

Barnesville Meets Moldova...

River Watch Students Join In Sister Rivers Project

By: Pam Aakre

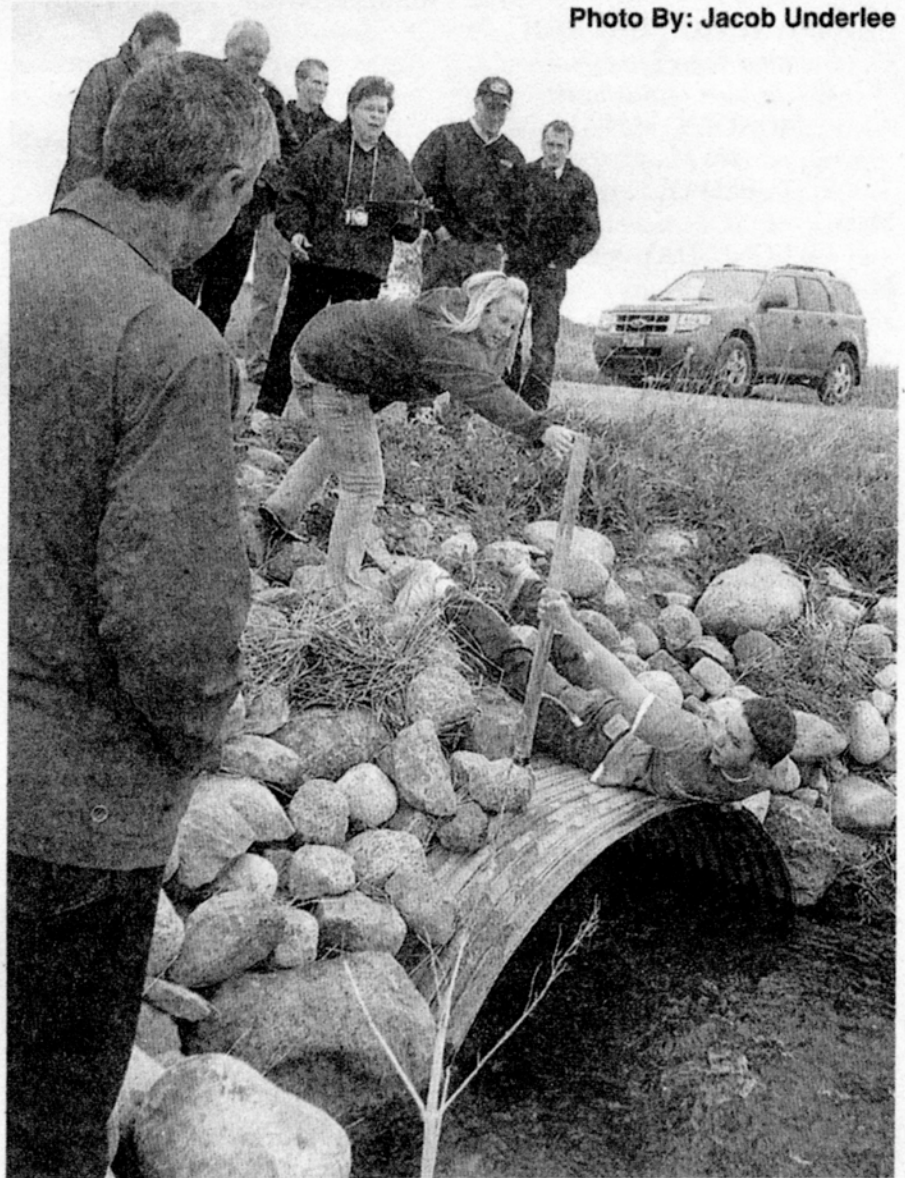
Since its inception eight years ago, the Barnesville River Watch program has received accolades from local and regional environmental organizations for its effort to collect biological assessments on area waterways. Using scientifically credible methods, high school students collect water samples from a variety of sites, perform tests, gather data and have developed a baseline of water quality that is serving as a comparison for current or future projects undertaken by environmental organizations.

