

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

April, 2009



President's View

What a wonderful warming trend we're having in the Midwest. The river is already at 43 degrees Fahrenheit and it won't be long before the walleye begin to spawn. The main brunt of the spring migration has already passed us by, and warm summer temps will be here soon.

I have never been more proud of our group than I was in Washington, D.C. at the National Wildlife Refuge Association awards ceremony, in February. We accepted the award as the National Friends Group of the Year on your behalf. To my surprise we are one of the largest and most active Friends groups nation-wide. Your compassion and commitment to the Mississippi is unparalleled, and with deepest sincerity, I and the Board of Directors thank you. Together we have done many great things.

As the Annual Pool-wide Mississippi River Clean Up date approaches (April 25, 2009) I'm reminded of the importance of Site Coordinators, local volunteers, and willing sponsors to finance our events. We have received a cost-share grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service as well as a \$1,000 donation from Canadian Pacific Railroad to help with clean up expenses. Railroad employees will also be assisting with the volunteer effort on the clean up day.

While I'm happy, I'm also deeply saddened with the recent passage of the Omnibus Parks Bill of 2009. While most of the items in the bill will benefit wildlife populations immensely, one will not. It includes the construction of a road through the 'heart' of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, on the Alaskan Peninsula. This area is only three miles wide (the width of our river valley) and contains 98% of the world's population of black brant, as well as brown bear and migrating caribou.

It was created to protect this population of Pacific black brant through its designation as a Wetland of International Importance by the RAMSAR Convention, under the Reagan Administration in 1986. In 2001, it was further protected as a Globally Important Bird Area. In spite of these protections, it is in immediate danger of the permanent encroachment of man, with a road connecting two Alaskan communities of 80 and 800 citizens 26 miles apart. Please take the time to read more about it and write the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Ken Salazar. Express your concerns, and the need for an Environmental Impact Statement to determine the need, feasibility, and impact on wildlife populations in the area and setting a nation-wide precedent that could have far reaching effects on wildlife all over America.

Congratulations to Friends family member Terry Fitzpatrick, for an outstanding performance and his 17th place finish (out of 92 fishermen) in the 2009 Bass Masters Classic, on the Red River in Bossier City, Louisiana. Can you teach me how to catch those big "hogs"?

On a sad note we bid farewell to long-time personal friend and Friends member Rodney Vlotho, who will not be with us on this or any years river clean up. He had worked along with us in past years cleaning the river, and we'll miss him. Happy fishing old buddy.

See you on the river,

John

To Contact Secretary Ken Salazar, Department of Interior

For your background information, I have a fact sheet on Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, or you can simply "google" Izembek electronically. To contact Mr. Salazar electronically use www.doi.gov and click on Contact Us. To write a letter via US Postal Service the address is:

Mr. Ken Salazar, Secretary
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
Phone: 202-208-3100

Friends of Pool 9 Annual River Clean Up Saturday, April 25, 2009

Friends of Pool 9 members are invited to participate in the Annual Pool-wide Mississippi River clean up scheduled for **Saturday, April 25, 2009**. Pool 9 is a huge pool, covering some 90 square miles of backwater, navigation channel, and open water. It takes many little towns and individuals pulling together to keep it in top-notch shape. Vast amounts of trash and debris flowed into the upper end of the pool during the record rainfall and floods last summer.



April 19, 2008 boat load of trash from Mississippi River backwaters at Visgers Landing. L. to R. Michael Laurer, Andrew Verdon, and Phillip Hooker.

An organizational meeting has been set for April 7, 2009 at 7:00 PM, at the Kerndt Brothers Community Center in Lansing. The meeting is open to interested community citizens as well as FOP9 members. Volunteers need not be members of Friends of Pool 9 to take part in the clean up activity. A complimentary noon lunch will be served the day of the clean up for all volunteers.

Site Coordinators for each location are asked to attend. Sign-Up Sheets, water, gloves, and garbage bags will be available for the Site Coordinators to pick up at the meeting.

