

2004 Annual Report

"Promoting a renewed vision for the Red River of the North."

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's been more than a few years since former board president, Keith Tandy, convinced me that I should join the River Keepers. And so it is that I now find myself president of the board. As anybody associated with non-profit organizations knows, the real work and success, resides with the staff. Robert Backman, the Executive Director, and Christine Holland, Project Coordinator, are the heart and soul of the organization. They have made my tenure with the River Keepers especially enriching.

As in any other year, Bob and Christine have been involved with numerous projects. If you ever want to get a direct sense of the impact of a River Keepers activity then I would like you to be my guest at next year's Red River Water Festival. Every summer, for a three day period, more than a thousand fourth graders from the region gather for mini-workshops to learn all about the river. The project has been funded from a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and one of the challenges for the future will be to find an alternative source of funding for this incredible event.

One of the events I took most pride in this past year was to attend an awards ceremony on a lovely summer day held adjacent to the river by the Hjemkomst Center. Bob and Christine, were nationally recognized by the EPA for their efforts to improve the quality of the river and its environs.

Prairie Public Television recently held the premiere for its own excellent production "Red River Divide". Who could have contemplated that a movie would be made of a river that for much of my time in Fargo has mostly been regarded as a dumping ground? As a River Keeper, it was particularly heartwarming during the premiere of the movie to hear our local political leaders make positive statements about the river.

This year, the long awaited Main Avenue Bridge opened and with it come promises of more improvements in the downtown reach of the river. Wouldn't it be nice if the new bridge was the catalyst for the continued development of parks and trails in the greenway of the river? In my dreams I can imagine continuous trails linking the corridor parks from the far north side to the Southside of our communities. As urban growth continues, the access to the river for boating and fishing, for quiet places to commune with nature, and for trails for various types of recreation will become ever more treasured public places.

Allan Ashworth



2004 Project Highlight: Living Laboratory

River Keepers is the developer and manager for the Living Lab, located on the outside bend of the Red River. The site is owned by the City of Fargo and leased to River Keepers. The goals of the Living Lab are to demonstrate and explore a variety of riparian restoration techniques; serve as an outdoor lab for students of all ages; and exhibit wildlife habitat improvements.

With assistance from many project partners and volunteers, a Master Plan has been developed, a buffalo/blue grama turf grass demonstration site has been seeded, the area has been cleared of dead trees and trash, and interpretive kiosks have been designed and installed.

Efforts this year will include: trees will be planted along the first 50 feet of the riparian area to begin the riverfront restoration, a storm water and how residents affect water quality interpretive display will be designed



Hanson Design Associates

Sustaining Sponsors: Buffalo-Red River Watershed District, Southeast Cass Water Resource District.

Government Members: City of Fargo, City of Moorhead, Clay County, Fargo Park District, Moorhead Public Service.



Race the Red: Coordinated a fun and a competitive race. Sponsored by Schools All Sports. About 15 vessels participated.

Cavity Replacement Program: Received grant from North Dakota Game and Fish to continue program. Wood duck boxes maintained by NDSU Natural Resource Management Club, Concordia Student Environmental Association and a student from Minnesota State University Moorhead.



Dams: Worked with Army Corps of Engineers and others on South Dam retrofit and portage. Continue to work with Water Task Force and others on Christine and Hickson Dams.



Lions Conservancy Park: River Keepers continues to work with the Fargo Park District, Fargo Lions, and other. Native grasses and wildflowers planted. Volunteers mulched trees.

Living Laboratory: Developed Master Plan. Planted buffalo and blue grama mix ture as an alternative to turf grass.

Designed, built and installed interpretive kiosks about the Living Lab, North Dakota's largest Hop tree, the native grass demonstration site, and riparian areas. Volunteers worked over 500 on-site volunteer hours.



River Arts: River Keepers participated in activities adjacent to the river as part of Moorhead's Tuesday evening programming.

The Red River Water Festival: Coordinated festival for over 1,400 4th grade students in the Southeast Cass Water Resource District and the Buffalo-Red Watershed District. Expanded festival this year to include activities outside, along the river. Area River Watch students presented water quality activities. Sponsored by Project WET, EPA Region 8, and Clay County Soil & Water Conservation District.



Dam Safety: Continued working with Fargo Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments Water Task Force and others regarding long term maintenance issues of buoys and signs.



Storm Drain Marking Program: Worked with City of Fargo and City of Moorhead to provide storm water education. Almost 300 participants contributed over 475 volunteer hours to the program. Produced and exhibited storm drain display.

Red River of the North International Historic Canoe Trail: Received contract from MN DNR to develop a map for the first 120 miles of the Red River, 3 kiosks and signs. Ribbon cutting held in Breckenridge. Worked with Cass County and ND Game and Fish on potential canoe access site. Worked with Wolverson on potential camp/access site.



