The Mississippi River is the most iconic, natural feature of the Twin Cities. Our environment, economy, culture, and daily lives rely on the river. Yet, many individuals in our community don’t feel connected to this crucial part of our collective livelihood. We are frequently asked, “How can I get on the river?” and “What programs can I take part in?”

Our goal is to create more opportunities for people to build connections with the river. During this past year, the fund began offering new programs—aimed at a broad spectrum of audiences—to experience the Mississippi River and our unique national park.

River City Revue brought together hundreds of Twin Citians on cruises aboard the Padelford Riverboat as a floating venue filled with art, science, music, and history. This program is a partnership between the fund, the National Park Service, and Works Progress.

Our partnership at Coldwater Spring has positioned us as leaders in significant planning and communications activities. Last year alone, we were involved in 84 programs with as many as 1,042 volunteers at Coldwater Spring.

We continue to develop and expand public programming in partnership with our friends from the park service. The wide range of educational and recreational topics include birding boat tours, biking, hiking, and eco-volunteer events. Our long-term goal is to provide consistent, reliable river programming for residents and visitors in our community.

We invite you to share any ideas you might have about programming and partnership opportunities. We encourage you to keep up with our activities via our website or social media and we hope that you’ll take the opportunity to share what we’re doing with others, as we continue to engage more people, in new ways.

Tricia Davidson  
Board Chair

Katie Nyberg  
Executive Director

Cover image:  
1944 Mississippi River alluvial meander floodplain map by Harold Fisk, Army Corps of Engineers.
I’m writing fresh back from the third government shutdown in my career with the National Park Service. I’m struck (not surprisingly) at the value of the partnership with this national park and the Mississippi River Fund. The hasty shutdown meant that our facilities were to close. Closure at Coldwater Spring threatened a lot of hard work by our volunteers who had just completed the most recent round of tree planting. We were able to convince our leadership that it was important to designate one National Park Service employee to maintain the health and safety of the precious resources at Coldwater and, with the help of the fund, we continued to protect and nurture the newly planted trees.

The transformation at Coldwater Spring would not be possible without the partnership between the park and the fund. Coldwater is no longer a fragile, disturbed site; rather, it is growing into a community asset and a natural landscape supporting an amazing variety of plant and animal life. Continued restoration at Coldwater moves us closer towards the vision of a fully restored oak-savanna prairie. Most exciting is the continuation of robust public programs year-round that respond to the public demand for access and information about this nationally significant treasure.

For the thousands who enjoy learning about Coldwater Spring, both the National Park Service and the Mississippi River Fund can smile and know that together we are helping create more stewards of our important places as well as supporters and stewards of all of our partners. We emerged stronger from the shutdown and will continue working on creative ways to bring the National Parks and the Mississippi River to our neighbors and friends. Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Paul Labovitz
Superintendent, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
Our Mississippi River Forum served 400 people in its fifth year, including via live webcasts. Thanks to support from the Mississippi River Fund and the McKnight Foundation, we have created a community of engagement between scientists, educators, planners, and policy makers.

Lark Weller, Water Quality Coordinator, NPS

“Thanks to the work the Mississippi River Fund has done with the Coldwater Crew. The transformation over the last two years has been incredible!”

Tom Holtzleiter, Volunteer & Member

**By the Numbers**

58,511
KIDS PARTICIPATED IN NATIONAL PARK PROGRAMS & EVENTS

3,151
VOLUNTEERS PROVIDED

18,719
HOURS OF SERVICE TO THEIR NATIONAL PARK

3,523
OF TREES PLANTED AT COLDWATER SPRING PROVIDED BY TREES FOR COLDWATER DONORS

405
SPECIES FOUND AT BIOMBLITZ, A 24-HOUR SCIENTIFIC SCAVENGER HUNT AT COLDWATER SPRING
From July 2012 to June 2013, the Mississippi River Fund, together with our community, worked hard, had a lot of fun and shared many amazing experiences—all for our national park.

“The birding pontoon boat event was a great trip—beautiful evening to be on the river. Thanks for offering these intimate outings on the river.

Dave Schmidt, Tour Participant
People and nature are fundamentally interconnected. The human relationship with nature is a proven component of good preventative health; it aids in physical and psychological restoration and it contributes greatly to intellectual development. Educators, physicians, and public health officials have all made strong arguments for ample exposure to nature.

