

A satellite photograph of the Mississippi River delta region. The river is a prominent dark blue-green line winding through a vast, arid, tan-colored landscape. The river's path is highly irregular and meandering, especially in the lower half of the image. The top of the image shows the river's mouth where it meets a larger body of water, likely the Gulf of Mexico, with a dark blue hue. The surrounding land is mostly flat and devoid of significant vegetation, with some lighter-colored patches that could be salt flats or sand dunes.

ISSUE ELEVEN : SUMMER 2018
OPEN RIVERS :
RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY

PARADOXES OF WATER

<http://openrivers.umn.edu>

An interdisciplinary online journal rethinking the Mississippi
from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

ISSN 2471-190X

The cover image is of The Nile River, July 19 2004. To the right of the Nile is the Red Sea, with the finger of the Gulf of Suez on the left, and the Gulf of Aqaba on the right. In the upper right corner of the image are Israel and Palestine, left, and Jordan, right. Below Jordan is the northwestern corner of Saudi Arabia. Jacques Descloitres, MODIS Rapid Response Team, NASA/GSFC.

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/). This means each author holds the copyright to her or his work, and grants all users the rights to: share (copy and/or redistribute the material in any medium or format) or adapt (remix, transform, and/or build upon the material) the article, as long as the original author and source is cited, and the use is for noncommercial purposes.

Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community is produced by the [University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing](https://www.libraries.umn.edu/) and the [University of Minnesota Institute for Advanced Study](https://www.umn.edu/institute-for-advanced-study/).

Editors

Editor:
Patrick Nunnally, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Administrative Editor:
Phyllis Mauch Messenger, Institute for Advanced
Study, University of Minnesota

Assistant Editor:
Laurie Moberg, Doctoral Candidate,
Anthropology, University of Minnesota

Media and Production Manager:
Joanne Richardson, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Contact Us

Open Rivers
Institute for Advanced Study
University of Minnesota
Northrop
84 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Telephone: (612) 626-5054
Fax: (612) 625-8583
E-mail: openrvrs@umn.edu
Web Site: <http://openrivers.umn.edu>

ISSN 2471-190X

Editorial Board

Jay Bell, Soil, Water, and Climate, University of
Minnesota

Tom Fisher, Metropolitan Design Center,
University of Minnesota

Lewis E. Gilbert, Institute on the Environment,
University of Minnesota

Mark Gorman, Policy Analyst, Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Gunn, History of Medicine, University of
Minnesota

Katherine Hayes, Anthropology, University of
Minnesota

Nenette Luarca-Shoaf, Art Institute of Chicago

Charlotte Melin, German, Scandinavian, and
Dutch, University of Minnesota

David Pellow, Environmental Studies, University
of California, Santa Barbara

Laura Salvesson, Mill City Museum, Minnesota
Historical Society

Mona Smith, Dakota transmedia artist; Allies:
media/art, Healing Place Collaborative

CONTENTS

Introductions

Introduction to Issue Eleven By Patrick Nunnally, Editor	5
Guest Editor's Introduction to Issue Eleven: The Paradoxes of Peace and Water By Joseph B. Underhill	7

Feature

Learning from the Dakota: Water and Place By Mona Smith	14
--	----

Forum

New Orleans Was Once Above Sea Level By Richard Campanella	19
Water as a Source of Regional Cooperation in the Middle East: The Work of EcoPeace Middle East in Jordan, Israel, and Palestine By Giulia Giordano	24
Water, Conflict, and Peace By Peter Gleick	33
Meandering and Riversphere: The Potential of Paradox By Irene J. Klaver	45
The Sources of the Nile and Paradoxes of Religious Waters By Terje Oestigaard	66

Feature

Writing the River By Leslie Thomas	86
---	----

Primary Sources

Paradoxes of Water: A Reading List By The Editors of <i>Open Rivers</i>	110
--	-----

Perspectives

An Endangered River: The Mississippi River Gorge By Olivia Dorothy	119
---	-----

Teaching and Practice

Paradise Lost: The Struggle to Preserve the Pongola River and its Inhabitants
By Shira Lanyi 126

Geographies

Water Unifies Us All
By Kristi Achor Pursell 142

In Review

A Tour of the Mississippi River Visitor Center
By Joanne Richardson 149

GEOGRAPHIES

WATER UNIFIES US ALL

By Kristi Achor Pursell

A dominant narrative in media today tells us that American society is full of juxtaposition and conflict: rural v. urban, rich v. poor, black v. white, conservative v. liberal. We might get the impression that we must stick to our own in-group in order to feel safe and heard. And yet, there is an issue central to life as a Minnesotan regardless of how you identify or with whom you spend your time. That issue—clean water— is a necessity for life and good health. Through my time working for the Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP), I have come to believe, as Maya Angelou wrote in her poem, “Human Family,” that “we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike” and that, perhaps, water can be the thing that shows us that truth.