Under the direction of former BHS science instructor Sheila Carlson, students participating in the award-winning River Watch program take monthly samples from 16 different sites along Whisky Creek, Deerhorn Creek, Hay Creek, Stony Creek, Spring Creek, South Branch of the Buffalo River and several ditches. Each of these smaller waterways eventually work their way into the Red River.

Students perform tests on water for dissolved oxygen, turbidity, or how clear the water is, as well as several other assessments. Once the data has been collected, students prepare an annual summary report and present their analysis and findings with respective local watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts and other interested parties. They must follow directives from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, RMB Environmental Laboratories and the monitoring coordinator that manages the data and provides direction for

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Photo By: Jacob Underlee



Barnesville High School student and River Watch member Eric Buchholz stretches across the culvert while reaching for the tube handed to him by peer Gretchen Redding. The two students demonstrate to the on-lookers how they test the water of Lawndale Creek for transparency.

The group from Moldova stands around Sheila Carlson, center, as she explains the process. The group from Moldova came to the United States as a part of the River Keepers Sister River project.

River Watch Students Join...



Sheila Carlson, coordinator of the Barnesville River Watch program, participated in the Mixing of the Waters Celebration. This event, which symbolizes that all waters are international, was held when representatives from Moldova visited the U.S. in conjunction with the Sister Rivers project.

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the scientific data collected.

The Buffalo Red River Watershed and River Keepers are among the supporters of the Barnesville River Watch program. River Keepers is a non-profit organization established in 1990 to protect and preserve the integrity and natural environment of the Red River of the North.

Giving youth a hands-on opportunity to receive real world science experience is just one way these organizations are able to educate and promote their findings while preserving the integrity and natural environment of the Red River.

Besides being a strong advocate for river safety and being a leader in water education, River Keepers is developing a Sister River relationship between the Red River of the North and the Dniester River in Moldova, Europe.

Moldova is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe located between

the Ukraine and Romania. The Dniester River separates Moldova from the Ukraine along most of Moldova's eastern border and eventually empties into the Black Sea.

The Red River of the North originates where the Bois de Sioux and Otter Tail rivers meet in Traverse County, MN and continues to flow northward through the Red River Valley, forming the border between Minnesota and North Dakota before continuing into Manitoba, Canada. It empties into Lake Winnipeg, whose waters join the world's oceans in Hudson Bay via the Nelson River.

Although separated half way around the world, the two rivers are similar in nature.

The Sister Rivers project is a collaborative project to develop a relationship between the American and Moldovan partners, focusing on the Dniester River and the Red River of the North. Its primary use is to recognize the importance of water resources in the world and emphasize that water is international

and all citizens are responsible to become good stewards of this international resource.

The sister river relationship has many components, including an opportunity to learn more about another part of the world and raise awareness of international rivers and their role in our environment.

One of those goals was realized in early May when a group of Moldovans traveled to the United States. Their week-long stay began in Minneapolis-St. Paul before touring the Prairie Wetlands Center in Fergus Falls, Itasca State Park and the Tamarac Wildlife Refuge.

The group traveled to Barnesville so that a team of River Watch students could show the foreign delegation how they help provide reliable data to the local water managers. The demonstration was held at the Lawndale Trout stream site.

The Barnesville River Watch team was the only student monitoring

team that the Moldovans met with. The students were able to share what they do and how they make it work to share the information with the watershed district. The Moldovans could see first hand how student involvement helps youth gain an understanding on the effects of land use on water quality.

Before leaving for their home country, the Moldovans toured other BRRWD projects and participated in several other environmental-friendly activities.

To symbolize that all water is international, Sheila Carlson participated in the Mixing of the Waters Celebration in Moorhead on Saturday, May 8. Water from many locations along the Dniester River in Moldova, water from streams in this area that empty into the Red River, including samples from Whisky Creek and Lawndale Trout Stream, were mixed together in a bowl. Each participant then left the event with a sample of the mixed waters.



Buffalo Red River Watershed District Manager Bruce Albright, center, introduces Luther Aadland, a river ecologist from the DNR, to a member of the Moldovan delegation. Aadland describes the purpose for restoring the habitat at the Lawndale Trout Stream.

