

Our Mississippi

PARTNERING TO KEEP AMERICA'S RIVER GREAT

SUMMER '10



One WITH THE River *Paddle, and learn, on new Mississippi River Water Trail.*

Kim Rea says she'll never forget the chilly November day she first paddled on the Mississippi River Water Trail. She began in a scenic backwater slough as peaceful as the big river would be the opposite.

"As we get closer to the main channel, I see a towboat coming down the river. I'm thinking, 'oh no,' and then I see the whitecaps and I could see how windy it was," she said. "But the minute we hit the confluence of that little stream and the Mississippi River, it was the biggest adrenaline rush. It was like, 'Wow. This is the Mississippi River, and I'm in a kayak.'"

Rea, the recreation interpretive services manager for Rivers Project Office of the U.S Army Corps of Engineers and her colleagues at the Corps' St. Louis District are working to let many more people experience that rush—but safely so—on a new and expanding water trail within the St. Louis District boundary.

While doing so, they hope to instill the same appreciation

Rea herself felt on the paddling trip. Inspiring environmental stewardship is especially easy, she notes, as someone glides amid showy limestone bluffs and past deer families crossing between islands.

"If we can get people on the river and make them see they are part of the river, we can talk about the importance of maintaining the habitat we have and restoring the habitat that's been damaged," she said. "We can talk about the importance of navigation and moving commodities. We can talk about our water safety mission and water safety education. It's one of the greatest watersheds in the world. Getting out on it gets people excited about learning more. It also makes them want to take care of it."

The development of the trail began in 2005, and it currently stretches across 78 river miles, within two entire navigation pools and parts of two others. The Corps has developed trail maps, 21 primitive campsites, 50 day use areas and interpretive panels and other related safety and education materials. It has also partnered with the Mississippi River Water Trail Association, the American Canoe Association, the St. Louis County Canoe and Kayak Club, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Illinois



Our Mississippi

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PHOTOS: USACE.

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Interview with Major General Michael Walsh, PAGE 4



From top: This stretch of the Des Moines River Trail, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has been named an official national recreation trail for its unique history and beauty. These kayaks are perched on one of the new day use areas developed along the Mississippi River Water Trail within the Corps of Engineers' St. Louis District. Kayakers take to the trail.

nearly highways, says Jamie Gyolai, a community planner at Lake Red Rock. Corps staffers are developing interpretation projects around the trail, hoping to get kids active and use the trail to underscore water safety messages. They're also looking at how geocaching, a popular treasure hunt-style activity, could extend from land to water.

"I'd say it's very new for us," he said. "We're learning as we go. What's pushing us into it is the public interest."

A Corps-managed stretch of the Des Moines River Water Trail around Saylorville Lake was recently named a National Recreation Trail by the Secretary of the Interior for its unique history and wildlife habitat, particularly for migrating flocks of American white pelicans. Around Rock Island, Ill., the Corps is working with the group River Action, which has developed 45 miles of water trails on and around the main stem of the Upper Mississippi. Guided trips on those trails will be part of the area's first-ever mass paddling event, Floatzilla, Aug. 21, on Lake Potter in Rock Island, Ill. Organizers hope to set an official Guinness World Record by getting 2,010 paddlers together for the 2010 float.

Trail expansion will come, but at a pace that keeps safety at the forefront, says Gary Swensen, chief of the natural resource management section at the Mississippi River Project of the Corps. He's working on portage options around Lock and Dam 14, where the current is especially tricky.

"The word that comes to mind is balance, and it's a challenge sometimes," he said. "It's trying to satisfy all the parties out there and keep things safe for a paddler in a kayak or two in a 17-foot aluminum canoe on the same body of water that a 1200-foot long towboat is."

Kevin Dempsey agrees but thinks the effort is well worth it. As head of the Mississippi River Water Trail Association and owner of Midwest Sea Kayak and Touring Co., he takes paddlers on guided instructional and multi-day tours of the river and new trail. His tours cover the river's unique history and may start newcomers in quiet pools teeming with wildlife.

"It's not a passive activity," he says. "You don't float the Mississippi River, you navigate it. A lot of people are surprised at how much work it takes. This day and age people are used to passively experiencing things. I'm proud it represents a real experience."

It's also represents an adventure unlike any other," he says, "on an ancient and storied river.

"You can be one moment enjoying a latte at a river town. You can push off and you're amongst wooded islands and river otters swimming by with fish in their mouths. And maybe there's a 20-30 mph wind blowing upstream—the same winds that blew upstream for the explorers."

"Paddling on the Mississippi River is one of the few ways in this modern world to experience the world in a way that people always have." —K.S.

"One with the River" continued from page 1...

Department of Natural Resources and numerous river towns on trail programming and expansion plans.

When completed in 2013, the trail will cover 300 miles of the Mississippi from Saverton, Missouri to Cairo, Illinois and the lower 80 miles of the Illinois Waterway. The ultimate goal is a trail stretching from the headwaters in Northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.

Col. Thomas O'Hara, St. Louis District Commander, says expansion will likely come as other Corps districts see how affordably a trail can promote recreation, environmental stewardship, navigation, education and partnership. The project links well with the President's Great Outdoors Challenge initiative—an effort to reconnect Americans, especially children, to nature, including America's rivers. The work with project partners carries over to the search for innovative solutions to other water issues, which is another part of the Corps mission, he says.

"From our perspective, there's a high return on the federal dollars we're investing," he said. "When you bring partners together working on a common vision, a common direction, we're able to pool resources and get a program like this in place that can meet the needs of the public and partners involved."

Collaboration has been key to establishing water trails elsewhere on the Upper Mississippi River and its tributaries. The Red Rock Lake Association applied for and received a grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to fund development of water trails at Lake Red Rock, trails that wind past showy rock walls—all on Corps land within the Lake Red Rock district. When completed, there'll be six stopping points, kiosks, maps and signs pointing out water trail access points from

Riding the river with some modern-day Huck Finns

On June 13, 20-year-old William Lytle slipped his kayak into the headwaters of the Mississippi River, paddling the first stroke in his goal of being the youngest person to solo kayak the full 2,350 miles.

Then on day 8, he shared this in his online journal. "I've got a mixed emotion thing to share," he wrote, adding that in just two days, he met three others who also planned to paddle the full length of the river.

"I shall say no more, besides that we analyzed each others trips and decided that we will all succeed. I am trying to grow out of my competitive nature in trips like this, so I turn my thoughts and words to today's pizza..."

These days, it seems, it isn't hard to find adventurers paddling the Mighty Mississippi to raise funds for breast cancer, bond with a friend or a father, tackle personal demons or film a documentary.

For Lytle, a wildlife ecology major at Michigan Technological University who has tucked only one book into his pack (*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*), the trip's impetus is partly about observing human impact along the river and documenting animal species—but not only. "A lot of people think there were only adventure to be had 200 years ago when the country was founded," he said. "I think there's so much especially for young people to conquer."

Adventure's something he's sure to find, says Gary Hoffman, who with son Darrin paddled the river in 45 days in 2002, a trip chronicled in the recently released "Mighty Miss." He's planning a more leisurely solo trip that allows more interaction with people along the way.

