

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

April, 2008



President's View

Watch as the sun rises farther to the north each morning along the Wisconsin bluffs that border the river valley, but yet we remain locked in the grasp of "ole man winter". Perhaps spring and warm temps have returned to the upper Midwest as you read this, and I'll never complain about cutting grass again!



USF&W staff serves turkey dinner to volunteers.

**L. to R.
Seth Kettler,
Tim Yager,
Clyde Male,
Neil Henkenius.**

Winter was interrupted momentarily when the staff of the McGregor District cooked up a turkey feast fit for the greatest of kings, and treated all comers with food, camaraderie, and appreciation. It was an evening to cherish as Mark Schneden received the Friends of Pool 9 Volunteer of the Year Award, and Phyllis and I the McGregor District Volunteers of the Year.

**Mark Schneden receives Pool 9 Friends Volunteer of the Year Award.
L. to R. John Verdon congratulates Mark Schneden.**



The real highlight of the evening however, was Byron Clements, who shed a tear (and so did most in the audience) when Upper Mississippi River Refuge Manager, Don Hultman named him the first recipient of the River Guardian Award. Recently created by Hultman, it recognizes people who take outstanding action in service to people and/or river resources. Don said, "Byron is one of those amazing people who care deeply about the river and the people who use it, caring that's reflected more in action than in words." Congratulations Byron from all your friends in the Friends of Pool 9.

**Byron Clements receives first River Guardian Award.
L. to R.
Don Hultman,
Byron Clements,
wife Jennifer Clements.**



To the Fish and Wildlife staff I offer my most sincere thanks and appreciation for making the evening such a resounding success. The accomplishments and success of our Friends group is far reaching and compounded many times over as agencies and local citizens intermingle and get to know one another better. Sharing life's stories and struggles helps us focus on our common goals for the Mississippi.

The Board of Directors met in early March and approved an exciting list of activities for spring and summer. Plans include sending two members (Mark Schneden and myself) to Washington, D.C. in early April; set April 19 for the Annual River Clean Up Day; granted \$200 for the 6th grade Eastern Allamakee Middle School River Adventure in May; set June 21 as a special day to get 200 students and parents onto the river for a day of Huck Finn-like activity (at no charge); being informed that we will be getting sand for placement this year; and set the Annual meeting and picnic for later in the summer. Sounds like a pretty full slate...and there are more ideas flying around that will come to the surface a little later on. And oh yes, new eagle nests seem to be springing up all over the place; you gotta' love this Pool 9.

Friends of Pool 9 received a letter from Evan Hirsch (President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association) indicating that we (FOP9) had been nominated for the prestigious National Friends Group of the Year Award. We however, were not selected as the winner this year, but it makes me proud to have been nominated and be associated with all of you and Friends of Pool 9 for all the good things you are doing. Thanks to Tim Loose, Tim Yager, and Don Hultman for supporting us and for submitting the application.

Let's get those boats in, idle through the backwater on a warm spring day, and locate that trash for the clean up. See you on the river.

John

Friends of Pool 9 Planning for Annual Pool-wide Clean Up

The Friends of Pool 9 Clean-up Committee is again making plans for its Annual Pool-wide Clean Up. The Committee is in need of boats with operators and crew, to clean all areas of the 31 mile-long Pool and in particular the upper end of Pool 9 of the Mississippi River, beginning at 8:00 am on Saturday, April 19. Local Co-Chairmen Glen Springer and Brent Darling will assign volunteers to areas north of Lansing to collect debris from the backwater. Once again the US Army Corps of Engineers will partner with the Friends of Pool 9 in a Service Agreement to provide limited tort liability insurance for the clean up. Lunch, water, gloves, and garbage bags will be provided to all volunteers.



Matt Mauss stands at the front of the Greg Dougherty boat with its cache of barrels collected from the Reno Bottoms, April, 2007.

