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The River Voice

Issue No. 2 March
2011

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Upcoming Events

April 5, 3:30 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Healing Our Waters

St. Louis Bay/River Funding

U.S. EPA Lab

6201 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN

Contact:

Cheryl@freshwaterfuture.org or

(231) 571-5001

April 5, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

St. Louis River Alliance

Environmental Stewardship Awards

Welcome to the second issue of the "River Voice." For those of you new to the mailing list, the goal of this newsletter is to keep the people who work on the river informed of the many projects that are happening. It is published by the St. Louis River Alliance every two months or six times per year, thanks to a grant from the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation.

The enthusiastic response to the newsletter has been gratifying. We hope you will find this issue just as useful and we appreciate the article contributions from so many people and organizations.

If you have a story or image for the next issue, send it to Marie Zhuikov at the St. Louis River Alliance: mariez@stlouisriver.org. The next deadline is **May 20**.

Long-Term Hog Island Project is Progressing

The states of Wisconsin and Minnesota, along with many partners, continue to work on projects that improve the water quality and habitat health in the St. Louis River Area of Concern. Some of these projects take many years to complete. A good example can be found at Hog Island -- the first remediation to restoration project in the St. Louis River.

9500 Spirit Mountain Pl., Duluth, MN
Contact: Julene Boe, St. Louis River Alliance slrcac@stlouisriver.org or (218) 733-9520

April 12, 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Duluth Stream Corps
Neighborhood Mtg.
Evergreen Senior Center, City Center West
5830 Grand Ave., Duluth, MN
Contact: Tim Beaster, Community Action Duluth
tim@communityactionduluth.org

April 13, 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Duluth Stream Corps
Neighborhood Mtg.
Chester Bowl Park Ski Chalet
1801 E. Skyline Dr., Duluth, MN
Contact: Tim Beaster, Community Action Duluth
tim@communityactionduluth.org

April 21, 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Duluth Stream Corps Neighborhood Meeting
Central Hillside Community Ctr.
Duluth Parks and Recreation Dept. Bldg., 12 E 4th St., Duluth, MN
Contact: Tim Beaster, Community Action Duluth
tim@communityactionduluth.org

May 2

Envirothon for Northern Area III
Camp Chicagami
Contact: Kate Kubiak, South St. Louis County Soil and Water Conservation District
kate.kubiak@southstlouisswcd.org

May 9-12

St. Louis River Quest
Contact: Adele Yorde, Duluth Seaway Port Authority
ayorde@duluthport.com

May 16

[Minnesota State Envirothon](#)
Spirit Mountain
9500 Spirit Mountain Place
Duluth, MN
Topic: Salt and Freshwater Estuaries

June 4, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Lake Superior Watershed Festival
Lake Superior College, Lower Parking Lot
2101 Trinity Rd., Duluth, MN
Contact: St. Louis River Alliance
slrcac@stlouisriver.org or (218) 733-9520



Hog Island. Image courtesy of the WI Dept. of Natural Resources.

Hog Island was built in the 1920s and 1930s from navigation channel dredge materials. Nearby Newton Creek and Hog Island Inlet were later shown to be contaminated with oil products. In 2005, approximately 60,000 tons of contaminated sediment were dredged from the inlet. Contaminated sediments were also removed from the downstream segment of Newton Creek.

Money from the Great Lake Legacy Fund made this remedial action possible. This project was part of a larger long-term cleanup of the area. Work on Newton Creek actually started in 1997 with Murphy Oil and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) removing contaminated sediments in the upper reaches of the creek, and Murphy Oil making improvements on the wastewater treatment lagoon at the headwaters.

Even though Hog Island has an industrial history, the inlet offers a type of habitat important for area fish and wildlife, known as a "sheltered bay." The island itself has



One of 20 log structures that were placed into Hog Island Inlet. The underwater portion provides habitat for fish and macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects, worms, snails, etc.) The above-water part provides loafing logs for turtles and perching areas for birds. The structures were designed by Douglas County, UWS-Lake Superior Research Institute, the WI DNR, the WI Dept. of Agriculture Trade & Consumer Protection, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They were built by Douglas County and the UWS-Lake Superior Research Institute with labor provided by the Gordon Correctional Facility.

