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News Release

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Mississippi River Forum Celebrates First Year

On Friday, May 7, 2010, 130 participants representing townships, cities, counties, regional government, the state of MN, and federal groups--as well as elected officials, students, environmental and educational groups--will come together to learn about several issues impacting the Mississippi River: the state of the river's fisheries, how to reduce bacterial contamination in the river, how the Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventure program is connecting to the next generation of river stewards, and how to move forward in the addressing agriculture's impacts on water quality. The 2nd Annual Mississippi River Forum workshop will conclude with a keynote address by Congresswoman Betty McCollum, who has lived on or near the river for her entire life, and who will share her thoughts about the federal government's role in protecting the Mississippi River.

This series kicked-off in April of 2009 with a highly attended half-day workshop. The purpose of the monthly Mississippi River Forum meetings, hosted by the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), is to bring together a wide range of practitioners whose work impacts the Mississippi River--city planners, engineers, natural resource managers, state agency staff, county commissioners, environmental and educational group representatives--so that they can talk with and learn from each other. "We all know how easy it is to operate in our own little worlds, but we also know that our work is impacted by, and impacts, many others and many other disciplines," says Lark Weller, Water Quality Specialist for MNRRA. "These meetings provide a forum for a diverse group of decision-makers to learn more about how decisions informed by a range of factors can better account for the Mississippi River."



Over the past year, nearly 500 people have attended a Mississippi River Forum meeting. Participants report the following outcomes of their attendance:

----The Forum has provided me with "a better understanding of some of the regional scale systems, and larger systems, in place and how everything that we do in practice and in planning cities along the Mississippi has an impact."

----Monthly meetings have given me new tools in trying to "change the behavior of...staff and council members on how to deal with storm water."

----"I have been thinking about the relationship between stormwater and drinking water in a new light that makes me realize the greater impacts of land practices."

----"I drafted a drinking water source protection overlay ordinance for" my county.

As the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has recaptured national attention on the Mississippi's outlet, we here in the headwaters state are continuing to work toward a healthier Mississippi River that can benefit, and serve as a model to, the rest of the nation. The Mississippi River Forum programs and workshops are made possible by the generous support of the Mississippi River Fund and The McKnight Foundation.

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