

Cleanup Review

Fall Issue 2008

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Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association Revives Belle Plaine Cleanup Efforts



Volunteers posing in front of the sign placed at the entrance of the Belle Plaine State Wayside, June 2008.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association (M4WDA) have begun a new cleanup initiative in the City of Belle Plaine, along the Minnesota River. The Association's goal in this project is to help the state restore a vital flood plain habitat which had been used as a salvage yard during the mid to late 20th century.

"The cleanup at the Belle Plaine State Wayside has been one of the largest and most complex cleanups I've had the privilege of being involved with," said Paul Nordell, DNR Adopt-a-River Coordinator. In 1999, this 60-acre cleanup involved 35 partner organizations, including the DNR's Adopt-a-River program. Over two million pounds of rubbish and scrap were removed in 1999, and some of that weight included automobiles winched out of the river by the M4WDA.

The latest push by the M4WDA was on National Trails Day (Saturday, June 7). On that day a group of about two dozen club members removed an estimated 100,000 pounds of rubbish from the site's wetlands. Over 30,000 pounds of materials have already been shipped to recycling firms, including 227 car and heavy truck tires, and metals.

This was the fifth time the M4WDA has assisted the DNR with river cleanups, and the second time they have volunteered at this site. This year's partnership has included DNR Parks and Recreation, Metropolitan Mosquito Control District and Alter Metal Recyclers. As cleanup efforts expand, more partners are expected to join.

Over time, the state plans to manage the Belle Plaine site as a vital flood plain habitat, in cooperation with local planning efforts. The cleanup challenges at this site, in addition to funding, are formidable. They include dense willow thickets, tall grass and nettles, clouds of mosquitoes, beaver ponds and dams, washed out roads and frequent flooding and siltation from the Minnesota River. The latest cleanup has been possible only through the volunteer efforts of the M4WDA, using their electric winches, skid loaders and 4x4 trucks and trailers.

If you or your organization is interested in helping with the effort to clean up the Belle Plaine State Wayside, please email Adopt-a-River at adoptariver@dnr.state.mn.us or call 651-259-5630.



Volunteers cleaning out tires and various metal objects from the site.

Adopt-a-River Celebrates Milestone: 5 Million Pounds Removed!

As of July 2008, Volunteers with the Department of Natural Resources, Adopt-a-River program, have removed an astounding 5 million pounds of rubbish from public waters since the inception of the program in 1989. To put things in perspective, that would equal roughly 124 million 20 oz plastic beverage containers, which would fill roughly 31 empty Olympic swimming pools.

Program Coordinator Paul Nordell states “Without the help of countless volunteers, all kinds of troublesome rubbish would still be in our public waters, harming wildlife, and polluting our drinking water. We can’t thank our volunteers enough for their passion and perseverance.”

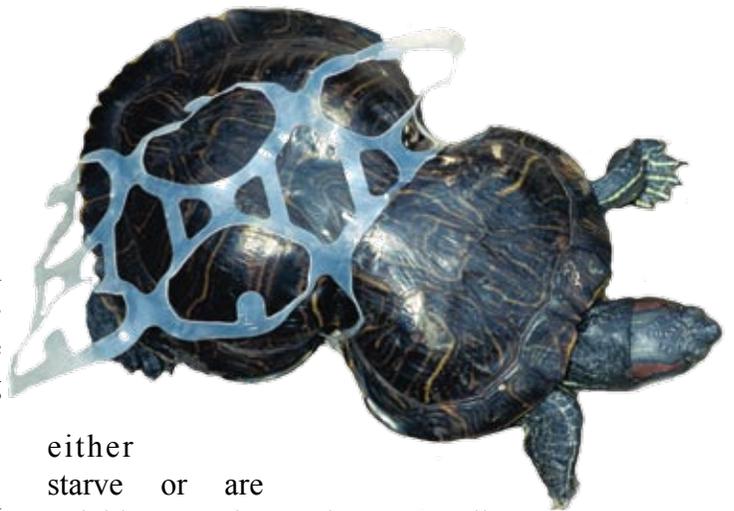
The most common items pulled from waterways include Styrofoam, plastic beverage containers, cigarette butts, and food wrappers. Another common and alarming item is motor oil containers, usually empty by the time they are found on the shoreline. “One gallon of motor oil is enough to pollute one million gallons of drinking water; we have a problem,” warns Nordell.

