



# FRIENDS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

## Inside

- Director's Letter 2
- New Board & Staff 3
- Gorge Stewards 4
- Storm Drain Stenciling 4
- Greenway Planning 5
- Organizational Update 7
- Events/Announcements 8

Spring 2002

## Welcome to Pine Bend Bluffs Protecting a riverfront treasure in our midst

**P**ristine natural areas along the Mississippi River can be few and far between, particularly in urban centers like the Twin Cities. In the southern part of our metro area, however, there is a series of relatively untouched open spaces along the river — a “string of pearls” that offers much-needed habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife.

Pine Bend Bluffs, located along the Mississippi in Inver Grove Heights and Rosemount, is one of these rare and special natural areas. With over 1,000 acres that include native oak woodlands and savannas, floodplain forests, wetlands, and rare sand gravel prairies, Pine Bend contains some of the largest remnants of pre-settlement landscapes in the metro area. “What’s so special about Pine Bend is that it includes forests, grasslands and oak savanna in close proximity to one another,” said Hannah Dunevitz, a regional plant ecologist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “Combined with the fact that it's located right on the Mississippi in the heart of the metropolitan area makes it very important from an ecological perspective.”

In addition to providing high biodiversity and critical habitat, Pine Bend's native plant and wildlife populations are an important part of the Twin Cities' natural heritage. Because of its size and key location along the Mississippi River, protecting and restoring Pine Bend has been a focus of FMR's conservation work.

“There are not many of these places left in the metro area, and when they're gone they are gone forever,” said FMR Executive Director Whitney Clark. “By protecting and expanding the natural areas around Pine Bend, we are getting that much closer to recapturing the seamless wilderness that once existed along the Mississippi.”

### A Rare Natural Area in a Fast-Growing County

One of the best ways to see Pine Bend is from the river. Here you can spot some of the towering old white pines that gave Pine Bend its name. You can also see how steep these majestic forested bluffs really are. The steepness offers more than just beauty—it also protects the area from the development that has claimed so much riverfront land in the Twin Cities. Steep terrain, along with the strong conservation ethics of many local landowners, has kept Pine Bend safe thus far. But with the area's population growing rapidly, the land is clearly at risk.

Dakota County is one of the fastest growing counties in the metro area with both farmland and natural areas under pressure from new development. According to FMR Conservation Program Director Tom Lewanski, “Dakota County is experiencing rapid growth, and there is a



*FMR's restoration ecologist, Karen Schik (right), points out native prairie species at Pine Bend during an interpretive tour last spring. Participants learned about the restoration work being done with Flint Hills Resources on their riverfront property.*

push to establish new residential and light industrial developments in the Pine Bend area. People are beginning to understand that if we're going to truly protect Pine Bend for future generations, we need to take action now.”

### FMR's Teamwork-Based Conservation

FMR is making Pine Bend Bluffs a priority by utilizing a number of tools and working with an array of partners to preserve and restore this important landscape. Because most of the area is privately owned, outreach to the individual and corporate landowners has been a critical first step. FMR's conservation staff has

*Continued on page 6*



46 East Fourth Street, Suite 606  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
Phone: 651/222-2193  
Fax: 651/222-6005  
E-mail: [info@fmr.org](mailto:info@fmr.org)  
Web: [www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org)

#### **MISSION:**

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) advocates a new vision for the Mississippi, especially the river and its watershed in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Through active leadership and education, FMR seeks to preserve and restore the river's fish and wildlife, its vital floodplains and scenic bluffs, its natural and cultural treasures, its beauty and its romance. We envision a river on which small boats are safe and welcome, to which we have clear and easy access and in which we can safely swim and fish. We envision a river that is cleaner, healthier, more alive and more inviting, a river no one can ignore or take for granted.

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

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Karen Schik, *Restoration Ecologist*

#### **NEWSLETTER VOLUNTEERS:**

Louise Jones, *Copy Editing*

## Letter from the Director



Forty years ago, the stretch of Mississippi River below St. Paul was a cesspool. Choked with sewage and industrial waste, fisheries biologists reported no fish in their survey nets. With the passage of the federal Clean Water Act in 1972, many of the worst point sources of pollution, primarily the large industrial dischargers, have been significantly cleaned up.