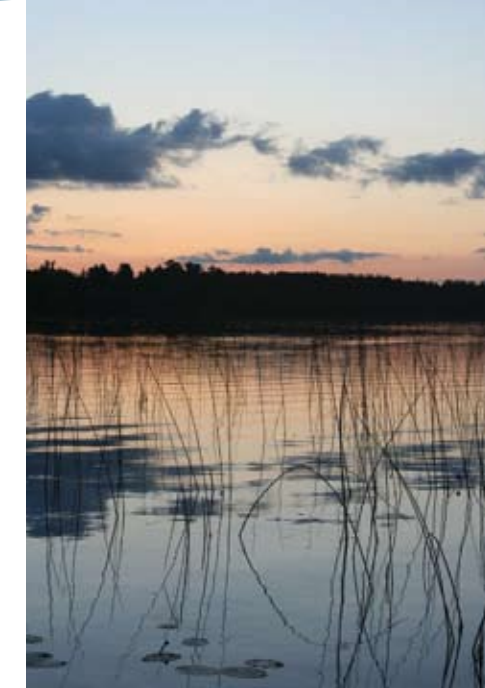
It was the half dozen "near-death experiences" of the trip that prompted the former Outward Bound instructor and canoe guide of some 45 years to pen the book. Within the 280 pages are tales about getting sucked into a whirlpool while (unwisely) trying to run the wing dams, of towboat operators who liked to play chicken, and of the armed guards who pulled them over in Louisiana after supposedly receiving a call about some canoe terrorists with explosives in their packs.

Hoffman also writes about the eagles that ushered them down the river and even some magical dancing carp.

It's the natural part of the adventure that Lytle hopes may inspire, even if it's just the children at his hometown library near Chicago, who can get summer reading program credit for reading his blog. In just the first few days that involved sleeping under a bridge (not easy for someone still terrified by the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff), the sightings of leaping deer, basking turtles, frolicking otters and some baby calves, and the devouring of burgers, donuts and other high-carb fare.

"I'll be reaching an impressionable crowd," Lytle said in an interview just before launch. "I hope to raise awareness on stewardship, our environmental impacts and at the same time reinstall a love for nature and adventure—of natural adventure in our society."

Follow Will's journey at willbewild.com, being sure to click on sections that include his journal and that of his brother, Joe, a former Peace Corps volunteer (and good cook) who is tagging along by land. For information on ordering "Mighty Miss" or to read excerpts from Hoffman's story, go to mightymiss.com. —K.S.



Clockwise from top left: William Lytle stands on a dock near the start of his planned trip from the Mississippi River's headwaters to the Gulf. Natural beauty in Northern Minnesota. Just one of many animal friends he's been meeting along the way.

Glide the Trail

MAPS Maps of the Mississippi River Water Trail can be found at greatriverwatertrail.org, or by contacting the Rivers Project Office at 636-899-2600. For Rock Island area water trail maps, or information on the Floatzilla event, go to riveraction.org (or floatzilla.org) and click on the water trails link. For information on paddling the backwaters or other areas within the Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, go to fws.gov/Midwest/uppermississippiriver/ and click on the canoeing link for directions to various paddling stretches and relative levels of difficulty.

GUIDES Getting a guide's a good idea for a novice planning to paddle the main channel of the Mississippi. Kevin Dempsey's Midwest Sea Kayak and Touring Company offers tours of various length in the Clarksville and Louisiana area, some including history, meals and rentals: midwestseakayak.com, 314-518-0950. Big Muddy Adventures also offers guided trips, including St. Louis area day trips, full moon floats and multi-day canoe camping trips around the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, 2muddy.com, 314-610-4241. Outfitters in Minnesota, including those based on the Mississippi, can be found at dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/outfitters.html. For Iowa trails, go to iowadnr.gov/riverprograms.

INSPIRATION You can't beat this link to those who are current engaged in, planning or have completed trips on the entire river: bigrivermagazine.com/rivertrips.html. —K.S.

Make your own trek, virtually, via the big screen, at free screenings of "The River is Life," a summer-time adventure tale produced by 11 Visions.

The film, shot during filmmaker Ryan Jeanes' and Phillip Hullquist's second trip down the entire length of the Mississippi River, is being shown at outdoor parks in river towns from August through fall, starting in Aitkin, Minnesota, and moving down to Baton Rouge, La. Find the schedule: theriverislife.com





‘Middle Coast’ Visionary

Major General Michael Walsh knows what he wants for residents living in the Mississippi River watershed two centuries from now: a quality of life unmatched in the world. That, he believes, will just take a little—well, big—vision to achieve.

The idea of planning 200 years out came from a flood. Major General Michael Walsh had just taken command of the Mississippi Valley Division. It was a big shift from his previous post as commander for the Corps’ Gulf Region Division in Baghdad, but still a massive responsibility that would come to include oversight of one of the largest disaster recovery operations in the history of the Corps of Engineers. He’d also been named presidential appointee to the Mississippi River Commission, a river engineering and inspection commission formed back in 1879.

Back more than a century ago, he realized, it took a string of heated debates and tough political and engineering decisions to help reshape the Mississippi, build levees and set land aside for floodways.

“When I got here in 2008, there was a major flood on the main stem, and we were able to use those floodways,” he said. “In my discussions, I wondered, ‘who’s thinking about those grand schemes today?’”

Books like “Designing the Bayous” and “The River We Have Wrought” were his homework when first taking command, Gen. Walsh said. That helped underscore the fact that no one was yet writing similar visions for the future.

“I’d go to the Upper Mississippi and get great stories about the upper river, go to St. Louis and get great stories about the middle river and to Louisiana and get great stories about the lower Mississippi. It was like everybody was talking about a different river. No one was thinking about it from the heart and the head. It’s a connected river, and should be treated like the third largest watershed in the world, which it is.

“That’s when we started looking at: ‘How do we get people to change their thinking from the river that’s outside their window, or town, or county or state and recognize the river runs from Canada to Mexico? If we look from the watershed perspective, 41 percent of the United States flows into this river, yet there’s no national recognition of the jewel we have in the center part of our country.’”

Seeking a watershed’s due

The general asked the Mississippi River Commission to adopt a working draft of an intergenerational commitment, a six-point outline of what they’d leave to their grandkids’ grandkids. The Corps is now working with The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, the Audubon Society, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the navigation industry and other groups to further refine that 200-year vision and also get national recognition for the watershed. One step toward that was a recent

America’s Inner Coast Summit, a think tank of sorts involving key regional leaders. (See story, page 6.)

Getting others to own the vision is key, Gen. Walsh says. “I’m busy with floods and hurricanes and rebuilding New Orleans, certainly with hurricane storm damage risk reduction,” he said. “I don’t think it’s my personal challenge or vision. But I think there’s a need out there for people to think about the river from this perspective. More and more folks are recognizing we need to think larger than outside one’s window. If I were the first one to think about it, it wouldn’t be taking on the legs that it has.”

Ownership of the vision may not be federal, it may not be the 31 states within the watershed. It may be some sort of a compact. That, he said, is still to be determined.

