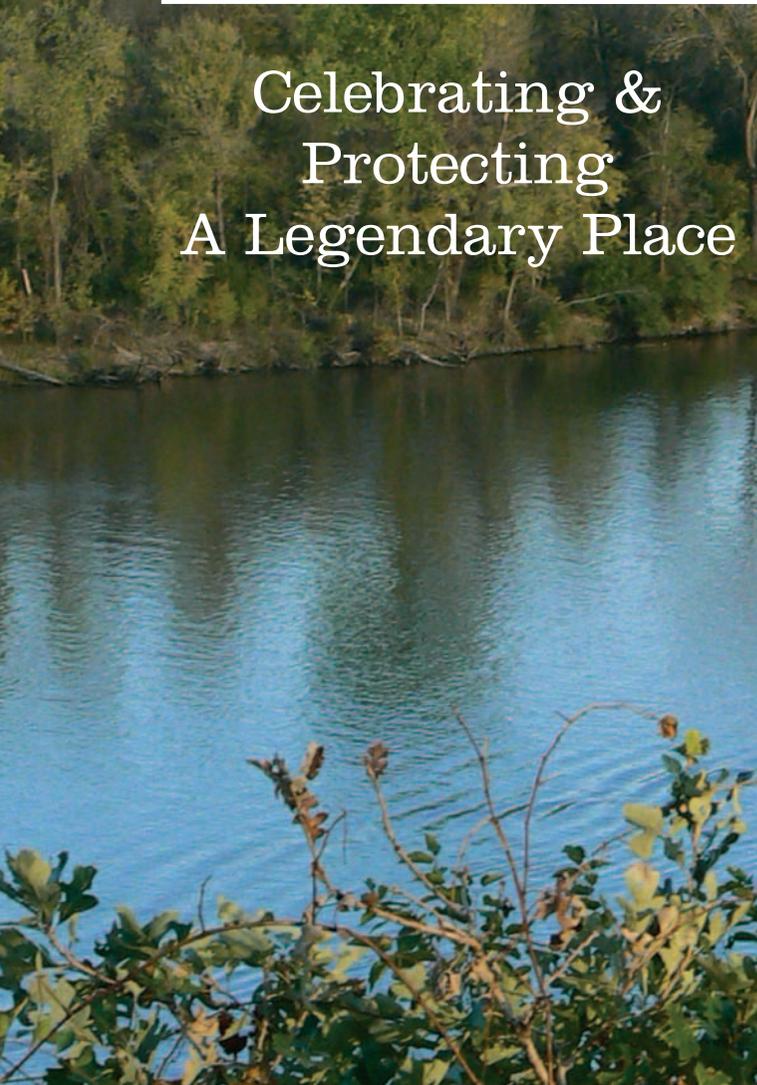




**FRIENDS OF THE
MISSISSIPPI RIVER**
ANNUAL REPORT 2007



Celebrating &
Protecting
A Legendary Place



Fifteen Years of Standing up for the River

Dear Friends,

In 2007, Friends of the Mississippi River made significant accomplishments toward our goals of protecting the river's watershed, of conserving and restoring land along waterways and of promoting stewardship along the river corridor. On behalf of the board of directors, I want to offer thanks to our talented and experienced staff; the 2,600 volunteers who rolled up their sleeves to help out on important projects; and our more than 3,400 donors, program partners and event participants.

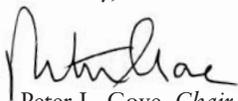
The year was not without challenge, however, as the tragedy of the I-35W bridge collapse tested the organization, occurring just days before FMR's annual river paddle, the Mississippi River Challenge. In the end, a successful one-day version of the event went forward with participants appreciative of the opportunity to do something constructive and beneficial for the river.

This year FMR celebrates 15 years of work on the Mississippi. The organization began as the idea of a few people concerned about the health and management of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities, and was launched in 1993 with financial support of the McKnight Foundation's Mississippi River Program. The organization's first task was to provide citizen input on water quality, riverfront development standards and the environmental impacts of a "working" river to the Mississippi River Coordinating Commission. I was chair of that commission, working with the National Park Service to develop the comprehensive management plan for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), established just a few years earlier. We've come a long way since then and this year we were pleased to welcome Paul Labovitz as the new MNRRA superintendent. A self-described "river rat," Paul is already making his leadership felt and we very much look forward to growing this partnership.

Over the past 15 years FMR's role has evolved to what today I believe is a national model of a place-based natural resource advocacy organization focused on—in the words of our mission statement—"engaging citizens to protect, restore and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities region."

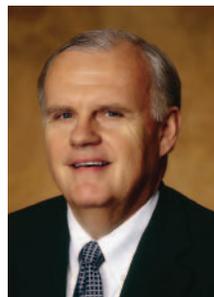
I was privileged to be the first chair of FMR's Board of Directors and am excited now to have that opportunity once again. I could not be more proud of what this organization has accomplished. But as we commemorate 15 years of hard work, significant achievements and growth in membership, donors, staff, budget and programs, we are mindful of the many challenges that remain for this stretch of the mighty Mississippi and its surrounding watershed. We remain committed to protecting and celebrating this great river.

Sincerely,



Peter L. Gove, *Chair, Board of Directors*

Cover background photo: National Park Service/MNRRA



Friends of the Mississippi River
engages citizens to protect, restore and
enhance the Mississippi River and its
watershed in the Twin Cities region.

