

Celebrating Ten Years of Protecting and Improving the Mississippi River and its Watershed in Minnesota's Twin Cities

Friends of the Mississippi River
2002 Annual Report





Chris Faust, photography fellow, Embrace Open Space Public Service Campaign.

“The song of the river ends not at her banks but in the hearts of those who have loved her.”

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Dear Friends,

Folks I know who are passionate about the Mississippi River often attribute their love of this extraordinary natural resource to some personal experience. They may cite the joy of spotting a circling bald eagle, the fun of fishing catfish from the banks below the Ford Dam or the solitude of an early morning paddle through the gorge.

As an anonymous river chronicler once wrote, “the song of the river ends not at her banks but in the hearts of those who have loved her.”

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) gives voice and action to this passion by focusing our resources on the critical tasks of protecting, enhancing and celebrating this incredible resource. Our efforts, multiplied in impact through collaboration, have had a significant impact in 2002.

FMR played a key role in the successful Dakota County bond referendum that will fund the permanent protection of open space throughout the county, including natural areas along the Mississippi River. We are in the midst of restoring high quality bluffland near Rosemount, and our Heritage Land Registry continues to enroll private landowners in the critical task of protecting and restoring fragile ecosystems. We are also strategically poised to launch a major watershed initiative in the Rice Creek and Vermillion River watersheds.



Our role may vary depending on the initiative, but our commitment is 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.

Our work is made more challenging because of the many jurisdictions through which the river meanders, but as Aristotle once observed, “boundaries don’t protect rivers, people do.”

Which brings me to you. Whether you have worked with us as a partner or supported us financially or as a volunteer, your involvement has been critical to our success. On behalf of FMR’s board and staff, I would like to thank you for your commitment to this important work.

Warm regards,

Phil Riveness

Phil Riveness
Chair, Board of Directors

Protecting and Restoring Riverfront Land

The remaining prairies, forests and scenic bluffs along the Mississippi River and its tributaries provide habitat and protect water quality — but these lands are disappearing quickly as population growth drives new development in the Twin Cities. In 2002, FMR achieved key land protection successes, leveraged significant open space funding, and carried out restoration work on numerous riverfront areas.

AN AWARD-WINNING GREENWAY PLAN

The Mississippi River Greenway is an innovative partnership-based effort to create a vibrant greenway along the Mississippi River in Dakota County. An important aspect of this work is to help communities plan for growth to ensure that key riverfront lands are set aside and protected before they are claimed for development. FMR has worked together with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Metro Greenways Program, the cities of Rosemount and Hastings, and Ravenna, Marshan and Nininger Townships to develop a Greenway Strategic Plan, which has been adopted by local municipalities. In 2002, the plan received an award for excellence from the National Association of Landscape Architects and was featured in the February 2003 issue of *Landscape Architecture*

magazine. FMR is now leading landowner outreach efforts and working to leverage funds to protect the land identified in the plan.

In 2002, FMR also worked with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District in identifying opportunities for the Northern Dakota County Greenway from Rosemount north to the Mendota Heights/Lilydale area.

MISSISSIPPI-VERMILLION HERITAGE LAND REGISTRY

The decisions made by riverfront landowners have enormous impact on the health of the Mississippi

River. Through our Heritage Land Registry, FMR involves private landowners in protecting and restoring their property. Depending on the landowner's interest, FMR provides ecological management planning, helps connect landowners with funding sources for restoration or facilitates permanent protection of the land. Once enrolled in the Registry, property owners proudly mark their land with a Registry sign and become part of a network of landowners actively practicing stewardship. There are currently 42 landowners and 2,137 acres enrolled in the Registry.

Victory for Open Space in Dakota County

FMR played an integral role in the successful November 2002 Dakota County bond referendum, which leveraged \$20 million for open space protection. FMR helped local activists establish Dakota County Citizens for Land and Water and recruited, hired, housed and supervised the organization's staff. We carried out fundraising activities and provided political and technical advice throughout the campaign. The measure, which enjoyed majority support in both rural townships and suburban cities, was approved by 57% of the vote. The successful referendum will fund a ten-year program to permanently protect land throughout the county. Natural areas along the Mississippi, Minnesota, Vermillion and Cannon Rivers will be among the lands receiving priority for protection.