River Ruminations

95% of the land on the Fond du Lac Reservation in Minnesota drains into the St. Louis River. The rest drains into the Kettle River.

Rick Gitar, Fond du Lac Reservation

Contributing Writers

Tim Beaster, Comm. Action Duluth
Charlene Johnson, City of Superior
Mike Kennedy, MPCA
Tracey Ledder, WI DNR
Julie O'Leary, MN Enviro. Partnership
Rondi Watson, Metro. Interstate Cnl.
Adele Yorde, Duuth Seaway Port Authority



developed a diverse habitat. It is also connected to an area for public access and recreation.

After contaminated sediments were dredged from the inlet, the remaining sediment in the dredged area was sampled again. The results were below the 2.6 mg/Kg polyaromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) remedial target. As initial restoration of habitat, the edges of the inlet were re-graded to help recreate good habitat and planted to prevent erosion. At Newton Creek, clean rip rap was added to prevent erosion. Some areas of oily sheen were not able to be removed from Newton Creek at the bridge.

Douglas County continues to work on the habitat restoration of the area through a grant in cooperation with the Great Lakes Commission. The WDNR is planning follow-up biological sampling in 2011 to help determine if the benthic (bottom) habitat has been improved. Watch for information in the future as the Wisconsin partners continue with this long-term project and others.

New Stream Restoration Project to Plant 20,000 Trees

Conservation Corps Model is Setting Trend

Community Action Duluth has received funding to launch a new program called the Duluth Stream Corps. Funded by a grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), the agency has hired six people (see "River People News" below) to perform stream restoration work in the Duluth area. This program may be the first of many. In the most recent request for applications for funding from the GLRI, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) explicitly asked for proposals for programs that, like the Duluth Stream Corps, have a "conservation corps" component.

Angie Miller, executive director of Community Action Duluth, is confident about the new program, "We're excited that the EPA wants to see more programs like ours, I take it as a sign of the program's potential to make a positive impact."



"This is a huge project that involves extensive, hands-on work; having a crew of six makes the large scale of our work possible," said Tim Beaster, Duluth Stream Corps project

coordinator. The project is aiming at restoring Duluth's coldwater streams by planting 20,000 trees on privately owned streamside land throughout the Duluth area.

"Duluth's streams are under stress from a variety of factors including warm water run-off from impervious surfaces, clearing of streamside vegetation and high sediment levels from erosion," Beaster said. Trees and shrubs help streams by filtering pollutants, providing shade and stabilizing stream banks. They can increase property values by five to 15 percent.

The stream corps has a team of experts volunteering to advise the project. Called the Habitat Action Team (HAT), members of the group have a wide variety of backgrounds, from city planning to landscape architecture to natural resources. The HAT is being facilitated by the St. Louis River Alliance and includes these professionals:

Joshua Blankenheim, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; **R. C. Boheim** and **Kate Kubiak**, South St. Louis County Soil and Water Conservation District; **Heidi Bringman**, LHB Corp.; **Bob Bruce**, Carduus Consulting; **Brian Fredrickson**, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; **Judy Gibbs**, Duluth Parks and Recreation Dept.; **Carl Haensel**, Lake Superior Coldwater Coalition and Trout Unlimited; **Rolf Hagberg**, retired from the Minnesota Conservation Corps; **George Host**, UMD's Natural Resources Research Institute; **Gary Meier**, Trout Unlimited; **Paul Sandstrom**, Laurentian Resource Conservation and Development; and **Jesse Schomberg**, Minnesota Sea Grant.