Adopt-a-River’s new poster child: Peanut the Turtle

This is Peanut the turtle. She was found in 1993 in Missouri and taken to a zoo in St. Louis where the six-pack ring was removed. Today she is in the care of the Missouri Department of Conservation, and is doing well.

When she was a small turtle, she got the ring stuck on her shell. She couldn’t get it off, and over time, the majority of her shell grew, but the area around the ring did not. If this had happened to a fleshy animal like an otter, the animal probably would have died from an infection. Since Peanut’s shell protected her body, she was able to live with it, though some of her organs don’t function properly.

Six-pack rings are not the only type of litter that can harm animals. If an item has any loops or openings, it isn’t difficult for an animal to get into trouble. The trapped animal often panics, making things worse. Since animals don’t have the same dexterity as humans, it’s difficult for them to get out of entanglements. Fishing line is another significant hazard, especially since it’s often invisible. Entangled animals do not usually survive long; they



either starve or are quickly eaten by predators. Small plastic bits and cigarette filters also pose a hazard to wildlife. Animals usually can’t tell the difference between litter and food, so they eat the litter, and choke or fill their bellies full of plastic and starve.

What can you do to keep this from happening again?

- Always cut up your six-pack rings
- Pick up litter
- Tell others not to litter
- Throw away fishing line properly
- Keep streets clean
- Clean up waterways with help from

Adopt-a-River!

Found Object Sculpture 2008

The Industrious Cooperative Ant

Created by: Rabi Sanfo



Each year since 1994 the Adopt-a-River program has commissioned a sculpture to be displayed at the Minnesota State Fair. This year's artist, Rabi Sanfo, created a giant ant from garbage collected from the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. He named it "The Industrious Cooperative Ant".

Along with the sculpture, Adopt-a-River sets up a tent with information and an opportunity for fair-goers to win a prize by playing a game around the sculpture.

Some people have never been to our booth before and others make a point of returning year after year, often remarking on which sculpture was their favorite and how the new one compares. The collection of garbage-turned-art never ceases to astonish and amaze folks as they pass or stop by.

Rabi has described this year's sculpture as follows:

"During the Great Mississippi Riverboat Cleanup (June 12, 2008) many people cleaned the river as a

community. Along the Mississippi riverbank in Lilydale, near downtown Saint Paul, my group removed a rusting, half-buried wheelbarrow. It reminded me of an ant's head. Underneath the piece there were ants. At this point, I knew I would be creating an ant for my sculpture. I chose every piece after I found the wheelbarrow to help build the ant, including a gas cylinder and a steel pot. Ants live in community and build everything in this community in an organized way. If people did the same, the environment would be better."

"When these pieces are garbage along the river, people don't like them. Once you put them together and create something, people like them. In my home country of Burkina Faso (West Africa), people do not throw things away. They always try to find a way to repair items or they transform them into other usable objects. They reuse everything, down to nails and screws. This has inspired me to do found-object art here in the United States, combined with my metal sculptures. When I create found object art, I talk to the parts and tell them that I am giving them a new life, a life where people are going to like them, instead of having them sit somewhere in a landfill or on a riverbank."

For more on the Found Object Sculptures visit www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver/sculptures



People gathered around the 2008 sculpture to play the hidden-object game.

Celebrating the Importance of Water

HISTORICAL MOMENT: October 16, 1999 in Belle Plaine Minnesota Pollution Control Cleanup Brings Hope to the Belle Plaine River Bottoms

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

Background: *In 1999, a year-long cleanup of the Belle Plaine State Wayside in Belle Plaine was begun after a number of earlier attempts had failed. This cleanup was dependent upon a grant from the Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board and 35 contributing entities working side-by-side. Great progress was possible by alternating the use of heavy equipment and hand labor. The effort continues in 2008, as resources and opportunities become available to restore a beautiful portion of flood plain habitat.*

On October 16, 1999, a group of about 20 energetic cleanup volunteers, working only by hand, capped a season in which 1,200 tons of salvage yard and household debris were removed from the Minnesota River flood plain. The site, once known as Frog Town Salvage Yard, had previously been owned by V & S Enterprises. The land had either gone tax forfeit or was deeded to the state and was slated to undergo a surface cleanup in 1999.

