

## News Release

# 20th Anniversary River Watch Forum at U of M Crookston

*By Elizabeth Tollefson on Tuesday, March 3, 2015* The Red River Basin River Watch Program will be celebrating its 20th Anniversary at the upcoming annual River Watch Forum on March 17th at the University of Minnesota Crookston campus. Over 200 students from over 25 schools throughout the Red River Basin will present posters highlighting their watershed research and education activities. Starting with four schools in the Sand Hill Watershed District in 1995, the field-based River Watch (RW) citizen monitoring program, led by the International Water Institute (IWI), has grown to include over 30 schools monitoring over 150 river sites. Related programs have also begun in the North Dakota and Manitoba portions of the Red River basin, with all using the same methods and equipment to ensure data are scientifically sound and comparable.

Students will also share observations from kayak trips they took on their local rivers as part of a River Explorers program coordinated by IWI--using local rivers as living classrooms to directly engage students in documenting and better understanding river conditions and watershed health.

Paddling will also be the theme of the keynote address to be presented by Natalie Warren, one of the first two women to paddle 2,000 miles from Minneapolis to Hudson Bay in 2011. Natalie will share her passion for learning from rivers and how communities can embrace rivers as assets, helping to protect rivers and make them more "paddle friendly."

Students will interact with resource professionals at concurrent sessions during the Forum on a wide range of topics, including stream ecology, climate change, Red River fisheries, invasive species, and river recreation options.

River Watch teams and partners are recognized in the afternoon at an awards ceremony for exemplary work in watershed science research and communications. School posters will be available for viewing in Bede Ballroom on the UMC campus from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm, and will be posted on the International Water Institute River Watch Website after the Forum. The Forum is hosted by the International Water Institute and the Red River Watershed Management Board with support from the Minnesota Clean Water Legacy Fund.

More information on the 2015 River Watch Forum and the River Watch program can be found at <http://iwinst.org/riverwatchforum.htm> or contact Wayne Goeken at 218-280-0516.

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