CRWP is a small, but mighty nonprofit membership organization with a focus on clean water. Our geographic focus is the land that drains to the Cannon and Straight Rivers, which means the map of our area is unlike that of any you may be used to seeing. We consider six counties that make up the majority of the watershed—Dakota, Goodhue, LeSueur, Rice, Steele, and Waseca—along with their Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), to be our primary partners in local government. We regularly work with these entities, as well as with city and township governing bodies, to accomplish work in our area. We also partner with state agencies, such as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on Wildlife Management Area projects, the Board



*The Cannon River riverfront in Northfield, Minnesota.
Photographer Alexius Horatius (CC BY-SA 3.0 US).*



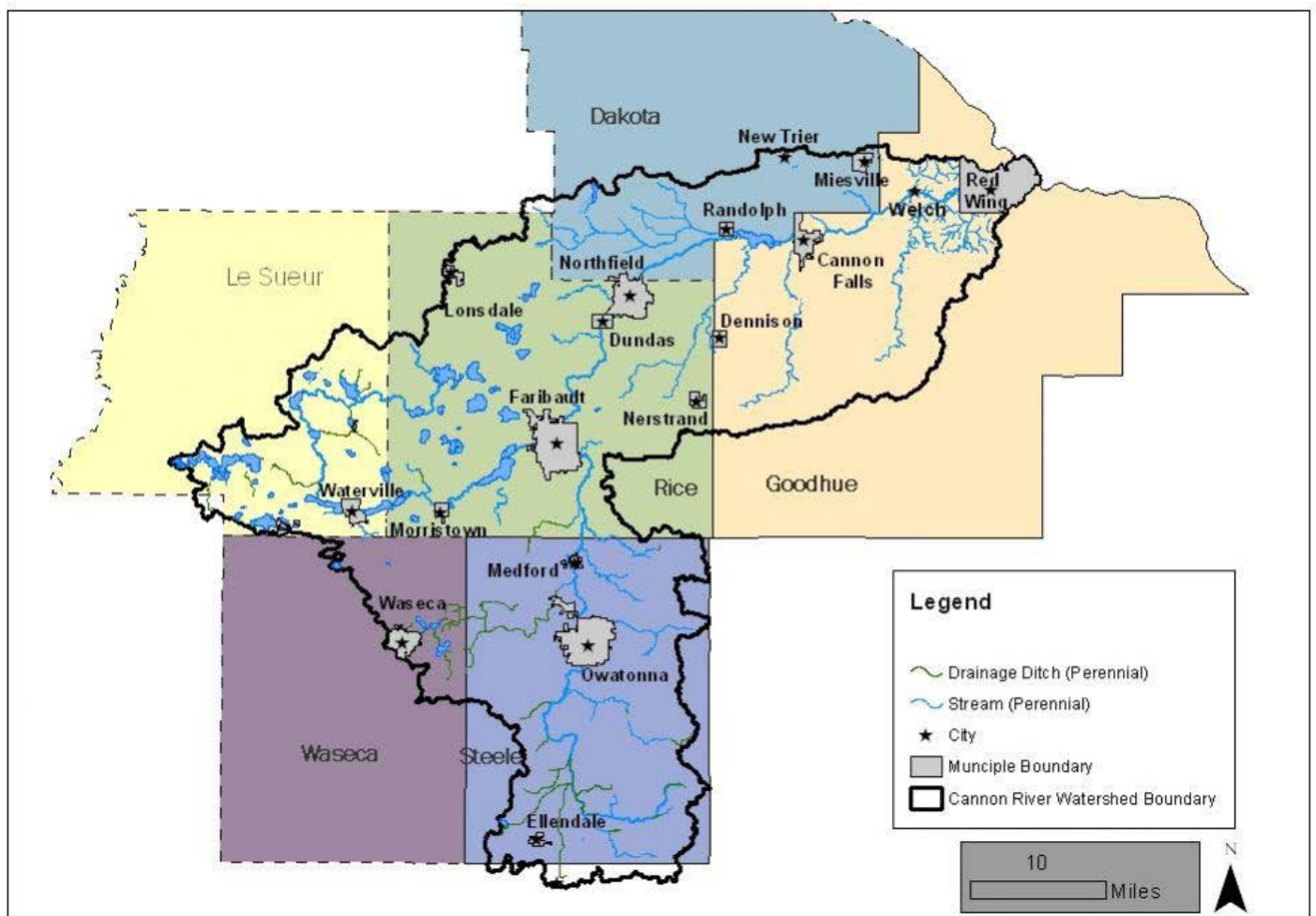
*Northfield youth sweep clear then stencil stormdrains that empty into the Cannon River.
Image courtesy of CRWP.*

