

2006 MWMO STEWARDSHIP FUND APPLICATION

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Name of Organization: Friends of the Mississippi River		
Legal Name (if different):		
Address: 46 East Fourth Street, Suite 606		
City, State, Zip: Saint Paul, MN, 55101		
Employer Identification Number: 41-1763226		
Primary Phone: 651-222-2193 ext. 11		
Secondary Phone:		
Fax: 651-222-6005		
E-mail Address: ijones@fmr.org		
Name of top staff or board chair: Whitney Clark		
Title: Executive Director	Phone: 651-222-2193 ext. 13	E-mail: wclark@fmr.org
Contact person regarding this application: Irene Jones		
Title: Outreach Director	Phone: 651-222-2193	E-mail: ijones@fmr.org

Is your organization an IRS 501(c)(3) not-for-profit? X YES NO
 IF NO, is your organization a public agency or local government unit? YES NO
 IF NO, check with MWMO for details on using fiscal agents, and list name and address of fiscal agent below.

FISCAL AGENT

Name of Fiscal Agent (if different than Organization):		
Address:		
City, State, Zip:		
Fiscal Agent Employer Identification Number:		
Title:	Phone:	E-mail:

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of request: FMR requests funding to support the Gorge Stewards project in Minneapolis for Sept 2006-Dec 2007. This project will build upon and expand the network of trained community volunteers needed to protect and restore the natural resources of the Mississippi River Gorge. Through inter-neighborhood and partner collaboration, stewardship projects, ongoing monitoring, training opportunities, and educational programs, local residents become and remain informed, dedicated caretakers of the gorge.	
Project dates: September 2006 through December 2007	
Dollar amount requested: \$30,050	Total project budget: \$52,550
Geographic Area/Community served: Minneapolis neighborhoods along river gorge: Longfellow, Seward, West Bank, Marcy Holmes and Prospect Park are main focus	Population served: Minneapolis residents and community members – individuals, families, organized groups

AUTHORIZATION

Name of top staff or board chair: **Whitney Clark, Executive Director**

Signature: _____

Date

1. ORGANIZATION NARRATIVE:

A) Describe your mission, whom you serve and your track record of achievement

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a leading citizen-based organization that works to protect and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities area. FMR has a strong record of working with volunteers on river and watershed protection and restoration activities. In 2004, over 10,000 hours of volunteer service were conducted through FMR's efforts, including close to 1,000 hours in the gorge, and in 2005 volunteers have clocked over 1,900 hours in the gorge.

The Gorge Stewards Project was started as a pilot program in 2001 in the Longfellow neighborhood of Minneapolis. In the first year, a dozen stewardship activities involved over 100 volunteers. In 2002, the Seward neighborhood in Minneapolis joined the project and FMR received a DNR Environmental Partnership Grant to expand the project to include neighborhoods on the east side of the river as well. The project is currently funded through August 2006 with funding from DNR and MWMO. As the project grows, the number of volunteers has grown to over 600 people a year, many of whom regularly participate in ongoing monitoring of trails and restored areas, training opportunities, and stewardship projects.

Attached to this application is a summary of participation to date for the Gorge Stewards project in 2005. This list of over 30 events and activities involved hundreds of volunteers and participants, and gives an example of the kind of work that is included in the project and the amount that can be accomplished.

B) List other key participants and their roles.

Natural Resource Partners assist with project planning and implementation, and in some cases funding. **Partners include:** Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, Great River Greening, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Ecological Strategies, LLC works collaboratively with FMR's restoration ecologist, other FMR staff and park agencies to provide ecological planning, guidance and leadership to the project.

Neighborhood Committees and Citizens provide input and feedback to the project, help promote the project to local residents, and volunteer for projects. **Minneapolis neighborhoods will be expanded to include:** Longfellow, Seward, West Bank, Marcy Holmes and Prospect Park. (Three St. Paul neighborhoods also participate, but that portion of the project is not funded by MWMO.)

Local Schools and Colleges participate in educational and stewardship projects in the gorge, often providing large numbers of volunteer hours.

