



Friends of the Mississippi River  
2006 ANNUAL REPORT



*Protecting Our Community Treasure*



# Letter from the Board Chair

## Dear Friends,

Several national publications have rated the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan area as one of the top places to live in the country. Many factors contribute to our high ranking and the high quality of life we enjoy as residents of this community. The Friends of the Mississippi River focus on one – the Mississippi River, our community treasure.

The Mississippi River is one of the great rivers of the world – an ecological system of international significance. As the river glides through the heart of the Twin Cities, it provides fish and wildlife habitat, open space, drinking water to millions, incomparable scenic views, a variety of recreational opportunities and many important cultural and historic sites.

How can we protect and improve our community treasure – now and for the future? We all have a role. Friends of the Mississippi River works strategically to focus our limited resources on key areas where we can have the most impact protecting, improving and restoring important natural areas, water quality and the ecological, cultural, historic, scenic and recreational assets of the Mississippi River Corridor.

During 2006 we worked to accomplish the goals we established in our strategic plan through three interrelated programs: Land Conservation, Watershed Protection and River Corridor Stewardship. To support our work we depend on the generous support of our members, foundations and grants. In 2004 we initiated the Mississippi River Challenge. Last year over 300 paddlers took the Challenge sponsored by the Minnesota Chiropractic Association. The Challenge raises funds for our work – more than \$92,000 in pledges in 2006 – and it also creates an opportunity for so many people to establish their own personal bond with the great river – our community treasure.

FMR continues to grow and evolve as an organization. In 2006 the Board of Directors authorized the creation of a Council of Advisors, a small group of wise and thoughtful individuals who have agreed to provide strategic advice and counsel on matters of importance for the river. I am pleased to report that the first Council of Advisors will begin its work in 2007. In the past year, FMR has also welcomed three new Board members and five talented staff.

On behalf of the FMR Board of Directors and staff, I thank you for your efforts to protect our community treasure through your support of our work through your volunteer work, financial contributions, and program participation. I invite you to read our annual report to learn about all we have accomplished together and discover additional opportunities to protect our community treasure. We all envision a river that is cleaner, healthier, more alive and more inviting – an even greater community treasure.

Warm regards,  
Lynn Moratzka



Lynn Moratzka  
Chair, FMR Board of Directors

## Our Mission

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a leading citizen organization working to protect and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities area. We believe the tremendous ecological, cultural, scenic and recreational values of the river must be carefully tended to ensure that they continue to be shared equally by all citizens and that they endure for future generations. We accomplish these goals through three interrelated programs.

- **Watershed Protection:**

Working with citizens and local governments, we draw attention to the health of local rivers, lakes and wetlands and bring citizen opinion to bear on decisions that improve water quality.

- **Land Conservation:**

We work with public and private landowners to protect, restore and manage important natural areas along the river and its key tributaries.

- **River Corridor Stewardship:**

The Mississippi River cannot protect itself. We engage citizens in a variety of educational, recreational, and volunteer stewardship activities that support their desire and give them the understanding to advocate on behalf of the river's public values at City Hall or the State Capitol.



## How We Protect Our Community Treasure

*“What makes a river so restful to people is that it doesn’t have any doubt – it is sure to get where it is going, and it doesn’t want to go anywhere else.”* — Hal Boyle

Generations of Twin Cities inhabitants have found peace and rest, as well as livelihood, from the portion of its journey that the Mississippi River makes through our communities. Protecting that asset and all of the many other treasures provided by the river, its tributaries, and the lands that drain into it is the mission of Friends of the Mississippi River. A natural endowment, the river will continually generate new value for us if we guard its health and beauty.

In 2006, FMR increased efforts on all fronts to protect and restore the Mississippi. Our combination of education and advocacy resulted in lands conserved, habitats restored, water cleaned up, heritage protected – and in unforgettable river experiences for thousands of people in our annual Mississippi River Challenge and other events.

### **Watershed Protection**

The Mississippi River system is the source of drinking water for many of us, and also the place we turn for relief from the stresses of everyday life and a chance to experience nature nearby. But polluted runoff from development that does not respect the river threatens the health of this resource. We focus our water quality efforts on influencing local land use decisions that significantly affect the Mississippi. We work to raise awareness of the issues by engaging citizens in the work of influencing local government and in hands-on restoration projects. We work to persuade both public officials and private citizens to consider themselves part of the Mississippi River system and to reflect on their impact on it.

### **Land Protection and Restoration**

Land and water, in a sense, are one. What happens on the land significantly influences the health and quality of the river. One of the primary tasks of FMR is to identify and work with landowners to conserve high-quality natural areas in the Mississippi River system that provide free “ecosystem services” like wildlife and fish habitat, biodiversity, pollution filtration, and flood storage benefits to our communities. We work to link these areas through greenways, or natural corridors. We help landowners act as thoughtful stewards of these parcels of land.



*Mississippi River from Pine Bend Bluffs.*

### **River Corridor Stewardship**

The banks of the Mississippi River, occupied by humankind for thousands of years, continue to draw visitors and inhabitants, and also to stimulate new development. FMR seeks to protect the timeless values of the river corridor for the benefit of this and future generations. Development plans sometimes threaten to obscure views, privatize public riverfront, degrade shorelines and diminish habitat. FMR works with citizens and local government to enforce laws that protect the river corridor, and to empower communities to shape the character of the river where they live.

