



River Connections

Missouri River Events Return!

The pandemic and high river levels forced cancellations of the Missouri River Events (MRE) during the last three years, but they returned this spring with great success. This issue features news and photos from the Watershed School Festival (below), Missouri River Cleanup (p. 5) and Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival and Homestead Days (p. 7). These events are made possible with your support.

Have you renewed your membership this year? Go to www.FOMNRR.com or page 8 to renew, become a member, or donate.



Students from area schools assemble at the Riverside Park Pavilion.



Jarett Bies teaches basics of paddling.

MRE Watershed School Festival *by Paul Lepisto*

Yankton's Riverside Park is an inspiring setting for students to learn about the Missouri National Recreational River. On May 5th, 349 students from six Nebraska and South Dakota schools attended presentations from twenty organizations in stations set up around the park. Much of their experience was hands-on, as students from grades 7-11 touched living animals like pallid sturgeon and bullfrogs, tried nature writing, or saw how far they could throw rescue ropes. They learned about a variety of river-related subjects, including paddling, wildlife, water flow, and invasive species. Students gained a respect for the river and could imagine a future for themselves as scientists and naturalists. Congratulations to the MRE and to everyone who participated!



Students get up close with a bullfrog.



Rich Burns, FOMNRR Chair

Being Part of FOMNRR: Why We Do What We Do

A cold and rainy day did not dampen the spirits of the 349 middle and high school students, and their associated volunteers, who attended the Missouri River Watershed School Festival on May 5, 2022. Nor did the winds of over 30 mph and rough waters keep around 60 volunteers from picking up over 1000 pounds of trash during the Missouri River Cleanup event on May 7. This year's Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival is potentially going into the books as one of the best. As FOMNRR moves into the longer and warmer days of summer, it's been a relief to be able to participate in these programs, which have been unavailable since Spring of 2019.

In addition to these recent events, FOMNRR's many other accomplishments include the trails and signage for the Frost and North Alabama Trails near Vermillion, SD; a canoe/kayak access and overlook development at Niobrara State Park; access development and highway signage standardization within South Dakota and, hopefully, in Nebraska.

We also continue to participate in planning efforts such as the US Army Corp of Engineers Master Plan for Lewis and Clark Lake, the Missouri Sedimentation Action Coalition Regional Sedimentation Action Plan, and the creation of bylaws, park rules, recommendations, and enhancements for Clay County Park in South Dakota. All of these past and current activities are examples of FOMNRR's involvement for improving the quality of life along the Missouri National Recreational River.

And as we move forward, FOMNRR has a significant role to play in the Missouri National Recreational River's future. Potential projects include developing improved river access within Charles Mix County in South Dakota as well as outreach initiatives such as the Junior Ranger Academy for youth education and "Missouri River in the Classroom" for continuous education. We will also work with the Meridian Bridge Visitors Improvement Project in Nebraska and the Nebraska LB 406 (Statewide Tourism and Recreational Water Access and Resource Sustainability Special Committee).

These are accomplishments to be proud of, and there are even more opportunities ahead. None of this past or future work could happen without the dedication of FOMNRR members and donors who have supported our organization. FOMNRR is striving to get our message out to a wider, younger, and more diverse audience. The redevelopment of our website (www.fomnrr.org) by Heartland Internet Solutions of Yankton, SD, and our partnership for social media outreach with the Vermillion Chamber and Development Council, are ways FOMNRR will show a more active and approachable presence.

FOMNRR needs to grow in membership, resources, and expertise if we are to keep all of our efforts moving and sustainable. We encourage past, current, and potential members and businesses to go to our website and see if you share a common vision and mission. If you do, please support our organization, either through an active membership or a donation. One hundred percent of what FOMNRR receives supports the projects, activities, and educational opportunities described above.

Visit our redesigned website at www.FOMNRR.org

From the Superintendent's Corner *by Curt Dimmick, MNRR Superintendent*

My name is Curt Dimmick. I was selected as the new Superintendent for the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) and began working in this position in January of 2022. As the Superintendent I am responsible for all operations and management of National Park Service interests relating to MNRR.

I have worked for the National Park Service for 27 years with assignments at parks across the country. This is the 11th unit of the National Park System that I have worked in during my career. I have worked at Coronado National Memorial in Arizona, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Big Bend, Everglades, Great Basin, Great Smoky Mountains, Crater Lake, Mt. Rainier, and Pinnacles National Parks. This is my first permanent Superintendency with the NPS. Prior to this I worked as a commissioned law enforcement ranger and served as the Chief Park Ranger at my last four national park assignments. I held a dual position at Pinnacles National Park, where I also was the Chief of Resource Management. I have previously served in roles as an Acting Superintendent. I have a background in science and have a Ph.D. in Zoology from Northern Arizona University. Before working permanently for the NPS I held a variety of other positions in research, education, law enforcement and emergency services.



