



Summer/Fall 2019

Friends of the  
Missouri National Recreational River  
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FOMNRR.org

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The mission of the Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River is to build awareness, enhance and advocate for the scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, ecological, geological, cultural/historical values and economic and recreational opportunities of the Missouri River, a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

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## Why a National Park?

Throughout the sweltering summer our rangers at Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) often discovered that local citizens from the area were pleasantly surprised to find that there is a National Park in their backyard. Once we explain where the MNRR is located, the next question that often arises is "Why?". Specifically, why were these stretches of the river deemed worthy of a National Park designation? That is a very good question and this article is here to provide some answers.

Consider that there are four basic guidelines Congress uses to decide whether a place is worthy of National Park status. Let's look at these criteria and see which ones the MNRR meets.



**1) Outstanding example of a specific resource** - The MNRR is an outstanding example of a large river ecosystem in the United States. It is definitely large, after all the Mighty Missouri drains one-sixth of the lower 48 United States. The MNRR stretches of river are outstanding because they have characteristics of the historic Missouri River, characteristics that do not exist elsewhere on the Missouri River. These include abundant braided channels, riparian lands, chutes, islands, sandbars, snags, and habitat for wildlife.

**2) Offers outstanding opportunities for scientific study; public use and enjoyment and outdoor recreation** - an example of a scientific study include research on the changes in the bed and bank of river since the closing of the dams in the 1950's. For instance, in many places the depth of the thalweg (main river channel) has doubled. The MNRR is an ideal location for scientific study and research.

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# Reflections from the Chair

Tim Cowman



It has been a challenging summer with all of the precipitation and flooding throughout the Missouri River Basin. In spite of these challenges, the Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River (FOMNRR) has been busy supporting activities along the wild and scenic Missouri River.

The FOMNRR was active with volunteers and financial support for Missouri River Events activities that took place along the river this spring. The Missouri River Watershed School Festival was held the first week of May and saw 370 students attend from South Dakota and Nebraska schools. Presentations included water safety, invasive species, river resources, and more. The Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival and Homestead Day was held in June.

Another FOMNRR project, the Frost Trail, continues to be a draw this summer for those wanting to experience the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) with a hike close to the river. This year the FOMNRR Board has begun identifying additional areas for river trail development. These trails are a great way for people of all ages to get out and enjoy the natural beauty of the MNRR.

In March the public turned out in great numbers for an informational meeting hosted by the National Park Service on the Goat Island management plan. Comments received at the meeting will be considered as the management plan is formulated.<sup>1</sup> The FOMNRR will assist MNRR in promoting the island's attractions and maintaining its natural condition.

Through a recent FOMNRR initiative, we are partnering with interests in the Niobrara, Nebraska area to seek a funding opportunity through the Nebraska Environmental Trust. If successful, this funding will build projects that improve river access in the Niobrara area.

Thank you for making the FOMNRR a successful organization. Your membership, participation, and volunteer time is what makes this organization a success. Hope to see you on the river!

<sup>1</sup> A public open house meeting was held on March 20, 2019 in Vermillion, South Dakota with over 130 attendees. The park posted the management plan and EA for public review and comment on the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) site from March 4 to April 10, 2019 and received 171 correspondences.

## Mark Your Calendar

- **August 17:** Yankton Riverboat Days
- **September 20:** Ponca Expo at Ponca State Park—Kid's Day
- **September 21-22:** Ponca Expo at Ponca State Park
- **September 24-26:** Friends Alliance Meeting in Jackson Hole
- **November 21:** Presentation for Center for Great Plains Study in Lincoln, NE
- **December 5:** Holiday Festival of Lights Parade—Yankton

## My Parting Advice

Lisa Yager, MNRR Biologist

For the past nine years I have had the great honor to work as a biologist for the National Park Service at Missouri National Recreational River. Countless experiences within these years have deepened my innate passion for this mighty river. However, in mid-August I will say farewell to my colleagues and partners at MNRR and transfer to Saint Croix Falls, Wisconsin to become the Chief of Resource Stewardship and Education at Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway. I was asked to share a few words of reflection about my years at MNRR during this time of transition.

Let's start with a question: Have you seen the MNRR park film, "River of Change" that debuted in November of 2018? The film is beautifully produced with stunning still photography and videography, an original soundtrack, and interviews with people who truly love and respect the Missouri National Recreational River. I've had the opportunity to view the film countless times since its premiere. Despite this level of repeated exposure, one specific moment in the film still triggers an emotional reaction for me.



