

Clay Co. Park Bodes Well For Conservation

BY LAURIE FRITSCH, PROGRAM CLERK
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

VERMILLION — When Audrey Job, the sixth grade Science teacher at the Vermillion Middle School, received the invitation to attend the sixth annual River Appreciation Day at Clay County Park, Vermillion, on Monday, Sept. 12, 2011, it was a no-brainer. She said, "The kids really enjoyed it last year and even though it doesn't coincide with what we're doing in the classroom, we decided to come."

She said, "My students grew up around the river and experienced the flooding of the river this summer. But I'd like them to have a greater appreciation for what the river is, understand how it moves and why it's important to us." What better way to teach them than to take them to the river and experience it for themselves.

Kristine Gillette, sixth grade teacher for the Irene-Wakonda Elementary School, Wakonda, followed suit. This is the second year she decided to take her students. She explained, "Attending River Appreciation Day is important to help students understand the value of the natural resources that we have in South Dakota. When they see the river and learn more about the animals, the soil and such, it makes it personal and brings it to life. If my students learn one new thing, I consider the 20-mile commute from Wakonda to Vermillion worth it."

As many as 167 sixth graders from Vermillion Middle School, Centerville Public School, Centerville and Irene-Wakonda Elementary School, and 14 fifth graders from St. Agnes School, Vermillion, participated in this year's event. Approximately 83 students took part in the morning session, and 84 gathered at the park for the afternoon session.

Gus Miller, the sixth grade teacher at Centerville Public School, explained, "I believe this is the best venue to provide environmental education and learn about our river system in South Dakota. Of course, this opportunity is so close that economically it's more feasible."

To set the mood as they arrived, students at the morning session enjoyed river songs by area musicians Michelle Martin and Terry Hill. The Oyate Drum with Wayne Evans, professor emeritus and elder, also helped close out the morning session and open the afternoon session. Students listened to songs and the beat of the drum, heard about native perspectives about the river and the earth, and greeted each other in a circle dance on the banks of the beautiful river.

Jerry Wilson, a local naturalist and author, opened the morning session by sharing his observations about the river. "This occasion gives us the chance to enjoy the river and all it has to offer," he said. He quizzed the kids just a bit, popping the question, "Who can tell me, what is the longest river in America?" Students yelled out a couple wrong answers, so he helped them out. "The Missouri River is the longest," he answered, "and some people call this turbulent river the 'Mighty Mo.'"

Students discovered that most of this great river has either been dammed or channelized, with only two wilderness-like stretches remaining in South Dakota. Students from Clay County are fortunate to live along a 59-mile stretch below Gavins Point Dam, which together with a 39-mile stretch below Ft. Randall Dam, are protected under the Wild and



DERON RUESCH, DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST FOR THE USDA NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS), VERMILLION, HIGH FIVES LAUREN BERN DURING A SESSION WITH THE 6TH ANNUAL RIVER APPRECIATION DAY.

Scenic Rivers Act. These two reaches are part of the U.S. National Park Service and known as the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR).

Although this summer's massive flood on the Missouri River has been devastating for some, Wilson said, "believe it or not, very little damage has occurred to the river. Much of this special segment of the river has been restored to its natural state just like when Lewis and Clark first explored it over 200 years ago." Wilson reminded students to keep the river clean, and to come back to Clay County Park as often as they can to camp, hike the two-mile trail that meanders through the park and along the river's edge, go boating or just stop out to enjoy nature at its best.

Grace Freeman, an organizer of the event along with Cindy Kirkeby and Nancy Carlsen, Vermillion, agreed with Wilson. "After the flooding disaster the river is really beautiful; like a wilderness again. There's just nothing like being the first one to discover and explore a new sandbar."

"That's why we've decided we'll only have this event at the river," Freeman said. A couple years ago nasty weather forced organizers to move the event indoors. "But it's so important that the students develop a relationship with the river, a natural curiosity so they want to come back. Because once this happens it becomes a part of their life."

Freeman welcomed everyone to the river and then directed students to find their trail guide responsible to lead the way to seven different campsites. The University of South Dakota's (USD) Cross Disciplinary Study (XDIS) Students served as trail guides. Presenters, who volunteered their time, covered soil conservation, stream flows, Haiku poetry, river landscapes, animals that live along the river, water cycle and water quality, water safety and how to make homemade boats.

When students arrived at Soils Camp, they met Deron Ruesch, District Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Ver-

million. He said, "Have you ever heard of the NRCS?"

In unison, the students said, "No." To which Ruesch said, "Well then, you're going to learn a few new things today."

