



GREAT RIVER GREENING

Summer Digest 2019



INSIDE:

- Keeping Twin Cities green: Arbor Day event brings volunteers out to clear invasive buckthorn in Rosemount
- Pollinator recovery in Central Minnesota
- Clean & Green Gala a success
- Business Forum takes up topic of climate change



New Executive Director, Keith Parker takes the helm. See enclosed letter and read more about it online at GreatRiverGreening.org

Great River Greening launches floating islands in St. Peter

Thanks to 40 dedicated volunteers who showed up on a cold, rainy Saturday morning in May, Hallett's Pond Natural Area in St. Peter is on its way to recovery.



(PHOTOS: Sarah Schandle, Mark Karney, and Peter Myers)

The pond has a high load of phosphorus and nitrogen from storm water runoff, which kills off fish populations and creates a safety risk for boaters and beachgoers. Volunteers, led by staff ecologists, planted four "floating islands" to improve water quality while keeping 3,000+ plastic bottles out of landfills.

The islands, constructed from recycled BPA-free plastic, mimic peat bogs that naturally filter harmful nutrients and create a food source for fish and other aquatic wildlife. Native wetland vegetation—mostly grasses—was planted in the structure, allowing the roots to filter water and provide important habitat.

The city of St. Peter was interested in this new technology that mimics a natural process to improve water quality and creates great aquatic habitat for fish. They fit with city's initiative to improve the pond's water quality through non-traditional means.

Great River Greening provided the resources and expertise to make this new wave of restoration happen. It adds important wetland habitat right into the middle of the water column where plants are usually not able to reach.

Restoring Land, Water and Wonder

Keeping the Twin Cities green



(PHOTO: Peter Myers)

This spring, volunteers removed buckthorn from parks and natural areas throughout the state—from Katherine Abbott Park, in Mahtomedi, to Carroll’s Woods/Schwartz Pond Park, in Rosemount, to Talahi Woods, in St. Cloud.

Our local parks are more than beautiful spaces to engage with nature; they also promote well-being, climate control, and community building. With 75% of Minnesotans living in a city—a number that’s projected to grow—there’s no better time to protect the parks and public lands, wetland buffers, and greenbelts that surround us.

Yet, many cities struggle to safeguard their parks and public lands from invasive plants, erosion, and biodiversity loss. Some lack the expertise on staff while others simply don’t have the financial resources to fight further decline.

Great River Greening, alongside our volunteers and fueled by our donors, fills the gap for many of these communities. For more than 50 parks and natural areas annually, we provide resources, expertise, and stewardship opportunities to transform degraded habitat into healthy, vibrant spaces.

Carroll’s Woods/Schwarz Pond Park in Rosemount is a great example of a community in need of green space. The city’s population has grown from 8,700 to 21,000 in 20 years, and is expected to reach 30,000 by 2040. As Rosemount looks to its future, preserving its existing natural areas is a top concern.

The park itself features 107 acres of secluded woodland with trails, a pond, and family-friendly play areas. But this treasured space is severely threatened by invasive species, diminishing plant diversity, and declining wildlife populations.

“The buckthorn in Carroll’s Woods is so established, the plants are tree-like and dominate the understory. Removing it will give new life to the area, bringing with it birds, pollinators, and healthy soil to protect the nearby pond.”

-Becca Tucker, Great River Greening ecologist

Engaging communities in our mission, throughout the state

Pollinator recovery in Central Minnesota

Pollinator habitat is on the decline for many reasons, including urban development and more intensive agriculture, but Great River Greening and our partners, donors, and volunteers intend to change that.

We're working alongside key pollinator experts and landowners to establish one of the largest pollinator corridors in our state, anchored by Hastings and St. Cloud. Once complete, the "Pollinator Central" will provide food access and shelter for winged pollinators, bumble bees in particular, that are crucial to our own food production and currently in steep decline.

Pollinator Central restores and enhances 18 traditional and non-traditional sites to create a 430-acre "hopscotch" corridor; pollinator charging stations that wind through a variety of settings, from populous urban neighborhoods to rural stretches in Central Minnesota.

Community stewardship, as with all of Great River Greening's projects, is critical to the plan's success. Citizens will monitor pollinator populations (e.g., species type, frequency) and vegetation to evaluate the impact.



The rusty patched bumble bee has been added to the endangered species list. Just 20 years ago, this native pollinator was a common sight across eastern United States, Upper Midwest, and Canada. In that time it has declined by a staggering 87 percent.

In the News January - August 2019



July was Water Month at MPR, sponsored by The Water Main, an initiative to raise awareness around water issues. A part of the stations' month-long promotions was an invitation for volunteers to join in a Great River Greening buckthorn bust in Talahi Woods, in St. Cloud, to improve the water quality of the Mississippi River.

Faribault News (Jan)—"Restoring Wildlife Management Areas in the Cannon River Watershed"

Outdoors First (Jan)—"FishAmerica Foundation and Brunswick Public Foundation Team Up to Enhance Water Quality and Improve Recreational Fishing"

Pioneer Press (Jan)—"Historic Pilot Knob to get nearly \$1 million in improvements. It'll be easier to find now."

The Villager (Feb)—"Comments sought on landscape plan for historic Pilot Knob"

Apple Vally Sun This Week (Mar)—"Busting up some buckthorn"

KARE11 (April)—"Rosemount High School Arbor Event"

Sherburne County Citizen Review (May)—"Clearview Forest Receives Pollinator Grant"

WCCO TV (Sept)—"Xcel day of service opportunities"

Star Tribune (Sept)—"How can Minnesotans help the Amazon rainforest amid fires? Local nonprofits offer some ideas"

Read more on our website: GreatRiverGreening.org

2019 GALA

The 2019 Clean & Green Gala was more than a lively party; the event raised important donations to restore our parks and natural areas – the places that we as Minnesotans, cherish so dearly.

Because of our passionate donors, Great River Greening will conserve local natural resources and strengthen our scope of work, creating more opportunities to engage communities in the restoration of our natural world. The impact is very real and immediate, and will help us launch or expand projects at Lilydale Regional Park, Wood-Rill Scientific & Natural Area, and Lake Elmo Park Reserve to name a few.

Nearly 250 donors joined us on April 25 at the Machine Shop in NE Minneapolis for an evening of celebration and inspiration.



“The urban and regional parks you support through Great River Greening are tied to the communities that surround them. By restoring these places, you’re creating space for those who need to get a way for a while. Kids like me, or kids who might be even further removed from nature. Kids whose families can’t afford to go camping up north, kids who need to have the chance to experience nature close to them.”

- Gala guest speaker Emma Smith, a GRG volunteer

How are Minnesota businesses preparing for climate change?

Join Great River Greening and 300 business leaders as we explore that question.



GREAT RIVER GREENING Business Forum

Wednesday, October 23, 2019
7:30-9:30 AM
McNamara Alumni Center
Minneapolis, MN

Featuring panelists:
Mary Jane Melendez
Chief Sustainability & Social
Impact Officer, General Mills

Moderated by: Amy Skoczlas Cole
Managing Director, MPR’s The Water Main

Emilio Tenuta
VP of Corporate Sustainability,
Ecolab

Proceeds from the 2019 Great River Greening Business Forum will support our mission to restore healthy land and water across Minnesota.

Great River Greening inspires, engages and leads communities in conserving and caring for the land and water that enrich our lives