of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to convene groups of people whose wastewater treatment processes need an upgrade, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for water monitoring and a qualitative data-gathering project talking to residents in particular sub-watersheds to hear their histories. However, we partner with more groups than just our government entities. CRWP was founded by a group of concerned citizens who wanted an entity to collectively look upstream and down to improve the waters and natural areas that drain into the Cannon, then the Mississippi. As an organization, we feel an obligation on behalf of the citizens in the watershed to partner with interested and affected communities in order to get the results we seek.

Because we work with farmers, youth, town-dwellers, lakeshore property owners, and elected officials, I have come to believe that, although we may have heard there is much to disagree on, water is a place where we can and do collectively come together. We all care deeply about the quality of the water we drink and share with our children and grandchildren. We want to leave our part of the world a little better than when we found it. These are universal truths no matter what your age, walk of life, or profession.

There are many families in our area who have worked the land for generations in order to grow crops and sustain a large sector of the economy in Minnesota. The farmers we work with are willing

Cannon River Watershed



The six majority counties that make up the Cannon River Watershed with major municipalities indicated. Image courtesy of CRWP.



*Volunteers gather at the Cannon River in the Carleton Arboretum, Fall 2017.
Photographer Heriberto Rosas. Image courtesy of CRWP.*

ISSUE ELEVEN : SUMMER 2018

to try things their parents or grandparents didn't teach them about, like Kernza, a new perennial grain we are testing with the University of Minnesota both for grazing and grain-harvesting. These are growers and grazers who care deeply about our land and water for the future of farming; you may first meet them over a microbrew before you learn how they make their living.

Similarly, we work with residents in small communities and towns in rural Minnesota. Some of the very best advocates for clean water and some of the best examples of partnering happen in these smaller localities and townships. The decades-old relationships that neighbors or lake association members have with one another have

shown me that, although it can be challenging to get the right people into the room, when trust already exists, there is no limit to what these committed groups of people can accomplish. Together they might raise money to remove invasive species, partner with upstream farmers to improve soil health practices, or create a lake improvement district.

Our rural communities are becoming more and more diverse and, although this can be a point of friction for a community of any size, water by its very nature creates spaces where we can all gather and unite. For example, on one Saturday morning each September, CRWP hosts a Watershed-Wide Clean Up at around a dozen



Field day on a local farm on Mud Creek, summer 2017. Image courtesy of CRWP.



*A kid catches a big one at the annual “Take a Kid Fishing Day” near Northfield.
Image courtesy of CRWP.*

locations simultaneously. This is a time when young and old come out to help pull trash from our rivers, lakes, and streams. The health of water affects us all, and it affects the places we love and where we live. Working together to find solutions that produce clean water benefits every one of us. The Cannon River Watershed Partnership seeks

to bring people together to achieve this lofty goal in our lifetimes.

To learn more about CRWP's work, please visit our website at crwp.net or contact the author at kristi@crwp.net.

Recommended Citation

Pursell, Kristi Achor. 2018. "Water Unifies Us All." *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, no. 11. <http://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/article/water-unifies-us-all/>.

About the Author

Kristi Achor Pursell has a B.A. in English/ Environmental Studies from St. Olaf College and has a background in small-scale farming, environmental education, and leadership. She joined the Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) in 2015 as the Community Engagement Coordinator. In 2018 she became the Executive Director of CRWP, where she is always searching for ways to make connections for clean water through innovative new and long-term CRWP projects and partnerships.