# Watershed Protection

Although the 1972 Clean Water Act began the work of restoring our waters, we cannot take the health of the Mississippi for granted. Rivers no longer catch on fire or flow red or black, but water quality has leveled off and in some cases begun to decline. Rapidly urbanizing areas like the Twin Cities metro face a profound challenge. From the paving of formerly grassed areas to the construction of pipes that send runoff directly into our waters, development is contributing to the slow degradation of the river.

Again in 2006, we devoted special care and attention to the Vermillion River in Dakota County. A coldwater trout stream and a valuable community resource, the Vermillion is challenged by rapid development and suburbanization. Stormwater from urban areas warms the river (thermal pollution) and threatens the trout. Also, runoff from streets and parking lots carries a host of pollutants including pesticides, bacteria and nutrients and other pollutants. FMR works to help shape development in the Vermillion watershed so that it protects and conserves the quality of the river resource.

We encourage citizens to take responsibility for the health of their watersheds, with hands-on stewardship and educational programs aimed particularly at the Vermillion River and Rice Creek watersheds. By teaching citizens about the health of their local waters, we help excite them about its value to their lives, and increase their motivation to stand up for the river as key public decisions are made about it. FMR is building a base of citizens who are communicating with their elected and appointed officials about the need to be protective of our community treasure.

## Vermillion River Watershed Advocacy

In years to come, how we manage development will strongly influence the kind of Mississippi River watershed we enjoy. A signature accomplishment of FMR in 2006 was our successful work to promote protective Vermillion River Watershed Standards. Adopted by the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (JPO) in the fall of 2006, these standards are an improvement over the original proposals, and will help tailor development to the needs of a healthy river system. FMR worked with hundreds of citizens through education and outreach to help convince the JPO Board to leave a strong legacy for the future through a protective approach.

FMR was able to achieve our three core goals for the watershed standards:

- Passage of strong watershed-wide stormwater management standards;
- Implementation of a septic system compliance program;
- Passage of standards for establishing and restoring buffers along the Vermillion River and its tributaries.

## Lakeville Low Impact Design Project

Low impact design or LID is a set of best practices that benefit taxpayers and the environment by mimicking pre-development hydrology where possible to keep water runoff on-site, reducing pollution and beautifying the landscape. FMR was part of a partnership in 2006 that advanced a project in Lakeville educating public officials and citizens about the values of alternative design and development methods. The project provided a side-by-side comparison of the existing traditional development design and a LID design. The project report concluded that low-impact design alternatives offer superior water management, water quality and quality of life outcomes with less expensive installation and reduced maintenance costs. This innovative project was a finalist for the 2006 Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award in the Land Use category.



*In a side-by-side comparison the Low Impact Development scenario (right) improved water quality while reducing development costs.*



**KEVIN SMITH**  
Parks and Recreation  
Superintendent  
City of Hastings

Working with watershed landowners to promote good land stewardship is a primary FMR mission. For the last three years, FMR has teamed

with the City of Hastings and its Parks and Recreation Superintendent, Kevin Smith, on a series of projects to restore, beautify, and promote public appreciation of city lands, including the protection of the rare Sand Coulee. One of the most important accomplishments is the restoration of the land that is now the Hastings River Flats Park, formerly a tank farm.

Together with the City, FMR has worked to restore native plants, improve wildlife habitat, monitor the health of the park, and make this prime riverfront land an inviting place.

“It has been great working with FMR,” says Superintendent Smith. “All of the people at FMR have exhibited exceptional professionalism. I personally appreciate all the attention to detail, the broad set of resources they bring to the collaborations and the commitment to educating our residents and staff. The partnerships have been nothing but positive throughout.”

FMR staff also praise the partnership. “Without Kevin’s steadfast and reliable support over the years, a lot less would have been accomplished, not only at Hastings River Flats but also at other Hastings projects we have worked on,” says FMR Restoration Ecologist Karen Schik. “The city of Hastings has been a great partner to FMR, and when it really comes down to it, the city is people. And Kevin is certainly one of the key people.”

### Stream Health Evaluation Project (SHEP)

Just like a person taking a physical, a river or stream needs a baseline of health and frequent monitoring to determine trends. FMR launched the Stream Health Evaluation Program (SHEP) in the Rice Creek Watershed District in 2006. SHEP is a new model for volunteer stream monitoring in the state of Minnesota, and is designed in partnership with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the nonprofit group Minnesota Waters. SHEP uses trained volunteers to evaluate the biological health of streams. It provides watershed communities with a premier volunteer monitoring program that produces reliable data and actively engages citizens in protection and conservation of the watershed.

The program is unique, providing scientifically reliable volunteer monitoring data and offering extensive opportunities for interaction and relationship building between volunteer monitors and local officials and decision-makers. We fielded 30 citizen volunteers in three SHEP teams who monitored six restoration project sites across the Rice Creek Watershed District. Volunteers collected thousands of samples, and laboratory analysis proved SHEP data to be 99.6% accurate across all teams. In a comprehensive programmatic evaluation, SHEP scored high marks in volunteer enjoyment, data accuracy and program design.

### Vermillion River Watershed Stewards

People won’t stand up to defend a river if they’re not connected to it. FMR worked to connect scores of people through the Vermillion Watershed Stewards in 2006. FMR conducted three educational events – a water quality education workshop, a prairie tour, and a how-to rain garden workshop – attended by 82 people. FMR also held volunteer events including shrub plantings, a prairie planting, and a wetland planting, as well as invasive exotic species removals and a watershed clean up. These events drew 284 citizens who devoted 528 hours to these projects. The watershed litter cleanup attracted volunteers to three sites located along the Vermillion in Rosemount, Farmington and Hastings.

