

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Wednesday, September 17, 2008

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### **MILLION ACORN CHALLENGE 2008 GREAT WEIGH-IN AND PLANTING TO BE HELD AT AFTON STATE PARK**



Twenty-two metro area youth groups are gathering on Saturday to meet Great River Greening's 2008 Million Acorn Challenge. From Lakeland on the east to Mound on the west; from Apple Valley in the south to Lindstrom in the north; youth groups throughout the metropolitan area are converging on Afton State Park this Saturday, September 20 to plant thousands of acorns they have collected during the past few weeks.

The fifty young people chosen to represent their various youth groups play a vital role in filling a forest gap that cannot be seeded by direct hardwood seeding. Eighty-five acres in Afton State Park are being seeded into oak forest as part of a restoration project to return the area to its original oak savanna and forest. The project, part of a valley wide For the Birds Initiative will provide for continuous forest canopy resulting in needed habitat for diverse and rare species.

Approximately five acres of the project area is too small to employ the equipment used in direct hardwood seeding, a relatively new high density planting technique that mitigates against animal foraging of the seeds. Youth participating in the Million Acorn Challenge will hand-plant the thousands of acorns they have collected thus providing the beginning of closing the gap in the forest canopy.

The 2007 Million Acorn Challenge resulted in the collection of 92,000 acorns which were planted in the Como Woodland area that had been devastated by August severe weather. The twenty-two youth groups participating in this year's challenge anticipate doubling or tripling that number to about 250,000 to 300,000 acorns. The goal is to achieve the collection and planting of a total of one million acorns by the end of the 2009 Challenge.

In addition to having the satisfaction of restoring a vital habitat to our area, the youth groups are vying for the honor of having collected the greatest number of acorns in this, the second year of the Million Acorn Challenge.

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The collected acorns will be weighed, prize checks presented, and then the acorns planted at Afton State Park between 9:00 AM and Noon Saturday, September 20, 2008.

The participating youth groups are: Barton Open School, Minneapolis; Boy Scout Troop 226, Lakeland; Brownie Troop 52737, Apple Valley; Cadette Troop 51415, Hudson; Chisago Lakes Agriculture Department, Lindstrom; Crosswinds Arts & Science, Woodbury; G & F Environmental Club, Plymouth; Home School Girl Scouts, Minneapolis; Girl Scout Troop 10155, Maple Grove; Girl Scout Troop 11232, Mound; Girl Scout Troop 11638, Minneapolis; Girl Scout Troop 52155, Maplewood; Girl Scout Troop 52350, Saint Paul; Honsa & Friends, Mahtomedi; Kids & Kinship, Apple Valley; Minneapolis Planet Protectors (Roots & Shoots), Minneapolis; Lake Harriet School, Minneapolis; Mueller Family, Bloomington; School of Environmental Studies, Apple Valley; Squirrel Nut Grippers, Minneapolis; Sunrise Middle School, White Bear Lake; Watson Evangelical Church, Montevideo.

Funding for the Million Acorn Challenge is provided by Allianz Foundation for North America; 3M, Andersen Corporate, Athwin, and Gordon and Margaret Bailey Foundations, Bailey Nurseries, Toro and Xcel Energy. Major operating support for all Great River Greening programs is provided by The McKnight Foundation.

Funding for the For the Birds project, a partnership of Great River Greening, Afton State Park and the Minnesota Science Museum, is provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) through Greening's participation in the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership.

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