2004 River Keepers Activities



River-Friendly Yard Management

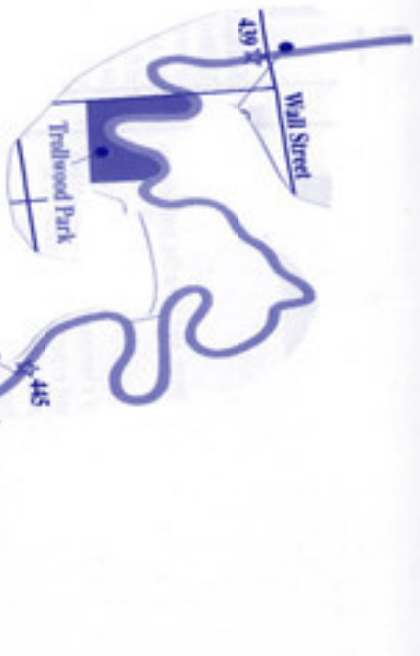
Received grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Coordinated workshop with 50 participants. Worked with Prairie Public Television on producing a 30 second public service announcement regarding keeping grass clippings out of the storm drains. Produced 2 displays which encompassed storm drains, buffers, grass clippings, phosphorus-free fertilizer, composting, mulching, etc.

Water Quality Monitoring:

Volunteers assisted in taking semi-monthly samples during ice-free conditions. Working on impaired waters designation for the Fargo-Moorhead reach of the Red River with Red River Basin Commission, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, North Dakota Department of Health, City of Fargo, City of Moorhead and others. Staff helped identify sampling sites, deploy and retrieve equipment, and outreach. Completed FM River, an EPA grant, that was used to communicate the health of the Red River through monitoring, presentations, displays, and Website.



Lip' Fishermen's Derby and Clinic: Along with the Fargo Park District coordinated at Dike East a derby and clinic with over 175 youth participants.



Polar Party: Organized ice fishing demonstration in February as a part of Moorhead Parks and Recreation's winter festival.



S.S. Ruby: Tour boat service ran Mid-May through September. About 3600 people rode the S.S. Ruby and were educated about the Red River. Regular operating hours were Tuesday and Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays.



Canoe & Kayak Rental: Canoes and kayaks were again rented from the S.S. Ruby landing. Rentals increased over last year.





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Board

Rick St. Germain- Past Pres.
 Allan Ashworth - Pres.
 Eugene Boyle - V. P.
 Rocky Swanson - Sec/Treas.
 Karl Bakkum
 Kristin Bortnem
 Greg Danz
 Craig Grundstrom
 Dennis Flom
 Pamela Schaffer
 Tom Tolman
 Jennifer Walz
 Brad Wimmer

Staff

Bob Backman
 Executive Director
 Christine Holland
 Project Coordinator

Numbers

Community members: 142

Annual Budget: \$230,000.
 Funding from our Sustaining Sponsors and Government members has allowed River Keepers to leverage additional grants and sponsorships from federal and state agencies, businesses, individuals and foundations to fund projects.

Volunteer hours: Over 500 people provided over 2800 hours to River Keepers' projects, special events and committees.

Presentations: Presented to almost 30 groups, reaching over 3400 people.

Displays and Parades: Set up at 8 special events, reaching over 8000 people. The S.S. Ruby was lit up at the Holiday Lights Parade and Holiday Lights in Lindenwood which was viewed by almost 20,000 people.

PLANS FOR 2005

- * 15th anniversary of River Keepers!
- * River Keepers' Annual Meeting is 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 28 at the Hjemkomst Center. Come early to view the "Discovering the Rivers of Lewis and Clark" exhibit.
- * A Water Friendly Yard Management workshop is scheduled for 6:30 -8:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 28 at the Hjemkomst Center.
- * South Dam retrofit ribbon cutting will be this spring.
- * S.S. Ruby Pontoon Tours and Canoe/Kayak Rentals regular operating season runs May 27 - September 4. Charters can be scheduled May 16 - September 16. For more information, call 701-793-RUBY .
- * A workshop, Recreation on the Red: Today and Tomorrow, is scheduled for Monday, June 6 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Call or e-mail River Keepers to register. \$25 fee includes lunch.
- * Race the Red Canoe/Kayak Race and Lil' Fishermen's Derby and Clinic are scheduled for Monday, June 6 at Dike East. Call or e-mail River Keepers to receive a race registration form.
- * Canoeing, Cooking and Campfire, a women's weekend paddle on the Red, will be this fall. For more information or to reserve your spot call River Keepers.
- * And much more!

**2005 Membership - If you haven't done so already,
 it's time to renew your support of River Keepers!**

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

E-mail: _____

Level of participation: ___ kayak - \$25 ___ Canoe \$50 ___ Skiff \$100 ___ Steamboat \$500+

SEND TO:

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 Fargo, ND 58103