2. PROJECT NARRATIVE:

A. Describe the problem or issue to be addressed.

The Mississippi River Gorge in Minneapolis is an important natural resource in the heart of an urban area. The river is surrounded by natural parkland on both sides of the gorge with pockets of significant natural areas including a remnant prairie, a restored oak savanna, oak forests, maple-basswood forests, floodplain areas and several planted prairies.

Ecological management plans were recently completed on both sides of the gorge south of the railroad bridge (27th Street in Minneapolis), and a plan is near completion by MPRB for the northern section of the gorge. These plans identify the key natural areas and the extent of invasive species in the gorge, and they provide extensive recommendations for protecting and restoring the ecological integrity of the gorge. High on the list of recommendations are: 1) the need to remove and control exotic invasive species, 2) increase plant diversity through plantings and seedings, and 3) the need to engage community volunteers in restoration and ongoing monitoring of the gorge.

In order to provide ongoing protection of this critical resource, a core group of trained and informed volunteers needs to be engaged in river gorge monitoring and restoration activities. Many resources have been invested in restoration of the gorge, and prioritizing the ongoing need is essential to maintain this investment. Focused ecological monitoring conducted by volunteers with guidance from ecologists and in coordination with MPRB, Great River Greening and other partners will enable us to coordinate stewardship activities that most effectively to address the needs of the gorge. Additionally, trail monitors and other volunteers are needed to pick up litter to prevent it from entering the river, and to report dumping, graffiti and other impacts to the gorge.

B. Describe clearly the project objectives and expected outcomes.

The goals of the Gorge Stewards Project are to promote and expand upon neighborhood-based environmental concern, and to provide citizens with the education, training and opportunities they need to improve the ecological health of the gorge environment. The specific objectives of the Gorge Stewards project, followed by the expected measurable project outcomes, are listed below.

Project Objectives

Involve community members in river and watershed stewardship

Neighborhood residents consider the river gorge to be one of the community's greatest features. Building on this strong sense of place and community pride offers many opportunities to bring people together to protect and improve this important natural resource. FMR will reach out to community members through regular mailings, email updates, newsletters, flyers and brochures, and by attending community meetings and events to encourage new participation. We will also provide outreach to other neighborhoods in the watershed, and connect a broader base of people with the project. As the project brings people from many neighborhoods together, it also provides opportunities for neighborhoods to network and collaborate in their efforts.

Help facilitate ecological management of gorge natural areas with partners

FMR will work closely with park agencies, other natural resource partners and the Gorge Stewards to help implement recommendations from ecological management plans that have been prepared for the gorge area. Gorge steward volunteers will play a key role in monitoring and maintaining restored areas.

Included in the project is the participation of FMR's restoration ecologist and the consultant group, Ecological Strategies, LLC. Their guidance brings restoration ecology expertise to the project, and allows the work of volunteers to better match the ecological needs of the gorge. The involvement of trained ecologists allows the volunteer work to be more adaptive in responding to a changing landscape and enables us to better integrate monitoring activities with planning efforts.

In addition, FMR has Metro Wildlife Corridors funding which can be used for restoration work in the gorge.

Provide ongoing stewardship opportunities and coordination of volunteer efforts in the gorge

Community members will be able to participate in stewardship projects such as invasive species removals, plantings, seed collections and litter clean-ups in several ways:

- **FMR Stewardship Events** – Groups of 10-50 volunteers work for 2-3 hours with FMR staff on a selected project. Activities focus on areas identified in management plans or problem areas. Park staff provide assistance as needed.
- **“Forays”** – Trained volunteers lead parties of 2-5 people on small stewardship projects such as hand-pulling invasive buckthorn seedlings and litter clean-ups. This dimension to the project enables volunteers to respond quickly and more consistently to “hot spots,” such as areas inundated with the invasive weed garlic mustard or littered beaches in the summer or after flooding.
- **Monitoring** – Individual volunteers will be trained to monitor natural areas and restoration sites for invasive species and to monitor trails for damage, graffiti and litter. Invasive species monitoring will guide planning of events and forays, and some of the current monitors will be recruited to lead the forays. Trail monitoring observations will be reported to the park maintenance staff through FMR in a coordinated manner.
- **Partner-sponsored projects and events** – Gorge Stewards form a ready-made base of volunteers to participate in large events with groups like MPRB, Great River Greening, MNRRA, and the Mississippi River Relief Clean-up. FMR will seek opportunities to partner on larger events that can involve Gorge Stewards.

