

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

May, 2019

www.friendsofpool9.org • www.facebook.com/friendsofpool9 • email: fop9sec@gmail.com • Telephone: 920-948-2245



President's View

Over the years since our beginning many have served Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. in lots of different ways. From the original hand-full of "founding fathers", to those that have served on the Board of Directors, to the past Presidents and Treasurers, and to all of you that have served on committees, and together have compiled thousands of volunteer hours "in the field" doing whatever is necessary to invest in our dream, we say "Thank You". The organization has moved from its "infancy stage" to that of "middle life" and we're now into our fourteenth year. Our membership swelled to over 800 a few years ago because of the very nature of the organization, and the sincere interest and support it has reaped; to be part of the best Pool on the Upper Mississippi River. It's important that we do everything in our power to keep it clean and available for public use, and at the same time maintain a balance between the needs of nature and the desires of man. This was, and still is our purpose; to create an ecosystem understanding along the river that meets the needs of all users, wildlife and humans, and helps everyone become better stewards of the resource.

It's because of my love and appreciation for the Mississippi River and Pool 9 that I responded "Yes", when asked by the Board to fill the unexpired term of Sue English as President of Friends of Pool 9. Because of unexpected personal commitments Sue feels she could not do justice to the role of the president. I will serve FOP9 in that capacity to the end of 2019. Thanks to Sue for her leadership, her wisdom, and enthusiasm. She will continue to play an important role in FOP9 and as Vice-President to the end of her term as well.

We, as a Board are beginning to show signs of longevity (we're getting old), and as such need to find some younger members to serve. Please give it some thought and if moved, contact a Board member and express your willingness to help run this great organization.

Let's hope the river eventually settles down and we can all enjoy its splendor and beauty. See you on the river.

John Verdon, President Protem

Vice President's View

As someone who has served possibly the shortest term as a president, since William H. Harrison, 9th President of the U.S. (He died one month after being inaugurated of typhoid and pneumonia), I feel compelled to offer an explanation for my short tenure.

John Verdon's description of his love of the Mississippi River mirrors mine exactly. This is why I joined Friends of Pool 9, first as a volunteer, and for the last 4 years as a Board member. Thus, when at a meeting in December, I was asked to take on the role of President. I was honored. As I look at the current Directors, I realized that each man and woman (1) that make up our Board has more knowledge in their little finger about the issues that affect our Refuge, than I have in my entire being. Yet I said "yes".

Any person who has served on a committee or board with me knows that if I join an organization, I will not be content to be "just a member". I will put my whole self into that group. If I can't do what is expected of me to the very best of my ability, I will not accept the task. Since saying Yes to the presidency, personal and family issues have happened that require my attention. I also still feel like a student sitting in a classroom with the very best educators available as my mentors. Because of the time restraints of the former and that I am still learning from the latter, I asked to return to my role as Vice President.

I will continue to serve on committees. I will continue to advocate for participation by our over 800 members. Many of you are too far away to participate in activities, but support us financially. Others can join in our endeavors. Look at the list of upcoming events. We will be asking for volunteers to help. Finally, you, as a member can help promote our mission: to conserve the cultural and natural resources within Pool 9 and to foster the wise public use and enjoyment of the Refuge and the Upper Mississippi River.

Thank you.

Sue English

Tim Loose/Friends of Pool 9 Scholarship

Board members presented scholarship checks to Eastern Allamakee and De Soto High School on Friday, February 1, 2019. Jeannine Hisel, Kee Guidance Counselor and Linzi Gronning, Superintendent at De Soto accepted the donations to their scholarship funds.



Friends of Pool 9 presented \$1,250 checks to both Lansing Kee and De Soto High Schools to be divided into three scholarships at each school. L. to R. Sue English, Bruce ReVoir, Jeannine Hisel, Bob Henkel, John Verdon.

FOP9 Board members presented a \$1,250 check to Linzi Gronning, Superintendent at De Soto Community Schools. L. to R. John Verdon, Sue English (President FOP9), Superintendent Gronning, Bruce ReVoir, Jerry Boardman, Bob Henkel.



