

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

June, 2023



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PRESIDENT'S VIEW

As I write this article, the water still covers many of the backwater islands. Fortunately, the Mississippi has been on a steady drop the last while and we can look forward to more normal conditions in the near future. Patience is a learned trait, and the river has no time line or schedule of events. It is unfortunate that we were not able to host some of our annual events when planned, but we can persist and move forward. We have rescheduled our cleanup for early June and MRAD for mid-September. There will also be some opportunities to assist with additional tasks as flood waters recede. We will be posting work days or evenings where we will spend a few hours at a time resetting fire rings and cleaning beach areas. Please watch the FOP9 Facebook page for these and other opportunities to help make the Upper Mississippi River Refuge and Pool 9 an amazing place to visit and enjoy. I would caution users that as the water goes down be careful for changes that may have occurred to some of the sloughs and back waters during the recent high water. It is amazing how quickly the river can rearrange areas creating possible hazards. Be safe and enjoy our beautiful river.

Alex Galema, President

DAIRYLAND POWER MAKES DONATION

Dairyland Power Cooperative has made their annual donation to the operation of Friends of Pool 9. Company representative Ben Campbell contacted Larry Quamme and the contribution was received by Friends of Pool 9 and other Directors at a breakfast meeting recently at *Coffee On The River* in Lansing.



John Verdon (FOP9 Director) receives a \$1,000 donation check from Ben Campbell, Environmental Biologist with Dairyland Power Cooperative, Genoa, Wisconsin. Others pictured (L to R) Bruce ReVoir and Larry Quamme. Photo by Bob Henkel.

Dairyland Power has been supporting Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. for 10 years with their annual donation. It is used to purchase liability insurance for the organization for all events that involve the membership, with special emphasis on the Annual Pool-Wide Clean Up. FOP9 is forever grateful for the ongoing relationship and support of Dairyland Power.

FRIENDS OF POOL 9 RIVER ED DAY – MRAD CANCELLED

As the river continued to rise, organizers decided to cancel the special day at the Driftless Center and on the river for kids. Lisa Welsh, Ross Geerdes, and others realized the difficulties created by the near record water levels on the Mississippi River and decided to move the event to the fall, 2023.



Flood waters engulf the parking lot and buildings at Village Creek Landing, Lansing, Iowa during Spring, 2023.

Eastern Allamakee staff will be planning for a Fall, 2023 event to enjoy the beauty and complexity of the aquatic ecosystem known as Pool 9, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge; and will involve students that missed the spring event at that time.

This has become a very special activity for area students, as they celebrate the uniqueness of where they live, along the banks of one of the greatest river systems in the world. Special thanks to the teachers and volunteers that make this happen and give our students such an opportunity.



NEWSLETTER TRANSITION

Susan Cantine-Maxson has graciously agreed to become the editor for our Otter's Tale newsletter, and she will be setting up a new email address where people can submit pictures and articles for future newsletters. Please send all information to: fop9newsletter@gmail.com

She can also be reached at 785-275-2258. The next newsletter will be published in late summer or early fall. Many thanks to John Verdon for his years of service working on the newsletter.

FRIENDS OF POOL 9 OFFERS LIMITED CLEAN-UP JUNE 3

It was an impossible spring along the Mississippi River, as you all are well aware. The Board had made plans for the Annual Pool 9 River Clean Up, but it was not to be. Conditions quickly rose to the dangerous level as record crests occurred the following weekend of the planned event, reaching the fourth highest level ever recorded in Lansing at 19.6 feet. Flood waters made it too dangerous to send volunteers out to collect debris, and there will be another year. For your information, record water levels are as follows: 1965 – 22.5 feet on 4/24 1965, 19.93 feet on 4/21/2001, 19.90 feet on 6/20/1880, and 19.61 feet on 4/28/2023.



Volunteers take a break after collecting the 3-mile-long dike roadsides along Wisconsin Highway 82 across the Mississippi River at Lansing, April 23, 2022.



Lansing Marina shows evidence of near record flood levels during the spring flood of May, 2023 when levels reached 19.61 feet at the Lansing gauge.

Friends of Pool 9 has scheduled a work day on area beaches, resetting 23 fire rings as well as a scaled back river clean-up for Saturday, June 3. The effort has been impacted due to the short preparation time and June being a busy recreation time with the other landings not having space for dumpsters on weekends along with other river users. **If you're interested in being part of the beach-fire ring group, please call Blake Schoh at 563-538-4454 or Alex Galema at 563-568-7294.**

A dumpster for flood debris you may have already accumulated or will collect June 3, will be located along the riverfront in Lansing between the VFW building and the Bob Henkel property (120 South Front Street) south of Shep's Restaurant. Volunteers and a tractor will be available to assist with unloading debris from boats from 9AM to 12 noon at the river front on Saturday, June 3rd. The dumpster will be available through-out the weekend but volunteers will have to get debris into the dumpster on their own outside of the 9 to 12:00 noon time on Saturday.