Provide educational programs about the gorge and training workshops for volunteers

FMR organizes high quality educational and interpretive programs about the natural and cultural history of the gorge, which provide valuable background for volunteers and inspire new participants to get involved. Training opportunities will be offered in coordination with park agency staff on invasive species removal, trail monitoring and other topics. The mix of learning opportunities with volunteer activities is a key component of the project, and it has been greatly appreciated by volunteers and other community members. It also provides a way for people who are less-abled to participate.

Some examples of previous educational programs include History of the Gorge with John Anfinson of MNRRA, Fish and Mussels of the Gorge with Mike Davis of the DNR and Birds of the Gorge with Bob Janssen, author of *Birds of Minnesota*. FMR staff and community volunteers have also helped to lead geology, natural history, plant identification and birding hikes. Trainings usually focus on trail and invasive species monitoring, and project leadership.

Maintain ongoing communication between neighborhood groups, natural resource partners, and citizens in order to coordinate activities and to keep momentum going for gorge protection and restoration.

Communication and outreach is key to the success of the project. FMR will regularly communicate with active volunteers by phone, email, a quarterly web newsletter, and at events. Outreach to new volunteers is accomplished through press releases to local media, postcard mailings, flyer distribution and word of mouth. In addition the Gorge Stewards project is on FMR's website, and activities are included in FMR's monthly e-mail newsletter, *Mississippi Messages*.

Expected Measurable Outcomes

- 3-5 partner and/or neighborhood meetings to plan events and projects
- 6-8 Stewardship events
- 5-7 Training/educational events
- 10-12 Volunteer-led stewardship projects (forays)
- 400-500 volunteers/participants
- 800 volunteer hours
- Ongoing communication between project staff, volunteers and partners
- Ongoing outreach to gorge neighborhoods and surrounding community
- Manage database of 1,000+ active and potential volunteers
- Quarterly production and distribution of postcards and flyers
- Quarterly production of a web-based newsletter/update
- 1,500 brochures printed
- 15-25 media hits

C. Describe how the project objective supports one or more of the Stewardship Fund purposes.

The project objectives support several of the Stewardship Fund (SF) purposes. Many of the volunteer activities are focused on preserving, protecting and restoring native plant and wildlife communities along the river. The educational components of the project meet two SF purposes by including the development of educational programs and training materials, and by educating the watershed community about the impacts of land use (and other factors) on water and other natural resources of the river gorge. In addition the project intends to connect people with the river, in some cases very intensively, and to improve coordination among agencies working to improve the gorge and watershed.

2. PROJECT DETAILS:

A. Attach a project workplan and timeline. See attached.

B. Attach a project budget. See attached.

C. Attach a letter of support from the landowner if the project is property specific. A letter from MPRB will be faxed/sent separately.

PROJECT EVALUATION:

A. Describe how the project will be evaluated.

The project will be evaluated in two ways.

1. **Results will be compared to predicted outcomes.** Many of the outcomes clearly demonstrate the level of success for the project such as number of events, number of participants, and number of volunteer hours. FMR staff refer to project goals frequently when organizing schedules and volunteer activities. Volunteer monitors are asked to track their time and keep records of their observations. In addition, the ecologists working on the project will work with park agency staff to keep records of work completed in the gorge, and the level of effectiveness achieved. Ecologists will also evaluate/monitor success of restoration work on an ongoing basis and design projects to respond to the needs of the landscape.

2. **Participants will be asked to respond to two program evaluation surveys** that gauge their level of interest and satisfaction in the project. Evaluations will be sent out in late Fall of 2006 and 2007. In addition, there will be opportunities at neighborhood/partner planning meetings to provide feedback and ideas for future activities.

B. How will the results be distributed and to whom?

The results of the project are distributed in a few ways. Quarterly web newsletter/updates will keep volunteers updated on recent accomplishments of the project. Articles submitted to local newspapers and newsletters provide information about the project results to the general public. A report summarizing project activities will be included with each invoice to the MWMO, and an annual report of project results is put together at the end of the calendar year for distribution to active volunteers, neighborhood groups, natural resource partners, and funders.

