



# Cleanup Review

Winter Issue 2009

Vol. 18, No. 2

## Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association Returns to Belle Plaine - The Ongoing Cleanup

By Al Frechette, Scout County Environmental Services & Paul E. Nordell, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

On Saturday October 24th the Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association (MN4WDA) returned to the site of the former Voss Auto Salvage yard located in the Minnesota River flood plain on the north end of Belle Plaine. It was chilly and the site was incredibly muddy after days of rain. But the spirits of the volunteers were bright and sunny.

After a year of site preparation by the DNR with the assistance of the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC), 48 volunteers from MN4WDA were joined by a small group from the Scott County Sentencing to Service program. The site had been an auto salvage yard and illegal dump operation for about 25 years. Scott County Environmental Services had ordered the illegal dumping to stop back in the mid 1980s, however, access was impossible to control without the owner's cooperation, and sporadic dumping continued to occur. That all ended when the property went tax delinquent and the DNR assumed control in 1998. At that point the city placed a locked gate on the road into the site, and little additional dumping has occurred since.

With the renewed interest of the MN4WDA, DNR has been able to re-ignite the cleanup efforts begun on this site by the MN Pollution Control Agency (PCA) in 1999.



**Heavy machinery from MN4WDA was used to pick up large items in the woods including tires, tanks, barrels and auto parts.**



**View of the Minnesota River adjacent to the site in Belle Plaine.**

Three weeks prior to the October 24th cleanup, local, metro-area and volunteers from New Ulm Area Sportsmen participated in a cleanup with hand tools. On October 24th, four-wheel-drive vehicles, trailers, loaders and power winches were used to pull, drag and haul tons of debris out of the brush. They hauled out over 100,000 lbs of debris plus the removal of about 500 – 600 old tires of all sizes. The four-wheelers seemed to enjoy putting their custom-modified vehicles to the challenge. One member pulled a half-buried fiberglass boat out of the brush. The partially muffled engine of the modified truck roared in super-low gear as the boat slowly emerged from where it was embedded in almost a foot of flood silt. In triumph, the boat was towed away to the dumpsters.

The cleanup of this site has been slated since 1999. It will continue until surface debris is entirely removed. It took 25 years of accumulation-for-profit to create this floodplain problem, and hopefully it will take less time to clean up with the use of public funds and private volunteer efforts. It stirs the imagination to think of how this site could have been

managed differently over the past 50 years, if habitat preservation had been a consideration rather than profit only.

The Belle Plaine City Council has joined in the restoration efforts. They have assisted in road repairs that have provided necessary vehicle access for debris removals, and they provided a very generous hot lunch both on October 3rd and 24th. Belle Plaine Mayor Tim Lies and Council Member Cary Coop were present to thank the volunteers and provide further support. Two local businesses, Ag Power Enterprises and Fahey Realty, donated the use of their equipment. The Minnesota DNR paid for the cost of removal of the scrap with money raised in an Adopt-a-River fund-raiser. The many tires that could hold water were disposed of by the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District.

In the future, this site will be managed for appropriate ecological and recreational uses as a unit of the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area and will be a valuable asset to the area, particularly to the residents of Belle Plaine.

For chronological aerial photos documenting land use change, you can check out <http://gis.co.scott.mn.us/ScottGIS/> where you can select maps from 1957 – 2008 to see how this area (and the rest of Scott County) changed over the past 50 years. (select “Layers” then “Aerial Imagery Layers”).



**MN4WDA volunteers, Scott Co. STS and others on October 24th.**



**Over 500 tires were removed from the site during the cleanup. Many thousands of tires remain.**



**The triumphant towing of an old boat to the dumpster.  
(Photo by Deborah Herber)**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Minnesota 4WD Association**  
[www.mn4wda.com](http://www.mn4wda.com)

**Scott County Environmental Services**  
[www.co.scott.mn.us](http://www.co.scott.mn.us)  
search for “pre-cleanup”

**Adopt-a-River Photo Gallery Online**  
[www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver/photogallery.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver/photogallery.html)



## 5th Annual Pig's Eye Cleanup

On a beautiful October morning, volunteers gathered at Upper River Services Red Rock Road barge facility on the Mississippi River. Boston Scientific volunteer and coordinator of the event, Alyssa Whiting, provided a generous breakfast to start the day for the volunteers.

In groups of ten, volunteers boated to Pig's Eye Island, known as Pig's Eye Scientific and Natural Area (SNA). The island has restricted access during the nesting season.