Celebrating & Protecting A Legendary Place

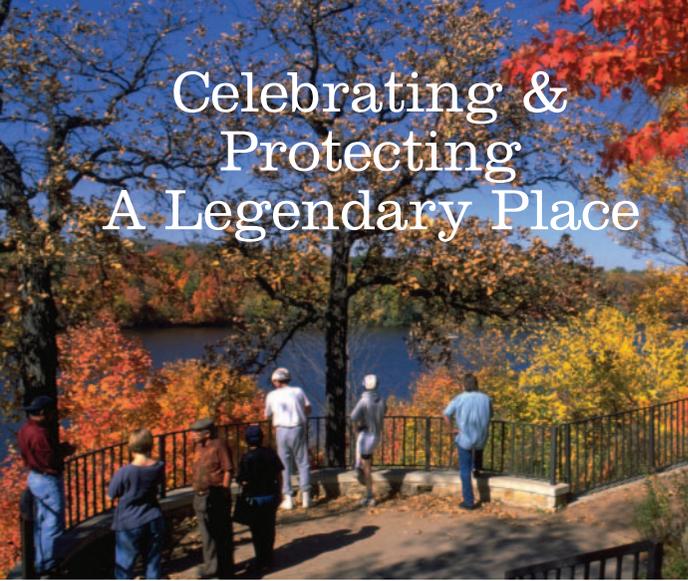


Photo: National Park Service/MNRRRA

Our river is more than a beautiful place to enjoy nature and have fun, more even than the centerpiece of the vast ecosystem that sustains us. It's the reason the Twin Cities exist, and it quietly flows through the vital culture that has grown up here. The Mississippi is truly a legendary place—known to people in all corners of the globe the same as the pyramids, the Himalayas and Paris.

That's why Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) and our many members from all walks of life are so dedicated to celebrating and protecting it. We have been blessed to live in a place rich in natural beauty and cultural vitality and want future generations to enjoy the same gift.

In August, the world's attention turned to the Mississippi out of tragedy—the collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis. Yet that was not the whole story of the river last year. Many hopeful signs are apparent, thanks to determined work by FMR, our partners and our supporters. Significant ecological sites have been preserved, clean water regulations strengthened, and stretches of riverfront protected from inappropriate development and restored to their natural state. Through advocacy and educational campaigns in three program areas (see sidebar at right), FMR is making sure the Mississippi will always be a place that Minnesotans are proud to celebrate.

Land Protection and Restoration

A healthy river is the result of good land practices. This is why Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) devotes considerable time reaching out to property owners of ecologically strategic parcels, helping them become thoughtful stewards of their land and encouraging them to explore new opportunities to permanently protect these places. We also pursue ambitious plans to restore the natural balance of land that has been degraded.

River Corridor Stewardship

One of the unique qualities of the Mississippi in our region is that an essentially urban river can offer such natural splendor and historical charm. But as development pressures all along the riverfront intensify, FMR is ready to spring into action to make sure this treasure is not squandered.

Watershed Protection

Many of us depend on drinking water from the river, and it's a favorite setting for recreation. But it is also a vulnerable natural resource. Water that is fouled anywhere in the region finds its way to the Mississippi. So FMR remains vigilant about pollution threats in the watershed—organizing public education efforts, targeting potential hazards and improving water quality in tributaries that flow into the Mississippi.

Land Protection & Restoration

Despite alteration of 98 percent of the native prairie, savanna, forests and wetlands in the Twin Cities region, we still enjoy natural amenities along the Mississippi River that you'd never expect to find in a metropolitan area of 3 million. Friends of the Mississippi River and our many volunteers are dedicated to preserving the remaining stretches of wild lands while helping property owners, citizen groups and government agencies restore natural splendor to the river corridor. This not only improves water quality and ensures healthy wildlife and fish habitat but also bestows every local resident with rich opportunities to experience the scenic beauty of this legendary place.

FMR takes a long-term approach to conserving lands: 1) We begin by identifying the most critical natural areas and reaching out to the owners; 2) We discuss options for protection, and help owners through the often complicated and technical process of conserving their property; 3) We work with owners to draft plans for restoring and managing these lands; 4) FMR staff continues working to coordinate the financial and technical resources that can help restore health and vitality to these special places.

Great Blue Lobelia is just one of the native wildflower species that are thriving at the Hastings River Flats Park thanks to FMR restoration work.

Highlights of 2007

- Protection moves forward for lands on St. Croix River and Pine Bend Bluffs
- Prairie restoration in St. Paul's Crosby Farm Park
- Key Dakota County woods and grasslands to remain natural forever
- Unique prairie treasure opens to public at Sand Coulee
- Volunteers restore blufftops with breathtaking view at Pine Bend
- Community enjoys new riverside park where petroleum tanks once stood

Our Land Protection Initiatives:

Lands near St. Croix River and Grey Cloud Island on path to protection

Dakota and Washington counties were the focus of FMR efforts last year in assisting owners of naturally significant tracts to explore protection for their land. Thanks to a 3M Foundation grant, we made initial contact with many land owners and helped people owning five key parcels begin the application process for protection through the Washington County Land & Water Legacy and the Minnesota DNR's Metro Greenways protection programs. Four of these applications involved property along the St. Croix River near its confluence with the Mississippi, and the other was in the vicinity of Grey Cloud Island on the Mississippi south of St. Paul Park. All five projects are currently pending approval by the County Board.



Owners of several key sites along the St. Croix River in Washington County are pursuing protection for their land with assistance from FMR. © Washington County

Helping landowners plan the future for natural treasures

As a proactive organization searching for opportunities to improve water quality and preserve ecological assets, FMR has a long tradition of connecting with landowners and helping them think about the future of their property. We drew up Natural Resource Management Plans for two special tracts in 2007—43 acres of glacial river terraces above the Vermillion River in southern Dakota County and the 63-acre Almquist property (see story on page 6). These plans mark an important step along the path to protection and restoration.



Helping landowners ensure ecological balance and water quality in nearby waterways is part of FMR's work. This land near Hastings is being managed under plans drawn up by FMR staff.



Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Area, a rare sand gravel prairie near Hastings, in the first stages of restoration.

Unique prairie opened for research and public enjoyment

A portion of the Sand Coulee, a unique sand gravel prairie near Hastings which is the largest remnant native prairie in Dakota County and home to 13 rare species, was opened to the public as an official state Scientific and Natural Area last fall. FMR helped spearhead efforts over several years for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to grant 76 acres of the Sand Coulee this special designation, which offers a higher level of protection than state parks. We will continue to partner with the DNR to manage and expand the Hastings Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Area.

