted.

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**"FMR gets this stuff. They have an organizational DNA that allows them to weave a path through incredibly complex issues that must be overcome to make our river healthier and our region better."**

*- Bruce Chamberlain, Assistant Superintendent for Planning, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board*



# 20 years of accomplishments

**1** Since 1993, FMR has worked with almost 38,000 community volunteers who have contributed over 286,000 hours of their valuable time (the equivalent of 137 full time employees working for a full year) to protect and restore the river and its watershed.

**2** FMR's land conservation work over the last two decades has led to the permanent protection of 1,509 acres in the Twin Cities metro area, and has been instrumental in the establishment of four new Scientific & Natural Areas and Wildlife Preserves in the region.

**3** In 2006, FMR launched the Stream Health Evaluation Program in the Rice Creek Watershed District, an innovative model for water quality monitoring that connects volunteers to their community's water resources and to their local decision-makers. Still going strong, this program engages and trains volunteers on a deep level as they work to foster improvements to water quality in their community.



**4** Since we began tracking them in 1999, FMR's media impressions (readers/viewers/listeners who have heard about FMR's work via the news media) total 106,328,829 – significantly furthering our goal to raise awareness of the issues facing the Mississippi River and its value as a community asset!

**5** FMR's Mississippi River Challenge, now in its 10th year, has engaged more than 2,410 participants who have raised over \$1 million in pledges to support FMR's river and watershed protection work.



**6** Working with a range of stakeholders, in 1998 FMR provided leadership to found the Metro Greenways Program at the Department of Natural Resources and successfully lobbied for its initial state funding.

Resources and successfully lobbied for its initial state funding.

**7** In 2000, FMR started the Gorge Stewards Project in partnership with the Longfellow Community Council. Now in twelve neighborhoods on both sides of the gorge, with additional projects upstream into North and Northeast Minneapolis and downstream in Dakota and Washington Counties, FMR's Community Stewards Program has proved to be an effective model for active community engagement in river and watershed restoration and protection.



**8** Since the early 1990s FMR has actively participated in discussions and plans related to the Mississippi River in Minneapolis and St. Paul. This has included chairing and/or actively participating in many community-based planning efforts, including the Above the Falls Master Plan and Citizen Advisory Committee, RiverFIRST, the Great River Passage Master Plan, the Ford Motor Company Redevelopment Planning and many others.

**9** Over the years, FMR has sought to influence proposals for more than 120 river-related projects such as private developments, bridges, trails and parks. In some cases our work has been to support and encourage the projects, in others we have tried to engage the proposers, stakeholders and policy makers to improve the projects to better benefit the river. In a few cases, FMR has actively opposed proposed projects that we believed would have had a negative impact on the health, public accessibility or scenic beauty of the river.

**10** Since 1999, FMR has restored 1,330 acres (45 sites) to healthier and more diverse native habitat, and we are now working on planning for an additional 8,272 acres (77 sites).

**11** In 2002, FMR led a coalition to pass Dakota County's Farmland & Natural Areas Program referendum, which to date has resulted in over 9,175 acres of land permanently protected in the county.

**12** In 2006 and 2007, FMR launched two citizen-based campaigns for stronger water quality measures that resulted in the passing of the Vermillion River Watershed Standards and the Rice Creek Rules and ushered in a new era of watershed management in the region.

**13** Begun in 1998, FMR's Storm Drain Stenciling Project has involved more than 28,000 volunteers who have contributed approximately 220,000 hours to stencil 43,340 drains with the message "Please Don't Pollute - Drains To River!" and distribute 140,413 educational doorhangers promoting individual actions people can take for watershed stewardship.



**14** FMR worked with several riverfront cities and townships to create the Mississippi River Greenway Strategic Plan, which guides our land protection work and won the 2002 American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award.

**15** FMR's Heritage Land Registry is often the first step in the land protection process, with 58 landowners and 3,070 acres currently enrolled to date. FMR works with registry members to protect and restore their land, offering customized services based on the needs of each landowner.

