

River Keepers

Mission: “to advocate sustainable use of the Red River of the North”.

Slogan: Promoting a renewed vision for the Red River of the North.

Organizational Background: River Keepers grew from a desire to rediscover the Red River’s heritage, and to teach people to again appreciate the Red as a living river. In earlier decades of Fargo-Moorhead history, people used and appreciated the Red River for a variety of activities. In later years, people lost that appreciation for the river which is the dominant geographical feature in the community, and began to consider it a liability to be avoided.

In, 1989, an intensive review and analysis by the Red River Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) proposed plans to educate people about maintaining the ecological health of the river, ideas for expanding the river’s recreational use, and plans to build a “rediscovered” riverfront area in the downtown Fargo-Moorhead area. These visions could be accomplished through the actions of a River Keepers organization, the Fargo and Moorhead governmental offices, and by educating the public to be stewards of the river.

Most recently if you mention the Red River, flooding comes to mind. But the Red is more than that. The Red is why Fargo – Moorhead was built here and it once again can become a showpiece, a signature location, for this region. Much of what River Keepers does is to change attitudes about the Red. We also help residents

learn facts and not myths about the Red.

Myths:

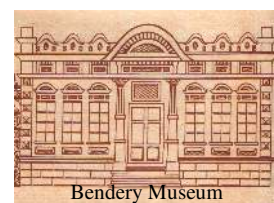
- The Red is dirty. It’s not, it’s one of the most pollution free rivers in the U.S.
- The fish are not safe to eat. The fish are as safe to eat as most of the fish in the Midwest.
- There are dangerous undertows that will “suck” you in. The Red never had dangerous undertows except at the dams and most of those dams have been retrofitted to remove the undertows.

Some of our success stories/activities/goals are:

- Being a strong advocate for river safety. One of the reasons the Red has been disliked is because of the deaths (over 20) that have occurred at dam sites. As a strong advocate for dam retrofitting we now have all three dams in Fargo-Moorhead retrofitted with a rock slope way that has eliminated dangerous undertows. No deaths have occurred at these sites since the retrofitting.



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- Being a leader in water education. Over 200,000 youth have participated in River Keepers led water education programming. 1000s of adults have participated/attended River Keepers led presentations and educational events.



- Water quality. River Keepers has participated in many projects designed to increase water quality, including tree planting, non-point source pollution reduction such as yard waste education, promotion of rain barrels, stormwater education and more.



- Promoting river related recreation. River Keepers is a strong advocate for riverfront bike trails. The Red and the Otter Tail are now designated water trails in Minnesota. River Keepers developed the recreational master plan for both the Red and Otter Tail. We lead an annual canoe race. We conduct an annual fishing clinic and derby for youth. We lead an annual women's weekend on the Red. We have been responsible for the development of almost a dozen river access sites in the Valley.



- Conducting on-going water quality monitoring activities. Results of the monitoring have been used to determine causes of fish kills.



- Managing the Red River Valleys only riparian restoration laboratory including experimental plots, interpretive trails, and backpack program for youth education activities.
- Participating in international water advocacy and educational efforts including the development of a "sister river" in Europe with the Dniester River.
- Developing pertinent "statements" as needed such as the recent "Flood Preparedness in the Red River Basin-2009 - A call to Action Again".
- Operating the only tour boat on the Red in the U.S. It's a major educational tool having reached over 18,000 people.



River Keepers has developed cooperative relationships with dozens of agencies and organizations, effectively expanding what it does.

River Keepers is recognized by many organizations and agencies as a cost effective, efficient organization. It has been given many awards by local, regional and international organizations.

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