The scholarships are offered by FOP9 to support volunteer efforts in the Pool 9 area, and stimulate interest in a career promoting the environment and/or the river ecosystem. Each school will offer a Volunteer Award (\$250) for a non-college bound student that has volunteered in their community, and a 2 Year Technical program (\$500), and a 4-Year College program (\$500) supporting coursework in the environment and/or the river. Tim Loose was the US Fish & Wildlife Specialist from the McGregor District that befriended area citizens and assisted the formation of Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. in 2006. He was paramount in its direction and programs and quite frankly “would not have happened without him”. His personality and desire to work with local outdoor enthusiasts in promoting the wise use of the river resource has made Pool 9 one of the best on the 261-mile long Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Tim died in November, 2018 from cancer (multiple myeloma) at the age of 63. Friends of Pool 9 now has more than 800 members nationwide involved in activities and programs promoting the environment.

On May 5, 2019 three Friends of Pool 9/Time Loose scholarships were awarded to students at De Soto High School. Friends of Pool 9 Board members presented financial scholarship awards to three students. The \$250 Civic Volunteering award was presented to Jake Sikora, Leah Meyer received the \$500 2-Year Technical School award, and Taylor Olson received the \$500 4-Year College award. In addition, at the May board meeting the FOP9 Directors awarded Elynn Russell-Miller a \$750 cash award to help defray expenses as she attends the Washington Youth Summit on the environment in Washington, D.C. during summer, 2019. Her teacher recommendation stated that “Now, more than ever, we need young leaders dedicated to conserving the diversity and beauty of our environment.”



FOP9 Directors voted unanimously to support Elynn Russell-Miller on her trip to Washington, with a \$750 cash award. L. to R. Lisa Welsh, Joe Mazanec, John Mitchell, Sue English, Jerry Boardman, Elynn, Larry Quamme, Bob Seeley, Blake Schoh, Bob Henkel, Ric Zarwell, John Verdon.

The FOP9 Board of Directors feel strongly about supporting our Mission statement, “to conserve, to foster the wise use of, and to educate”. It’s our responsibility to teach and inspire our youth to become future stewards of the natural resource. These were also the guiding principles of Tim Loose, and we are proud to have been a part of his life. That’s why we have decided to make it a priority to financially help young people entering an environment related educational field.

Those wishing to help finance this endeavor can make a donation to Friends of Pool 9 in Tim’s memory and at the same time support the scholarship program. Simply add “Tim Loose Scholarship” to the memo line on your check. They should be written payable to Friends of Pool 9 and sent to: Friends of Pool 9, PO Box 455, Lansing, Iowa 52151.

Friends of Pool 9 Supports Driftless Center Purchase of Kayaks

The Mission statement for Friends of Pool 9 encourages outdoor activities on the Mississippi. In January the Board of Directors donated toward the purchase of kayaks for the educational program at the Driftless Center. Assistant Director Jarrod Olson and Conservation Naturalist Ross Geerdes used the \$5,000 donation toward the purchase of fifteen kayaks and in so doing, will offer an expanded program on river adventures at the Center.



*FOP9 Directors met for a picture at the Allamakee County Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center on January 22, 2019.
L. to R. Bruce ReVoir, Bob Henkel, John Verdon, Larry Quamme (Treasurer), Ross Geerdes, Jim Janett (ACCB Director).*

The kayaks were ordered from Current Designs in Winona, Minnesota and included a delivery charge. But since the Driftless Center had their own trailer they were able to bargain an extra kayak (at no charge) if they transported the kayaks themselves. The purchase includes eleven tandem and four solo kayaks. They were picked up in April and have already been in the water with students. Staff at the Center complimented Friends of Pool 9 for their donation and commitment to this project.



*FOP9 Directors and guests view the fifteen recently purchased kayaks for the Driftless Center river education program.
L. to R. Ric Zarwell, Blake Schoh, John Verdon, Bob Henkel, John Mitchell, Joe Mazanec, Jarrod Olson, Larry Quamme, Jerry Boardman, Bob Seeley, Sue English, Lisa Welsh.*

Geerdes and Olson will offer kayak instruction and lead small groups on an adventure through the Mississippi River backwater. On Thursday, May 7th New Albin teacher Debra Masek and her 5th grade Eastern Allamakee Community Schools students enjoyed a kayak outing at Village Creek Landing.



EACS students launch their kayaks after getting final instructions from Driftless Center Naturalist Ross Geerdes reviewing the importance of water safety and proper kayak techniques.



Geerdes and other chaperones paddle among the kayaks as EACS students have their first "on the water" encounter and begin developing their navigation skills and the enjoyment of kayaking.

Inquiries for small group kayak instruction seminars can be made by contacting Erin Cubbon (Office Manager) at accb.officemanager@gmail.com or calling 563-538-0400.