Formalizing partnerships

What the Corps is doing, he said, is moving from single focus to multiple focus projects—navigation/ecosystem restoration or flood damage reduction/navigation, for example.

“To do that you need to have a voice from everyone at the table so you can design a project that meets everybody’s needs as opposed to pairing one off against the other.”

Thinking short-term tends to pit one group against another, something not so true when the vision is larger.

“I think that’s what I’m also looking for in this 200-year vision,” he said. “I think if we look far enough out, we can make good landscape policy decisions that would meet the needs of many, if not all of the requirements and needs in a particular area, whether it’s ecosystem restoration, navigation, flood damage reduction, water quality/quantity issues or hydropower. With all the systems we know we’ll need in next 50 years, we can try and make landscape policy decisions. To make that happen, you have to collaborate with a number of different groups.

The Corps has signed formal memorandums of understanding with Ducks Unlimited and the Audubon Society in the last two years, he said. There’s now a Memorandum of Agreement between the Mississippi and Mekong river commissions, seeking to exchange solutions learned on the Mississippi with lessons learned from management of the Mekong. And this is just a start, he believes.

“We’ve been working on the river for the last 230 years; there were decisions made then affecting us now.

“We’re beginning to form more working relationships to make sure everybody has a seat at the table today, for solving the issues we know we’re going to have tomorrow.” —K.S.

America’s Watershed: A 200-year vision

Our people:

- enjoy a quality of life unmatched in the world.
- lead secure lives along any river or tributary in the basin.
- enjoy fresh air and the surrounding fauna, flora and forests while hunting, fishing and recreating along any river or tributary in the basin.
- travel easily, safely and affordably to various destinations in the watershed.
- drink from and use the abundant waters of any river, stream or aquifer in the basin.
- choose from an abundance of affordable basic goods and essential supplies that are grown, manufactured and transported along the river to local and world markets.

PHOTOS: PA. ALAN DOOLEY, P.S. KIM SCHNEIDER, ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS.

What’s going through your head, little fish?

Fish “psychology” helps in planned Mississippi River fish passage.

Trying to figure out how fish think so you can predict their behavior has long been the study of fishermen hoping to lure them close for a tasty catch. Today, innovative research designed to better get into the minds of animals is being applied to ecosystem restoration projects like the first-ever fish passage system on the Mississippi River system.

Congress has approved passageways that’ll begin at Lock and Dam 22 near Saverton, Mo., and continue at other lock sites, to strengthen populations of the 34 migratory species whose natural behavior is impacted by locks and dams installed to help humans better navigate the river.

Fish passage will allow species like shovelnose sturgeon, paddlefish and catfish access to desired habitat for feeding and spawning. That, experts hope, will give them a better chance of thriving amid invasive species like Asian carp, says Mark Cornish, team leader for the fish passage project. Before anything’s constructed on the river, however, engineers and biologists want as much assurance as possible that it’s something that the Upper Mississippi River fish would likely use.

For help, they’ve turned to the Cognitive Ecology and Ecohydraulics team of the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC). The four-member team has merged the fields of ecology, biology and engineering for a model originally developed to facilitate salmon passage in the Pacific Northwest.

To traditional field monitoring data and hydraulic and water quality modeling, the team adds in cognitive ecology, a field that uses neurobiology and neuroscience to better understand why animals make the decisions they do.

To traditional field monitoring data and hydraulic and water quality modeling, the team adds cognitive ecology ... to better understand why animals make the decisions they do.

“The animal through its decisions is going to dictate whether the engineer is successful in design,” says Dr. R. Andrew Goodwin, a research environmental engineer on the team. “What we’re trying to do is develop the tool that can get into the head of these animals, and to a degree we can describe/replicate their decision-making so you can in virtual reality simulate their behavior.”

Unlike salmon, migratory fish common to the Upper Mississippi River don’t tend to leap over obstacles, requiring fish passageways unique to the Upper Mississippi. They also face a demanding environment with the possibilities of high amounts of sediment, flooding, and other obstacles. Some migrate upstream, others swim down.

Researchers, nonetheless, can build on a fact documented through the Pacific Northwest work: fish thinking is not as simple as previously believed. They then

apply that mathematically through what’s called the Eulerian-Lagrangian-Agent Method (ELAM). “To understand animal decision-making in many contexts, you have to take the perspective of the fish,” explains Dr. David L. Smith, a team research biologist who applies the model to river systems around the world. “Only that way can you track elements of behavior, such as perception, that go into decision-making.”

To explain the concept, Smith likes to use the example of someone driving home from work, listening to the radio. How often, he asks, do we turn off the car, go into the house, and turn the car on the next morning to get almost blasted out—even though nobody’s touched the volume since we were last inside. Just as we acclimate to the sound of a radio to the backdrop of road noise, so do fish acclimate to conditions they’ve just experienced on a river. Predicting behavioral response then must take that into account, and the model does.”

Once factors like flow conditions are plugged in, the model can show through computer animation how fish would approach a passage system and how many would or wouldn’t enter.

“The function isn’t just to do something cool that lets us watch what fish do,” Cornish says. “They create mathematically relationships for behavior so we can have a more accurate representation of how fish behave in water.”

The model is only as good as available data on fish behavior. For that, researchers are using information gained through the acoustic tracking of fish above and below the targeted dams, for example. One such sampling found 200,000 fish backed up behind the Melvin Price Lock and Dam near Alton, Ill., 10 percent of those 40 inches or longer; the most abundant fish in that sampling were shovelnose sturgeon and blue catfish.

Some of the most interesting data, Cornish believes, could come from a new cognitive ecology lab under development by researcher Smith in Vicksburg, Miss. Expected to be completed early next year, the lab features a temperature-controlled, 35,000-gallon flume, designed to be eight feet wide, four feet deep with two separate channels. A 40-foot glass window on one end allows observation of a sampling of migratory fish. Smith and his colleagues will create formulas based on fish reactions, plug them into the model and predict when certain species of fish would be at what river location and what they’d be doing.

To figure how fish would find the fish passage system, for example, they could put an object in the flow field, measure how the object changes the current and document how fish respond. Similar tests can be done to determine reaction to a predator in the passage system and whether a fish would be more likely to cross during the day or night.

“If there does seem to be a particular behavior for an individual species of fish, that tells us when the critical times would be for the operation of the fishway,” Cornish said. “If there is required maintenance or shutdowns, we’d want the least amount of impact possible.” —K.S.



From left: Scale models of the river system, like this one at the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, Miss., help determine how fish passage systems affect navigation by simulating actual flow conditions. Migratory species like this massive blue catfish caught during fish sampling research would most benefit from fish passage.

Fish model has military applications, too

The merging of ecology and engineering to improve the bio-inspired design of engineered systems is of great interest to the military as well as civilian branches of the U.S. Army and Corps of Engineers. The military branch is funding the “swarming research” of the Cognitive Ecology and Ecohydraulics Team because of its strong interest in bio-inspired design and how the neuroscience of decision-making can help improve the responsiveness of man-made machines in complex situations.