### Water Quality Education

When you see a Twin Cities storm drain with the message: “Please! Don’t Pollute! Drains to River,” you’re most likely looking at the work of an FMR volunteer. In 2006, 2,018 student and adult volunteers stenciled 3,943 drains and distributed 14,921 educational door hangers to Twin Cities households and businesses. Volunteers contributed 4,893 volunteer hours to this cause. FMR gave a non-point source pollution prevention presentation to each of the 63 groups of stenciling volunteers.

## 2006 Highlights

- We organized citizens and key stakeholders to persuade the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization to **adopt protective stream buffer and stormwater standards** that will conserve this high-quality stream and tailor development to protect river health.
- FMR was the recipient of the 2006 Environmental Awareness award from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The award recognizes FMR's work to **use cutting-edge design to help communities protect the Mississippi River**.
- We worked with residents in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Saint Paul Park, and Grey Cloud Island Township to ensure major development proposals **respect the unique natural and cultural assets of the river corridor**.
- We played a leadership role on a City advisory committee made up of neighborhood, business and environmental interests to support the implementation of an award-winning plan that **calls for continuous green space and trails** on both sides of the river in north and northeast Minneapolis.
- We launched the Stream Health Evaluation Program in the Rice Creek watershed, training volunteers to **collect results that were 99.6% accurate** from thousands of samples and establishing a baseline of water quality from which to measure future trends.
- We made major strides in working with landowners to protect and restore the Sand Coulee, a rare sand gravel prairie and **the largest native prairie remnant** in Dakota County.
- We led a design team that completed a concept plan for an interpretive trail corridor that will **connect downtown Rosemount to the Mississippi River**.
- We led the Clean Water Stewardship component of the Saint Paul Environmental Roundtable which presented recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on how to improve the City's performance on water quality. **The project won the 2006 Nonprofit Mission Award** in the Advocacy Category from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.



*With encouragement from FMR and hundreds of citizens, the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization adopted standards that require vegetated stream buffers like this, which protect water quality and stream health.*



*Rain gardens are beautiful and they can help save our rivers and lakes. This rain garden in the City of Burnsville reduces stormwater volume by 92%! PHOTO COURTESY OF BARR ENGINEERING.*

## Watershed and Rain Garden Workshops

FMR held eleven water quality workshops in 2006 for 227 community members interested in watershed-friendly lawn and garden care at venues ranging from the Minnesota Home and Garden Show to the Living Green Expo.

## Saint Paul Environmental Roundtable

FMR staff helped lead the Saint Paul Environmental Roundtable to a successful conclusion. A year-long effort to engage citizens in developing recommendations to the Saint Paul City Council and Mayor regarding specific steps that the City could take to improve its environmental performance, the Roundtable resulted in significant new ideas in the area of Clean Water Stewardship, including improved stormwater standards, better construction site erosion control, and environmentally sound street reconstruction practices. Efforts are now underway to carry out the implementation of many of the recommended actions. The project won the 2006 Nonprofit Mission Award in the advocacy category from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.

## Dakota County Septic System Inspection and Abatement Program

Improperly maintained on-site disposal, or septic systems, are a major source of pollution in many areas. In 2006, the Vermillion Watershed – in cooperation with Dakota County – developed a septic system inspection and abatement program that FMR and area residents had advocated for several years. The program will begin addressing the bacteria and other contamination seeping into area wells, groundwater and into the Vermillion River. An age-based assessment of every septic system in the floodplain of the Vermillion River will be coupled with on-site inspections for those systems built before the adoption of current standards. The owners of systems deemed not in compliance, including those leaking pollutants into the groundwater, will be required to update their systems within a specific timeline and will be provided with low-interest loan options.



## Land Protection and Restoration

The beauty and majesty of the original Mississippi River landscape are still visible in many places – and FMR is working to bring more of them back. Although the vast majority of our area’s prairie, savanna, forest and wetlands have been altered or destroyed, critical parts remain that we can protect and restore.

Land protection and restoration is important for other reasons. Many of the habitats we conserve provide fish and wildlife habitat, reduce pollution, control flood waters, and provide other services to our society. Beauty and economics work hand in hand, just as FMR works hand in hand with landowners, local governments and others to renew the health of land along the Mississippi.

### Landowner outreach

In 2006 FMR contacted 80 Dakota County landowners and conducted face-to-face meetings with many of them. Three landowners submitted applications in 2006 for permanent protection of their land through the Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas Program. FMR staff were able to assist these landowners in exploring protection options and in developing and submitting applications to the County’s program. In one case, within the Sand Coulee near Hastings, FMR was able to broker a relationship between the landowner and the DNR. The DNR has made an offer to purchase the property, which contains rare, high quality prairie.

### Heritage Land Registry

FMR’s Mississippi-Vermillion Heritage Land Registry helps both private and public landowners become active stewards and provides the assistance needed for them to protect and improve the ecological functions of their land. We now have 53 registrants and nearly 3,000 acres enrolled. In 2006, FMR worked with nine of the Registry members on restoration activities or natural resource management planning.