**Members Need to Check Out
Our New FOP9 Website!**

friendsofpool9.org

Friends of Pool 9 CO-SPONSOR Eagle Day

This is the 9th year FOP9 has been a co-sponsor of Bald Eagle Day in Ferryville, Wisconsin with the Ferryville Tourism Council. Again this year one of the features was the "Spread Your Wings" banner that has the real wingspan of the American Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, American Kestrel and Hummingbird on it along with logos of both sponsoring organizations. It was actively used by the children to get a photo and check out how big the wings really are of these birds. More than 50 children made bird feeders and paper bird puppets throughout the day. There were more children this year than ever before attending the event. This is a free program including the great eagle and owl cookies, cake pops and Kickapoo Orchards Apple Cider.



This photo shows four lucky award winners at the 2019 Ferryville Tourism Bald Eagle Day seminar, as they spread their wings and show they're not yet big enough to fly from the nest. Submitted photo.

Attendance was 250 plus, and visitors came from Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois to enjoy the experience of seeing the American Bald Eagle, Kestrel, Red Tailed Hawk and Great Horned Owl up close and personal. The University of Minnesota Raptor Resource Center was the presenter for the live bird program which was very well attended at both the 10:30 A.M. and 2 P.M. programs. Chloris Lowe, Ho Chunk Nation, presented "Walking in the footsteps of the Ho Chunk" and the early morning program included Eagle Nest building with Michael White.

FOP9 was in charge of the famous "Hooting Contest" which gives folks of all ages a chance to show off their skills at sounding like an owl. Many thanks to Judges Larry Quamme and Tom White for heading up this part of the program. It's always a pleasure to have John Howe and Amy Ries of the Decorah, Iowa Raptor Resource Project sharing their stories of this world wide attraction and telling about what has happened with eagles of the past years. Their information about the American Bald Eagle and other raptors of the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge educates those attending about habitat, bird watching, and how to protect this precious resource.

Many thanks to Sue English and her team of FOP9 Volunteers who staffed the FOP9 booth, sold our items and helped the event in so many ways. We are looking forward to 2020 and another great Eagle Day.

Beach and Fire Ring Cleaning

During every flooding event sand is washed away from the down slope side of the fire rings and the rings need to be lowered back into the sand. This is a major work activity for the twenty fire rings placed on area beaches by Friends of Pool 9. The rings help beach users keep the fire pit in the same place year after year, and in so doing keep items burned in the rings where they can be cleaned periodically. We are fortunate to have one of our FOP9 members volunteer to organize the cleaning of the fire rings. Kevin Quillin will assign volunteers to certain fire rings for summer 2019 cleaning. Fire rings are located on Lansing beach (immediately above Lansing) on the Iowa side at River Mile 664, on the Wisconsin beaches at mile marker 664.5, more are located on the Iowa side at RM 665.5, and on the Iowa side at Hummingbird beach at RM 666. Additional fire rings are located on the beaches at RM 671.5 on Boot Jack Island across from Black Hawk Park. All fire rings are available for volunteers to "adopt" and keep clean during the months of June, July, and August. Gloves and garbage bags will be supplied when you meet with Kevin for instructions. Contact Kevin at 563-568-4334 or email at aquillin52@gmail.com.

Someone also has to maintain and clean our Pool 9 beaches on a regular basis monthly or seasonally. Bob Henkel and Blake Schoh have agreed to Co-Chair and organize this activity. If you're willing to be part of the Beach Work Group to help maintain and clean the beaches please contact Bob at 563-538-4864 (email robhenkel46@gmail.com) or Blake at 563-538-4454 (email info@ssboatrentals.com). When a river flooding event occurs (as occurred this spring for two months) the sand along the river side of the fire ring is washed away and the ring needs to be settled deeper into the sand. It's a time consuming problem and is rather tedious. We need individuals willing to help to contact Bob or Blake and agree to go to your assigned beach at your leisure and straighten or deepen the fire ring(s) you've "adopted".

A beach cleaning work day to remove downed trees and spray for Poison Ivy will be organized through the FOP9 Work Group as well, a little later in the summer. We will use the same email list as in the past and add all others willing to help. Let's hope for a beautiful summer with lots of "river-time," when we can enjoy our spectacular Mississippi River and Pool 9.