Dakota County's rare landscapes that are under private ownership, such as the Sand Coulee shown at left, can potentially be protected with funds from the open space referendum.



Landowner Profile

Scott Robinson and Tom Segar are the proud owners of a rare bedrock bluff prairie surrounded by dry oak savanna that includes a stand of 200-year-old oak trees. Scott and Tom knew they wanted to do all they could to protect their five acres of land, which are situated on a steep bluff in Dakota County's Ravenna Township.

Members of FMR's Heritage Land Registry, Scott and Tom have worked with FMR to create a prairie management plan. FMR helped secure funding to carry out controlled burns and other management activities, and Scott and Tom made considerable contributions, both with direct costs and sweat equity. The results of these efforts include vigorous new growth in rare native prairie plants and a dramatic decrease in exotic species.

"I believe landowners have a responsibility to be good stewards of their land," Scott says. "One of the benefits of being enrolled in the Heritage Registry is that FMR helped me do it right. I'm proud of what we've done."



A volunteer pitches in to transport native wetland plants to a restoration site at the Katharine Ordway Natural History Study Area (in the Pine Bend Bluffs).

EMPIRE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT RESTORATION

This 440-acre property is critically situated on the Vermillion River between Farmington and Hastings. The land forms an important link in both an east-west greenway corridor along the Vermillion River and in a northerly greenway corridor to the Mississippi River at Pine Bend Bluffs. In September 2002, FMR was awarded \$250,000 from the Metropolitan Council for restoration work at the plant, based on a Natural Resource Management Plan completed in 2001 by FMR, the

Department of Natural Resources and Dakota Soil and Water Conservation District. Four areas targeted for restoration are: 1) about 1,000 feet of eroded streambank on the Vermillion River, 2) a 50-acre farm field that will be restored to wet meadow and

wet prairie, 3) a 35-acre grassland that will be restored to prairie, and 4) floodplain forest that will be managed for invasive exotic species. In mid-November we hosted a large event to remove buckthorn from two miles of riverbank.

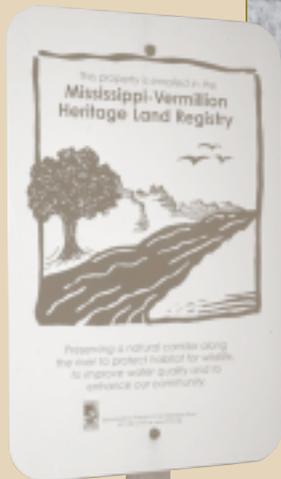
RESTORING HABITAT IN PINE BEND BLUFFS

FMR is working with several landowners to restore natural areas in this unique and beautiful stretch of the Mississippi River. At Macalester College's Katharine Ordway Natural History Study Area, FMR worked with the college and Great River Greening to develop, plan and implement restoration of a wetland near Inver Grove Heights. Sixty five volunteers took part in this October event and installed approximately 1,500 native plants at the site.

We are also in the midst of restoring 85 acres of high quality bluffland located on the Mississippi near Rosemount and owned by Flint Hills Resources (formerly Koch Petroleum Group). Working as part of the Big Rivers Partnership, our 2002 efforts



FMR Heritage Land Registry member Scott Robinson.



New Scientific and Natural Area

FMR's efforts to permanently protect land came to fruition in 2002 when we helped secure two properties in the Pine Bend Bluffs area near Rosemount. These properties, which total 168 acres, will become the core of a new Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) administered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The effort to save this land began in 2000 when FMR's Conservation Director, Tom Lewanski, met Dwight Malcolm, a local musician whose family had owned 58 acres of land in the area since 1920. Malcolm was committed to preserving the land in its natural state, and FMR and Malcolm teamed with the Trust for Public Land and the DNR to achieve protection. Though he died of cancer before the protection of the property was complete, his sister, Mayjel Anderson, continued the process. "My brother didn't like the idea of commercial business or housing moving in here," she said of the bluffs where she spent her childhood. "They'd have come in and torn that whole hill down."

