



The River Voice

Issue No. 1

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Upcoming Events

February 4, 1-4:30 p.m.

Lake Superior Binational Forum Public Input Meeting
"The St. Louis river Watershed: Water and Land Stewardship from Multiple Perspectives"
Fond du lac Tribal and Community College Auditorium
Cloquet, MN
See full [agenda](#)
Contact: 715-682-1489 or lakesuperiorday@northland.edu

February 7-8

St. Louis River Estuary Summit
UW-Superior, Yellowjacket Union
Contact: 218-529-5171 or patrick_collins@fws.gov

February 18, 6-9 p.m.

Sno Fun on the River
Candelight x-c ski and snowshoe on the St. Louis River
Spirit Lake Marina and RV Park

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the "River Voice." The goal of this newsletter is to keep the people who work on the river informed of the many projects that are happening.

This is your newsletter. The Alliance welcomes submissions of activities and projects related to the St. Louis River from all groups who are involved. The newsletter is not exclusive to St. Louis River Alliance activities.

The "River Voice" will be published six times per year, thanks to a grant from the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation. This current issue is larger than usual because we have some catching up to do. Please send your stories and images for the next newsletter to Marie Zhuikov at the St. Louis River Alliance: mariez@stlouisriver.org. The next deadline is March 18 and the newsletter will be distributed at the end of March.

The 40th Avenue West Project Combines Talents of Many Partners

30 years of working toward 'Remediation and Restoration'

If you drive on the Bong Bridge from Superior to Duluth, the 40th Avenue West Project comprises 330 acres on either side of the Minnesota banks. From Eric Pier to the right, to the Burlington Northern tracks on the left, the project represents a collection of three sites out of about 40 in the St. Louis River Estuary that require agency cooperation to determine both remediation and restoration needs.

See [details](#)
Contact: srcac@stlouisriver.org

April 5

St. Louis River Alliance Environmental Stewardship Awards - Stay tuned for a call for nominations.

See [details](#)

River Ruminations

The St. Louis River Estuary experiences 300,000 hours of angler pressure per year, which is more angler hours than for the entire North Shore of Lake Superior.

John Lindgren, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Contributing Writers

Chris Anderson, The Nature Conservancy
June Kallestad, UMD-NRRI
Becky Sapper, Lake Superior NERR



Image courtesy of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority. Photo by Dave Witt/Aero-Environmental Consulting.

"Typically, remediation and restoration are done by different agencies," says Daryl Peterson, senior project manager for the Minnesota Land Trust. "But we realized that by working together, we could be much more efficient." So the Minnesota Pollution Control

Agency is combining its remediation skills with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' habitat restoration expertise to carry out the strategies identified over the years to reduce exposure to persistent toxic chemicals and bring back wildlife to the estuary.

The agencies are addressing contaminated sediments and reintroducing vital plant life with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

In addition, the St. Louis River Alliance will be coordinating public outreach for the project and the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) at UMD will be surveying the plants and animals in the area. The institute will also develop computer models of scenarios of sand bars and shallow areas that can be built to break the waves and provide quiet coves.

"The models will show how we can change the wave action and then what types of vegetation we can expect to grow," says Valerie Brady, NRRI aquatic ecologist. "With the right plants, it's assumed bugs will come back, then birds and fish."

"Clearly, some areas in the estuary will remain industrial, so we're trying to balance the mixed uses," Peterson says. "Understanding what's living there now and what each species needs to thrive helps us with planning and developing the tools we need to optimize the ecological design for the habitat restoration."

Successful Program Introduces Youth to River

This summer, over 400 youth and adults got a chance to enjoy the St. Louis River Estuary through the "Recreation Opportunities for Youth on the River" program. The youth came from all walks of life and 21 different community groups. They learned how to canoe and identified plants on hikes led by UMD Outdoor Program staff members.

The experience sparked positive reactions from many participants:

The kids had a blast! This is such a great opportunity for these children to go canoeing and hiking while learning about the St. Louis River. For many of these children this was the first time they ever went on a canoe.

Tina Riley, The Salvation Army

This project was organized by the St. Louis River Alliance and funded in part by the Coastal Zone Management Act, by NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, in cooperation with Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program.



Clough Island Purchased by The Nature Conservancy

Clough Island should be familiar to anyone who has visited the twin ports of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin. It is the centerpiece of the St.



Clough Island. Photo by Richard Hamilton Smith.

Louis River Estuary where the St. Louis River meets Lake Superior.

