

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

June, 2021

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President's View

This will be the last of my offerings for this portion of the Otter's Tale as I welcome a new and more youthful member of FOP9 to the leadership team. At the first meeting of the Board of Directors earlier in 2021, Alex Galema was nominated and elected unanimously as the next President of Friends of Pool 9. He is an outdoorsman and naturalist supreme; he loves the river and will be a great leader for FOP9. I will stay on as Vice-President to the end of the year and help where I can. New leadership is vital to the sustainability of any organization, and I'm pleased that the Board of Directors has a good number of younger members committed to our mission of conserving the integrity of the Mississippi.

I am impressed with the number of volunteers for the cleanup a few weeks ago, and pleased with the removal of thousands of pounds of debris from the river corridor. To paraphrase a bit, "*never have so few done so much in such a short period of time*". Thanks to the more than a hundred volunteers that gave the day to cleaning the river, whether walking one of the seventeen landings, the highway 82 dike, the beaches, the shorelines or the backwater of the 31-mile-long pool. It's a huge effort and everyone should feel proud to be associated with such a caring group of folks. And with that I'll sign-off and leave some room for Alex to make some comments. Thanks for all your volunteerism and support over the years, see you on the river.

John Verdon, Past President

I would like to start off by thanking John for his past leadership as President of Friends of Pool 9, and his willingness to continue to serve on the Board. As an organization I feel we have a dedicated Board of

Directors that represent the communities up and down both sides of Pool 9 with the common goal of making this portion of the Upper Mississippi River a wonderful place for all. I'm a small-town guy, born and raised right here on the river. My family ran the Lansing Fish Market for years and I became a river-rat from the very beginning. I currently work at Yellow River State Forest as a Forestry Tech 2 and prior to that I worked in corrections at Luster Heights for 18 years.

I do feel that the real strength of FOP9 is its membership. The 800-ish members that are participating in the events and activities of the group is what allows it to be so successful. I know that everyone's lives are busy but I would like to encourage and challenge every member to try to find one event during the year to donate a few hours to an FOP9 activity. If you have time for more that would be great. Many hands make light work. Look through the newsletter and keep an eye on the FOP9 Facebook page for opportunities to volunteer. If you are unavailable to volunteer that is understandable. You are still very valuable as a member by *role modeling courtesy and respect to both people and the resources in Pool 9* every time you visit the river. Thank you for your membership and support of the FOP9 organization. Get out and enjoy all the river has to offer.

Alex Galema, President

Annual Meeting Set for September 25th, 2021

The FOP9 Board has scheduled the Annual Meeting for Saturday, September 25th at the New Albin, Iowa Community Center. Members are invited to the dinner with an awards ceremony, silent auction and live auction. A cash-back Raffle will also be included and tickets will become available in the near future. Donated items are needed for the auctions. Please contact Larry at 920-948-2245 or FOP9sec@gmail.com

Friends of Pool 9 Takes Kids Ice-Fishing

Thursday, February 18 dawned with seasonably cool temps in the teens, after two weeks of sub-zero with wind chills nearing -35 degrees. But this day was warmed by Jerry Boardman and several other FOP9 volunteers as they accompanied a 'hearty' band of 28

De Soto middle and high school outdoorsmen to the ice fields of Green Lake at Black Hawk Park to learn some *ice-fishin'* skills.

Students embraced the day after a long winter of covid restrictions and near record cold and snowy weather. Students were transported via school transportation and Friends of Pool 9 reimbursed the school system for the cost of the bus driver for the day. Kids were appropriately dressed and drilled holes with the auger, baited their poles and jigs, and were able to catch a few fish. Others helping with the day's activities included Don Lathrop and Danny Holt. Part of the fishing cost (food and fishing gifts) for the day was also paid from Ras's Benefit earlier this year (area conservationist).

One student commented, "It was kinda' cold, but we had a great time fishing, and I caught a fish." The event has been offered in previous years, but this one was special because of the changes implemented in the school district by the corona virus pandemic. Organizers added that "the students were well behaved and had a good time learning what the Mississippi River offers for their fun and enjoyment, even in the winter. We'll probably do it again next year."