That moment occurs near the end of the film. The tempo and tone of the music changes and an elderly man begins to speak. A casual observer might describe this man's words as ordinary or expected within the context of the park film. However, for me, his words carry such power and emotion due to the impact of his river legacy and the event of his recent passing. Jim Peterson's lifelong passion for the Missouri National Recreational River was undeniable and his enduring legacy is difficult to summarize in a short article. I'm grateful his words are captured within the park film, and I know his passion for the river continues to live on throughout the MNRR.

Jim is one of many Missouri National Recreational River legends. Countless others have worked tirelessly and contributed greatly to what MNRR is today or to what we hope it becomes in the future. I've had the great privilege of knowing and working closely with so many individuals and groups who care deeply for these unique segments of river. I firmly believe that we all offer our own MNRR river legacy in some shape or form. What will your MNRR legacy be? How are your actions contributing to a better MNRR?

My parting advice?

**Love this river deeply.**

**Protect this river tirelessly.**

**Share your passion for this river endlessly.**

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"It gets in your blood. It gets in your system. It becomes part of who you are."  
Lisa Yager. *River of Change*. 2018.



## A Naturalist Moment



Every Academy member wanted to hold this American bullfrog.

**Teresa Mentzer, MNRR Education Technician**

Perhaps you have had one, too? A naturalist moment? It might be a time when you are on the river or on a favorite trail, and you stop in your tracks to take in the phenomena of nature. Suddenly your senses are peaked and you freeze to hear a bird calling his mate or see a dragonfly glisten in the sunlight.

The kids in this summer's Roscoe Junior Ranger Academy I and II were treated to many such moments as they explored the flora and fauna of the river with Rangers Daniel Peterson and Teresa Mentzer. The weeklong sessions were held June 10-14 and 24-28 in Yankton and at various settings nearby. Session I was for first-time participants who became members of the Junior Ranger Club by week's end. Activities included birding on the Meridian Bridge, captur

ing and identifying macro invertebrates, kayaking, tree and plant discovery and, of course, making s'mores before they received their Junior Ranger badges and certificates. A new wrinkle to the camp was to complete a service project. All of the wayside displays on the banks of Riverside Park were scrubbed clean by the crew. It was a fun week of exploration and we welcomed six new club members.

For Session II we invited kids from 2017 and 2018 Academy groups to attend a one-week camp. At the heart of the Roscoe Junior Ranger Academy and Club is the park's mission to foster a relationship with these future river stewards and their connection to the resource. The Club did meet during the shoulder seasons of the park for activities, but the follow up camp gave the rangers an opportunity to review some of what was introduced in the academy and to provide new experiences with the phenomena of the Missouri National Recrea-



Sam Stukel, US Fish & Wildlife Service, help Academy members identify a water bug.

tional River. The week ended with a boat ride on the river and stop over on Green Island with MNRR bio technicians, Rangers Chris Langland and Geoffrey Gray-Lobe. This time around the participants could delve more into areas like birding, wetland and prairie habitat, nature journaling, and a lake paddle. It was good to see that everyone had become a stronger paddler since our first time together on the water. All in all, the group was able to take in more naturalist moments and appreciate the important work of some of our park partners.

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## Why A National Park?

*Continued from page 1*

One fine example of a superlative opportunity for outdoor recreation is paddling. Events such as the South Dakota Kayak Challenge take place every year. The Kayak Challenge tests endurance as paddlers traverse nearly the entire lower district of the MNRR and then beyond to Sioux City, a course of 72 river miles. Racers are given 30 hours to complete the course. Other opportunities include boating, fishing and hunting.

**3) Interprets Nationally Significant themes about our nation's natural and/or cultural history-** For instance, the river was a principle highway and commerce route for the American Indians, fur traders and steamboat eras, and a trail for the Lewis and Clark Expedition and European American settlers.

**4) Has a high degree of integrity as a true, actual and relatively unspoiled example of a specific type of resource -** In 1978 and 1991, Congress designated portions of the Missouri River, and two tributaries in Nebraska, as components of the National Wild and Scenic River System for the protection and enjoyment for present and future generations. These stretches of river are managed by the National Park Service as the Missouri National Recreational River.

