



*The River Voice*  
Issue No. 6 December 2011

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**Upcoming Events**

**January 11, 2012**

Great Lakes Floodplain Mapping Project  
Northern WI Building and Construction  
Building and Educational Summit  
UWS - Yellowjacket Union Hall  
1605 Catlin Ave., Superior, WI  
Contact the Superior Building Inspection  
Dept. for more info: (715) 395-7288

**January 18, 2012**

St. Louis River Alliance Annual Meeting  
Great Lakes Aquarium  
353 Harbor Dr., Duluth, MN  
For info: (218) 733-9520

**River Ruminations**

## St. Louis River Named Important Bird Area

Audubon Minnesota, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Nongame Program, held a dedication ceremony on September 28 to recognize the St. Louis River Estuary and Minnesota Point's rich habitat for birds.



Ornithologist Gerry Niemi makes a point during the ceremony to designate the St. Louis River Estuary as an Important Bird Area.

The designation as an Important Bird Area (IBA) was a long-term effort spearheaded by Gerald Niemi, biology professor with the University of Minnesota Duluth, and Jan Green a local conservationists and Audubon State Board Member. The IBA Program is a systematic effort to identify and

The St. Louis River is Minnesota's only Area of Concern. It is one of Wisconsin's five Areas of Concern.

## Contributors

Jane Cleave, Duluth Audubon Society  
Erin Endsley, Wisconsin DNR  
Sharon Moen, MN Sea Grant  
Ruth Oppedahl, Univ. of WI Extension  
Andrew Slade, MN Environmental Partnership



protect habitats crucial to the long-term survival of Minnesota's bird populations.

The estuary's role in supporting migrating and water-dependent species was noted during the ceremony. The IBA designation is both a tool for assisting private landowners and public land managers, and a rationale for preserving habitat from threats. Volunteers support the IBA Program through citizen science and stewardship. This may include conducting bird monitoring, helping land managers, or being conservation advocates.

For more information, read page 2 of the Audubon Minnesota [newsletter](#).

## Wisconsin Angler Survey Opportunity

The Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services is hoping to survey 5,000 Wisconsin anglers over the next three years about their fishing habits and fish consumption to improve outreach on healthy fish eating practices. But the clincher is that the anglers must be male and age 50 or older. To participate, access the [survey](#).

Next spring, volunteers will be solicited for another phase of the study, which involves providing hair and blood samples to measure levels of nutrients and contaminants that come from eating fish. Again, the volunteers will be male and 50 or older, and efforts will focus on those who live in counties that contain Areas of Concern, such as Douglas County (the St. Louis River AOC).

If you have suggestions for recruiting participants, contact Pamela Imm, the study manager, at (608) 267-3565 or [Pamela.Imm@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Pamela.Imm@dhs.wisconsin.gov).

## Effort to get River Delisted Kicks Off

The St. Louis River is listed as an "Area of Concern," which means the environment is considered severely degraded and requires extensive clean up and restoration. Since this designation was made in 1987, many groups have been working together to address issues, called Beneficial Use Impairments, identified in its recovery. The process of getting the river officially delisted requires documentation of these efforts.

An exciting step forward took place on November 15 when about 90 people gathered in Duluth to form teams to tackle removal of the Beneficial



*Image courtesy of MN Sea Grant.*

Use Impairments. The teams will use existing information to document progress made to-date, which will help determine the status of each of the nine impairments. The teams will also recommend additional actions that need to be taken, resources needed, and a timeline for removing each impairment.

These teams are guided by a scientific advisory group and the agencies involved in coordinating the delisting process (the MN Pollution Control Agency, and the WI and MN DNRs - aided by the Fond du Lac Tribe, St. Louis River Alliance and Limnotech).

This stakeholder-driven effort is a result of the two-year implementation framework grant funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The goal is to assess the delisting status of each issue by spring of 2012. Updates will be reported in future newsletters.

## Celebrating Water

### Wisconsin Holds Area of Concern Meeting

# Explore & Restore



Eighty-two people attended the first Wisconsin's Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) [meeting](#) in Green Bay on November 3-4. The audience was a mix of citizen/stakeholder advisory committee members, agency staff and researchers. Held at Heritage Hill State Historical Park overlooking the Fox River, part of the Lower Green Bay and Fox River AOC, this event provided an opportunity to get to know others working on Areas of Concern across Wisconsin. (For meeting photos click [here](#).)

The audience heard about the history and background of Wisconsin's AOCs, updates on the national status of AOCs, the need to show progress and accountability, and methods each AOC are using to removing impairments. In the afternoon, citizen advisors provided updates on their work in each of the AOCs (Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Green Bay, Menominee and St. Louis River).

The second day brought training sessions on restoration, use of video, using events for outreach and planning how to track progress in AOC projects. Speakers provided background information on Michigan's Statewide Public Advisory Council and how it operates to provide training, networking and advocacy on behalf of Michigan's AOCs.

Energy levels were high through the entire event. It was motivating to meet so many people who care about bringing these rivers and waterways back to life, and inspiring to meet the many volunteer citizens and stakeholders, some who have worked decades to make these waters healthy again. The economic value of this clean-up work was evident and it's clear that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding is instrumental in energizing this work and advancing the cause.

## Readers Appreciate the *River Voice*

Thanks to those of you who took the *River Voice* newsletter survey last month. Fifty people took the survey. Most (90%)

said they learned something new by reading it and thought that the length of articles was just right (92%). A majority (84%) like the every-two-month timeframe. Feature stories are the most popular part of the newsletter, followed by upcoming events and river people news.

