

RIVER

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and community leaders gathered at a riverfront residence off County Road 98 to discuss the program and then plant trees.

Last year's project saw about 5,000 trees planted along the Rat Root River as a part of a larger project to restore walleye habitat. Longtime RLSC member Tom Worth said this year fewer, but larger, trees would be planted with the assistance of Duane Sjoblom, owner of a local nursery who grew up playing, fishing and living along the river.

The group gathered for speeches and photographs before heading off along the river to tree plant — something Nolan said he knows about.

"I love it," said Nolan as he walked in between tree planters, offering advise about it. He said he and his wife planted 250 trees this spring and likely more than 100,000 trees in his lifetime.

Students with the CCM are getting an invaluable experience by working in the outdoors and getting an understanding of the need for cooperative projects like the one they were assisting, Nolan said.

"They get engaged and involed in good projects and creating shade for the next generation," he said of the students. He called MCC a wonderful program and said he's attempting to create something similar for veterans.

"My father was a veteran and he worked in his youth in conservation corps and he passed that tradition on to us kids — we learned to plant trees from our father and now it's time to teach the next generation," he said.

Taking part in the tree planting will assist him in Washington as he attempts to secure funding for national parks and resources projects. "Everybody needs to pause, take a step back and see the beauty of our great forests, our roads, bridges, schools, health and safety (resources)," he said. "Citizens, local, state and federal government working with the private sector and making things happen, getting things done and sometimes it's as simple as planting a tree."

He urged McCollom to leave a little more dirt in the hole she was preparing for a seedling. "That's the quickest way to kill them," he said of planting too deep.

"There's nothing like seeing a politician sweat," said someone as Nolan, International Falls Mayor Bob Anderson and CCM students Jake Reber, St. Cloud, and Ellen Fraley, Bemidji, dug into the sticky clay to plant the trees. Sjoblom, who said he has the river in his blood, provided guidance. Anderson called Fraley one of Borderland's own when she said parents originated from Gemmel.

Anderson is a member of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, which has provided significant money toward the larger river walleye restoration project. The Legislature established the council with the responsibility of providing annual funding recommendations to the Legislature from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. The fund, one of four funds created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, receives one-third of the money raised by a tax increase approved by Minnesota voters.

McCollum, DFL-Minneapolis, who like Nolan fished Rainy Lake Friday, talked about how the project represents an interconnectedness among the nation, Voyageurs, the local community, and the wall-eye that travel between the Rat Root River and park.

Christine Geopfert, NPCA, explained Saturday the partnership's reforestation effort will benefit Voyageurs and the people who visit it by improving the walleye resource in the Rat Root River, which flows into the park.

Planting native, long-lived trees along the shoreline will stabilize the shore by replacing short-live hardwoods that grew and died along the bank, creating logs jams and sedimentation impacting the ability of walleye to spawn.

Geopfert credited RLSC for suggesting MCC be involed. Geopfert, who is a member of the MCC board, said it was a great idea.

"You have different generations working together toward the same result—to protect the resources for the future generations," she said.

Also present to document Saturday's activities was Littlefork native Don Breneman, renowned photographer who co-authored with Mark Seeley, the colorful book "Voyageurs Skies — Weather and the Wilderness in Minnesota's National Park." Breneman notes in the book he was introduced to the outdoors and the land that would become Minnesota's only national park by his parents Floyd and Ruth Breneman.

Breneman posed the tree planters for photographs to be shared with representatives of Nature Valley and others involved in the project.

CCM student Sonia Chavez-Meza, Brooklyn Park, said planting something that will last "is really cool. You can come back and see it. Maybe if you tell your kids and they tell their kids you planted that, 100 years from now someone will say they know who planted it."

Joe Carr, Duluth, said Saturday's experience was great and would be a highlight of MCC work. Carr said the group has spent the first three weeks of the program working on projects along Lake Superior's shore, at the Iron Range Off Highway Vehicle Recreational Park and then in Borderland.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "And hard work."

As Nolan walked past the students, he asked Chavez-Meza to hold out her shovel.

"They have a saying in tree planting: Plant them high or they die," said Nolan. "That's way too low. This is the crown. You want that to be level with the ground or a bit higher. Put some more dirt back in the hole and this will be here in 20 years."

Voyageurs National Park Superintendent Mike Ward described the effort as "awesome" as he carried two pine seedlings toward the river. "Everything we're doing here affects the park, and the NPCA can't use funds inside the park. It has to be used outside the park, but have an effect on the park. What a better way, especially when the community is already involed in something that is important to them and affects the park."

Ward was also involved in last year's tree planting work. "It's great we have local, national leadership come together in this community to work together on something that's important to us and therefore it should be important to them.

"And the fact that a congressman is teaching us how to plant a tree is also important to know," he said laughing.

Bill Walter, NPCA board, also joined in the planting. "It's inspiration to have the student conservation corps here and it's just a thrill for us to be here. We're lucky to have General Mills and Nature Valley supporting us here. They are big supporters of national parks and the organizations you see represented. It's a great collaboration and a great partnership of people who really care and we are honored to be a part of it."

COUNTY BOARD

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"What I'm really hoping is people that are computer saavy, they get on and they complete that survey," Briggs said. "For those who don't, we will have paper copies in my office."

Peterson said his fear was people who aren't comfortable won't fill out the survey, therefore, the county won't get much of a response.

At this point it's up to the public to fill out the survey, Briggs said, adding officials can only make the information available.

Meanwhile, the board also approved a motion to allow certain county department heads to obtain bids or quotes for flood recovery and damage repair.

Land Commissioner Dennis Hummitzsch, county Engineer Joe Sutherland, and Environmental Services Director Dale Olson will work to obtain bids or quotes for removal of sandbags and damage repairs on county parks, landings, roads and bridges.

Briggs said there's a variety of ways to let bids for different aspects of flood recovery and damage, which is why the three department heads will work out the best way to do it.

Olson said the clean, uncontaminated sand can be used in sandboxes or beaches, and the rest of the sand can be used as land fill or for road construction. There's also a time crunch to remove the sandbags, he said, as they're decomposing quickly.

"They're starting to be picked up and they rip open," he said.

Hummitzsch said his department has already run into safety or sanitation issues with damages, and has done repairs. However, they've properly documented everything for reimbursement purposes.

"We haven't confounded anything in our FEMA process, and most of the things are small items where we have the legal authority to do informal quotes," Hummitzsch said.

FILINGS

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- Councilor, now held by Kevin Sather
- Mayor, now held by Mike Fort

Big Falls City Council
Council positions are four-year terms; mayor is a two-year term

- Councilor, now held by Leslie Lepisto
- Councilor, now held by Shawn Pritchard
- Mayor, now held by Marta Lindemanis

Falls School Board
Three board member positions, each of which are four-year terms, are up for election.

- The positions are now held by Dena Wenberg, Willi Kostiuik, Darrell "Boxer" Wagner.

Littlefork School Board
Three board member positions, each of which are four-year terms, are up for election.

- The positions are now held by Keith Knaeble, Mike Imhof, Anita Gray.



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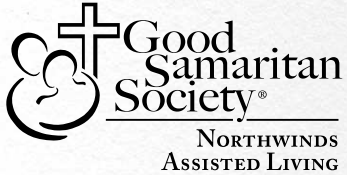
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