Boats and crews are needed to gather barrels and other debris carried over the dam during the Brownsville, Minnesota flood of 2007, and now located in the backwater north of New Albin. Reno Bottoms is the prime area of focus for the clean up and is usually inaccessible and covered with thick vegetation later in the year. Boats can be pulled by trailer to either Visgers Landing or New Albin Landing (Army Road) on the Iowa side, or Dairyland Power Landing or Black Hawk Park on the Wisconsin side of the river. Mark Clements and Shawna Stringham will coordinate the Wisconsin side of the river. Most of the barrels and debris will be found in the Reno Bottoms below the spillway and in off-channel cuts below Willow Island, Twin Island, and Gillette Island. Debris will be transported to either Visgers or New Albin Landing where an Iowa DNR truck will be waiting, or to the dumpster at Black Hawk Park. Lunch will be served at Black Hawk and at Ferryville for Wisconsin volunteers, and at New Albin Landing and Lansing (VFW) for Iowa volunteers.



Tim Novak, Manager of Blackhawk Park helps to unload barrels brought in by volunteers during the 2007 Pool-wide cleanup.

Clean up will also take place in the middle and lower end of the pool. Area volunteers should contact Springer or Darling, or Mark Schneden of Lynxville or LaDonna Noelting at Heytmans. A dumpster will be located at the old Lansing Fish Market site for trash collected from mid-pool. A tractor will be at the site to lift heavy items into the dumpster. At the lower end of the pool debris will be collected at Lynxville Landing (small dumpster) and at Heytmans Landing to be picked up later by Friends of Pool 9, Iowa DNR, or US Fish and Wildlife staff.

Interested volunteers need to register with Glen Springer (563-538-9232), Brent Darling (563-538-4489), Al Wuennecke (563-544-4929), Ric Zarwell (563-438-4991), Mark Clements (608-606-3109), Shawna Stringham (608-673-3681), Mark Schneden (608-874-4478), or LaDonna Noelting (563-586-2873). There will be a coordinators meeting on April 19, at 7:00 PM in the Kerndt Brothers Community Center, in Lansing. The primary meeting site the day of the Clean-up is the VFW building in Lansing.

All volunteers must sign the registration form and those under 18 years of age must have the Parent Approval Form signed prior to taking part in the clean up activity. Volunteers will be given a short, but necessary Safety Briefing prior to departure.

A complimentary lunch will be provided all volunteers at noon. It's imperative that volunteers sign up early (before 8:00 AM) so that lunches can be prepared and collection areas assigned. The food committee is also in need of help, volunteers should call Sue Stirn (538-4055) or Shirley Darling (538-4489). There are over 90 square miles of natural habitat that needs to be cleaned and maintained in Pool 9, we need your help. Please volunteer today by contacting one of the individuals listed above.

Coming Soon to Pool 9!

What is *Virtual Geocaching*? Virtual Geocaching is a high-tech scavenger hunt that involves locating a specific landmark on or adjacent to Pool 9 and the Upper Miss Refuge. It does not involve digging anything up or burying anything for others to find. That is against the law on the Refuge and could lead to disturbance or destruction of the habitat. This is a family friendly activity, using a hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) unit to find a specific landmark to help answer a clue.

The landmark could be a scenic vista, or the site of an historic building or event, or it may be a beautiful place on the Refuge that you've never been to. Once you are there you will be able to answer a clue. For example the clue might be a question about an historic event that took place on the site. If you have found the right place, there might be a monument or an information panel that has the answer to your question.

The clue may ask you to tell us what animal lives at the landmark? The GPS coordinates may have taken you to a really cool beaver lodge or perhaps an area that normally has pelicans visible.

One of our Friends of Pool 9 members, Wes Hardman is putting together a variety of geocache activities. Each activity will have approximately 8-10 landmarks for you to search for. We hope to have the activities ready to go by early summer. The Refuge received a grant to help pay for GPS units, backpacks and activity guides and is in the process of purchasing them. Once we have everything ready to go we will be putting the backpacks at select locations (libraries, parks, campgrounds, etc) where you can check them out for your adventure.

We will have a variety of activities. Some may require that you drive, others may walking routes with in a community, and some will even be water based (where you will need a boat).