Many readers (74%) have been involved in a project featured in the newsletter and some (20%) have even found new collaborators for projects. The newsletter's design and images were highly rated, given a 4 out of 5 for quality. But when push comes to shove, only 10% think their organization would be willing to help with monetary support for continuation of the newsletter, and another 47% aren't sure.

Many readers offered comments and ideas for article topics. Progress on delisting the river as an Area of Concern and in dealing with the beneficial use impairments on the river was suggested by several readers. We were able to cover that topic in this issue and hope to provide updates in the future. We also plan to cover the additional topics suggested in other issues.

One person wanted to know about the best way to print out a copy of the newsletter. To do so, visit the St. Louis River Alliance [web site](#). We archive past issues there in PDF format, and you can print off those.

## Teaching with Technology Along the St. Louis River

For two days in mid-November, groups of students and teachers explored the St. Louis River on foot and by iPhone. Their goal was to join estuary scientists and mobile-device quest developers to generate a place-based learning experience about the St. Louis River. The students had an opportunity to go geocaching and to work with specialized software to build a hybrid world of virtual interactive characters and objects placed in physical space.

Pat Collins, St. Louis River Conservation Coordinator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, became one of those quasi-virtual characters



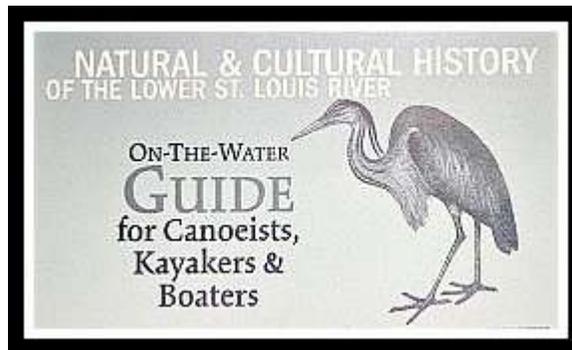
at the Rice's Point boat launch, giving students pause as they tried to figure out who he was and what information he contained.

The "Teaching with Technology in the St. Louis River Estuary" workshop was funded by the Minnesota and Wisconsin Sea Grant Programs and supported by the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence Great Lakes. It was organized by a team of scientists and educators from University of Wisconsin Madison, University of Minnesota Duluth's Natural Resources Research Institute and other partners.

A 13-minute video of a presentation that describes this project is available [here](#).

## Popular River Canoe Guide Funded for Reprinting

The St. Louis River Alliance received a \$13,600 grant from the Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program to enhance and reprint the "On-the-Water Guide for Canoeists, Kayakers and Boaters," for the St. Louis River. It was one of 15 projects funded by the program.



The 38-page Canoe Guide was first printed in 2001 and reprinted in 2002. The only informational resource about the river available for

recreational boaters at the time, the guide covers the natural and cultural history of the lower St. Louis River, including descriptions of the area's geology, plants, animals, birds, habitat, and the natural and industrial histories. Detailed maps are coupled with descriptions of public facilities, cultural and natural features, and special site histories.

The grant will allow for addition of text for the industrial area of the harbor and for more emphasis on the river's public access points and recreational uses. The guide will also be updated to include the latest information on habitat restoration efforts and invasive species prevention measures that boaters can take. A web-accessible version will be available on the Alliance's and partner web sites.

The Alliance has been busy convening partners to help shape the new guide. The goal is to have it ready by fishing opener this spring.

## River People News



**Erin Endsley** is a hydrogeologist who will be working in the Wisconsin DNR Remediation and Redevelopment Program in the Superior Service Center. Erin grew up in Duluth and is glad to be back in the Twin Ports. She earned BS degrees in geology from Beloit College

and teaching from University of Minnesota Duluth and an MS degree in geology from UMD. Erin will be involved in river projects concerning remediation of contaminated sediments. Erin's phone number is (715) 392-3126 and her email is [Erin.Endsley@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Erin.Endsley@wisconsin.gov).



The Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) has hired **Andrew Slade** as Northeast Program Coordinator. MEP is a coalition of 80 organizations working to protect and restore the natural

resources of the state. Andrew has worked on environmental issues for 25 years as an educator, naturalist and writer. He was executive director of Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association and director of education at the Great Lakes Aquarium.

Andrew will work closely with environmental organizations active in this region. He will coordinate MEP's work on Great Lakes policy. Andrew is the author of four North Shore guidebooks, including *Hiking the North Shore: 50 fabulous day hikes in Minnesota's spectacular Lake Superior region*. The MEP Northeast office is in the Dewitt-Seitz Building in Canal Park.

MEP member groups active in the St. Louis River include Duluth Audubon Society, Izaak Walton League, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Land Trust, The Conservation Fund, and Save Lake Superior Association, as well as many organizations working to ensure that proposed mining operations in the watershed are conducted in an environmentally-sound manner. Andrew's phone number is (218) 727-0800 and his email is [AndrewSlade@mepartnership.org](mailto:AndrewSlade@mepartnership.org).

## In Other News(letters)

Limnotech's newsletter, *Currents*, has a story about the delisting process for Areas of Concern and it highlights Limnotech's role in the St. Louis River delisting project. Look for "The Drive to Delist AOCs" [story](#) on pages 1 and 2.

## 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 !\[\]\(2b9000c261447981d88674ebdb52dc1e\_img.jpg\)](#)