

TRIDINGS

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of the Mississippi Headwaters

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From the Director:

As MHB updates the management plan and we evaluate our work, questions arise with respect to how physical, chemical, and biological data is used. Collecting "base line data" (considered clean/healthy) to use as a measure of health, as opposed to "EPA standards" is a common sense application of technology. We all know there is nothing "common" about "common sense", but let's try to apply it.

For example: The standard for dissolved oxygen (DO) of 5 ppm may vary relative to site and field conditions in which a sample is collected. Swampland DO will be naturally lower than the standard due to the anaerobic (without oxygen) conditions. Base line data is validated with scientific method that reflects QA/QC (Quality Assurance/Quality Control) procedures and can be cross checked with split and repeat samples. QA/QC procedures as well as preservation techniques for samples, splits and field blanks all play a role in determining the accuracy, precision, reliability, and repeatability of an analytical result. Base line data for other analytes can be validated in the same manner.

The definition of natural may not be fishable or swimmable in certain areas. The incidence of high bacteria due to a herd of elk is appropriate to a natural condition, if indeed there is a herd of elk in the vicinity. However, we no longer live in a completely natural environment. The question becomes one of values. Can a herd of cows be considered natural instead of a herd of elk? Could the concentration of livestock be considered natural if it meets a certain density? Is a standard related to the density issue? Should a base line standard be established in lieu of a maximum/minimum concentration levels (MCL)?

Since we, as a society at the top of the food chain, did not have analytical techniques in place to measure natural conditions when they were still natural, our society has determined that health, particularly human health will determine what "natural" is.

In this world (Earth, North American Continent, State of Minnesota, 2000A.D.) there are no ecosystems functioning without the influence of Mankind. Technology allows us to simulate and in some cases conserve or implement conditions that are more natural than others. The system is extremely complex and Mankind's simulation is always somehow flawed.

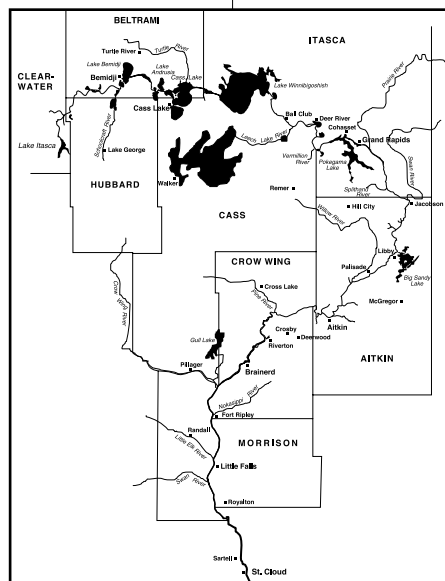
The Mississippi Headwaters Board's (MHB) mandate to protect and enhance the Mississippi River may not be the most "natural" in the truest sense of the word. We don't know the true natural conditions. If we did, they may not serve what mankind determines as today's purposes for the Mississippi River. The purposes for the River have changed. Instead of watering herds of elk, we are watering herds of people. Instead of navigation we are providing for recreation, solitude and a natural environment along with provisions of goods and services.

Our cultural definition of "natural" has been defined as "safe". Unique conditions for the most part, are preserved inasmuch as those conditions are deemed safe for human habitation. The definition of "safe" is the political question. Is it safe for wolves? Is it safe for drinking? Is it safe for fishing? Is it safe according to the ecosystem needed for a specific organism? Is it safe for economic or industrial growth?

What is of value? Which choice will address the greater good? Historically, MHB has taken a high road by protecting water quality; consequently a host of species thrive.

Deviations from "natural" or original physical, chemical, and biological conditions have occurred throughout geological and meteorological history of the earth. We know from fossil records that natural conditions have defined which

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ROSSMAN WATER BOOKS ON-LINE

People interested in weather and water levels in the Mississippi Headwaters region now have a new source of information. The new website is open to public use at < <http://ea.bemidji.msus.edu/MNnorth/> > . We would like to hear your comments!

From the Director... *continued from page 1*

organisms survive the changes. EPA standards may not reflect natural conditions in every situation. The level of safety may be a set standard at some sites.

