

Minnesota River Update:

May 30, 2006

Feel Free to Comment and Forward -- AND TO SUBMIT NEWS ITEMS

*Past issues of the Minnesota River Weekly Update are available at
<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/basins/mnriver>*

ALLIANCE TO RECEIVE FUNDING FOR COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

POSITION: The McKnight Foundation has approved a grant for the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance to hire a Communications Coordinator. It will be a three year position and will be hired by Minnesota State University-Mankato. The coordinator will be integral in communications about Minnesota River activities. More detail will follow as it becomes available.

MPCA LAUNCHES PHOSPHORUS PERMIT WEB SITE IN CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY IN MINNESOTA RIVER:

In many southern and southwestern Minnesota communities, every flush of the toilet or flow from a sink drain passes through some form of wastewater treatment and eventually enters the Minnesota River.

To help citizens and communities do a better job of reducing the amount of one particular pollutant in the wastewater, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency recently launched a Web site about the Minnesota River Basin General Phosphorus Permit. The site provides useful information for citizens as well as wastewater treatment facilities affected by the permit. The permit is part of the implementation strategy for the Lower Minnesota River Dissolved Oxygen Total Maximum Daily Load.

The permit, issued Dec. 1, 2005, currently applies to about 150 wastewater treatment facilities within the Minnesota River Basin. It requires phosphorus effluent limits on 41 of the larger facilities, such as in Mankato, New Ulm, Marshall and Willmar. Effluent is the water discharged from a plant after the treatment process is complete. The remaining smaller facilities have other requirements to help reduce phosphorus discharged to the basin. Any new or expanding wastewater treatment facility in the basin will receive a phosphorus limit to ensure that there is no net increase in phosphorus discharged.

Excess phosphorus in water feeds the growth of algae. When algae blooms die off they are consumed by bacteria. The consumption process reduces the level of dissolved oxygen in the water. Fish and other aquatic life require dissolved oxygen to survive. When the river flow is low, wastewater treatment facilities become a primary source of phosphorus.

The new Web site contains general information about the permit. It also provides copies of forms and reports that facilities must submit to comply with their permit conditions. The Web site will be expanded in the future to include additional information, such as actual phosphorus discharge data, a registry of phosphorus trades made and compliance with the phosphorus reductions required by the permit.

For more information about the Web site, contact the MPCA's Steve Sommer, at steven.sommer@state.mn.us or (651) 282-5851. The Web site is located at: www.pca.state.mn.us/water/basins/mnriver/mnriver-phosphoruspermit.html

MELLOW SPRING RAINS RAISE HAWK CREEK LEVELS AND CLARITY: Paddlers on the annual canoe and kayak excursion Sunday, May 21, down lower Hawk Creek in Renville County enjoyed high water, a fast current and observed relatively high water clarity. Although no one carried a T-tube, the canoe-paddle sampling method suggested clarity of about 60 centimeters. It may have been greater under a sunny sky, which, unfortunately, remained above dripping clouds. Speculation about the relative clarity pointed to the moderate amount of spring rain in the region so far this year, occurring in slow soakers instead of downpours pounding exposed soil on cropland. About 30 paddlers made the trip about eight river miles from Hwy. 212 to the confluence with the Minnesota River about eight miles southeast of Granite Falls. With a drop in elevation of more than 100 feet, the segment presents numerous Class I and II rapids, especially in the final two miles. The event is organized by [CURE – Clean Up our River Environment](#), and included trips on the Minnesota, Yellow Medicine and Lac qui Parle Rivers on Saturday.

N EFFICIENCY KEEPS IMPROVING: The latest Agricultural Chemical Usage Field Crops report released on May 17, 2006 by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service indicates that nitrogen use efficiency on corn for 2005 improved by 0.1 lb-N/bu to a new record of only applying 0.95 pounds of commercial N per bushel of corn grown. This is calculated on a 5-year running average. This average has improved steadily from 1984 when the average stood at its most inefficient use of 1.31 lb of commercial nitrogen applied per bushel of corn grown.

