



GREAT RIVER GREENING



Annual Report 2013

RESTORING LAND, WATER AND WONDER



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*Great River Greening inspires,
engages and leads local
communities in conserving and
caring for the land and water
that enrich our lives.*



Welcome to the 2013 Great River Greening Annual Report. We have much to say about our past year's work, but we start this report with a look forward and the announcement of a new logo and tagline. This change comes in advance of our 20-year anniversary in 2015—a good time to reflect on our growth, becoming the state-wide leader in community-based conservation and the go-to organization for environmental volunteering.

Restoring Land, Water and Wonder

Our new look depicts both land and water, urban and rural, in an oak leaf silhouette. It reflects entire landscapes and connected systems, while also showing the potency of a single beautiful tree. The tagline supports our purpose: to bring beauty, ensure sustainable landscapes, and create flourishing habitat with an end benefit of restoring wonder in the eyes of generations to come. For Great River Greening, there are few purposes more important than to restore wonder in the world around us. We strive to inspire natural curiosity and moments of connection between us and nature and each other. Project by project, we create deeper understanding and enduring commitment to protecting and preserving Minnesota's natural heritage. This is what we do. The following pages illustrate how we do it.

Community-Based



Our grassroots work creates enduring commitment to caring for healthy lands and waters in local communities and restores wonder in the habitat that surrounds them.



“Community” is an easy word to throw around. But for Great River Greening, community is at the heart of our work. Each new project is guided not just by our ecological expertise and conservation priorities, but also by our ability to reach deep within the community. We bring resources to caring for the lands and waters in communities, but we also try to connect residents and businesses to these resources and inspire them to understand how central the environment is to their lives.

Sometimes our grassroots work means reaching deep into communities to recruit volunteers from schools, businesses, churches, and other community groups. Through other projects, like our work with farmers along the Minnesota River in Nicollet County, we are getting to know farmers one-by-one, building trust and achieving local-scale improvements that add up to a big impact.

By reaching out to residents, businesses and leaders in the community, we produce workable solutions and expose individuals to the wonders in their backyards, sharing the knowledge and passion to be stewards of the site for generations to come.

Volunteer-Driven



Rolled up shirtsleeves, dirt under our nails, we work side-by-side with 34,000 volunteers to improve, restore and care for Minnesota's natural heritage – 12,000 acres and counting.



Greening's first volunteer events brought people back to the Mississippi River, a resource the community had ignored for decades. Since then we have introduced people to hundreds of natural areas and parks right in their backyards, many of them brand new parks that they are helping to restore and then return to recreate in, for example, Cedar Creek Conservation Area, Heritage Village, Spring Lake Regional Park, and Fish Creek Open Space.

Through active participation and learning by doing, Great River Greening volunteers become advocates with a deep connection to the land and water that enrich their lives.

Nearly every weekend in the spring and fall, we engage thousands of people of all ages in private and public, nonpartisan, restoration events. We engage local organizations, schools, businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies in counties throughout the Metro Twin Cities and beyond, to ensure these volunteers are connecting to spaces in their own communities.

Active Partners



Leading collaborative partnerships ignites a shared passion for improving, enhancing, and restoring our lands and waters, and multiplies our impact on the ground.



In the last five years, Great River Greening has grown tremendously as a response to the growing issues of erosion, the spread of invasive species, and habitat fragmentation. Stewardship and restoration is our focus and our special niche, where others focus on acquisition, planning and policy and legislation.

In particular, we've grown through longer term, more effective partnerships, from collaborating on funding proposals to sharing conservation goals to leveraging resources to leading the agenda.

Great River Greening brings unique core competencies to our partnerships with cities, counties, nonprofits, and community groups: highly trained ecologists, a dynamic community and youth involvement program; and a philosophy of collaboration that includes no advocacy.

Great River Greening has spearheaded major partnerships to advance conservation, driving them to on-the-ground results. Our very first one, Big Rivers Partnership, 1999-2003, impacted 4,228 acres in four years with multiple partners.

On-the-Ground Expertise



Experienced, committed ecologists practice state-of-the-art restoration and introduce the next generation to careers in environmental sciences and skills that provide them with confidence and a connection to the world.



Great River Greening's team of ecologists are among the best in the region, with a combined experience of over 65 years and a vast range of experience from Chicago Wilderness to The Nature Conservancy. We collaborate with research universities and nonprofits and are among the first to promote new restoration methods, like prescribed grazing, haying, and wild rice wetland restoration.

We also share that knowledge and passion with volunteers and with youth at events and in special programs and trainings. It's a rare opportunity to talk one-on-one with scientists of such depth, and for young people especially, the occasion can be inspirational.

Since we began, we have engaged over 900 at-risk youth in targeted career and science activities like our Science Area Teen Program and Summer Youth Crews. We are distinctive in introducing youth to a range of sites from urban to wild and engaging them in conversations with our scientists and other community mentors about careers in the environment.

2013 Highlights

Expanding our reach

In 2013, we engaged 1,737 volunteers in projects all over the metro area, showing our ongoing expansion: Anoka, Scott, Ramsey, Washington, Hennepin, Dakota, and Morrison Counties, to name a few. Many of the projects were new parks: Cedar Creek Conservation Area, Heritage Village, Spring Lake Regional Park, and Fish Creek Open Space. But we also continued restoration at some keystone sites like Historic Pilot Knob and Pond Dakota Mission Park. We have worked with communities all over Minnesota, and that includes our newest work in the St. Peter area, working collaboratively with farmers on water quality conservation. In coming years, we will continue with new projects in the west and south metro, including Carver Nature Preserve (Victoria) and Doyle Kennefick Regional Park (St. Catherine).