Team member Bertrand Lemasson is researching how birds and fish respond to social stimuli, including predators, to better understand the complex nature of collective behavior (also referred to as swarming) in groups of animals. His study was recently published in the Journal of Theoretical Biology, and it’ll be integrated into the team’s ongoing modeling. Information on how fish respond to one another and how fast information moves within a school could be used to improve fish passage on the Upper Mississippi River system, for example. The complimentary work of team member Eric Dimperio focuses on cognitive decision-making in humans and how it is affected by other factors such as emotional, environmental and cultural influences.

Both research threads are being applied to land-based situations, with hydraulics and water quality data replaced with terrain data and used for other purposes, says R. Andrew Goodwin, a research environmental engineer on the team and co-author of the recent journal piece.

Animals display remarkable ability to reach near-optimal solutions in a world characterized by change and uncertainty, Goodwin said. Modeling concepts found in animal behavior and ecology could potentially help improve in machines factors like responsiveness (adapting quickly to change), robustness (maintaining effectiveness under different circumstances), and resiliency (ability to recover from unexpected problems). —K.S.

DID YOU KNOW?

Before being called the Mississippi by Europeans, the river had been named Rio de Espiritu Santo (Holy Ghost River) by Hernando de Soto, first European explorer of the river, in 1541. In 1682, French explorers de la Salle and de Tonty named it Rivière Colbert.

FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER

Illinois River Basin Restoration Program

The Illinois River Basin Restoration Program (section 519) was authorized by Congress in 2000 to develop and implement restoration of critical water resources within a 30,000-square-mile basin. The project area stretches from Chicago to the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers and is home to 11 million people.



How did this area become a restoration priority?

Historically, this was a mosaic of prairies, forests, wetlands, marshes, rivers and lakes. It's an extremely important migratory waterfowl pathway, and at one point produced 10 percent of the nation's catch of freshwater fish. Since settlement, the basin has become one of the most productive agricultural areas within the nation if not the world. We've identified that through land use change some of the natural aquatic resources have been degraded. What we're trying to do through this program is halt the degradation, restore and sustain the natural resources within the basin.

What are the major goals?

Reducing sediment delivery, restoring side channels and backwaters, restoring floodplain riparian and aquatic habitat and function are some of the primary goals of the 519 Program. We've moved forward with 16 critical restoration projects. That includes restoration efforts on the main stem of the Illinois River as well as within its tributary streams and basins.

What have you accomplished so far?

Construction of the first Illinois River Basin (519) project was launched in 2009. The Peoria Island Backwater Project is a 21-acre island and 44-acre backwater that's being constructed to restore overwintering habitat for fish; the lack of habitat has been identified as one of the primary limiting factors in the ecosystem health of the basin.



MY MISSISSIPPI

Maria Ontiveros, 20 (right), Chinese Major, University of Wisconsin, Bettendorf, IA

Growing up on the Mississippi River, I always thought of rivers as drifting playgrounds. Many of my most memorable experiences have been in or on the water. Living in Bettendorf also allowed me to see the economic and agricultural importance of our rivers.

After doing some research on China's numerous dam projects and water pollution problems, I realized that not many Chinese people have similar experiences of having fun on the river. I hoped that if exchange students saw the progress we've made cleaning up our rivers here, they could return to China inspired to protect their own.

To bridge the cultural gap between us young people and begin a conversation, a few students and I set up a spring camping trip called the River Spirit Exchange for 40 Chinese and American students from 11 universities. The trip includes visits to Devil's Lake, the Kickapoo Nature Reserve, the International Crane Foundation, Organic Valley Coop, the Ho Chunk Buffalo Ranch, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, and the Platte River to pull invasive plants. We hope to complete the exchange by organizing a trip in China soon. My Mississippi is flowing right into the Yangtze.

Editor's Note: The River Spirit Exchange is a pilot project of Rivers as Bridges, a broader sister-river strategy designed to complement similar governmental and private sector partnerships between the Yangtze and Mississippi Rivers. For more information, go to riversasbridges.org.

What's next?

We are removing low head dams on Waubonsie Creek to improve the distribution and density of native fish and other aquatic species. The Starved Rock Pool Backwaters project is primarily focused on restoring aquatic vegetation that benefits migratory waterfowl. Filling gaps in aquatic vegetation at resting and feeding areas on the Illinois River will result in less stressed and healthier migratory birds. Another project we are making progress with is Senachwine Creek, focused on naturalizing tributary stream corridors, reducing shoreline erosion and cutting down sediment flowing into the Illinois River.

As project manager, what do you find most exciting about the project?

In the past it has been difficult for our large river programs to address some resource problems (such as sedimentation filling of backwater) because we were only able to work within the floodplain. The 519 Program has allowed us to more effectively address resource problems at their source. This has also resulted in the formation of strong partnerships among agencies that now jointly address issues; it's also a model for future basin-wide Corps initiatives addressing natural resource problems. The most exciting thing for me is seeing actual improvement to the system, knowing that as we move forward we are making a positive difference in finding balance between utilizing and sustaining the great resources we have. —K.S.

Inner Coast Summit helps shape vision for river's future

Finding a way that America's "middle coast" can integrate its many missions and thrive was the purpose of America's Inner Coast Summit, held at Union Station in St. Louis on June 22-24.

Invited members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, several non-governmental organizations, federal agencies, states, tribal nations, private landowners and industry, academia and community representatives came together to help shape high-level recommendations that will go into development of sustainable Mississippi River valley projects and initiatives. Another goal was to share information on current barriers and constraints in moving current projects forward.

Participants said that too much attention and too many resources have been spent on the nation's east and west coasts, to the detriment of the inner coast—the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

Major General Michael Walsh, Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division and President Obama's designee to the Mississippi River Commission, kicked off the opening session with a suggestion that we are too caught up in the culture of our past.

It's not enough to just go through the intellectual exercise of accepting a 200-year vision for the watershed, he said. Others need to believe in one with their hearts and commit to the hard work required to communicate and bring people along to agree on a path forward for the 3rd largest watershed in the world.

Ivor Zavadsky, a Senior Water Resources Management Specialist from Europe's Global Environmental Facility, said governments of foreign nations through which the Danube River flows and which the Black Sea boundaries touch have been able to pull together diverse interests in a way parallel to what mid-America is trying to do with this vision for the river and its tributaries.

Other speakers included representatives from the National Corn Growers Association, the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes, and two of the largest contributors to the Mississippi River—the Ohio and Missouri river watersheds. A representative of the Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission described how that group works under a charter that binds the states together and ensures that various entities work toward the common benefit of the region.

Breakout work groups also were held so participants could examine specific issues and develop recommendations for future consideration. Suggestions included the need to develop a common vocabulary, to look at the basin as a whole, to use science to determine which efforts are sustainable and which aren't and to develop a framework not manipulated by "hot" events like oil spills or flash flooding, to broaden the scope of those involved and to ensure that state governors have a strong voice in the vision process. —A.D.

What challenges will our children and grandchildren face within the Mississippi River Watershed, and how can we address those challenges with a working Vision today? Share your thoughts through the social media link at: conference.ifas.ufl.edu/AICS/. A complete list of conference input will also be posted there as available.

