



Friends of Wild River State Park Newsletter

January, 2009

www.wildriverparkfriends.org • info@wildriverparkfriends.org • 651-583-2926 (Visitor Center)

2008 - A Year of Change

By Paul Kurvers, Wild River State Park Manager

This past year has been a period of persistent and dramatic change. Significant change has occurred with our national and state economies. The housing market bubble has burst. The national and international banking and financial industries have been in turmoil and gas prices hit an all time high. Historic change also occurred politically as our country elected its first minority President. There has also been a significant change made in the way funding for our state's natural resources will occur in the future. The passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment will dedicate a portion of the state sales tax to fund efforts to conserve, restore, and protect natural resources and support and enhance parks and trails for the next 25 years. And finally, most recently there

has been an organizational change within the DNR that has merged the division Parks and Recreation with Trails and Waterways to form a new division.

Despite all these changes, people continue to visit and recreate in our state parks as evidenced by increases in a number of park areas. Specifically, at Wild River, we had increases in day use visitors, tent and RV campers, equestrian campers, and an increase in the use of our camper cabins and guesthouse. Attendance at the Visitor Center and interpretive programs also increased. Additionally, the concessionaires that operate the park's ski and canoe rental operations had increased business and revenues over the previous year.

This past year was also very successfully in terms what the park was able to accomplish in the area of resource management. Park staff completed five prescribed burns this past spring as well as three in the fall, totaling more than 130 acres. According to park assistant manager Shawn Donais, this represents the largest number of burns completed in the park in over 8 years. These burns combined

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*"Oak Savanna" area
near the park road burns.*



Let It Snow!

By Dave Kovlosky,
Friends Group President

There are three things on my mind as I write my column for the winter newsletter. First, let it snow! The Candlelight Ski is coming up on January 10th!. In our family, when you reach the age of three, you are expected to start cross country skiing. My grandson has reached that age and I want his first Candlelight ski to be a great experience.

Second, we have heard disappointing remarks of late as to the number of children and young adults using the outdoors. My wife Jan and I canoed the St. Croix from the Sunrise landing to the Park on the 4th of July, and were happy to see many young adults enjoying the river. Jan and I attended other Park and Friends sponsored activities and events throughout the summer saw many children, young adults and families enjoying them.

What can you do to keep good programs to attract children, young adults, and families to WRSP? Later in this newsletter, Gary Noren remembers Barb Ledbetter Nelson, one of the founding members of the Friends of WRSP. Barb was a great example of volunteering her time and advocating for WRSP. The Friends of WRSP is looking for more people like Barb to serve on the Friends board. The Friends of WRSP need your help!! It is time to step up and volunteer at one of our events!

Hope to see you at the Candlelight Ski Jan. 10th or our next meeting on Sat., Jan. 31st, 9am at the Visitor Center!

Naturalist Notes

By Dave Crawford, Park Naturalist

We've had a very successful Sesquicentennial year for the park. Besides the Friends-sponsored Summer Guest Series with more presenters than ever, we had help from MK Everts to obtain guest presenters from the Minnesota Aquarium Society (hands-on electroshocking/minnow-seining), the Minnesota Archaeological Society (flint knapping, archaeological preservation, and atlatl throwing) and the East Central Purple Martin Recovery Project. We also hosted a photo workshop with Gary Nelson and astronomy presentations by Kenny Bahmer with help from Friends of Wild River.

Field trip participation by schools this fall was great, with 12 schools participating in prairie restoration seed collecting. Seed collection this year has tallied up increased amounts of critical species collected by Species Stewards, and the total value of seed processed so far is over \$40,000. Park staff machine-harvested native grass seed to supplement this, so we should have a good planting season this coming spring.



Park staff use a mechanical harvester to supplement the prairie seed that's harvested by hand.

Having two summer interns (one interpretive program, one Prairie Care) helped diversify program offerings, resume offering Friday evening programs for campers, and produce more short-term displays. We hope to fill two similar positions for summer 2009.

There is a region-wide project to develop touch-screen kiosks for visitor information in state parks. Wild River's kiosk will be located in the visitor center lobby and will use a trackball and "armored" glass screen, since it's in an unsupervised location when staff are not in the building.

Geocaching has been very successful in drawing new users. The Geocaching History Challenge cache, part of a system-wide program initiated for the Sesquicentennial, has gone through over 900 souvenir cards for people who find the cache. Our puzzle cache, Wild River State Park History Cache I, has so far only been found by one family – it's a tough



puzzle, and solving it requires visiting numerous interpretive kiosks scattered around the park. Over 800 people have downloaded the clue sheet from the park website. The Wild River GPS Challenge, an online guide to a short list of less well-known locations of interest in the park, has also had a high number of viewers. Minnesota State Parks will begin a new geocaching activity state-wide next summer, a Wildlife Safari activity with a goal of participants collecting souvenir cards of each park's most representative wildlife species.