Within the month, Community Action Duluth will be sending out a mailing to nearly 3,000 streamside landowners in the Duluth area. This will be the first chance for landowners to sign up for the project and to hear more about how they can be involved. The corps plans on holding neighborhood information sessions early this spring (see "Upcoming Events" for a listing).

For more information on the Duluth Stream Corps or to speak with Tim Beaster, please call (218) 726-1665 or email tim@communityactionduluth.org.

River Summit Brings Scientists and Managers Together

More than 140 research scientists and resource managers recently spent two days sharing information and exploring opportunities for

increasing collaboration on projects to help restore and protect the St. Louis River Estuary. The meeting was held at the University of Wisconsin - Superior on February 7-8, 2011.



Long-time conservationist David Zentner makes a point during his presentation at the St. Louis River Summit Meeting. Image courtesy of Lynelle Hanson.

A dozen oral presentations provided big-picture perspectives on current and historical natural resource issues, including ongoing efforts to link research opportunities with management efforts in the designated Area of Concern. Twenty six posters provided details of recent and ongoing projects in the area. The poster session reception provided opportunities for one-on-one discussions between participants that focused on specific efforts to better understand and manage estuary resources. A variety of large and small group activities sought to draw out information about other projects, needs and opportunities.

The Great St. Louis River Estuary Data Slam, organized by George Host of the Natural Resources Research Institute and Tom Hollenhorst of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, challenged participants to enter information about sources of St. Louis River Estuary data. More than 90 data records were entered by the time the Summit was over. The Data Slam remains [open](#) for people interested in entering information or viewing the results.

More information on the meeting can be found [here](#).

St. Louis River Quest to Host Over 1,000 Students on Educational Harbor Tours

Boatloads of area sixth-grade students, carrying "passports" to

document their adventures, will travel through the Duluth-Superior Harbor this spring aboard the *Vista Star* to learn all they can about the St. Louis River watershed through the River Quest adventure.

The 19th annual *St. Louis River Quest*, scheduled for May 9-12, 2011, will again draw over 1,000 sixth graders - bringing to over 15,000 the total number of students that have benefited from the program since its inception in 1993.



Students experience hands-on learning at the U.S. Coast Guard station during River Quest 2010. Image courtesy of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority.

River Quest provides hands-on learning activities for students to raise their awareness of the St. Louis River ecosystem and interrelated commercial, industrial and recreational activities. During two-and-a-half-hour boat trips, students visit 11 learning stations staffed by volunteers who cover topics ranging from pollution prevention and stopping aquatic invaders, to boating safety and commercial shipping.

Students are encouraged to submit essays about their experiences as part of the event's "Captain Ray Skelton River Quest Essay Contest," named in honor of one of the program's founders. The winner's name will be added to a traveling school plaque to recognize both the student's writing abilities and the school's participation in River Quest. The 2010 winner was Eleanor "Ellie" French from Woodland Middle School.

For more information about St. Louis River Quest, visit <http://www.duluthport.com/authority-activities.php>. For a list of learning station organizations and sponsors or for educational materials, check out www.seagrant.umn.edu/riverquest.

How to Pronounce NERR

The advent of the new [Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) (NERR) has left many local agency folks scratching their heads about how to pronounce the acronym. Is it NEAR or is it NERRrrr?

Ralph Garano, director of the Lake Superior NERR, pronounces it NEAR. However, the person who introduced him before his presentation at a recent meeting pronounced it NERR. So which is correct?



"It's really a matter of personal preference," says Sue O'Halloran, coastal training program coordinator for the NERR. "There's no consistency, even at the national level. People just use whichever term they prefer."

Becky Sapper, NERR outreach coordinator, prefers to say NEAR because she jokingly states, "NERR sounds sort of like the word Nerd, and while some of us consider that a compliment, it isn't always the most positive association."

So there you have it. Say it how you wish, unless you want to be NERR-dy.

