



Cleanup Review

News and information about the Minnesota Adopt-a-River Program.

Celebrating 10 Years of Cleaning Minnesota's Waterways!

Historic Moment: Wednesday, June 29, 1988 Lilydale Park Cleanup

by Paul E. Nordell, Coordinator, Adopt-a-River

Dump trucks piled high with refuse were lined up Wednesday along Water Street in Lilydale Regional Park. Some were overflowing with worn-out sofas or kitchen appliances. Others were stacked with old wood, car parts, used tires and bulging plastic bags of unidentified trash. All was dumped illegally.

This may have been the largest single one-day river cleanup in the history of the state. It was a cleanup encouraged by Governor Rudy Perpich, and orchestrated by DNR. The cleanup involved a total of 185 volunteers, and they removed 77 tons of rubbish, loading 40 trucks. Despite the heroic efforts, an estimated 100 tons were still in the woods at the end of the day. According to eyewitness Larry Fonnest, Director of the DNR Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC), all river cleanups after this one were simply echoes of this "mother of all river cleanups".

In addition to the 95 DNR volunteers that day, Saint Paul Mayor George Latimer and Commissioner Alexander and Smokey Bear were there, encouraging everyone. Other groups involved that day included Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, Talented Urban Youth, and the Minnesota National Guard.

An incredibly ironic moment at the end of this cleanup signaled the turning of the tide for local river stewardship. One of the DNR cleanup supervisors, Steve Mueller, encountered a station wagon

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entering the park, packed with waste tires. After radioing to the vehicle behind with DNR Commissioner Alexander and Conservation Officer Dale Thell, they were able to stop the in-coming driver and persuade him to dump his load elsewhere.

To heighten the significance of the great cleanup of 1988, the legislature had earlier that same year amended the public dumping law to specifically outlaw flood plain dumping, and had increased the penalties for it. This was the result, in part, of Governor Rudy Perpich finding out that a recent dumper in Lilydale had been fined only \$10 for his offense.



The Lilydale cleanup of 1988 was the climax of a process beginning with the Mississippi River floods of 1951, 1952, 1957, 1965 (the all-time record), and 1969. Finally, in 1971, the Legislature authorized the Saint Paul Port Authority to begin buying up flood-plain property for park purposes. County acquisition began in 1974, and by 1984, most of it had been

purchased.

The cleanup of 1988 was a crucial step in the revitalization of Lilydale following public acquisition. In the midst of a virtual dumping area, it was only a dream that was beginning to take shape. Already the idea of a public river cleanup had been pioneered by an advocacy group known as Mississippi River Revival. They had been doing annual river cleanups since 1981, with their peak effort was on June 27, 1987 when about 40 tons of rubbish were removed from a 12-mile stretch of the Mississippi River.

Following the DNR's Lilydale cleanup of 1988, smaller cleanups continued in the area, and a roadside steel guard rail was installed to prevent further dumping. In 1993, a public river access was built by DNR, to be managed by the City of Saint Paul. In 1994, a ten-foot-wide bike path was built through the park, linking parklands from Harriet Island all the way past the Mendota bridge. More development is being planned. For a number of years now, Lilydale's stretch of the river has been adopted by various groups in the DNR Adopt-a-River Program. This would never have happened if it hadn't been first for the devastation of successive floods, the purchase of land for parkland, then the devotion of citizen groups such as Mississippi River Revival, and finally the multi-agency commitment demonstrated so dramatically on June 29, 1988.

Primary sources: Saint Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch, Thursday June 30, 1988; Tuesday February 15, 1994; DNR Resource Review, August/September 1988; MN Laws, Extra Session, Ch. 35. Sec. 7-9; Docksider Magazine, August 1987; personal interviews, July 2000.

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Meet The Sculptor: Lou Ferreri

What ideas conjure thoughts of the Minnesota State Fair for you? Pronto pups, butter sculptures, or perhaps the animal barns? There's a new tradition in front of the Department of Natural Resources' building. The Adopt-a-River Program captured the curiosity of many fair-goers by commissioning various artists to create sculptures out of collected items from past cleanups. Last year, Lou Ferreri joined the Adopt-a-River effort after presenting a few ideas to the program co-ordinator, Paul Nordell. Lou used actual dump site materials to build the "2600 Scarecrows" sculpture that towers above the native plantings and pond that surrounds it.