To date, Friends of Pool 9 volunteers have collected and removed more than 168,800 pounds (84.4 tons) of debris from the river and recorded 9,900 hours of volunteer time to keep Pool 9 clean. In 2022, 100 volunteers collected 12,160 pounds of trash (excluding recycled metal), an average of almost 122 pounds of debris per person from the Mississippi River. Thanks to all the volunteers that make this effort such a success; it makes us proud to be members of *Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc.*

EAGLE DAY AT FERRYVILLE, WISCONSIN

On Saturday, March 4th the village of Ferryville, Wisconsin was filled with anxious 'birders' of all ages, as the Ferryville Tourism Council and Friends of Pool 9 sponsored Eagle Day unfolded. The popular event was once again the "place to be" as raptors of several species were introduced to the crowd.



Anna Voss, Naturalist with the Raptor Center of Minnesota holds Alulah, the Red-Tailed Hawk.

Erica Rasmussen, Environmental Education Specialist (USFWS) at the Genoa Fish Hatchery related there are 201 active American Bald Eagle nests and 402 adult eagles in Pool 9, of the Mississippi River. She further explained that

each mating pair will hatch from 1-3 eggs per year, and adult eagles can live up to 35 years; and hence a growing eagle population in Pool 9.

Anna also displayed an American Bald Eaglenamed Pi. Each year the Raptor Center works with over 1,000 raptors (in need of rehabilitation) from all across the US.

John Howe (Decorah Raptor Center) was also in attendance to explain what their organization does to assist the eagle population in northeast Iowa and southern Minnesota. And he helped the kids in attendance assemble and build an eagle nest.



Anna Voss holds Lois, the Great Horned Owl at the Ferryville Eagle Day.

One of the other activities for the younger set that day was the Owl Hooting Contest. It was thoroughly enjoyed by all and really was quite "a hoot." Special thanks for the day go to all the volunteers and organizers from the Ferryville Tourism Council and Friends of Pool 9. The date for next year is already set for March 2, 2024.

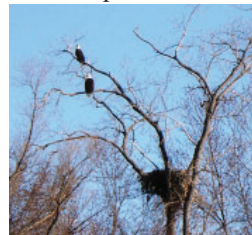


HIGH WATER HELPS POOL 9 EAGLE SURVEY MAY, 2023

Eagle-counter supreme, Jerry Boardman and assistant Don Lathrop completed the Spring, 2023 Pool 9 Eagle Survey in record time. The two-some motored to all parts/ends of the pool in rapid fashion. They reported **183 nests as active with adults/young at the nest.** They recorded 78 nests as Unknown and 11 nests Not Checked or In Active. This places the "active percentage" at 69% based on the 183 active nests out of a total 261 checked nests. Many of the Unknown nests could in fact have been active but both parents were away from the nest at the time of the visit by

Jerry and Don.

Adult American Bald Eagles let all know this is their nest, taken in Pool 9 Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge near Lansing.



Erica Rasmussen, USFWS Environmental Education Specialist at Genoa National Fish Hatchery had stated at the Ferryville Eagle Day in March, 2023 that Pool 9

has 201 active eagle nests, and this is verified through the survey completed by Boardman and Lathrop. Jerry stated that many of the 78 nests they had to record as inactive actually showed signs of recent eagle habitation, ie. fresh branches, well- built/sturdy nests. The actual active count could be well over 200, perhaps as high as 250 nests in Pool 9. The bottom line is that the American Bald Eagle population in Pool 9 is doing well, actually thriving. Nests are easy to find because they are so prominent and many are located along the main navigation channel. Get out and enjoy this majestic symbol of America.

FRIENDS OF POOL 9 DONATES TO DRIFTLESS CENTER

At the December meeting Friends of Pool 9, Directors voted unanimously to donate to the aquarium being added to the Allamakee County Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center, south of Lansing. The aquarium will display fish collected from Pool 9 of the Mississippi River and will be a major addition to the educational experience at the Center. The cost of the project is in the \$80,000 range and FOP9 donated \$10,000 toward that amount.



Ross Geerdes, Naturalist and newly appointed Supervisor of the Driftless Center accepts the donation from Alex Galema, President of Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc.



The new 1,260-gallon aquarium is installed and stands ready to accommodate inhabitants of the Mississippi River, at the Allamakee County Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center.

Friends of Pool 9 is a 501c3 non-profit organization whose Mission is to conserve the cultural and natural resources within Pool 9 (UMRW&F Refuge) and to foster wise public use and enjoyment of the Refuge and the Upper Mississippi River. The group works in cooperation with the Upper Mississippi US Fish and Wildlife Service, McGregor District (Kendra Pednault, Manager), and has a membership exceeding 800 members. FOP9 sponsors an annual river clean up, offers scholarships to area students entering a science field, organizes an MRAD (Mississippi River Adventure Day) for Lansing and De Soto students, offers financial support to activities/projects that enhance access to and/or knowledge of the river; such as handicapped ramps at landings, kids fishing events, eagle days, beach cleaning, planting island trees, and activities at the Driftless Center that promote the river. **More information can be found at www.friendsofpool9.org**

USFWS PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Kendra Pednault, McGregor District Manager

The McGregor District was not able to fill the Visitor Services Internship financed by Friends of Pool 9. The intent was to hire a college-age intern to assist with projects in the McGregor District. However, no applicants applied for the position and plans for interns in 2024 will be started at an earlier date.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin DNR personnel responded to the recent train derailment near De Soto, Wisconsin. Cars derailed were carrying lithium batteries, paints, and compressed oxygen. The engines leaked a small amount of diesel fluid into the river with most of the train cars derailing on the Wisconsin side of the tracks. Two containers floated down the Winneshiek Slough and were retrieved by commercial barge (Brennan Marine, La Crosse), neither container contaminating the Refuge.



