



# Cleanup Review

DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

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## A MISSISSIPPI RIVER JOURNEY

Ron Severs—Forest Manager, Cloquet Forestry Center

A few years back contributing journalist Harvey Tjader of THE PIONEER news paper in Bemidji Minnesota wrote:

*“even setting a canoe in one of the small tributaries to the “Father of Waters”, like the Turtle or the Schoolcraft rivers we feel drawn toward the gulf. I think it’s the hydrogen bonding, that strong chemical linkage that ties one molecule of water to the next. Through hydrogen bonding, a molecule of water in Lake Itasca or Lake Bemidji is tied to water molecules all the way to Louisiana and to the seven seas. Knowing we could conceivably go around the world by boat nearly every time we set our canoes in the water is awesome.”*

For me this quote continues to be a favorite thought-provoking statement when it comes to journey by paddle. Each time I paddle on moving water it amazes me that, from the spot at which I’m at, I could travel by paddle to anywhere in the world if I could “just keep going”.

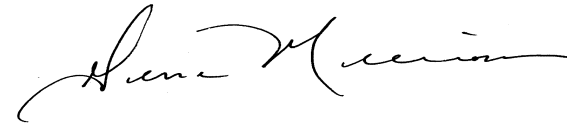
It would be hard to believe that anyone who has ever dipped a paddle in the Mississippi River or traveled by boat through one lock to another has not wondered what it would be like to “just keep going”, or to be able to travel the Mississippi river from one town to the next, through one bend to another until we reach the end, experiencing the growth of the river and the inspiring beauty of the changing landscape through which it flows. Have they wondered about meeting inhabitants of the villages, towns and cities along its course? Have they experienced, if only for a short while, what it may have felt like to those early journeyers who were drawn to discover what lay beyond what the eye can see, a time when rivers were the only highways providing access to a great land?

Being on a river journey, or any journey for that matter, provides ample opportunity for introspection. One can not help but wonder and visualize in the mind’s eye how the river might have looked before the man-made changes we see today. One can wonder, have we permanently damaged the river or only temporarily altered it? I want to believe we have only temporarily altered it.

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## Commissioner's Comments



**Gene Merriam, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources**

Year after year, I am impressed by the amount of work and the results achieved by staff, partners and volunteers through our DNR Adopt-a-River program, so I thought it would be a good time to simply let you know how much Governor Pawlenty and I appreciate what you are doing to cleanup and protect Minnesota’s water resources.

Sure, it makes us all feel good to roll up our sleeves, put on a pair of gloves or just get dirt under our fingernails as we clean up our treasured waters and shorelands, but I know also that there is a certain camaraderie and a personal bonding that occurs as you share in these labors of love.

DNR’s Paul Nordell tells me that he saw it during the clean-up last November at the Pig’s Eye Island Heron Rookery Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) and spear-headed by Guidant, Inc., a long-time Adopt-a-River member. Guidant was looking for a new challenge for their annual company outdoor service project.

The new challenge was to clean the area that is home to one of the largest heron rookeries in the state. Located south of Pig’s Eye Lake along the Mississippi River in Saint Paul, it is the nesting site for five species of colonial water birds. Visitors there also see bald eagles. Because of restrictions on activity in the area during nesting season, it has never received an Adopt-a-River cleanup.

Typical of the program’s partners and volunteers like you, the people and half-dozen organizations involved in this cleanup brought together goods and services totaling \$4,300. It included donations of professional staff time and food, plus free use of boats, dumpsters, barges, cranes and sanitary facilities. An impressive 42 volunteers provided 78 hours of work and removed 3,800 pounds of trash from the SNA. The garbage included obvious threats to the environmental health of the area. For example, one of the items removed was a polluting 8-foot section of oil spill-containment boom that was partially embedded in the soil. Other removed items represented wildlife entanglement potential, human trip hazards, recyclable commodities and aesthetic blights.