The title of the sculpture indicates the number of scarecrows its size would equal the amount of rubbish in the Mississippi River still. To give the scarecrow an old, stark image, Lou placed some environmentally threatening items on it. By using these found objects, he was able to portray the negative impacts of them, and expressed that it is important that we re-shape the vision of how we treat the landscape. He depicts the scarecrow as a magnet that collects rubbish from the riverbanks, and likewise, people act as magnets as they collect debris as well. Lou witnessed this first-hand as he joined in organized cleanups to collect pieces for his work.

Lou stated, "This project gives me an opportunity to give a creative visual translation of the mission of cleaning the riverbanks. My job is to draw attention to the fact that people are working hard to clean the environment".

Look for a significant change in this year's addition to the sculpture at the Fair. The scarecrow will be adorned in nets full of rubbish that has been washed to the river by the street sewers. Since this "flotsam" (floating material) comes from such a different source than the rest of the sculpture, it represents the different types of solutions needed to keep the shores of Minnesota clean!



US Army Corps of Engineers

"If you enjoy the outdoors, canoeing, or river systems, get involved or find out who is cleaning a section of river".



Since 1997, the pool below the Gull Lake Dam in Brainerd has been a little bit cleaner. The increased level of enjoyment at the banks of the pool is partly due to the efforts of the US Army Corps of Engineers Adopt-a-River group. Gregg Struss, a ranger for the Corps,

explained that he and other rangers have great concern for the environment and this beautiful stretch of river that lies within the Corps of Engineers Recreation Area. The Adopt-a-River Program allows them to "channel" their energy into an event that gives them self-satisfaction.

In the past, two rangers have gone on cleanups alone, or have had troubled youth along as a sort of mentoring event. Sometimes the rangers' families will join as well. They've been successful by keeping the effort in the family, as well as including youth in the community. One creative solution to the retrieval dilemma was solved by having Water Safety Instructor (WSI) certified family members snorkel further out into the water! As for progress on the river, Greg thought it has considerably improved, but mentioned that old dumpings re-appear at high water times. The Gull Lake Dam is in much better condition than the eyesore it began as years ago!

Medtronic Milaca Fishing Club

"Try to make the cleanup fun!"

Adopting a section of river is about making the experience rewarding and fun! The Medtronic Milaca Fishing Club has, as many of our "Adopt" groups, turned a cleanup into a fun event for everyone. For the last four years, about fifteen people of all ages gather at a nearby park to begin the cleanup. A few start to clean by canoe while others continue on the shoreline. Everyone then meets up at the end point for a picnic lunch. The fun continued afterwards when some of the volunteers fished in the river and caught small-mouth bass. The Fishing Club realizes the biggest rewards when everyone has a fun experience cleaning the Rum River!



Brainerd and St. Cloud Sunrise Kiwanis Club

“Get kids involved in the cleanup to add extra enthusiasm to the day!”

Some of the Adopt-a-River groups end up going the extra “mile” during their cleanup! The Brainerd Kiwanis Club has been cleaning Boone Park, along the banks of the Mississippi River since the beginning of the program 11 years ago. Their spring 2000 cleanup event included about 100 fourth graders. Together, the group collected about 1,000 pounds of trash. Along with the students’ collaborative efforts with the Kiwanis, each of Brainerd’s ten parks have been adopted by a different classroom of fourth graders for the last ten years. The teachers made a day of fun for the kids by having a picnic lunch afterwards and swimming at the local YMCA.

The Kiwanis Club adopted the entire park including the riverbank, man-made lake, and open spaces. Built in the early 1900’s for lumbering, Boone Lake now has a fishing pier and is stocked annually with pan fish by the local DNR. The park includes many amenities such as a canoe landing at the Mississippi River, a nearby picnic and restroom area, and a hiking and biking trail that connects with the Paul Bunyan State Trail.

The Kiwanis Club discovered the Adopt-a-River Program when they were building fishing piers through the local DNR Trails and Waterways Division. The group was looking for an idea for volunteering and appreciates a nice, clean environment. To make the event more successful, they use pick-up sticks to collect trash with and ask volunteers to bring their own gloves. By doing this, they save money on gloves and are able to use the pick-up sticks for their Adopt-a-Highway section as well. The group has noticed a 100 percent reduction of trash in the area. The Kiwanis Club expressed the sentiment of many groups that the public is more careful with litter disposal once they’ve picked it up themselves.