Eventually we will be putting these on our website, so that if you have your own GPS units, you can download the clues right from the web.

Watch for a complete update in our summer newsletter.

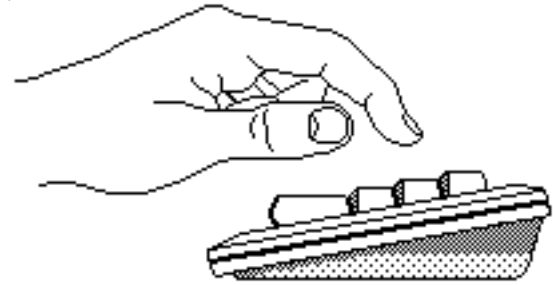


Volunteers Needed !

The Friends of Pool 9 have several activities and projects that we will be working on this summer and we could use your help. We are a volunteer based organization and rely heavily on you, our members to accomplish these. If you would like to volunteer for any of the projects below, please email or call Tim Loose for more information: tim_loose@fws.gov or 563-873-3423



Reno Bottoms Canoe Trail - needed volunteers to help construct an information kiosk for the trail head at the walk-in access on the spillway at Reno and to help sign the canoe trail from the spillway to the Army Road Boat Ramp.



Website Construction and Management - we are looking for a volunteer to help us construct and maintain a Friends of Pool 9 website. A large portion of our members now have access to the internet. We need to be able to update them about our activities in a cost effective method. If you have website design experience or the willingness to learn how, please contact us.



Mississippi River Adventure Day - We hope to have 200 kids and parents participate in our first annual Mississippi River Adventure Day. In order to pull this off we need lots of volunteers. We are looking for volunteers to help cook lunch, transport equipment, cleanup, take pictures, help maintain order and safety, and assist the speakers. If you would like to help lead an activity that opportunity is available as well. Please contact Tim Loose for complete details or to volunteer.

Friend of the River Docks in De Soto Middle School Classroom

by Mrs. Hosemann's 6th Grade Reading/Language Arts Students, De Soto Middle School

Mr. Jerry Boardman is hardly the type of gentleman who spends much time in a rocking chair. He's much happier trolling the waters of the Mississippi River in this region he's called home for over 65 years. This fall Boardman traded a morning on the river to take the rocking chair reserved for special guests in our classroom. He came to speak with us about his experiences and remind us of our role as future guardians of this important resource.

Boardman said that he began fishing "pretty much the day he was born" and hasn't stopped since. Aside from three years in

military service, Boardman has fished every year of his life. He comes from a legacy of commercial fishermen in his family. His great-grandfather, grandfather, and his own father all fished commercially. Boardman said

that he first experienced the river with his father, and his mother often remarked that he'd "rather be on the river than go to school."

In his many years on the great Mississippi, Boardman has fished commercially, collected shells for the pearl button industry, trapped muskrats, and competed in tournaments. His favorite times include any opportunities he can get out with his four sons, especially if they can all get out together. Boardman keeps a diary and he records details from every day he spends on the river. When asked if he knows any great secret fishing spots, Boardman smiled slyly and said he doesn't tell anyone. He's even gone so far as to record some of his secret spots in the diary using a code, much to the dismay of one of his sons who likes to check the diary every time he comes over.

Boardman has witnessed the changes in the river over his lifetime, including the floods of 1965 and 1993. He explained that erosion and sedimentation have changed

the river and its banks tremendously over time through depositing sand and soil in the river bottoms.

When asked about the bald eagle populations, Boardman said that he's observed more nest sites in Pool 9 than any of the other pools he's visited. He explained the amazing recovery the species has made since the use of DDT in pesticides destroyed large numbers of eggs in the 1950's and 60's. When he owned the Swing Inn Bar and Restaurant in Ferryville, he used to feed the eagles on the ice. He thinks recent data suggests there are about 80 nest sites on Pool 9.

Boardman noted another positive change. The river is cleaner now than it has ever been in his life due to tighter regulations and increased environmental awareness in the public. Still, he urged us to take an active role and

get involved in organizations like Friends of Pool 9. The clean-ups and beach restorations are great chances for local people, including kids, to make an impact, he said.

