



## River Connections

Summer/Fall 2023 Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River [fomnrr.org](http://fomnrr.org)

Banner photo: Tom Vollmer (Retired science teacher) presents Fossils at your Feet at the 2023 Watershed School Festival.



Welcoming students to the 13th Missouri River Watershed School Festival on May 4 at Riverside Park in Yankton.

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## FOMNRR and Missouri River Events

FOMNRR plays a critical role in the three Yankton area Missouri River events (MRE); the School Festival, River Cleanup, and Homestead Day. Our 501(c)(3) tax exempt status allows us to actively fundraise for the events, and it makes any donation tax deductible. This is an important factor for many corporations and foundations.

FOMNRR members also volunteer to assure the events are successful. The events help fulfill our mission of building awareness, enhancing, and advocating 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.

As a FOMNRR member, we urge you to get involved in the Missouri River events. You can do that by contributing to the events, noting "For MRE" in the memo of your check, or by volunteering at next year's events, the School Festival on May 2, the River Cleanup on May 4, or Homestead Day on June 8.

FOMNRR brings people together as advocates for the river—both for today and tomorrow.

We need your support—help us grow our organization!

Go to [FOMNRR.ORG](http://FOMNRR.ORG) to become a member or donate.



## Watershed School Festival

Above: NPS-MNRR Ranger Carolyn Campbell talks with students about cottonwood trees along the Missouri River.



Students depart school buses to join the 2023 Watershed School Festival in Riverside Park. This year there were 508 students in grades 7-11—the second largest group ever to attend!

**FOMNRR is dedicated to ensuring that the younger generation develops a deep understanding and appreciation for the Missouri National Recreational River.**

Next year's Watershed School Festival will be held on Thursday, May 2, 2024.

**Area schools that participated in the 13th Missouri River Watershed School Festival:**

**Schools in South Dakota:**

- Irene/Wakonda School District
- Wausau NE School
- Sacred Heart Middle School
- Andes Central Schools
- Yankton Middle School

**Schools in Nebraska:**

- Laurel/Concord/Coleridge School
- Cedar Catholic School/Hartington
- Crofton St. Rose of Lima
- Hartington/Newcastle School

The MRE Watershed School Festival is extremely popular with students and teachers. Students learn about a variety of river-related subjects and gain a new respect for the river. This year's festival had 20 presentations led by experts in the sciences and river safety.



In addition to FOMNRR members, volunteers included members from the Yankton Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Yankton Democrats. The volunteers led groups of students around the events.

Paul Lepisto, from the Isaak Walton League and a FOMNRR board member, and Mary Robb, past coordinator of the School Festival, talked to students before they split into groups of 20-25; each group visited seven different stations around the park.



## What Lives Along the River?

Students at the Watershed Festival had up-close and personal experiences with some of the wildlife that live along or in the Missouri River—and maybe they began to imagine becoming naturalists and scientists themselves!



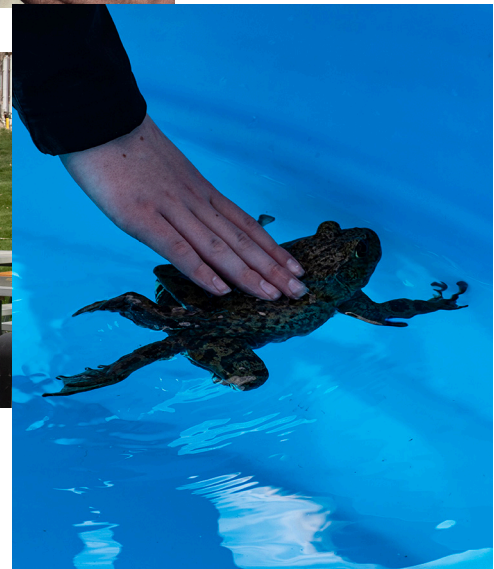
**Animals of the Missouri River**  
SD Game, Fish & Parks  
(above)

**Invasive Species**  
SD Game, Fish & Parks  
(left)



**Fish of the Missouri River**  
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (left)

**Birds of the Missouri River**  
Missouri River Institute



**Fish of the Missouri River**  
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service

Students also participated in activities that taught them about nature journaling, piping plovers, glaciers, cottonwood trees, and invasive plants along the river.



**Palid Sturgeon Recovery**  
SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources  
(left)

**The Power of Glaciers**  
SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources  
(right)



# How to Be Safe on the Water

Students learned about safety gear and other ways to stay safe when they are out having adventures on the Missouri River.



Playing in the Water  
SD Game, Fish & Parks



Playing in the Water  
National Park Service



Paddling the Missouri River  
SD Canoe and Kayak Association



The NRCS Rainfall Simulator: Seeing is Believing  
SD Natural Resources Conservation Service

## What Affects the River System?

Students learned how long it takes materials like plastics to break down, how different tillage systems affect water runoff, and how rivers and streams shape the watershed.



Leave No Trace  
Nebraska Game and Parks  
(left)



Stream Table  
National Park Service



**Fossils at Your Feet**  
Tom Vollmer, Retired Science Teacher

## History Along the River

Students learned about how riverboats work and looked at fossils that former students found near Lewis and Clark Lake in Yankton.

