

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

April, 2020

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President's View

The present life threatening situation impacting our State, Nation, and world will eventually lessen, and we'll get back to keeping nature beautiful and in balance. None of us has ever experienced such an overwhelming obstacle like this, but we will survive and our resolve to work together for the betterment of the river will be even stronger. If possible, we will reschedule the river clean up at a later time.

The winter season is in the rearview mirror and we look forward to a beautiful spring and refreshing summer on the Mississippi River and Pool 9. FOP9 has all sorts of activities available for your pleasure, as well as those that need your indulgence. Our *American Bald Eagles of Pool 9* have been nesting since late February and will soon have new eaglets peering over the edge of the nest. They need to be counted and documented, a huge task. Our Annual Pool 9 River Clean Up is another huge project involving all 90 square miles of the pool and over 120 volunteers. We'll need your help organizing the collection sites, feeding the workers, and getting rid of the trash. We have twenty-three fire rings scattered along the main navigation channel that are in need of cleaning and other attention. There'll be trees to plant on selected islands and poison ivy to remove from others, as well as downed trees that obstruct the beach area. We'll also need volunteers to help with the sale of our hats and shirts, and hand out free materials at area celebrations such as Lansing Fish Days and De Soto Winneshiek Days. And then we have other projects you might enjoy as well: helping with the Lansing/De Soto River Ed Day, or tagging sturgeon in the fall at Genoa National Fish Hatchery, or working at the Driftless Center. Contact me or any of your Board of Directors to volunteer for an activity or event.

We anticipate a great summer on the beaches, and we hope all of your fish coolers are filled with a good catch. Be kind to your fellow boaters, be considerate and safe. And above all be a good example, be a positive role model for others to follow in taking care of our little piece of the river.

See you on the river,

John Verdon

Washington Youth Summit Participant Thanks FOP9 Elynn Russell-Miller

My experience at the Washington Youth Summit on the Environment was a once in a lifetime one. Over the week I heard from so many inspirational speakers and presenters who work in the fields of climate change and environmental studies. I traveled to the Capitol, visited the Smithsonian National Zoo, the National Geographic Headquarters, the Rappahannock River, and experienced life on a college campus during the week.



Elynn Russell-Miller visits with Wisconsin Congressman Ron Kind during her week-long experience at the Youth Summit in Washington, D.C. during summer, 2019.

Attending the summit expanded my views and knowledge on protecting the environment to preserve the planet for future generations and made me appreciate the beautiful world around us even more. I want to thank The Friends Of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge and all of the other organizations and people that supported me to have been able to attend this eye opening experience. I couldn't have made it without you.

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**Ferryville Tourism Council and Friends of Pool 9
Co-sponsor American Bald Eagle Day - March 7, 2020**

2020 is the 10th year FOP9 has been a co-sponsor of Bald Eagle Day in Ferryville, WI. What a super event with people in “standing room only” numbers both in the morning and afternoon. Approximately 520 people attended this annual event and this year FOP9 launched the **Eagle Nest Building** activity for kids with USFWL rep. Hallie Rasmussen and Larry Quamme in charge. Kids were lined up to the back of the room. The **Hooting Contest** had record participation. We even added an 80-100 age category and the winner was “Dorothy” age 87 from Onalaska. FOP9 was in charge of both of these segments and thank you to Judges Mark Schneden, John Howe and Larry Quamme for making it fun.

Again this year the “Spread Your Wings” banner was popular and has the wingspans of the American Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, American Kestrel and Hummingbird on it along with logos of both sponsoring organizations. It was heavily used by children to get a photo and check out how big the wings really are. Fifty plus children also made bird feeders and paper bird puppets throughout the day.



A baby “eaglet” perches on the nest after Hallie and Larry assisted fifty children build the nest with sticks and branches, at the Ferryville Bald Eagle Day.

The 520 attendees came from Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois to enjoy the experience of seeing the American Bald Eagle, Kestrel, Red Tailed Hawk and Great Horned Owl up close and personal. Amber Taylor, University of Minnesota Raptor Center, returned as the presenter for the live bird program. Brenda Kelly, DNR Biologist, presented a waterfowl program titled “**Get your ducks in a row**”.



Amber Taylor, from the University of Minnesota Raptor Center holds Maxim, American Bald Eagle and “wows” the crowd at the recent Ferryville Bald Eagle Day.

John Howe, Executive Director of the Decorah, IA Raptor Resource Project shared the story of this world wide attraction and told about what has happened to the eagles of the past years. John also “*live streams*” the Decorah Eagles site, where the adults are presently tending their eggs in the nests. Many thanks to Sue English and her team of FOP9 Volunteers who staffed the FOP9 booth, sold our items, and helped the event in so many ways. We’re already looking forward to 2021 and another great Eagle Day.