The good news is that the Mississippi and many of our other surface waters are, in most cases, cleaner than they were. The bad news is that these large improvements tend to mask what may be a trend toward degradation of the water quality of our rivers, lakes and streams.

One of the simple truths of water quality science is that the health of any given river is directly related to the land uses within its watershed. All of the changes, practices and disturbances that take place on the landscape have corresponding effects on the health of the waters in that drainage area. When wetlands that once filtered stormwater are drained, that water then flows unfiltered to the local lake or stream. When shorelands that once featured trees, shrubs and grasses are altered for development, that critical zone between the water and the land can't function to filter runoff or prevent erosion.

Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes and the headwaters of the great Mississippi River. Clean, pure water is part of our heritage. I think most Minnesotans would tell you that it is one of the quality-of-life attributes that makes Minnesota such a desirable place to live.

Unfortunately, the Minnesota of our collective imagining is disappearing. Development and urbanization are changing the face of our watersheds. Between 1982 and 1992, development on Minnesota farms and natural areas occurred at a rate of about 2.7 acres per hour. Between 1992 and 1997, that rate increased to about 7.1 acres per hour. That means that we're losing an area of open space the size of the City of Minneapolis about every seven months. According to the Metropolitan Council, between 1990 and 1997, non-urbanized land in the seven county metro area fell by 83,350 acres or seven percent. Unless we begin to take aggressive action, our legacy to future generations of Minnesotans will be polluted water, fish advisories and unswimmable lakes and rivers.

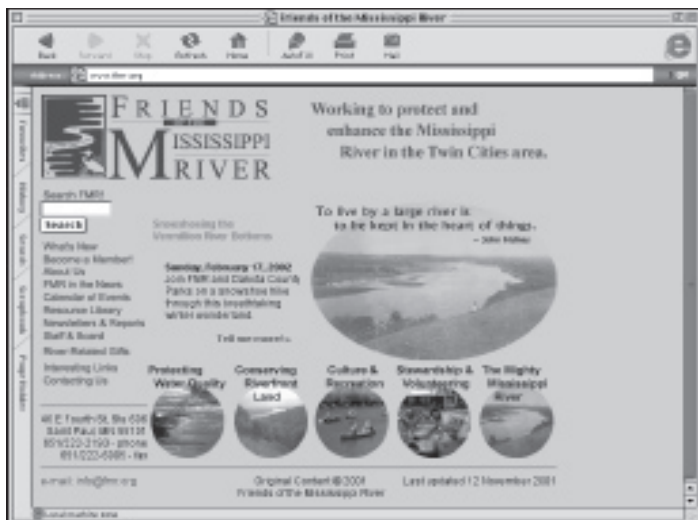
With this in mind, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) has joined with more than 75 local and statewide environmental and conservation organizations under the banner of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) to press the legislature to do more to protect our water. In fact, our specific package of legislative proposals is entitled, "Protect our Water." The package is a 21-point plan designed to clean up Minnesota's rivers and lakes and to keep them that way.

One of the bills that could make the biggest impact on the water quality of the Mississippi River is the Shoreland Buffers Program, which FMR developed and has been working to pass for several years. The \$10 million bill, which is authored by Senator (and FMR board member) Deanna Wiener and Representative Dennis Ozment, would provide much-needed funds to protect undeveloped shoreland from development and restore vegetated buffers on private shoreland that has been degraded.

Other pieces of the Protect Our Water package that are of special significance to the Mississippi are:

- The Metro Greenways Program of the Department of Natural Resources, which is an important source of funds for protecting native habitat along the river.
- The Brownfield to Green Space Program, which would provide resources to clean up polluted lands (many of which lie along the river) for conversion to open space.
- The Phosphorus-Free Fertilizer Initiative, which would restrict the application of phosphorus fertilizer on residential turf. Phosphorus fertilizer, which runs off into surface water, is responsible for algae blooms and other water quality problems in

Please take a moment to contact your state legislators and ask them to support the Protect Our Water initiative. For more info check out our website at [www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org).



### FMR Home Page Gets a Facelift

If you haven't visited FMR on the web recently, you might want to "stop in" and see some of the exciting new changes we've made in design and navigability.

