



DAVID WHEATON



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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Mission

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

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2024 FMR staff and board

LAND CONSERVATION

Creating and connecting habitat throughout the metro watershed



Dear friends of the river,

It's a privilege to preface this summary of all we accomplished together in 2024. Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) helped advance two critical projects noted in this year's report: one to slow the spread of invasive carp up the Mississippi River and another to reduce the volume of sediment and farm fertilizer degrading the river's water quality and habitat.

Invasive species, unhealthy land practices, insensitive development projects, species struggling against extinction, climate change and more make working to preserve and restore our great river ever more important.

Greater inclusivity is one key to this work. Supporting youth — the future of any organization — is another. Over the past several years, FMR has heavily invested in both. Read on to see what I mean. Building deep foundations also requires investing in the organization's financial strength. Through the Our River Campaign, FMR will carry forward the momentum highlighted in this report. We've raised more than 80% of our \$5 million goal, and with your help, we can reach 100% in 2025.

All of FMR's accomplishments and our hope to continue advancing them depend upon our advocates, volunteers and donors. You take us from a staff of a couple dozen to thousands, and that is how we make the most difference.



With gratitude,
Dr. John Anfinson
2024 Chair of FMR's Board of Directors

Get the full report: fmr.org/AR2024

Conservation by the numbers

- 39** ACTIVE RESTORATION SITES
- 2,158** ACRES RESTORED
- 17** THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES FOUND
- 2,944** POUNDS OF NATIVE SEED PLANTED
- 234** NATIVE PLANTS PLANTED
- 54** ACRES MANAGED W/ PRESCRIBED FIRE

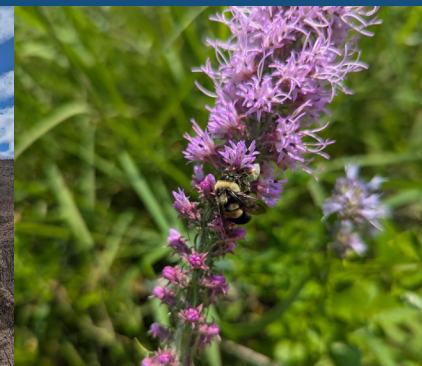
SPOTLIGHT:

Plans for a new riverside greenway

Our Land Conservation team restores land all across the metro region. Vitaly important for wildlife, these restorations also improve water quality and climate resilience. In 2024, FMR worked on 39 restoration projects. Through cutting-edge ecological research and monitoring, we're learning how to do this work even better. Before we begin, we undertake an extensive process to understand a place, envision its future and write a detailed playbook for how to get there. We wrote five of these intensive management plans last year.

One was an ecological plan for the Mississippi River Greenway, a 26-mile trail that follows the Mississippi from the southern edge of South Saint Paul to Hastings in Dakota County. Already, the Mississippi River provides important connectivity for wildlife migration. This greenway will expand the ribbon of parks, woodlands, prairies and wetlands that the trail connects, and enhance the miles that people can roll, walk and bike while feeling connected to nature.

Our long history of stewarding the Mississippi's watershed gave us good insights into how to improve habitat along the trail. Even small riverside parks are brimming with opportunities to create additional habitat and make these corridors more robust.



Enabling the right projects for our river



SPOTLIGHT: The first proactive invasive carp deterrent on the Mississippi River in Minnesota

FMR and our Stop Carp Coalition partners were thrilled to celebrate a big win in 2024: The Minnesota Legislature approved \$12 million for an invasive carp deterrent in the Mississippi River. We've long advocated for this proactive measure at Lock and Dam 5 just upstream of Winona, the last stop for invasive carp before they reach the metro.

For decades invasive carp have been working their way up the Mississippi River. These carp can outcompete other fish for food and space, introducing threats to ecosystem diversity, water quality and recreational opportunities. And recent record-setting catches of these fish in Minnesota show that our state needs to act with urgency.

We rose to the challenge. In addition to leading the Stop Carp Coalition, we met with lawmakers at the state and national level in 2024 to make our case. We organized three community meetings with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Nearly 250 people attended with important questions and real concerns. And more than 1,000 River Guardians urged their legislators to take action.

Working together, we secured this major investment to stop invasive carp while we still can.