With no time to waste, he said, "Who can tell me another nickname for the Missouri River?" As several raised their hand, one student yelled, "The Big Muddy."

"That's right. Way to go!" said Ruesch. "Now," Ruesch said, "Who wants to shake up the Missouri River?" One of the boys received his nod in return, and grabbed the big pickle jar filled with a mix of sand and water from the river. Once it was thoroughly mixed, Ruesch set the jar on the table. Students watched intently as the contents began to fall to the bottom. Ruesch discussed how the sand, silt and clay settle out after a flooding event, and in that order. "Why does the sand settle first?" he asked.

The students got quiet, and then one of them answered, "Because it's the heaviest."

Ruesch said, "That's correct. The sand settles first because sand particles are the largest. And the clay settles last because the clay particles are the smallest."

Next he said, "Who can tell me the name of the soil we're standing on?" His question totally stumped them. "This is the \$2 million question," he said.

Since they didn't know the answer, he told them they could find the answer in the Soil Survey of Clay County, South Dakota published by the NRCS, which includes a listing of all the soils in every county. Or he suggested that they look online in the Web Soil Survey, soil data published by the National Cooperative Soil Survey, and operated by the NRCS.

"You give up?" Ruesch asked. After grappling to come up with the correct answer, he said, "It's Haynie-Grable soil."

They took in all the soils information they could muster as Ruesch finished up his 14-minute session to show them a

soil probe, a soil profile and quickly mentioned a few tidbits about young versus old soils.

On down the trail, Eugene Bormann, with the Corps of Engineers Missouri River Recovery Program, displayed several items for students to touch and examine. A turkey tail feather, an ancient shark tooth, a deer jaw and antler, and a turtle shell were just a few of the things that helped students understand which animals live along the river today, as well as centuries ago. "Some of these animals have been here a long, long time. They're the descendants of animals from the days of Lewis and Clark and from prehistoric times. Sometimes we forget how valuable some animals are to the food chain and the natural environment."

"Do you believe a mosquito is valuable? You may not think so. But the mosquito is a source of food for birds and other animals," he explained.

Bormann also spoke about the resourcefulness of the Native Americans, trappers and others to provide food, shelter, clothing and transportation for themselves by utilizing the natural resources at their fingertips. "Years ago trappers would sell pelts in St. Louis, Mo., and return home to make hats, coats and even boats," he said.

During the morning session, Sarah Fuoss, a USD senior majoring in Chemistry, volunteered her time to help Bormann at the Animal Camp. She worked with students to help them identify various animal tracks and ink stamp their favorites onto a small notebook page.

At a teacher's request, Bormann also visits schools in South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska, to teach students about the endangered species of the Missouri River. At the end of River Appreciation Day, the kids receive a Project Wet Booklet from the South Dakota Discovery Center, compliments of the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as an "I Love Rivers" sticker from American Rivers.

Lauren Bern, a sixth grader from Vermillion Middle School, could not recall

visiting Clay County Park since she was a toddler. That's about to change if she gets her wish, she admitted. "I want to bring my family and friends to play in the river, and sit with my sketch book and draw the river....I enjoyed drawing the river at Art Camp. I'm not that good at it, but I like to draw, and building sailboats was so much fun."

What did Miller and his students take away from the event? He said, "I received many 'Thank You's' from students who posted their notes on my bulletin board since we attended River Appreciation Day. The campsite voted the 'most fun' by the Centerville crowd was Boat Camp, where they learned boat safety and worked in teams of two to build sailboats to race down the river before heading back to Centerville."

Miller appreciated the chance to evaluate the presenters and the effectiveness of their teaching methods. He said, "As teachers, we very seldom get a chance to observe each other. I've been an elementary teacher for several years and as someone who has evaluated instruction, I look at how the presenters are presenting. I take note of what's working and what's not. I find that useful."

Presenters from the Vermillion Area Arts Council included Norma Wilson, a poet and educator, who guided the students in writing their own haiku poems at the Poetry Camp, and Nancy Losacker, visual artist and educator, who mentored students as they drew charcoal landscapes at the Art Camp.

Stream Camp leaders Melissa Campbell, a graduate student with the Missouri River Institute, and John Erikson, a community educator, used a stream table to demonstrate ways that waters both create and erode channels and banks as they meander through the surface of the land.

Aquifer Camp leader Sarah Chadima, a geologist with the South Dakota Geological Survey, used an interactive aquifer model to illustrate how waters move through aquifers below the surface, with special emphasis on ways that pollution can spread through the aquifers.