Kiwanis International has been a large supporter for the Adopt-a-River Program over the years. This tradition continues with another new “Adopt” group further down the Mississippi River in St. Cloud, MN. The “St. Cloud Sunrise Kiwanis” held their first **cleanup on June 17, 2000.**

This group included fifteen wrestling team members from St. Cloud Technical High School as pictured. After finding items such as a car axle, TV set, and a tractor tire, the group can't wait to get on the river again!



Friends of Lilydale

“Even if you just have a few people to clean, it prevents others from dumping”.



This issue’s cover story features the cleanup at Lilydale Park that began the Adopt-a-River Program and eventually led to the adoption of the park by the WSCO (West Side Citizens Organization) Environment Committee in 1994. Pickerel Lake is a shallow, muddy lake within the park that was originally a prime target for dumping of large materials. WSCO was created to help educate neighbors in the area and advocate solutions to environmental issues, including meetings with other neighborhoods.

Formerly the WSCO (West Side Citizens Organization) Environment Committee, the Friends of Lilydale Park group was organized to raise awareness and develop community support to create a new master plan for the West Side. The “Friends” group has promoted the historical significance and present value of Lilydale Park to the public through nature walks, biking, boating, fishing and fossil hunting. Plans are being made for historic Lilydale storytelling and bonfire event for all ages in September.



The Friends of Lilydale has utilized the same method as many other “Adopt” groups by encouraging groups of students and others from the community to combine efforts. Because the “Friends” group is smaller, it was helpful when about fifty students from the Friendship Club of Humboldt High School joined in for a day of cleaning, fishing, snacks, and prizes afterwards. Sherilyn Young, the group’s contact, mentioned that fishing afterwards has also proven to be a great incentive and recruitment tool. Public notices, local newspaper ads, and planning cleanups on the same day as the city’s cleanup is another successful recruitment strategy.

Besides the unique historical aspect to Lilydale Park, its geographical position adds another dimension. Since it’s located on a floodplain, the “Friends” group sometimes has difficulty reaching their section. This was the case in the spring of 1998 when the entire park was closed due to flooding. Overall, the dumping incidence has drastically decreased, but the natural occurrence of spring flooding keeps reminding the group of the increasing problem of stormwater trash.

Adopt-a-River



Mississippi River Revival 6-27-87



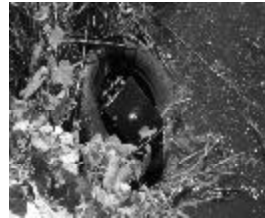
Belle Plaine 10-16-99



St. Thomas Cleanup 10-2-99



Urban Corps 10-1-98



Bassett Creek 5-20-00



Bassett Creek 5-20-00



Hamline University 10-12-95



Riverboat class 5-6-98



Crosby Farms 10-11-96



St. Paul 10-7-94

Photos



Mankato Paddling & Outings Club 1993



St. Thomas Cleanup 10-25-95



St. Paul Drain 7-2-93



Paddleford Cleanup 6-15-00



Belle Plaine 10-16-99



First Stencil in St. Paul 8-3-93



Target Volunteers 6-21-97



"Take-a-Kid Fishing" Cleanup 6-5-93



Paddleford Cleanup 6-15-00

Bonnie Blackwell

“Just remember that each individual can make a difference!”

Bonnie Blackwell will be the first to tell you that each individual can make a difference in the environment! She has been cleaning different stretches of the Minnesota River on her own since 1987. She officially adopted her section of the Minnesota River between the Bloomington Ferry Bridge and Lyndale Avenue in 1995. Bonnie joined the program to create awareness about water-quality issues. But, Bonnie can't take all the credit. Her dog, Lobo, and her neighbor's black labrador, Jake, also give her reason to take daily walks along the banks of the river. Although Jake is only there for the entertainment that the geese provide, they've become a recognized group by the barges as well (sometimes they even sound the horn!).

Sometimes the wildlife in the area takes Bonnie and the dogs by surprise. Once, as they walked along the path, Bonnie noticed a large snapping turtle in the middle of it. Unsure of how the dogs would react to the creature, she avoided the turtle. But it didn't matter because the dogs were too scared to even get close!