Boardman also cautioned us to think of safety

when out on the river. He said that many accidents occur because people overload boats and get careless. Boardman also reminded us to wear sunscreen and lip balm to avoid skin cancer.

"Any time you can get out on the river itself, take time to look around," Boardman said. He encouraged us to "pay attention" in order to appreciate the amazing sights in our immediate surroundings. He reminded us that the river is a sensitive system that should be respected and treated with care so that it can be a valuable resource for future generations.

Our class was grateful for the opportunity to hear about Jerry Boardman's experiences in his life of work on the Mississippi River. He had many stories to share about fish he's caught, and other animals he's observed, including river otter, water snakes and peregrine falcons. The solitude and quiet of the river draw him back time after time. When asked where he would fish if he could go anywhere in the world, Boardman replied, "Right here. I never want to be any place else."



Mississippi River Adventure Day Saturday, June 21, 2008

Hey kids, how would you like to spend a day exploring the Mississippi River islands and backwaters? Will here's your chance! On Saturday, June 21st the Friends of Pool 9 will be teaming up with Iowa State Extension and our Natural Resources partners to bring you the first annual Mississippi River Adventure Day!

Youth and adults will be transported by chartered boats to the Mississippi River backwaters and islands for a day of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn-like adventure. Participants will investigate an eagle nest, pollywog (swim) for mussels, seine for fish, search for frogs and turtles, collect aquatic bugs and critters, learn about the floodplain forest plants and animals, have a picnic lunch, and enjoy exploring the Mississippi River under the leadership of outdoor enthusiasts and resource professionals. **The entire event is free.** In order to participate all youth must be accompanied by a parent or adult leader (no more than 4 youth per adult). This program is designed for youth ages 5 to 17. Kids under 5 are welcome but must be accompanied by their parents.



Why are we asking that kids be accompanied by a parent or adult? Our goal is to introduce children, families, and youth group leaders to the beauty and

diversity of the wildlife and plants in the Mississippi River ecosystem. We feel that in order for kids to be comfortable exploring the River, their parents or leaders need to be comfortable as well. In recent years there has been a shift in child and student oriented investigative activities, from the natural world to computers and indoor based simulation games and activities. While these activities serve students with limited access to the natural world, it has been shown that children learn about nature best when immersed in nature itself; a swim in the water searching for mussels or a walk in the mud collecting frogs will elevate their excitement and enthusiasm for learning. Even in our small town



settings of northeast Iowa and southwest Wisconsin, we feel the river resource is under used as an educational tool.

For families living along the Mississippi River in Pool 9, watch for fliers and handouts coming home with your students in May. If you and your family live off the river, you may also email or call Tim Loose at (tim_loose@fws.gov) or 563-873-3423 ext 11 for a registration packet.



Friends of Pool 9 Annual Picnic and Business Meeting Saturday, August 23rd 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Plans are underway to try something different for this year's annual picnic and business meeting. The Friends of Pool 9 have reserved one of Jack Libby's Mississippi Explorer Cruise boats (~ 80 passenger capacity) for a Saturday evening cruise on August 23rd. We will cast off from Lansing and head north for an evening cruise and catered dinner.

Complete details will be coming out in the summer newsletter, but mark your calendars now if you think this is something you might be interested in.



Friends of Pool 9
P.O. Box 455
Lansing, IA 52151



Calendar of Events:

Coordinators Meeting for the Pool-wide Cleanup

7:00 pm, Wednesday, April 9, 2008
Kerndt Brothers Community Center

Pool-wide Cleanup Day

8:00 am to 12:00 (noon)
Saturday, April 19, 2008

Mississippi River Adventure Day

(See enclosed article)
Saturday, June 21, 2008

Friends of Pool 9

River Cruise and Dinner
(Annual Picnic and Business Meeting)
Saturday, August 23, 2008

**To accomplish great things,
we must not only act, but also dream;
not only plan, but also believe.**

Anatole France