I'm on the committee which will develop the information for the cards.

Another initiative to draw new users is to place audio podcasts on the DNR website. I've done one for Wild River, which you can listen to online by clicking the link on Wild River's Web page at www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/wild_river/index.html

The Sesquicentennial snowshoe hike to the Annie Boyce farm site last February has continued to have spinoffs. Boyce family descendants who saw the program announced in newspapers sent copies to relatives who then contacted us, and as a result we've sent copies of Annie's maps of the farm to several people, conducted an oral history interview with Annie's granddaughter, collected copies of many historic family photos, and hosted the Boyce family reunion this summer. Relatives from as far away as California, Colorado, and Washington participated in a brief tour of the farm site, including great-great-great-great-grandchildren of the farm's founders, Silas and Margaret Boyce, Annie's parents. Hikes to the site will continue to be part of the scheduled programs here in years to come. You can join me for a snowshoe hike there on February 7, or for any of the other snowshoe hikes offered in January and February. I'm also looking forward to another great Candlelight Ski/Hike on January 10!

Wild River State Park CANDLELIGHT

❄️ *Ski • Snowshoe • Hike*



Saturday
January 10th
6-9 pm

❄️ **Join Friends of Wild River State Park** ❄️
for a fun moonlit evening of cross-country
skiing, hiking or snowshoeing on over five miles of
candlelit trail. Enjoy refreshments, indoor and outdoor
programs for all ages, musical entertainment, and the
BIGGEST prairie bonfire around to warm your buns on!
IT'S WINTERTIME FUN FOR ALL AGES!

To get to Wild River State Park go 14 miles east of North Branch or 10 miles northwest of Taylor's Falls on MN 95. At Almelund go north on CR 12 about 3 miles to the park entrance. Vehicle permits and ski passes are required. Annual ski passes can be purchased at any ELS vendor or by filling out a mail-in application at the park office on your arrival. Freewill donation for refreshments provided by Friends of Wild River State Park.

❄️
SKI & SNOWSHOE RENTAL AVAILABLE
Call the park for more info: 651-583-2125





Memorandum for a Friend

By Gary Noren

Our dear friend and Friends co-founder, Barb Ledbetter Nelson, died suddenly on June 25, 2008. She served faithfully on the Board of the Friends of Wild River State Park from its inception - as Secretary, Corresponding Secretary,

and (always) as Recruiter Extraordinaire. I'm guessing that many of you reading this are Friends because of Barb's personal interest in you and perhaps, her invitation to join the Friends ... or the Board.

About 20 years ago, Barb, Bill Carlson and this writer had a meeting with then Park Manager Chuck Kartak about the need to establish a Friends group for the park. Barb immediately understood the vital role a Friends group could fill in providing the necessary public relations for the community and in offering the political support system for the park in its dealings with the DNR and other agencies and organizations. Many times, Barb was called on to write the letter summarizing the Board's position on sometimes difficult decisions. She never backed away from a conflict.

Among Barb's many interests, land preservation via a conservation easement was one on which she spent considerable time in retirement. She and Stan protected much of their land with a conservation easement and Barb worked tirelessly encouraging others (especially those near Wild

River State Park) to do the same.

A book nook is being built for the Visitor Center with lumber provided by Friends' members Dennis Johnson and Tessa Hill. Books are being donated from her collection by her husband, Stan. A park bench will be dedicated in her honor next summer. A Barb Nelson Memorial Scholarship for naturalist interns is being considered, provided additional funding can be secured.

Thanks for your great smile Barb, for your never ending work for libraries, for all you did for the Friends and Wild River State Park, and for your dedication to improving the environment. We miss you!



An bookshelf will be located along this wall in the Visitor Center in Barb's honor with oak boards donated by Dennis Johnson and Tessa Hill.

Wild River Youth Nordic Ski Club

to hold practice at the park beginning Jan. 4

2009 will be Wild River Youth Nordic Ski Club's third year at Wild River State Park. The WRYNSC brings the joy of cross-country skiing to local youth.

The MYSL provides a structured 8-week curriculum at six different ski levels. Groups of skiers ages 4-14 will meet at the Trail Center on Sundays between 2 and 4pm. Park staff hopes to groom several special areas around the Horse Camp to accommodate up to 40 young skiers and their coaches.

The club is organized by a volunteer coordinator and volunteer coaches. The club leader welcomes help with snacks,



drinks, assisting group coaches, and even being a group coach (several spots are available!). Group coaches need to make a commitment to eight Sunday afternoons, understand the fundamentals of skiing, and have fun! Volunteers do not need to be an experts, just willing to help!

Please contact John Grund, 651-674-6096 or jmgdape@yahoo.com for more information or go to www.mysl.com.