Friends of Pool 9 Builds Mussel Cages

On two separate days members of FOP9 volunteered at Genoa National Fish Hatchery to help build wire mesh cages to increase the population of endangered mussel species. The cages actually hold fish (20-30 small bass) that have been inoculated with the mussel larvae. The host is not harmed by the young mussels and they drop from the gills as the summer progresses. The fish are released and the young mussels are collected from the cage floor, for dispersal (at a later date) in selected Mississippi River sites.

Volunteers were treated to a delicious lunch at the Office break room for their efforts. They returned to the work area and continued construction until supplies were depleted. On Wednesday, March 11 another group of workers gathered at GNFH to construct additional cages.



GNFH staff and FOP9 volunteers complete mussel cage work. L. to R. Larry Quamme, John Verdon, Kevin Quillin, Bob Henkel, Jim Klum, Darus Spingler, Beth Glidewell (GNFH), Doug Sharp, Lloyd Lorenz (Friends Upper Miss). Missing: David Lien, Ann & Mike Gallagher. Photo courtesy Bob Modersohn.

Beth Gildewell, mussel biologist at GNFH discussed the importance of volunteering at GNFH and educated the group as to the process of recovery for endangered mussel species and the role these mussel cages play in the restoration. Over the years GNFH has been recovering an average of 325 mussels from each cage placed at the Ice Harbor location in Dubuque, and some produce even more in a controlled environment such as the ponds at Genoa National Fish Hatchery. Megan Bradley, the current biologist in charge of the mussel project at Genoa NFH explained that these cages are going to eastern U.S. to help restore mussel species populations unique to that area.

Volunteers bend wire mesh around a metal frame and add rivets to hold it in place. Workers completed all the cages available that are to be sent to rivers and lakes in eastern U.S. L. to R. Larry Quamme, John Verdon, Kevin Quillin, and Bob Henkel. Photo courtesy Bob Modersohn.



More at Driftlessmode on Facebook.

Megan Bradley, the current biologist in charge of the mussel project at Genoa NFH explained that these cages are going to eastern U.S. to help restore mussel species populations unique to that area. She also thanked the volunteer efforts of Friends of Pool 9. Our impact now extends well beyond the Mississippi River Valley. Thanks to all the volunteers that gave their time to make this happen.

The Year in Review 2019

High water for five months (March - July) limited boater access to Pool 9 and had a profound impact on the pool itself. We postponed and rescheduled dates and finally agreed to not have a clean up this year. We did have some work days on the beaches and removed fallen trees and relocated fire rings that had been eroded by the high water. Poison ivy was treated several times to keep it under control and an ongoing effort by a dedicated group kept the fire rings clean all summer long. Members compiled 150 hours of volunteerism on the activities.

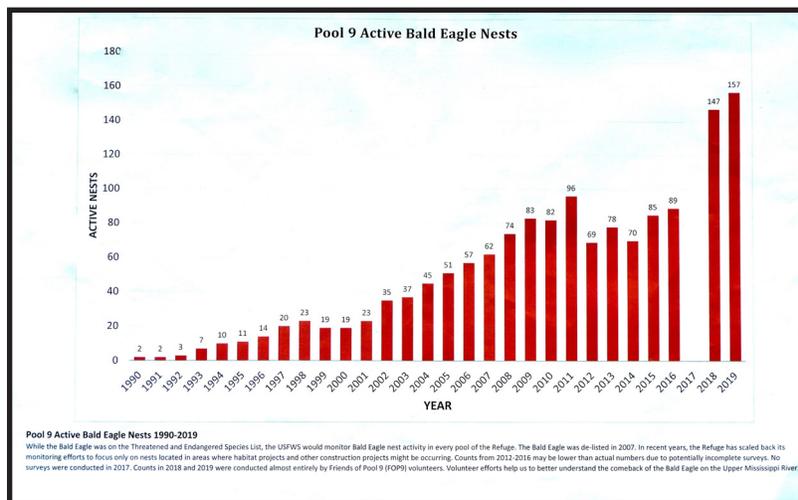
Our partners for the year included Dairyland Power Cooperative (Brad Fouss), Dan Hagan and ITC, Dan Hanson (Commander Lansing VFW), Vernon County Waste (Gene Edwards), Terry Hainfield (IA DNR), Allamakee County Waste (Dave Mooney), Brennan Construction Lansing, (Marty Brennan), Black Hawk Park USACOE (Eric Hammer), Genoa NFH (Doug Aloisi), Allamakee Co. Driftless Center (Jim Janett), Sabrina Chandler (Manager, Upper Miss Refuge) and folks from the IDNR for the handicapped ramp. FOP9 donated \$5,000 to the Genoa Interpretive Center for the purchase of the Interactive Multimedia Gallery, \$5,000 to the Allamakee County Driftless Center for the purchase of fifteen double kayaks for water activities, and \$3,000 for the ramp at Village Creek Landing. FOP9 Directors had a chance to witness the success of the first two purchases during the Lansing/De Soto MRAD activity.

