

TIDINGS

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of the Mississippi Headwaters

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From the Director:

Is there anything more frustrating than having a complaint and not being able to find the right person to complain to? Worse, is finding the right person and feeling like they just blow you off.

The watchfulness of citizens is one

way protection of our resources can be effectively achieved. In Minnesota, protection of our environment is overseen and directed by the legislature through DNR (Department of Natural Resources), PCA (Pollution Control Agency), BWSR (Board of Water and Soil Resources), joint powers boards, local planning and zoning, and other local water planning agencies. Diligence of these agencies, despite sharp criticism, allows Minnesotans to enjoy the quantity and quality of water that fuels our natural resources and businesses. The effectiveness of these organizations is often a result of the political climate in which they function and what citizens do to support them. Many dollars are spent to fight these agencies. Citizens need to be watchful and aware, supporting their decision makers with communication and thanks for good work.

There are appropriate channels for citizens to use to accomplish this. As public servants, we need to be responsive to citizens' comments. Agency personnel may receive many complaints that are simply neighborhood or family quarrels. No agency personnel should be asked to get in the middle of a personal altercation. Citizens should not misuse the system in this way.

There is usually some factual basis for almost every citizen complaint. By the time you (the complainant) find someone who will listen, you have gotten "the run around" (yes, this is a technical term), been passed onto many different people, and you are likely just as angry at the system/bureaucracy as you are about the problem. This should not be the norm. How to complain effectively:

1. USE GOOD MANNERS: Always be courteous and positive, the issue cannot afford the luxury of your anger. Everyone responds better to a calm voice of reason. If possible, first speak to the person responsible for the problem yourself. They may not be aware of the problem. Giving them a chance to respond, may mean better relations later. Treat people, as you would like to be treated. Agency staff will strive to respond to all citizens fairly. Remember you are "helping" them address an issue "not blaming" them for it.

2. BE ACCURATE: Get the facts right, nature of the complaint, dates, time, people, legal description, contact information, and history.

3. BE OPEN: State clearly what you perceive the problem to be and how you think it should be resolved. Be aware that although something may not seem right, there may be issues, circumstances, or laws of which you are not aware that may have an impact on how the issue is managed.

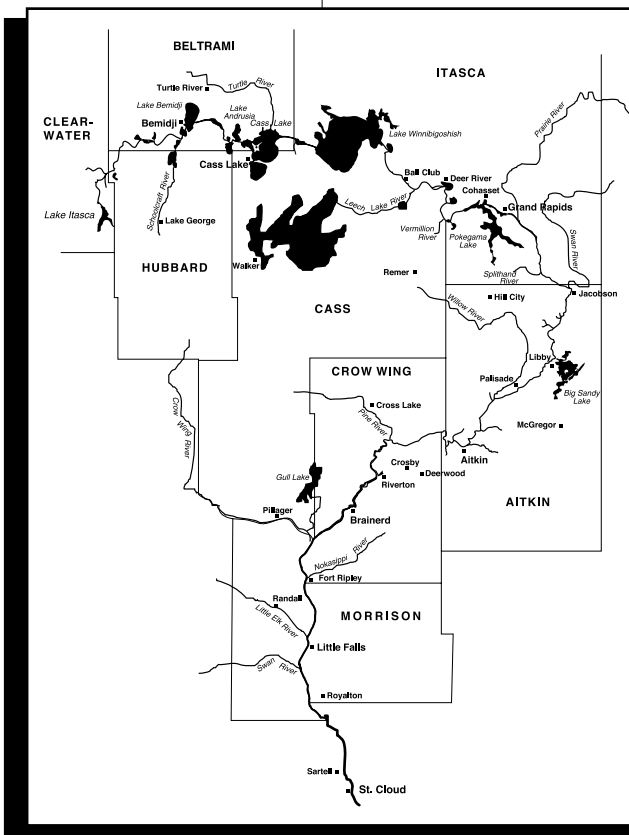
4. BE OBJECTIVE: Be sure this is a legitimate concern, that you are being objective in your approach. Officials will resist responding to your complaint if they sense the complaint is subjective, manipulative, or personal in nature.

5. BE PATIENT: It is reasonable to expect a response of some kind in 10 working days.

6. ANONYMITY: Your identity as a complainant for land use is protected under Minnesota's Government Data Practices Property Complaint Law 13.44. This is intended to protect the complainant from retaliation. Often the alleged violator believes he/she knows who complained, nevertheless, the agency person is not allowed to reveal information about the complainant. If the issue goes to court, anonymity of a complainant is difficult to maintain as the alleged violator has the right to face the accuser.

