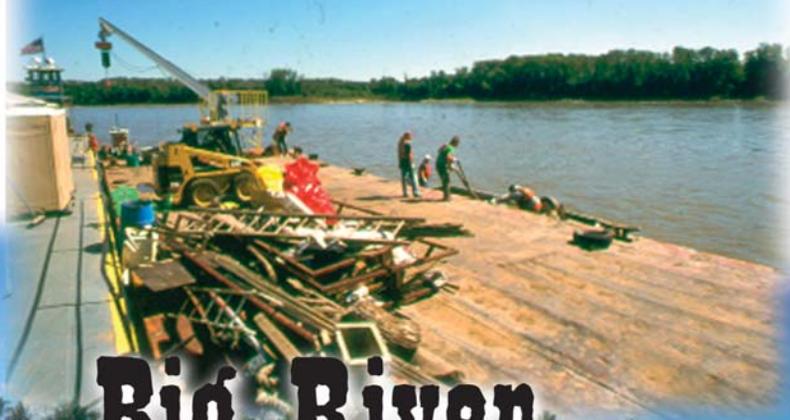


The Rivers Notebook



Big River Educational Workshops

by Bryan Hopkins
photographs by Scott Myers



The lands of Missouri have long been influenced by its big river systems. Their waters provided paths for exploration, routes for settlement and movement of trade goods. The Mississippi and Missouri rivers literally shape the state, defining the eastern border and a significant portion of the western edge. Both rivers are important as cultural and natural resources, with the waters of more than 30 states contributing to their flow. The rivers' fertile bottomlands provide habitat for an immense variety of wildlife, and they create unique aquatic habitats for hundreds of different fish and mussel species.

An amazingly rich history is tied to these two rivers. Their waters have witnessed the rise and fall of the Indian mound-building societies, the exploration by the Corps of Discovery, and the drama and romance of the

Workshop participants learn the value of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers through firsthand experience. Some of the workshops take place aboard a floating classroom along with smaller excursion boats. Topics covered include wildlife restoration projects, river island habitats, tree planting initiatives, commercial fishing and river transportation systems. For more information and to register for a workshop, visit the department's Web site at [www.dnr.mo.gov/oac/river-cleanup.htm].

steamboat era. They facilitated the movement of both goods and people, resulting in the development of many of America's greatest cities.

Unfortunately, these great rivers also serve as a dumping ground for solid waste in the form of old tires, appliances, drums and an unending variety of other trash. Other less ob-

vious forms of pollution also affect these rivers such as sewage, detergents, fertilizers, pesticides, toxic chemicals and automotive oils. Both rivers have been impacted by alterations in flow, temperature and sediment load, and have experienced significant changes in the 200 years since Meriwether Lewis and William Clark first set out upon their waters.

The Rivers as a Teaching Tool

The Missouri and Mississippi rivers are national treasures. These rivers offer an ideal platform for teaching about cultural history, as well as an evolving relationship with our nation's natural resources. A series of Big River educational workshops have been developed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with Chad Pregracke of Living Lands

WORKSHOP CONTENT

Watersheds: How they function and a “make and take” watershed model.

The river as a natural resource: drinking water use, receiving waters for municipal and industrial wastewater, agricultural activities in the flood plain, recreational and commercial fishing, and other recreational aspects.

Impacts on the river: Nonpoint source pollution (issues and prevention) along with other impacts (solid waste, loss of wetlands, etc.).

River stewardship: How to minimize impacts and get involved (Adopt-A-River Mile, Stream Teams, future cleanups, other educational resources).

Boat trips: Whenever practical, to allow participants to observe firsthand some unique aspects of the river (commercial fishing, reforestation efforts, riparian zones, lock and dams, etc.).



and Waters. Pregracke and his crew have been working hard to clean up the big rivers of the heartland and have conducted hundreds of community-based river cleanup events. Check the Living Lands and Waters Web site at [www.livinglandsandwaters.org] for more information. The river workshops occur directly on water aboard Living Lands and Waters’ floating classroom and include trips in smaller boats to experience the river firsthand. The primary target audience for these workshops is the educational community. The general public and civic leaders wishing to learn more about the big rivers also are welcome.

To check when the next workshops are being offered and obtain lesson plans concerning our big rivers, please visit the department’s Web site at [www.dnr.mo.gov/oac/river-cleanup.htm]. Environmental Education staff can be reached by calling the Outreach and Assistance Center toll-free at 1-800-361-4827.

Come join us on one of our big rivers and experience the waters that have

been integral to the development of the state of Missouri and our great nation.

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Workshop participants learn about the various things that impact water quality and what they personally can do to protect watersheds. In addition, participants receive educational materials on Big Rivers to take back their classrooms, civic groups or youth organizations.