Also known as Whiteside Island and Big Island, the property is the largest island in the estuary, an exceptionally significant natural area due to its diversity of habitats, and it is

easily seen by motorists stopping each year at the Thompson Hill Information

Center on Duluth's Skyline Drive.

The 358-acre property had been slated for development. But thanks to The Nature Conservancy and its partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Clough Island will instead be conserved for fish and wildlife habitat, clean water and outdoor recreation.

Clough Island's size and prominent location make it a rare and valuable property for wildlife including migratory and breeding birds as well as fish that move between Lake Superior and the river. Clough Island is among the last places in the estuary with long stretches of unaltered shoreline. Shallow wetlands and sheltered bays surround the island, providing critical habitat.

Click [here](#) for more information.

The St. Louis River Estuary is now a NERR

NERR stands for a National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Lake Superior NERR, which encompasses the St. Louis River Estuary, was dedicated in a ceremony on October 26, 2010, held at the University of Wisconsin Superior (UWS).

This NERR is a program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration led by the University of Wisconsin Extension. The goal of this designation is to improve the understanding of Lake Superior freshwater estuaries and coastal resources and to address issues affecting them through an integrated program of research, education, outreach and stewardship.

UW-Extension and UWS recently leased two vacant buildings on Barker's Island for the NERR headquarters. The former Boathouse Restaurant and Vista Landing gift shop and docks will be used as an interpretive center, administrative offices and a lab. The two organizations are exploring purchasing the properties as part of their partnership in the research reserve. Click [here](#) for more information.

The Wisconsin and Minnesota Sea Grant Programs are planning on supporting the Lake Superior NERR by developing games and innovative educational tools. Read more about it in this [news release](#).

Grant Garnered for St. Louis River History Display

The Minnesota Historical Society recently awarded the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage grant of \$6,900 for a display chronicling the modern history of the St. Louis River and formation of the district. The display will be housed in the WLSSD reception area, but may travel with WLSSD staff to area public events.

"We host more than 1,000 students annually in our tour program, as well as a steady stream of contractors, vendors and residents, many of whom have no idea that the St. Louis River was anything but what it appears today -- a great fishery and a nice place to recreate," says Sarah Lerohl, environmental program

coordinator. "This display will highlight the choices made by the communities and industries now served by WLSSD to address the pollution of the river, the river's eventual recovery and the overall shift toward greater environmental awareness locally and nationally."

WLSSD is looking for photographs of people working and playing on the river, as well as objects, articles and anecdotes relating to the formation of the district. Call Sarah at (218) 740-4784 or email sarah.lerohl@wlssd.com, if you can help.

Arrowhead Pier Opens



A great new place to enjoy the river was dedicated this fall. Actually, it's an old place that's been rebuilt. The Arrowhead Pier lies at the end of Belknap Avenue in Superior, Wisc. Built on the foundations of a bridge, the pier features lighting, benches and plenty of room to fish. A boat launch sits off to the side, angled so that departing boats won't tangle any fishing lines cast from the pier. A picnic pavilion and restrooms complete the site, which was built with much community involvement and special funding.



Arrowhead Pier ribbon-cutting ceremony. (Left to right) Former Mayor of Superior David Ross, Chamber Ambassador Jim Peterson, Chamber Ambassador Lynda Hoffman, Dedicated Citizen Ray Kelm, 2nd District City Councilor Tom Bridge, Chamber Ambassador Carol Clark, 9th District City Councilor Mick Mackenzie.

Stream Volunteer Monitors Honored

About 45 hearty souls braved the cold to attend the St. Louis River Alliance's annual meeting on January 20. Alliance members and river friends heard a recap of past events and plans for future activities. The main focus of the meeting was a recognition ceremony and reception for the many volunteers who have worked over several years to collect data and samples from the streams that flow into the St. Louis River and Lake Superior.



Alliance Board Chair Bill Majewski presents outgoing board member and stream monitor Lori Gitar with an appreciation gift.

Their efforts are part of a program organized by the Alliance and funded by the Minnesota State Legislature through the Minnesota Pollution Control

Agency with the Clean Water Legacy Act for Surface Water Assessment Grant. In appreciation, the volunteers received prints from local artist Shelley Getten.

River People News



Tracey Ledder is the new St. Louis River Estuary Area of Concern coordinator for Wisconsin. This position is one of five new federally funded project positions within the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to work on the state's Great Lakes Areas of Concern. Tracey is located in the Superior office, but will spend some time in the Ashland office as well. She will be working to update the St. Louis River AOC sediment database and the Stage II Rap documents and AOC accomplishments.

