CATCHING UP WITH THE LAKE SHETEK CHAPTER OF LET’S GO FISHING / PAGE 2

ALSO INSIDE

- Lake Shetek, pictured above, figures to get plenty of use by local Let’s Go Fishing chapter

- Fly fishing in Southwestern Minnesota

- 2010 fishing openers and regulations

- 2010 hunting openers

- There’s a reason behind removal of trees from prairies and grasslands
Local Let’s Go Fishing chapter making waves

Phillip Bock
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A local chapter of the Minnesota-based Let’s Go Fishing is springing back up this summer with plans to complete the purchase of a pontoon boat and use it to take senior citizens, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and members from nursing homes and group homes out on free trips to area lakes.

“We have a vision of getting them on the water and out of isolation,” Roger Benson, director of the Willmar chapter, said. “No one else in the state puts 15,000 people on the water.”

According to its Web site, Let’s Go Fishing With Seniors is a non-profit organization whose mission is to “enrich the lives of people age 55 and older through free fishing and boating excursions that strengthen communities, build relationships and create memories.”

The organization started in Willmar in 2002 and has since expanded into 26 chapters throughout Minnesota, six of them being new chapters launching this spring. Each chapter is supported by local volunteers and sponsors who come together to benefit the people in their community who do not have access to the lakes.

“(The program) is dependent entirely on volunteers,” Benson said. “The more lives you touch, the more word gets out there.”

Events are scheduled throughout the summer months from Memorial Day through September and range from fishing trips to boat tours around area lakes. Equipment for the excursions are provided by Let’s Go Fishing.

“We provide the life jackets, fishing poles, the bait, all of the basics you need to go fishing,” Jackie Esping, a volunteer for the Lake Shetek chapter, said, adding that you do not need a fishing license if you belong to a nursing home.

“If you live in a nursing home you don’t need one, but if you are outside of a home then you do,” she said.

The pontoon boats used for the excursions are custom built and can cost $35,000 to $40,000, Benson said. The boats are designed with accessibility in mind and have a wider gate for wheelchair access, complete overhead canopies for sun protection, removable seats to make space for wheel chairs, and a third pontoon float on the underside of the boat that provides additional stability.

The local chapter based on Lake Shetek obtained a loan and purchased a pontoon for $38,500 last fall. The chapter launched the boat last September.

“We called it the maiden voyage,” Marilyn Strate, a volunteer for

The Lake Shetek chapter of Let’s Go Fishing With Seniors is in the process of raising money to complete the purchase of this customized, wheelchair-accessible pontoon.

LGF ONLINE VOTING

■ The Lake Shetek chapter has joined Pepsi’s Refresh Everything project in an attempt to raise funds for its pontoon. The top 10 projects on the Refresh Everything Web site at the end of April receive funding from Pepsi toward community projects. You can help the chapter by voting for its project.

1. Sign up at www.refresheverything.com
2. To vote for the Lake Shetek project type in the keyword “pontoon” in the search box at the top right of the Web page.
3. Once registered and at the project page, click to vote for the project.
4. The site allows one vote per day

■ If you are interested in scheduling an outing with the Let’s Go Fishing Lake Shetek chapter they can be reached at 507-829-3022.
Ducks Unlimited began enhancement of another shallow lake project funded in part by the Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The early warm weather melted snow and allowed crews to get started on the Curtis Lake project near Marshall.

“To complete construction of this shallow lake project by summer, our contractor needed to mobilize the required heavy equipment, steel structure materials and rock riprap before the spring roadway load restrictions were posted,” said Brad Karel, DU construction manager. Karel and contractor Chad Monson Excavating of Willmar began working in early March on Curtis Lake to install a sheet pile water control structure designed by DU.

“After a brief shutdown for the spring runoff, we will be able to resume work as soon as site conditions dry and improve,” Karel said.

Another large water control structure and a fish barrier will go in when construction resumes. This and other large and complex DU shallow lake enhancement projects create and sustain Minnesota jobs that benefit local economies.