MHB's inventory and monitoring programs have been in place for some time. In order to implement the MHB Management Plan, information is shared through partnerships in the region. This information better enables MHB to meet the legislative mandate to protect and enhance the values of the Mississippi River. Through stewardship, partnerships and education, MHB helps people understand the reasons behind the plan. This fulfills MHB's zoning responsibility to protect health, safety and welfare, the common sense approach.

In Public Service,

Jane E. Van Hunnik, MS,
MHB Director

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High School Hosts Youth Congress

Students and teachers from 7 area schools attended the 4th Annual River Watch Youth Congress at WHA High School on April 4, 2000. Students brought displays with information about their water quality monitoring sites and sampling data. Each school received a Certificate of Commendation from Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura for their program's work in water quality monitoring. President Bill Clinton also sent a letter praising their work and thanking them for their efforts.

Students participated in sessions that involved a River Game, simulating real life issues and how decisions affect water quality. Teachers heard from other educators on graduate standards, local support for River Watch, and macroinvertebrate monitoring. Plans are ongoing for Youth Congress 2001.

River Game Kits used at the Youth Congress are now available for presentations and use by schools or interested organizations. Please contact the MHB office at 218-547-7248 for more information.



(Top) MHAC member John Weber encourages a student fishing in the River Game at the Youth Congress



(Above) Sue Hattenburger (left), a River Watch Graduate of Moose Lake High School and student representative on the Mississippi River Basin Council, presents students from Bagley with a Certificate of Commendation from Governor Jesse Ventura.

Native Plantings Shoreline Buffer is Under Way at LeBourget Park.

A shoreline planting project at LeBourget Park was made possible through the joint efforts of the City of Little Falls and Morrison County staff members according to Mark Wettlaufer, Morrison County Local Water Planner. Key participants included the County Extension Master Gardeners, assisted by Mary Blickenderfer, for design and layout of the plantings.

Many people simply do not realize that they can have an attractive, low maintenance, shoreline using native plants. This project is really about getting people to rethink how shoreline area should be managed. We encourage people to make a conscious effort to better manage their property beyond just a mowed turf grass lawn along the entire shoreline frontage.

Native plants have a longer, more complex root system, which acts as a net for soils that could erode away. Native plants also benefit wildlife habitat, and prevent nutrient loading to surface waters. Each County Extension has a Master Gardeners Program, please contact your County Extension Office for more information.

Focus 10,000 Features River Restoration

River and water stewards interested in the costs, benefits, and examples of restoration of rivers (including the Mississippi Headwaters!) to their natural, erosion-proof, meandering ways can swim deeply in research biologist Luther Aadland's feature coverage in the June issue of Focus 10,000, Minnesota's Lakeside Magazine. FOCUS' mission is advocacy for the appreciation, conservation and restoration, where necessary, of lakes, waterways and watersheds. It is a vehicle for the debate over stewardship of our natural environment. Call 800-450-5253 or email <enviroco@mlecmn.net> .

River Watch Coordinator Takes to the River.

Tamie Fairbanks, MHB's River Watch Coordinator, and MHB Director Jane Van Hunnik, have spent the last two months visiting the schools and local government folks involved in the Mississippi Headwaters River Watch Project. Ms. Fairbanks has been out on the water sampling, examining equipment, reviewing procedures for sampling and quality assurance/quality control, talking with teachers about needs and future growth, and bringing together school personnel with local government officials who use their data and also provide local support. After sampling with Teacher Dave Nelson and students from Deer River High School, Ms. Fairbanks commented "This is the best school yet!" Other events are scheduled in the MHB communities.



MPCA holds “Boom School” for Mississippi River Communities

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has concentrated its Emergency Spill Response Training in the Mississippi Headwaters region this spring. Funds from a successful 1999 legislative request by the River Defense Network provided additional emergency equipment to Mississippi River communities. Spill response equipment such as a trailers, boom, oil-absorbent pads, anchors, and explosimeters have been distributed during training. The equipment has already been put to successful use in Grand Rapids in response to a fire and spill. Participating Headwaters communities include Cass Lake, Bemidji, Deer River, Grand Rapids, Aitkin, Brainerd,

and Little Falls. The Mississippi River provides drinking water for 66-75% of the population of the state of Minnesota. MHB is pleased to be a part of the River Defense Network whose goal is to diminish the likelihood of a spill into the river and to provide a means for responding to river spills rapidly and effectively.



