

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

July, 2008



President's View

I'm writing this article the last week in June and the Mississippi is at the 10.4 foot level at the Lansing gauge, a mere three feet above normal. My heart goes out to our many friends that have suffered life altering flooding in recent weeks. There is no way to truly understand the effect of the loss of a family home unless you have actually experienced it, and I haven't. But as a compassionate and concerned citizen I would ask our FOP9 membership to do all you can to assist your fellow Iowans at this time of need.

A great deal has transpired since our last Otter's Tale, here are a few of the details. Director Mark Schneden and I went to a three day, Friends for the Future conference at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. What a spectacular facility for the workshop. We had an opportunity to meet other Friends groups from across the nation, as well as some dignitaries in pretty high places. The weekend continued on Monday as we joined the largest group of Friend's members (ever) to lobby on Capitol Hill for increased funding to the National Refuges. Mark and I joined forces with Barb Hammes, Mississippi Wild (La Crosse, Pools 7 and 8) to visit with ten Congressional staffers. See photo to right of John, Barb, and Mark on the Capitol steps.



The Friends of Pool 9 has received several grants from US Fish and Wildlife Service (\$4,500) and Allamakee County Community Foundation (\$4,000) to assist the Mississippi River Adventure Day, 2008 River Clean Up, and Reno Bottoms Canoe Trail. Thanks to Tim Loose for applying for the Fish and Wildlife grants and the ACCF Directors for their commitment to our MRAD. See later article on rescheduled river day set for Monday, July 21.

The Eastern Allamakee Community Schools 6th grade River Adventure Day received a \$200 stipend from FOP9, as well as involvement from FOP9 volunteers. Six discovery stations were set up to inform kids on: boater safety, water chemical testing, birds, mammals, aquatic invertebrates, and river history. Thanks to Deb Masek for fostering and organizing this experience for her students. See photos following of River Adventure Day on the Mississippi.



Kee 6th grade students testing for water quality.



Birding group under the leadership of Jon Stravers and Bob Henkel.

We welcome Rick Frietsche, new Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge Assistant Manager to the valley and FOP9. He brings a unique blend of experiences with him, and places a great deal of emphasis on relationships and communication. Let's hope he can bring unity and enthusiasm to the entire 261 mile-long Refuge. We also congratulate FOP9 member Shawna Stringham on her selection for a prestigious award, see later article.

The clean up was a huge success and porta potties and pit toilets are back in place at area launch ramps and selected sand beaches. The virtual geocaching activity is progressing, but not yet ready for implementation. However, another program titled "Let's Go Outside" with backpacks will be placed in area libraries for student/parent use. Sand dredging will (likely) take place in the fall, we're hopeful some can be placed on area beaches for bank stabilization and island nourishment.

A big thank you to Kevin Quillin and Jim Gobeli for cleaning up a not-so pretty mess on an area beach. They collected five bags of garbage and made the site inviting again. Thanks for your environmental concern; you've set a good example for others to follow.

And on a wildlife note, Tim Loose reported that 73 of the 78 eagle nests located in Pool 9 were active with adults in the vicinity during the spring survey. The uniqueness and popularity of Pool 9 is spreading and is known by our feather friends as well. Have a good summer on the river and we'll see you at the Annual meeting in August.

John

Friends of Pool 9 Prevail Over Adversity 2008 River Clean Up

A One-Two Punch thrown by Mother Nature did not dampen the spirits of 108 volunteers that showed up to clean the 31-miles in Pool 9 on Saturday, April 19. A rainy stretch of days prior to the clean up date, coupled with higher than normal river levels had organizers a bit concerned about the success of this years cleanup effort. It became apparent that landings would be under water, and the cleanup would have to be scaled back.

Three areas in particular were affected; two at the upper end of the pool near Genoa and Black Hawk Park and the third was Heytman's Landing at the lower end of the Pool (both the Genoa and Heytman's groups are planning to collect their areas at a later date). It was decided to concentrate efforts in the New Albin and Lansing areas on the Minnesota-Iowa side, and the DeSoto, Ferryville and Lynxville areas on the Wisconsin side.

In Lansing, early risers began to mobilize at the VFW building by 6:30 AM, and Sue Stirn was already working in the kitchen. Once again Glen Springer and Brent Darling had collection site assignments organized to fit each boat and crew. With the kitchen crew included, 52 volunteers gathered at the VFW building for their assignments.

In the New Albin area, Visgers Landing was the only boat launching site available. 39 volunteers gathered under the direction of Al Wuennecke. Some boaters had made the 40-minute trip by river from Lansing to the landing. Wuennecke, organizer in the New Albin area said, "Things went well despite the high water conditions and it turned out to be a really great day. We were able to fill two Iowa DNR trucks with trash including 30 tires and 40 barrels. Another group walked and cleaned the Army Road, as well as Millstone and the Upper Iowa River landings. Special thanks to Mike Griffin and the Iowa DNR for taking all the trash and to everyone that turned out."