I wish I could thank each of you personally, including the volunteers from Guidant, because you inspire and motivate others to follow your lead as the Adopt-a-River program adds to the impressive 2,100+ cleanups it has completed since 1989. So far, we have received reports totaling 4.7 million pounds, removed from more than 7,300 miles of shoreline, ravines and flood plain surrounding our state’s 92,000 miles of flowing water and 22,000 lakes, wetlands and ponds.

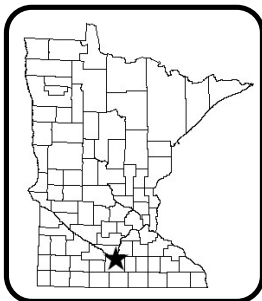
You and I know that these impressive accomplishments were made by people like you picking up one piece at a time. For that, I thank you.

## Celebrating the Importance of Water

**HISTORICAL MOMENT: June 6th, 1857**

**Mankato, a region worthy of an artist's admiration and study**

*Lovers of the picturesque should by all means visit the junction of the Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers. It is a romantic spot – that “meeting of waters” where the bold bluffs of the northern side, whose rocky declivities are dotted with young cedars, look over the far-winding valley of Blue Earth River. No civilizing hand is yet visible in that locality, and it looks as it may have looked for many a year before the eye of a white man rested upon it. It is a region worthy of an artist's admiration and study...* (Mankato Weekly Independent, Saturday morning, June 6, 1857).



The language of discovery and promotion made Mankato a compelling place to be. Not only was the landscape noteworthy (i.e. the “romantic” meeting of waters), but traveling was “easy”. Because it would still be 11 years before Mankato would see its first train (on 10-6-1868), travel by water was the way to go. The Mankato river wharf was the focus. Springtime brought 100 new houses to the community. The local paper stated, “Every boat that arrives at our wharf adds scores to our population,... Since the opening of navigation that amount of freight at our wharf has been immense. Taking into consideration the fact of her location on the Minnesota river at a point easily accessible by boats during nearly the entire boating season; the inexhaustible supplies of timber and stone by which she is surrounded,... it is not to be wondered at that Mankato is making rapid progress...”

Rates for river travel were advertised in the paper. The cheapest and quickest route from Chicago to Mankato was by rail to Prairie du Chien (beginning 4-15-1857, it became the most northerly railhead on the Mississippi River) and then by steamboat to Mankato. The trip from Chicago to Mankato was advertised for \$16.50, with the trip to Mankato from Saint Paul costing \$5.00. Saint Paul newspapers reported a new steamboat, the Jeanette Roberts, was on her way to Saint Paul, destined for use on the Minnesota River.

As grand plans were being made in 1857 for the future of rail, the limitations of river travel and shipping were about to become apparent. The droughty, shallow-water conditions of 1860 - 1864 were debilitating to river commerce. Without a maintained, dredged shipping channel, river shipping was problematic. The Mississippi River limited the shipping of iron rails upstream to Saint Paul, and lumber for wooden ties could not be rafted downstream to Saint Anthony Falls for the state's early rail construction.

Primary sources: DNR Cleanup Review, February 2003; Mankato Weekly Independent, June 6, 1857; Rails to the North Star, by Richard S. Prosser, Dillon Press, 1966; U of MN Studies in the Social Sciences, No. 3, Edward Van Dyke Robinson, 1915.

## On the Water

**Featuring:**  
Crow River  
Organization of Water  
(CROW)

The Crow River is one of the upper Mississippi's major tributaries, both in water volume and nutrient-loading. The effects of rapid urban growth, with its expanded wastewater facilities, and erosion from agricultural lands have been common concerns of many citizens and government bodies within the Crow River watershed of central Minnesota. As a result, many groups began meeting in 1998 to discuss management of the basin, consisting of the North Fork, which has a drainage area of approximately 1460 mi<sup>2</sup> and the South Fork (approximately 1300 mi<sup>2</sup>). The rapid growth of small cities on good agricultural lands in the eastern watershed has been of particular concern. New population centers require intensive wastewater treatment and urban runoff controls. Consequently, it is an appropriate time to recognize the needs, desires and natural limits of the Crow River watershed and to begin short and long-term management efforts.