**16** Since 1998, FMR has fostered a stronger river stewardship ethic by providing an estimated 12,500 people with the opportunity to participate in over 250 educational and interpretive events.



**17** Over the last two decades, FMR has led and participated in numerous forums to bring about tangible improvements to the way our region and our state protect water quality. These include:

- Chairing the Minnesota Environmental Partnership's Water Cluster since 2010
- Mississippi River Sediment Cleanup Plan (TSS TMDL)
- Mississippi Makeover Stakeholder Advisory Committee
- Minnesota Minimum Impact Design Standards Work Group
- Environmental Initiative Agricultural Leadership Dialogue Group
- Coordinating the Metro Watershed Partners' Clean Water Minnesota Media Campaign

This work is slow and incremental, but FMR is persevering and keeping our end goals in sight as we work to hold agencies and polluters accountable and make a measurable impact on water quality.



**18** In 2010, FMR launched the Blue Star Award Program to positively recognize cities that are going beyond the minimum to manage urban runoff and protect water quality. To date, 44 cities have registered for the program, 30 have completed the assessment, and 16 have won the award.

**19** In 2009, FMR led the effort to pass the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Reform Bill passed in the state legislature and get \$500,000 appropriated to draft new Critical Area Rules that will help communities along the river in the Twin Cities protect their riverfront assets while also enjoying and maximizing them.

**20** FMR became active on the Asian carp issue in 2011, advocating for strong measures to prevent these invasive and ecosystem-damaging fish from moving any farther upstream. Our efforts included changing the first day course of the Mississippi River Challenge to raise awareness of the call to close the locks - one way of slowing or stopping the upstream movement of Asian carp. In addition, in 2012 we helped launch the Stop Carp Coalition and developed StopCarp.org, a website dedicated to advocacy around this issue.

**21** After several years of research and planning, 2012 was the year FMR and the National Park Service teamed up to release the first State of the River Report. This groundbreaking report reveals the status and trends of 13 key indicators of water quality and river health in the Twin Cities metro Mississippi River. The report findings generated significant press, and have to date been presented at 30 events to almost 1,300 people across the state.

**22** FMR was a leading citizen organization advocating for the development of sediment standards for the south metro Mississippi River. After several years of work, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency approved these standards in 2011.

## FMR at 20 years, continued from page six

“The Critical Area rules are a significant piece of unfinished business,” says Irene Jones, FMR’s River Corridor Program Director. “New rules will provide badly needed protections for future generations of river lovers.”

### A Hands-on Approach

As local and regional plans are shaped and adopted, and as land is acquired for new parks and natural areas, FMR works to engage thousands of volunteers and program participants every year in hands-on stewardship actions such as trash clean-ups, ecological restoration events, stream monitoring and learning how individuals can protect water quality through river-friendly landscaping at home. What began in the late 1990s as a modest engagement program with a few hundred participants has grown into a well-respected volunteer and education program with more than 5,000 people engaged each year in over 100 events and outings at dozens of sites throughout the metropolitan region.

FMR’s staff currently includes two professional ecologists, Karen Schik and Joe Walton, who, in addition to providing oversight for volunteer restoration events, play a leadership role in managing numerous natural area restoration projects, securing funding and overseeing professional crew work.

### Watershed Protection

Since 2004 FMR has emphasized enhanced water quality and watershed protection through education, monitoring, stewardship, and advocacy programs. Shaping public policy in this area requires a long-term outlook, since progress on policy reform is often slow. But FMR, working with key allies, has made great strides in several key program areas.