In late 2002 the protection of the Malcolm property was completed, and an adjacent property was acquired through a process that also started with FMR's landowner outreach. Located in the heart of what biologists consider one of the best natural complexes left in the region, the new SNA will preserve the land's rare bluff prairie habitat.

Under the conditions of a trust fund being created by the Malcolm estate, FMR will provide ongoing management activities on the land to ensure that its extraordinary habitat value is preserved and improved. The land's designation as an SNA not only guarantees that it will be a legacy for future generations, it also provides new public access to this beautiful stretch of the river, which is almost exclusively in private ownership.

focused on restoring native prairie ecosystems. In 2002 FMR also completed management planning for 3,000 additional acres owned by the company in the area. We created a long-term land use planning map and developed a five-year proposal for land conservation and management activities. The company has made a significant commitment to funding restoration activities, which FMR will be carrying out over the next several years. Since this restoration began in 2000, more than \$300,000 has been raised to fund key land improvement activities.

In an effort to encourage breeding success among native bird species around Pine Bend, FMR teamed with Flint Hills Resources employees to build bird nesting boxes for bluebirds, owls and kestrels.

FMR's Conservation Director Tom Lewanski and Mayjel Anderson on a walk through her family's property, which is now part of the Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area.



Andy Blenkush/Sun Newspapers

"We loved this place so much — we wanted to preserve it in its natural state."

Mayjel Anderson



The beautiful 8,000-acre Vermillion River Bottoms, near Hastings, is an important FMR project area that has been featured in the McKnight Foundation's Embrace Open Space campaign.

HABITAT RESTORATION AND NEW RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN HASTINGS

We launched new ecological restoration work on the Hastings River Flats, a 215-acre park that includes floodplain forest and emergent marsh that support more than 50 species of nesting birds. FMR's staff developed a plan for improving the habitat of a portion of the property that was once a petroleum tank farm. The long-term goal for the project is to combine ecological restoration with recreational features that include a new interpretative center, a sculpture garden and a bandshell.

CONTINUING AND EXPANDING PRAIRIE STEWARDSHIP WORK

The southern section of the Twin Cities metro area is home to some rare prairie remnants — diverse ecosystems that support a variety of threatened plants, birds and snakes. FMR's current prairie work focuses on the biologically rich Sand Coulee prairie near Hastings. This tremendously beautiful area was identified

as a top priority in the Mississippi Greenway Strategic Plan. Because the Sand Coulee is all privately owned, FMR's efforts have focused on reaching out to landowners and identifying needed restoration activities. With recent funding from the Metro Greenways Program, FMR will be implementing this project in the coming year. In 2002, FMR also continued restoration planning with several Registry members whose property contains rare prairie remnants, and led a group of interested landowners on a prairie tour and seed collection outing.

WORKING WITH 3M IN COTTAGE GROVE

This corporation's land on the river bluffs in Cottage Grove includes 145 acres of quality woodlands and prairie. FMR is working with 3M to ensure that that this land is managed to maximize benefits as habitat and open space. In 2002, we worked with 3M to prepare a detailed plan for managing the land. In 2003, we are preparing an ecological management plan for a portion (143 acres) of the 3M property. This will be the blueprint for actual restoration to follow.

Embrace Open Space Campaign

Embrace Open Space is a multifaceted campaign to raise awareness and encourage protection of open space "treasures" in the Twin Cities. FMR participated in the planning and implementation of this McKnight Foundation-sponsored campaign, which showcases two FMR project areas: Pine Bend Bluffs and the Vermillion River bottoms. We created site-specific websites for these two open spaces and helped plan the kick-off event at Pine Bend Bluffs. Take a look at all of the campaign's treasure sites online at www.EmbraceOpenSpace.org.