The new front page includes a compact menu with easy-to-find links and gateways to more information. We've added a new area on the front page dedicated to current events and "hot topics."

We are also working on revising and expanding other areas of the site. The interior of the site has been updated so the search function is now accessible from every page. One of our goals is to greatly enhance the background information we provide about the river, and another is to add more links to other pertinent sites. One very important addition to the site is the ability to join FMR or make donations online in a safe and secure manner through helping.org.

Some things to watch for on FMR's website are the **River Events Calendar**, which will now be updated on a monthly basis, upcoming **Volunteer Opportunities**, and the dates and locations of our slate of **2002 Special Places Tours**, which will be posted on our website by April 1st.

## Thank You FMR Donors and Partners!

*The following foundations, agencies and corporations have awarded grants, contracts or in-kind gifts to FMR in*

- Aggregate Industries
- American Rivers
- Elmer L. & Eleanor J. Andersen Foundation
- Patrick & Aimee Butler Family Foundation
- Carpenter Nature Center
- City of Saint Paul Public Works
- Conservation Technology Support Program
- Dakota County Parks
- Flint Hills Resources (makers of Blue Planet Gas)
- Gannett Foundation (as recommended by KARE 11)
- Hennepin Parks
- Hoigaard's
- HRK Foundation
- Impressive Print
- Samuel & Sylvia Kaplan Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation
- Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources:
  - Big Rivers Partnership
  - Farmland & Natural Areas Project
- Longfellow Community Council
- McKnight Foundation
- Metropolitan Council
- Midwest Mountaineering
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources:
  - Metro Greenways
  - Prairie Stewardship
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- Peregrine Capital Management Inc. Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation
- Irwin Andrew Porter Family Foundation
- Recreational Equipment Incorporated
- Reliant Energy/Minnegasco
- Trotters Cafe & Bakery
- Unity Avenue Foundation
- Warner Nature Center
- Whole Foods Market

*Friends of the Mississippi River is proud to be a member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund (www.mnenvirofund.*



## It's a great time to become a Friend of the Mississippi River

Join us — or continue our friendship — as we expand our efforts to protect the mighty Mississippi! All contributions to FMR are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to Friends of the Mississippi River and send them, along with this form, to 46 E. Fourth St., Suite 606, St. Paul, MN 55101 • 651/222-2193.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

- \$5.....Youth
- \$15.....Student/Senior
- \$25.....Individual
- \$40.....Household<sup>s</sup>
- \$50.....Sponsor
- \$100.....Supporter
- \$500.....Sustainer
- \$1,000+....Patron

<sup>s</sup>If you join at a level of \$40 or more, you will receive the beautiful, full-color FMR poster, "Native Fish of the Upper Mississippi River - A Diversity of Species" or a set of ten notecards featuring the photographs of Henry Bosse. These items are also for sale individually. Contact FMR for information.



*Continued from Page 1*

contacted nearly every landowner around Pine Bend to discuss land protection goals and opportunities for improving the health of native plant communities located on their property.

Based on the landowners' interests, FMR helps facilitate a range of initiatives. Some landowners are working with FMR and its partners to carry out ecological management projects, such as removing exotic plant species or conducting controlled burns on native prairies. Other landowners agree to work with FMR on donating a conservation easement, which ensures that their land will never be developed.

Working with the DNR Metro Greenways Program, FMR has been able to connect property owners to funding sources for land improvements and, in some cases, set up the purchases of key lands for public ownership. Several acquisitions are underway and an important goal of these efforts is to create a new Scientific and Natural Area in Pine Bend, which would be managed by the DNR and open for limited public use.

Two key landowners FMR is working with at Pine Bend make up the "book-ends" of this important natural area: Flint Hills Resources (formerly Koch Petroleum Group) and Macalester College. FMR's partnership with Flint Hills includes ongoing extensive ecological restoration on over 100 acres at the southern end of Pine Bend (see sidebar). FMR has also completed a natural resources management plan for the Katharine Ordway Natural

History Area, which is owned and managed by Macalester College. Ordway is an important natural area at the north end of Pine Bend that includes 280 acres of oak forest, tallgrass prairie, and floodplain forest.