7. FOLLOW-UP: Follow your initial contact with written documentation of the conversation and the problem.

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2002 River Watch Youth Congress

On April 3, 2002, more than 40 students from six Headwaters Area High Schools who help monitor water quality on the streams and rivers in the Mississippi Headwaters region gathered at Deep Portage Conservation Center to share information on their programs and adventures and to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act.

"Go With the Flow" was the theme of this year's River Watch Youth Congress. Special guests included keynote speaker Karen Studders, Commissioner of the MN Pollution Control Agency; and Dave Anderson and J.P. Rennquist from Courage Communications. Commissioner Studders spoke on the impact the Clean Water Act has had on us all. Anderson and Rennquist kept the students "moving" and focused on the important water quality issues facing us today.

The highlight of the day was each school's innovative presentation by means of skits, illustrations, music, and video

to tell their story on how the Clean Water Act has affected their communities within the Mississippi Headwaters Region. Bagley High School students were recognized for the best presentation; their prize will be a guided Mississippi River canoe trip hosted by Headwaters Guide Terry Larson as soon as the weather warms up.

All students received a River Watch T-shirt. If you are interested in purchasing one, please contact MHB at 218-547-7248 or e-mail MHB at: cass.mhb@co.cass.mn.us. T-shirts cost \$10, plus \$3.00 shipping, and are available in two colors — natural (sizes Adult L and XL) and sage green (sizes Adult M, L and XL).

The afternoon concluded on a sweet note; "birthday" cake was served to celebrate the importance of the 30th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act.



Clockwise from top left: Grand Rapids students make a presentation; Allan Knaeble, MN Geological Survey and Tami Fairbanks, River Watch Coordinator give a demonstration; Keynote speaker Karen Studders, Commissioner MPCA; students celebrate "clean water"; Jane Van Hunnik, Director MHB; Cass Lake/Bena High School students and Pine Rive High School students attend Youth Congress for the first time.

Oral History: The “Big One” That Got Caught

Bill and Gladys Peters of Marble, Minnesota, were interviewed by Pat Oliver for the Mississippi Headwaters Oral History Project on January 10, 2001. Here Bill tells of his musky fishing adventure on the Mississippi River.

“...over there by that Forest History Center. ...Talking about that, that’s where that musky was caught that’s hanging up there. That’s the Second Bay. There’s Sylvan and then you just go out around the point and come back into Second Bay and that’s where this musky was caught, thirty-two pounds, fifty-two and a half inches.

The whole thing is this, that was the same year that they had the big run at Leech, catching all the muskies. That’s the same year, 1981.

Yah, I got in the blue book on that. I got second place but then they found out that the guy that got first place brought his down from Canada so they give me all the stuff for first place too. I got two prizes for that fish.

Yah, you see, there are no bars on that. It’s more like speckled, you know. The only place he even resembles like a bar on him is on the tail back there. There’s three or four bars on the tail and that’s all. But the rest of it is like spots. They are nice fish.

I didn’t look at the watch but I’ll tell you what, we were out there for quite a while. One burnt thumb from the reel, a big blister. We had lots of fun! Anybody that’s going to do something like that should have a camcorder and when you get the fish on, turn on the recorder and leave it go until you get it in the boat.

Well, I seen the one behind it. My son-in-law seen it first. He asked me, “Are you sure you still got that fish?” I said, “Why?” He said, “Well, look behind you!” Well, I looked back



and there was another one laying right up on the top of the water with his back all out of the water. He was about the same size as the other one. I told him, “No, mine is still on!” I’m glad that he didn’t try to catch the other one. We’d a had an awful mess!

The only thing, we had no gaff hook, no landing net, but we did have a crescent wrench. So my son-in-law says, “Bring him up here close and I’ll hit him on the head!” Well, when he hit him, that’s when I burnt the thumb. He took the line and went down the river with it, too. Got him back again and that time he hit him square enough so that we got him knocked out so we could get him in the boat.

I took it into Rapids Tackle to get it weighed and their scale wasn’t big enough. So where Ogle’s is now, there was a grocery store in there, so they told me to take it over there. Well, you come out of the back of Rapids Tackle, it was right on Pokegama Avenue by the old theater, so I went out of the

backdoor, me and my son-in-law. We were going over so they could weigh it over there, the National T, on the beef scale. And when we went across there carrying the fish, it was just like the Pied Piper. We had a whole bunch of people behind us, follow us over there to see this fish get weighed. A big event, I’ll tell you!