The new water control structures will allow the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources field staff to actively manage water levels in Curtis Lake. Temporary water level draw downs simulate natural periodic drought conditions that will rejuvenate the basin’s aquatic ecology and optimize wildlife habitat in the lake, as well as improve hunting opportunities. Once the lake is enhanced, it will be especially important for migrating and brood-rearing waterfowl.

Curtis Lake is a 440-acre shallow lake with an average depth of four and a half feet. During their assessment in 2006, the DNR found that aquatic plants only occurred in 10 percent of the basin. This condition was due to stagnant high water levels, poor water quality and turbid conditions.

Workers are shown recently driving a steel sheet-pile for a water control structure on Curtis Lake.

Typically, a healthy shallow lake at four feet deep would have aquatic plants occurring...
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Fly fishing in southwestern Minnesota

By Jay Brown

THE RIVERS FOUND THROUGHOUT THE DRIFTLESS AREA IN SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA AND THE RUGGED TRIBUTARIES OF LAKE SUPERIOR ARE KNOWN NATIONWIDE AS FLY FISHING DESTINATIONS. BUT SOUTHWESTERN MINNESOTA PROVIDES FLY FISHING OPPORTUNITIES AS WELL.

THE SPORT OF FLY FISHING INVOLVES THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL "FLIES" MADE FROM HOOKS, FEATHERS, AND FUR TO IMITATE INSECTS AND OTHER FORAGE TO CATCH FISH. FLY FISHING IS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH TROUT STREAMS BUT METHODS ALSO EXIST FOR PONDS AND LAKES.

ARTIFICIAL FLIES COME IN FOUR GENERAL STYLES: DRY FLIES, WET FLIES, NYMPHS AND STREAMERS. DRY FLIES FLOAT ON THE WATER SURFACE TO IMITATE WATER-BORN ADULT INSECTS. WET FLIES SINK TO IMITATE EMERGING OR EGG-LAYING INSECTS. NYMPHS IMITATE THE IMMATURE AQUATIC FORMS THAT LIVE BELOW THE WATER SURFACE.

Streamers are used to imitate baitfish, crayfish, leeches and other large food items.

Camden State Park located near Lynd is a designated trout stream. The river is stocked with brown and rainbow trout in the spring. Anglers can enjoy river fishing surrounded by the beautiful Redwood River valley. A typical outfit for Camden State Park is a medium-action 5-weight graphite fly rod equipped with a floating line and a 9-foot 4x monofilament leader with an artificial fly.

A variety of dry flies in sizes 14-16 can be effective if the Redwood River is exceptionally clear. But anglers will have better luck using wet flies (sizes 12-14), nymphs (sizes 12-14), or streamers (sizes 8-12) in cloudy water.

The best fly fishing for trout at Camden State Park is generally found as the spring runoff subsides and water clarity improves. The best part of trout season at Camden State Park is often from mid-April (opening day) through the end of May (Memorial Day weekend).

Cold weather can extend optimal river conditions into June. Warm weather can end trout fishing early. The park offers public fly fishing workshops in the spring. Contact Camden State Park staff (507-865-4530) for workshop scheduling and reservations.

As summer approaches, and water temperatures increase, trout

Fly fishing Page 6

Curtis Lake FROM PAGE 3

in 100 percent of the basin because the water is clear and sunlight can reach the lake floor. The DNR legally designated Curtis Lake for wildlife management purposes in 2006.

More recently the DNR was able to finalize easements with landowners around the outlet of Curtis Lake that enabled enhancement activities to move forward and will ensure management activities persist into the future.

“This project was made possible with assistance from local landowners such as the Busack and Bode families, public support for Lake Designation and financial support from the Cottonwood Sportsmen’s Club,” said Bill Schuna, DNR’s assistant area wildlife manager in Marshall.

Schuna acknowledges the strong partnership with DU and the support of private landowners, the public and local conservation organizations. “DU played a vital role in this project by providing wetland engineering design expertise that will give us the ability to temporarily drawdown Curtis Lake. A drawdown and fish barrier will improve critical habitat for waterfowl and prevent invasive fish such as carp from re-entering the lake. These efforts will ultimately improve water quality and clarity,” Schuna said.