FMR's work with these landowners has been part of a larger initiative to restore critical river habitat, called the "Big Rivers Partnership" (BRP). The BRP, a team of nonprofit and government agencies led by Great River Greening, has made Pine Bend a priority area and is providing some of the resources for management planning and restoration work.

One of the hallmarks of the BRP is

**"People are beginning to understand that if we are going to truly protect Pine Bend for future generations, we need to take action now."**

the involvement of community volunteers. On-the-ground restoration initiatives, powered by volunteer workers, are generating truly inspiring results at Pine Bend. Farm fields are being transformed back to their native prairie, and areas of oak savanna, once choked by invasive plants, are being restored to ecological health. One of the biggest volunteer events took place on Flint Hills Resources' property and involved over 350 people removing buckthorn and other invasive species.

Although Pine Bend is currently in private ownership, there are a few opportunities to get out there and see this amazing natural area in our midst. Volunteer activities are in the works for both Flint Hills and Katharine Ordway. FMR also leads natural history programs at both sites, giving people a chance to learn about the diversity of birds and wildflowers of Pine Bend.

For the many projects helping to protect and restore Pine Bend, FMR has taken a leadership role by coordinating partnering agencies and providing the ongoing

## Working with Flint Hills Resources

**FAQ:** So why is an environmental group working in partnership with a petroleum refinery?

**Answer:** It's an opportunity to protect and restore hundreds of acres of prime habitat along the Mississippi River.

Several years ago FMR identified the Pine Bend Bluffs as a conservation focus area, based on the presence of large tracts of high quality natural landscapes such as native oak forest, oak savanna and prairie. Upon further investigation, we learned that Flint Hills Resources (formerly Koch Petroleum Group) owned 4,000 acres in the area, only 1,000 of which are used for refinery operations. The remaining land was purchased as a buffer for their industrial operation.

FMR approached the company about working together to plan ecological restoration and management of their riverfront lands. To their credit, Flint Hills saw this as an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the environment that is consistent with their business objectives.

After two years of a successful partnership, Flint Hills is planning to keep the project going and to contribute more resources to it. They also have a growing number of employee volunteers who are helping with restoration activities.



**Removing Buckthorn is hard work!** Volunteers wrestle with exotic species removal during a Big Rivers Partnership volunteer event at Pine Bend Bluffs.

advocacy needed to ensure that projects are completed. It is work that is appreciated by many area partners. "Pine Bend has enormous environmental, historic, and scientific significance for our city and surrounding communities as well," said Joe Atkins, mayor of Inver Grove Heights. "FMR's role in local preservation and conservation efforts has been absolutely critical."

For more information about Pine Bend Bluffs or how to get involved in FMR's activities there, please contact Tom Lewanski at 651/222-2193.

## FMR Welcomes Four New Board Members



*FMR is excited to announce the appointment of four new members to our board of directors, each of whom brings a range of new skills and experience to the organization. Pictured left to right: Phil Riveness, Kate Jaycox, Andy Brown and Terra Thompson.*

**Andy Brown** brings a wealth of experience to FMR. He is a partner at Dorsey & Whitney LLP, where he is co-chair of the Environmental, Natural Resources and Energy Practice Group. He is also the Chair of the MN State Bar Association's Environmental and Natural Resources Section. Andy was an undergraduate at Stanford University and received his law degree from Duke Law School. He also has a Master of Public Administration Degree from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Andy serves on FMR's Policy and Planning Committee, where he is helping to develop the organization's environmental programs.

**Kate Jaycox** has spent much of the past eight years as a professional campaign fundraiser working for candidates that care about the environment. Her skills and experience in this area are a great addition to FMR's board. Currently Kate is attending law school at the University of Minnesota. Kate looks forward to sharing her passion for the environment and her

**Phil Riveness** is an avid river enthusiast with a wide-ranging resumé that includes various positions in the public sector. A veteran of the Minnesota Legislature, Phil served two terms in the Senate and three in the House. While in the Senate, he served on the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division. Phil is currently the Metropolitan Council Member for District 5. He enjoys boating on the Mississippi, as well as hiking and biking the river trails. He hopes to utilize his background and many contacts to help advance the mission of FMR.