Recipe for a solution?

Ridding the river of Asian carp, one magazine editor believes, can start one wine pairing at a time.

Reggie McLeod once believed his father, who told him carp weren't very good to eat. Then while in high school in a Detroit suburb one day, he went to the home of a Polish friend, who was feeding a live carp in a basement wash tub, fattening it up for the upcoming Christmas feast. He wondered how bad carp could be, if a whole culture made it the centerpiece of the most important feast of the year.

Fast forward a bit, and the now Minnesota-based writer is writing a story on a fish market owner trying to market carp—smoked, pickled, fashioned into leather, and in carp balls distributed in tuna fish cans.

McLeod likes the taste, but even more so the idea of locals eating something so plentiful that the fish market guy was catching hundreds of thousands of pounds of it. The evolution of a new nickname, "The Carp Man," is set into motion.

As editor of the Winona, Minn.,-based *Big River Magazine*, McLeod, 60, has now made it one of his missions to improve the culinary reputation of the common carp. He's been publishing carp recipes for a half dozen years now, even including wine pairings for dishes like Filets de Carpe Mariniere (Chianti) and Carp aux Raisins (late-harvest Riesling). As concern about the invasive Asian carp grows, his mission's taken on more urgency.

"People shouldn't just eat them to save the environment," said McLeod, an avid paddler, fisherman and historian who serves as vice chair of the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center board.

"They're really good to eat actually, and they're cheap. They can take a little pressure off some endangered species, off endangered ocean fish. Asian Carp are so destructive, and they are such a problem that it just made us really increase our efforts."

Earlier this year, McLeod gained international notoriety of sorts by launching a recipe contest for chefs along river towns within the magazine's coverage area, from the Twin Cities to the Quad Cities. Not a single chef entered.

"At first, we thought it was a failure," he said of the contest-without-an-entry. "Then I realized it was probably a good publicity opportunity. I wrote up a press release and sent it out. The story was reported in dozens of newspapers and radio stations. We were on the front page of the Sunday *Chicago Tribune*. It started out with, 'Reggie McLeod is trying to get more people to eat carp.'"

"I really liked this: the *Voice of America*, Chinese edition, ran a story about us. For people in China, that'd be so bizarre to think Americans don't want to eat carp. They were probably mystified. It's the oldest domesticated fish species in the world. They've been farming carp in China/Southeast Asia for at least 3,000 years."

The staff launched Carp Connoisseur Challenge II and then had a potluck to boost their spirits; someone made carp breaded and fried, another put it in a Greek fish soup, another brought a spicy Thai carp dish.

No professional recipe entry has come in yet, but some high-end Chicago restaurants are serving dishes like a carp ceviche, under the name Shanghai bass, and McLeod says he's heard rumors that local restaurants are experimenting a bit.

"One bar and grill place was planning to serve fish tacos, hopefully this summer, and a fancy restaurant in La Crosse, I've heard through the grapevine, is experimenting with carp recipes, too. There's nothing on the menu yet—that's the thing.

"We're going to keep doing this until we make them serve carp. This is our crusade."

Of course, what they may be serving is river snapper, the winning entry of yet another Big River contest, this one called "Name That Carp." The staff's hoping a carp by another name will help the fish overcome an apparently widespread food prejudice.

"If you think about it, shrimp and lobster are bugs," McLeod said. "A hundred years ago, they were feeding them to prisoners; it was starvation food. Now it's quite expensive. So, it's just a food prejudice. When people eat some good carp, it won't take long to change their minds." —K.S.



COOK UP SOME CARP!

Baton Rouge, La. chef Philippe Parola is working with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to help control the Asian carp population by making the fish a culinary delicacy. First step: "rebranding." He first cooked the fish while out with Animal Planet's Jeff Corwin for a Food Network show called "Extreme Cuisine." Originally after an alligator gar, he also cooked up a couple of Asian carp that leaped into his boat. The fish (silver carp) that Louisiana now calls "silver fin" tastes like crabmeat and scallops, the chef says, adding that in Louisiana, you can toss anything into a gumbo pot and it will taste good. A couple of recipes he's created: (FIND MORE AT CHEFFILIPPE.COM)

Silver fin fried strips

- 16 silver fin fish filets (boneless if possible, bones easily removed by boiling)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup of half & half for eggwash
- 1 cup of Louisiana fish fry seasoned flour
- Peckapepper mango sauce for dipping

Preheat fryer at 350°, in a bowl beat eggs, then add half & half and stir well to make egg wash. Place the silver fin strips into egg wash, then coat each strip with the seasoned flour. Fry until done and serve with Peckapepper mango sauce. Serves 4.

Silver fin with fresh berries

- 4 silver fin fish filets
- 2 ounces each: raspberries, blueberries, strawberries and grapes
- 2 tablespoons pecan oil
- 2 ounces unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 3 ounces white wine
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 orange, juiced
- seasoning to taste

Heat pecan oil and butter in a saute skillet until very hot. Brown seasoned silver fin on both sides, then add white wine and juices from lemon and orange. Bring to a boil, then add all the fresh berries and boil for 3 minutes over medium high heat. Stir in cream and season to taste. Serves 4.

Silver fin cakes

- 1 pound silver fin white meat
- 4 ounces unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 eggs
- 1 ounce bread crumbs
- seasoned flour
- seasoning and hot sauce to taste

Poach or steam silver fin meat until fully cooked, then break it up in pieces to remove bones. Place meat into a mixing bowl and add butter, mustard, 1 egg and lemon juice. Mix well. Add bread crumbs and season to taste. Roll into small cakes. To make egg wash, beat one egg with 2 tablespoons water. Dip fish into egg wash, then seasoned flour. Fry. Serves 4.

DID YOU KNOW?

Founded in 1716 by the French, Natchez is the oldest settlement on the Mississippi river.



OUR MISSISSIPPI KIDS

Bobber the Water Safety Dog wants you to be safe on the river! Read his tips, then test yourself.

Bobber's Advice

- You won't float if you don't wear it.
Size your life jacket properly.
Make sure the straps, snaps, and buckles are secured properly each time you wear it.
Pick a bright color jacket for better visibility by other water users.
Swim in designated areas.
Take a buddy when swimming.
Don't dive into unknown water.
Swim only when a lifeguard or adult is present.
Do not rely on blow up toys— wear a life jacket.

QUESTIONS

Can you boat without a life jacket?

No, not unless you are 13 or older, but you should wear one for your safety anyway.

Do your parents have to wear a life jacket?

No, but they should for their safety.

What color life jacket can you have?

Any color, but bright are better for visibility.

How many life jackets do you need on a boat?

Enough to properly fit every person on board.

Where should you swim at the lake?

Designated area or somewhere your parents are watching you.

Should you ever swim alone?

No.

If the water is murky should you jump or dive in?

No, never jump or dive in unknown water.

Are blown up arm floats okay instead of a life jacket?

No, arm floats do not take the place of life jackets.

Take me fishing!