Advancing state-of-the-art restoration

In 2013, we promoted the use of prescribed grazing as a restoration and management tool, bringing horses to Historic Pilot Knob and goats to Pine Bend Natural Area. We also completed a second year of wild rice restoration along the Rum River, a novel component of wetland restoration, resulting in the planting of 5 acres of oxbow backwaters. In coming years, we will partner with The University of Minnesota and the Xerces Society to address urgent challenges from a changing Minnesota climate and pollinator crisis. In addition to our local projects, we will also take on complicated large scale projects, like our largest riverbank restoration on the Rum River and the country's largest oak savanna restoration at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

Working together

Everything Great River Greening does is in partnership with others: volunteers, landowners, communities, businesses. In the last few years, we have brought this to a new level, building major partnerships to leverage resources, solve problems, and make things happen. In 2013, we reached a milestone with one of these partnerships—the Anoka Sandplain Partnership, a coalition of over 20 government and nonprofit entities—concluding phase one of conservation in east central Minnesota, restoring over 4,200 acres of critical wildlife habitat on 11 sites over the past 3 years. In the coming years, we will set new milestones with these partnerships, including locally-driven collaborations with farmers, conservation of rare Minnesota habitats, and connections within metro area conservation corridors.



Teaching stewardship

Every Great River Greening volunteer event includes interaction in small groups with our top-notch ecologists, who answer questions about the restoration work volunteers are doing, as well as conservation overall. In 2013, we trained 113 volunteer supervisors, who help us to lead these events and then return to their communities to champion environmental stewardship in general. Also last year, 30% of our volunteers were youth, including university and college classes, Girl Scout, Cub Scout, Boy Scout, and youth groups from schools, communities and churches. Last year, Greening engaged 173 at-risk youth in our Science Area Teen Network, adding to a cumulative total of over 900 youth who have benefited from this career and science program with field activities and discussions with community mentors. In the coming years we want to multiply these numbers, training more volunteers as supervisors and expanding the schools and/or youth groups that partner with us.





Business Forum 2013

Each fall, the Great River Greening Business Forum brings together business and community leaders to discuss important topics in the green economy. Recent years have featured presentations from CEOs of some of the Twin Cities’ most prominent companies, including Xcel Energy and Land O’Lakes.

Guests benefit from these leaders’ invaluable insights, and have the rare opportunity to interact with these CEOs and other senior business leaders. The event also provides an opportunity to reinforce Great River Greening’s collaborative, nonpartisan vision for healthy economies and a healthy environment.

The 2013 Business Forum was our largest yet, featuring a presentation by Ecolab CEO Doug Baker about global water demand and its impact on businesses. More than 300 guests shared ideas and questions in a Q&A session moderated by acclaimed business journalist Chris Farrell.

Financial Summary 2013

FUNDING SOURCES

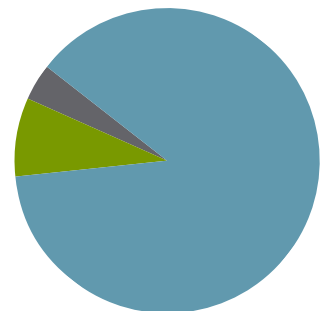
Government Contracts & Grants	936,834
Foundation Gifts & Grants	306,627
Non-Government Contracts	98,614
Corporate Gifts	94,728
Individual Gifts	84,804
In-Kind & Other Revenue	8,594
Total	1,530,201

EXPENSES

Program Services	1,266,373
Management & General	127,157
Fundraising	63,229
Total:	1,456,759
Change in Net Assets-Unrestricted	73,422

ASSETS & LIABILITIES

Total Assets	635,279
Total Liabilities	129,554
Total Net Assets	505,725



RESTORING LAND, WATER AND WONDER



Thank You 2013 Major Donors

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We thank more than 200 additional individual donors for helping to make Greening's work possible!

IN MEMORY

We are grateful for the friends who honored the memory of Merl Arthur Lensing with a gift in 2013. In his memory, a burr oak was planted in a memorial grove at Pilot Knob Hill in Mendota Heights.



Josie Huss, 16, of Lakeville leads Cotton, left, a palomino and Holly, a dun, off a parcel of land at Historic Pilot Knob Hill in Mendota Heights on Tuesday, July 23, 2013. St. Paul-based Great River Greening is using horses as a vegetation management tool. (Pioneer Press: John Autey)

Excerpt from Pioneer Press article By Nick Ferraro 07/25/2013
At Pilot Knob Hill, horses chew grass - aka 'conservation grazing'

"The grazing horses are the latest land-management technique introduced at Pilot Knob Hill, a historic site that seven years ago was threatened by development but instead has been restored to its natural landscape.

"I'm pretty confident this is the first time horses have been used on public land in the Twin Cities," said Wiley Buck, a restoration ecologist for Great River Greening, adding that Belwin Conservancy in Afton has bison that graze.

Grazing will increase the biodiversity of the landscape to allow native species to thrive and non-native species to be kept in check, Buck said."

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