

MNRR

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souri River and the people who enjoy it,” he said. The Friends group has completed incorporation and expects to receive its 501©3 tax-exempt status by October, making donations tax deductible, Lepisto said. “I think it will really ramp up the number of contributions we receive from individuals and corporations for things we do on the river on a year-round basis,” he said.

A NATIONAL TREASURE

The Missouri River must be recognized as a national treasure, according to MNRR superintendent Rick Clark. In that respect, it makes perfect sense to link the NPS centennial and the creation of the Friends organization, he said. “This is a real momentous day to launch this Friends group,” he said. The 2,341-mile Missouri River is the longest river in North America, with its basin covering one-sixth of the nation, Clark said. The MNRR has been designated as wild and scenic, free flowing and with superior water quality, he said. In addition, the MNRR exhibits outstanding remarkable values such as recreation, scenic, geology, fish and wildlife, ecological and historical/cultural. The centennial, with its theme, “Find Your Park,” recognizes past successes and the promise of the future, Clark said. The celebration encourages stewardship and passing along the national parks. “Our centennial goal is to connect with and create the next generations of park visitors, supporters and advocates,” he said. “Without them, we will have a much more difficult time preserving the national park system in the future.” In that respect, Lepisto challenged the audience to step forward and help pre-



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Rick Clark, superintendent of the Missouri National Recreational River, describes the National Park Service's upcoming centennial year and encourages the public to submit ideas for local events during the year-long celebration. He also helped roll out the newly formed Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River (FOMNRR).

serve the river's future. “A personal part of you feels the MNRR is a personal part of your quality of life,” he said. “It's why you like living here.” The Friends organization goes beyond writing a check, Lepisto said. The group seeks members willing to speak up about river issues and spread the word about the Friends, he said. In addition, the Friends group seeks people with grant-writing skills and a willingness to work with membership drives. The Friends will seek volunteers to work with current activities such as the Missouri River Watershed School Festival, the Great River Cleanup, the River Rendezvous and the Clean Boat Event, he said. New events can include interpretive boat tours and working with the NPS' centennial in 2016 and the MNRR's 40th anniversary in 2018. “This (area) has a good track record of success with their events,” he said. “With the Friends, we will continue and expand on it.”

Most importantly, the Friends can provide an umbrella for the many groups which already exist, Lepisto said. “We can share and exchange information,” he said. “We can provide a forum for a wide range of services. And we can combine interests.” **MANY VOICES** The open house also featured remarks by individuals who have worked with the Friends effort. • W. Don Nelson, a businessman and former chief of staff for then-U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.), expressed a personal interest in the Missouri River. “I've been around here more than 50 years, and I consider this the Nebraskans' coast. Sadly, most Nebraskans don't recognize the Missouri National Recreational River,” he said. “I tell young people, it's one of the few places where you can experience the river as the expedition forces did more than 200 years ago. The

rest (of the river) is a chain of lakes.” • Dave Swanson, a University of South Dakota biology professor working with the Missouri River Institute, spoke of the academic interest in the river. “We promote the use of the river,” he said. “We foster the outreach for education and research.” • Todd Van Maanen, with the Eisenbraun and Associates engineering firm of Yankton, described his personal love for the Missouri River and the need for more awareness of it. “I'm a fan of the river,” he said. “We need to get people to realize the river is here and a resource for us to enjoy.” • Ponca State Park Superintendent Jeff Fields spoke of his willingness to work with the Friends organization. “We're anxious to share the things we do and learn what everyone here is doing,” he said. • Barb Yelverton of Vermilion grew up on a ranch in the 39-miles stretch of the MNRR. “When it comes to economics and recreation, I want people to realize the diamond we have here and respect it,” she said. As a landowner along the river, she noted other property owners are wary that those using the river won't be responsible. She advises visitors to enjoy but also respect the river. “Be quiet and listen to what is here. It's a very chaotic world, and the river is a quiet place,” she said. “We want to get people on the river for the right reasons.” • Carmen Schramm, executive director of the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce, noted the need for promoting the river. “Some people take the river the granted,” she said. “We need to get active to maintain, protect and preserve the river.” • Stephanie Moser, director of the Yankton Convention and Visitors Bureau, spoke of the tremendous opportunities for river tourism, education and preservation now and for future generations. “I have kids, and I want them to learn about (the