No matter what your level of experience—or fish dinner preference—there's an angling experience on the Mississippi River sure to please, says Clyde Male, assistant district manager of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, McGregor District.

The Upper Mississippi River is home to more than 119 species of fish, and you don't need a boat to catch most of them, says the long-time fisherman and enforcement officer.

Stop into the visitor's center and say you want to take a young

FIND YOUR DREAM FISHING SPOT

Go to the FWS website, click on your preferred fish, and you'll be steered to the appropriate refuge: fws.gov/refuges/fishingguide/.

grandkid out fishing, and Male says it's probably panfish you'll be after. Crappies and bluegills both can be found in the river, with bluegill particularly abundant. To catch one, all you need is a bobber and a worm, he says, and you can catch them from a boat or shoreline in many locations up and down the river.

A close second in popularity is catfish, generally found in deeper water and along the river bottom. Though caught commercially, they're also popular with sport fishermen. Channel catfish are common as are flatheads—what Male calls the "prime rib" of catfish.

Anglers who fish exclusively for bass are in luck. Largemouth bass are common in the backwaters of the river, and smallmouth found more often in the main channel, where they prefer structures like rocks and wingdams and the flow of the main channel.

Other main channel species are walleyes and saugers, most often found where there's a faster-flowing current. You'll find walleye fishermen at the sweet spot of a wingdam, a void area where fish can wait for prey without expending energy. Northern pike are another popular sport fish species in the river, found most often in backwater wetland areas.

Those looking for "the big one" are especially in luck. The world record-setting blue catfish, 124 pounds, was caught in the Mississippi in 2005. Plenty of state records have been broken in the river, too, including a 157-pound specimen of the prehistoric-looking alligator gar; a 48-pound buffalo fish, a 57-pound sturgeon and a 52-pound paddlefish. —K.S.



Scouts perfect the art of sandbagging at a recent Boy Scout Jamboree.

Inspiring a new generation of environmentalists: with sandbags

What were U.S. Army Corps biologists doing sandbagging on high land at a Boy Scout jamboree near St. Cloud, Minn. earlier this summer? Inspiring a new generation of flood-fight volunteers, it turns out.

Jon Sobiech, a biologist whose main job is working on flood risk reduction projects in the Fargo/Moorhead area says he wasn't so sure how his sandbagging demo would go over at a recent Boy Scout jamboree, especially when the some 12,000 scouts had other options including ropes courses and rock climbing. His station, on the other hand, involved a lot of hard work—from the construction of small levees to the filling and stacking of sandbags.

As it turned out, "they were pumped," he said. "One kept doing it and doing it. What they said they wanted to do is be prepared for flood at which they could actually help out. I figured we talked to 3,000 scouts that day."

Corps outreach events in the St. Paul District also involve the twice annual "Journey to the Falls" in which inner-city groups spend a day on a river houseboat, learning the importance of the Corps' navigation function by actually locking through a 50-foot drop at Upper St. Anthony Falls. Archeologists talk about another of the Corps' missions, protection of cultural properties along the river, in the especially historic corridor, one sacred to Native Americans. Elsewhere, like at the RiverVision Leadership Program in St. Louis, Missouri, in mid-May, the Corps partnered with the Audubon Society to teach teens the importance of connecting with the river. Major Gen. Michael Walsh, commander of the Mississippi Valley Division, and Col. Thomas O'Hara, St. Louis District Commander, shared with teens their early river connections and urged them to use their knowledge and passion to make a difference. —K.S.

Project Update: NESP

The Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) was approved by Congress in 2007 as a way to restore and sustain the nation's largest river system through navigation improvements, ecosystem restoration and dual-purpose operation at a system scale.

Improvements to antiquated infrastructure and a degraded habitat are designed to ensure the multiple human uses of the iconic river and river ecology both thrive. The \$4.2-billion program includes small-scale navigation improvements, new 1,200-foot lock chambers at seven existing lock sites on the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway and restoration of natural river processes and wildlife habitat throughout the 1,200-mile system.

If funding allows, there are \$54 million in projects ready for construction within a year and a subsequent \$164 million in two to three. Full implementation requires an assured funding stream to support implementation of the plan over 15-20 years.

The price tag may seem staggering, project managers acknowledge, but the projects themselves provide for innovative and unprecedented habitat restoration as well as major improvements to locks not large enough to efficiently accommodate the typical barge load hauled by most tows on the river system today.

Navigation efficiency improvements, ready for fiscal year 2011 include ongoing project design, mooring cells and a switchboat to improve lock safety and efficiency before new locks are built and any necessary environmental mitigation. Ecosystem restoration projects include wing-dam alterations, island shoreline and culture site protection, backwater restoration and water level management to improve plant growth. The one-year \$20 million construction scenario would create an estimated 600 jobs. —K.S.



Bobber.info

Check out Bobber's website to play interactive games and learn more about water safety.

Bobber's Water Safety Word Search

V S B O B B E R U Y G H F
R C R I O V R E S E R S W
Q W A T E R K B Q C U A H
T E P N L S E E L N J F I
S A O N O G Q L S H Z E S
A R R I V E R C D C B T T
N I Y U M K R J K D O Y L
D T F T B E A C H L A R E
G L I F E J A C K E T P X
H W G N B C X S W I M Q Z

- Canoe
Bobber
Boat
Life Jacket
Swim
Beach
Water
Whistle
Safety
River
Sun Screen
Reservoir
Sand
Paddle
WEAR IT!

DID YOU KNOW?

Dam 15 in the Quad Cities is the largest roller dam in the world.



MY MISSISSIPPI
Ted Hayn, 69,
Kampsville, Ill.,
operations maintenance,
U.S. Army Corps of
Engineers

I was always considered a river rat, I guess. I was about 18 when I started working on towboats as a deck-hand. That's been 40 years ago. They claim if you wear a pair of shoes out on the river, you're stuck for life. I started working for the Corps of Engineers in 1976. I had 27 years in and I retired. I was off two years when we had a disaster at Mel Price, with the gates. I went back temporary. It was supposed to be 4 to 5 months. I've been there ever since. I've been back temporary for 5 years!

What I do depends on the workload. Now I'm running a forklift, unloading trucks, and I run cranes too. We do the maintenance around locks and dams, working on gates, chambers, whatnot, different things that need to be done.

About three years ago, we were securing a fleet. I was on a tall, long pier barge, and two guys were below on a regular barge, about 10 feet lower. I kind of whipped a line around a piling, and they missed it. I re-coiled that line, bent over to give it an extra big heave to get it around that piling. I guess I was laying on that chain, and I didn't know it. A snap broke. I tried to catch myself, but I couldn't do it, so I went in. It was 11 degrees that morning. It could have been a little warmer.

I've been in three times in my career. This one here didn't scare me, but it did shake me up a bit. I was going to shake off like a duck and forget it, but they made me go to the hospital. Respect. That's something you have to show to the river all the time. You've always got to stay kind of alert out there.

My Mississippi is my bread and butter. I couldn't say the love of my life, 'cause my wife would get mad at me. Guess I'll hang it up one of these days. But not yet, I don't guess.