Primary funding for this project was provided by Outdoor Heritage Funds and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. The Cottonwood Sportsmen’s Club also provided local cost-share to the DNR for this project.

DU and the DNR’s Section of Wildlife work together to enhance shallow lake habitats throughout Minnesota. This partnership will help fulfill the shallow lake goals of both the DNR’s Duck Recovery Plan and DU’s Living Lakes Initiative, and will address the wetland habitat objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

DU has five other shallow lake enhancement projects under contract that are funded by a 2009 Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, including Jennie Lake in Douglas County, Ash Lake in Grant County, Cory Lake in Lac qui Parle County, Round Lake in Murray County and Rice Lake in Faribault County.

Construction plans for Smith Lake in Wright County and Lake Christina in Douglas County will go out for bid later this year. Each project has been developed in partnership with the DNR’s Section of Wildlife.

Ducks Unlimited is the world’s largest non-profit organization dedicated to conserving North America’s continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 12 million acres thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.
fishing at Camden State Park becomes difficult. However, fish activity in Brawner Lake (located at the south end of the park) begins to increase. Fly anglers can catch bluegill sunfish and large-mouth bass all summer long because the spring-fed lake remains cool and active. The trout fishing outfit described above is adequate for bluegill fishing as well. A heavier (7-weight) 9-foot fly rod equipped with a large artificial nymph (size 8) or streamer (sizes 6-8) is often used for largemouth bass.

Other Southwestern Minnesota fly fishing destinations include Ramsey Park in Redwood Falls, Fort Ridgely State Park in Fairfax, Lake Benton in the town of Lake Benton, and Split Rock Creek State Park in Jasper.

If you park near the intersection of Ramsey Creek and the Redwood River in Ramsey Park, you can wade in the creek all the way up to the plunge pool of Ramsey Falls. Try fly fishing with weighted nymphs to catch the smallmouth bass that live in the deep plunge pool throughout the summer.

This is a very small fishery so please consider practicing catch and release to conserve the resource for other anglers to enjoy. Ramsey Creek is also stocked with brown trout above the falls in the spring. Fort Ridgely Creek winds its way through the east side of Fort Ridgely State Park in Fairfax on its journey to the Minnesota River. The creek is stocked with rainbow and brown trout in the spring.

Fly anglers will find numerous riffles and small pools throughout its length. The scenery along this charming creek makes the trip worthwhile.

If you’re interested in fly fishing lakes, you’ll want to visit Lake Benton and Split Rock Creek Reservoir in the early summer before the warm weather shuts down daytime feeding activity in the shallows. You’ll have a hard time fly fishing these lakes once the fish seek deeper cool water during the warm summer months. Southwestern Minnesota really has a lot to offer fly anglers. Licensing requirements and other regulations can be found on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Web site (http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/index.html). The DNR also provides a useful on-line fishing guide for the Hutchinson region that includes Ramsey and Fort Ridgely creeks (see http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/hutchinson/hutchareaguide.pdf).

Jay Brown is the Analytical Chemistry professor at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU). He began fly fishing for trout as an undergraduate student living in Syracuse, New York in 1983. His recent book “A Fly Fishing Guide for Camden State Park, Second Edition” is available at the Marshall Public Library, Marshall High School library, and for sale at the SMSU bookstore and Camden State Park. All proceeds from the sale of the book are donated to the Friends of Camden (a local non-profit organization) to support special projects for the park.

Late Memorial Day weekend delays walleye opener

Minnesota’s 2010 walleye opener will be Saturday, May 15, one week later than usual. State law sets the walleye opener two Saturdays prior to Memorial Day weekend, which does not occur until the last weekend of May this year.

The later start means that the walleye opener will not coincide with Mother’s Day weekend, which will be Saturday, May 8, and Sunday, May 9.