C. What additional project(s) could be initiated from the result of this project?

The Gorge Stewards project began as a model for involving community members in river restoration and it has successfully grown to include other neighborhoods. FMR would like the project to continue to expand to serve more neighborhoods, and potentially move northward along the river in Minneapolis as parkland is developed north of downtown. The AFCAC could someday enjoy a river stewards program. In general, the project is a good model for any community that wants to connect with local natural resources, and it works well when there is public land to care for. FMR is currently exporting the "neighborhood stewards model" to the Vermillion Watershed in Dakota County.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER GORGE STEWARDS PROJECT
Project Dates: September 2006 through December 2007
WORK PLAN AND TIMELINE

Timeline	Workplan	Who will carry out
Fall 06 Winter 07 Summer 07	Hold meetings with neighborhood groups, park implementing agencies and other natural resource partners to coordinate monitoring and restoration work and plan seasonal schedules of stewardship activities for the gorge.	FMR Staff and Ecological Strategies in collaboration with MPRB, Great River Greening, MNRRRA, neighborhood groups
Sep 06 – Dec 07	Develop, coordinate and distribute seasonal schedules of stewardship projects, educational workshops and trainings.	FMR Staff
Sep 06 – Dec 07	Promote and publicize the Gorge Stewards project to community members and recruit volunteers through brochures, flyers, postcard mailings, press releases, open houses, tabling at community events, and attending neighborhood meetings.	FMR Staff, volunteers
Sep 06 – Dec 07	Manage and track a database of potential and active Gorge Stewards and partners and correspond with them through phone, e-mail updates and a quarterly website newsletter.	FMR Staff
Sep 06 – Dec 07	Plan and scout stewardship projects/sites for small and large groups based on ecological criteria and needs of the gorge.	FMR Staff, Ecological Strategies, MPRB
Sep 06 – Dec 07	Organize 12-15 stewardship and/or training/educational events in collaboration with neighborhood groups, MPRB and other partner agencies. Activities will take place in five Minneapolis neighborhoods: Longfellow, Seward, West Bank, Marcy Holmes and Prospect Park. <i>Examples:</i> Stewardship projects: invasive species removals, prairie seed collection/broadcast, native plantings, garbage clean ups, fire ring removal, graffiti removal and trail clearing. Training workshops: trail monitoring, native and exotic plant identification, invasive species monitoring, restoration techniques, water quality issues, gorge ecology and natural history.	FMR Staff and Ecological Strategies with assistance from MPRB, other partners and volunteers
Sep 06 – Dec 07	Coordinate and supervise volunteers that regularly monitor trails and restoration sites.	FMR Staff, Ecological Strategies
Sep-Nov 06 Mar-Nov 07	Train and coordinate a group of Foray leaders to lead parties on 10-12 small stewardship projects (“forays”).	FMR Staff, Ecological Strategies, MPRB
Sep-Nov 06 Mar-Nov 07	Provide technical assistance and support for 2-4 neighborhood groups, schools and/or colleges that want to organize stewardship projects in the gorge.	FMR Staff, Ecological Strategies
Sep 06 – Dec 07	Maintain records of volunteer participation, work completed, results of monitors, and ecologists’ observations	FMR Staff, Ecological Strategies

Proposed Project Budget

Projected Expenses	MWMO	DNR/Other*	COMBINED
Personnel			
Project Management/Partner Coordination	4,400	4,400	8,800
Volunteer and Event Coordination	16,000	16,000	32,000
Web-based Newsletter	250	250	500
Restoration Ecologist (FMR)	1,250	1,250	2,500
	21,900	21,900	43,800
Operations			
Postage	1,100	400	1,500
Printing	700	200	900
Food	300		300
Supplies	250		250
Mileage	300		300
Consultant Fees (Ecological Strategies)	5,500		5,500
	8,150	600	8,750
Expense Totals	30,050	22,500	52,550
*Other Sources			
FMR has a \$10,000 grant from DNR and will apply to private sources for additional matching funds			
Some funds from other sources will be applied to St. Paul neighborhoods			