



MISSISSIPPI MAKEOVER

A Plan for Restoration, Just Around the Bend

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Open house kicks off first-ever ‘great plan for the great river’

Hastings, Minn. — Citizens can learn about the Mississippi Makeover project, the first locally led comprehensive plan for restoring the river south of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, at an open house Thursday, Jan. 28, from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Hastings High School, 200 General Sieben Drive.

“This is the first great plan for the great river, the result of area citizens working with several agencies from both Minnesota and Wisconsin to share resources and create a regional gem for recreation, wildlife and economic opportunities,” said Phil Vieth of the project’s citizen advisory group.

The project includes Spring Lake, the Mississippi River above Lake Pepin and the Lower Vermillion River. Spring Lake is a wide and shallow expanse of the Mississippi upstream of Hastings, located in what’s called Pool 2. The Mississippi River portion includes Pool 3, which extends from Lock and Dam 2 in Hastings to Lock and Dam 3 near Red Wing. This pool includes many large floodplain lakes and the confluence with the St. Croix River. The Lower Vermillion River starts with a 60-foot waterfall in Hastings and travels parallel to Pool 3 for 20 miles, often mingling with the Mississippi through a series of channels and wetlands.

These water bodies suffer from poor water clarity caused by sediment, algae and other suspended materials. The cloudy water is aesthetically unpleasing to people and harmful to fish, wildlife and aquatic plants. The sediment contributes to the filling-in of Lake Pepin downstream.

The Mississippi Makeover plan focuses on managing the river in the Hastings area and downstream, including building islands, removing rough fish, and perhaps temporarily lowering water levels to improve water clarity, stimulate vegetation growth, and enhance river habitats. By clearing up the water, habitat for fish and wildlife would improve. Clear water fosters additional recreation opportunities, such as swimming, fishing, boating, wildlife watching, hiking, camping, hunting and trapping. Economic opportunities, such as tourism, commercial fishing, and product sales, would also increase.

To track progress of the project, citizens and agencies have selected several indicators to measure improvements in the health of the Mississippi River, including water clarity, aquatic vegetation, sedimentation rates, mussels, fish and waterfowl.

Scientists and representatives from several federal, state and local agencies will have stations at the Jan. 28 open house to distribute information and answer questions. A panel discussion will take place at 4 and 6 p.m.

With funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Dakota County is coordinating this project with assistance from partners including Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Army Corps of Engineers, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, and others.

For more information about the Mississippi Makeover project, contact Laura Jester, watershed conservationist with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, at 651-480-7784 or www.dakotaswcd.org.

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Broadcast version

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The river suffers from poor water clarity caused by sediment, algae and other suspended materials. The cloudy water is aesthetically unpleasing to people and harmful to fish, wildlife and aquatic plants. The sediment is also harming Lake Pepin by settling to the lake bottom and making the lake shallower.

The Mississippi Makeover plan focuses on managing the river in the Hastings area and downstream, including building islands, removing rough fish and perhaps temporarily lowering water levels to stimulate plant growth and improve water clarity and river habitats. With funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Dakota County is coordinating this project with assistance from partners including MN Department of Natural Resources, Army Corps of Engineers, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, and others.

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