Some of its most significant efforts have been helping watershed districts establish standards and rules for watershed management, including the Vermillion River Watershed and the Rice Creek Watershed. In 2006, the work with Rice Creek evolved into a successful volunteer stream monitoring program called the Stream Health Evaluation Project, which was designed in partnership with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

FMR soon turned its sights to an even larger problem: excess river sediment, which chokes aquatic life and pollutes the river. FMR played a leadership role in the development of the sediment standards for the south metro Mississippi River in 2011. This new state standard led to the development of comprehensive statewide sediment clean-up plans for the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, which are currently awaiting state approval. Throughout this process, FMR held meetings with key agency leaders and staff, coordinated non-profit and local government partners and allies, and co-hosted open houses for the public in partnership with state agencies.

In 2010, FMR launched the Blue Star Award for Excellence in Community Stormwater Management, designed to offer communities that excel in stormwater management the positive public recognition they deserve. The Blue Star Award is Minnesota’s only award for communities that exceed minimum standards and make the extra effort to protect our water.

FMR also has recently taken a leadership role in coordinating the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) Water

Cluster – a collective of water-related organizations working to protect and preserve our natural resources through advocacy, education and outreach related to state and regional water and land management policy.

“FMR understands that making progress on river policy requires numerous partners and leaders from across the state,” says Trevor Russell, FMR’s Watershed Program Director. “By bringing different voices and perspectives to the discussion, we are able to shape public ideas and build consensus around priority policies for protection and restoration.”



Employees from Flint Hills Resources, Friends of the Mississippi River, and Great River Greening team up with other volunteers to remove invasive species and replant using prairie grasses and forbs to restore the ecologically vital bluffland owned by Flint Hills Resources in Rosemount.

### State of the River

In 2012, FMR partnered with the National Park Service to publish the ambitious and groundbreaking *State of the River Report*, which examined the status and trends of 13 indicators from the Twin Cities metro stretch of the Mississippi River to determine the state of its water quality, health and vitality. Intended to serve as a benchmark, the report will be updated in future years.

### Deep Roots, Future Potential

“Over the past 20 years, FMR has established deep grassroots and a credible voice,” says Whitney Clark. “We’ve observed how the river responds when we are able to act decisively to improve it. We are also beginning to see how communities respond when their river gets healthier and more accessible.”

But Clark notes how much work remains to be done. “The major source of pollution to the Mississippi is runoff from industrial agriculture and we have not really begun to address that problem from a policy standpoint. This will be a key objective of our work in coming years. While many plans to benefit the river are now in place, the real heavy lifting comes with implementing those plans. To bring planned riverfront parks, trails and natural area protection and restoration to fruition will require major investments and lots of grassroots support.”

“The future of the river has never been brighter,” adds Gove. “And now we’ve got a proven organization with many friends and partners to make sure the vision of a healthy, vibrant river becomes reality.”

## The Mississippi River Legacy Society: Ensuring the health and beauty of the river for future generations

As we celebrate FMR's 20th anniversary, it is a time to both honor our past and also envision our future. Were it not for committed community leaders with the foresight to create Friends of the Mississippi River 20 years ago, we would not have the much healthier river that we enjoy today. If we are to continue to protect and enjoy this great community treasure, FMR will need the financial security to provide this ongoing stewardship.

In honor of our 20th anniversary, FMR is asking committed members to help ensure that our critical mission endures for future generations by making a planned gift. Your gift can be

as simple as a bequest in a will or the donation of a life insurance policy. Or you may choose to make a gift through a trust, annuity or retirement plan. Along with the personal satisfaction of creating your own river legacy and ensuring a vibrant future for FMR, we are pleased to recognize and celebrate donors who make a planned gift commitment by automatically enrolling you in the Mississippi River Legacy Society.