FMR is also doing extensive restoration work at the Sand Coulee, thanks to grants and the contributions of our generous volunteers. We completed our fourth season of intensive restoration efforts at private and city-owned properties in the Sand Coulee. In critical land north of the Hastings Sand Coulee SNA, we helped restore the area through controlled prairie burns, removal of invasive species and collection of native seeds for new plantings. We partnered with Hastings High School biology students to grow seedlings in their classroom over the winter and plant them this spring.

Two Dakota County properties saved in their natural state

Two significant tracts of natural land in the Vermillion River watershed near Welch, Minnesota, received permanent protection through the Dakota County Farmland & Natural Areas Program. FMR has worked with landowners Paul & Kari Curtis and Gene & Carol Almquist for several years, drawing up Natural Resource Management Plans for their properties and helping guide the process toward a conservation easement, which ensures that the land's natural assets are legally protected. One property is 66 acres encompassing grasslands and woods at the head of an intermittent stream into the Vermillion River, and eventually the Mississippi. Across the road, the other property is 63 mostly wooded acres. The owners will continue to own their land, and were paid in return for giving up certain development rights. FMR will work with the families and Dakota County to implement the restoration plans for the land.



The grass savanna on Paul and Kari Curtis's farm near Welch, Minnesota, is rich in native species, which will be enhanced by a restoration plan created by FMR.

Land Restoration Initiatives:

Never underestimate the power of FMR volunteers

Pine Bend Bluffs, a state-owned Scientific and Natural Area overlooking the river in Inver Grove Heights, is one of the least disturbed sites along the Mississippi in the Twin Cities, according to the DNR. FMR was deeply involved in protecting this area — celebrated for its stunning river views (see main photo on report cover) and rare plant species such as kittentails and James Polanisia. We are now conducting a detailed restoration of native plant communities on the site.

This project is a testament to the dedication and determination of FMR's volunteers. In April of last year, 17 supporters gathered at Pine Bend Bluff SNA to embark on a major campaign to weed out garlic mustard, which they carried out for several weeks with a total of 130 volunteer hours. Twelve people attended a training session in June about collecting seeds, and tallied more than 200 volunteer hours throughout the summer. Seed collected by volunteers, combined with other locally-harvested supplies, was used for a 15-acre prairie restoration that was seeded in the fall.



FMR volunteers devoted many hours to weeding out garlic mustard, an invasive species that crowds out native vegetation at Pine Bend Bluffs near Inver Grove Heights.

This year FMR's restoration work continues on a new 40-acre addition to the Natural Area and other land to the south with a project to clear brush from bluff prairies and conduct a controlled burn. Creation of a Pine Bend Bluff Stewards group is planned to carry out the long-term work of caring for this important segment of our legendary Mississippi.

Showcase of riverbluff restoration

One of our longest-running restoration projects continues on oak savanna, tallgrass and sand-gravel prairies on a prime riverbluff setting owned by Flint Hills Resources in Rosemount near Pine Bend. The firm's employees joined four different teams to administer treatments to diseased oak trees, control cheat grass, hack away at exotic plant species and other projects throughout the summer. In October, 60 people from the company and the community turned out to remove buckthorn from the site and collect native prairie seeds for planting.

Bringing back a riverside prairie in Cottage Grove

FMR continued restoration over 25 acres of riverside prairie in Cottage Grove that is the site of a 3M facility. We conducted a controlled burn, while volunteers were trained to tend plantings done in earlier years. Special programs were held for 3M employees—a springtime bird hike, a prairie hike, an event to remove invasive species and a seed collection session.

Natural splendor restored to three prime locations

Environmental restoration, like raising children, is a joyful fulfilling experience from which you never walk away. FMR's dedicated efforts to revive native flora in three unique settings in the south metro area came of age last year, providing green space for people and natural habitat for wildlife. We will be checking in on these special places regularly to make sure things are going well and consider ideas for improvements.

Hastings River Flats Park: People stroll and children play alongside the Mississippi in Hastings where massive petroleum tanks once stood. Since 2003, FMR has worked to restore sections of degraded riverfront park, including creation of a 32-acre prairie and the addition of protective buffers on the shore of Lake Rebecca.

Rosemount Preserve: Partnering with the city of Rosemount, FMR conducted a prescribed prairie burn on 8 acres in April 2007 and a woodland burn on 10 acres last fall to reestablish native vegetation. Twenty-five volunteers planted 220 native trees and shrubs.



New trees and shrubs being planted at the Rosemount Preserve by FMR volunteers and staff.

Empire Wastewater Treatment Plant Site: Native species planted by FMR volunteers now dominate this 50-acre wet meadow near the Vermillion River, giving rise to spectacular wildflower blooms and harboring at least 30 bird species. We also helped restore four acres of prairie that has boosted the diversity of species in a grassland flanking the river.