**What Makes a Riverboat?**  
Mead Museum (right)



## A Thank You Letter from a Member of FOMNRR

Thank You Everyone!!

With your help and the blessing of good weather we have finished our two Missouri river Events. It has been gratifying to see all of you donating your time and efforts over the last three days. I really want to thank Paul Lepisto of the Izaak Walton League for not only finding the money for these events but for his months-long shepherding of all the principal people that are involved and all of us that volunteer. Hats off Paul!!

Without the volunteer forces we could never pull this off, I am sure that we had over 90 volunteers, from many clubs and organizations, people from Yankton and Vermillion made up the majority of our volunteers but we also had volunteers from from Tyndall and Freeman and Saint Helena, our FOMNRR photographer made the journey down river from Boyd county Nebraska both days to capture all the action. Thank you Patricia! There were well over 60 people from all the different Governmental Agencies (National, State, City) that bring equipment and water tanks and live fish and boats and payloaders and do a ton of different things to make sure we have a safe and fun day. I know it's their job, but it's one thing to do your job—it is totally another thing to bring your community together while doing your job!

I want to thank all the staff, from the lead staff at the National Park, all the way through to the Department of Corrections staff and everyone in between, for their work making our river a more fun place to live.

Thank you so much!  
Dennis Menke



## MRE 17th Annual Missouri River Cleanup

Above: Volunteers boarded boats that took them out to pick up trash at various sites along the Missouri River.

The 17th Missouri River Cleanup was held May 6 in Yankton, SD. Over 60 volunteers removed 1,560 pounds of litter and trash from along the river.



Aluminum cans, paper, cardboard, plastic chip bags, and many other items are strewn along the banks and wedged in the rocks. Someone had even thrown old carpeting along the river!



Tom Downs and other NPS staff helped volunteers choose personal flotation devices.

FOMNRR worked with the National Park Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, US Fish and Wildlife, the City of Yankton, Yankton County Search and Rescue, the SD Department of Corrections—Yankton Community Work Center, and other agencies and organizations to organize and complete this event.



A local Girl Scout troupe picked up trash in Riverside Park.

**Teamwork helps make picking up trash a lot easier!**



Galen Jons, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, brought back trash that volunteers had collected.

## What was removed?

- 1180 pounds of litter & trash
- 160 pounds of scrap metal
- 120 pounds of tires (3 tires)
- 100 pounds of wood/rubble

**Total= 1560 pounds!**



Bags of trash collected along the river were hauled away in this truck.

## And then there was food!

Brats and chips are a satisfying way to end a morning of hard work! Thank you, volunteers, for your efforts! The river is now a cleaner place for wildlife and the people that live, play, and work along it.



FOMNRR members Rich (left) and Kelly (center) Burns served food to hungry volunteers.



Guy Larson (far left), State Chair and Yankton Chapter Chair of the Sierra Club, FOMNRR members Bob Foley and Dennis Menke, and Rich Burns, former Chair of FOMNRR, showed their expertise in cooking brats.

**Next year's Missouri River Cleanup will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2024.**



Staff members from the National Park Service in Yankton enjoy a well-deserved lunch after the cleanup.



Volunteers eat lunch at a picnic shelter above the river.



## MRE: Homestead Day

The 2023 Homestead Day was held Saturday, June 10 from 10am to 1pm. It was a gray day, but rain held off until after the events at the Pierson Ranch Recreation Area of Lewis and Clark State Park.

Families who visited the picnic shelter engaged in many hands-on activities. Children and adults could try butter-making, candle-dipping, and other crafts like quilt-making and panning for gold.



Making candles by dipping string into hot wax.



Children use fabric squares to make their own quilt designs.

**Homestead Day activities were sponsored by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, the Meade Center, and Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River.**



Panning for gold.



Churning butter as they used to do it in the pioneer days..



Children learned how to make crafts out of acorns, twigs, and a hot glue gun.



Regalia International Birds of Prey demonstrated diverse birds to visitors at Homestead Days.



A cowboy in chaps taught children how to lasso a (wooden) cow. It just takes practice!

**Next year's Homestead Day will be held on Saturday, June 4, 2024.**



Visitors to Homestead Day enjoyed listening to the sounds of a guitar-playing folk singer and her old-time, good-time songs.



Sam Stuckel, from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, talked about some of the reptiles and fish that live in the Missouri River, including the endangered pallid sturgeon.

**Homestead Day is continued on page 11...**



## From the Superintendent's Corner by Curt Dimmick, NPS-MNRR

*Above: Superintendent Dimmick (center) welcomes volunteers to the 17th Annual Missouri River Cleanup*

It is hard to believe it's summer! I think I slept in one day and missed spring! Seems only yesterday I was bundled up in the wind struggling to our barn to feed our animals in 50 below wind chills. Now summer is here with temperatures in the 90s and all that winter snow (and moisture) is gone. But with summer also comes a flurry of activity on the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR). Schools are out, the gear is packed, and visitors are on the road and on the water.