Curt Dimmick

I grew up in Illinois on the banks of another large “M” river, the Mississippi River. My wife and I met in Yellowstone National Park where she was working as a seasonal interpretive ranger. We have three children: a 13-year-old son, 11-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. We live on a property just north of Vermillion along with 2 cats, 25 chickens and, as we have discovered over the last several weeks, a healthy tick population!

I greatly look forward to the opportunities to work with the staff and partners here at the MNRR to further our mission to preserve and protect the natural and historic integrity of the MNRR, to foster greater access and varied recreational opportunities, and to further connect citizens to the Park's nationally significant natural and cultural resources. (Cont. page 5)

Mulberry Bend Overlook Reopening



Dugan Smith, Curt Dimmick, and Tom Downs install a poster about the Mulberry Bend Overlook redesign.

The National Park Service staff invited people to help celebrate the reopening of the Mulberry Bend Overlook in Dixon County, Nebraska, on June 10. MNRR park staff were present to provide information, and the park's mobile ranger station was on site to provide an opportunity for people to learn more about the river, the park, and their programs.

The redesign of the Mulberry Bend Overlook improves visitor experience and accommodates all levels of mobility. New construction includes an accessible walkway and parking spot, a slightly lowered overlook, and a new mulched wood trail that follows the flowing contours of the river and the hill. The overlook gives visitors an expansive view of the river, the surrounding countryside, and the Newcastle-Vermillion Bridge.

Hello to Carolyn Campbell, *Science and Resource Management Program Manager*

Hello! I'm very excited to be here and looking forward to working with such a fantastic Friends group. Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself.

Before moving here, my career has mostly been a National Seashore tour. While still in college, I volunteered at Padre Island National Seashore in Texas, where I experienced the wide variety of tasks a resource division accomplishes. After completing my master's degree at Texas A&M, I moved to northern California to start working at Point Reyes National Seashore. I fell in love with the National Park Service at that point, and my course was set! I spent five years at Point Reyes working with elephant seals, harbor seals, and snowy plovers.

Then the east coast called, and I moved across the country to Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina to be a permanent biological technician. As part of a team of generalist biologists, I was able to work on a wide variety of resources, including shorebirds, sea turtles, marine mammals, vegetation, compliance, and the ever-present shoreline erosion.



Carolyn Campbell

After three years at Hatteras, I moved to Cape Cod National Seashore in Massachusetts to be a lead in the shorebird program, monitoring piping plovers, terns, and oystercatchers. Working for other divisions at Cape Cod, including interpretation and administration, vastly increased my appreciation for all the wonderful work the NPS does.

Moving to Yankton has brought me closer to family and western roots, having grown up in Wyoming. I'm very appreciative of this opportunity as the new Science and Resource Management Program Manager and really looking forward to experiencing all the river has to offer, including the shorebirds! I hope to strengthen our partnerships with researchers, assist the other agencies working on the river, and continue to develop the fantastic team here at MNRR. A long-term goal of mine is to recruit the next generation of NPS employees, and have them fall in love with the NPS as I did. I look forward to the summer season and spending time on the river!

The Night Sky *by Tom Downs, Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Outreach*

When was the last time you took time at night to gaze up at the cosmos? What were you able to see in the night sky above? Are you surrounded by city lights or are you in an area where lights are few to none? If you are in the latter, you should be able to answer the second question easily. On a clear dark night, free of light pollution, the stars twinkle brightly out of the darkness and it's easy to locate the Milky Way's expanse. Sadly, nearly 80% of Americans cannot see the Milky Way where they live—and worse, many have never seen it. Encouragingly, more and more Americans and international visitors are discovering that our national parks are some of the best places to view unpolluted night skies and discover the Milky Way.



Of all our pollution issues on Earth, light pollution is the one that is completely reversible. We could simply choose to turn off all the lights and instantly return to the pristine night sky views seen by Native Americans and settlers. Perhaps, more importantly, we could help restore our natural world by eliminating harmful light pollution. Plants and animals evolved with dependence on dark skies for life-sustaining behaviors. Many species of birds, insects, and mammals throughout the Missouri National Recreational River corridor depend on dark night skies for their survival. Please help to keep the skies dark at night by turning off all unneeded lights around the river and elsewhere.

For a calendar of night sky events, go to <http://www.nps.gov/mnrr/planyourvisit/calendar.htm>

Missouri River Cleanup, *by Paul Lepisto, FMNRR board member*

Although high river levels and the pandemic put the Yankton Area Missouri River Cleanup on hold since 2019, it was held again this year on Saturday, May 7th. About 60 volunteers helped gather trash that had accumulated from Gavins Point Dam to Riverside Park. But before volunteers began, there was cause for celebration as Mary Robb and Paul Lepisto, from the Missouri River Events (MRE) Committee, awarded Dugan Smith, from the National Park Service, with a picture that showed their gratitude for Dugan's role in organizing all 16 of the Yankton Area Missouri River Cleanups. The photograph of a buffalo skull in the river by Green Island was taken by Sam Stukel of the US Fish and Wildlife



Cleanup crews head out into the choppy Missouri River.