*What a difference! FMR assisted Heritage Registry members Harry and Patty Benjamin to restore this Mississippi River bluff property to native prairie.*



## Working with Citizen Advocates



**CAROL SWENSON**  
West Side Saint Paul

West Side Saint Paul resident Carol Swenson regards urban rivers as more than amenities. “They’re an important city-building tool and a living resource that we need to take care of,” says Carol.

This is just one of the impulses behind Carol’s thoughtful and persistent advocacy on behalf of appropriate riverfront development along the West Side Saint Paul riverfront. Joining forces with FMR and other community residents through her district council, she has been articulate in opposition to the proposed Bridges of Saint Paul project, which in the form proposed in 2006 would have put tall towers across the river from downtown Saint Paul, blocking one of the region’s most magnificent viewsheds and in effect privatizing a share of the waterfront. For two decades, neighborhood residents and business owners have called instead for an urban village to complement, rather than obliterate, the river landscape.

Carol’s interest in the river and the city dates back to around 1990, when she spent six weeks on a trip in association with the Design Center for the American Urban Landscape looking at cities up and down the Mississippi. “It was an opportunity to experience the river in ways that I hadn’t before, to understand how the relationship between rivers and cities can contribute to a healthier community.”

The point of Carol’s work, and that of her allies in the community including FMR, is not to stop all development. Rather, she says, it’s about “helping us envision and be supportive of development that is environmentally appropriate and brings the broadest benefits to support a vibrant community.”

FMR’s experience with other riverfront development issues brought insight and new options to the table, Carol says, and FMR staff were effective spokespeople who helped communicate messages to the press and decision-makers. Their involvement demonstrated that the proposed project impacts a wide array of stakeholders, she adds.

“FMR has been a really important partner in this work,” Carol remarks. “They’ve brought that larger perspective of the river as a whole and have also brought environmental concerns to the table. Their expertise and professional approach to the issues are valuable. We’re fortunate to have such an organization in our community.”



## Restoration

### Restoring Wetland and Streambank Health at the Empire

**Wastewater Treatment Plant:** In its third year of restoration, this project is flourishing. FMR continued to manage exotic species control efforts at the 50-acre wetland restoration, and hosted a 25-person volunteer event to install 1,400 wet meadow plants. FMR monitored the ecological progress of the wetland as well as the streambank restoration throughout the summer. We also continued restoration of a 4-acre prairie.



*Swamp milkweed and other native wetland plants flourish on this 50 acre wetland restoration on the Vermillion River.*

**Bluffland Restored to Health on Company Property:** After eight years of sustained effort, this very significant bluffland area, which is owned by Flint Hills Resources, has been transformed into a showcase restoration site. What was once a dense buckthorn thicket is now an open savanna again with ancient spreading oaks and waving prairie grasses. Rare sand-gravel “goat” prairies are restored to vitality and former cropland is sporting oak seedlings and prairie flowers. At a 65-person volunteer event on October 14, community and employee volunteers collected and planted prairie seeds, and planted acorns and prairie seedlings.





**Former Tank Farm is Now a Revitalized Natural Park:** FMR obtained a \$5,000 grant from the Minnesota DNR Metro Greenways Program to continue this restoration project at the Hastings Riverflats Park which was begun in 2003. New funding allowed FMR to increase the plant diversity at the lakeshore and at the park entrance. In collaboration with a Hastings High School biology class, 30 students installed 300 plants at the park entrance. Eight volunteers installed aquatic plants at the lakeshore and assisted with weeding. FMR also hired and oversaw a contractor to control exotic species at the 30-acre prairie restoration in its third growing year.

**Helping 3M Restore Prairie in Cottage Grove:** FMR worked with 3M to coordinate and manage restoration of a 25-acre high quality prairie remnant at the 3M facility on the river in Cottage Grove. In addition, FMR facilitated three 3M employee events – a bird hike in the spring, an exotic species removal and a prairie seed collection in the fall.

**Guarding the Health of the Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area:** In 2006, FMR continued the long-term management and restoration at the spectacular Pine Bend Bluffs SNA, which is owned by the Minnesota DNR. We conducted exotic species removal on a new 12-acre portion of the site, a prescribed burn of the 25-acre oak forest, and installation of a 2-acre prairie, the latter with the help of 30 volunteers at an event in June.

**Supporting the Sand Coulee Comeback:** FMR has been working to protect and restore this rare sand gravel prairie (the largest native prairie remnant in Dakota County) for several years. In 2006, with wonderful volunteer help, we removed invasive woody species from 50 acres of prairie, removed exotic species from 30 acres of adjacent woodland, completed a prescribed burn on 20 acres of the prairie, and removed weeds from two acres. FMR also completed a prairie stewardship plan for a 78-acre property on the south side of the coulee. Large sections of the coulee are in private

ownership and we are now working with nearly every landowner at the site, communicating with all of them on a regular basis. FMR completed exotic species control and prescribed burns on 26 acres of prairie owned by the City of Hastings at the sand coulee. Finally, FMR worked with the biology class at the Hastings High School to grow and install native plants in and around a stormwater pond at the site.

**Renewing the Rosemount Preserve:** FMR worked with the City of Rosemount to manage restoration of a 16-acre property the city recently obtained, located adjacent to another FMR restoration project site. FMR completed intensive exotic shrub removal on ten acres of the woodland in the spring, followed by a prescribed burn of the woodland in fall as follow-up control. We also conducted a breeding bird survey and continued work on the 6-acre prairie restoration that was initiated in 2004. A 25-person volunteer event in April helped install 220 native trees and shrubs.