A second school group of De Soto fifth graders took to the ice on March 5th to see if they could land "a bigger one." The group fished at Green Lake also, but were challenged with 40-degree Fahrenheit weather. They did catch some nice fish, and had a great time doing it. Thanks to Jerry, Don, and Danny for spending the day with them.

Friends of Pool 9 Workers Clear Downed Trees

February 11, 2021

On a cold winter day in February a small group of FOP9 volunteers removed trees along the north side of the dike on Wisconsin Highway 82. The trees had fallen across the slough running parallel to the highway. They were blocking boat travel and needed to be removed. Only tops and branches extending across the main portion of the slough were removed. Tree trunks and root masses were left in place for bank stabilization, only that portion of the tree actually reducing navigation was removed.



L. to R. Don Lathrop, Tom Kerndt, Jerry Boardman. Volunteers cut and remove fallen trees along Wisconsin Hwy. 82 blocking navigation in the slough on the upstream side of the dike. Photo by Bruce ReVoir.

Jerry Boardman, Don Lathrup, Bruce ReVoir, and Tom Kerndt spent a winter day improving fishing access to the backwaters of middle Pool 9 for next summer. Numerous boaters and bass fisherman had complained that the area was no longer accessible since high water and strong winds had toppled trees blocking access to the area. Board member Bruce ReVoir commented, *"This is one of those projects no one wants to do, but it makes Pool 9 a better place for all users of the resource. And we got a little wet but had a good time doing it."*

Friends of Pool 9 Has Approval to Place No-Wake-Buoys

Members of FOP9 recently placed buoys along the riverfront to restrict the size of the wake created by non-commercial vessels and their impact on the shoreline and the safety of others. The No-Wake-Zone was recently approved by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and includes that portion of the navigation channel from the Lansing Marina (on the north) to below S&S Rentals on the south. The affected area is along the portion of the channel that extends outward 300 feet from the Iowa shore. All non-commercial vessels moving through the zone are required to reduce their speed, lessening the size of the wake created by the moving vessel.



The Lansing shoreline No-Wake-Zone runs from the Lansing Marina (on the north) to below S&S Rentals (on the south). Boats inside the zone must reduce their speed to create a smaller wake.

Friends of Pool 9 Has Great Clean Up Effort

The weather and water level cooperated on Saturday, April 24th as a hundred volunteers cleaned Pool 9 of the Mississippi River. They came from all parts of Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota to participate in the annual event. In reality it's an outgrowth of the Earth Day goal "To Restore Our Earth" celebrated on April 22nd every year. The 90 square miles of the river pool (31 miles in length) had not been cleaned for the past two years; first by high water in 2019 and then the pandemic in 2020.

With gloves and garbage bags in-hand they descended on the river valley from all angles and all parts of the pool. Many walked the shorelines, while others cleaned the seventeen landings on both sides of the pool. Some walked the Highway 82 dike, at times struggling to climb down over the rock rip-rap to collect a bottle or some other discarded piece of debris. This was accomplished by younger volunteers from Kee High and De Soto High School, but included a lot of older adults as well. The group filled 26 forty-gallon garbage bags with trash, and also collected several tires, a trailer hub, and plastic pieces from an auto body.

Many volunteers launched boats and navigated the backwaters, while others walked the beaches and cleaned fire rings. Barrels, plastic bottles, and buoys were common items of "interest." Some buoys were so mired in mud they could not be retrieved at this time.



Volunteers cleaned the Dairyland Power Blask Family Landing and filled several bags with trash. L. to R. Joni Styve, Verna Fitzpatrick, Cheryl Walsh, Tom Erb, Paul Styve, and Don Walsh kneeling.

It was a spectacular day in that folks gave up the comfort of their homes for a windy and chilling day on 50-degree water. Alex Galema, recently elected President of Friends of Pool 9 commented, "I wish I could personally thank each of the volunteers that came out today. These small-town folks have a real concern and commitment to taking care of Pool 9, making it one of the best on the Upper Mississippi and I'm proud to be

part of FOP9. It was just a good day for everyone." Their efforts were rewarded with the thousands of pounds of debris pulled from the Mississippi River, and it made the river and everyone else feel a whole lot better.