*Curt Dimmick, Superintendent of the NPS-MNRR*

Our staff is also at full summer strength. Interpretive programs are happening, kayak clinics are "exposing" people to the river, projects are getting done, resources are being monitored, patrols are happening to protect the park and keep visitors safe. Our summer seasonal staff is critical to being able to meet our annual mission goals for the MNRR. We rely heavily on their skills and expertise to provide visitor services, perform maintenance, and advance projects. This year our seasonal staff consists of three interpretive rangers, two law enforcement rangers, two biological technicians, one maintenance worker. We hope to still add a couple of Youth Conservation Corps members. Our seasonal staff come from near and far – from Vermilion to the East Coast.

Like many other businesses and organizations, the MNRR has had more challenges recruiting seasonal staff in the

past few years. We still get quality staff, but we see fewer people applying and hiring process more difficult for our supervisors. This is a nationwide trend for the National Park Service (NPS) as a whole. Gone are the days when I was a seasonal and many more people wanted to work these positions than there were jobs. Perhaps it is a reflection of the nation's job market. Local businesses have troubles filling vacant positions too. Perhaps it's some generational shift with people looking for other opportunities. Perhaps it is the bureaucratic red tape you must get through to apply or the changes that the NPS has undergone in recent decades. Regardless of likely multiple factors, help us spread the word that MNRR and the NPS still have great opportunities, both seasonal and permanent, for people interested in supporting our mission to conserve these wonderful places so people can experience them in all their glory.

We also have recent changes to our permanent staff. Last fall interpretive ranger Duggan Smith left for a position nearby with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the Lewis and Clark Visitor Center. The park has hired Abby Schauer into that position. Abby comes with some great experience, most recently working at Rocky Mountain National Park. Last fall the park added an Outdoor Recreation Planner position hiring Harrison Freund into his first NPS position. He came from a local council of government in Iowa. The park hired its first permanent maintenance position in June. We are happy to have Neal Hohenthanner, who previously worked as a seasonal at MNRR, transfer back from the U.S. Forest Service into that position. Finally, our Chief Ranger, Andrew Podany, transferred back to a park in Arizona in May to accommodate new opportunities for his family. We are in the process of hiring a new Chief Ranger and should be able to introduce that person in the next update.

**So, get out! Experience the river in all of its majesty this summer. Hike, boat, float, fish, learn, and enjoy! Remember to drink plenty of fluids and always be safe! We hope to see you out on the river!**

# Hello to Abby Schauer!

Lead Park Ranger for Interpretation, Education, and Outreach

Greetings! My name is Abby Schauer, and I'm the new Lead Park Ranger for Interpretation, Education, and Outreach at Missouri National Recreational River. I am very excited and honored to be filling this position and greatly look forward to working with all of the staff, partners, and friends of MNRR.

After visiting numerous national parks while growing up, I always dreamed about being a National Park Ranger. With that dream in mind, I decided to study Ecology and Environmental Science at South Dakota State University. The summer after my sophomore year, I began my first work experience with the National Park Service – an Interpretation and Education Intern at Mount Rushmore National Memorial. I've also worked at seasonally at Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Tumacacori National Historical Park, and Grand Canyon National Park. Additionally, I've held two permanent positions at Fort Scott National Historic Site and Rocky Mountain National Park, which adds up to almost 5 years with the NPS.

I thoroughly enjoyed working at so many national park sites around the country, but after spending several years away, I was ready to come home. I grew up in NW Iowa and was looking for opportunities to move closer to home. When this position in Yankton was posted, I was so excited to apply. After receiving the offer, I was ecstatic to have the best of both worlds of being able to work with the NPS and be very close to my family in Iowa. I'm really looking forward to working and growing here at MNRR and in the community of Yankton!



## Homestead Day, continued from page 9



The NPS Mobile Station is a wonderful way to learn about the Missouri National Recreational River.



Inside the NPS Mobile Station, visitors find additional information, maps, and photos of the MNRR.

# About FOMNRR Membership



**FOMNRR website: [www.fomnrr.org](http://www.fomnrr.org)**

**“Like” FOMNRR on our Facebook page!**

**NPS-MNRR website: [www.nps.gov/mnrr](http://www.nps.gov/mnrr)**



## Piping Plover Recovery

The U.S. Army Corps of Discovery station  
at the Watershed School Festival.

## Annual Membership

### FOMNRR Membership

- \_\_\_ \$25 Individual
- \_\_\_ \$50 Family
- \_\_\_ \$10 Student (under 25)

### Corporate Sponsorship

- \_\_\_ \$1000 Platinum
- \_\_\_ \$500 Gold
- \_\_\_ \$250 Silver
- \_\_\_ \$125 Bronze

**Please join, renew,  
or donate now**

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

**Click the “Become a Member” button**

Or send a check with this form to

**Friends of the MNRR**

**P.O. Box 7029**

**Yankton, SD 57078**

**Memberships and donations are tax-deductible.**

## Photography credits:

MRE Watershed School Festival: Pat James

MRE Annual Cleanup: Pat James

MRE Homestead Day: Paul Lepisto