river),” she said. • NPS Ranger Dugan Smith sees the Friends allowing the expansion of current activities and educational outreach. “We can recognize the river as a valuable resource and advocate for it,” he said. • Jim Heisinger of Vermilion provided an example of the joint effort of river organizations in his dual role as president of the Spirit Mount Trust and as a member of the Living River Group of the Sierra Club. “All these different organization and interests for the river can come together. We have all these ideas about the river, and what better place and opportunity to exchange ideas?” he asked. “That doesn't mean we give up our individual identities. We will continue to do our own thing. But we can cooperate and work together. We can do a lot of wonderful things together.” • Tim Bellis, tourism and marketing coordinator with the Vermillion Chamber and Development Company (VCDC) agreed. He noted the opportunity to bring together federal, state, city and private entities. “Everyone wants to use the river the right way,” he said. “Collectively, as Friends, we can have a connection and a larger voice to protect, preserve and enjoy the river.” Lepisto agreed. “This will broaden our reach. We'll have more players at the table and be able to spread the word,” he said. Lepisto encouraged the public to become a “Friend” of the river both financially and as advocates. “This is something that's going places, and we want you involved,” he said.

For more information about the Friends, visit online at www.FOMNRR.org and email info@fomnrr.org. For more information about the NPS and its centennial, visit online at FindYourPark.com and follow Twitter at [FindYourPark](https://twitter.com/FindYourPark). Follow @RDockendorf on Twitter.

Bids

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in at \$11.7 million. Gall said he expects more bids to come in this time around. “Last time we did it, we only had one bidder and we're hearing there should be multiple bidders,” he said. “This should be a lot more competitive bid.” He added that it helps to let bids further in advance of the project rather than a couple of months, as was done the last time.

“We're going to get better, competitive bids because they're not filled up yet for next year, so contractors are looking for work,” he said. “Last spring, most of them were all filled with work already and they really didn't want to have to get into another job or project.” Gall said projects of this size typically see three to five bids cast when let in advance. He added there have been no major changes to the project since the project was originally let in March. “Besides splitting it in half, we're hardly changing

anything with the way it's going to be constructed,” he said. “Any kind of design, it's pretty much all stayed the same.” The full project will now encompass two phases. Phase one, between Marne Creek and Highway 81/Broadway Ave. will expand the highway to five lanes and reduce lane width from 12 to 11 feet. A new traffic signal will be installed at Douglas Ave. along with new lighting along the stretch. During this phase, a temporary detour using Second St. will be available with a temporary light being

installed at the intersection of Second St. and Broadway Ave. for traffic control. Phase two, set for 2017, will include reconstruction along Highway 50 between Marne Creek and Archery Lane. Gall said while the bulk of phase one will begin in 2016, SDDOT officials hope to accomplish some work by the end of 2015. “It's supposed to start, maybe this fall, but that's just to put in pipe on Burleigh St. and possibly put in the traffic light on Second St. and Broadway Ave.,” he said. “They don't have to do

that this year, but we're hoping maybe they will. They'll start early next spring, possibly early April on the actual project.” Gall said it's the right time to move forward with the project. “This is something that's been in the plans for a long time,” he said. “The old pavement's past its usefulness and it's time to repair it and get something new in there to better handle the traffic. I think it's something that's got to be done now.” Follow @RobNielsenPandD on Twitter.

Parade

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parade for several years. “It's something that's been done in the past and hasn't been done for a few years,” Kraft said. “With the theme that we have this year — ‘Red, White & Blue, We Salute You veterans theme’ — we thought it would be a good idea to bring that back and honor a veteran from Yankton who has done a lot for the community as well, so we picked Don List and his wife.” Kraft said the Lists were a natural choice for grand marshals.

“(Don) does a lot with the color guard and is always in a lot of events around town, and we thought he would be a fitting marshal for this year's theme and parade,” he said. “Several board members have had experience with them in the past.” Additionally, the Lists also do volunteer work with the American Legion, National Guard and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Don said he likes the idea of playing a role in a major part of Yankton's culture. “Riverboat Days parade has been an important thing to us as far as being in the parade and being a part of Riverboat Days,” he said. “Plus, it's an honor for Yankton, South Dakota. This is something big and I just feel proud to even be part of it.” As a veteran himself, Don said it becomes even more meaningful that he and his wife were chosen.

“I feel humbled and honored to lead the parade,” he said. “With age and stuff, you're not around forever, but I'm humbly proud.” Kraft said there's a possibility grand marshals will once again be returning as a regular feature in coming Riverboat Days parades. “It just depends on the themes that are chosen in the future and how we can incorporate that into the parade,” he said. “We typically have a Captain and Belle for Riverboat Days, as well, and they've been kind of the parade marshals of the past.” Marlys said it's a very special honor for both of them. “It's just maybe a once-in-a-lifetime thing,” she said. “I think it's going to be an honor to be a part of it. We've been in it and led it with the colors, but to have this prestige is pretty special.”

Follow @RobNielsenPandD on Twitter.

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