Boom stretched across the river can contain spill material for effective clean up.



Spill Response Equipment is packed in trailers and ready to roll.

MHB's Oral History Project Gathers Stories

Following is an Oral History excerpt as told to Terry Larson by Jack Prill January 11, 2000:

“My mother (Lila Korth, born 1904) said she could remember as child going to visit the Headwaters Inn to spend Christmas and she said it was wonderful. A lot of the people that came up there were railroad owners, managers.”

“Grandmother Korth was Swiss and her father and three other men whose name began with ‘H’, started the first cheese factory in Wisconsin. It was called the 4H’s Cheese Factory. So my grandmother and grandfather made cheese for Douglas Lodge and it became so popular that railroad managers kept urging them to make cheese so they could serve it on the train. The orders became too numerous, so many, that my grandmother and grandfather couldn’t handle it all, so they just gave it up and didn’t touch it anymore. One of the interesting things was that one time they were so far behind in cheese orders to Douglas Lodge that wasn’t fully aged and it became so popular that the people clamored for it. Later on it was (allegedly) copied by Kraft and called Velveeta.”

The MHB Oral History Project has collected over 20 interviews to-date (completed or in the process of transcription). Six interviewers are actively adding to the collection. More volunteers plan to begin work this summer after attending one of several workshops held throughout the region by Oral History Coordinator Patricia Oliver. Additional workshops will be held in the fall.

The primary focus of the project is the Mississippi River, but you don’t have to live along the river to have a good story about it. And, even the shortest story is able to present a picture of the river that no one else has seen in just that way. MHB is looking for more storytellers. Do you have a story to tell? MHB especially seeks anyone with information relating to Minnesota Power and its impact on the area, women along the river, and canoe racing. Groups, clubs and organizations may request an oral history presentation by contacting Patricia Oliver at 218-963-4595 or 218-547-7248.



MHB Celebrates 20 Years By Honoring Founders

The U.S. Department of the Interior under President Gerald Ford delegated the task of creating a management plan for the first 400 miles of the Upper Mississippi River to the National Park Service. In 1979, a partnership of local government from each of the 8 counties which surrounded the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River collaborated to protect and enhance the Mississippi River corridor at a local level of government. In 1980, the effort became the Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) with enabling legislation through MN Stat. 103F.361-377. At that time the Plan of the National Park Service was held in abeyance pending the success of the MHB. In 2000, MHB celebrates 20 years of protecting and enhancing the River.

The desire of local citizens to maintain their self governing authority in the Mississippi Headwaters corridor

was a reality championed by Minnesota State Senator Bob Lessard, Lloyd Nesseth, Virgil Foster and others including Vikings Coach Bud Grant. The premise of local lawmakers has always been that those who live, work and grow by the River know and love her best, are in the best position to protect the River. The mission as outlined in State Statute is to enhance and protect the unique and special scientific, natural cultural, historic and recreational values of the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River from the source at Lake Itasca to the Southern portion of Morrison County at the City of Royalton (refer to map on page 1). As meetings are held in each community throughout the year, MHB will be honoring those who helped found or dedicated 10 years or more to the Mississippi Headwaters Board.

The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) is a joint powers board of Clearwater, Hubbard, Beltrami, Cass, Itasca, Aitkin, Crow Wing and Morrison counties, organized in 1980 to protect and preserve the natural, cultural, historical, scientific and recreational values of the Mississippi's first 400 miles. The Board protects the river by regulating land use on its shorelands; by monitoring water quality and taking actions to protect the health of the river, and by educating the river's users and neighbors on how to balance human uses with the river's ecology.

R. Otterstad, Chairman, Beltrami • **V. Foster**, Vice Chairman, Cass • **K. Solberg**, Secretary-Treasurer, Clearwater • **J. E. Van Hunnik**, Director
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