Members again worked at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery repairing clam cages. In August and September members worked tagging thousands of sturgeon for transport to northern lakes and rivers. And FOP9 erected "catch boxes" for discarded fishing line at all the landings in Pool 9. This was a project by the Eastman church youth group and completed by Jerry Boardman.

Friends of Pool 9 did organize and complete an American Bald Eagle survey of nests in Pool 9. Jerry Boardman and his crew spent several days checking on most of the nests in the 31 mile-long pool. They found **157 active nests of the 211** they were able to locate and make visual contact with adults on the nest. This means 76% were active nests and a growing population of eagles in Pool 9.

FOP9 offered student scholarships to both De Soto and Lansing graduating seniors for the first time in the name of Friends of Pool 9 and Tim Loose. Each school offered a Volunteer Award (\$250) for a non-college bound student that has volunteered in their community, a 2 Year Technical program (\$500), and a 4-Year College program (\$500) supporting coursework in the environment and/

or the river. The Board of Directors also voted their support to Elynn Russell-Miller (De Soto student) with a \$750 scholarship to attend the Washington Youth Summit on the Environment in Washington, D.C. A total of \$2,000 was awarded to students this year in support of student course work and study in the sciences or the environment.



Eagle nest growth in Pool 9 from 1990 (2 nests) to 2019 (157 nests). Graph Courtesy USFWS, Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge, Winona, MN.

Friends of Pool 9 supported and was involved in the Ferryville Eagle Day in March, as well as the Lansing Fish Days booth and had the Iowa DNR fish truck at the site. On September 11, sixty-five De Soto and Lansing seventh grade students under the guidance of Andrea Christofferson and Lisa Welsh spent a day exploring river activities at the Genoa Interpretive Center, Genoa Fish Hatchery, the Allamakee County Driftless Center, and water adventures at Village Creek Landing. Cost for the day for food and transportation was paid by Friends of Pool 9 and 97 hours of volunteerism recorded for the activity.

Our volunteerism hours for the Year 2019 stand at just over 1,500 (unusually low) and since our beginning in 2006 we have totaled more than 35,000 hours for the Upper Miss Refuge and Friends of Pool 9. Thanks to all of you for your hard work and commitment to the river this year and to our Friends of Pool 9 group.



Revised Friends of Pool 9 Plans for Annual River Clean Up

After making plans for the 2020 River Clean Up, the Board of Directors voted on March 16th to cancel the clean up for the present time, based on the coronavirus danger to all participants. It may take place at a later date this spring, if the opportunity is available.

The Board had selected Saturday, April 18, 2020 for the annual FOP9 clean up of the 90 square miles of Pool 9. Groups were to collect debris on the beaches along the main channel and other areas around the perimeter of Pool 9. When the 2020 River Clean Up is rescheduled the membership and public will be informed via local media (newspaper, radio, website) and a special mailing from FOP9. Families and schools are encouraged to take part in this activity and use it as a “teaching moment” for children to become stewards of the resource and realize the value of volunteerism. To date Friends of Pool 9 volunteers have collected and removed more than 151,000 pounds (75 tons) of debris from the river and recorded 8755 hours of volunteer time to keep Pool 9 clean.

Calendar of Events & Chairman For 2020

- Mussel cage repair- Genoa NFH.....March TBA
- Clean Up - Bob H/ Alex/ Bob S/Jerry..... Postponed
- Eagle Survey - Jerry B..... Completed April/May
- FOP9/Tim L. Awards - Bruce/Lisa/Darus..... Completed May
- USACOE Master Plan - Joe M. Summer TBA
- Tree Planting on Islands - Jerry/Alex..... Summer TBA
- Beach Work - Bob H./Blake/Kevin Summer TBA
- Clean Fire Rings - Kevin/Blake ... Monthly by Volunteers
- Lansing Fish Days - Bob S./Sue E..... August 8-9 (DNR Sat. 8/8)
- Sturgeon Tagging – GNFH..... Aug. - Sept. TBA (GNFH)
- EACS/De Soto MRAD - Lisa/MandiSeptember TBA
- FOP9 Annual Mtg. - Larry/Al/BlakeSeptember 26

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.