Those willing to go out on the river from a particular site should contact the site coordinator listed below:

- **Lansing Coordinator**
Glen Springer - 319-239-5301
- **Visgers Landing (north of New Albin) Coordinator**
Al Wuennecke -563-544-4929
- **Heytmans Landing Coordinator**
LaDonna Noelting - 319-232-0245
- **Black Hawk Park (lower landing) Coordinator**
Mark Clements - 608-606-3109
- **Ferryville City and Lynxville City Landing(s)**
Mark Schneden - 608-412-0483

Volunteers willing to help with food preparation should contact Sue Stirn at 563-568-8087. We also need photographers at as many sites as possible, and truck haulers for the sites without a dumpster.



April 19, 2008. L. to R. Will Willson and Guy Boardman unload a damaged red channel marker buoy that had spent the last several years lodged in the Wisconsin backwater.

On April 25, volunteers will gather at 7:15 AM at several sites around Pool 9. All volunteers must sign the Volunteer Service Agreement with Friends of Pool 9 and US Army Corps of Engineers. Those volunteers under 18 years of age must also have a signed Parent Approval Form. Site Coordinator must read a Safety Informational Sheet and all participants must wear an approved personal flotation device (life jacket) while on the water. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited during the clean up.

Trash and debris will be collected at each site and dumpsters will be located at Lansing, Black Hawk Park, and Ferryville City Landing. Trucks will be used to transport trash collected to the dumpster sites, another need for volunteers.

This is one of our major and most demanding projects. Take pride in knowing that what we are doing is very important, and we are being observed by Friends groups nation-wide. We are the National Wildlife Refuge Association **Friends Group of the Year**.

*What we do is not only for ourselves
but for generations yet to come.*

Eastern Allamakee 6th grade River Ed Day Tuesday, May 5, 2008

Friends of Pool 9 has again partnered with Eastern Allamakee Community Schools (EASC) instructor Debra Masek to offer 6th grade students a day of river education. The thirty students will participate in six activity stations along and on the Mississippi River. Stations include: Boater Safety Instruction (Vicki Hansen, Iowa DNR), Birds of the Upper Mississippi (Jon Stravers, Audubon Society and Bob Henkel, FOP9), Water Quality Testing (Jared Olson, Allamakee County Conservation Board and John Verdon, FOP9), River History Museum (Karen Galema (FOP9) and Phyllis Verdon, FOP9), GPS Virtual Geo caching on the Refuge (Tim Loose, US Fish and Wildlife Service), and Macro-invertebrates (Ann Blankenship, US Fish and Wildlife Service). Students will receive and must wear a personal flotation device (life jacket) at all times when on the water.



In May, 2008 EACS 6th grade students checked for water quality of the Mississippi River above Horse Shoe Island, using LaMotte Chemical Testing Kits.

All student groups will be accompanied by an adult and will be moving along Front Street between Main Street and the VFW building at all times of the day. Drivers should use caution in that area on the day of the activity (May 5, 2009). A lunch will be served participants in the baseball diamond bleachers at 11:30 AM. Students will return to EACS Middle School at 3:00 PM.

Funds to support the day of activity have been donated by Friends of Pool 9, New Albin Savings Bank, and Kerndt Brothers Savings Bank

*“The river has great wisdom
and whispers it’s secrets to the hearts of men.”
-Unknown*

Reno Bottoms Canoe Trail

The Friends of Pool 9 were awarded a challenge grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help create a canoe trail in the Reno Bottoms. This area is designated a Research Natural Area due to the diverse floodplain forest habitat that exists there. It is one of the best examples of what the River looked like prior to impoundment.



Photo by Sandra Lines

Working with the Minnesota DNR, we have secured permission to place a trailhead at their parking lot on the western edge of the Lock and Dam 8 spillway/dike.

Refuge staff have built an official notice board and the Friends of Pool 9 will be helping to design and pay for an informational panel and leaflet that will go on this structure. We hope to put the signs up on May 2, 2009. We will be canoeing the trail and posting canoe route signs along the way to help keep people from getting lost.

We are inviting volunteers to assist with this project. If you have a canoe/kayak and would like to join us, please send an email to tim_loose@fws.gov or call him at 563-873-3423 ext 11 and ask to be put on the list as a potential volunteer for the project.