What's your Mississippi? Email responses to: editor@ourmississippi.org

Trash Man *of the* Mississippi

THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER has few friends more dedicated than Chad Pregracke, founder and director of Living Lands and Waters, a non-profit environmental organization in East Moline, Ill., devoted to protecting the nation's major rivers and their watersheds. Since its founding in 1998, his organization—assisted by some 60,000 volunteers—has removed more than six million pounds of debris from the Mississippi and other rivers. The organization also sponsors educational and tree-planting projects and promotes the Adopt-a-River Mile program.

On June 19, Living Lands and Waters sponsored the Great Mississippi River Cleanup, during which more than 600 volunteers in 23 communities from St. Paul to St. Louis cleaned up multiple tons of garbage (the debris ranged from a 1956 Lincoln Continental hood and a garage door to a Bart Simpson doll and gumball machine).

Q: What has motivated you to help the Mississippi and other rivers?

A: My entire life has been spent around rivers. I grew up in the Mississippi river town of Hampton, Ill., and as a young adult I worked as a commercial shell diver and fisherman and on the crew of a barge. I loved the beauty of the Mississippi, but I got sick of seeing all the garbage on its banks and in the water. When I first got involved in cleanup efforts I didn't have any intention of starting an organization, but I eventually came to see that in order to make real change happen, there needed to be a larger structure.

Q: What are some of the oddest things you've found in the river?

A: We never know what we're going to find out there. Once we found some empty money bags and a surveillance tape, items that were discarded after a bank robbery (we turned them over to the police). But we find odd things all the time. Safes. Bowling balls. Bottles with messages inside. One contained a treasure map, another had a love song someone had written. We get a lot of letters to lost loved ones, too.

Q: How did the Great Mississippi River Cleanup in June go?

A: It went very well. We weren't sure how it was going to turn out, because the cleanup was much larger in scope than what we've done in the past. While we've coordinated nearly 500 river cleanups, this was the first time that we had many communities working together all on

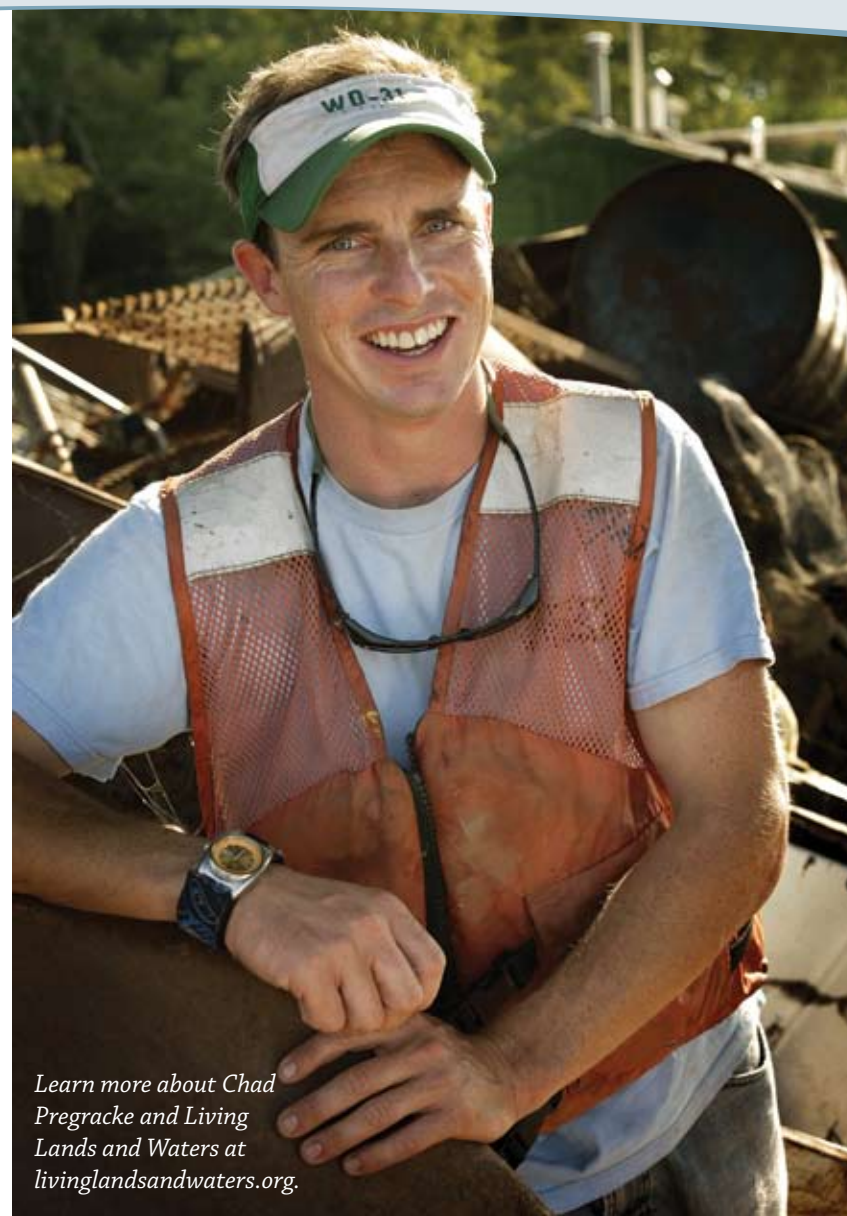
the same day. We couldn't be everywhere at once to supervise, but a number of these places had hosted cleanups before and so they knew how the process went. We got the ball rolling and they ran with it. It was great to see so many people come out to help, including a lot of commercial fishermen.

Q: What have you learned from doing this work?

A: At first I thought that what I was doing was just picking up garbage. But now I've come to see that it's also about social change, which happens when enough people get together to make a difference in the world. I'm happy to see how people's attitudes toward rivers, lakes, and streams have changed and how they're much more conscious of wanting to protect waterways. I know from personal experience that there's much less garbage out there than there used to be. I've also learned that there are many people who care about the river as much as I do. It's amazing to see all the volunteers come out on a Saturday morning for our cleanups, especially given how busy people are nowadays. In our cleanups we do everything from picking up a pop can to cutting up a barge and removing it, so we need a lot of help.

Q: What message do you hope to send to the world?

A: I hope to spread the message that anything is possible. When we first started, it was tough to get people's attention and motivate them to help. But the momentum for change is building, and I think as a society we're headed in the right direction. It's taken a long time, but I think positive change is happening. —L.E.



Learn more about Chad Pregracke and Living Lands and Waters at livinglandsandwaters.org.

PHOTOS: CLEANUP, MARY TIMOSHUK; PREGRACKE, COURTESY LIVING LANDS AND WATERS.

Pitching in and pitching out

An enthusiastic crowd of families, local business leaders and other good Samaritans donned tall rubber boots, gloves, and shovels then boarded six johnboats and the tugboat *Becky Sue* on June 19 to help make the Mighty Mississippi a bit cleaner. Only this wasn't an ordinary cleanup day. Their efforts were being multiplied all the way down the river, as hundreds of volunteers in 27 river towns joined in the largest-ever one-day river cleanup.