Before being transported along the river in seven boats, the National Park Service loaned volunteers Personal Flotation Devices and gave them instructions for staying safe as they worked along the river. And did they work! Despite gusty winds that shortened the event, a total of 1330 pounds or .665 of a ton was brought back to Riverside Park and collected by a ground crew. The trash will then be recycled or disposed of. Volunteers left the event knowing that they are leaving a cleaner river, but also having a better connection to the Missouri River and to the Yankton community.



Mary Robb presents Dugan Smith with a gift celebrating his leadership in River Cleanups.



Hauling trash back to Riverside Park.

Since arriving at MNRR, one of the things that has struck me most is how many people I have met have their own story about what connects them to this river. I have met people who moved here specifically to be near the river, as well as people who have lived in the area for years, but who have “discovered” the river and now spend as much time on it as possible. And there are the native tribes that tie their history and identity to the river. The river breathes life into this region and that is reflected by the people who live here, visit here, and experience its wonders.

--Curt Dimmock

Missouri River Paddlers 2022 Rendezvous *by Bob Foley, board member*



Many river enthusiasts enjoy the Big Muddy with a canoe, a kayak, a paddle-board, a packraft, or a rowboat. Most use human powered watercraft for leisurely pursuits. Others race com-

“through paddlers.”

These intrepid souls follow historic “paddle strokes” left by native peoples, fur traders and explorers who plied the Missouri River to transit, to amass wealth, or to satisfy human curiosity. Most every “through paddler” intends to travel the entire 2341 mile Missouri River from the Montana Rockies to the Mississippi at St Louis; some in a single trip, and others in stages over several years. A small number travel another 1500 miles down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico on a ‘source to sea’ journey of personal accomplishment. While the number varies, a typical year sees about a dozen paddlers attempting a descent--fewer than the number who scale Mount Everest. Indeed, “through paddlers” surely qualify as endurance athletes!

In 2004, Livingston, Montana river guide Norm Miller completed an up-river journey from St Louis to the Pacific Coast to honor the Bicentennial of the 1804 Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition. Motivated to share his experience, Miller formed a group, Missouri River Paddlers (MoRP), as a resource for future “through paddler” trip planning. Norm researched those who made past descents of the Missouri River and posted information about these historic trips on the MoRP website to connect paddlers worldwide.



Through paddler Jerico Lefort holds the 2015 MoRP Rendezvous t-shirt.

In 2015, Miller and other river-alums organized a “through paddler” reunion, which they named the ‘MoRP Rendezvous’ after the historic fur trader marketplaces. Interest grew for another gathering, so MoRP set the second Rendezvous for 2022. Coincidentally, 2022 marks the bicentennial of the 1822 “Ashley’s 100” expedition that created the ‘rendezvous trade system’ used by the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

Nearly 100 “through paddler” alumni and associates plan to attend the 2022 MoRP Rendezvous from July 30 to August 7. They hail from 15 US states and Europe. Many have never met personally, but all share an experience of expedition paddling. Together, they’ve paddled 300,000 Missouri River miles--more than the distance from earth to the moon. Like kindred trappers at historic rendezvous, long-separated paddlers

Anyone with a love of the Missouri river is invited to paddle the whole week, or a day, or to come to camp and just say “hi.” The MoRP Rendezvous begins on July 30 at Randall Creek, south of the Fort Randall Dam, and ends on August 7 at Scenic Park in South Sioux City.

Check the MoRP website <https://www.missouririverpaddlers.com/> for more information. David Mays of South Dakota Canoe and Kayak Assn and Bob Foley of FOMNRR assist Norm with local details. Email Dave at dam@midco.net or Bob at rfoley9147@gmail.com with any questions you have.

Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival and Homestead Days

Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival

Families who came to the Lake Yankton training dike on June 11 were treated to many fun, hand-on learning experiences. At the Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival, children played mini golf, disc golf, and hover ball archery. A fishing clinic gave kids a chance to cast a line. Adults and kids went on the lake in kayaks or waterboards, viewed equipment used by search and rescue services, and learned about majestic birds of prey. Activities were led by the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Corps of Engineers, and local organizations.

Kids, parents, and grandparents played together and learned about the Missouri River and life on the frontier.



Playing miniature golf.



Learning to fish from the pier.



A new adventure for a young kayaker.

Homestead Days

And over at the Pierson Ranch Recreation Area, families experienced how settlers dressed, cooked, played games, and made crafts. This area featured a guitar-playing folk singer, a cowboy in chaps who taught people how to lasso a cow, and stations where kids and adults could try butter-making, candle-dipping, and panning for gold. Everyone could taste delicious homemade bread, cherry-rhubarb cobbler, and other old-time foods! Thanks to the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Park, the Meade Center, and the other presenters for a great day!



Preparing old-time food.



Learning to lasso.



Trying on pioneer clothing.

Friends of the MNRR
P.O. Box 7029
Yankton, SD 57078



FOMNRR website: www.fomnrr.org

MNRR website: www.nps.gov/mnrr

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