As we get closer to the May 2nd date we will send you an email or give you a call with more specifics. In the event of bad weather, we will postpone the event until May 9th. Plans are to meet at the parking lot, put up the information panel, and float the backwaters putting up the canoe trail signs. We will canoe down past the Millstone and Visgers Landings (possibly stopping at Millstone for a picnic lunch) before completing the route to New Albin. From there we will have a shuttle van to transport drivers back to the Reno Bottoms to pick up their vehicles. In the event of high water, we may have to take out at the Visger’s Boat landing.

*“We will remember, not the words of our enemies, but
the silence of our friends.”
Aldo Leopold*

Friends of Pool 9 Receives National Award

The Friends of Pool 9, Upper Mississippi River Refuge, Inc. received a national award at the Friends Unite Conference in Washington, D.C. on Sunday, February 22, 2009. Members of the Friends of Pool 9 joined a record number of national wildlife refuge Friends and staff at the largest National Friends Conference held in the history of the Refuge Friends movement. The conference drew over 450, representing 161 different Friends groups from forty-nine states and included 150 U.S. Fish and Wildlife staff.

The Friends of Pool 9 group was selected from the more than 220 Friends groups across America. In just four years the group has grown to over 500 members, and was cited for their accomplishments in Pool 9 of the Mississippi River and their involvement on the political front as well.

The Awards Reception and Ceremony program highlighted some of their programs and accomplishments including the annual Pool Wide Clean-Up Day and the implementation of the "Leave No Trace" campaign to rid the Refuge of trash left behind by visitors. They also showcase the Refuge to youth and adults through environmental programs such as the Mississippi River Adventure Day involving hundreds of youth and their parents, and the Fall Rivers and Bluffs Birding Festival. **The award, The National Wildlife Refuge System 2009 Friends Group of the Year was presented to Friends of Pool 9.** It includes a \$2,000 cash award for Friends activities and an engraved plaque and wildlife print.

The group was complimented for their high visibility programs and projects that have improved communities' relationships with the Refuge and opened up new opportunities for Friends groups all along the river. Four new groups have recently formed using the Friends of Pool 9's grassroots approach as an example. By opening the communication lines between the Refuge and the community through their quarterly newsletter "**The Otter's Tale**" and by reaching out to local newspapers, news television networks, and radio shows, the Friends of Pool 9 have gained regional, and now national recognition for their efforts.

There are 549 national refuges across the nation. The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge extends 261 miles long and includes Pools 4 – 14 on the Upper Mississippi River. Don Hultman is the Upper Mississippi River Refuge Manager and Tim Yager is Manager of the McGregor District, which includes Pool 9. It is the most visited national wildlife refuge in the lower forty-eight states with 3.7 million visitors yearly.

The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA). It featured nearly two dozen training sessions and special forums in three tracks: Refuge System resource challenges; tools, programs, and strategies for success; and Friends capacity building. Experts discussed the impact of climate change and invasive species on national wildlife refuges, the vitality of citizen science programs, and how nonprofits can



John Verdon, President of Friends of Pool 9 speaks to the crowd of 500 in attendance at the Awards Reception Ceremony. Others in the photo include wife Phyllis (left), Nita Fuller (Region 3 Chief, US Fish and Wildlife Service), Ric and Betty Zarwell, Kim and Mark Schneden, Tom Melius (Region 3 Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service), Mamie Parker (NWRA Board), and Evan Hirsche (far right, NWRA President). On stage but not visible in the photo, John complimented Tim Loose for his exceptional effort and contribution to the group and stated "that without his help we would not be a Friends group today."

grow and ensure a future in which the National Wildlife Refuge System and the wildlife it protects will thrive. The conference was attended by FOP9 members Kim and Mark Schneden, Phyllis and John Verdon, and Betty and Ric Zarwell.

On Tuesday, February 24, 2009 more than 225 refuge Friends (from 130 Friends Groups representing 146 refuges and 44 states across America) went to Capitol Hill. They met with no fewer than 245 US Representatives, Senators, and key Committee staffers to advocate support for the National Wildlife Refuge System, specifically increased funding and member support for the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus.