A happy bunch of volunteers gather at Visgers Landing following clean up.

While high water had an adverse effect on the lower end of the Pool, 17 Wisconsin volunteers from the DeSoto, Ferryville, and Lynxville areas turned out for the event. Their combined efforts brought trash to the



Volunteers L. to R. Michael Lauer, Andrew Verdon, and Phillip Hooker and their load of trash.

Lansing and DeSoto dumpsters, and completely filled the one at Ferryville. Area coordinator Mark Schneden commented, "It was a great success. We just need a few



Trash collected from Hwy 82 and the lower end of Pool 9 fills the dumpster at Ferryville.

more hands next year. Special thanks to Stan Hagensick for his big boats and to all the volunteers that did turn out in tough conditions."



Volunteers gather inside the VFW building at Lansing and get assignments for river clean up.

According to site coordinator, Glen Springer, “It was another fantastic year for Pool 9 as the 40-yard dumpster at the Lansing (old Fish Market) site was filled to overflowing with tires, barrels, a 100 pound propane cylinder, and hundreds of bags of trash from all parts of the Pool. I can’t thank all the volunteers enough for their effort and commitment, to come out on a cool, drizzly morning to help restore the river.” Vice-President, Sue Stirn complimented FOP9 leadership by



Bob Henkel, Jr. and Troy Hill unload their collection of backwater trash including a 100 pound propane cylinder.

saying, “Without the hard work and dedication of our President, John Verdon and his wife Phyllis we would be just like any other struggling group along the river. Without their motivation we wouldn’t be out here on a cold, crappy day. And thanks also to Tim Loose for his leadership to get things done on Pool 9.”



L. to R. Kyle Walleser, Tim Brennan and John Heiderscheit, Kee High Baseball Players, Clean along Hwy 82 Dike.

One of the biggest surprises was the amount of trash collected from the sides of Hwy 82, along the dike from the Black Hawk Bridge at Lansing to the Wisconsin shore. The three mile distance netted 28 garbage bags of trash, collected by Gene Schultz and the Kee High School baseball team.

A pickup load of trash was collected from the fishing access near the power plant, and several bags from the City Marina dike as well. Seven Coast Guard channel marker buoys were pulled to landings for recycling, with many more still mired in backwater marsh locations inaccessible to volunteers. One group worked diligently to loosen a buried vintage 1915 Model “A” auto body frame only to realize the excessive weight, and had to abandon the cause for a later date.



Model “A” body rises from Mississippi River mud to show its face again.

Volunteers also cleaned and collected trash from area recreational sand beaches. Fire pits were cleaned on both sides of the Mississippi River channel and a new fire pit was cemented into place at the upstream end of “the Dune Island” north of Lansing. FOP9 Board member Dan Porter commented, “The fire pits were really in good shape, with few bottles and cans or other garbage in them. It appears our Leave No Trace Program and the level of concern our beach users show is guiding their environmental conscience.” In total, volunteers gave over 500 hours of community service on this one day alone, and at the in-kind rate of \$18 per hour totaled well over \$9,000 for the Refuge.

John Verdon (President of the FOP9 group) gave credit “to the teamwork of concerned citizens. This is a real show of solidarity of all people that live in the Mississippi River valley. They’re anxious to help when it comes to protecting and restoring the natural beauty of the river. I’m proud to be part of the group and the movement it’s creating up and down the river. We are making a difference.”



A filled to capacity 40-yard dumpster boasts to the efforts of FOP9 volunteers to clean up Pool 9.

Thanks to the Agency personnel that made this project possible, in particular the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife, and the Iowa and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources. But the biggest thank you of all goes to the members of the Friends of Pool 9, whose dedication and effort continues to be supreme. From the gals in the kitchen preparing a scrumptious lunch to the volunteers mired in mud and water to clean the Mississippi, we offer our thanks and appreciation for a job well done.

Friends of Pool 9
P.O. Box 455
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Shawna Stringham Receives Award

Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle recently announced that Shawna Stringham (Wisconsin DNR Officer) was the recipient of the 2008 Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award. It is given annually to a woman in State government in honor of exemplary performance in public service that improves the quality of life for Wisconsin citizens.

Shawna has been active in the Friends of Pool 9 since its beginning years ago and is a big factor in its success. We can attest to her commitment and enthusiasm to an environment ethic and a cleaner Mississippi River, having witnessed her resolve on several river clean up days. We celebrate her selection as an “outstanding ambassador for the DNR and the State of Wisconsin”. Congratulations Shawna, we’re proud of you and glad to have you as a member of Friends of Pool 9.

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 400 member organization has no due 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.

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P R E S S

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Shawna (far right) and others on a trash pile during the 2007 Pool-wide Mississippi River clean up.

DON'T FORGET!

**Friends of Pool 9
Annual Meeting**

Saturday, August 23rd

6:00 to 9:00 pm

Information and Registration Form on insert