I finally got him down to a friend of ours. Their freezer didn’t have nothing in it. We got him wrapped up in newspaper and put him in there so he’d lay out flat and get froze. Then the guy that worked with me, his son was taking taxidermy at Bemidji so he took it up there and mounted it. That’s the way she happened!

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

8. AVOID becoming a frequent complainant. It’s like crying wolf too many times.

9. ASK: If you truly believe you are not receiving adequate response from the agency person you are dealing, ASK to be redirected, or what else you should do to resolve the issue.

10. DON’T BE DISCOURAGED: Most agency people want to help if they can. Agency personnel welcome citizens’ comments that enable us to do our jobs more effectively. The citizen is in the field making firsthand observations.

Is this type of participation important? Recently, at a public water planning meeting for a new ordinance, a citizen asked, “How do you monitor compliance?” The official responded without hesitation, “We rely on citizen complaints”. That is how important citizen participation is in our government!

In Public Service,

**Jane E. Van Hunnik, MS,
MHB Director**



MHB Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process Nears Completion

The MHB Taskforce, Advisory Committee, and Board have completed the final draft of the updated MHB Comprehensive Plan. This has been a three-year process that has included input from cities, townships, counties, lake associations, industry, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, the Chippewa National Forest, DNR, PCA, BWSR, ACOE, and other stakeholders in the Upper Mississippi River corridor. Public hearings and adoption should be completed this summer and the Plan will go into effect July 1, 2002.

Thank you to all who participated in helping MHB reach these goals:

1. Efficiently address the statutory requirement.
2. Ease implementation of process.
3. Reduce any duplication of effort.
4. Provide consistent application of standards.

Special thanks goes to the MHB Advisory Committee, the County Planning and Zoning Directors, the Water Planners, Township Supervisors, City Personnel, Land Commissioners and Forestry representatives for their input and help in making the amended document more user friendly and reflective of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

ROSSMAN WATER BOOKS ON-LINE:

People interested in weather and water levels in the Mississippi Headwaters region now have a source for information.

The new website is open to public use at
www.minn-north.org

This website is maintained by students and staff at Bemidji State University, and sponsored by the MHB with funding from the Blandin Foundation. Web space is donated by Paul Bunyan Net.

George Rossman, former publisher of the Grand Rapids Herald-Review and creator of the Water Books, passed away on March 2, 2002. All of his life he served as an advocate for this region, the headwaters reservoirs and the river that joins them. It has been our pleasure work with him on the Water Books project. He will be missed.

UP-COMING EVENTS:

May 28	Itasca County Public Hearing on MHB Comp Plan in Grand Rapids	June 24	Morrison County MHB Comp Plan Hearing in Little Falls
May 31	Source Water Protection Ad Hoc Committee Meeting in St. Cloud	June 25-27	Shoreland Planting Project at Lake Roosevelt, Outing (call 218-792-5527)
June 2	Crow Wing Canoe Day and Minnesota State Parks Open House Day	July 2	Morrison County MHB Comp Plan Hearing in Little Falls
June 4	Cass Co. Public Hearing on MHB Comp Plan at Crooked Lake Town Hall	July 4	Holiday
June 5	Hubbard County MHB Comp Plan Hearing in Park Rapids	July 11	Shoreland Landscaping Workshop Series Design II at Cass Lake (call 218-587-8280)
June 11	Clearwater MHB Comp Plan Hearing in Bagley	July 18	Tri-County Leech Lake Watershed Annual Meeting
June 13	Crow Wing County MHB Comp Plan Hearing Brainerd	July 19	Mississippi Headwaters Board Meeting in Walker
June 15	Shoreland Planting Project at Walker City Park (call 218-547-2471)	July 25	Aquatic Plant Identification Workshop in Cass/Crow Wing area (call 218-587-8280)
June 15	Aitkin Rivers and Lakes Fair in Aitkin (call 218-927-6565)	July 26	Aquatic Plant ID Field Day (call 218-587-8280)
June 17-19	Big Sandy Water Institute in Libby, Aitkin County (call 218-927-6565)	August 7	Audubon Ark Flotilla in Morrison County
June 21	Mississippi Headwaters Board Meeting in Walker	August 8	Mississippi Headwaters Advisory Committee Meeting in Walker
		August 16	Mississippi Headwaters Board Meeting in Walker

Please update your mailing address with the MHB office by calling 1-888-547-3301, Ext. 248

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.