The largest gathering of Friends advocates in NWRA history to address the needs of the refuge system on Capitol Hill. Local Friends members from Pool 9 and Pool 10 are in the front row, middle left to right; Ric Zarwell, Betty Zarwell, Mark Schneden, Phyllis Verdon, John Verdon, and Robert Vavra, Friends of Pool 10.

Friends of Pool 9 and Pool 10 members visited with local Congressmen to advocate for increased refuge funding, protection, and enhancement. The group was in contact with eight different Iowa and Wisconsin Senators and Representatives during the day, as well as Appropriations Chairs Dianne Feinstein and Norm Dicks.



Friends group members from Pool 9, Pool 10, Trempealeau, La Crosse, and Necedah visit with Congressman Ron Kind (center) while in Washington. Photo includes Ric and Betty Zarwell (left), Robert Vavra (rear left), Mark Schneden (right), and Phyllis Verdon (far right).

The Friends of Pool 9 award will be on display in area businesses in the communities of Lansing, New Albin, Waukon, Genoa, De Soto, Ferryville, and Lynxville. It is the result of all communities bordering the Mississippi River and Pool 9 joining together in one common goal. The award belongs to all the communities involved and will be shared by all. President Verdon ended his remarks at the Awards ceremony by saying “**we can, we will, and we are** having an impact on the world.” Congratulations to the Friends of Pool 9 on their award. We look forward to an improved Mississippi River stewardship ethic and its impact on all river users for years to come.

The next project for Friends of Pool 9 is the annual Pool Wide Clean-Up scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 2009. Details and sign-up sheets will be forth coming at the **April 7 organizational meeting** at the Kerndt Brothers Community Center in Lansing. Contact Glen Springer at 539-9232, John Verdon at 538-4836, Al Wuennecke at 544-4929, Jerry Boardman at 608-648-3588, Mark Clements at 608-606-3109, Mark Schneden at 608-874-4478, LaDonna Nolting at 319-232-0245, or visit the Friends website at friendsofpool9.org for more information.



In February, 2009 local commercial fisherman (and FOP9 Board of Director) Jerry Boardman shared his extra bounty of hundreds of pounds of carp and buffalo with 125 Bald Eagles. The fish were consumed in just a few days by the appreciative residents and migrants of Pool 9, near Ferryville, Wisconsin.

Mississippi River Adventure Day Monday, July 20, 2009

Planning is well underway for our 2nd Annual Mississippi River Adventure Day! Perhaps you missed out on your chance to attend last year or had such a great time that you want to go again this year. Registration forms for this year's event will be posted on our website (friendsofpool9.org) starting on May 4th.



Wisconsin DNR Fisheries Biologist Pat Short gets a helping hand from a few of the participants at the Mississippi River Adventure Day.

We will be using the same format as we did last year. Youth and adults will be transported by 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. **There is no cost for children and their parents to attend the event.** 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. All participants must be at least 5 years of age by July 1, 2009.



If you do not have internet access you may call Tim Loose at 563-873-3423 ext 11 and a registration form will be mailed to you after May 4th.

Motorboat Operators Certification Course (MOCC) Offered to Friends of Pool 9 Members

US Fish and Wildlife Service Trainers have offered a boat operators certification course to members of Friends of Pool 9. The twenty-four hour training course will be offered on April 27-29 (in Lansing) and Saturday, May 8, (La Crosse) for "on the water" instruction.

Instruction will take place at the Kerndt Brothers Community Center in Lansing. Presently 12 members of FOP9 have signed up for the MOCC course. Topics of instruction will include rules, regulations, operation, and safety while operating a boat with passengers. Completion of the motorboat operator's course will certify FOP9 members to transport passengers during any Friends of Pool 9 activity. It will require periodic

updating as well to maintain the certification. Mr. Clyde Male, Assistant District Refuge Manager, McGregor District US Fish and Wildlife Service will be one of the instructors. Other instructors will come from the La Crosse District Office of US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Members interested in applying for training should contact John Verdon at 563-538-4836. The course participant number is limited due to the availability of certifier trainers and is being offered as a benefit to Friends of Pool 9 members. We appreciate the commitment of the trainers and the opportunity to become Certified Motorboat Operators in accordance with Federal standards.