This was the fifth year that volunteers from Boston Scientific cleaned Pig's Eye SNA. This year, volunteers spread out over the south end of the island and found lots of plastic bottles nested in drift wood. Also found were tires, large pieces of Styrofoam and metal barrels. Over the course of 4 hours, cleanup volunteers collected 2,400 lbs of trash.

Pig's Eye SNA is known for being one of the largest nesting sites for colonial waterbirds in Minnesota. According to the Ecological Services division of the DNR, an estimated 1,600 nesting pairs of 4 species were observed at the seasonal peak of nesting. Colonial waterbirds include: herons, terns, gulls, pelicans, grebes and cormorants.

For more information on Pig's Eye SNA, visit: [www.mndnr.gov/snas/sna01009/index.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/snas/sna01009/index.html)

Boston Scientific hosts this annual family-friendly cleanup, which is open to anyone. If you would like to participate next year, email [adoptariver.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:adoptariver.dnr@state.mn.us) or call (651) 259-5630 to get on the communication list for the event.



**A volunteer used this efficient way to carry bags of trash across the island.**



**Young volunteers dragged trash through the woods to the dumpster along the shore of Pig's Eye shipping channel on the Mississippi River.**

## Belle Plaine Volunteers

In addition to the MN 4WD Association cleanup, Adopt-a-River hosted a community cleanup of the site on Saturday, October 3rd. A total of 43 volunteers showed up to work in the rain. In addition to local volunteers, workers came from around the metro area, New Ulm and Jordan. Six volunteers from the 3M River Restoration Team of New Ulm arrived to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their earlier volunteer cleanup on this site. Even though the wet weather created site difficulties, two dumpsters were filled and countless other items were pulled out of the woods to be dragged out by the four-wheelers later in the month.



**Volunteers from the 3M River Restoration Team (New Ulm) took a moment to pose by the recognition sign installed 10 years ago.**



**Volunteers used rope and teamwork to pull heavy items out of the ground.**

Some unusual items found included a baby doll, a vinyl record, pair of glasses and countless old auto parts. A Sentence-to-Service crew also helped throughout the day and removed an auto transmission tangled in the roots of a tree.

The City of Belle Plaine provided great support by providing water and hot lunches for the volunteers. We would like to thank everyone who participated in this cleanup, we hope to make it an annual event!



# Celebrating the Importance of Water

## HISTORICAL MOMENT: Bridging the Red River at Moorhead, July 5, 1872

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

According to Moorhead's first newspaper, the *Red River Star* (Vol. 1, No. 1) of July 6, 1872, seven dignitaries arrived in town by special train the evening of Friday July 5, 1872. They were welcomed with a 21-gun salute and spoke "in favorable terms of the rapid completion of the great enterprise", the Northern Pacific's route all the way to the Missouri River in Dakota Territory, before the end of the year. This route, to connect the Great Lakes with the Pacific Ocean, was destined to completely change the Red River valley. For example, it marked the final end of ox-cart freighting and shipping between Saint Paul and Winnipeg. Construction of the track had begun on February 15, 1870 near Duluth, crossing the Mississippi River at Brainerd early in 1872. In April, *The Brainerd Tribune* reported that an "imposing and substantial bridge [is] being pushed to completion at [the western end of the NP construction] in Moorhead, where the new depot buildings are now already up, preparatory to the reception of traffic for Manitoba and the great Saskatchewan valley."

In July, *Red River Star* stated, "Moorhead is situated on the Red River at the head of navigation on high banks never subject to overflow." This spot is where the Northern Pacific began building the bridge across the Red River. The bridge was built wide enough to have a wagon lane on each side. The river was so narrow at this point that "quite a hole had to be dug in the bank [of the river] to allow the *International* [steamboat] to turn around, about 100 feet wide." By August 3, the track had been laid 15 miles beyond the river to the west, in the open prairie.

This rail and bridge construction had almost unfathomable impact on the Red River valley. In April, *The Brainerd Tribune* had reported, concerning Moorhead, "A great many men [are] idle, waiting for full opening of spring and the onward movement of the road west." By July 5, thirty cars of freight were arriving per day in Moorhead. The railroad had already transferred 1,500 tons of merchandise to boats heading north on the river. 80 to 100 wagon loads were daily being shipped west and north from town. No estimates were available for the volume of goods traveling daily in and out of Moorhead by horse teams and Red River ox carts.