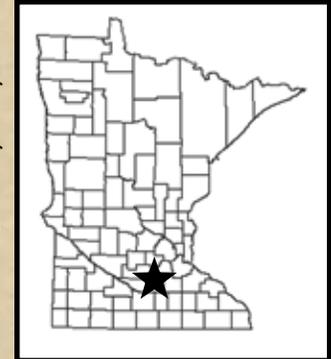
Unwittingly, this site was first “developed” in response to some of the most progressive environmental thinking of the 1960’s. The Highway Beautification Act (HBA) of 1965 called for scenic improvements in roadside scenery, including the planting of wildflowers and shrubbery, and the removal of billboards and junkyards. For the junkyards that could not be moved, they were screened from view. As the roadsides improved, however, Frog Town expanded.

Some screening of junkyards took place along U.S. Highway 169, which also passes through Belle Plaine. The operators of Frog Town were reportedly inspired so much by the beautification campaign that they collected roadside wrecks and auto parts from as far south as La Crosse, Wisconsin and as far northwest as central North Dakota. The Frog Town yard was on the back side of town, far from the highway. It was hidden in a swampy area below the railroad tracks along the Minnesota River.

The site expanded some time after the flood of 1969, eventually collecting hundreds of thousands of tires. The tire piles continued to grow following the ban on

tires at Minnesota landfills in 1984. Serious difficulties arose during the flood of June 1986, when many thousands of tires floated off the site, going down stream fifty miles to Fort Snelling and the Mississippi River. Estimates have been made that perhaps as many as one million tires were once on the site. To this day, many tires remain in inaccessible corners of the property, but most of them were either reprocessed or have floated away.

The significant cleanup action of 1999 began in the aftermath of a citizen complaint to the Pollution Control Agency (PCA) in March 1998. By the end of 1999, the PCA, with a grant from the Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board, and with assistance from 35 separate local or statewide organizations, businesses and agencies, began a year-long effort that removed 1,200 tons of junk. The cleanup has been continued by DNR to the present. The most recent effort was on June 7, 2008, when Minnesota 4 Wheel Drive Association removed 100 tons of tires and scrap metal (see cover story).



View of the salvage yard office before the cleanup efforts began in 1999.

Plant Page

Eurasian watermilfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*

Megan Godbold, Minnesota Conservation Corps/ DNR Adopt-a-River Assistant

Eurasian watermilfoil is an aquatic invasive species that is ravaging aquatic habitat around Minnesota. Its morphology is very similar to the beneficial native species, northern milfoil, which can make identification difficult. It thrives in nutrient-rich lakes where it forms a thick, tangled floating canopy that can interfere with recreation. These mats can also block sunlight to native species below. The following covers the basics of this problem species:

History

Eurasian watermilfoil originated in Europe and was accidentally introduced into the United States and spread to the Midwest between the 1950's and 1980's. The first identification of it in Minnesota was in the fall of 1987 at Lake Minnetonka. Now over 200 identified sites of infestation exist.

How it grows

Most people think plants come from seeds, but this is not true of every plant. Eurasian watermilfoil can sprout from small fragments. This makes it exceptionally easy to spread from lake to lake.

Identification

The Eurasian watermilfoil typically has 12-21 pairs of leaflets. In contrast, the northern milfoil has 5-10 pairs of leaflets. See the illustration to compare the species.