The really good news is that there are nearly a dozen new nitrogen fertilizers (broadly classified as Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizers) that either are just starting commercial production or are on the verge of being commercialized. They should help put more N into the plants with less loss to the environment. There still needs to be significant amounts of rate testing done by university researchers to prove which of these new fertilizers (or blends thereof) work best in particular soil types and with different hybrids, which are the most economical and which have the most positive environmental impact.

If you are interested, send me an email and I can supply you with a list of sources of information about most of these new Enhanced Efficiency nitrogen fertilizers. Jim Porterfield, Director of Special Research Projects, American Farm Bureau Federation, 202-406-3628 or JimP@fb.org. (From Linder Farm Network newsletter)

FOURTH ANNUAL RALLY FOR THE REFUGE SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 10: The Fourth Annual Rally for the Refuge is just around the corner. The Rally for the Refuge, hosted by Friends of the Minnesota Valley, will be held at the beautiful Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Bloomington. All proceeds from the Rally for the Refuge go directly to support Refuge programs and projects.

This year's Rally kicks off with a 5K Fun Run at 9:00 a.m. at the Long Meadow Lake Trailhead, located at the Refuge Visitor Center, 3815 American Boulevard East in Bloomington. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Pre-registration is encouraged. Those interested in participating may register online at <http://www.active.com> or <http://www.raceberryjam.com>. Phone registration is also available by contacting Lori Nelson at 952-858-0706. Mail-in registration with check payment may be sent to: Friends of the Minnesota Valley; Attention: Rally for the Refuge; 3815 American Boulevard East.; Bloomington, MN 55425-1659.

Rally for the Refuge entry fees are \$16 on or before June 5th and \$20 from June 6th up to the day of the event. All participants will receive a complimentary Rally for the Refuge t-shirt. Free refreshments and door prizes will also be provided.

The 2006 Rally for the Refuge is sponsored by Friends of the Minnesota Valley and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Friends of the Minnesota Valley is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural resources within the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the Lower Minnesota River Watershed. Founded in 1982, Friends of the Minnesota Valley currently has over 1,400 members and supporters. For more information, log on to <http://www.friendsofmnvalley.org>

FILING FOR SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD) SUPERVISOR CANDIDATES IS JULY 4-18: Minnesota citizens interested in influencing natural resources issues at the local level are encouraged to run for supervisor of their local SWCD.

SWCD supervisor positions are filled through general elections on November 7. Individuals who wish to be on the ballot in 2006 must file for the election between July 4 and July 18. Because July 4th is a state holiday on which unnecessary public business is prohibited by law, neither affidavits of candidacy nor nominating petitions will be accepted for filing and will not be processed on that day.

Interested citizens should file a Minnesota Affidavit of Candidacy (available from the county auditor), along with a \$20 filing fee. All candidates for state and local offices must state on the Affidavit of Candidacy that they are eligible voters, will be at least 21 years of age when assuming office, and will have been residents of their nominating district for at least 30 days before the general election. Supervisor candidates must live in and file from a nominating district. Candidates are elected at large on the ballot, except for one conservation district in the Twin Cities.

More information on the filing process can be obtained at the Minnesota Secretary of State Web site, <http://www.sos.state.mn.us>. Persons interested in finding out what nominating district they live in and which supervisor positions are open for election should contact their local SWCD office. A directory is located at <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/directories/SWCDs.pdf>. In September, the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts will post a listing of all SWCD candidates on their web site at <http://www.maswcd.org>.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK: "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams, live the life you've imagined." - Henry David Thoreau

"The potential of the average person is like a huge ocean unsailed, a new continent unexplored, a world of possibilities waiting to be released and channeled toward some great good." - Brian Tracy

Editor: larry.gunderson@pca.state.mn.us
651-297-3825