LANDOWNER PROFILE

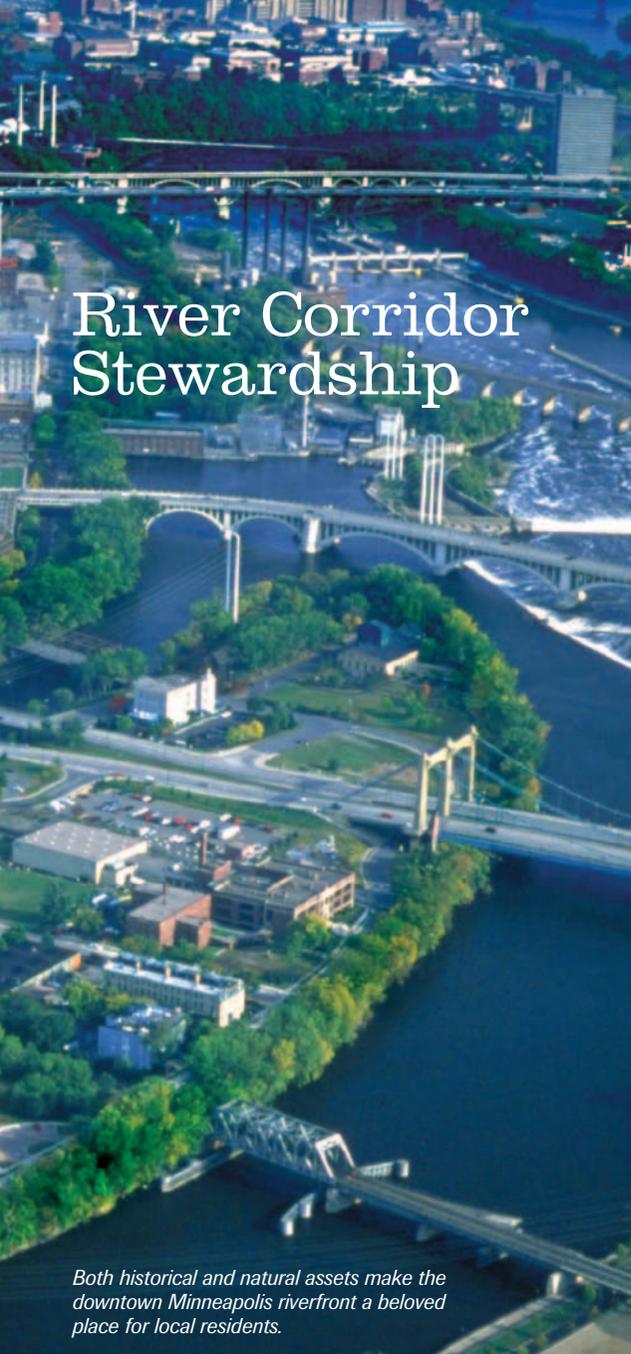
Safeguarding her lifelong home



Tecla Karpen

"It's a special place," Tecla Karpen says with soaring enthusiasm, describing the river bluff property near Hastings that her father bought in 1917 and onto which he moved an 1857 house. "I live in the woods but am still close to the galleries and restaurants of the city. Hills slope down from my house to Lake Rebecca, which is on the floodplain of the river."

A retired English teacher and founder of the Hastings Environmental Protectors organization, Tecla is working with FMR to keep her five-acre plot the way it has been all her life. "I aim to protect it for perpetuity," she declares. "The hillsides are now in the process of getting a conservation easement from Dakota County. FMR is helping me with the legality of it all, and helping me with a plan to get all the invasive species out and the reestablishment of the original woods."



River Corridor Stewardship

Both historical and natural assets make the downtown Minneapolis riverfront a beloved place for local residents.

Highlights of 2007

- St. Paul's breathtaking valley view preserved
- A better idea for new Fort Snelling project
- Volunteers restore the river Gorge
- Revealing secret treasures along river's bank
- Partnering with National Park Service and Minnesota DNR

Friends of the Mississippi River believes the 72 miles of river that run through the Twin Cities region make it a truly legendary place. We are home to the only waterfall and gorge along the entire length of the river, as well as surprisingly natural landscapes in the midst of a major metropolitan area.

While everyone recognizes that the Mississippi is a superb natural asset to the Twin Cities, it's a significant cultural landmark too, offering a valuable window on our history from the time of early Native American settlement through the heyday of St. Paul as a river port and Minneapolis as the grain milling capital of the world. This is why the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, at the urging of FMR, put the Mississippi Valley of St. Paul on its list of Minnesota's Ten Most Endangered Historic Places last year along with the riverfront St. Anthony Falls Historic Milling District in Minneapolis. This marks a new era when a natural and cultural landscape like the Mississippi is deemed worthy of preservation in the same way as architectural treasures.

After years of neglect, our urban riverfront is now hot property—a positive sign of people's appreciation for this special river whose name inspires interest all over the world. But we must remember that decisions made today about what happens along the river will still be here a century from now. A legendary place deserves to be celebrated with nothing less than first-class stewardship and redevelopment. This is why FMR members are so enthusiastic in undertaking natural restoration projects and so vigilant in monitoring urban redevelopment projects.



A citizens' coalition, led by FMR, saved St. Paul's one-of-kind riverfront from an inappropriate mall project.

Megamall-on-the-Mississippi defeated in St. Paul

The Valley of St. Paul is a sweeping scenic vista that begins in downtown, where the river widens coming out of the gorge. FMR has been drawing attention to the Valley of St. Paul as a rare treasure in an urban area, offering views today that would be familiar to Native Americans living here centuries ago.

In a major victory, FMR led a broad-based coalition of citizens to stop the Bridges of St. Paul, a mega-scaled mall, condo and parking-ramp development planned for the west river flats across from downtown that would have walled off the the river with high-rises of 12 to 32 stories. Views of the river would have been blocked and major congestion problems spawned. After three years of strong citizen opposition, the city council and planning commission both decisively opposed the project, derailing the proposed mall complex in its current form.

Protecting St. Paul's riverfront

St. Paul increasingly recognizes the importance of protecting its 17-mile stretch of riverfront. The city is now on the verge of adopting new regulations for development along the Mississippi. FMR is closely tracking their progress at city hall. The proposed law would affect several sites where FMR is already involved, including the site of the soon-to-be-closed Ford truck plant and land surrounding the former High Bridge power plant. At the Ford plant site, we are working to ensure that planning for any new development will enhance this one-of-a-kind location atop bluffs looking out on the river gorge. In planning for prime riverfront land at the High Bridge power plant, we helped develop a concept for a natural park, which was well received by the neighborhood, and there is a good chance it will be adopted.

Bikes yes! New bike bridge no!

FMR promotes biking as one of the most pleasurable ways to enjoy the river that runs through our communities, but we vigorously opposed plans that were suddenly hatched last summer to build a new bridge over the Mississippi to extend the popular Midtown Greenway biking and hiking trail from Minneapolis into St. Paul. We advocated using the historic bridge that already exists on this former rail line or routing the greenway a short way to the Lake Street Bridge, rather than crowd the only gorge along the entire Mississippi with another new, expensive bridge. The proposed bridge is now on hold, due in part to widespread opposition.

Changes to Fort Snelling threaten river's historical character

The confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers is a sacred place to Dakota Indians as well as the site of the first European settlement in Minnesota, Fort Snelling. This rich history is still with us today in a spot that resonates with natural beauty. But plans to build a modern-style visitors' center at Historic Fort Snelling, just a few feet from the bluff, imperil the character of this evocative river junction. FMR is raising awareness of what might be lost in this project, proposing that the new visitors' center be built by reusing some of the fort's neglected historical buildings.