Wetlands and Wetland Buffers can Benefit the St. Louis River

Buffer systems for wetlands and streams have been hot topics for regulatory agencies in response to wetland, waterway, and floodplain management. Commonly known as "setbacks" among zoning circles, "buffers" as a habitat concept within landscapes are developing as an integrated science of their own.

Because the science of buffer systems at the landscape level is so broad, scientists have recently been collaborating and compiling better data on buffer functions and effectiveness across multiple habitats within a larger "landscape." Wetland buffers and wetlands in the landscape were the key focus of the 2011 Wisconsin Wetland Association's annual conference held in Baraboo, WI, February 16-17.



A mitigation site within the Bear Creek Watershed near Superior, Wisc., that demonstrates a landscape buffer for Bear Creek and the St. Louis River Area of Concern. Image courtesy of the Wisconsin DNR.

Landscape ecology and habitat buffers play a critical role in the implementation of the St. Louis River Remedial Action Plan. Restoration efforts in aquatic communities may begin with sediment remediation, then include enhancements to adjacent wetland habitats including re-vegetation of eroded shorelines and management of invasive species. Upland buffers adjacent to the wetlands are critical for providing transition zones through which wildlife can move between habitats.

Those working in the St. Louis River Area of Concern should consider a broader landscape approach to project development as they prepare projects for implementation. Collaboration across project leaders, champions, and stakeholders should be considered to synergize multiple strategies and projects within the AOC. Many strategies and projects address specific habitat types including shallow water, embayments, wetlands, etc., but may not effectively maximize the restoration potential by considering the adjacent land use within each project and how improvements or protection of the adjacent system would benefit the whole system within the landscape.

More information on the state of science for buffers and landscape ecology can be found on the Wisconsin Wetland Association's [Website](#).

Harbor Committee Addresses Port and River Issues

Many organizations have an active stake in the continued health and vitality of the St. Louis River, especially at the juncture of

Lake Superior in the Duluth-Superior harbor. The Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC) originated in the late 1970s and continues to bring together local, state and federal agencies and units of government, along with citizen, environmental and industry representatives.

HTAC participation provides opportunities for information exchange and collaboration on initiatives affecting the St. Louis River Bay and Estuary such as habitat creation and restoration, dredge material management, marine safety, harbor infrastructure, and land use development.

The HTAC is an advisory group to the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC), which provides a cooperative, multi-jurisdictional planning process to address issues for all modes of transportation, not only for roads and motorized vehicles, but also for bicycles, pedestrians, harbor, air and rail. The MIC's transportation planning initiatives support mobility and access for people and goods, efficient infrastructure performance and preservation, and quality of life.

The HTAC has been nationally recognized for its unique structure, diverse membership, and success in addressing port issues in the Duluth-Superior Harbor. For more information about the HTAC, please visit the MIC's [Website](#).

MPCA Programs Work to Ensure Water Quality

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is working on four programs that impact the St. Louis River. The programs contain many acronyms, but you'll be sure to impress your friends if you mention a few during your next conversation.

In December 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) office in Chicago began efforts to develop a scoping plan for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin to use in the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load value (TMDL) for existing contaminants in the river. A TMDL is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

This plan will assist the tribe and states in developing a better understanding of the scope and range of contaminants, the resources required to address some or all of the existing

contaminants, and a draft timeframe to implement the TMDL process.



In addition, the MPCA has begun working on the St. Louis River as a part of the ten-year intensive watershed monitoring schedule known as a Watershed Restoration and Protection (WRAP) plan. With one summer of field work completed (2009) and three more planned, the WRAP will concentrate efforts in assessing the health in terms of aquatic use and aquatic life at the river's sub-watersheds, main stem, and the large lakes within the watershed. The outcome of this work will give local stakeholders the direction needed to ensure good water quality throughout the entire St. Louis watershed.

This summer, the MPCA received Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds to develop an implementation framework for restoration of the nine Beneficial Use Impairments (BUI), or benchmarks, for the St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC.) This work will provide detailed guidance in the form of action steps, which will lead to de-listing of the existing BUIs.