A sample of some of the debris collected and deposited at the Lansing dumpster at the Brennan Landing in south Lansing. L. to R. Dan Hansen, Bob Henkel, Tom Limbach. Jim Kerndt is "at the wheel" of his tractor loading debris into the dumpster during the 2021 FOP9 River Clean Up. Photo by Bob Modersohn @ driftlessmode.com.



Young Kee Hawk volunteer Andrew Kolsrud adds a barrel to the boat while Jacob Galema removes blue Styrofoam from the backwater north of Lansing.



Dustin Wilson carries another barrel to the pile of rusted metal in the Galema boat during the Pool 9 Clean Up on April 24.



A filled dumpster at Black Hawk Park during the Friends of Pool 9 river clean up. L. to R. Ben Verdon, Brody and Tyler Verdon, Todd, Trevor, and John Verdon.



Brenda Kelly (WDNR) and husband Scott arrive at the Black Hawk Park Landing with a boat load of barrels during the FOP9 2021 river clean up.



An over-flowing dumpster at the Brennan Landing in south Lansing attests to the efforts of volunteers to remove trash from Pool 9 of the Mississippi River, during the 2021 river clean up.

The Board of Directors and President Alex Galema want to thank everyone for giving some time to take care of the river. In just a few hours 100 volunteers searched every mile of the pool to remove debris. They all gave a few hours, and together it became more than 550 hours. At the end of the day, they had removed more than 12,610 pounds (over 6 tons) of trash from the river, as reported by Vernon and Allamakee Counties and Waste Management of Prairie du Chien. This brings the total amount of debris removed by Friends of Pool 9 over the years to more than 163,000 pounds (81.5 tons) and volunteers have compiled more than 9300 hours in this activity alone. This year the volunteers (on average) collected over 122 pounds of trash per person.

Thanks to all the sponsors that supplied materials and allowed us the use of their landings. Thanks to Kerndt Bros. Savings Bank, Lansing/Quillins IGA, Lansing VFW, Brennan Construction, Lansing Village Farm & Home, U.S. Army Corps at Black Hawk Park, Allamakee County Waste Management, Vernon County Recycling and Waste, and Waste Management of Prairie du Chien. Thanks to the Village of Ferryville and Dairyland Power Cooperative. But the biggest “Thank You” has to go to the foot soldiers, the ones that walked the roads and scraped their knees on the rocks, and traveled by boat to hidden locations in the backwater where the trash was embedded in island brush. Thanks to all of you, “It was a really good day.”

Friends of Pool 9 Bald Eagle Nest Survey April, 2021

Local eagle expert Jerry Boardman and his band of workers have once again checked most of the Bald Eagle nests in Pool 9, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Pool 9 covers approximately 90 square miles, being 31 miles long and 3 miles wide. The lower half of the Pool is mostly open water, a result of the impoundment process created by Lock and Dam 9 located below Lynxville, Wisconsin. As a result, the greatest concentration of eagles is in the upper half of the pool.

The group was aware of 242 nests, an increase of 30 nests above the 212 nests known to exist in 2020. They checked 230 nests, but could not get to 12 nests. Of the number of nests checked they recorded 169 as active with an adult at the nest site. This gives a total nest activity rate of (169/242) or 70%. Of the actual nests checked it would be 169/230 for an activity rate of 73.5%. **Continued on Page 5**



An American Bald Eagle stands “watch” on the nest at the top of a cottonwood tree in Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge.

Friends of Pool 9 Awards Scholarships to Area Students

Both Eastern Allamakee and De Soto High Schools awarded Tim Loose/FOP9 scholarships at their awards ceremonies in May, 2021. Friends of Pool 9 is an organization that promotes programs that protect and preserve the 31 miles-long pool 9 of the Mississippi River. Educational programs are encouraged that help students and adults become better stewards of the natural resource, and to that end several scholarships are given to assist area graduating seniors. Tim Loose (USFWS) was the inspiration and reason FOP9 formed in 2006. In his memory we are offering these scholarships to reward volunteerism and encourage students to enter a scientific field that may impact the environment in some way. Both schools received \$2,250 for awards to qualifying students; including two \$500 4-year programs, two \$500 2-year programs, and one \$250 volunteer/life award.