Have you paid your Friends of WRSP dues? Dues are the Friends main source of funding for programs we support at the park. Send in the form on the back of this newsletter and help support Wild River!

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS



January and
early February, 2009

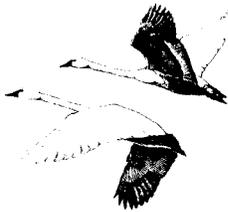


Saturday, January 10 - Annual Candlelight Event, 6 - 9 p.m.

Enjoy winter recreation under the full moon! Ski one of several beginner-level trails illuminated by candles, and stop by the bonfire on the Amador Prairie ski trail. Snowshoe and walking route also lighted. If there's not enough snow, ski trails will be lighted for walking. Lighted trails begin at the trail center, where ski rentals and refreshments are available. Advance ski rental reservation recommended for this event. Call (651) 257-0685. Snowshoe rental also available.

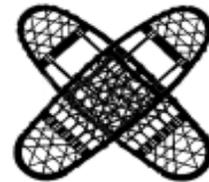


Live music by Gigi Nauer at the trail center. Along the trail, stop at the visitor center to warm up, snack, visit Ripley the Bull Snake, and view a short program on the beauty of nature. Event sponsored by the Friends of Wild River State Park, www.friendsofwildriver.com. Minnesota Ski Pass required (unless you are just walking or snowshoeing). Ski passes may be purchased at the park the night of the event.



Saturday, January 17 - Amik's Pond Snowshoe Hike, 2-4 p.m. Age 10 and up. Begin at the visitor center for a discussion of what different kinds of snowshoes are for and how to use them, then hike (with or without snowshoes, depending on the snow cover) around a beaver pond to look for signs of the plants and animals that live there. We may also see trumpeter swans on the St. Croix River. Snowshoes provided at no charge. Advance reservation required! (Phone number at bottom of page.)

Saturday, January 24 - Snowshoe Dry Creek, 2-4 p.m. Age 10 and up. Snowshoe (or hike) from the visitor center to an oak savanna remnant. Try a short hill climb, and see how the park is working to restore this rare landscape. Check out animal tracks along the way. Snowshoes provided at no charge. Advance reservation required! (Phone number at bottom of page.)



Saturday, January 31 - Windfall Trail Snowshoe Hike, 2-4 p.m. Age 10 and up. Begin at the visitor center for a discussion of what different kinds of snowshoes are for and how to use them, then hike a level route (with or without snowshoes, depending on the snow cover) through the woods to look for animal tracks and other signs of wildlife. Snowshoes provided at no charge. Advance reservation required! (Phone number at bottom of page.)

Saturday, February 7 - Annie Boyce's Home Farm on Snowshoes, 1 to 3 p.m.

Try beginner-level snowshoeing on a trip into the past. The Boyces established a farm on Military Road in 1874, near today's visitor center. Their oldest child, Annie, drew a detailed map of the farm's fields, buildings, and play areas. Much has changed, but you can still tour the farm using Annie's map and your imagination. Distance about 1.5 miles with frequent stops. Not enough snow? We'll walk if necessary. Begin at visitor center. Limited to age 10 and up. Snowshoes provided at no charge. Advance reservation required! Call phone number below.

In case of bad weather, outdoor interpretive programs will be held inside the visitor center instead. Call the Park Naturalist at (651) 583-2925 for interpretive program reservations, or the park office at (651) 583-2125 for camping and trail information.

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with the volunteer efforts of those involved with the Prairie Care Program will help us work towards the goal of restoring and maintaining prairie, and oak savannah within the park.

In November, the park conducted another successful managed deer hunt. In total, about 150 hunters participated in the four day hunt harvesting 95 deer. As has been the case in the three previous years, this falls hunt was an ear-a-buck hunt, which required hunters to harvest an antlerless deer prior to taking

a buck. This type of hunt favors the harvest of female deer and thus reduces the breeding and overall population of deer in the park. In the long run, a deer population that is in balance with the environment will result in less damage to forb, tree, and shrub species and promote healthy prairie and forest plant communities within the park.

Finally, remember that the Minnesota State Park annual vehicle permit makes a great gift that lasts for 365 days! Hope to see you this winter on the park's ski and snowshoe trails.



**PLEASE POST THE Moonlight Ski Poster AND INVITE
YOUR FRIENDS TO COME OUT TO
WILD RIVER STATE PARK on Saturday, January 10th!**

Friends Group Members will be at the Visitor Center
with cookies and hot cider! FREEWILL DONATION

Friends of Wild River State Park Membership

- Individual Friend - \$10 per year
- Family Friend - \$20 per year
- Community Friend - \$100 per year
- Add an additional \$10 and be a member of MN Parks and Trails

Mail memberships to: Bill Carlson
810 Delwood St. S.
Cambridge, MN 55008