Stewarding the River's Cultural and Recreational Values

The Mississippi River is a defining natural, cultural and historical feature of the Twin Cities. FMR works to foster appreciation of the value of the Mississippi through educational events and opportunities for individuals — and by encouraging local governments to make land use decisions that respect and embrace the special qualities of the river.

FUN, EDUCATIONAL RIVER EVENTS

A day out on the river is one of the best ways to inspire commitment to this wonderful natural resource. In 2002, with the help of more than 50 volunteers and numerous sponsors, FMR's Fifth Annual Canoe Adventure brought 464 people to the river. Our

2002 interpretive events included a bird hike at the Katharine Ordway Natural History Study Area, a natural history hike at Grey Cloud Scientific and Natural Area and macroinvertebrate sampling in Shingle Creek. In all we held ten programs, which were attended by 189 people.

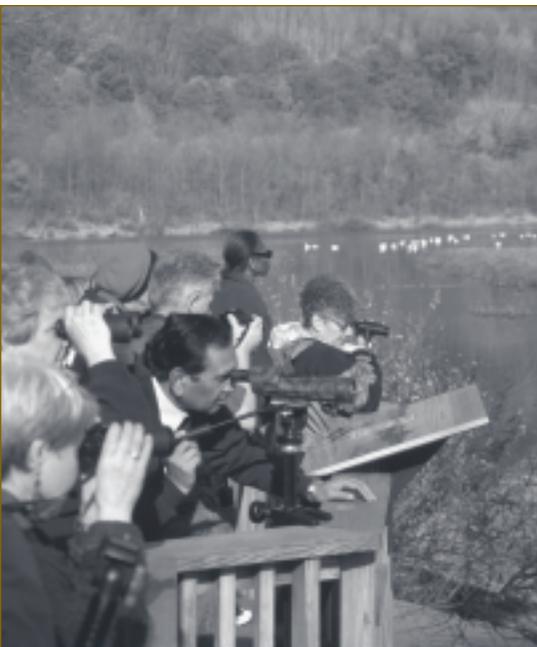
MISSISSIPPI RIVER POOL 2 INITIATIVE

FMR was an active participant in this Metropolitan Council and McKnight Foundation-sponsored initiative, which identified and prioritized

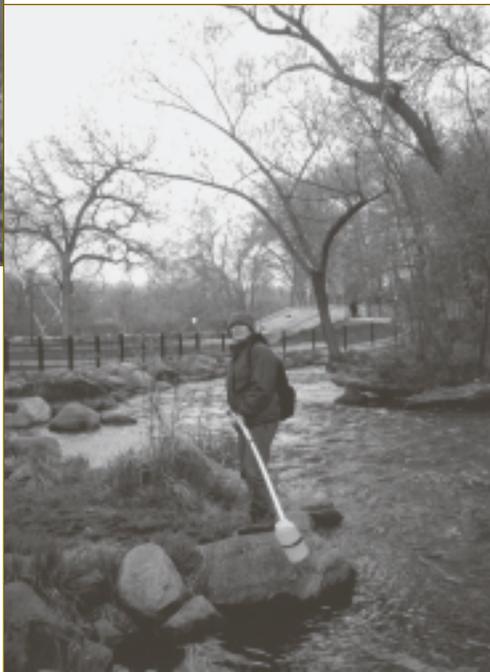


More than 200 canoes and kayaks lined up to go through Lock #1 during the 5th Annual Mississippi River Canoe Adventure. Many participants find the experience of "locking through" to be a highlight of the event.

projects that are revitalizing the Twin Cities stretch of the Mississippi River. A broad coalition of partners selected eleven priority projects, three of which are FMR initiatives — the Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area and Hastings River Flats (described on pages 4 and 6) and the Wakota Bridge Recreational Area, where FMR is working with the City of South St. Paul to transform a former wastewater treatment plant into a new riverfront park and commercial area.



The annual gathering of Tundra Swans during fall migration drew birders to Alma Wisconsin on the Mississippi during an FMR tour last November.



Understanding the importance of water quality monitoring has been the focus of several hands-on FMR tours and educational programs.