By definition, the low rail bridge at Moorhead removed even the possibility of river traffic south of town. The *Red River Star*'s "River News" column of July 13



**Northern Pacific work train at Fargo-Moorhead constructing first railroad bridge into Dakota Territory, 1872.**

Photo Credit: Minnesota Historical Society Collection.

spoke of life on the river north of Moorhead in 1872. "Owing to the low stage of water for the last few weeks, boats have been unable to reach this point. All freight [is] being transferred with teams to Frog Point below Green Rapids. The late rains, however, raised the river sufficiently to allow boats to resume their trips, and last Monday the *Dakota* arrived with a very fair cargo, consisting of 47 bales of fine fur for J.W. Fisher and Company, Saint Paul and 151 bales of buffalo robes (10 in a bale) bound for Hamilton, Ontario."

In August, *Red River Star* reported another boat, having unloaded furs at Moorhead, departed for Fort Garry (the future Winnipeg) in early August with the following cargo: wagons, buggies, plows, reapers, mowers, other farm machinery, and groceries. Without the railhead in Moorhead, the land to the north had developed very slowly. It was home to the "Scotch, English and half breeds". They were almost wholly dependent upon the Hudson Bay Company, but now the valley was "becoming rapidly Americanized."

The trans-continental railroad dreams of the summer of 1872 in Moorhead were not fully achieved until September 8, 1883, when a "Gold Spike" ceremony in Gold Creek, Montana marked completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad to the Pacific Ocean.

Sources: *Brainerd Tribune*, 4-20-1872 and 4-13-1872; *Red River Star*, 7-6, 7-13 and 8-3-1872; Richard S. Prosser, *Rails to the North Star*, a *Minnesota Railroad Atlas* (re-published), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2007.

# Plant Page

## Green-headed coneflower: *Rudbeckia laciniata*

Eva Johnson, MCC Water Recreation Specialist

While walking through the woods in the floodplain of the Minnesota River in Scott County, we came across an understory full of *Rudbeckia laciniata*. What a beautiful site juxtaposed against the debris from the former salvage yard. These plants were thriving in this floodplain environment. Related to the Prairie Coneflower and Black-Eyed Susan, this Minnesota native towered over us, reaching 6' tall.

**Habitat:** Native to Minnesota, found in floodplains, prairies and savannas.

**Bloom:** Yellow flowers in mid to late summer.

**Family:** Asteraceae.

**Identification:** 3'-10' tall, lacinate, pinnately divided alternate leaves, yellow composite flowers with green heads.



*Rudbeckia laciniata*

## Jerusalem Artichoke: *Helianthus tuberosus*

Found in the same habitat as *Rudbeckia laciniata*, this sunflower plant is a favorite of Paul Nordell, the Adopt-a-River Program Coordinator who seeks it out while in the field. Though it is native to Minnesota, it has also been developed as a garden cultivar that grows very rigorously and thus requires it to be constrained. Sacajewea (American Indian guide for the Lewis & Clark Expedition) dug and served the wild version of this nutritious tuber for the expedition dinner on the banks of the Missouri River on April 9, 1805. The wild variety has tubers the size and shape of large fingers.

**Bloom:** Native variety produces yellow flowers in August.

**Family:** Asteraceae.

**Identification:** 3'-10' tall, thick leaves, hairy stems, leaves simple, large, opposite on lower stalk, alternate on upper stalk, produces tubers in fall.



Leaves of *Helianthus tuberosus*



Drawing by  
Diane Wagar, 2009

For more information on  
Minnesota Wildflowers, visit:  
[www.mndnr.gov/wildflowers](http://www.mndnr.gov/wildflowers)





# Cleanups & Creativity

## REMNANTS OF THE PAST A POEM & PHOTOS BY DEBORAH HERBER

*Editor's Note: "Cleanups and Creativity" is a new feature that showcases artist's work involving shoreline cleanups. This issue incorporates Cleanup Review's first ever published poem.*

Along the eroding banks of the Minnesota River  
Lies a tranquil scene that will make you shiver  
Where nature and man join together as one  
Entwined around debris that time has spun.

Acre upon acre farther than the eye can see  
Hidden underground rusted metals flee  
Bogged down by mud time stands still  
Where trees and brush continue to spill.

An historical town with stories to tell  
Of steamboats landing under yesterday's spell  
Where mills and foundries drowned in the past  
Mastered by floods the river cast.