Bald Eagle Nest Survey Continued

Jerry was joined by Don Lathrop and Bob Henkel on the search team and spent the better part of five days recording eagle nest activity. Thanks to these dedicated members for compiling data for UMRNWF Refuge as well as Friends of Pool 9.

The increased number of new nests (30) may be the result of an increasing eagle population in Pool 9, but may also be related to the condition of abandoned nests and the trees they are located in. Successive years of high water tends to loosen tree root masses (on the islands) and makes trees more unstable; perhaps a contributing factor in nest abandonment as well.

US Fish and Wildlife officials have repeatedly stated that the 261-mile-long Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge may contain the greatest concentration of nesting American Bald Eagles anywhere in the lower 48 states, and Pool 9 may have



Eastern Allamakee seniors (L. to R.) Owen Henkes and Macy Manning received their scholarship awards from Lisa Welsh at the spring, 2021 Kee award ceremony.

Kee High School awarded two \$500 scholarships for seniors entering a 4-year program in some area of the science field as well. Owen is planning to study zoology and Macy will be entering the field of education. Congratulations to all the award recipients at both schools, we are proud of you. We wish you well in life and your collegiate career. Remember to volunteer to help others, and help preserve the environment wherever you may be in the world.

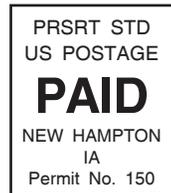
Mandi Boardman, FOP9 Director presented De Soto awards graduating De Soto seniors received five scholarships (\$2,250) from the Tim Loose/Friends of Pool 9 Scholarship Fund. L. to R. Trevor Sanding (2-year), Elly Russell-Miller (4-year), Emilee Kock (Life Award), Kenzy Kreuzer (4-year), and April Haakenson (2-year).

the most of all the pools. We are delighted to have them in Pool 9.

USF&W Manager Takes New Position

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge have announced that District Manager Brandon Jones has accepted a new position as the new Project Leader in South Texas at Laguna Atascosa NWR. Brandon came to the Mississippi River, McGregor District in 2017 from the Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District (WMD) in Nebraska. He worked with FOP9 on numerous projects during his four years and gave advice and guidance to Friends of Pool 9. We thank Brandon for his commitment to wildlife and the natural resource, and wish him well in his new endeavor. Congratulations Brandon. Wendy Woyczik will be the Acting District Manager for the McGregor District until a permanent appointment is made.

Friends of Pool 9
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Fish Days Celebration

Friends of Pool 9 will have a booth at the Lansing Fish Days celebration, on Saturday, August 14th. The booth will have the latest innovations in the apparel offered by FOP9. Hats, shirts, and other items will be available for purchase.

Want more information on FOP9 or sign up to help work on an event? Fish Days attendees will also enjoy the presence of an Iowa Department of Natural Resources “live fish truck” with specimens of fish commonly found in the Mississippi River. The truck will be at the FOP9 site on Saturday, August 14th only.

Support Lansing Fish Days as well as Friends of Pool 9 by attending the celebration and taking part in the festivities. If you would like to volunteer to help work the booth, please contact John Verdon (563-538-4836) or Sue English (563-379-1129).

Calendar of Events For 2021

No-Wake-Buoys.....May/June
Gypsy Moth Trapping.....May/Summer
Tree Planting on Islands.....Summer TBA
Beach Work.....Summer TBA
Clean Fire Rings.....Monthly by Volunteers
Lansing Fish Days (DNR truck).....August 14
Sturgeon Tagging @ GNFH.....Aug. - Sept. TBA
EACS/De Soto MRAD.....September TBA
FOP9 Annual Mtg.....September 25

TBA (To Be Announced)

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.