Even though Bonnie and the dogs are unable to drag the big pieces home, her persistence acts as a constant representation of the clean water cause. The Adopt-a-River Program has seen many individually adopted sections over the years, so she represents others who face similar challenges and successes!

Normandale-Hyland United Methodist Church Men's Fellowship

“Adopting a waterway teaches young people to pick up what they throw down. It helps to build a sense of community as well.”

The Normandale-Hylands UMC Men's Fellowship has experience in getting wet on their cleanups! One of the most memorable moments was during the second cleanup when a member accidentally tipped his canoe into Normandale Lake. Jack Hauser, a member of the group, says it's still talked about to this day. Their many heroic efforts have resulted in less trash every year.



The church location is near Normandale Lake, so when the snow melted the spring trash would be obvious to the group. They liked the idea of keeping the environment clean, and joined Adopt-a-River back in 1993.

The group typically recruits within the church, but Jack noted that although it's not technically considered "recruitment," people see the group cleaning and it reduces their tendency to trash the area.

Friends of Swede Hollow

“Find a place that's being ignored—it makes your efforts even more rewarding”.

In addition to recognizing our long-time, persistent groups, the Adopt-a-River



Program also wants to thank some of our newer "Adopt" groups. Hopefully, their enthusiasm will keep groups inspired! One such group is the Friends of Swede Hollow who recently adopted a section of Trout Brook this past spring. Shaun Murphy, the group's co-ordinator, just happened to pick up an Adopt-a-River brochure at a nearby community center and decided to take action.

He noticed that the Trout Brook area was consistently trashed, so Shaun gathered area volunteers by posting fliers in the neighborhood.

The first cleanup for the Friends of Swede Hollow will certainly be memorable! One challenge with outdoor work is the unpredictability of the weather conditions. The group had a little more wet and chilly conditions than expected, but still ended up with a very productive cleanup! The "Friends" knew that the area had been neglected for quite a while by examining the collected items. They found an old Pepsi bottle from

Editor's Note: The eight preceding interviews were conducted by Jenny Meyer.

.....**THANK YOU**.....**THANK YOU**.....

The Adopt-a-River Program would also like to take this opportunity to recognize our corporate sponsors for their support during our first ten years!
Thank you to **Minnesota Corngrowers Association, Lutheran Brotherhood, and the Dayton-Hudson/ Target Corporation** for bag donations!
Thank you to **Northern States Power** for providing signs and decal printing!



A special thank you to our dedicated volunteer, **Terri Philips**. She will be completing 12 years of service to Trails and Waterways this August! Terri has been a tremendous help to the program!



The 2000 Adopt-a-River Calender of Events.

This calender includes events that will help you better appreciate rivers, lakes and wetlands, or will provide community service, learning and discussion opportunities relating to watersheds. Call to verify times and locations.

date?? Gilbert Mine Off-Highway Vehicle Area Cleanup. The Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association is sponsoring this cleanup of illegal household dumping. For more information, call Mike Sullivan at 612-602-8905.

Historic Passenger Paddleboats scheduled to be docked at Lampert's Landing. A chance to view these only three sternwheelers (non-casino) on the Mississippi River!

August 2: The Mississippi Queen (382 foot sternwheeler debuted in 1976)

August 8: The Historic Delta Queen (285 feet long, operating since 1947)

September 1, 5, 12: The American Queen (418 foot steamboat, built in 1995)

October 12, 19, 26: The American Queen

August 19: Trail Reconstruction with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Trail repair in Theodore Wirth Park near Eliose Butler Wildflower Garden. Contact Abby Schrader for more details at 612-661-4883 or <mprb.volunteers@ci.minneapolis.mn.us>.

August 24-September 4: The Minnesota State Fair. Stop by the DNR Building to see the Adopt-a-River sculpture!

September 16: Buckthorn Removal (Lake Harriet). Help the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's ongoing effort to this invasive, non-native shrubby tree. Call Abby Schrader at 612-661-4883 with questions.

October 7: Buckthorn Removal (Minnehaha Park).

October 21: Buckthorn Removal (Mississippi River Gorge along West River Pkwy.).

November 18: Prairie Seed Project. Volunteers will collect and/or distribute prairie wildflower and grass seed at prairie sites managed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Contact Abby Schrader at 612-661-4883.

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