Mississippi Gorge Stewards



A young gorge steward cuts invasive Buckthorn to protect a restored oak savanna in the Mississippi Gorge in Minneapolis.

The Gorge Stewards project focuses specifically on creating a network of river protection volunteers around the Twin Cities' gorge — the only true gorge along the entire Mississippi River and a premier riverfront park in both Minneapolis and St. Paul. Launched in 2000 with Minneapolis' Longfellow Community Council, FMR expanded the program to include the Seward Neighborhood in 2002. In 2003, we will further expand Gorge Stewards into Minneapolis' Prospect Park neighborhood and Macalester-Groveland and Merriam Park in St. Paul. In 2003, we will also pilot an innovative intergenerational stewardship project that will forge a new partnership between FMR, teachers and students from Minnehaha Academy, and residents of nearby Becketwood — a retirement community on West River Road.

Volunteer training and events are a central aspect of this popular program. In 2002, we completed eighteen Gorge Stewards events and involved approximately 240 individual stewards in 1,051 hours of volunteer service.

REVITALIZING MINNEAPOLIS' UPPER RIVER

FMR has worked for several years to help draft and promote the Upper River Master Plan, which advocates a shift from industry to parkland along the Mississippi in Minneapolis north of St. Anthony Falls. In 2002, we participated in the formation and start-up of the Above the Falls Citizen Advisory Committee, and we were selected to represent the environmental caucus on the group's Facilitation Committee.



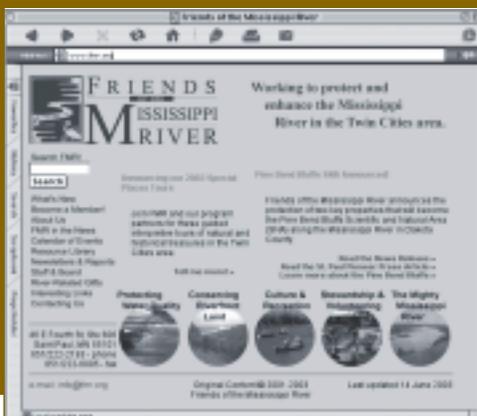
Spreading the Word

FMR works to let people know about the Mississippi River — and FMR's work — through a variety of mechanisms. We continue to improve the FMR website and we received an average of 4,321 visitor sessions per month in 2002 (more than double our average of 1,989 in 2001).

FMR also created a new monthly e-mail update for FMR members and

partners, called *Mississippi Messages*. Launched in July, the update is sent to approximately 1,600 people each month and provides information on FMR progress, programs and events as well as other river related information and tips for protecting the Mississippi in your home or yard.

www.fmr.org



Protecting and Improving Water Quality

Water quality is one of the most pressing concerns for the Mississippi River. It is closely linked to land use and livability issues in the Twin Cities as well as the many communities downstream. FMR is working to make the Twin Cities a model for decision-making that positively impacts water quality. Through our program activities, we work to activate and engage individual citizens, shape the priorities of local governments and influence public policy related to local water quality.

WATER QUALITY EDUCATION

FMR's Storm Drain Stenciling Project fosters public awareness of stormwater pollution by distributing educational materials and marking local storm drains with the message: "Please! Don't Pollute! Drains to River." In 2002, we involved 2,399 volunteers who stenciled 5,003 drains and distributed 14,755 educational leaflets in St. Paul, Minneapolis, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, and cities within the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. We also established a new partnership with the Dakota County Environmental

Education Program and developed a two-year plan to work with that agency on curb marking.

Schools are important partners in our stenciling efforts and in 2002 we worked with 67 classrooms from 32 schools and provided several additional classroom visits to teach about watersheds and urban runoff. We also implemented two workshops on service learning for 23 St. Paul teach-

ers who planned to participate in stenciling.

Working at the community level, FMR planned and presented four local watershed workshops in 2002. The workshops, which were presented in St. Paul and Maplewood, included information on urban runoff pollution and landscaping for water quality as well as hands-on yard planning sessions.