To learn more about making a lasting gift to the river and the Mississippi River Legacy Society, please contact Jeanine Holden at 651-222-2193 x22 or [jholden@fmr.org](mailto:jholden@fmr.org). -*Jeanine Holden*

## Fulton Beer to make a special brew for FMR's 20th Anniversary

Here at FMR, most of us like beer. And with all the local breweries in town, it seems like a lot of other people do, too. With tap water in the Twin Cities coming right from the Mississippi River, there's a strong connection between the health of the river and the quality of our local beers. The connection, then, between FMR's work and local beer is also strong! One popular local brewery, Fulton Beer, has stepped up to do



a special garage-series beer in honor of FMR's 20th anniversary. The yet-to-be-named brew will have a one-day release in the Fulton tap room on May 25th, and a limited release to bars and pubs around town. Stay tuned to FMR's website and Mississippi Messages email newsletters to ensure you get a taste, pick up a few bottles, and get your friends on board to show support for the partnership between Fulton Beer and FMR. -*Heather Haynes*

## \$2.00 off and 20% for the River!

### Peace Coffee & FMR partner for our 20th Anniversary

What's the secret to a good cup of coffee? How about clean water? Peace Coffee's fair trade, organic coffee, delivered by bicycle is a natural fit with FMR's work to protect the source of our drinking water. That's why Peace Coffee and FMR are teaming-up to celebrate FMR's 20th anniversary with a special deal for river-lovers. Peace Coffee and FMR are excited to announce our partnership to bring you a discount when you

purchase Peace Coffee online or around town in the months of April, May and June. Clip the coupon on this page for \$2 off your next purchase of Peace Coffee at a local vendor, or use the code FMR20YR when ordering online at [peacecoffee.com/online-store](http://peacecoffee.com/online-store). You get a good deal, and 20% of the proceeds will be donated to FMR. Thanks for buying local AND helping to protect your local river. -*Heather Haynes*



### GREAT COFFEE DEMANDS GREAT WATERS



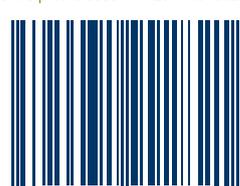
In honor of Friends of the Mississippi River's 20th Anniversary, Peace Coffee is donating 20% of proceeds to river conservation when you use this coupon or order online with the code FMR20YR! Help improve water quality, habitat, and community connections to the Mississippi River with the coffee you drink! Find out more at [fmr.org](http://fmr.org).

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If you can't find Peace Coffee in your area, order online at [peacecoffee.com/online-store](http://peacecoffee.com/online-store). Use the promo code FMR20YR to receive \$2.00 off your order. (Does not apply to shipping.)



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# Invest in your river: Join the Mississippi Riverkeepers!

In order to honor our current donors who have provided significant financial resources to ensure FMR's protect-restore-enhance mission over the past 20 years, FMR is now formally recognizing all donors who give \$1,000 or more in annual operating contributions as "Mississippi Riverkeepers." Mississippi Riverkeepers are investors in the protection of our treasured Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities region. Members enjoy special benefits at various giving levels, including the satisfaction that their gift is used to realize practical solutions that improve local water quality, protect and restore critical land and habitat, and enhance the beauty of the river for all of us today and for generations to come.

**Giving Levels:**  
 \$1,000 - \$4,999 River Enthusiast  
 \$5,000 - \$9,999 River Guardian  
 \$10,000 - \$14,999 River Protector  
 \$15,000 - \$19,999 River Defender  
 \$20,000+ River Conservationist

To learn more about becoming a Mississippi Riverkeeper, contact Jeanine Holden at [jholden@fmr.org](mailto:jholden@fmr.org) or 651-222-2193 x 22.

## Welcome new friends; adieu to old

**Welcome Jeanine Holden.** In June 2012, FMR welcomed Jeanine Holden to the staff in the role of Development Officer. Her experience includes more than 12 years of fund development work with a particular expertise in major gifts – annual, planned, endowment and capital – for a number of important Minnesota organizations including the Children's Hospital Foundation, the Minnesota Historical Society, and Wellstone Action.

**Farewell to Karen Solas; hello Adam Flett.** Over the winter, we bid farewell to Karen Solas, who had been serving as our Stewardship Event Coordinator. Replacing Karen as the new Stew-

ardship Event Coordinator is Adam Flett, who coordinated the annual Mississippi River Challenge Event in 2012.