Eurasian watermilfoil infestation map

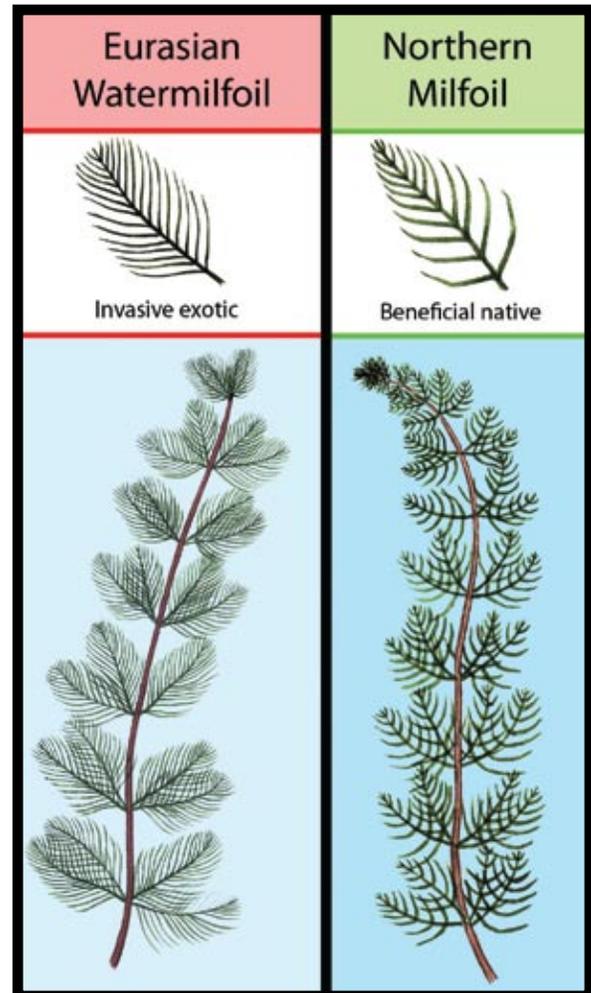
Management

Milfoil is controlled by using approved aquatic herbicides or by mechanical means. The DNR Aquatic Plant Management Program regulates the control of aquatic plants. A permit from the DNR is required to control aquatic plants.

Prevention

Boaters can do their part to prevent spreading this and other aquatic invasive species by ensuring their

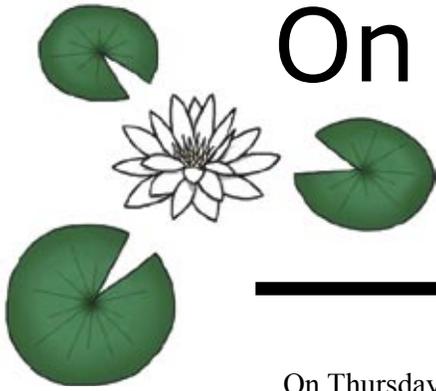
boat and boat trailers are free from any aquatic vegetation after leaving a lake. A fragment only a few inches long is enough to grow into a new plant.



Mechanical clearing from beaches and docks creates countless new stem fragments which can lead to even more plants establishing. Clearing of native aquatic species also creates new opportunities for Eurasian watermilfoil to establish.

If you find Eurasian milfoil in a lake near you, take a sample of the plant and call the DNR to report it immediately (Twin Cities call 651-296-2835, other areas call 1-888-MINNDNR).

Info and photos from the MN DNR
www.mndnr.gov/invasives/aquaticplants/milfoil/index.html



On the Water

Great Mississippi Riverboat Cleanup

Featuring:

Adopt-a-River
&
Volunteers

On Thursday June 12th, 2008 148 volunteers embarked on a mission to clean up a portion of the Mississippi River with the 17th annual Great Mississippi Riverboat Cleanup, spearheaded by the Adopt-a-River program. This years cleanup had the largest volunteer turnout since 1994.

The volunteers traveled up river from St. Paul aboard the Anson Northrup, graciously provided by the Padelford Packet Boat Company, and cleaned between 35E and the Smith Ave. High Bridge. The Minnesota Conservation Corps also played a major role, providing both office staff and work crews to help manage and lead volunteers.

At the end of the day they had collected 3,200 pounds of garbage which included two refrigerators and an antique metal cart which was later incorporated into the 2008 Adopt-a-River State Fair Sculpture.