Volunteers step forward to restore Mississippi's only gorge

One of the many exceptional features of the Twin Cities is the river gorge running from downtown Minneapolis to St. Paul, offering a welcome patch of wildness right alongside bustling city streets. This area is beloved by local citizens, as witnessed by how many volunteers join FMR's Gorge Stewards—a dedicated crew who roll up their sleeves to help take care of this special place. More than 496 people helped weed out invasive species, pick up trash, and collect prairie seeds at 21 Gorge Stewards events in 2007. Interpretive events brought out another 300 folks to learn about the gorge's ecology, history and restoration efforts.

A particular focus for the Gorge Stewards is an exceptional oak savanna along the riverfront at 36th Street on the Minneapolis side. Last year FMR sponsored eight events there in which ecologists demonstrated what's special about the place and trained people in restoration work. An Oak Savanna team, numbering 20 volunteers, has now been



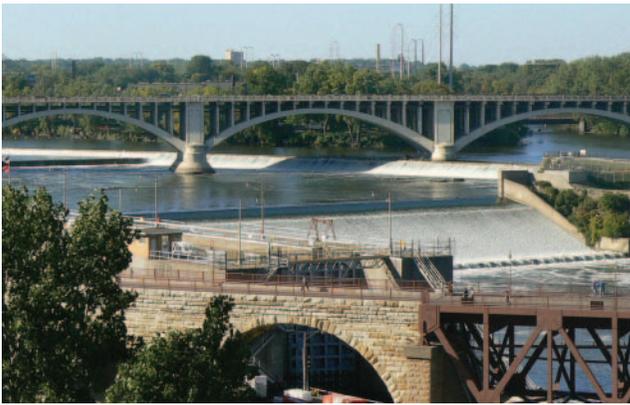
Minneapolis and St. Paul are home to the only true gorge along the Mississippi—a wonderful place for city folks to enjoy nature. Photo: National Park Service/MNRRRA

formed to continue the restoration project there and in a neighboring grove of Maple and Basswood that survives from before the time of European settlement in Minneapolis.

Partnering with a number of concerned groups, FMR is working to ensure that a planned visitors' center at Historic Fort Snelling does not diminish the historical atmosphere of this scenic blufftop.

Ensuring visual quality for the new 35W bridge

The tragedy of the I-35W bridge collapse saddened our entire community. The new bridge will stand as one memorial to those who were lost, and FMR is proud to have served on an advisory panel on bridge design and aesthetics. Working with MnDOT and their consultants, the panel set visual quality goals to ensure that the new bridge is built with the appropriate aesthetic quality to fit the scenic and historic character of the Minneapolis riverfront area.



As Twin Citizens rediscover the Mississippi, the downtown Minneapolis riverfront is seeing more and more development pressures.

FMR responds to overload of development in Minneapolis mill district

A surge of proposed development along the river in downtown Minneapolis has raised concern about the future of the St. Anthony Falls Historic Milling District from many people, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation Alliance of Minnesota.

FMR has been engaged in numerous efforts to protect the area's amenities, helping lead a coalition of citizens' groups who challenged city plans for taking park land on historic Nicollet Island to build a football stadium for a private high school. The plan, twice rejected by the city's Heritage Preservation Commission, was nevertheless approved by a vote of the city council. The coalition has seen success in winning significant changes in the scale and design of the project that

will make it less obtrusive if it is built. A proposal to build an underground hydroelectric generating plant next to the Stone Arch Bridge is being closely monitored by FMR. In December, the Minneapolis Park Board voted to deny Crown Hydro developers access to parkland, which essentially cancels the project. The developers are now fighting that decision in federal courts.

Celebrating special places along the river

FMR celebrates the Mississippi with a regular schedule of Special Places Tours that encourage the public to discover the river's ecology, history and culture. Events last year included birding at Pine Bend Bluffs, paddling on Rice Creek, wildflower identification at Grey Cloud Dunes prairie and learning about river history and culture at Mounds Park in St. Paul.

For information about this year's tours, sign up online for our monthly e-mail newsletter:

www.fmr.org/news/messages

Bringing stakeholders together to discuss river protection tools

At the invitation of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, FMR convened a series of meetings to gather ideas and opinions from stakeholders—environmental groups, neighborhood organizations, businesses who use the river, public officials and citizens—to evaluate how well the river corridor is being managed and protected.

The Mississippi corridor was designated many years ago by the state as a Critical Area, which means it was deemed to be a place with unique public assets worthy of special attention from state agencies and in state policies. It was an honor for FMR to be selected by the state as the organization best able to lead a process to evaluate how well the Critical Area program is working in regard to protecting natural resources and ensuring appropriate development. FMR acquired valuable first-hand experience in working with river stakeholders and new information to help us in our policy work.

Sixty-six representatives of stakeholder groups participated in the meetings, and there was a surprising level of agreement on a number of key points: maintaining a unique state management framework for the river region, strengthening the partnership with the National Park Service, increasing coordination between government agencies, establishing a process for early input by the DNR and other stakeholders in decisions affecting the river, and providing outreach and technical assistance to river communities. These findings were written up in a report to DNR, and will provide the basis for future policies.



FMR partners with National Park Service

FMR is conducting a series of workshops about ways to protect river resources in partnership with the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area in four riverfront communities: Brooklyn Park, Cottage Grove, Hastings and Ramsey. The workshops involve elected officials, park managers, planners and citizens to discuss best practices in planning and management for riverfront property.

The Rum River as it flows through Anoka to meet the Mississippi. The Minnesota DNR has called upon FMR to help them reach out to communities to assess how well the river is being managed.

Watershed Protection

One of the core lessons from the science of ecology is that all things are connected. You can't pave over land or spray chemicals or let waste go down a storm drain, without it having a negative effect somewhere else. The biological health and recreational benefits of the Mississippi depend on what happens everywhere throughout the metro area and the entire Midwest.