*Prescribed burns like this one at the Rosemount Preserve re-establish the natural order in this oak-dominated woodland.*

**Tending to Spring Lake Park, Dakota County:** FMR completed exotic species management along the Mississippi River bluffs at the popular Spring Lake Park, clearing 77 acres of exotic trees and shrubs.



## River Corridor Stewardship

Globally unique in its watershed size and magnificence, the Mississippi River also offers unique natural and cultural features in our region that it offers nowhere else. The river changes more in its 72-mile journey through the Twin Cities than it does anywhere else along its 2,400-mile length, changing from a prairie river to a gorge at St. Anthony Falls and finally to a big floodplain river in downtown Saint Paul. We enjoy some of the most spectacular scenery and plant and animal diversity of the river basin. Protecting that quality and diversity is one of our primary missions.

Mississippi River stewardship is not a spectator sport – with FMR’s encouragement and technical support, it’s a hands-on opportunity for citizens of the Twin Cities region to pitch in and make a difference.

### River Corridor Advocacy

#### *Technical Assistance to Riverfront Communities*

Helping local governments and citizens envision and put in place policies to protect a high-quality river corridor is a big part of what we do. After the Minnesota DNR reorganized how state critical area law – which protects essential river corridor lands – will be managed and enforced, FMR convened a working group of natural resource professionals. We developed several strategies to improve critical area protections, including outreach to local government officials, development of a model critical area ordinance, and coordinated communication efforts regarding comprehensive plan updates and amendments. FMR is now integrating these ideas into our strategic plan as we look to assist communities throughout the 72-mile Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) corridor in embracing their riverfront.

#### *River’s Edge Development and Collaboration with U of M Metropolitan Design Center*

One of the most valuable scenic and natural gems along our community’s span of the Mississippi River is the Rural Open Space District of the Mississippi River Critical Area in Grey Cloud Island Township. FMR, the Minnesota DNR and many others have raised concerns about the enormous impact the proposed River’s Edge development and its 605 homes would have on the high quality forest, bluff, floodplain and backwater habitat on the property. State law prohibits urbanization of

this part of the Mississippi Critical Area. FMR helped local citizens make the case to city and township officials to protect the area by modifying the River’s Edge development project, and to ask the DNR Commissioner to uphold critical area law.

FMR also worked with the University of Minnesota Metro Design Center and local elected officials to create and present a set of three design alternatives for the River’s Edge proposal that would protect critical area lands as natural habitat and open space. We engaged the Design Center again to develop more detailed designs for the critical area portion of the project. Two design alternatives were presented at a public workshop to 45 community members. FMR staff gave a presentation about how other cities have successfully funded and protected natural areas and open space valued by the community. FMR followed up with city officials and Metropolitan Council staff about the feasibility of new designs.

#### *Proposed Bridges of Saint Paul*

The proposed “Bridges of Saint Paul” project threatens to destroy one of the most significant viewsheds of the metropolitan Mississippi River. The proposed mega-mall type development would put 12 to 32-story towers across the river from downtown Saint Paul in defiance of two decades of community planning and visioning that call for a neighborhood-scale urban village to complement, rather than obliterate, the river landscape.



FMR worked extensively with local citizens, neighborhood district councils and environmental groups to oppose the Bridges as proposed by a local developer. We coordinated with citizens and partners to plan and present testimony for the Saint Paul Planning Commission. FMR staff met with all seven city council members and maintained close contact with Mayor Coleman and his staff regarding the project's status. After the Planning Commission denied the zoning change by a 13-6 vote, the developer withdrew the proposal and attempted to reconstitute membership of local district councils in its favor. FMR continues to work closely with the neighborhood groups and other partners to shape the upcoming public process.

### *Holman Field Floodwall*

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) again sought approval in a years-long campaign to build a floodwall and earthen dike at the Saint Paul Airport, across the river from downtown. FMR staff met with Mayor Coleman and City Council members to outline the many objections to the proposal because of the physical and scenic impacts the floodwall would have on the river.

After the Planning Commission approved the project, FMR and several other groups filed an appeal to the City Council. In a contentious 4-3 vote, the appeal was upheld, thereby denying the MAC's proposal. After Mayor Coleman expressed major concerns about the proposal, MAC withdrew and agreed to make changes to their plan. FMR participated in two processes to reshape the project, but both processes were largely ineffective at bringing about any significant changes. FMR opposed the project to the end. The final vote approving the floodwall plan was 4-3 in favor.

## Young Artists Support the River

### GODZILLA IN THE GORGE AND THE SEWARD NEIGHBORHOOD PLAY GROUP

The battle to save the mighty Mississippi became a successful stage production in the summer of 2006 when about a dozen kids under the guidance of Louise Robinson and Neal Cuthbert put on *Godzilla in the Gorge* in the Seward neighborhood of Minneapolis.



*Reptiles Rule! Godzilla, the much misunderstood monster, is shown here fiercely defending the Great River!*

The third annual production of this youthful troupe, *Godzilla in the Gorge* pitted monsters that would pollute or destroy the river (including Furious George and the Evil Happy Fun Monster) against the Mississippi's protector, Godzilla. Huge turnouts generated proceeds that were generously donated to FMR.

In the process of putting on the play and taking a subsequent tour along the river with FMR staff, young members of the play group came to see how individuals can either damage or protect the river. They spotted furniture, cigarette butts, appliances, graffiti and other kinds of pollution in and around the gorge.