“Moms still can fish free on Mother’s Day weekend,” said Dirk Peterson, fisheries section chief for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. “But they’re going to have to focus on panfish.”
04/17/10 - 09/30/10  
Stream Trout in streams, except SE

04/17/10 - 09/14/10  
Stream Trout in streams SE

05/01/10 - 02/27/11  
Bowfishing

05/08/10 - 05/09/10  
Take-a-Mom fishing weekend (Panfish Only)

05/15/10 - 09/30/10  
Lake Trout (summer)

05/15/10 - 02/27/11  
Walleye, sauger, northern pike

05/15/10 - 10/31/10  
Stream Trout in lakes

05/29/10 - 02/27/11  
Largemouth Bass

05/29/10 - 02/27/11  
Smallmouth Bass

06/05/10 - 12/01/10  
Muskellunge (Muskie)

06/11/10 - 06/13/10  
Take-a-Kid fishing weekend

09/13/10 - 02/27/11  
Smallmouth Bass - catch and release season

09/15/10 - 09/30/10  
Stream Trout (Fall) SE - catch and release season

**Fishing regulations changes, effective July 1:**

- Allows night bowfishing statewide from May 1 to the last Sunday in February, with limitations on noise and distance from structures.
- A resident may take fish by angling in a State Park without an angling license under certain conditions, except in waters where a trout stamp is required.
  - Residents age 90 or older may take fish without a license.

**Fishing contests:**
- Allows 25 boat minimum for needing a fishing contest permit (currently 30 participants).
- Exempts rough fish contests and contests with total prize value of $500 or less from needing permits.
- Deletes the fee waiver for charitable organizations.
- Cuts the current maximum contest fees in half.
- Requires the commissioner to develop best practices certification for fishing contests to assure proper handling and release of fish.
- Requires the commissioner to develop an online web-based fishing contest permit application process.
- The commissioner may allow for live release weigh-ins at public accesses.
- Clarifies that a "shelter" in addition to fish and dark houses must be licensed.
- Permits a nonresident to take fish by spearing; establishes nonresident spearing and darkhouse fees.
- Extends the winter season for lake trout and stream trout in lakes located entirely within the BWCA to January 1 to March 31.
- Allows a resident under age 16 to net ciscoes or whitefish for personal consumption without a license.
The Department of Natural Resources, an organization some would call overly bureaucratic, prides itself on taking care of Minnesota’s great outdoors yet there were no DNR trucks on Valhalla Road that morning.

What happened Monday on Shetek had nothing to do with fiscal distribution or state-run agencies. What happened Monday on Shetek had everything to do with well-meaning, humble folks rolling up their sleeves, getting dirty and smelly and working as one to do what’s right.

A number of volunteers among the 25 to 30 of them spent the better part of the day wading through dead carp and tossing them up on land. Others stood on shore with shovels and pitchforks, scooping and stabbing as they loaded 30-pound fish carcasses onto trailers and tractor buckets. They came away smelling like they had just bathed in fish emulsion.

But these good people — from 11-year-olds to 50-year-olds — also came away with a sense of accomplishment, a sense of job-well-done pride. They could walk tall when they were done because by that time, the lake referred to simply as “Shetek” was on its way back to normalcy.

“People here have a valid interest in the lake and are taking care of it,” said Shetek resident Mark Slettum, one of the main organizers of the party. “It’s a matter of taking a not-so-good situation and turning it into something good. It’s not life-or-death … just not-so-fun and stinky. I’ve had people who have called who don’t live by the lake but they want to come out fishing, so they get involved. I think that’s awesome.

“It was a hard winter,” Slettum added. “When you get that amount of snow and you
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Trees grow on people. They also grow in places where they don’t belong.

For many years, wildlife agencies such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have practiced a wildlife management strategy that involves cutting down trees from prairies and grasslands. In more recent years, those agencies and others have stepped up the effort somewhat and that has not gone unnoticed by local citizens.

“As we have increased our tree removal efforts, we have received more inquiries from local folks questioning what we’re doing and why,” said Ken Varland, DNR Southern Region wildlife manager at New Ulm.

