

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

January, 2010



President's View

Reflections

As we begin 2010, I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of you for your time and effort dedicated to Friends of Pool 9 over the past year. We're beginning our 5th year and our membership is well over 500. We've shown continued growth and commitment every year, both in terms of number of people involved as well as accomplishments on the river. More folks have come "on board" to help us in our endeavors to promote good stewardship and conservation of the natural resource.

My volunteer sheets show that members have contributed in excess of 3000 hours of work in Pool 9 activities for 2009, which represents an in-kind value of \$61,500 for grant applications. Thus far we've received individual donations of \$6,170, and corporate or business donations of \$4,740. Grants and awards (Allamakee County Community Foundation, Alliant Energy Foundation, Canadian Pacific Railway, National Wildlife Refuge Association, and Fish and Wildlife Service) produced \$7,200 for our activities, and volunteer's boat-use for various activities (at \$50 per half day and \$100 per full day) netted \$3,350 in-kind donations as well. All of these figures are far above the levels of 2008. Remember that we are a 501 © 3 organization, and any donation you've made in 2009 (dollars or boat use) is deductible on your State and Federal income tax form. Contact me if you need proof of your donation.

We were involved in several new activities in 2009; Motorboat Operator Certification (MOCC) trained 12 of our members to operate motor boats in our activities, identified the Reno Bottoms Canoe Trail with signs, assisted with the Ferryville buoy placement project through our dollars as well as our labor, set and checked Emerald Ash Borer traps on the Refuge with the Iowa Department of Agriculture, organized a successful Pool 9 Photo Contest, and partnered with Dairyland Power and Genoa Lions Club to provide a portable toilet at their landing, bringing the total to three sites throughout Pool 9.

We received a great deal of recognition this year by WXOW (Dave Solie) and KWWL (Ron Steele) television stations, when they did a community service series on Friends of Pool 9. We were also recognized in Washington, D.C. as the National Friends Group of the Year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association, and received a Governor's Award for Volunteerism from the State of Iowa and Governor Chet Culver.

Several new activities are in the plans for 2010; a two-day Kids Digital Photo Workshop for Lansing and De Soto students, a Kids Pool 9 Photo Contest, signing a partnering agreement with US Army Corps of Engineers for a re-forestation project on the channel islands of the river, and partnering with the Iowa DNR to improve shoreline fishing at the New Albin Landing on Minnesota Slough. We'll continue our proven activities of the past; Kee 6th grade river education day, Pool-wide Clean up (May 1), kids fishing tourney during Lansing Fish Days, Pool 9 Photo Contest, and the Mississippi River Adventure Day (MRAD) for kids and parents in July.

I want to draw your attention to the McGregor District Appreciation Banquet scheduled for Saturday, February 6, 2010. It will be held at the Blackhawk Township Fire Hall Building on Highway 35, across from Cabela's north of Prairie du Chien. This had been held in Lansing for several years, but the new location will be more accessible for all travelers around the District. I remind you to call (Ann Blankenship 1-563-873-3423, Extension 14) and make your reservation ASAP so she can complete plans for the meal. [Please RSVP by Wednesday, January 27th](#) . See further details in a separate announcement later in the newsletter.

My most sincere appreciation for all your labors to the Mississippi River in 2009; and for a blessed and healthful 2010. **We can and are** making a difference on the Mississippi and across this nation. See you at the winter banquet on February 6.

John

Friends of Pool 9 Photo Contest

by Natalie Baugher

The first Friends of Pool 9 Photo Contest came to an end on December 15th, with the receipt of 27 outstanding pictures of life on and around the river. Pictures covered all three areas of competition from Recreation



and Scenic Views to Small Wonders. The committee thanks everyone who sent in photographs. You made our first photo contest a real success.

As your pictures arrived I couldn't wait to open the envelopes to see what wonders awaited me. I was amazed at the beauty each picture captured. You didn't make this an easy job for our judges to deter-

mine the winners of each category; they had some difficult decisions to make.

All your pictures and the winning entries will be on display at the McGregor District Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on Saturday, February 6, 2010. Winners will be notified by mail and the winning photos posted on our website shortly after the Volunteer Banquet. Please plan to attend the dinner and view all the wonderful pictures of Pool 9. Thank you again for your interesting perspective of the beauty of Pool 9.

Find a sampling of the pictures below.



Friends offer Digital Photo Workshops for Nature in Spring 2010

Digital photos of Bald Eagles, deer, and many other forms of wildlife, plus various types of beautiful wildflowers, and other gorgeous scenes of nature have become very popular in recent years. This is largely because film has been replaced by a more convenient technology; digital cameras and lenses with amazing magnification capabilities have become quite inexpensive; and, especially, that very impressive photos will result when a few helpful techniques are learned and put to use.

Despite the popularity of digital photos in magazines and other publications, and on the Internet, very few people have had any training in the best ways to use digital cameras, or have done repeated hands-on experimenting with this new equipment. Now, an opportunity to do all these things – and at no cost – will be offered this coming spring.