Boat Camp leaders Harry Freeman and Terry Hill, educators, boat builders and river experiencers, helped students put on their life jackets and talked to them about safety on the river, showed them several kayaks they had made, and set partners loose to make their own sailboats — gluing masts on hulls, attaching sails, and signing and naming their own boats. At the end of the morning and afternoon sessions, everybody gathered on the riverbank to cheer the flotilla of 80-some colorful sailboats speeding along the current during the Big Boat Race.

Financial grants from the Living River Group of the Sierra Club, South Dakota Water Festival Fund, University of South Dakota Cross Disciplinary Studies Program, Vermillion Area Arts Council and the Vermillion Basin Water Development District provided for this event.

Contributions from American Rivers, Clay County Parks and Recreation, Corps of Engineers, Ina Anderberg, Missouri River Institute, U.S. National Park Service, Project WET, South Dakota Discovery Center, and the University of South Dakota Facilities Management, were also received to make this field trip possible.

Yankton Area Missouri River Sandbag Cleanup Held

Keep Yankton Beautiful, the National Park Service and Missouri River Futures celebrated National Public Lands Day (NPLD) on Saturday by supporting the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce Missouri River sandbag cleanup.

We were there to help desperate Yankton residents remove rapidly deteriorating sandbags that were at risk of getting into the Missouri National Recreational River.

NPLD "is the nation's largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy. In 2010, 170,000 volunteers built trails and bridges, removed trash and invasive plants, planted trees and restored our water resources."

Here in Yankton, we are concerned that sandbags getting into the river will clog water intakes, become tangled in boat props, will hurt or destroy wildlife — especially birds and fish, and will make our beautiful river look very

unappealing. Although we had a low volunteer turn-out, the above groups and the residents affected were all very grateful to those who did come to help. We were competing with a beautiful day and a number of other Yankton area activities.

There are still eight residents and one business unable to clear the volume of sandbags on their property and they really need community help. If you are interested in helping, please contact the Chamber at 605-665-3636. The Chamber will give you address and contact information for families who need help. This would be a great community helping-hands project for business, church and/or civic groups in the area.

A big "thank you" to our volunteers, to Subway, who donated coupons for a free sub sandwich, to Culligan who donated water, and to Cheers on Broadway in front of the Broadway Inn, who offered all volunteers a free drink of their choice.



CARMEN SCHRAMM WITH YANKTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, SIGNS-IN VOLUNTEERS FOR SATURDAY'S SANDBAG CLEANUP

MEETING MINUTES

INTERCHANGE

Interchange met at noon on Sept. 26 at Minerva's.

The meeting was called to order by President Kathy Jacobs, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Hostess Colleen Craig Davis of HSC introduced Mary Wiph Wick, an artist in residency this week at HSC. Mary is a multi-media SD artist who has been with the SD Arts Council for the past 28 years. During this time she has spent over 700 weeks in residency working with a variety of populations. Her goal is to help people interface with the world through their senses. Mary also devotes her time to her artwork, specializing in drawing, printmaking and hand marbeled patterns on paper and silk scarves. Currently she is working on botanical prints of plants native to the Black Hills area where she lives. Mary shared several beautiful pieces of her artwork and concluded her presentation by demonstrating to the attendees the fascinating art of marbelizing paper with ink and water.

The next meeting will be at noon on Monday, Oct. 3, at Minervas. Carmen Schramm is the hostess and her speaker is Marie Steckelberg.

TOASTMASTERS 1294

Yankton Toastmasters Club 1294 met at the Fryn' Pan restaurant on Saturday, Sept. 25. The meeting was called to order by president John Swenson. A short business meeting was conducted. Doug Fickbohm was the Toastmaster of the Day. Joy Winther was the Master Evaluator. Speakers were Steve Hamilton who spoke on The Appealing Berry and Angela Mann who gave a reading of Jonathon swift. Speech evaluators were Vernon Arens and Kathy Hejna. Table topics was conducted by Jeremy Skrenes. Grammarion was Harry Voeltzke. Ah counter was Janice stone and the timer was Tara Arens. Votes were counted by John Swenson. Joke Master was Mike Arens. Angela Mann was awarded the Best Speaker trophy, Kathy Hejna won for best evaluator and best in table topics was Tara Arens.

HAIR FOR A CAUSE



Kellie Casey is shown cutting 12 inches off of Webster School Counselor LaVonne Lorenzen's hair this past week as a fundraiser for the Heavenly Hats program. A donation goal of \$180 was surpassed with a total of \$315 raised for this program. The hair and money will be donated to the Heavenly Hats program and used for people who have lost their hair due to cancer. Thank you to LaVonne, Kellie, Webster School staff, students and parents who helped make this possible. (Submitted Photo)

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