In 2013, we launched Ticket to Ride, a new scholarship fund that provides financial support for young people to take part in national park programs that get them outdoors—including funds for program fees, boat tickets, or simply bus fare to get there—and begin a lifelong relationship with the river. In its first year, Ticket to Ride provided 3,523 kids with the means to participate in park programs.

Park programs like Big River Journey, Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures, and Take Me to the River not only bring urban youth to their national park, they give kids a chance to make connections with nature that empower them. Through Ticket to Ride, we bring youth to the river, where they can watch an eagle soar or see a great blue heron rookery. We teach them how to get back to these special places and empower them with skills and confidence they can use their whole lives.

“Without scholarship funding, my students would not have been able to afford this trip. Most of them are at poverty level...and had never been on a boat or near the river. This experience had a profound effect on these kids, and they felt so fortunate to be able to do this. Widening their world and minds is a gift that will give back in countless ways. I can’t thank you enough!”

Jan Nethercutt,
5th Grade Teacher, Pratt Community School, Minneapolis
The Mississippi River has long been an inspiration for artists, adventurers, storytellers, and river dwellers. And it is no secret that the Twin Cities community is alive with outdoor enthusiasts, science lovers, visual artists, and musicians alike. When the opportunity to create a shared space on the river for inspired conversation, art-making, and entertainment emerged, a partnership was born.

The Mississippi River Fund and the National Park Service partnered with the art and design studio Works Progress to create River City Revue: a series of public events that blend a novel experience on the river with opportunities for creative participation and social connection.

“There are myriad opportunities to experience the river through recreation, environmental stewardship and advocacy, and although these are important programs, we wondered how a focus on art and creative culture could be a catalyst for people who might not otherwise feel a connection to the Mississippi River. After all, there’s a long tradition of art and culture inspired by the Mississippi, and art is a powerful way that people express their relationship to things that matter deeply. How can art help us imagine the river? How does the river inspire our art and culture?”

Shanai Matteson and Colin Kloecker,
Co-Directors, Works Progress
In the three years since the National Park Service began managing Coldwater Spring, not only has the landscape there changed dramatically, the level of engagement with the community and the park has grown exponentially as well. Dedicated volunteers care for the park weekly and all year long, watering newly planted trees and shrubs, pulling and hauling buckthorn, and maintaining the prairie.

The Mississippi River Fund’s Trees for Coldwater program has also provided an opportunity for people to show their support of their national park site while honoring and remembering loved ones by donating trees that will stand for generations to come… reshaping the landscape and our relationship with it.

“On the Saturday of Mother’s Day weekend of 2013, I had the privilege to plant an oak grove at Coldwater Spring in memory of my mother. There were many other people planting trees in the spirit of spring tree planting at Coldwater, and I had a group of wonderful volunteers dedicated to ‘my’ grove.

Having a place to plant a tree in honor of someone and making it a gift to the community is truly elating and lasting. Donating trees to my national park has provided me with a private joy and sense of connectedness. As a volunteer at Coldwater Spring, I am immersed in nature, peace, and a feeling that this work truly makes elementary sense.

Every so often I hear someone referring to the trees in memory of my mother as ‘your grove,’ but I see it as our grove, and I hope the people helping me care for them feel the trees are also theirs. They are cared for by dedicated volunteer crews that meet Tuesday evenings and Thursday mornings; there is no difference between ‘my’ tree and ‘your’ tree. And that is the beauty of it—creating a public space with many other people to look toward the future for many generations to come.”

Gabrielle Pillmann, Volunteer and Donor
Coldwater’s historic spring house.
In July, our community lost one of its most influential civic leaders, Mary Lee Dayton. Mary Lee was a founding trustee of the Mississippi River Fund and we owe a great deal to her vision and guidance for how our work benefits the river and our community. She will be dearly missed.
Financials

Expenses

Grants and Program Services 88%
Fundraising 5%
Administration 7%

Grants and Program Services $408,073
Administration $29,904
Fundraising $25,335
TOTAL $463,312

Revenue*

Foundation and Corporate Grants 33%
Individual Gifts 16%
Endowment Distribution 29%
Program Revenue 8%
Other 3%
Temp Rest Funds Released 10%

Foundation and Corporate Grants $167,774
Individual Gifts $81,586
Program Revenue $41,458
Endowment Distribution $147,495
Other $13,088
Temp Rest Funds Released $50,680
TOTAL $502,381

* Reflects unrestricted activity. $55,821 raised in the previous year was available for 2012-13 operations. $64,805 is available for 2013-14 operations.
Barges along the Mississippi River in Saint Paul.

MISSISSIPPI
River Fund

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