Members of the board of directors of the Friends of Pool 9 have spent the last weeks of 2009 planning for a series of three digital photography workshops, to take place on consecutive days, in spring 2010. A serious photographer with many years of experience, who has delivered these kinds of workshops previously, will lead the locally held sessions. A number of other skilled photographers will also be present to provide one-on-one assistance. The following describes the basics of what we will offer.

Arrangements have been made to provide several dozen good quality digital cameras with good magnification capabilities. All workshop participants will learn how to take high quality digital photos, and most importantly, will be able to practice repeatedly by taking photos outdoors. Some cameras may also be on loan for a short time following the workshops.

Our plan is to host a digital photo workshop for adults on a Saturday, most likely in late March. This training will introduce non-photographers to digital cameras and the best ways to use them, and it will also help

individuals who have taken photos off and on for years but wish to improve their skills and the results they have been getting.

On the Thursday and Friday immediately prior to the Saturday adult workshop, we will offer similar, but less technical training along with ample time for hands-on use of cameras to students who live near Pool 9 on both sides of the river. One day will be for students in the DeSoto School District, and the other day will be for students in the Eastern Allamakee Community School District. Thought has been given to paying for buses to take participants to nearby natural areas for their hands-on experiences with the cameras.

The quest to capture high quality photos causes individuals of all ages to slow down and look carefully for the best photo opportunities within the natural world. There are endless opportunities for newly trained photographers to become more deeply connected to our refuge and its diversity of habitats. Local scenery and wildlife in the nearby bluffs likewise provide unending opportunities for camera users to enjoy, relax and learn.

Digital photos taken by participants during the three workshops may be used in any number of ways that are now under discussion. Examples include: downloading all photos onto CDs that each participant can keep (and email their photos to others); creating attractive prints of selected photos for participants; providing prizes for winners of photo contests in several categories; and displaying winning photos in school newsletters or yearbooks, or on school websites or the Friends of Pool 9 website.

Learning the simple techniques that experts use to capture incredible photos of wildlife and other scenes in nature is easier than you might think.

For full details about each of the three upcoming workshops, and how you can register, please watch your website < www.friendsofpool9.org > in late January or February. Alternatively, you may phone any member of your board of directors.



this species. If you have this as an ornamental in your garden, please be careful not to allow it to spread into the wild. Better yet if it is growing wild along your roadside or near a stream on your property we are asking you to consider eradicating it.

If you would like a fact sheet with information on how to control this species, please call Tim Loose at 563-873-3423 ext 11 or email him at tim_loose@fws.gov.

Left unchecked our streams and rivers can quickly be overrun by this plant. The picture below shows how aggressive this species is.



There's a new kid on the block, and it's quickly outwearing its welcome! **Japanese knotweed** is the latest non-native, invasive species to find its way into Northeast Iowa and Southwest Wisconsin.

Originally planted as a garden ornamental, it has escaped and is becoming increasingly common along stream corridors and right-of-ways. The species forms dense stands that crowd out native vegetation, degrading plant and animal habitat.

The resource agencies managing the public lands adjacent to Pool 9 are asking land owners to take an active role in helping to eradicate



Volunteer Appreciation Dinner
5:30 p.m. Saturday, February 6, 2010

This year's Banquet will be held at the Blackhawk Township Fire Hall, directly across from the Country Inn and Suites, Prairie du Chien, WI (just north of Cabela's on Hwy 35).

All members of the Friends of Pool 9 and their families are invited to the McGregor District Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.

Clayton Ridge Farm, out of Guttenberg, will be catering the meal. All you need to do is show up and enjoy yourself!

The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. **Dinner will be served at 6:00 pm.** Come early and meet other volunteers from around the District. An awards ceremony will follow the dinner.

Please RSVP by Wednesday, January 27th Ann Blankenship at **563-873-3423 ext. 14** or send an email to **ann_blankenship@fws.gov**. We need to let the caterer know how many people will be attending the banquet, so we greatly appreciate a timely response. We hope that you will join us for this evening celebration!

Tim Yager, District Manager and the McGregor District Staff

FRIENDS

2009 in Pictures



Friends of Pool 9
P.O. Box 455
Lansing, IA 52151



The Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. is a grassroots citizen action group, whose sole purpose is the protection, restoration, and preservation of our natural resources. The 500 member organization has no dues requirements, and pays for its activities through donations and grants. It is a 501c3 federally tax exempt organization, all donations are tax deductible. The communities that border Pool 9 are its primary contributors and supporters.



708 N. Jackson St.
Charles City, IA 50616
866-508-3257

Calendar of Events

Volunteer Appreciation Banquet
Saturday, February 6, 2010

Digital Photography Workshop
Tentative date – Saturday, March 27, 2010

May Day on the Mississippi
Pool Wide Cleanup Day
Saturday, May 1, 2010

Mississippi River Adventure Day
Monday, July 19, 2010