

5<sup>th</sup> Minnesota River Congress  
Summary  
(103 Individual Participants)

Co-Sponsors of the 5<sup>th</sup> Minnesota River Congress included Friends of the Minnesota Valley, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance, Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Center, The University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, The New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen, The Mankato Paddling and Outings Club, Minnesota DNR, Minnesota PCA, The Minnesota Earth Sabbath Team, Clean Up our River Environment, Wild River Academy, Joseph R. Brown Center, Rural Advantage, The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, Friends of Pool #2, The Minnesota River Watershed Alliance and Minnesota State University Mankato Water Resources Center

The 5<sup>th</sup> Minnesota River Congress officially opened in New Ulm Minnesota on Thursday November 12<sup>th</sup> beginning at 4 PM with a networking fair. The networking fair included 14 interest groups from all parts of the basin and was very well attended. The participating interest groups included, The Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Center, Friends of Pool 2, Friends of High Island, The Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River, Clean Up our River Environment, MNDNR, MPCA, The New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen, Mankato Paddling and Outings Club, Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition, Rural Advantage, Joseph R. Brown Center, LeSueur River Watershed Project and The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District.

Two presentations were given prior to the beginning of the business session. The first was given by Wild River Academy on their "Paddle Forward" expedition which took place on the Minnesota River this past fall. The trip was taken in canoes the entire stretch of the river. It gave participants a heightened awareness to its beauty and importance to residents and visitors. All the paddlers came away with a different perspective at the end of their journey than when they began. The next presentation was given by Discovery Farms, a project sponsored by the Minnesota Agricultural Resources Center. Data was shared from 5 locations where precipitation and surface water runoff from varying field conditions has been collected. The data collected suggests that field runoff contains less than what was expected in amounts of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and sediment runoff. The study and collection continues and there were several questions on methodology of data collection and clarifications were offered.

Next a brief history on the modern day Minnesota River improvement movement was given by Scott Sparlin. Some highlights of the past 25 years of activity with regards to efforts designed to improve conditions in the river

were presented in sequential order. He then outlined the historical creation of the Minnesota River Congress over the past two and a half years. Including the 1<sup>st</sup> thru 5<sup>th</sup> congresses, Organization Team meetings and 6 basin wide listening sessions ultimately arriving at the present.

The business then continued with distribution of Action Board applications with a solicitation to apply if so moved.

Relevant documents were then distributed which had been developed from previous congresses and approved by vote. The documents included were, meetings ground rules, mission statement, prioritized purpose statements, functioning ideals and guiding principles, Minnesota River Congress organizational chart, Action Board structure description, roles and responsibilities of Action Board members, roles and responsibilities of Management Committee and application form to the Action Board.

Participants were asked to further review both Action Board and Management Committee rules and responsibilities.

Next a Minnesota River interest survey was distributed. Participants were encouraged to fill out the survey by identifying their most specific area of interest. Then they were asked to identify if they were willing to lead or participate in a interest support network team. 64 surveys were filled out and collected. It was explained that contact would be made and teams of interest would be assembled for various actions using the surveys. The idea of a substantial volunteer force of willing help in various areas of interest was presented and well received. These interest networks will be able to interact with the Action Board to gain additional support from the entire congress. Participants were encouraged to have others fill out surveys and tell others about this particular coordinated aspect of the Minnesota River Congress.

Next each Action Board member application was read aloud.

After review by the full congress, the floor was then turned over to the nominating committee of Linda Meschke, Mark Dittrich, and Ron Bolduan who were previously selected by the Organization Team as the nominating committee. All 19 applications were approved unanimously. The list of new Action Board members includes, Jessie Shaffer, Bryce Hoppie, Forrest Peterson, Bob Finley, Greg Genz, James and Mary Stone, Louis Knieper, Paul "Gus" Davis, Skip Wright, Lee Ganske /Joanne Boettcher, Jeff Nielsen, Drew Campbell, Rylee Main, Ted Suss, Scott Tedrick, Nancy Spooner Mueller, Brian Hicks, Mark Bosacker and Jessica Nelson

The last order of business was to consider the endorsement of a Minnesota River Commission Bill. This order of business was a carry over from the 4<sup>th</sup> Minnesota River Congress at which time it had been tabled for further review. Since that time congress participants had been given an opportunity to review the bill in its current form. A presentation was then given by Linda Loomis and Ron Harnack of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District and questions were fielded. After thorough discussion participants were asked to vote by ballot. A three answer vote was offered, they consisted of a no vote to not endorse the bill, a yes vote to endorse the bill and a yes with conditions for the ability provide input for potential changes. The vote was a yes with conditions and overall yes by a substantial margin over no votes. It stands as an endorsement of the bill with the ability to modify after further review and consultations among Congress participants and others.

Next Steps were presented which included contact with interest network survey participants. It was noted that the next full congress would be most likely in late February or March and that the newly elected Action Board would be meeting the second week of January.