Brennan Marine (La Crosse) tugs remove rail car containers from the backwaters of Winneshiek Slough south of De Soto and north of Ferryville, Wisconsin.

As a result of the Great American Outdoors Act, the McGregor District will receive \$12 million dollars to support construction costs for the new multi-purpose building and shop, and replacement of boat landings, fishing piers, kiosks, and observation areas throughout Pools 9-10-11.

FRIENDS OF POOL 9 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO DE SOTO AND EASTERN ALLAMAKEE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS - MAY, 2023

FOP9 gave five scholarships to outstanding students at both Eastern Allamakee and De Soto High Schools during their annual awards ceremonies Thursday, April 26 and May 4, 2023. The scholarship program is in memory of USFWS Specialist Tim Loose (deceased) and Friends of Pool 9, to promote science and the environment. Tim was a popular FWS employee that had special talents in working with citizens and Pool 9 in particular. He was instrumental in the formation of Friends of Pool 9 in 2006, and many have said FOP9 “formed because of Tim Loose”. Awards of \$500 to \$1,000 were given to each student, with priority given to those students pursuing a degree in environmental science or similar fields of study. One scholarship is given to a student in each school who has shown exemplary character, promoted volunteerism, and has chosen to enter the work world.



EACS seniors received their awards from FOP9 Board members. Pictured left to right, Sue English, Alyssa Darling, Neva Peterson, Thomas Troendle, Alison Wagner, Jersey Mathison and Bruce ReVoir.



De Soto seniors received their awards from FOP9 Board member Jerry Boardman (left) and included (l. to r.) Matthew Kumlin, Ian McKittrick, Brian Ziegler, and Anesah Ellis. Jayvyn Jones received an award as well but was absent for the photo.

Friends of Pool 9 is committed to supporting conservation of our natural resources, as well as the education of our youth (as was Tim Loose), and we will do all we can to help young people become good care-takers for Pool 9 and the Mississippi River well into the future. If you support our efforts in this endeavor, and want to make a donation to the scholarship program for Friends of Pool 9, add the FOP9 scholarship program to the memo line on your check.

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



REFUGE CENTENNIAL PHOTO CONTEST

The Friends of the Refuge Headwaters (FORH) are encouraging all amateur photographers to get outside and capture the beauty of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge) for a Centennial photo contest.

The Refuge, which was established in 1924 through the efforts of Will Dilg, founder of the Izaak Walton League of America, includes much of the lands and waters of the Mississippi River from Wabasha, Minnesota to Rock Island, Illinois. Photos taken on the Refuge will be accepted until October 27, 2023. Winning entries will become part of a traveling display at events up-and-down the Mississippi River in 2024.

Photographers may enter a total of three photos in the following categories; **Scenic Views** of the Refuge, **Wildlife and Plants** of the Refuge, and **Connecting People with Nature** on the Refuge. There is a fourth category, Young Nature Photographers, for youth ages 16 and under.

Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three winners in each category and a “Best of Show” award will be given to the photo receiving the most public votes at the end of 2024. Prizes will be funded in part by a generous donation from the League of the Ridiculous of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

For complete rules, visit the Friends of the Refuge Headwaters at friendsoftherefugeheadwaters.org or call Stephanie Edeler at 507-454-7351.

So, come on members of Friends of Pool 9, let’s win this thing. Get out there and take some winning photos of the beauty in Pool 9.

Calendar of Events For 2023

River Clean-up.....April 22 *Cancelled*
Pool 9 Eagle Survey.....April/May *Completed*
EACS/De Soto MRAD.....May 15 *Cancelled*
Scholarships De Soto/Lansing.....May *Awarded*
No-Wake-Buoys Placed.....May
Dumpster Available-Cleanup.....June 3-4
Beach Work-Reset Fire Rings.....June 3
Clean Fire Rings.....Monthly by Volunteers
Black Hawk Park Kids Fishing.....August 5
Lansing Fish Days Booth.....August 12 (Fish Display)
Sturgeon Tagging @ GNFH.....Aug. - Sept.
EACS MRAD.....Fall 2023
FOP9 Annual Meeting.....September 23
Refuge Cent. Photo Contest...Photo Deadline Oct. 27, 2023
100 Year Refuge Anniversary.....2024

Upcoming FOP9 Board meetings 2023: July 10, Oct. 9, Nov. 13.
All meetings 7:00 PM at Driftless Center. Annual meeting Sept. 23.

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 800 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.