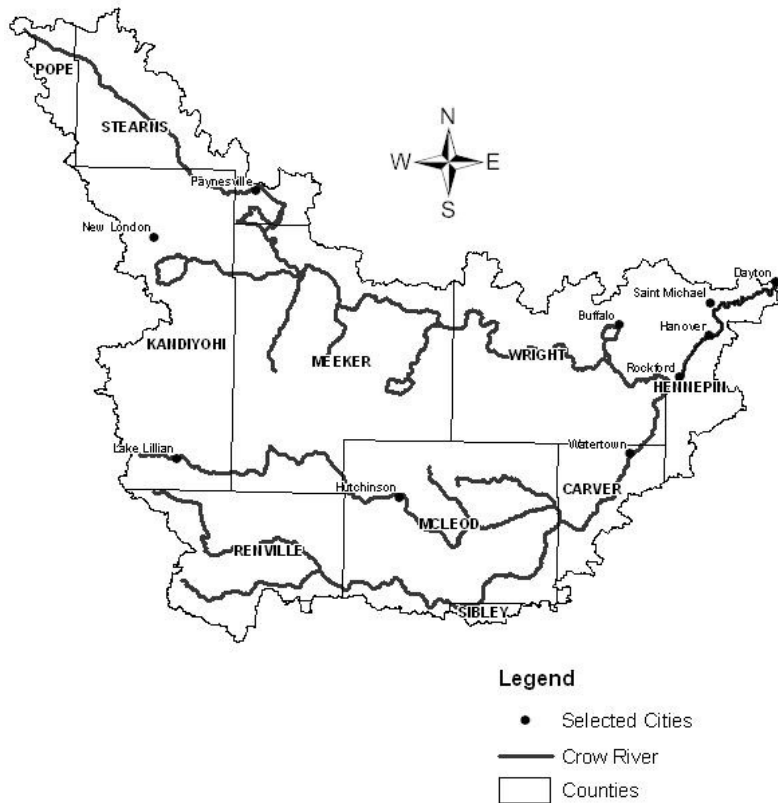
The Crow River Organization of Water (CROW) was formed in 1999 as a result of heightened interest in the Crow River. A Joint Powers Agreement has been signed between all ten of the counties encompassing the Crow River watershed. The CROW Joint Powers Board is made up of one representative from each of the county boards who signed the agreement. The counties involved in the CROW Joint Powers Agreement include Carver, Hennepin, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Pope, Renville, Sibley, Stearns and Wright.

CROW's mission is to support and facilitate the cooperation of local governments, agricultural communities, businesses and citizens in the preservation and restoration of the Crow River. As part of this mission, CROW has been working closely with local, state and federal agencies as well as citizen groups to assess the conditions of the basin. The Crow River Cleanup Day is one of many successful projects CROW has done throughout the watershed.

On September 17, 2005 CROW coordinated the second annual Crow River Cleanup Day. Citizens from surrounding communities came together at ten different cities across the watershed to help pick up garbage from the banks of the Crow River and its tributaries. Over 280 citizens volunteered their time to remove 6 tons of garbage! Cleanup activities ran from 8 am until noon in each community. Following the cleanup, volunteers enjoyed lunch and admired their piles of trash and hard work.

While this was the second watershed-wide cleanup, it was the fourth year of cleanups for the citizen groups of Rockford (Crow River Pride), Hanover (Hanover Area River Team - HART) and Delano (Delano Dream Team). Previous cleanups that have been organized by citizen groups in these communities inspired Diane Sander, CROW Coordinator, to try for a more regional cleanup event. "It seemed like the right time to expand the cleanups, and I knew there were other groups in the watershed that would be eager to help their local communities and cleanup a local resource at the same time" she said. The event has been a huge success and each year it expands to include another neighboring community in the Crow River watershed. Within four years the cleanups have expanded from three communities to ten communities. Each year additional citizens, sportsmen clubs and cities contact CROW to get involved in the next cleanup.