"If you look past the garbage, it's beautiful down there," said sixth-grader Audrey Cuthbert. "I think what people do to the river is kind of sad."

Said third-grader Duncan Cross: "If everyone knew that they were polluting our drinking water, they would think twice about it."

Andre Mohring, a sixth-grader, said he's glad that there are groups like FMR working like Godzilla to protect the river. "I think it's great there's an organization working on just this one river, trying to help us all take care of it."

FMR and the community are fortunate that these young actors are contributing their talents to raising public awareness. It's a hopeful sign for our future.

## *Proposed Football Stadium on Nicollet Island*

DeLaSalle High School has proposed to build a football stadium on Nicollet Island. The project will require closing a 150-year-old public street and turning public riverfront parkland over for private use. Many groups including FMR oppose the construction of this stadium in the heart of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District because it will irrevocably harm the historic and scenic character of the island and remove valuable open space from the public domain.

FMR requested that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) deny DeLaSalle's request to site the project on MPRB-owned land, encouraged citizens to do the same through e-mail action alerts and phone calls, and lobbied individual park board members. When the MPRB approved the project and the decision shifted to the Minneapolis City Council, FMR worked closely and intensively to lead a coalition opposed to the proposal that included park users, historic preservation advocates, and residents. Our coalition prepared and presented over two hours of testimony in opposition at a public hearing of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC). The HPC denied the application by a 7-0 vote. But an appeal to the City Council resulted in an 8-4 vote overturning the HPC's decision. Other opponents to the project have filed a lawsuit to stop the project.

## *Above the Falls Committee Impact on Industrial Land Use Policy*

The Above the Falls Citizen Advisory Committee (AFCAC), a 30-member board of citizens, businesses and environmental groups, advocates for implementation of the Above the Falls Master Plan, an award-winning plan that calls for continuous green space and trails on both sides of the river north of downtown Minneapolis. Irene Jones, FMR's Outreach Director, served for the fifth year on the AFCAC, where she co-led the meetings and played an important coordinating, agenda-setting and facilitating role. FMR and the AFCAC successfully advocated that a new Minneapolis Industrial Land Use Policy would not conflict with the goals of the Above the Falls plan.

## **Community Stewardship of the River Corridor**

### *Gorge Stewards*

The unparalleled river gorge in the Twin Cities is benefiting from an unparalleled outpouring of volunteer support. We continued in 2006 to create a network of volunteer stewards around the gorge with 33 events. Interpretive events attracted 550 participants (a 29% increase from 2005), and stewardship events drew 623 community members, who donated 2,027 volunteer hours. Most of the events had an ecological or historical focus, and some were educational presentations and open houses to give neighborhood residents a chance to connect with, learn about and celebrate the



*With future generations in mind, hundreds of volunteers restore the great Mississippi River Gorge*

river and the project's many successes. These interpretive events also included activities such as a heron watch in the gorge and a spring woodland plant hike. Others were volunteer events led by conservation biologist Carolyn Carr and FMR staff geared to carrying out the restoration goals at key sites in the Minneapolis gorge. These "Oak Savanna Workdays" involved invasive species removal, prairie weeding, and other maintenance activities. Other activities included clean-ups and seed collection.

### *Special Places Tours*

FMR conducted ten Special Places Tours in 2006. These events are designed to be fun, active and educational – teaching people about the Mississippi's ecology, culture, and history while encouraging river stewardship and river-related recreation. They inspire a commitment to the river, and encourage participants who have not already joined to become members of FMR.

The tours included spring birding at Wargo Nature Center, a fall geology hike at Minnehaha Falls Park, two sessions of the popular wildflower walk at Grey Cloud Dunes, a new paddle route on the Rum River, the traditional paddle through the gorge during peak fall colors, owl watching at Spring Lake Park, and more. These events were attended by 303 people in 2006 and supported by 15 volunteers. The Special Places Tours have been growing in popularity each year since their inception and most are filled to capacity well before each event.



## The Mississippi River Challenge

A beautiful weekend supported the 2006 Minnesota Chiropractic Association-American Spine Foundation Mississippi River Challenge August 5 and 6 – and paddler surveys indicated that they enjoyed themselves immensely. FMR benefited to the tune of more than \$92,000 in pledges.

Over 300 paddlers took the Challenge in 2006, an increase of 42% (almost 90 paddlers) from 2005. The addition of the one-day option enabled 64 additional people to participate, and we plan to continue to offer this option in future years. Thanks to the Minnesota Chiropractic Association for helping bring on board many of the new paddlers!



Numerous new and returning sponsors provided both cash and in-kind support. In addition to event collateral and media sponsors, we strategically placed paid advertising and gained a substantial amount of earned media – bringing total media impressions for the 2006 Minnesota Chiropractic Association Mississippi River Challenge to 5,703,110 – an increase of nearly 1,000,000 over 2005. Significant television coverage both before and during the event helped propel the Challenge to a new level of success.

## River Challenge Participants Paddle It and Protect It

### KATIE HAAS

It's one thing to travel over and around the Mississippi River every day like most Twin Cities inhabitants, and it's another to watch it from the



*Nick Watts and Katie Haas paddle in the 2006 River Challenge.*

river's surface for two consecutive days. That's what FMR Mississippi River Challenge participant Katie Haas of Minneapolis and her fiancé Nick Watts have done the past two years.

For Katie, a practiced wilderness canoeist and former canoe guide at a YMCA Camp Menogyn, the experience has been both a lot of fun and an education.