Watershed Initiative: A Strategic Program Expansion

FMR's Watershed Initiative is an exciting new program that will use grassroots advocacy, land protection and public education to achieve improvements in the water quality of the Mississippi River and its tributary creeks and streams. A key project goal is to activate and involve a diversity of stakeholders in shaping local decision-making that affects water quality.

FMR carried out extensive research and planning for this initiative in 2002. We convened a panel of water quality experts to help determine where our work was most urgently needed. These experts identified polluted runoff, especially in rapidly urbanizing areas, as a key concern that FMR can effectively address. They also advised FMR to work at the sub-watershed level where we could have a positive, measurable impact on the activities linked to water pollution.

After evaluating a number of sub-watersheds, FMR selected the Rice Creek and Vermillion River watersheds as our two focus areas for this new project. The initiative, which will be fully launched in 2003, will be a critical expansion of our efforts and will create a model that can be used in other river communities.



Hardwood Creek, pictured here, is an important tributary in the Rice Creek Watershed, which drains to the Mississippi River. The Rice Creek and Vermillion River watersheds will be the focus of FMR's new water quality initiative.

Thank you for teaching us about non-point source pollution. We learned a lot that day. We learned that the Mississippi is very polluted. We learned that the fertilizer makes the algae grow very fast. The algae takes the oxygen when it dies. The Mississippi River is connected to lots of bodies of water. That's why it is so polluted.



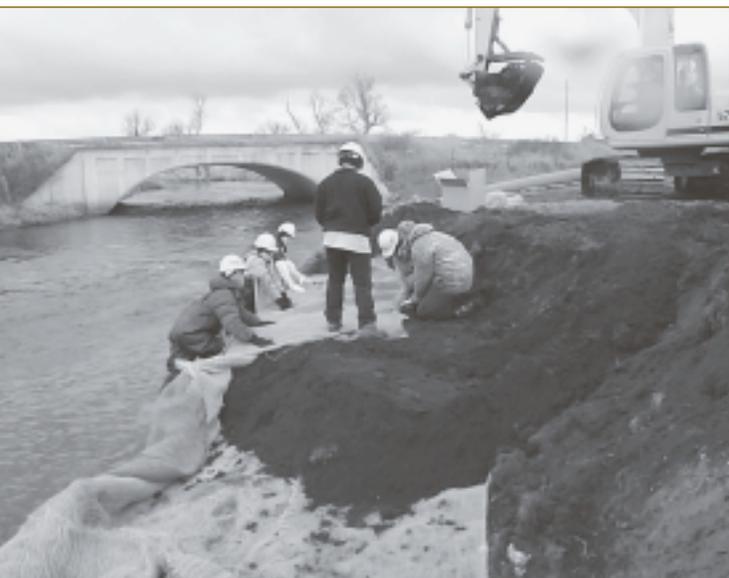
VERMILLION STREAMBANK RESTORATION

The health of this key tributary has a large effect on the Mississippi River as well as the Vermillion River bottoms, an 8,000-acre high quality natural area located at the confluence of the two rivers. FMR has been working for several years to restore streambanks along the Vermillion and promote Best Management Practices with landowners, many of whom are farmers. In 2002 our conservation staff oversaw completion