**Terra Thompson** has what it takes to help a fast-growing nonprofit manage its financial affairs. She is a CPA with Ritchie, Luukkonen, Campbell & Co. Ltd., where she works with a variety of commercial businesses, nonprofit and governmental organizations in the audit and tax practice areas. Terra is a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College. She currently serves on FMR's Finance Committee.



## Farewell to Board Member Shelley Shreffler

After more than eight years of active service, Shelley Shreffler has left FMR's Board of Directors to become Program Officer for the Environment at the McKnight Foundation.

Shelley's commitment to the river is unmatched—her dedication and expertise will be greatly missed on our board.

As a member of the original board in 1993, Shelley took part in FMR's early development, which set the stage for future growth. She helped to build a strong board, to develop a clear mission and vision, and to create FMR's first organizational plan. During her three-year tenure as board chair, Shelley was involved in hiring the current executive director, developing a strategic plan, and starting the River Leaders Forum. She was also a big part of planning the first Canoe Adventure and designing FMR's conservation program goals.

We wish Shelley the best of luck in her new job and in her continued work at protecting our environment.

## Meet FMR's Two Newest Staff Members...



### **Katie Galloway** Volunteer Programs Coordinator

FMR welcomes Katie Galloway as its new volunteer programs coordinator. Katie is responsible for recruiting and organizing volunteers for all of the organization's stewardship activities and events. FMR currently works with more

than 3,000 volunteers each year, and with Katie's skills and energy we expect that to grow! A graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College with a B.S. degree in Biology and Environmental Studies, Katie enjoys camping, biking and natural history.



### **Dale Johnson** Director of Development

FMR is pleased to announce the hiring of Dale Johnson as its first director of development. Dale will be responsible for all of the organization's fundraising activities, including membership development, major gifts and foundation support. Dale brings a wealth of experience

in non-profit development to FMR. Most recently he was the director of development and communications for the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota. Dale's interests include cooking, theater and hiking.



### Mississippi Gorge Stewards - Protecting an Urban Sanctuary

**R**unning through the heart of Minneapolis and St. Paul is the only true gorge on the Mississippi River. This amazing natural area, which extends downstream from St. Anthony Falls to the confluence with the Minnesota River, features steep limestone cliffs, forested bluffs, patches of prairie, sandy beaches, and a myriad of trails to explore.

A growing group of dedicated citizens are working with FMR to protect and restore this important community resource through a project called Gorge Stewards. The Gorge Stewards project, which was started through a partnership between FMR and the Longfellow Community Council in Minneapolis, aims to expand



*Gorge Stewards collecting seeds from a prairie remnant in the gorge last fall. The seeds were then broadcast as part of an ongoing oak savanna restoration project.*

upon neighborhood-based environmental concern, and to provide citizens with the education, training, and opportunities they need to improve the ecological health of the gorge.

Local residents can become involved in a variety of gorge protection efforts in their own neighborhood by joining monthly stewardship activities or routinely monitoring trails. Some examples of recent efforts include riverfront clean-ups, storm drain stenciling outings, and the removal of invasive species. Gorge Steward volunteers have also worked to restore a unique section of remnant prairie and oak savanna by collecting and broadcasting native prairie seeds at this special site. A dedicated group of volunteers have signed up to be trail monitors, routinely tracking a portion of trail and making reports on signs of erosion, graffiti, litter and invasive species.

Over the winter months FMR organized a series of educational opportunities, which Gorge Stewards and other interested parties were invited to attend. Sessions on the geology, history, and native ecology of the area gave people an opportunity to learn even more about the area that they have been working so hard to protect.

We are very excited to announce that



Seward Neighborhood Group in Minneapolis has joined as a new partner in the Gorge Stewards project. FMR began coordinating projects in Seward in January, in addition to continuing the project in Longfellow. We are looking forward to working with new volunteers in this area and involving more people in local stewardship efforts this spring and summer.

FMR is also fortunate to have received funding for the Gorge Stewards project from the Gannett Foundation (as recommended by KARE 11) and the Irwin Andrew Porter Family Foundation. FMR is currently exploring the possibility of further expansion of the Gorge Stewards in the future by developing partnerships with other Minneapolis and St. Paul neighborhoods bordering the gorge.

For more information about the Gorge Stewards Project or to get involved, please contact Katie Galloway at 651/222-2193 or [kgallowa@fmr.org](mailto:kgallowa@fmr.org).