"It's lived up to its name as a challenge," said Katie, a youth social services worker (Nick works in public television). "It's very different for me to paddle through the city, seeing the river from the perspective of what brought people here in the first place. Today most of us stay out of the river but originally it was the reason for being here."

The trip exposes paddlers to both significant natural beauty and the impacts of industrial and motorized recreational use, observed Katie, who has served as a Challenge safety captain, helping to keep watch on other paddlers and responding to any mishaps. "You pass a number of areas that are parks, where the natural habitat is coming back. It's beautiful."

The occasional evidence of pollution and areas in need of restoration, Katie added, "are a good reminder of why FMR needs to be supported... It makes us all feel good in the Challenge to know the money we're raising is going to protect the river."

Another highlight of the Challenge, Katie said, is that the participants are "well-fed, well-taken-care-of," and the Saturday night party at Fort Snelling with music and refreshments is "a blast." She and Nick plan to be part of the Challenge again in 2007.

## Working With Volunteers



**GWEN AND FRANK NEUMANN**

FMR got more than just two able volunteers when we signed Gwen and Frank Neumann up for the Stream Health Evaluation Project (SHEP) – we got a poet,

too. Pleased with the first year of their opportunity to sample Rice Creek to set a baseline of water quality, Gwen wrote an “Ode to the SHEP Project” that begins:

*“Twas the end of the summer when we got a request  
From Friends of the Mississippi  
with some creeks to test*

*“They were concerned about the water and its quality  
And were looking for some folks with some time that was free...”*

Retired educators who live in Circle Pines, Gwen and Frank have lived beside Rice Creek for 31 years. Although the creek behind them is undeveloped, they’ve observed significant development in the area around them and wondered what effect it was having on the health of the Creek.

“I’ve always been curious as to how the water quality was doing out here, given the development that’s happened over the years,” Gwen says. “So when the opportunity came to volunteer on behalf of the Rice Creek Watershed, we said, ‘Oh great.’”

After training, the Neumanns and approximately 30 other volunteers donned waders and dipped nets in the stream, collecting samples of macroinvertebrates that are a signal of water quality. The results were positive in two ways: first, thanks to their concentration, the Neumanns and others delivered results that were more than 99.5% accurate. And they found healthy populations of beetles, damselflies and other macroinvertebrates.

Noting that SHEP will help set a baseline for future monitoring of the creek, Frank says, “It’s like taking an EKG on your heart, and then looking for gradual improvement.” The Neumanns plan to be back out on the stream to monitor it again this year.

After training, the Neumanns and approximately 30 other volunteers donned

## Volunteers:

### *Make the Difference for a Treasure at Risk*

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Friends of the Mississippi River. They do everything from keeping office operations running to restoring habitat and protecting critical areas. These citizen stewards promote the health and well-being of the Mississippi River in countless ways.

In 2006, 3,305 volunteers completed 10,824 hours of FMR service worth more than \$100,000. But in truth the value of the work is incalculable. We thank all volunteers for helping us in 2006.

| Work   | Program Name                | Volunteers | Hours contributed |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Stewardship and habitat restoration<br>Mississippi River Gorge | Gorge Stewards              | 623        | 2,027             |
| Habitat restoration<br>Dakota County and Vermillion watershed  | Vermillion Stewards         | 393        | 1,249             |
| Stream monitoring  | SHEP                        | 28         | 760               |
| Office assistance  | Tuesday Night Crew          | 13         | 359               |
| Assisting paddlers and other event tasks                       | Mississippi River Challenge | 140        | 1,326             |
| Hike/walk leading  | Special Places Tours        | 16         | 64                |
| Stenciling   | Storm Drain Marking         | 2,092      | 5,039             |



*Stream Health Evaluation Project volunteers collect macroinvertebrate samples in Rice Creek.*

### *Want to help in 2007?*

For current volunteer opportunities, please check our Volunteer Events calendar at [www.fmr.org/participate/events](http://www.fmr.org/participate/events), or contact Volunteer Coordinator sue rich at [srich@fmr.org](mailto:srich@fmr.org), or 651-222-2193, extension 14.

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 Minnesota Chiropractic Association/American Spine Foundation  
 Minnesota Community Foundation  
 Minnesota Environmental Partnership  
 3M Foundation  
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 Unity Avenue Foundation

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## Government

Anoka County Parks  
 Dakota County  
 City of Hastings  
 City of Minneapolis  
 City of Saint Paul  
 Metropolitan Council  
 Minnehaha Creek Watershed District  
 Mississippi Watershed Management Organization  
 Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District  
 State of Minnesota, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources  
 State of Minnesota, Metro Greenways  
 State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources  
 State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
 St. Paul Port Authority  
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
 Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

## In Kind

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 American Canoe Association  
 Anoka County Parks  
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 Midwest Mountaineering  
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 Mississippi Market  
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 Natural Resources Restoration, Inc.  
 Pajunas Interactive, Inc.  
 Panera Bread  
 Pioneer Press/Twin Cities.com

Pracna on Main  
 Premium Waters  
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 New York Times  
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 Recreational Equipment, Inc.  
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## 2006 Financial Information