Cities that participated in the 2005 cleanup included Buffalo, Dayton, Hanover, Hutchinson, Lake Lillian, New London/Spicer, Paynesville, Rockford, St. Michael and Watertown. This was the first year that citizens in Dayton, Lake Lillian, Paynesville and Watertown participated. These cleanups allow people to get in touch and take ownership in the Crow River and they help to improve recreational opportunities on the river.



Map of the Crow River watershed with county boundaries

"Journey" Continued from page 1

I want to believe that in time, with nature as a teacher, we can correct or minimize many of the mistakes made in the past, as well as those we will make in the future.

I observed many visual problems on a 2,552-mile journey down the Mississippi from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico, in the early 90's. Since then, great strides have been made to curb the harmful effects of riparian farming. Agricultural practices now pro-



Farming up to the waters edge increases pesticide and fertilizer nutrient pollution

mote the establishment of riparian buffers to reduce sedimentation, pesticide and fertilizer runoff.

Increased government regulation, detection and monitoring have reduced the impact of community and industrial pollution. Today bass and walleye tournaments are held annually along many stretches of the Mississippi River. Activities like this are a heartening testament to the improving water quality of the river today and to the increased tourism and recreational value created by successful regulation.

Some current permitted practices along the river need to be examined. Some states appear to continue to allow disposal of tree debris into the river. Another problem may occur when semi-permanent duck hunting blinds are destroyed by ice flows, depositing these construction materials in the river. Perhaps removable floating blinds might be a better practice in the future. Organized shoreline cleanup efforts by local river activist groups have been instrumental to increase community awareness and support for river restoration projects.



Pollution like this a decade ago, is becoming a thing of the past on the Mississippi

“Journey” Continued from page 6



Many local activist groups have been responsible for cleanup and removal of river hazards and eyesores

Even though many of us have a strong affinity for the rivers, we need to understand that we do not work to improve the river environment only for the river’s sake. We do it for our own sake. We have all experienced the benefits provided by improved water quality: lower costs for safe community drinking water, increased recreational opportunities, better fishing and swimming, and increased commercial opportunity for clamming and commercial fishing. The improved quality of our environment can improve the quality of our lives.

The book *ONE GOOD STORY – A Mississippi Kayak Journey* describes the longevity of the river:

*“The river seems to communicate that it does not care about time; that it is eternal; that not long after our society has flourished and failed, it will erase our efforts to control it and turn to wandering where it chooses – as it has done for thousands of years. You sense your existence is but a speck on the rivers timeline. It’s a humbling experience.”*

As the ranks and passion of river environmentalists grow, so will the desire be to make our river better. It is the corrective action and increased education of today that causes optimism for the future of the Mississippi and other rivers. While paddling I have discovered that nature, if given enough time, has an awesome penchant for healing man’s mistakes. Imagine how quickly the river environment can improve if we help nature in that process.

Like I do when paddling the river, I am curious to see what lies ahead. What is around the bend in the river’s future? How will the river look if we can hold the course of this river journey and “just keep going” ?

*Ron Severs is an avid river enthusiast and journeyer. Having paddled the lengths of the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Yukon, Minnesota, Illinois and many smaller rivers, he has logged over 9,000 miles by paddle and authored the book ONE GOOD STORY – A Mississippi Kayak Journey (Nodin Press, January, 2001).*

“On the Water” Continued from page 5

In total, the clean up resulted in the collection of 6 tons of garbage along 24 miles of shoreline. Items collected included plastic and glass bottles, cans, fast food containers/wrappers, tires, lawn furniture, appliances, an air compressor tank, syringes, a stove, a motorcycle frame, propane tanks, parts of a wooden wagon wheel, cans of spray paint, a basketball, a softball, fishing poles, a steering column, construction debris, a water heater, pallets, PVC pipe, sheets of Styrofoam, trailer parts, a bed frame and mattresses. Participants included Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops, students in the Jobs for MN Graduates program, Coles Karate and Jujitsu classes, Crow River Trail Guards in Paynesville, South Fork Crow River Association, St. Michael Area River Team (SMART) and the Lake Lillian Sportsmen’s Club, among others.