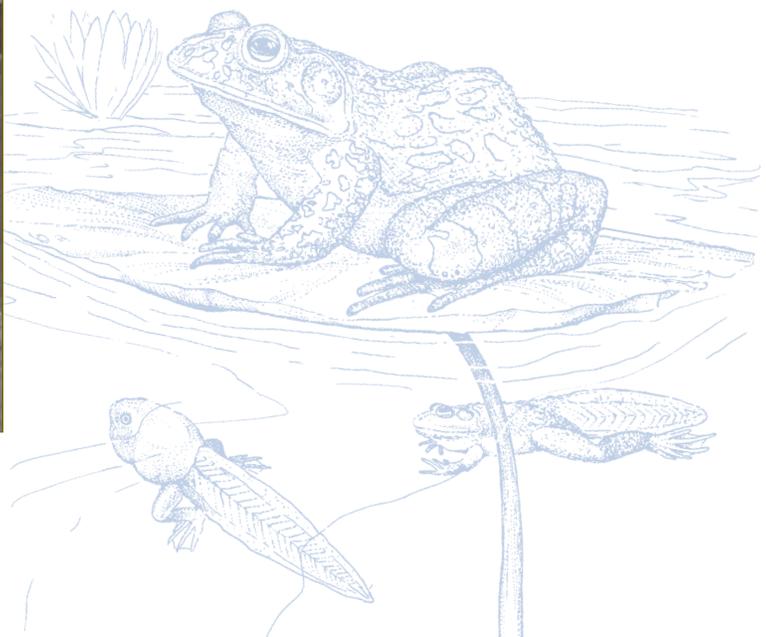
of several projects, including spring planting of about 5,500 trees and shrubs on three properties. We also provided planting plans to a landowner for an 11-acre seeding project along a tributary to the river and developed plans for installation of 400 trees and shrubs at a 1-acre site on South Creek, a Vermillion tributary.

In one particularly innovative on-the-ground project, FMR helped manage and conduct a unique bioengineering

stabilization project on a 275-ft severely eroded bank on the Vermillion River near Hastings. Carried out in concert with several partners, the restoration forms a final link in a more than one-mile stretch of river that has undergone significant restoration work in the last year. To date, FMR has restored over six miles of Vermillion River streambank.



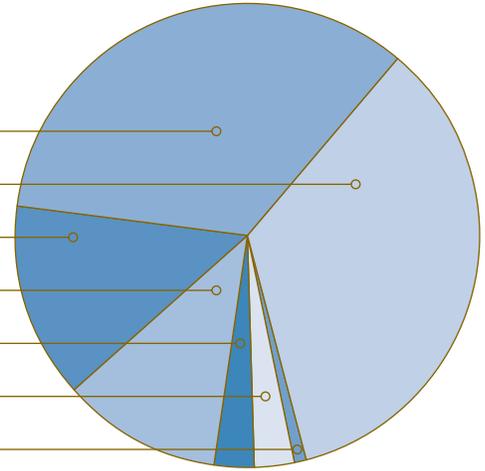
Stabilizing streambanks is one way FMR works to protect the Vermillion River. This 2002 project involved layering willow and dogwood brush between envelopes of soil held by coconut fiber mat.



2002 Financial Statement

REVENUE

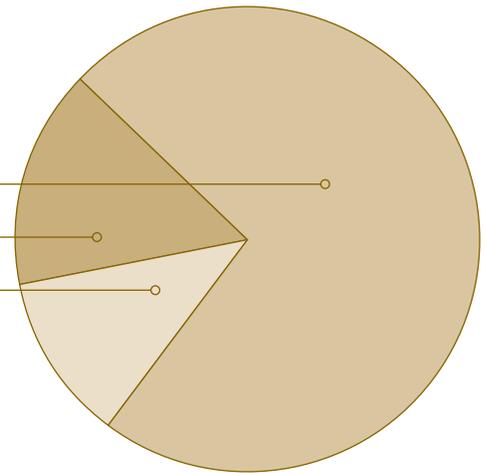
| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Foundations | \$ 164,254 | 34.2 % |
| Government | 166,937 | 34.8 % |
| Corporations | 65,183 | 13.6 % |
| Individuals | 54,051 | 11.3 % |
| Workplace Giving | 13,193 | 2.8 % |
| Fees | 12,273 | 2.6 % |
| Other | 3,748 | 0.8 % |



Total Revenue **\$ 479,639**

EXPENSES

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Program | \$ 380,150 | 73.3 % |
| Fundraising | 78,362 | 15.1 % |
| Management | 60,339 | 11.6 % |



Total Expenses **\$ 518,851**

Financial numbers from an audit conducted by Judd, Ostermann & Demro, Ltd., Certified Public Accountants.

Thank You 2002 Contributors

\$ 1-49

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