*FMR is proud of its energetic new staff members Adam Flett, Jeanine Holden and Lindsay Hefferan.*

**Welcome Lindsay Hefferan.** In January, Lindsay Hefferan joined FMR as a Volunteer and Event Registrar. This is a new position that will handle all of FMR's volunteer and stewardship event registration. We are excited to have a year-round person in place to provide a consistent first point of contact for new and returning volunteers. Lindsay has a B.A. in journalism and mass communications from the University of Minnesota and brings a range of experiences to the position. - Irene Jones

## FMR welcomes two new members to Board of Directors

FMR is pleased to welcome Julia Kaemmer and Chad Dayton to its Board of Directors.

Julia is a long-time FMR supporter and an artist whose work is inspired by the natural world. She is currently the chair of the board of her family foundation, the HRK Foundation, and she has also served on the board of directors of the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Steering Committee of the St. Croix Watershed Research Station, two of FMR's regular partner organizations.

"I have admired the work of FMR and revered the staff for years, so I'm excited to get a chance to work with great people and a great mission," said Julia. "I hope to strengthen the FMR support base in the process."

Chad is a passionate outdoor educator with a special love for rivers. He is a field instructor for the National Outdoor

Leadership School (NOLS), an instructor for the NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute, and a guide for Wilderness Inquiry, a Minneapolis-based international outfitter. Chad also serves on the board of directors for the Minnesota Zoo Foundation and Dodge Nature Center (where he also volunteers as a teaching naturalist). Chad has been involved with FMR for a number of years as a Mississippi River Challenge paddler (with his daughter Eliza) and as a member of FMR's Mississippi River Challenge Steering Committee.



*New FMR Board Directors Julia Kaemmer and Chad Dayton*

"As a long time supporter of FMR's mission and a participant in the Mississippi River Challenge, I am excited about the opportunity to increase my involvement with FMR's conservation, stewardship and policy initiatives," said Chad. "I hope to bring a passion for FMR's mission and activities and a deep appreciation for the river in general."

- Whitney Clark





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## Join us for a very special 10th year of the Mississippi River Challenge!

With nine Mississippi River Challenges under our belt, we know how to show paddlers and volunteers a good time on the river. We are ramping up for the 10th annual Mississippi River Challenge this year, and we've got plenty to celebrate!

- More than 2,400 paddlers on the river, over 1,350 volunteer shifts filled, and over \$1 million raised in pledges in nine years,
- Paddlers, volunteers, partners and sponsors who have been involved since the beginning,
- New discoveries about the beauty and majesty of the river each year,
- And new this year: a new website, networking meet-up events, the option to paddle and fundraise as a team, and more.



The website, [mississippiriverchallenge.org](http://mississippiriverchallenge.org), is complete with new features such as team registration and fundraising options, and a Mississippi River Challenge news feed. We hope you enjoy the new look and layout!

Looking to find out more about the event in person? We've planned a number of meet-ups the last Tuesday of each month from 5-7 p.m. at various locations throughout the Twin Cities. Prospective dates are Tuesdays; April 30th, May 28th, and June 25th. Please like our Facebook page (Mississippi River Challenge), follow us on Twitter (@MissRivChall), sign up for Paddle It Protect It monthly emails on the web site, or call 651-222-2193 x 30 for more details.

## Spunk Design Machine brings a fresh look to FMR for our 20th year

As we entered our third decade, a few of us at FMR thought it was time for a "facelift." We looked around to find a "surgeon" who would help us keep what we love about our look and freshen it up at the same time. We feel fortunate to have connected with locally-based Spunk Design Machine,



headed by river enthusiast Jeff Johnson. This issue of the newsletter introduces some aspects of the new look that may feel familiar to you; Spunk Design Machine has done a great job adding versatility to our logo and look without changing any of our core values. You can find out more about them at <http://spkdm.com>.

**FMR.ORG**

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](http://www.fmr.org).



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FMR is proud to be a member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund  
[www.mnenvirofund.org](http://www.mnenvirofund.org)