Tracey's work experience includes laboratory analyses of water and soil, sampling and site assessment of hazardous waste sites under CERCLA, Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, creating and implementing a water resources monitoring program for the Bad River Tribe, biological monitoring in rivers, and behavioral field studies of whales and hummingbirds. She set up the award-winning citizen monitoring program of the Bad River



Watershed Association. Ledder has a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Binghamton and a master's from Virginia Tech. Contact Tracey at tracey.ledder@wisconsin.gov or (715) 395-6904.

Dr. Ralph Garono accepted the Lake Superior Estuarine Research Reserve Manager position. Ralph comes from Oregon where he presided over his own aquatic ecology consulting business. While in Oregon, Ralph was the science/technical coordinator at the Tillamook Bay National Estuary Project and was an associate professor at Oregon State University and Western Washington University. He conducted his doctoral research at the only other Great Lakes NERR site, Old Woman Creek NERR in Ohio, and has conducted research at the South Slough NERR in Oregon. Contact Ralph at ralph.garono@ces.uwex.edu or (715) 394-8455.

Sue O'Halloran, previously with UW-Superior's Lake Superior Research Institute, is now the coastal training program coordinator for the Lake Superior NERR. Sue's familiarity with the St. Louis River Freshwater Estuary and the Superior and Duluth communities will be a valuable asset to this position. Her contact information remains the same for now. **Patrick Robinson**, UW-Extension, will continue to serve as the interim assistant reserve manager through the rest of this fiscal year. He will provide the continuity of a strong relationship between Wisconsin and its federal partner, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The NERR will be hiring an education coordinator, research coordinator and monitoring coordinator as well. Stay tuned for information on those positions.

John Perrecone, the Area of Concern program manager with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes office in Chicago, visited the river in November. He was escorted to several project sites by a group of Wisconsin and Minnesota river partners.



Daryl Peterson joined the Minnesota Land Trust in Duluth this past fall as a senior project manager. He has experience in land conservation and water ecology, having worked previously for more than 15 years at The Nature Conservancy both in Duluth and in California. In addition, Daryl worked for several years at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in California. Daryl is leading the Land Trust's work within the context of Lake Superior and its tributaries, including the St. Louis River.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Whittier College in California and a master's degree from California State, Chico. Contact Daryl at darylpeterson@minnesotalandtrust.org or (218) 722-4641.



Marie Zhuikov has been hired as a project administrator for the St. Louis River Alliance. She will be facilitating several Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects, performing outreach activities and writing grants. Marie has been involved in environmental outreach activities for over 20 years. Previously, she worked for the Minnesota Sea Grant Program and Mayo Clinic. Marie has a master's degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota and

currently serves as communications advisor for the Environmental Protection Agency's Board of Scientific Counselors. Contact Marie at mariez@stlouisriver.org or (218) 733-9520.

In Other News(letters)

Mud Management: The Island and the Superfund Site

Remediation of the Tallas Island/Interlake/Duluth Tar Superfund site ended successfully last November. An [article](#) in Minnesota Sea Grant's "Seiche" newsletter describes the happenings.

The Ups and Downs of Lake Levels

The impact of Lake Superior water levels on the Estuary's coastal habitats is the focus of an [article](#) from the Natural Resources Research Institute.

River Publications

From the EPA

Trebitz, Annett S., et. al., Status of non-indigenous benthic invertebrates in the Duluth-Superior Harbor and the role of sampling methods in their detection. *Journal of Great Lakes Research* (2010), doi: 10.1016/j.jglr.2010.09.003

Hoffman, Joel C., et. al., Using stable isotope mixing in a Great Lakes coastal tributary to determine food web linkages in young fishes. *Estuaries and Coasts*

(2010), 33:1391-1405, doi: 10.1007/s12237-010-9295-0

From the MN DNR

[*An Evaluation of the Ecological Significance of the Headwaters Site*](#) - prepared by the Department of Natural Resources Minnesota County Biological Survey Division of Ecological Services (2007).

This document highlights the ecological features of the headwaters of four rivers: Stony River, Dunka River, South Branch Partridge River, and the St. Louis River. The ecological evaluations summarize the conservation actions most relevant for maintaining the outstanding natural features of these sites.

Lawson Gerdes with the MN DNR says, "One of the nice things about the electronic copy is that you can zoom in on the figures. The native plant community map and aerial photo displaying hydrologic flow are especially illustrative of the patterned and other peatland complexes out there."

About Us

The St. Louis River Alliance is a nonprofit organization of citizens and groups working together to protect, restore and enhance the St. Louis River.