That's why FMR has always looked beyond the Mississippi itself to fulfill our mission of protecting one of the world's great rivers. We work across the seven-county metropolitan area with citizens, government agencies, businesses, schools and non-profit groups to stop pollution threats, capitalize on environmental opportunities and raise people's awareness about water quality. We've devoted a lot of attention to two target watersheds—the Vermillion River watershed in Scott and Dakota counties and the Rice Creek watershed in Washington, Ramsey and Anoka counties.

As the old saying goes, we all live downstream. That's why FMR is determined to safeguard our water quality by protecting our watersheds.

Volunteers gather to help restore wetlands in Dakota County's Sand Coulee. Water from all across the region flows into the Mississippi, which is why FMR focuses on stream quality throughout the watershed.

Watershed Highlights of 2007

- Protecting one of America's best urban trout streams
- New clean water standards in north suburbs
- Volunteers jump in to monitor pollution in Rice Creek
- Rubber ducks help keep the river clean
- Activists hit the streets in Minneapolis and St. Paul
- Promoting rain gardens





A victory for clean water in northern suburbs

The Rice Creek Watershed will enjoy significant improvement in water quality thanks to new regulations enacted this spring in response to a push from FMR and our partners.

More than 200 square miles of the north metro area, including 60 lakes and three major streams that eventually drain to the Mississippi River, will benefit from these greatly improved stormwater management rules.

This victory was the result of determined grassroots organizing work. FMR was instrumental in forging a strong coalition of organizations and concerned citizens willing to organize, do research, attend public hearings and submit testimony about the importance of the issue. FMR also conducted extensive public outreach and education efforts, while working hand in hand with watershed stakeholders to ensure that the Rice Creek Watershed's new rules meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

FMR spearheaded a successful campaign to strengthen water quality protection in the Rice Creek watershed, which stretches across the north metro area.

Vermillion Stewards take care of the trout—and the river

The Vermillion River, which meanders through Scott and Dakota counties before emptying into the Mississippi, is considered the nation's only trophy trout stream within a metropolitan area. This is good news for anglers, and for the rest of us too, since we benefit from the environmental assets of a clean river. The Vermillion River Watershed Stewards, organized by FMR, aim to keep things that way.



Volunteers with the Vermillion River Stewards jump into their work of protecting this Mississippi tributary that flows through Scott and Dakota counties.

This lively band of volunteers, which involved 259 people last year, regularly monitors the trout population, restores the natural shoreline, plants native species on nearby land, and cleans up trash along this unique river. In conjunction with the Stewards, FMR also conducted three educational events in the area—a how-to seminar on building rain gardens; a tour of the University of Minnesota's new Outreach, Research and Education Park near Rosemount; and a workshop for gardeners about plants that help clean the water.



Citizen researchers coordinated by FMR help scientists and state officials keep tabs on pollution levels in Rice Creek and nearby waterways in the north metro area.

Innovative program involves citizens to measure stream health

More than 25 adults regularly go wading in Rice Creek, not just for the fun of it—although it is a lot of fun—but to gather critical scientific data. It's part of an innovative effort sponsored by FMR, the Rice Creek Watershed District and Minnesota Waters (see profile on page 18) to monitor water quality in Rice Creek, Hardwood Creek and Clearwater Creek in the north metro area. Volunteers comb through the stream bottoms in search of macroinvertebrate insects, whose presence or absence in a stream is a good indicator of stream conditions.

FMR launched this research initiative, known as SHEP (Stream Health Evaluation Program), in 2006 by recruiting and training volunteers to collect macroinvertebrate samples and other important stream health data. SHEP yields not only scientifically reliable data about the health of the streams, but also increases public awareness about water quality.

How rubber ducks help protect the river

Friends of the Mississippi River is an innovative advocacy group well known for achieving goals through an array of effective strategies—including, starting last year, rubber ducks. FMR worked with the “Minnesota Water—Let’s Keep It Clean” campaign to help broadcast a series of innovative radio, print and TV spots urging residents to keep our water clean by keeping pollutants out of stormdrains. One of the televised ads, “Fowl Water,” used rubber ducks to draw attention to the connection between streets and streams. The “Minnesota Water—Let’s Keep It Clean” campaign is a workgroup of the Minnesota Metro Watershed

Partners, a coalition of more than 60



public, private and non-profit groups concerned about water quality.

The group introduces a

clean water curriculum in schools, offers tips to homeowners about how to prevent stormwater pollution and provides an on-line clearinghouse of information and resources.

For more about the “Minnesota Water—Let’s Keep It Clean” campaign, visit www.cleanwatermn.org.

Getting the word out about how to keep our waters clean

There's a lot we can do to minimize pollution before it enters our streams, lakes and rivers—that's the message FMR took to the public in a variety of ways last year.

Taking it to the streets: More than 1,500 people hit the streets of Minneapolis and St. Paul to warn people of an environmental hazard right in front of their homes. Local storm sewers drain straight into the river and its tributaries—a fact that's easy to forget. So FMR volunteers stenciled almost 4,000 stormdrains and distributed 12,000 flyers with the message, "Please Don't Pollute! Drains to River!"

FMR goes back to school: Our staff gave presentations in dozens of metro area schools, offering lessons on how to prevent stormwater pollution and other important subjects.



Public interest in rain gardens is growing, so FMR hosted expert Bob Fossum at a number of workshops showing how to create them.

All you want to know about rain gardens:

Watershed protection begins at home. How you take care of your lawn has big implications for the health and beauty of our river and lakes. That's why we conducted public workshops at local libraries, a neighborhood center and a food co-op last year explaining how to minimize water pollution running off from lawns and gardens. People were especially excited to hear about rain gardens—low-lying plantings of wildflowers and other wetland species, which collect run-off from pavement and filter out particulates and other pollution.

What's bad for frogs is bad for humans, says noted biologist

Dr. Tyrone Hayes offered an explanation for the alarming decline of frog populations to a packed audience at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey



Berkeley Biology Professor Dr. Tyrone Hayes

Institute of Public Affairs last spring. Hayes, professor of integrative biology at the University of California-Berkeley and leading researcher on the subject, pointed to the role of atrazine (the second most commonly used pesticide in the world) in causing sexual malformations in amphibians at levels that are well within what the EPA considers safe for human drinking water.