In addition, the section of the river from Grassy Point upstream to Cloquet on the Minnesota side, will receive sediment analysis from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA. They will complete the sediment work by October 2011, providing the comprehensive information needed to prioritize several planned remediation-to-restoration projects.

Stay tuned for meetings and opportunities to learn more about these activities in the St. Louis River watershed. If you would like more information on the non-estuary components of the St. Louis River or the TMDL, contact Mike Kennedy, MPCA-Duluth, at (218) 302-6629, mike.kennedy@state.mn.us. If you would like more information on the St. Louis River AOC or Great Lakes

program, contact Marc Hershfield at (218) 302-6633,
marc.hershfield@state.mn.us.

Lake Superior Watershed Festival Celebrates Water

Come join the many local groups that make up the Regional Stormwater Protection Team (RSPT) for the Lake Superior Watershed Festival. This event celebrates local streams, rivers and lakes and will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on June 4, 2011, in a new location: the lower parking lot of Lake Superior College (2101 Trinity Rd., Duluth).



Individuals and families can learn how to reduce stormwater runoff and enjoy performances and workshops by respected and innovative entertainers like the In the Heart of the Beast Puppet Theater. This event is funded, in part, under the Coastal Zone Management Act by the NOAA Office of Coastal Resources Management in cooperation with the Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program.

The RSPT and the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District are also hosting an annual rain barrel and backyard compost bin sale held in conjunction with the festival. Participation is free. For more information about the festival, contact the St. Louis River Alliance at slrcac@stlouisriver.org or (218) 733-9520.

River People News



Diane Nelson (left - City of Superior) and **Julene Boe** (right, St. Louis River Alliance) met with Minnesota Lt. Governor **Yvonne Prettner-Solon** (center) and all 10 members of the Minnesota Congressional delegation during Great Lakes Days in Washington, D.C., on March 1-2, 2011. The annual event, hosted by the Great Lakes Commission and the Northeast-Midwest Institute, brings people to the capitol to support Great Lakes region legislative priorities. Others participating in the Minnesota contingent included representatives from the Clean Water Action Alliance, Minnesota Land Trust, Izaak Walton League of America, Minnesota Environmental Partnership and the League of Women Voters Duluth Chapter. The group attended issues briefings, a joint session with the Great Lakes Commission, and a reception at the Canadian Embassy. Their goals were to garner continued support for full funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). They also asked legislators to fund short-term actions to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes and expedite the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' study of how to permanently separate the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basins to stop transfer of invasive species between the two watersheds.



Image courtesy of the Duluth News Tribune.

Dennis Pratt, senior fisheries biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, has retired after a 37-year career. He worked in concert with Minnesota DNR biologists to restore the St. Louis River Estuary and fish populations. He also was the first to discover the presence of the invasive Eurasian ruffe fish in the estuary. An avid angler, Pratt says he intends to reap the benefit of his previous work by spending time on the river fishing in retirement.

Six people have been hired as members of the Duluth Stream

Corps and will be working on the GLRI-funded [Duluth Coldwater Streams Project](#). Please welcome **Kris Eilers, Aaron Finke, Gabe Mayfield Sr., Kurt Oelhafen and Stacy Pietari**. **Tim Beaster** was hired as the Duluth Stream Corps Leader.

In Other News(letters)

A New River Research Project

A St. Louis River project was one of three to receive funding through the University of Minnesota's Water Resources Center. "The Role of Sulfate Reduction in Sediment of the St. Louis River Estuary: Phase II," a project by Assistant Professor Nathan Johnson (UMD Civil Engineering Dept.), is described in the [Minnegram](#) Newsletter.

River Jobs

The Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve is advertising for two jobs: [Education Coordinator](#) and [Research Coordinator](#).

About Us

The St. Louis River Alliance is a nonprofit organization of citizens and groups working together to protect, restore and enhance the St. Louis River.

[Find us on Facebook](#) 