In addition to the many citizen volunteers that donated their time, 50 local businesses and organizations also contributed to the event to make it a HUGE SUCCESS. Sander stated that “Without their help, this event would not be possible.” Other sponsors included Subway Restaurants in Rogers, Albertville, Buffalo, St. Michael, Delano, Rockford, Spicer, Watertown, and Hutchinson as well as the River Inn in Hanover and James Street Coffee Company in Paynesville who donated delicious sandwiches. Culligan and Cub Foods donated bottled water. SuperValu, MarketPlace Foods, Cash Wise Foods, Big Store Grocery, Coborn’s, and Wright Soil and Water Conservation District donated cookies and bags of chips to complete the meal for the volunteers. The volunteers received a t-shirt provided through donations from Stearns County Pheasants Forever Chapter, Carver County Land & Water Services, Hutchinson Technologies and 3M located in Hutchinson. Dumpsters and trash removal were provided by cities participating in the event, Randy’s Sanitation, Lake Lillian Township and Three Rivers Park District. Trash bags and gloves were donated through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources *Adopt-a-River* Program.



Group from Hanover, Minnesota posing with their trash after the 2005 cleanup

More information on the Crow River Organization of Water (CROW) can be found at [www.crowriver.org](http://www.crowriver.org)

## Plant Page

### Silver Maple: *Acer saccharinum*

The silver maple's scientific name is *Acer saccharinum*, but this common Mississippi floodplain tree is known by many different aliases. These include soft maple, silverleaf maple, white maple, river maple, swamp maple and water maple.

No matter its name, the facts about this tree remain the same. Growing to a mature height of 90 to 120 feet, it is considered medium sized. The silver maple is characterized as a fast growing species, that can survive prolonged periods of time being submerged in water. These trees can live 130 years or longer.

In identifying a silver maple, look at several characteristics. The trunk is often separated into several branches near the ground, and the crown of the tree is usually open and of a rounded shape. The bark of young stems is smooth, but over time it becomes darker, with furrows and strips of bark easily flake. The leaves have a silver appearance on the under side and a light green top surface.

Perhaps one of the most notable characteristics of this maple is its shallow, fibrous root system. As compared to trees with a single large taproot, and lesser fibrous roots, this sort of root system is ideal for growth in floodplain systems such as those found along the Mississippi, because it provides a source of natural bank stabilization. This stabilization occurs because of the ability of the shallow, fibrous roots to cling to soil particles and thereby prevent or reduce erosion.

#### Source:

Sullivan, Janet. 1994. *Acer saccharinum*. In: Fire Effects Information System, [Online]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fires Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Available: <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/> [2005, November 22].



**The Minnesota DNR keeps a record of the state's largest native trees through the Native Big Tree Registry. Minnesota's record Silver Maple was recorded in Houston County in 1988. At that time, it measured 90 feet high and had a circumference of 272 inches. If you think you have seen a bigger one contact the DNR's Big Tree Registry at (651) 259-5265**



## Spring 2006 Adopt-a-River Calendar of Events

As of February 11, 2006 \* Contact organizers to verify times and locations.

### March 4th: White Bear Lake Cleanup

The White Bear Lake Conservation District is planning a lake-wide cleanup. For information contact Kristine Lampert at 651-748-8997 or at [kristine\\_lampert@yahoo.com](mailto:kristine_lampert@yahoo.com).

### April 8th: The Greater Minnesota River Cleanup

The MSU Chemistry Club will be hosting a cleanup starting at 9 a.m. Please meet at MSU, Trafton North, Room TN-242. Contact Trent Vorlicek at [trenton.vorlicek@mnsu.edu](mailto:trenton.vorlicek@mnsu.edu) for more information.