friendsofpool9.org

Friends of Pool 9 Photo Contest

By Natalie Baugher

If you are a member of the Friends of Pool 9, and you like taking pictures, we hope you will consider entering our photo contest. To participate you must be an amateur photographer at least 18 years of age and your photos have to be taken in the Pool 9 area. Mail your photos, along with a filled out Photo Contest Entry Form, between May 1 and December 15, 2009 to:

Natalie Baugher
Box 401
Lansing, Iowa 52151

There will be prizes for:

- Overall Best of Show - \$50.00
 - 1st Place - \$30.00
 - 2nd Place - Friends of Pool 9 Shirt
 - 3rd Place - Friends of Pool 9 Cap
- In each category

Categories for this year's contest are: ***Recreation*** (Photos depicting people enjoying the Refuge by fishing, hunting, swimming, boating, wildlife watching etc.), ***Small Wonders*** (Photos of plants and/or animals.) and ***Scenic Views of the Refuge***.



Leopard Frog by Sue Fletcher

Photographers may enter up to two photos in each category. If your photo contains people, there must be a signed release from each person in the photo.

Please submit photos 5" x 7" in size. We ask that you donate your pictures to the Friends of Pool 9 to be used on our website or in our promotional material. For our convenience we may ask you to provide a digital copy of your photo/s. We will not sell your photos. If you wish your photos returned, please send a stamped, self addressed envelope along with your photo entry. If you do not send an envelope the photos will become the property of the Friends of Pool 9. Pictures may be on display during the year at businesses in the Pool 9 area and on our web site.

The winners will be announced at the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet held in January.

We're looking forward to seeing your entries!

Detach and return to: Natalie Baugher, Box 401, Lansing, Iowa 52151

ENTRY FORM • FRIENDS OF POOL 9 PHOTO CONTEST

Each entry must have this form attached to the back of the photo.

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

TELEPHONE: (Day) _____

(Evening) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHOTO TITLE: _____

PHOTO CATEGORIES:

Scenic Views: _____ Recreation: _____ Small Wonders: _____

I AM: _____ AN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER.

_____ A MEMBER OF THE FRIENDS OF POOL 9

_____ I WISH TO DONATE MY PHOTO TO
THE FRIENDS OF POOL 9

By signing this form I hereby grant the Friends of Pool 9 and our affiliates the following irrevocable rights: to use and reuse my name and photographic likeness in all form and media to publish and republish the Photograph in whole or in part, individually or in conjunction with print manner or in composite form and in any medium for editorial commercial promotion. I hereby waive any right to inspect or approve any copy that is used in conjunction with the photograph and release and discharge The Friends of Pool 9, and affiliates from any and all claims arising out of the use of the photograph for the purposes described above, including any claims for libel breach of copyright. I have read the foregoing and fully understand its contents.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE: _____

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



To Get Your Otter's Tale Electronically

We received 23 requests from members willing to view their copy of the Otter's Tale online. We are asking others to respond to that request so that we can save on the cost of postage. If you would be willing to read (online) and print your own copy please contact John Verdon (563-538-4836) or Tim Loose (563-873-3423 - Ext. 11), or add your name to the list on the website (friendsofpool9.org). We will begin this service with the Summer, 2009 newsletter.

The Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. is a grassroots citizen action group, whose sole purpose is the protection, restoration, and preservation of our natural resources. The 500 member organization has no dues requirements, and pays for its activities through donations and grants. It is a 501c3 federally tax exempt organization, all donations are tax deductible. The communities that border Pool 9 are its primary contributors and supporters.



708 N. Jackson St.
Charles City, IA 50616
866-508-3257

Calendar of Events:

Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, May 4, 2009
Kerndt Brothers Community Center
Lansing, Iowa

Pool Wide Cleanup Day

Saturday, April 25, 2009
(See enclosed article)

Mississippi River Adventure Day

Monday, July 20, 2009

Friends of Pool 9 Summer Picnic/ Annual Business Meeting

Saturday, August 22, 2009

*A true conservationist is a man who knows that
the world is not given by his fathers
but borrowed from his children."*

- John James Audubon