Advocacy by the numbers

1,634 RIVER GUARDIANS	72 NEWS STORIES CITED FMR ON RIVER ISSUES
23 ADVOCACY EVENTS	20 FMR WORKED ON POLICY ISSUES ON THE STATE OR FEDERAL LEVEL AND
419 ADVOCATE MESSAGES REACHED	32 LOCAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
165 DECISION-MAKERS ABOUT RIVER AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	

Lifting up innovative policy solutions to complex problems



SPOTLIGHT: The first flight ever fueled by clean-water crops

In the fall of 2024, the first commercial plane to use jet fuel made from winter oilseeds flew from MSP Airport to LaGuardia in New York. The trip was powered in part by sustainable aviation fuel made using Minnesota-grown winter camelina — a clean-water crop that can survive our harsh winters while in the ground and, as a result, boost both water quality and soil health.

There's no path to a healthy Mississippi River without a significant reduction in agricultural pollution. In 2024, we worked with aviation fuel industry leaders and policymakers to invest in lower-carbon, river-friendly winter oilseeds; in the fall, farmers planned to plant 10x as many oilseeds as the prior year. To ensure the transition to sustainable aviation fuel happens with people and the planet at the forefront, we teamed up with other organizations to establish environmental and equity principles for sustainable aviation fuels.

This first flight was a watershed moment for a lower-carbon aviation future and for clean-water crops. Sustainable aviation fuel made from hardy winter oilseeds could help us achieve the most river-friendly agricultural landscape we've seen in quite some time.



TOM FISK

DODD DEMAS

SHER FREEBIRD

Connecting community with the waters that sustain our lives — and caring for them in return

Stewardship & Education by the numbers

- 2,116** VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS
- 6,291** SERVICE HOURS
- 1,700** STORM DRAINS STENCILED
- 1,765** YOUTH PARTICIPANTS
- 40** ESI YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

SPOTLIGHT:

On-water experiences for our youth and stewards

We hosted more than 100 volunteer habitat restoration volunteer events, community science opportunities, educational workshops and classroom lessons on land in 2024. We also held more events on the water than ever before.

In 2024, canoe trips framed each week of our Environmental Stewardship Institute (ESI) summer youth program. We doubled the number of hours fellows spent together and planned outdoor experiences so our 25 fellows could connect with the river.

Youth fellows paddled the Mississippi River Gorge with U of M researchers near our locks and dams, discussing the pros and cons of removal. They canoed with Wakáŋ Tipi Awanyankapi staff near Bdote, listening to understand more about Indigenous relationships with the river. They visited North Minneapolis with environmental justice advocates, learning about inequities and harms along the riverfront.

At our first on-water cleanup in many years, volunteers in a fleet of kayaks and canoes paddled the metro Mississippi, collecting trash from the river. On the river together, we were able to reach litter and pollutants that we couldn't reach from land.

We hope this on-water programming can foster a deeper connection to the place we live and create the basis for dedicated, lifelong stewardship and activism to protect it.



Looking ahead: 2025 and beyond

Our vision is a transformed and thriving Mississippi River with clean and healthy waters, a vibrant watershed resilient to climate change, and diverse, engaged communities caring for its future. The Our River Campaign aims to raise \$5 million to make this vision a reality. Here's what your donations to this campaign can achieve:



Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative

FMR is leading a 10-state coalition to advance the first comprehensive federal initiative that will protect the Mississippi River from the headwaters to the Gulf.



Land conservation and restoration

Growing our reserve of resources will allow us to seize opportunities to restore critical ecological land along the river and its tributaries in the Twin Cities metro area.



Youth & community engagement

We're expanding our youth programs to train and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders, building advocacy for the river and growing stewardship opportunities.



Agricultural landscape change and water quality

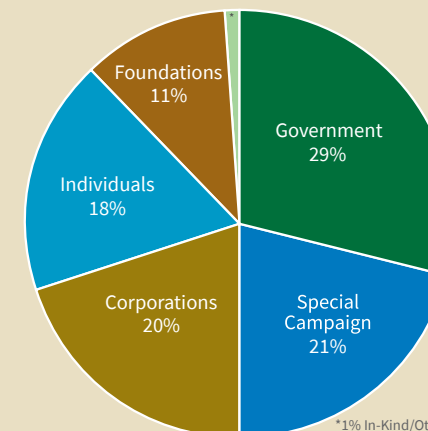
We're part of a first-of-its-kind collaboration to innovate new market-based approaches to address the largest source of pollutants to the river — runoff from agricultural lands.

Help us realize this vision and raise \$1 million for our river in 2025!