### Storm Drain Stenciling - Hands-On Learning!

The 2001 stenciling season was a great success. We met our goal of reaching more citizens than ever before with our message about non-point source pollution. We worked with close to 3,000 volunteers, who stenciled over 7,000 drains and distributed literature to 23,000 households.

Stenciling volunteers included scout troops, Y camps, families, park centers, corporations, schools, individuals and neighborhood groups. A little more than half of this season's volunteers were students of all ages from metro area schools.

This past year we focused on providing more education to stenciling volunteers, particularly with students. We spent at least one class period before the stenciling outing discussing water qual-

ity and the things we can all do to help prevent polluted runoff. This year we are taking it a step further, by looking for classrooms that are interested in having FMR lead more water quality activities and service learning projects. We hope to make educators out of our students by stenciling and spreading the message about polluted urban runoff in their local communities.

Special thanks to our 2001 partners and funders for their generous support of this project—The City of Saint Paul, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, the Metropolitan Council, the Saint Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium, and the Capital Region Watershed District.

**For more information or to get involved, call 651/222-2193 or send an email to [ahawkins@fmr.org](mailto:ahawkins@fmr.org)**



*Employees from Whole Foods Market took some time out to spread the word to local residents about how to prevent stormwater runoff pollution*

# Mississippi River Greenway Planning Project

*Greenways are privately or publicly owned corridors of open space, which often follow natural land or water*

The Mississippi River is one of the great rivers of the world and a natural resource of international significance. FMR recently completed a year-long greenway planning process that has resulted in a specific plan to protect and restore important environmental landscapes along a portion of this great river in eastern Dakota County.

## Community Planning for Greenways

In fast-growing communities like Hastings and Rosemount, development is driven by those who propose new projects. While communities have the authority to pass zoning ordinances which prescribe broad land uses or residential density requirements (for example, one unit per 40 acres), they do not have the power to zone land as open space. The only way that local governments can ensure that open spaces such as natural areas or parks are set aside is to purchase them. With FMR's help, several riverfront communities have recently completed a public planning process that relies on voluntary landowner participation to protect landscape features that the community as a whole values. Toward this goal, FMR, the Cities of Hastings and Rosemount, the Townships of Ravenna and Marshan, with consultants from the Hoisington Koegler Group (HKG), worked together

to develop a greenway plan for an area that includes all or a portion of these communities. Tom Lewanski, FMR's conservation director feels that this project was a critical first step. "This greenway project was crucial because it brought citizens together from several communities to discuss and plan for the protection of this shared natural resource. The preservation of these natural areas is not only important to the Mississippi River ecosystem, but it also adds greatly to the local quality of life." The Cities of Hastings and Rosemount and the Metro Greenways Program of the MN Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) provided funding for this planning project.

This year-long process included four public workshops designed to solicit ideas and comments from area landowners and residents. Workshop participants shared their ideas on important areas to protect, discussed the role of government, and reviewed maps of landscape features.

## Using Environmental Data to Identify Greenway Opportunities

Also, during this time, staff from FMR and HKG studied the project area from a scientific perspective and established landscape features that were important to consider for protection. These included areas that contained slopes greater than 18%, rare species, shorelands, and wetlands. Using these landscape thresholds, the staff developed an initial draft greenway opportunities map, which illustrates where greenways could be located.

During the final workshop, participants were able to review the maps that



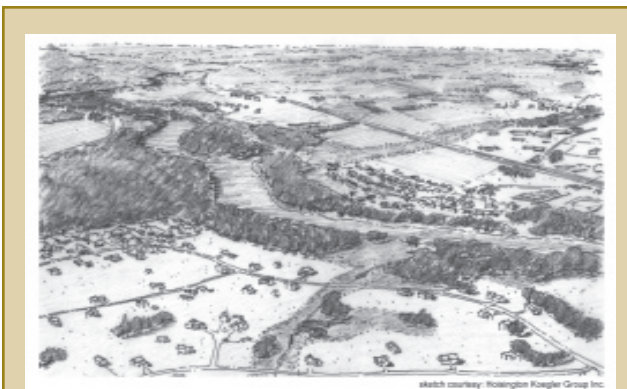
The Mississippi River in eastern Dakota County

emerged from the landscape threshold exercise and offer suggestions on where greenway connections might be developed. The result was a composite greenway opportunity areas map that combined staff research and community input. The final map and plan were presented at an open house in May.