"We use 80 million pounds annually in the United States, primarily on corn," he said, which means it is extensively sprayed throughout the Mississippi watershed. Hayes warned that this raises serious concerns about human health, because frogs' sexual hormones are chemically identical to those of humans. Friends of the Mississippi River sponsored Dr. Hayes' talk together with the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization.



A volunteer wades in Rice Creek looking for tiny insects that offer scientists information about water quality. FMR partners with Minnesota Waters to provide high quality data on ecological conditions.

PARTNER PROFILE

Tapping the power of citizen researchers

Friends of the Mississippi River is partnering with



Minnesota Waters to train volunteers to monitor stream health in the Rice Creek watershed in the northern metro area. Minnesota Waters has pioneered the idea of enlisting citizens to provide high-quality data about the state's waterways that otherwise would not exist.

The Rice Creek partnership (known as SHEP, or Stream Health Evaluation Program) began in 2006 with guidance from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Last fall citizen researchers recruited by FMR donned hip waders and slogged through local streams in search of macroinvertebrates—tiny bugs that live along the bottom of streams.

Some of these insects are quite sensitive to toxins in the water, while others can tolerate pollution at varying levels, explains Courtney Kowalczak, Minnesota Waters Program Director for Citizen Monitoring. "So by monitoring which species are in a stream, you have a good measure of water quality."

Kowalczak is thrilled with the program. "It proves citizen volunteers can be very accurate in collecting data. Professionals shoot for 95 percent accuracy in their work, and last year we had 96.5 percent in the Rice Creek watershed. That's an important finding that reassures public officials about this kind of work."

Join the fun! Make a difference for our great river.

Last year, 2,703 FMR volunteers donated more than 10,000 hours (worth an estimated \$180,000) to protect and restore the Mississippi River. That's an extraordinary accomplishment, the results of which can be seen throughout the region.

Volunteers are truly the backbone of FMR's efforts to protect and celebrate our river. Tackling projects that range from planting native trees and leading nature hikes to keeping things running smoothly at the Mississippi River Challenge and organizing citizen input on crucial public issues, these remarkable people are central to Friends of the Mississippi River's success.

Program / Work	Volunteers	Hours contributed
Gorge Stewards / Stewardship and habitat restoration in Mississippi River Gorge	496	1,232
Vermillion Stewards / Habitat restoration in Dakota County and Vermillion watershed	347	1,136
SHEP / Stream monitoring in the Rice Creek Watershed District	28	1,122
Mississippi River Challenge / Assisting paddlers and other event tasks	125	800
Storm Drain Marking / Stenciling	1,641	3,336
Organizational Support / Office and event assistance; advocacy, consulting, writing, etc.	66	2,384
Totals	2,703*	10,010

**Adjusted for multiple event participants - 2,639*

For exciting volunteer opportunities, see www.fmr.org/participate/events

Or contact FMR volunteer coordinator sue rich at srich@fmr.org; or 651-222-2193 extension 14

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Working on the river opens new career for FMR volunteer

Tim Boyle

Tim Boyle grew up looking out on Lake Superior in Ashland, WI, and now that he lives in Minneapolis he says it seems only natural to spend a lot of time near the river. That's what prompted him to volunteer with Friends of the Mississippi River two years ago.



He began helping with restoration projects in the gorge, which is near his home. But soon he was visiting FMR's offices to sort seeds as part of other restoration projects, and jumping from boat to boat as our official photographer for the Mississippi River Challenge. "For me, these are social outings more than work details," he explains. "You get to know a lot of great people."

Working with FMR has also helped launch Tim on a long dreamed-of new career as a naturalist and nature photographer. He now works at Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley and WoodLake Park in Richfield as a naturalist, and always brings his camera along on FMR volunteer projects to shoot photographs.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The fun, the friends, the Challenge.



Jen Lynch

When the I-35W bridge collapsed into the river just days before FMR's annual Mississippi River Challenge last summer, Jen Lynch figured

she'd forgo the annual canoe and kayak event. "How are they going to do it? Should I do it? I then decided even though it was a terrible tragedy we still need to celebrate the river."

She's glad she did. Jen, who grew up with the Mississippi in her backyard in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, savors any chance to be out on the river. "You get a completely different perspective of things when you are right on the water. When you go through the city you realize this stretch of the river is just as beautiful as the rest."

Jen, who in her day job is the office manager for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, worked as a volunteer on the first Challenge and has paddled it ever since.

"I look forward to connecting with people I've met in years before," she says. "The campground is a blast. It's really great to stay inside the fort. The food is great. The beer is great. The band is great. And you get a real sense of accomplishment when you're done."

Mississippi River Challenge goes on just days after I-35W bridge collapse

Final preparations for the 2007 Mississippi River Challenge were in full swing August 1 when the FMR office, along with the rest of the world, learned the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis had collapsed, plunging people and vehicles into the waters below. We were stunned by the news of deaths, serious injuries and grieving families.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, and 387 people were signed up to paddle right beneath the bridge site three days later in FMR's 4th annual 44-mile canoe and kayak event to celebrate the river. FMR staff debated canceling the Challenge, but after consultation with the Coast Guard, paddlers, our members and our sponsors, we decided to hold a shorter one-day event beginning downriver from the bridge. Dedicating the event to the victims, families and rescuers of the bridge tragedy, we directed people on our website how to make donations to help survivors and families of the victims.

Two hundred and ninety people chose to participate, many of whom said paddling the river helped them cope with their sadness about the lives lost in the bridge collapse. Although the first day of the trip was cancelled, we gathered Saturday night for the planned camp-out inside the walls of Fort Snelling and on a bright Sunday morning shoved off for the 22-mile paddle to Grey Cloud Island.

Paddlers raised \$91,000 through pledges from friends and family to support FMR's work protecting the river, and sponsors contributed \$41,500. The tragedy will not be far from our minds on July 26, 2008 when Mississippi River Challenge canoeists, kayakers and—new this year—bicyclists pass the construction site for the new bridge.

Paddle it.
Pedal it.
Protect it.