### April 15th: Annual City of St. Paul, Parks Cleanup Day

The 2006 Clean-Up will be held on Saturday, April 15th from 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. please call 651-266-6400 or visit <http://www.stpaul.gov/depts/parks/environment/parkscleanup/> for more information.

### April 22nd: 14th Annual REAP Cleanup

Volunteers are encouraged to contact Lois Swanson at 651-451-1038 about joining the River Environmental Action Plan (REAP) as they clean their section of the Mississippi River in South St. Paul.

### April 29th: 1st Annual Cannon River Watershed Cleanup Day

Come help cleanup the Cannon River Watershed on Saturday, April 29th. Please call Sil Pembleton at 507-664-0770 for more information.

### May 12-21: National River Cleanup Week

Any groups interested in conducting their cleanup during this week can register to be included in the National River Cleanup Registry through America Outdoors. For information, contact American Outdoors at 865-558-3595, by email at [infoacct@americaoutdoors.org](mailto:infoacct@americaoutdoors.org) or register online at [www.nationalrivercleanup.com](http://www.nationalrivercleanup.com)

### June 4th: Celebrate Lake Pepin

A presentation of river issues and information at this event with booths in the dining hall, bird walks, children's activities, and food. A cleanup of the area is also scheduled. Activities run from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Please contact Joanne at [jemweavers@earthlink.net](mailto:jemweavers@earthlink.net) for more information.

### June 22th: 15th Annual DNR / Padelford Great Mississippi Riverboat Cleanup

Pre-registration is encouraged for this great event to help clean the Mississippi River aboard the Harriet Bishop riverboat. Food and entertainment will be provided. Contact the Adopt-a-River Program by phone at 651-259-5620 or by email at [samantha.wangsgard@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:samantha.wangsgard@dnr.state.mn.us).

An updated calendar of events can be viewed on the DNR's Internet Calendar of Events which can be reached through the Adopt-a-River's webpage: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/adoptriver](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/adoptriver).

## Adopt-a-River Notes & News

**Phone Numbers:** As of November 2005, the Adopt-a-River program has two new phone numbers. Paul Nordell can now be reached at 651-259-5630 and the Adopt-a-River Assistant Samantha Wangsgard is now at 651-259-5620. Please make sure you update your records to reflect the changes. Thank you!

**Purple Cards:** Thank you to all the groups that have sent in their purple cleanup report cards for 2005. As of January 30, 2006, volunteers have reported spending 11,615 hours over the course of 126 cleanups removing 142,486 pounds of trash from Minnesota's public waters. To date, *Adopt-a-River* volunteers have spent nearly 224,098 hours removing over 4.7 million pounds of trash from Minnesota's public waters. Excellent work! Also, please remember that if you have completed a cleanup and not reported it to SEND IN THOSE PURPLE CARDS. Results can also be emailed to [samantha.wangsgard@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:samantha.wangsgard@dnr.state.mn.us) or called in to 651-259-5620.

### Quote of the Issue:

"A river is victoriously persistent, it overcomes all barriers. For a while it goes steadily on its course, then it comes to an obstacle and for a while is baulked, but it soon makes a pathway round the obstacle. Or a river will drop out of sight for miles, and presently emerge again broader and grander than ever."

Source:  
Chambers, Oswald. "September 6th." *My Utmost for His Highest*. Dodd Mead and Co, 1935.

This "River Turtle," by Paul Byer, was the main focus at the Department of Natural Resource's *Adopt-a-River* booth at the 2005 Minnesota State Fair. The turtle serves as a face and voice for the local river environment, bringing awareness of how precious nature is and how delicate its balance is. This sculpture, as well as all of the past sculptures, may be viewed by visiting our website.



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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: [paul.nordell@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:paul.nordell@dnr.state.mn.us); or write to: MN DNR, Trails & Waterways Division, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul MN 55155-4052.

\*Don't forget to visit our web site at:  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/adoptriver](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/adoptriver).

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