“A natural reflex reaction, I understand, is to oppose cutting down trees.”

Research has shown that the presence of trees in or near grasslands can have an adverse affect on grassland nesting birds such as prairie chickens, pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse and certain species of songbirds. Trees provide perches from which avian predators can spot grassland birds and launch their attacks. They are also attractive to mammalian predators such as raccoons and skunks that raid bird ground nests.

“Over time it has become ingrained in these ground nesting birds that the presence of trees equals danger so they avoid nesting in those areas,” Varland said. “That results in fewer young birds being hatched in those locations.”

Historically, trees were prevented from gaining a foothold on prairies by wildfires and grazing animals such as bison. Today, prescribed burns are used by land managers to invigorate prairie plants and also control the invasion of unwanted trees. Still, in many cases trees have become well-established and cutting them down is the most effective means for ridding them on and near grasslands.

Wildlife managers understand the strong connection people have with trees, Varland noted. “As kids we climb in and swing from trees and on hot summer days they provide us with welcome shade,” he said. Some trees provide fruit and others pleasing fragrances. Trees are planted as memorials and sometimes serve as landmarks on the countryside.

“Wildlife managers appreciate trees as much as anyone,” Varland said. “We continue to plant them in appropriate places when we can.

“But trees and prairie are generally not a good combination. It is our responsibility to provide the best wildlife habitat we can and sometimes that requires taking down a few trees.”

Varland encourages anyone with questions about the practice of tree removal to contact the DNR wildlife office in their area.
Wetland restoration program sign-up through May 14

Landowners looking for competitive payment rates to restore wetlands are encouraged to sign up for the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) partnership through May 14.

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are now accepting applications for funding to restore wetlands that have been drained and have a history of being used for agricultural production.

"Restoring wetlands on privately owned lands provides many public benefits, such as enhancing wildlife habitat, improving water quality and reducing potential flood damage in targeted areas," said John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director.

RIM-WRP is a local-state-federal partnership that combines the state’s Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve conservation easement program with the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program. Combining these two programs allows state funds to leverage federal funds that are available through the Federal Farm Bill. Funding for this partnership is through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

Over the last two years, Minnesota has been one of the top states in the nation for leveraging federal WRP dollars. In 2009 Minnesota had the highest number of WRP easements enrolled with 125, and the second-highest number of acres enrolled with 19,793.

In 2008, Minnesota received 20 percent of the WRP dollars that were spent nationwide. The state dollars for this partnership are expected to be provided from the constitutionally dedicated Outdoor Heritage Fund, based on a recommendation of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

Details of the RIM-WRP Partnership:

- To leverage federal funds that are available until the end of the federal fiscal year, the RIM-WRP signup period is from April 1 to May 14, 2010.
- Interested landowners should contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff at their local USDA Service Center.
- Eligibility is statewide, but priority is given to areas of Minnesota that have experienced the greatest wetland losses.
- Competitive payment rates have been established for this partnership using township average land values. Contact your local SWCD or NRCS field office to determine your payment rate per acre by township.

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources is the state’s administrative agency for SWCDs, watershed districts, metropolitan watershed management organizations, and county water managers.

The BWSR mission is to improve and protect Minnesota’s water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners.
Minnesota is home to the largest lake in the world (Superior), America’s only million-acre canoe wilderness preserve (Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness), and the crystal-clear source of the great Mississippi River.

Northeast Minnesota

Like adventurers of long ago, today’s explorers are moved by the spirit of this land. The beauty of the land is striking: the enticing shoreline of Lake Superior, the serene wilderness lakes of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, the expansive waters of Voyageurs National Park, the scenic St. Croix River rushing through tall, rocky cliffs. Pine and hardwoods of the Chippewa and Superior national forests blanket the rolling hills. They are home to moose, wolves, bears, deer, eagles and loons. The history here is the story of the Ojibwe Indians, French-Canadian voyageurs, miners, lumberman, and lighthouse keepers. For those who come to fish the waters and hike the trails, there are hundreds of lodges, resorts, and campgrounds.