Thus, the MNRR meets four criteria used to determine whether a place is worthy of National Park status. Many National Park units that have been designated only meet one of these four criteria. As can be seen, we have a unique resource that runs through our communities, our collective histories and the landscape that surrounds us. Let us celebrate the unique nature of our National Park by continuing to educate ourselves and our fellow citizens as to the why we have a National Park in our midst!

## A Naturalist Moment

*Continued from page 4*

Thanks to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and the City of Yankton for providing assistance and locations for our junior rangers to learn and explore the "national park in their backyard." An added thanks to the Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River for their support of this ROSCOE project. Through grants and donations they helped purchase nature journals, t-shirts and water bottles for each of the participants.



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Pass It Forward. Pass It On.

Summer/Fall 2019



[www.fomnrr.org](http://www.fomnrr.org)



## Year In Review: Missouri River Events

Paul Lepisto and Mary Robb, Friends Members

This year 370 students from seven area schools attended the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Missouri River Watershed School Festival May 2 in Riverside Park in Yankton. The event featured 20 hands-on presentations about the river and our natural resources. The School Festival has become one of the top events of its type in the region. Students learned about the fish of the Missouri River, recovery of endangered species, preventing the spread of invasive species and ways to safely enjoy recreating on the river. Support, including many FOMNRR members, has enabled the festival to become an event students and teachers eagerly anticipate each spring.



US Fish & Wildlife Service Sam Stukel shows off a pallid sturgeon to a group of students at the Missouri River Watershed School Festival.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> highest runoff in recorded history forced the cancellation of the 2019 Missouri River Cleanup. The event was scheduled for May 4, but high releases from Gavins Point Dam prompted the National Park Service to call it off for safety reasons. The event will return next year. In its 15-year history the cleanup has removed tens of tons of litter and trash from the river, making it healthier for fish and wildlife and a more pleasing place for people to recreate.

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The Fourth annual Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival-Homestead Day event was held on June 8 and was attend-



The bird of prey programs presented by Raptors Keep are always popular at the Outdoor Festival.

come off the water.

The FOMNRR thanks you for your support of these events, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with you on them in the future.



Friends member Jarett Bies gives an overview on kayak safety to students at the Missouri River Watershed School Festival.



Lots of duct tape is key to make a cardboard boat float.

This was a record year for the 11th annual Missouri River Invasive Species Awareness Event. The event informs boaters, anglers and water recreationists about invasive species and how to prevent spreading them to other waters. This year over 1,500 contacts were made with people from 11 states during the event during May and June, including a record 756 contacts on June 29. The event focuses on high traffic areas above and below Gavins Point Dam teaching people to always clean, drain and dry all of their equipment every time they

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

**FOMNRR Memberships and MRE Sponsorships Expire at Year End.**  
**Please Donate or Renew for 2020. Remit 'on-line' at [www.FOMNRR.org](http://www.FOMNRR.org) or Complete This Form**

**Personal Membership Types – Please Select Your Preference and Enter Your Contact Info**

☐ Student (\$5)                      ☐ Youth (\$10)                      ☐ Individual (\$25)                      ☐ Family (\$50)

### Agency/Business/Corporate/Institution Sponsorship Types

Sponsors can ' earmark ' all or a portion of their donation for **Missouri River Event (MRE)** activities. These very popular, long standing programs, that occur primarily in the Yankton area, raise public awareness of the Missouri River and feature the Missouri National Recreational River.

The MRE Committee, a subcommittee of the FOMNRR, organizes the Missouri River Watershed School Festival, the Annual Missouri River Clean Up, the Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival, and the Annual Missouri River Clean Boat Event. Your contribution pay for supplies, materials, and presenters necessary for MRE events to continue. Your sponsorship means your organization logo is displayed on materials distributed at MRE events. If you have questions or suggestions please call Dugan Smith at 605-665-0209 or [dugan\\_smith@nps.gov](mailto:dugan_smith@nps.gov).

Undersigned funds pay for general purposes like trail development projects, education/outreach programs and administration,. FOMNRR pay no salaries or building rents.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Suggested Donation</i>	<i>Total Donation</i>	<i>\$ or % for MRE Only</i>	<i>\$ or % for FOMNRR</i>
Bronze	\$125 - \$249			
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**Thank you for your support!**



**Friends of the MNRR**  
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Membership includes a subscription to the newsletter,  
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Memberships and donations are tax-deductible.

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