Since the plan was completed, each of the partnering communities has endorsed the greenway plan. What will the implementation phase look like? An important component of this greenway plan is that landowner participation will be on a *voluntary basis only*. FMR's Conservation staff will contact landowners in the greenway opportunity areas to discuss the greenway plan, provide information on land protection options, and solicit their involvement in making the greenway a reality. Rosemount Mayor Cathy Busho views the project as a great tool to help the area become sustainable, "The Mississippi River Greenway Project is as important to the people today as it will be to future generations. By working in partnership, government, business, and non-profits can accomplish what the Project has envisioned—an environmentally safe river that can be used for economic advantages as well as recreational activities."

The Mississippi River runs through many communities on its journey to the Gulf of Mexico. Greenway planning is a new tool that communities can use to define how growth and development affect the places that they value.

**To view the greenway opportunities map, visit FMR's website at: <http://www.fmr.org/dakgrnwy.html>**



*Greenways provide natural corridors and important connections for birds and other wildlife as well as opportunities for recreation. With careful planning, these greenways can enhance the quality of life for both new and existing residential areas.*

### **Save the Date!** The Fifth Annual Mississippi River Canoe Adventure will be Saturday, July 27, 2002

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please send your name and address to [ahawkins@fmr.org](mailto:ahawkins@fmr.org) or call 651/222-2193. Registration for the event begins in late

### **Protect Our Water**

*Clean, fresh, pure water is part of our heritage, and is what makes Minnesota one of the best places to raise a family, live, work and play.*

Friends of the Mississippi River joins the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP), a coalition of more than 70 state and local environmental and conservation groups, in asking the Minnesota Legislature to support Protect Our Water - a common sense plan that will help protect and restore Minnesota's rivers and lakes.

Over 250 of MEP's 500,000 members turned out for Protect Our Water Lobby Day on February 28th to speak with their legislators about making Protect Our Water a cornerstone of responsible stewardship of Minnesota's natural heritage.

Legislators were asked to support a \$79.4 million bonding investment in water and land conservation, tax incentives to encourage conservation, and policy initiatives that help citizens get involved in monitoring water quality and using phosphorous-free fertilizer.

To find out more about the initiative, which will continue into 2003, or to send an electronic message to the governor or your legislators asking them to support Protect Our Water, please contact FMR or visit [www.ProtectOurWater.info](http://www.ProtectOurWater.info).

### **FMR Receives Metro Greenways Award**

Last November, FMR and the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) received an award from the Metro Greenways Program of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in recognition of their work to evaluate and protect the Vermillion River, an important tributary to the Mississippi. For the past three summers, staff from FMR and Dakota SWCD have conducted a parcel by parcel ecological assessment of the Vermillion that focused on the condition of the streambank and the wildlife habitat within 300 ft. of the river. FMR has followed up with many of the landowners along the river to discuss the study and possible conservation opportunities on their properties.

### **Special Places Tours**

**Dates & Locations TBA**

FMR is gearing up for a third season of Special Places Tours—active, educational programs that highlight the natural and cultural resources of the great Mississippi. We are planning to continue popular programs such as spring birding, hikes and interpretive paddling trips and add a few new twists as well! If you are not on our mailing list, but would like to receive the schedule of programs (available in late March), please contact Alyssa at FMR at 651/222-2193 or e-mail her at [ahawkins@fmr.org](mailto:ahawkins@fmr.org). Programs will also be listed on FMR's website—[www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org).

### **Living Green Expo**

**Saturday, April 27, 10 am-4 pm**

**Capital Grounds/St. Paul Armory**

Discover sustainable choices, technologies and topics at the Living Green Expo. This family event explores fun, food, earth-friendliness and future trends through workshops, exhibits and demonstrations. FMR will be presenting a workshop on water quality and lawn care. For more information, please visit: [www.livinggreenexpo.org](http://www.livinggreenexpo.org) or call 651/296-8709.



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current information on events and  
programs... [www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org)**