North Central / West Minnesota

The wide variety of natural scenery here appeals to travelers and makes for a range of things to see and do. Minnesota is a crossroads for three distinct environments -- the western plains and prairies, the northern coniferous forest and the eastern hardwood forest. These three lands meet in the northwest third of the state, where deep pine forests and wilderness lakes gradually give way to a tapestry of rich farmland to the west and rolling woods of aspen, birch and maple in the vacation lakes area to the south. It’s a land with tales to tell -- of Vikings, voyageurs, Paul Bunyan and Charles Lindbergh. But the real focus is its lakes, noted for their fine fishing. Its thriving cities and hundreds of resorts and campgrounds beckon today’s explorers to discover this unique region of the country.

Southern Minnesota

Wooded bluffs tower above the mighty Mississippi River to the east; to the west, patches of virgin prairie and a buffalo herd are remnants of the sea of grass that once covered the plains. Stone etchings and a pipestone quarry are part of the rich heritage of the American Indians who first explored this territory. The productive farms of the area trace their roots to humble sod homes and small fields carved out of the prairie. Dozens of historic sites and museums relay the stories of determined pioneers from Germany, Scandinavia and central Europe. The towns they founded are now noted for their historic architecture, antique shops, inns and ethnic festivals. In the countryside there are bike trails, canoe rivers, and fishing lakes and streams. This land of quiet charm attracts travelers for peaceful getaways.

MINNESOTA STATE FACTS

State Bird Common Loon (gavia immer) Dating back 60 million years, the common loon is one of the earth’s oldest living bird species. Its name comes from a Norwegian word that means “wild, sad cry.” Approximately 12,000 make their homes in Minnesota. Loons are large black-and-white birds with long black bills. Clumsy on land, they are excellent divers, underwater swimmers, and high-speed flyers.

State Butterfly Monarch (danaus plexippus) The Monarch butterfly, also known as the milkweed butterfly, is one of the few that migrate north and south like birds do for winter. Approximately four generations of Monarchs are born in Minnesota each summer and live roughly four weeks; the exception is the last generation of the season which survives about six months. Each fall, members of this last generation of the season migrate, at a rate of up to 80 miles per day and at an altitude of about 400 feet above the ground, to remote mountain areas of central Mexico where they spend the winter in a state of semi-hibernation.

State Drink Milk Minnesota produces 9.7 billion pounds of milk a year and ranks fifth in dairy production among the states.

State Fish Walleye (stizostedion v. vitreum) Walleye, a favorite fishing catch, inhabit waters in all parts of the state, but mainly the large, cool lakes in northern Minnesota. Their eyes are sensitive to light, so they go to deep dark waters during the day and move to shallow lake areas at night.

State Flower Pink and White Lady Slipper (cypripedium reginae) The pink and white lady slipper is one of Minnesota’s rarest wildflowers. Thriving in swamps, bogs, and damp woods, they grow slowly, taking 4 to 16 years to produce their first flower. Sometimes they live for 50 years and grow about three to four feet tall. They bloom in late June or early July. It is illegal to pick the lady slipper.

State Mineral Lake Superior Agate These unusually beautiful quartz stones are banded with rich red and orange colors derived from iron ore in the soil. Found in northeastern and north central Minnesota, they are often polished to make jewelry.

State Food Wild Rice (zizania aquatica) Wild rice grows naturally in the shallow waters of lakes and in northern Minnesota. For many years, all the wild rice produced in the world came from Minnesota. It is harvested from lakes in the traditional Anishinabe Indian way, from canoes. It is also planted as a farm crop.

State Mushroom Morel (morchella esculenta) These tasty brown, spongy-topped mushrooms pop up in fields and forests in spring time, and are considered a rare delicacy by mushroom hunters. The official seal shows a barefoot farmer plowing a field near St. Anthony Falls on the Mississippi River. The farmer’s axe, gun, and powderhorn rest on a nearby stump, as he looks at an Indian riding a horse. Minnesota’s state motto “L’Etoile du Nord,” French for “star of the north,” also appears on the seal.