Volunteer Terri Phillips hands out bags and gloves to volunteers before they depart. August 31st 2008 marked Terri's 20th anniversary of volunteering with the DNR

gathered over 50,000 pounds of garbage from the Mississippi River including countless tires, plastic bottles, appliances, and even a prosthetic leg.



Captain Bob Schleicher and his boat Maggie transporting volunteers to various sites on the Mississippi River

Volunteer Stephanie Gardiner, reflecting on the event said "I really felt like I did something worthwhile today. It was great to work as a team to get this 'stuff' out of the Mississippi."

Since the annual event began in 1992, the volunteers have



Volunteers assisted by the Minnesota Conservation Corps, pose by a refrigerator and cement cart they pulled from the banks of the Mississippi.

Check our website next spring for information on registering for this event!



Visit our website!

www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver

There you will find our:

Events

How-to-Kit

Resources & Multimedia

Electronic Newsletter

Found-object sculpture info

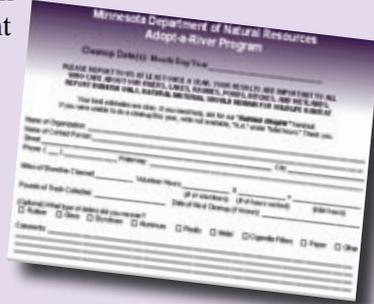
Welcome New 2008 Adopt Groups!

Anderson, Mike - Boisclair, Peter - Clammer 5 Crew - Denny Green - Elk River Watershed Association - Ferguson Family - Fish Lake Lutheran Church - Friends of the Sauk - Gail Hanson and the River Walkers - Headwaters Geology Club - Horseshoe Bay Company - Kallok, Mike and Kelly - Milbridge, Jay - Millerbernd, Jodi & Juli - Mora High School - NTS Inc - Paddle Pushers Kayak Club - George Peters & Karen Griffin - Pine Island H.S. Environmental Club - Quest Program, Ramsey County Community Corrections - River Market Cooperative - Simpson Family - Sobiech, Scott - St. Peter's Youth Ministry - The Institute of Production and Recording - Voodoo Lounge Friends and Family

Purple Cards

Thank you to all the groups that have sent in their purple cleanup report cards for their 2008 cleanups. As of September 17, 2008, volunteers have reported (for 2008) 70 cleanups, spending over 192 hours cleaning up 140,000 pounds of trash from 156 miles of Minnesota shoreline. To date, Adopt-a-River volunteers have spent 255,705 hours removing over 5 million pounds of trash from Minnesota's public waters. Excellent work!

If you have completed a cleanup and forgot to report it, SEND IN YOUR PURPLE CARD. Results can also be emailed to Adoptariver@dnr.state.mn.us or called in to 651-259-5620.



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 CR Editor.....Megan Godbold
 Adopt Coordinator.....Paul E. Nordell
 Dir., Trails & WaterwaysForrest Boe
 Technical AssistanceDave Lonetti
 Graphic ConsultantLinda Escher
 Layout, graphics, and backgrounds by Megan Godbold 2007-08 Adopt-a-River Assistant.

Please direct your comments, questions, and suggestions to the editor of *Cleanup Review* at 651-259-5620 or to the Adopt-a-River Coordinator, Paul Nordell at 651-259-5630; FAX 651-297-5475; MN Toll Free: 1-888-646-6367; e-mail: adoptariver@dnr.state.mn.us; or write to: MN DNR, Trails and Waterways Division, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul MN 55115-4052



Drawing by 2008 Big River Journey Art contest winner: Gao Kalia Vue



Minnesota Department of
Natural Resources
Trails and Waterways Division
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4052

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Adopt-a-River

Cleanup Review Newsletter

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To find a cleanup event near you,
check our calendar of events online at
www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver/events.html
Events are posted as we receive notice, so
be sure to check the list frequently!

CLEANUP STATISTICS: SEPTEMBER 2008

2,652 Cleanups - 75,584 Volunteers - **5,184,520** lbs collected - 8,765 Miles
(since program began in 1989)