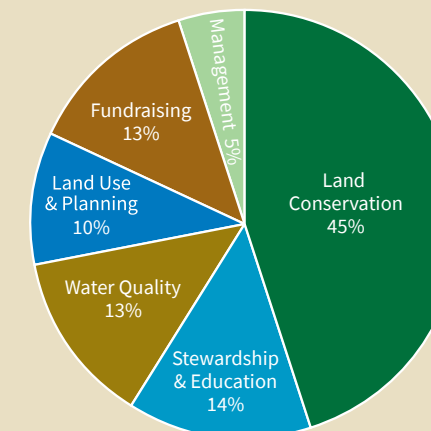
Give today: fmr.org/our-river

12-MONTH STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

REVENUES: \$3,973,338*



EXPENSES: \$3,957,298*



*This data is from unrestricted income for the 12-month period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. See our full 2023-2024 financial report and more at fmr.org/AR2024.





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THANK YOU

Our accomplishments rely on a community of supporters that actively embraces a river ethic. These supporters choose to give time, talents and resources to ensure the health of the river that connects us to each other and to this home.

You are that community. Thank you for partnering with us to steward the Mississippi River for generations to come.

Inside, find highlights from the accomplishments you made possible in 2024. And be sure to enjoy the full, interactive version of our annual report, plus our list of generous supporters and donors at fmr.org/AR2024.

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OUR RIVER

CAMPAIGN



The next 10 years are critical for the future of the river.

Friends of the Mississippi River launched the Our River Campaign to address the most urgent threats to the Mississippi River and the life it supports.

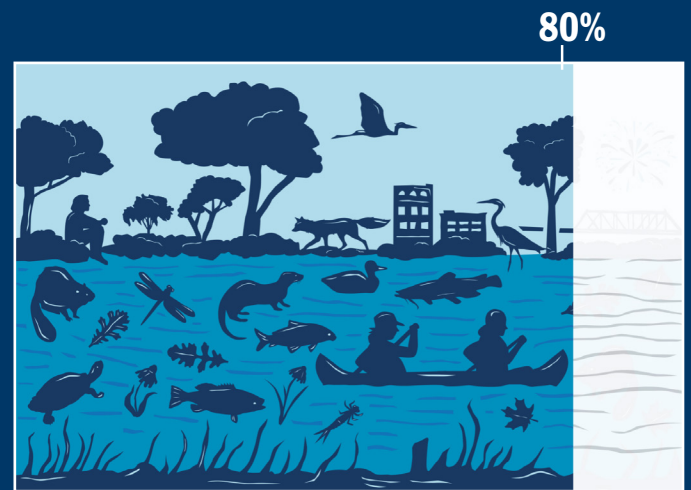
At the heart of this campaign is the vision of a healthy Mississippi River. The impact of the Our River Campaign will be transformational and enduring in Minnesota and for all downstream communities along the 2,350-mile river.

It all starts here.

So far, thanks to generous donors, we've raised more than \$4 million toward our \$5 million goal.

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is at the forefront of groundbreaking initiatives to strategically mitigate river threats like climate change and pollution. We can continue to improve the river's health and strengthen its protections.

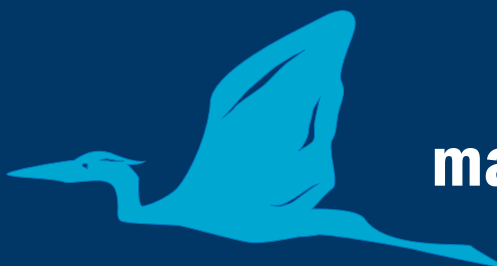
Together, it is possible to achieve this ambitious vision for the river and propel FMR into its next phase.



We're just \$1 million away from our goal.



Give today
fmr.org/our-river



**Will you help
make this vision
a reality?**



OUR RIVER CAMPAIGN

You're invited! Join us for a series of events in 2025 for on-site opportunities to discover the impacts of the Our River Campaign.

Spring: Music in the Prairie



Tour a Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) prairie restoration site, learn about our land conservation work and enjoy live music, local food and drinks.

Summer: Dinner on a Farm



Enjoy a dinner featuring clean-water crops and learn about FMR's work to transform Minnesota agriculture to enhance water quality.

Fall: Meander on the Mississippi



Learn about the confluence of FMR's land and water initiatives while exploring the metro Mississippi River on a historic paddle boat through Lock and Dam #1.

Winter: Art for the River



Celebrate the success of the Our River Campaign and hear what's next for FMR at our river-inspired art gallery.

Sign up at fmr.org/our-river to be notified when tickets and sponsorship opportunities go live.

Thanks to our lead campaign donors for their investment in FMR and the future of our river:

\$1,000,000+

Thane & Blanche Hawkins

\$500,000 - \$999,999

Anonymous

Cochineal Charitable Trust

\$100,000 - \$499,999

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