This year, for the first time, you can either bike or paddle on the opening day of FMR's annual celebration of the Mississippi. Join with hundreds of others to protect and celebrate the river.

Great River Energy Mississippi River Challenge 2008

Bicyclists will join canoeists and kayakers July 26 in celebrating the Mississippi River and raising funds to protect it. The Great River Energy Mississippi River Challenge, one of the most high-profile events raising awareness of the river's importance to our community, has been organized by FMR since 2004.

The fun starts Saturday, July 26 with kayaks and canoes putting in the river at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park in Brooklyn Park for a 22-mile journey to Fort Snelling and bikers beginning at Fort Snelling for 22- or 40- mile loops along the river. Everyone meets up at Fort Snelling that evening for a festive camp-out with good food, good drink, historical reenactments and live music. The next morning Challenge participants will paddle another 22 miles to Grey Cloud Island.

For more information about participating in the Great River Energy Mississippi River Challenge, see www.mississippiriverchallenge.org. You can paddle, pedal or do both, spend one day or two, or just come for the one-of-a-kind party inside the walls of Historic Fort Snelling.



To bike or paddle in this year's
Great River Energy
Mississippi River Challenge, visit
www.mississippiriverchallenge.org



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Anoka County Parks
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 Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
 Rice Creek Watershed District
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 Minnesota Historical Society
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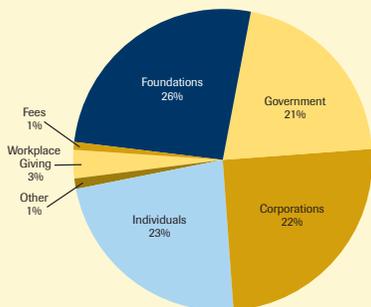
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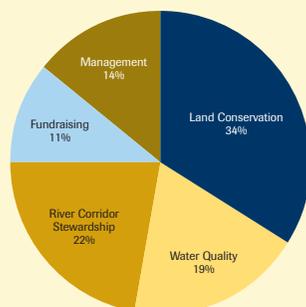
Revenue

Foundations	320,918
Government	259,249
Corporations	307,853
Individuals	283,856
Other	11,865
Workplace Giving	31,439
Fees	14,779
Total Revenue	1,229,959



Expenses

Programs	
<i>Land Conservation</i>	405,470
<i>Water Quality</i>	233,351
<i>River Corridor Stewardship</i>	264,876
Total Programs	903,697
Fundraising	133,276
Management	172,351
Total Expenses	1,209,324



FMR is pleased to meet all the accountability standards of the Charities Review Council of Minnesota



FMR is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund

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MEMBER PROFILE

Two of the river's best friends

Tom & Elizabeth Bell

With a home that looks out on the river's Grey Cloud Island channel, Tom & Elizabeth Bell are constant and enthusiastic supporters of Friends of the Mississippi River.



Tom, a retired biology teacher at Park High School in nearby Cottage Grove, has studied this stretch of the river for decades. He sometimes leads FMR's birding outings to special spots he's discovered. Elizabeth is involved with Friends of the Bay, a citizens' group determined to put the brakes on a proposed massive housing development near the river, and she credits FMR with helping them hold off the project until its negative environmental impacts could be fixed. "They offered us good advice about how to work," she says.

"FMR is an excellent investment for us. They've been of real assistance down here on an ongoing basis," declares Tom, a former township board member who now sits on the planning commission. "It's a fantastic organization that's accomplished a great deal for the time it's been around."

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 Karen Miksch & Mark Pedely
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 Susan Donohue
 Brenda Van Dyke in honor of
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 on their wedding

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 Brian H. Davis & Marilyn J. Doyle
 in memory of David Reger
 John & Virginia Greenman in
 memory of Tom Kelley
 Gina Harper in memory of
 Joseph Rogich and his love for
 the Mississippi River
 Ms. Elizabeth Hinz in memory of
 Herb Opp
 Gregory Page in memory of
 Tom Kelley

*Gifts of all sizes are appreciated and make a difference for the river.
 Donors of \$30 or more are listed in this annual report. Please contact us at 651-222-2193 x22
 with any omissions or errors so we can correct our records. Thank you for your support!*

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BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

A river for our future

Chris Higgins

"If you're traveling and tell someone you're from Minnesota, they'll politely nod," recounts FMR board member Chris



Higgins. "But just tell them you live on the Mississippi River and they light up."

An account executive with the Padilla, Spear, Beardsley public relations and marketing firm, Chris is a communications specialist and joined the FMR board four years ago to help get the word out about protecting and promoting the river.

A native of California, he now feels right at home biking or paddling along the river—which is why he stepped forward to chair FMR's Mississippi River Challenge Committee. "It's a beautiful place to be, and I think one of FMR's biggest messages is that we have just one good shot at responsible development. One shot for making sure that everyone can enjoy the river, not just a few. Once something is built, it's there for 100 years. We need to remember this is everybody's river. And as a citizens' group, FMR speaks for everyone—even those not born yet."

2007: FMR's Major Accomplishments



- Helped pass state-of-the-art water quality standards for the Vermillion River and Rice Creek watersheds.
- Protected ecologically sensitive land on four properties totaling 237 acres near Hastings and Inver Grove Heights.
- Received the 2007 Minnesota Environmental Initiative award for our work with several partners to protect and restore the Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area.
- Nominated the Mississippi Valley of Saint Paul to a highly publicized list of the state's 10 most endangered historic places. The first time a landscape has ever been listed for protection.
- Organized and led the community coalition that defeated the proposed Bridges of St. Paul mega-development on the West Side Flats across the river from downtown St. Paul.
- Led a series of four stakeholder meetings to gather input on improvements to state policies affecting the Mississippi.
- Launched a comprehensive redesign of our web site, www.fmr.org, that brought a fresh look and easier access to information.
- Led 23 educational and interpretive events that drew 567 people.
- Inspired 2,703 volunteers to donate more than 10,000 hours to projects like habitat restoration, water quality monitoring and riverbank clean-ups.
- Conducted ecological restoration work on nine strategic properties covering more than 350 acres.

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