

Minnesota River Update:

March 25, 2006

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<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/basins/mnriver/>*

MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE SUBMITS COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR PROPOSAL TO MCKNIGHT:

Communications can be a challenge with all of the people working to improve the Minnesota River in 13 major watersheds and 37 counties. On March 1, the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance submitted a proposal to the McKnight Foundation for funding to hire a Communications Coordinator. The coordinator would serve the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance and its partners by managing and promoting the Alliance list serve, collecting and conveying information about the activities of basin partners, and providing leadership and direction to the Alliance about where specific efforts may be useful. The coordinator would also be responsible for planning events, distribution of communications, and promotion of strategies for river cleanup. The proposal is for a three year position.

The Minnesota River Watershed Alliance is a network of citizens and staff from public and private organizations that communicate the benefits of an ecologically healthy Minnesota River watershed to others and who actively work toward its improvement and protection. The next Minnesota River Watershed Alliance meeting is scheduled for evening of Tuesday, April 18.

FRIDAY NIGHT CHIPPEWA RIVER MEETING DRAWS 120: On Friday, March 3, the Chippewa River Watershed Project held its eighth annual meeting. Over 120 people attended the meeting on the shores of Lake Minnewaska at Glenwood's Lakeside Ballroom, with ice heaves just feet from the windows. Kylene Olson, Executive Director of the Project, explained that five out of six of the Chippewa's subbasins are now moving ahead with implementation activities and the entire watershed is eligible for septic system loan funding. Progress has been made with implementation of 831 acres of filter strips, 57 septic system upgrades, 32 sediment blocks, 7 shoreline naturalizations, 4 wetland/pond restorations, 3 nutrient management plans, 1 streambank protection, and 1 manure separator/composter.

Watershed Scientist Paul Wymar's water monitoring data showed that the 1,141 tons of nitrate-nitrogen flowing in the river would be enough to fertilize 23,571 acres of corn at 120 pounds per acre. The 111 tons of phosphorus would fertilize 6,344 acres of corn at 35 pounds per acre. Data also show that 92 percent of the sediment coming from the Chippewa River's Lower sub-basin comes from only 30 percent of the basin whereas the rest contributes relatively little. Watershed Specialist Jennifer Hoffman urged people to take action and asked people to consider two questions: What are you doing to protect water quality and what aren't you doing to protect water quality?

Next steps include continued installation of best management practices and seeking funding for the sixth subbasin. All of the activities can be found on the Chippewa River Watershed Project's Web site www.chippewariver.com

SCHWAN'S CUTS PHOSPHORUS DISCHARGE BY 11,000 POUNDS: High phosphorus levels are a concern in the Minnesota River and the Lower Minnesota River Dissolved Oxygen TMDL Report set a goal to reduce phosphorus. The Schwan Food Company is helping to meet that goal. By using alternate cleaning materials, the Schwan Food Company has reduced phosphorus in wastewater from its Marshall ice cream manufacturing operation by 74 percent, for annual phosphorus emission reduction of 11,000 pounds. To reduce phosphorus levels in the wastewater discharge at its manufacturing facilities in Marshall, Schwan's partnered with its cleaning chemical supplier, Anderson Chemical Company of Litchfield, to formulate a phosphorus-free cleaning material. The company received the Governor's Award for Excellence in Waste and Pollution Prevention at the Air, Water and Waste Environmental Conference in February.

The cleaning chemical system was tested on actual production equipment with detailed oversight by corporate microbiologists for a two-month period before being adopted as the standard sanitation procedure for this plant. The new system shows improved cleaning and sanitation performance with no net increase in combined chemical and labor costs. Schwan's is currently investigating other potential reductions in its wastewater phosphorus levels using conventional source reduction techniques.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING APRIL 3: A Minnesota Nutrient Management Initiative Training will be held in St. Peter at the Nicollet County Fairgrounds on April 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Speakers include Brian Williams, Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Jeff St. Ores, NRCS; Kevin Kuehner, Brown-Nicollet-Cottonwood Water Quality Board, and Linda Meschke, Rural Advantage. See the attachment for more information.

BIOENERGY THE TOPIC OF EMERGING ISSUES LECTURE AT UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA: The fourth annual William E. Larson and Raymond R. Allmaras lecture on Emerging Issues in Soil and Water is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19 from 2:00-4:30 p.m. The overall theme of the program will be "Defining a Future Bioeconomy." This will be an expanded program with two speakers: (1) Dr. Bruce Dale from Michigan State University on "Biomass Supply and Biofuels: Some Perspectives" and (2) Dr. Rick Cruse from Iowa State University on the "Future Bioeconomy and its Impacts on Soil and Water Resources." Both lectures will be given in 335 Borlaug Hall, which is located at 1991 Upper Buford Circle, on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. Representative Al Juhnke will make some brief comments prior to the lectures on the "Importance of Bioenergy to Rural Minnesota." If you need more information, please contact Dr. Satish Gupta, sgupta@umn.edu 612-625-1241 or view the following Web site: http://soils.umn.edu/Emerging_Issues/2006/index.html

STRIP TILLAGE EXPO SCHEDULED FOR JULY IN LAMBERTON AND WASECA: "Strip Tillage Expo: Tillage for Today and Tomorrow" will be presented by the University of Minnesota at the Southwest Research and Outreach Center, Lamberton on July 25, and again at the Southern Research and Outreach Center, Waseca on July 27. Manufacturers will demonstrate equipment for strip tillage and associated operations, including auto-guidance systems, fertilizer injectors, and minimum tillage planters. Speaker topics will include equipment management, soil fertility in high residue systems,

economics of reduced tillage systems, and yield results from two years of on-farm trials across Minnesota comparing tillage systems. A panel of long-term strip tillers will discuss tips for success.

The Expo will begin at 9:00 a.m. with tillage demonstrations until 11:00, followed by three hours for education presentations, review of information booths, and lunch. More field demonstrations will continue from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. There is no cost for attendance. Expo information is periodically updated at <http://wrc.coafes.umn.edu> Equipment vendors who would like to participate in field demonstrations and organizations with tillage-related information who would like to reserve indoor exhibit space are encouraged to visit the Expo Web site above for the registration information. Field demonstration, outside display, and inside display space can be guaranteed if reserved by May 1st, with later reservations on an "as-available" basis. Please refer potential exhibitors and attendees to the Web site.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing that we see too late the one that is open." – Alexander Graham Bell

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