State Tree Norway Pine (pinus resinosa) The Norway pine, also called the red pine because of its reddish brown bark, stands 60 to 100 feet tall, with a trunk three to five feet wide. Its needles are four to six inches long and grow in pairs. The tallest Norway pine in Minnesota is in Itasca State Park. It is over 300 years old and stands 120 feet high.
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don’t get that photosynthesis underneath, you’re gonna have winterkill. I think if there’s a silver lining, most of the winterkill seems to be contained to carp. Kind of nature’s way of gettin’ rid of the crud. I can certainly think of worse things.”

This is kind of what being a rural Minnesotan is all about — that and not having your gag reflex triggered by the smell of fish. It’s not just about neighbor helping neighbor, it’s about neighbors helping the environment, helping the lake that is used by thousands of people from all over the state every summer.

It’s about proud people stepping up and taking action. No one was there Monday to complain about the DNR’s absence because they understood it’s not the DNR’s responsibility. Plus, they knew complaining wouldn’t get the fish out.

“This is a good thing,” Slettum said before Monday’s work began. “People have gotten together … I met some people I’ve never met before. People want to help and get involved. I think that’s awesome.”

Lake Shetek belongs to everyone, and even though not everyone is willing or able to lift it up when it’s at its lowest there are enough people who care enough to do some of heavy lifting. This is the way they did things in the ’60s when a similar winterkill occurred on Shetek. We might have better equipment today, but the attitude is the same.

And that’s refreshing.

“It’s the people’s lake, you know?” volunteer Elmer Brake said Monday. “It’s just not the residents that live here. It’s gonna smell a long time if we don’t do something.”

The smell might not quite be gone yet — you just don’t Febreze THAT stench away — but it will fade. What won’t fade is the bond people around here have with their corner of the outdoors world, whether it’s in a lake or in a field — a bond that was made a bit stronger Monday.

Darrell Kleve has seen his share of major winterkills throughout the years on Shetek. And like the others pitching in Monday, he said the work they were doing was simply something that needed to be done. Going out to help was a no-brainer.

“We’re keeping the lake clean,” he said. “That’s the idea.”

Aviation assets are a valuable tool for firefighters

(DNR) — Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ firefighters are using four types of fixed wing-aircraft to assist with their fire suppression efforts this spring.

“These aircraft are used individually or in unison to provide some of the best fire suppression in the country,” said Ron Stoffel, DNR wildfire suppression supervisor.

The DNR is using two CL-215 water scoopers that were purchased from Canada in 2001. The water scoopers are currently based at the Brainerd and Anoka airports.

The CL-215s have proven to be excellent firefighting tools for Minnesota’s lake country. It takes the scoopers 11 seconds to load with water once they reach the source. The turnaround time from fire to lake and back to the fire is usually 5-10 minutes. This allows a lot of water to be put on a fire in a short period of time.

This year, the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs brought in a P3 Orion air tanker for fire suppression in the Great Lakes states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan under a U.S. Forest Service contract. This aircraft is currently based at the Brainerd airport.

The P3 carries 2,550 gallons of fire retardant in each delivery. Fire retardant is particularly effective in slowing fast-moving fires and protecting structures. Once the spring fire season ends, the P3 will go west to support fire activity in the western United States.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER FACTS

- Lake Itasca is the headwaters of the Mississippi. There are 2,552 miles between Lake Itasca and the Gulf of Mexico.
- The nickname is the Mississippi River is the “The Father of Waters.”
- The Mississippi River is the third largest river in the world.
- The largest island in the Mississippi River is Prairie Island (south of Hastings).

MINNESOTA GEOLOGY

- Location: 44.84 North, 092.99 West
- Northernmost point in the 48 states: Penaas, Minnesota. Minnesota’s northernmost point is also the northernmost point in the forty-eight contiguous states located at the Northwest Angle (jutting into Lake of the Woods)
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