



GREAT RIVER GREENING

Fall 2016 Seasonal Bulletin



Photo credit: nimmerphoto.com

Engaging young new Americans in their local environment

This fall, students from Wellstone International High School in Minneapolis spent a day by a stream that feeds the Minnesota River. They tested the water quality and then heard from Dr. Lanham, an ornithologist and author of "The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature," (Milkweed Editions).

The event was part of Great River Greening's Field Learning for Teens program, which has inspired more than 1,200 at-risk students through hands-on restoration activities and connections with mentors who work in environmental fields.

Dr. Lanham read from his book, which describes his experience as a nature-loving person of color. It is a combination, he said, many people view as an oddity, and he'd like to see that change. And he encouraged the students to think about what problems they want to solve in the world.

Wellstone students develop global competency through rigorous coursework and acceleration in English language acquisition. Many are new Americans and speak multiple languages.

"This time with you has been the highlight of my trip. I hope you know, this is a special group. We are from all parts of the world and gathered in peace."

- Drew Lanham speaking to the group



Highlights

- Utilizing our restoration sites for research
- Minnehaha Creek renewal among new west metro projects
- 800 volunteers cover a lot ground
- Million Milkweed Challenge 2016

See inside for more great stories!



Utilizing our restoration sites for research

Nearly 4,000 of our 35,000 Great River Greening volunteers are working on sites that we now use for research in pollinators, forest ecology, and citizen engagement.

Our ecologists have teamed up with experts in these fields to conduct multi-year studies on a number of our restoration sites. This fall, in Lindstrom, volunteers planted trees for a climate resilience study in partnership with The University of Minnesota Center for Forest Ecology.

Studying Bur Oak Ecotypes for Climate Resilience

The oak tree is revered in Minnesota for its strength, shade cover, and longevity. But the slow growing acorn dropped from a Twin Cities' tree today may not mature well in tomorrow's Minnesota weather. Other, faster growing, often weedy, plants adapt quickly to change and can take over.

This study is aimed at discovering what we can do to help new trees to take root and thrive under extreme weather conditions. It will compare early year growth and survival of three ecotypes of bur oak – local, southern, and northwestern – planted in Lindstrom and three other metro site.

“We are looking at human-assisted accelerated migration, to defend the oak from faster adapting plants. If we can determine which if any ecotype of bur oak fares better, it will inform and guide oak restoration throughout the state.”

- Great River Greening ecologist Wiley Buck

Pictured above: Volunteers at Allemansrätt Wilderness Park, in Lindstrom, MN helped to reforest an old hay field by planting Bur Oak trees. The event kicked off the research on Bur Oaks - Photo credit: nimmerphoto.com



Minnehaha Creek renewal among new west metro projects

Great River Greening and The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) are partners for restoration of MCWD lands, thanks to substantial support from both Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund and The Outdoor Heritage Fund.

A highlight of the collaboration will be working on The Minnehaha Greenway, an impressive multi-year endeavor to improve one of the most degraded sections of the creek. So far, MCWD has returned a more natural meander to the creek, restored wetlands to deter runoff, and added boardwalk and trails for public access. Great River Greening will partner with the District and the City of St. Louis Park to involve the community to enhance the habitat.

“The vast expanse and populous of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed provides great opportunities to affect water quality on a large scale and connect with new communities, particularly the young stewards of tomorrow.”

- Great River Greening Executive Director
Deborah Karasov

Minnesota Corn Growers cheer on Gophers with a gift to Great River Greening

This football and hockey season, Minnesota Corn Growers Association will donate to Great River Greening for great performances from the MN Gophers at home games. \$100 will go to Great River Greening for every extra point the Gophers score, and every save the Gopher goalie makes.



Million Milkweed Challenge

Great River Greening initiated a new community collection challenge to gather one million milkweed seeds. Common Milkweed is a favorite food plant for the colorful monarch butterfly, an important pollinator, currently in decline. Bailey Nurseries will nurture the seeds for planting in the spring throughout the seven county metro area.

**25 pods per volunteer x 200 seeds per pod
x 200 volunteers = 1 million milkweed seeds!**



Photo credit: Rich Krahulec

800 volunteers covered a lot of ground this fall.

In Lindstrom, St. Louis Park, Bloomington, Jordan, St. Peter, and along dozens of roadsides throughout the metro area, volunteers worked to restore Minnesota land and water. They collected Milkweed seeds, planted trees for research, and restored the riparian zone along a portion of Sand Creek. They seeded wildflowers in 100 acres of farmland and in the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and hiked into Westwood Hills Nature Center's wooded hills to clear buckthorn.

Thank You!

RESTORING LAND, WATER AND WONDER

9th annual Business Forum hosts MN Twins president



More than 200 business colleagues came out for the 9th annual Great River Greening Business Forum. The guest speaker, Twins President Dave St. Peter, discussed the Minnesota Twins' commitment to environmental stewardship and followed up with a Q&A, led by journalist and founder of i.e. network Rick Kupchella.

The Business Forum, which benefits Great River Greening, has built a reputation among professionals to connect and

converge on important environmental topics facing the business community. The event was a success, raising \$13,000 in donations – \$3,000 above goal – thanks to the generous guests in attendance. It was held in late September at McNamara Alumni Center on the UMN campus.

St. Peter joked about the team's slump but his tone turned to pride when speaking about "go Twins go green." Target Field – named the "Greenest Ballpark in America" in 2010, was the first sports stadium to achieve a Silver LEED rating (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) and has since achieved LEED certification for operation and maintenance. St. Peter said environmental sustainability makes good business sense; reducing waste and conserving water and electric power resonates with young fans.

The event was presented by Stoel Rives and Land O' Lakes.

In the News

Hudson Observer, May—Andersen employees remove buckthorn
KEYC TV, May—Mankato volunteers help bring prairie back to life
Lilly News, May—The city's gone to the bees and butterflies
Prior Lake American, May—Volunteers restore Spring Lake shoreline
St. Peter Herald, May—Volunteers clean prairie after controlled burn
East Metro Water, June—Groundwater and climate change
Gustavus, July—Summer research students study water pollution solutions
Rosemount Town Pages, July—Flint Hills plants milkweed
St. Peter Herald, July—Seven Mile Creek stakeholders address water quality
Conservation MN, Aug.—Nitrogen and buckthorn yes, they're related issues
St. Peter Herald, Aug.—Legislators get deep dive
KSTP, Sept.—Performance raises awareness of declining bee populations
Star Tribune Sports blog, Sept.—Business Forum
Woodbury Bulletin, Sept.—Scout's honor and then some
Mankato Free Press, Oct.—Volunteers plant wildflowers on farmland
Rosemount Town Pages, Oct.—Volunteers team up to conserve river bank
See articles at greatrivergreening.org/news

Thank You!

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