About 50 of the 80-some St. Paul volunteers boarded the *Becky Sue*, which was outfitted with a massive orange commercial trash container. That would soon be filled with large chunks of foam, plastic and other trash, as volunteers traveled to islands and other spots north and south of the city and hauled tires and more from amid log jams and the forest floor.

Crew captain Geoff Manis caused a stir when he shouted that he'd found a message in a bottle. His company and project sponsor, Living Lands and Waters, has the world's largest collection of messages in a bottle displayed at their headquarters. Alas, this was no tale of lost love, just a laminated information sheet and small geocaching notebook inside a satellite traceable bottle. Scott Nagel, president of the grain transport company ADM brought a large contingent of employees, saying, "If you use the river, you ought to share the work."

Scott and Jenny Davis of Minneapolis, found the event through Facebook. While she said she was disheartened to know the hard day's work would eventually flow into an oil-soaked Gulf of Mexico, it didn't dampen her zeal.

"Well work hard today on the river, then reward ourselves tomorrow with a round of golf," she said. "We all need to pitch in." —M.T.



MY MISSISSIPPI

Gwendolyn White, 87,
retired teacher, Lewistown, Ill.

My Mississippi is a golden dream that happened 70 years ago when I was a College student on the campus of Culver Stockton College, Canton, Mo. The beautiful campus with its glowing red brick buildings stood high on a hill, above a small quiet town that rambled gently to the banks of The Great Mississippi.

The sparkling water, like magic, drew the students to its banks. My roommate's family was friends with the ferry operator who invited us to ride the ferry whenever we pleased. We spent many hot afternoons on the ferry with our books and papers catching the river's breeze.

Along the Mississippi on the Missouri side were small fireplaces. Many times we roasted hot dogs that tasted so good, as the old river ambled on beside us. One spring day at a noisy college picnic I met the boy who later became my husband. Many evenings we walked along the river in what seemed to us a perfect world, and perfect time. It was on the steps going down from the town to the river that my love asked me to marry him.

The river had its bad personality too. One summer the rains came down and floods cut off the little town. Classes were cancelled and the students were sent to sandbag. Some of us were assigned to care for the elderly and sick who were housed in a dormitory on campus. After a time the Red Cross came and finally the water went down and life returned to normal.

Another sad occurrence happened at the end of the school year. I was scheduled to take my oral exam just as the body of an extremely well-liked student was brought up on campus from the river. The whole school mourned the loss and I'm surprised that I got through the exam. My husband-to-be had graduated, and in another year I graduated. Both of us became teachers, but Culver Stockton and The Great River were embedded deeply in our lives.

Today the only remnants of that golden time that remain are two bricks with our names engraved on them, located in a college patio and the mighty Mississippi that goes on and on forever.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the few sections of the Mississippi that actually flows east and west is located in the Quad Cities area. Mark Twain called it the Land of the Sunsets.

AN ISLAND BY ANY OTHER NAME

Where will you find Snake Tongue, Broken Bow, Smallfry and Old Scribbler islands? In Navigation Pool 8, where fifth graders were among the winners of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contest to name areas created as part of a habitat restoration project for migratory fish, birds and other animals. The eight names were chosen from among 1,000 names submitted by 160 people. The island building and other habitat restoration efforts are part of the Environmental Management Program administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In cooperation with other partners, the Corps has changed water levels in the pool, conducting "drawdowns" that lower water levels enough to allow aquatic plants to grow back, resulting in areas now thick with arrowhead, cattail and wild rice. The protected vegetation provides places for fish, other aquatic creatures and even migratory birds to feed, hide and mate. —K.S.

From top: Tires were among the biggest finds at the St. Paul cleanup, sponsored by local businesses and the Corps of Engineers. A St. Paul-based volunteer crew of 51 sets sail on the *Becky Sue*, a barge donated for the day.

Our Mississippi

PARTNERING TO KEEP
AMERICA'S RIVER GREAT



Tell us what you think.

For questions or comments, please contact the following U.S. Corps of Engineers regional outreach specialists: Kevin Bluhm, St. Paul, 651-290-5247; Angela Freyermuth, Rock Island, 309-794-5341; Hilary Markin, Rock Island, 309-794-5730; Laurie Farmer, St. Louis, 314-331-8479, or Kimberly Rea, West Alton, 636-899-0050. Or email story ideas, questions or comments to Editor Kim Schneider at editor@ourmississippi.org. For changes in the mailing list, contact Marsha Dolan at Marsha.G.Dolan@usace.army.mil.

For more information or to view the newsletter online, go to ourmississippi.org. There, you will find a "subscribe here" link if you'd prefer to receive this quarterly newsletter via email.

What's your Mississippi? We'd like to share your answer to the question, "My Mississippi is..." in future issues. Email editor@ourmississippi.org with a short anecdote about your unique river connection.

This newsletter is a quarterly update of ongoing efforts in the Upper Mississippi River Basin and does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Army.

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Travel Briefs



Return of the River Cruise

Cruise West out of Seattle will launch the 207-foot *Spirit of America* in New Orleans in March 2011 for an eight-day cruise to Memphis via the Mississippi, Ohio and Cumberland Rivers—the first overnight cruises on the Mississippi since 2008. cruisewest.com

Travel site eases trip planning

One click now helps visitors explore Mississippi River travel information across the middle Mississippi River Valley. The Travel Mississippi River partnership of 15 organizations in Iowa and Illinois launched a new site last spring to promote tourism stops along the scenic river reach. TravelMississippiRiver.org

Museum exhibit inspires reflection

Those checking out the new \$40-million expansion at Dubuque's National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium won't find the sharks, rays and fish planned for the project's centerpiece, a 40,000-gallon fish tank. At least not yet. The tank's being kept empty in a statement that may be the first of its kind, a move designed to inspire viewers to "consider the delicate balance of life in our oceans" in the wake of the Gulf oil spill, museum officials said. About 285 billion gallons of Mississippi River water enter the Gulf each day. The exhibit also features a video showing the oil spill unfolding. A 92-foot map of the Mississippi River also graphically displays the oil spill in a way that will grow as the disaster widens. mississippirivermuseum.com

Share your vacation photos, and win

Collect your best three images and enter the Share the Experience Photo Contest—an annual photo contest encouraging amateurs to explore the nation's federal lands. The winning photo will be featured on a future Federal Recreational Lands Pass. The grand prize also may come in handy: an Olympus E-3 DSLR Camera and extra lens, a four-night trip for four to a federal recreation land of choice, an annual pass and Ken Burns' "National Parks: America's Best Idea" DVD and book. All photos must be taken during the calendar year. Entries must be received by Dec. 31. To enter and check out the gallery of past winners, go to: nationalparks.org/connect/photo-contest/

Noteworthy River Fun

Mississippi Earthtones Festival features a river celebration through art, music and conservation. Alton, Illinois, September 19, 11 a.m.–7 p.m. riverfrontamphitheater.com/earthtones/



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DID YOU KNOW?

Martin Strel, a Slovenian swimmer famous for swimming the length of entire rivers, conquered the Mississippi over 68 days in 2002.