Our National Bird is Doing Fine in Pool 9

Ric Zarwell

There's great news for all who acknowledge and appreciate Bald Eagles as being the symbol of our nation! A comprehensive 4-day Bald Eagle nest survey made by boat during very high river levels in April, 2019 found and documented a total of 215 nests within the Pool 9 area, of which 157 were confirmed to be active (73% active), as opposed to 147 active nests in 2018. Pool 9, Upper Mississippi River is 31 miles long, and includes the small communities of New Albin, Lansing, Victory, De Soto, Ferryville, and Lynxville. These totals appear to demonstrate that more Bald Eagle nesting is concentrated within our Pool 9 portion of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge than anywhere else.

This year's fascinating eagle nest survey project was again led by long-time Friends of Pool 9 Board member, commercial fisherman, and expert river man, Jerry Boardman. Don Lathrop and this writer assisted throughout, and photographer Bob Modersohn joined the adventure for a day. All are members of Friends of Pool 9, who conducted this effort in support of the understaffed refuge district office. All data is submitted to, and becomes the property of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



An adult American Bald Eagle majestically sits atop its nest in Pool 9, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Submitted photo by Bob Modersohn.

As some readers will know, sharp-eyed observers can sometimes find up to a few dozen Bald Eagles near open water sources of food during especially severe winters, and this is important. But such gatherings are only temporary and often occur during spring and fall migrations. Reproduction is the obvious key to the increasing population of our noble and photogenic national symbol, and this is where Pool 9 truly stands out. Ongoing research has not uncovered documentation of a higher concentration of nesting Bald Eagles anywhere within all of North America, which is the normal range of our national bird. The natural habitat, available food resources (predominantly dead or dying fish) and lack of human disturbance within Pool 9, are conditions all members of our Friends organization and all visitors to this region can take great pride in.



This American Bald Eagle attempts a landing and balances on the highest tip of maple branches in the backwaters of the Mississippi River in Pool 9. Submitted photo by Ric Zarwell.

Bidding during the auction at the Friends of Pool 9 Annual Meeting last September led to participation in this year's eagle nest survey for this writer. Funds raised in this way support this nest monitoring initiative and other valuable projects for Friends of Pool 9. It is hoped that opportunities to experience so many gorgeous nesting eagles by boat - at close but not too-close range - will be put up for bids again in the future. Ongoing conversations while on the survey boat provide interesting and little known details about Bald Eagle behavior and ecology. And this incredible wildlife experience also offers quick photographic opportunities and is sure to be remembered for a very long time, if not forever.

Because analysis of eagle data as well as data from investigations of other wildlife are ongoing, US Fish & Wildlife Service staff now require use of the following disclaimer: "Data exceeds statistical relevancy and is to be used for informational purposes only."

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



2019 Friends of Pool 9 Annual River Cleanup On Hold

The Friends of Pool 9 Board of Directors have made the decision to “place on hold” the Annual Pool 9 River Cleanup because of higher than normal water levels. The Board will select a date when river conditions are safe for those venturing out onto the river. The Mississippi River at the Lansing gage station reached almost 18 feet in early April and has taken months to get to a safe level. The presence or absence of spring rains will dictate when and if there is a clean up of Pool 9 this year. The Board is considering a possible clean up date in June or July.

In 2018, the 136 volunteers collected and removed 11,000 pounds of debris from the river corridor. Over the years Friends of Pool 9 members have removed more than 151,000 pounds (75 tons) of debris on the clean ups and recorded 8,755 hours of volunteer time, for the 31 mile-long Pool 9 of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. This represents a tremendous effort and commitment by a loyal group of concerned individuals, and is greatly appreciated. When a decision is made by the Board to have a Clean Up we will let you know, and hope you can join us in cleaning and protecting our valuable natural resource. We can not do this without you.

Calendar of Events & Chairman for 2019

River Clean Up - FOP9 Board.....	TBA
Eagle Survey - Jerry B.....	Completed April/May
FOP9/Tim L. awards - Bruce R./Jerry	Completed May
USACOE Master Plan - Joe M.	Summer TBA
Tree Planting on Islands - FWS.....	Summer TBA
Beach Work - Bob H./Blake S.....	Summer TBA
Clean Fire Rings - Kevin Q.	Monthly by Volunteers
Lansing Fish Days - Bob S./Sue E.....	August 9-10-11
Sturgeon Tagging - GNFH.....	Aug. - Sept. TBA (GNFH)
EACS/De Soto MRAD - Lisa W.	September 11
FOP9 Annual Mtg. - FOP9 Board	September 21
<i>TBA: To Be Announced</i>	

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 800 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.

JACKSON ST. 708 N. Jackson St.
Charles City, IA 50616
P R E S S 866-508-3257