In the quiet river valley where eagles soar  
The support of volunteers continue to pour  
With trucks and skid loaders they renovate the land  
Removing the debris once left by man.

The hum of equipment echoes throughout  
Giving nature a chance to sprout  
Where metal and tires layer each other  
Showcasing debris nature and time will smother.

Piece by piece the past is removed  
But the power of the river still carves its groove  
Where the trains lone whistle echoes each day  
And natures growth still guides the way.

Today the river continues to fight back  
Claiming its territory with a sedimentary attack  
Wave after wave it buries the past  
Leaving behind a mark that will last.

Along the eroding banks of the Minnesota River  
Lie remnants of the past that will make you shiver  
Where nature and man grow together as one  
And tales of progress are diligently spun.



## ABOUT THE POET

Deborah Herber grew up in Good Thunder and has observed the beauty of Minnesota since she was a child. She has always had a passion for nature and wildlife and when she was invited to visit the Belle Plaine cleanup on October 24, she responded immediately because she believes in the preservation of our land and wildlife. She is a single mother of three and is currently a photo tech at Walgreens and freelance photo journalist for the Mankato Free Press.

Adopt  
-a-  
River

Bulletin

HAVE YOU  
FOUND  
SOMETHING  
**unusual?**

Send an email to [adoptariver.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:adoptariver.dnr@state.mn.us) and let us know the most unusual item that you have found during a cleanup (photos too!). The item could be extremely old, unique or just plain odd. We will be using the information to write an article about some of the most unusual items found along Minnesota's shorelines.



kitchen sink



suitcase

NEED A JOB?



**Minnesota Conservation Corps  
has Spring and Summer Jobs  
for Youth 15-18 years**

**Youth Outdoors:**

Spend 12 hours a week after school accomplishing conservation and community service projects. Applicants must live in St. Paul, in a household at or below 80% the median income. Deadline to apply: February 5, 2010.

**Summer Youth Program:**

Travel Minnesota to complete environmental projects for 8 weeks during the summer. Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing youth from across Minnesota are encouraged to apply. Deadline to apply: April 23, 2010.

**For More Information:**

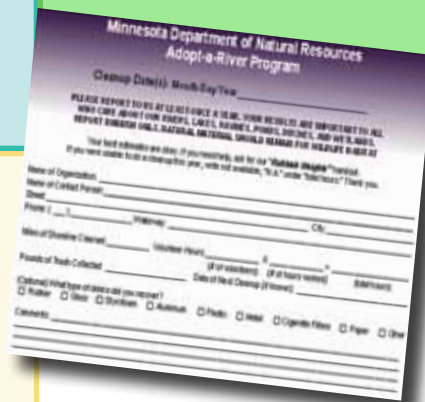
[www.conservationcorps.org](http://www.conservationcorps.org)

Call: 651-209-9900 or

E-mail: [youth@conservationcorps.org](mailto:youth@conservationcorps.org)



By 2009 National Park Service Big River Journey  
Art Contest Winner Payton Lindorff



Don't forget  
to send in  
your purple  
reporting  
cards for  
the 2009  
cleanup  
season.

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





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# Adopt-a-River

## Cleanup Review Newsletter

Each year, the Adopt-a-River program sponsors a river trash sculpture at the Minnesota State Fair. This year's sculpture was the largest in the history of the program, over 25 feet tall.

The artist, Demian Jackman, an elementary art teacher, decided to create a sturgeon sculpture. The requirement for the sculpture is that the entire thing must be constructed of authentic river trash (excluding necessary structural components). A large flat-bed truck and a crane was needed to complete the sculpture on site. During the summer, Demian, with the help of former Adopt-a-River assistant Megan Godbold and volunteers, constructed the massive piece at his studio near the U of M campus.

During the fair, the Adopt-a-River booth served at least 9,800 visitors. The scavenger hunt around the sculpture is one of the most popular free, all-age activities at the fair. The size of this year's sculpture was able to capture the attention of many more people. Some unusual items found in the sculpture were a cell phone (still wrapped in its plastic bag), a toddler car, a Vikings chair and countless pieces of plastic and shoes. To view sculptures from previous years, visit our website at:

[www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver/sculptures/index.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/adoptriver/sculptures/index.html)



**Urgie the Sturgeon by Demian Jackman, 2009.**

CLEANUP STATISTICS: DECEMBER 2009

**2,866** cleanups - **79,504** volunteers - **5,818,525** lbs collected - **9,471** miles cleaned

(since program began in 1989)