### Expenses

#### Programs

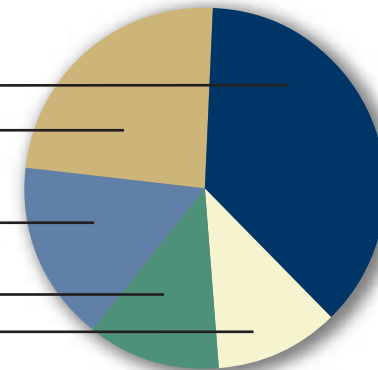
|                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Land Conservation</i>          | \$473,986        |
| <i>Water Quality</i>              | \$307,568        |
| <i>River Corridor Stewardship</i> | \$210,091        |
| <b>Total Programs</b>             | <b>\$991,645</b> |

Fundraising \$153,237

Management \$142,146

**Total Expenses \$1,287,028**

36.83%  
 23.90%  
 16.32%  
 77.05%  
 11.91%  
 11.04%  
 100.00%



### Revenue

Foundations \$315,838

Government \$379,479

Corporations \$266,293

Individuals \$271,636

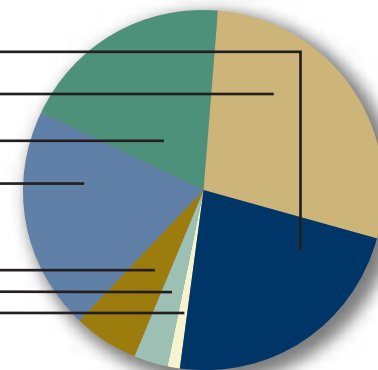
Other \$79,031

Workplace Giving \$35,768

Fees \$13,472

**Total Revenue \$1,361,517 100.00%**

23.20%  
 27.87%  
 19.56%  
 19.95%  
 5.80%  
 2.63%  
 0.99%  
 100.00%



From an independent audit conducted by Judd, Ostermann & Demro, Ltd. Certified Public Accountants.



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



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# Board Members:

Give Their Time and Talent



FMR Board Back row: (from left) Michelle Beeman, Terra Penny, Peter Gove, Lynn Moratzka, Stewart Crosby, Forrest Flint, Edward Oliver. Front row: Kate Jaycox, John Linc Stine, Steve Novak, Candace Campbell, Deanna Wiener, John Anfinson, Chris Higgins, Hokan Miller. Not pictured: George Dunn, Perry McGowan.

## Working With Our Diverse Board

### JOHN LINC STINE



In 2006, John Linc Stine joined his professional talents and personal interest in clean water to the work of the FMR Board. Now the director of the Environmental Health Division of the Minnesota Department of Health, John previously worked on river and water issues at the state Department of Natural Resources, where he was manager of the section responsible for the Critical Area program, floodplain management and wild and scenic rivers.

John's service on the FMR board is just an extension of his lifelong interest in the Mississippi River and water generally. During his childhood in Roseville, John remembers trips with his father to Mounds Park in Saint Paul to watch spring floods.

"It's a spectacular place," he says. "It's one of the best views in the Midwest." Later, as a University of Minnesota student, he says, he came with a class to the same park to learn more about the significance of the river in Native American and early European settlement history. At the DNR, his respect for the river's resources and the use of land along it deepened.

So why is he now on FMR's board? John says it's because of the way FMR operates. He worked with FMR during his time in the DNR on land use issues and came to respect the organization. "One of the things I like about the FMR is its balance," says John. "The organization is interested in promoting the conservation and value of the river without alienating folks. The mission of the organization and the way FMR works with people are consistent with my values and interests."

## FMR Staff



FMR Staff Back row: (from left) Ryan Kane, Heather Haynes, Claire Stokes, Gabe Ormsby, Karen Schik, Whitney Clark; Middle row: Karen Phillips, Kay Yanisch, Sara Muchowski, Irene Jones; Front row: sue rich, Kerry Walsh, Tom Lewanski, Trevor Russell.

## Council of Advisors

Friends of the Mississippi River is honored to rely upon the wisdom and experience of the following advisors as it develops its strategic priorities and policy positions.

Shirley Hunt Alexander  
Charles K. Dayton  
David Durenberger  
Tom Kelley  
George Latimer

Ted Mondale  
Dr. Michael Osterholm  
Phil Riveness  
Tina Smith



# In 2006, Friends of the Mississippi River...

- Engaged a total of 3,305 volunteers for 10,824 hours of work.
- Engaged 550 participants and 623 volunteers who donated 2,027 hours in stewardship, education and training events that focused on improving the one and only true gorge on the Mississippi River.
- Held eleven water quality workshops for 227 community members interested in watershed-friendly lawn and garden care.
- Increased membership in the Mississippi-Vermillion Heritage Land Registry to 53 landowners representing nearly 3,000 acres of ecologically-important land.
- Mobilized 2,028 youth and adult volunteers to stencil 3,943 storm drains with the message "Please Don't Pollute – Drains to Mississippi River," and distributed 14,921 educational door hangers to local homes and businesses.
- Engaged approximately 4,950 students and other volunteers in educational presentations about urban runoff pollution and how to prevent it from entering the river.
- Offered ten interpretive Special Places Tours along the river that were attended by 312 participants.
- Contacted more than 100 landowners to provide advice and technical assistance regarding options for permanent land protection and ecological restoration.
- Received 143,622 visits to our web site.
- Distributed Vermillion River Watershed advocacy packets to 2,500 watershed residents and mobilized over 600 watershed residents to urge strong stream buffer standards.
- Engaged 284 volunteers in 528 hours of stewardship and restoration activities in the Vermillion watershed and attracted 82 people to participate in educational programs about the improving the health of the watershed.
- Completed eight new habitat restoration projects on 170 acres.



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