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Minnesota's quarterly newsletter

# Minnegram

## Minnegram

The Water Resources Center's quarterly newsletter focuses on water-related issues.

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## Summer 2017 Minnegram

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## Features

### **Retirement just a change of course on Faye Sleeper's road map**

Faye Sleeper decided early on that being a woman was not going to limit her life choices. Her father taught her to change tires and motor oil and she was her own bike mechanic. Her parents' life and work ethic of fairness and kindness to all, cautious optimism and unwavering stewardship for the earth, had a profound effect on their daughter who carried those lessons into her life and work.

### **Meeting Minnesota's Needs for Stormwater Research**

#### **Reducing and preventing impact from urban stormwater runoff**

By John Bilotta [bilot002@umn.edu](mailto:bilot002@umn.edu) Extension Water Team

University of Minnesota researchers are working to meet the immediate and ongoing need for additional research in stormwater management, practices, and policies for Minnesota.

One project is the Stormwater Research Roadmap to articulate and prioritize research needs that can propel stormwater management and practice implementation forward to reduce and prevent pollution from urban stormwater runoff.

### **HABs explained: what, how and what now?**

By Shahram Missaghi [miss0035@umn.edu](mailto:miss0035@umn.edu) Extension Water Team and Marte Kitson [mkitson@d.umn.edu](mailto:mkitson@d.umn.edu)

Algae blooms can turn the water green and smelly, and contribute to fish kills by creating dead zones in the water. At times, algae bloom also produce toxins that pose serious health risks to people and animals, and these algae are referred to as Harmful Algal Blooms or HABs. Blue-green algae or Cyanobacteria are one of the major types of HABs that are also found in Minnesota.

### **Universities Council on Water Resources awards Deborah Swackhamer the Warren A. Hall Medal**

The Universities Council on Water Resources (UCOWR) has awarded Deborah Swackhamer (former WRC co-director) the Warren A. Hall Medal in honor of her lifetime achievements in water resources research and education. Dr. Warren A. Hall, known worldwide for his active involvement in water resources research and education, was one of the founders of UCOWR. The Warren A. Hall Medal is a memorial established by friends and family to recognize exceptional accomplishments and distinction of an individual in the water resources field.

### **Water science and policy salon present priorities to Governor Dayton**

During Governor Mark Dayton's Year of Water Action, the Water Resources Center convened a series of Water Science and Policy Salons to identify policy strategies that will provide significant movement towards meeting the goals put forth in the Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

### **Sleeper honored amid climate awards at National Adaptation Forum**

Mark Seeley, climatologist with the UMN Department of Soil Water and Climate, handed out Climate Adaptation awards at the

May 2017 National Adaptation Forum in St. Paul. Seeley began the award portion of the program by presenting an award to recently retired WRC Associate Director Faye Sleeper

## News

[Summer 2017 Community News](#)

[Summer 2017 Student News](#)

[Summer 2017 Resources and Publications](#)

[Summer 2017 Upcoming Events](#)

[Summer 2017 CrossCurrents-Links to other water-based websites](#)

The Water Resources Center is a unit of the [College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences](#) and [University of Minnesota Extension](#).

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## 1 2017 Director's Corner

Unbelievably to me anyway, October is already here and that means that the Minnesota Water Resources Conference is just around the corner. I am really excited about this year's program. Featured speakers will include Amy Skoczlas Cole, Director of American Public Media's Water Initiative; Greg Page, retired Cargill Chairman and CEO; Michael Sadowsky, Professor of Soil, Water, and Climate at the University of Minnesota; and Nancy Schuldt, Water Projects Coordinator for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. A special session will explore the promise of new continuous living cover cropping systems to provide water quality and other ecological benefits. And, backed by popular demand, [Water Bar](#) returns to the conference this year, this time in an expanded format that captures themes from the conference and aims to connect attendees to the water stewardship traditions of the Dakota people. You can learn much more about the conference in a feature article in this issue, and you can register to attend on the conference [website](#).



Autumn also means that the University campus is again bustling with students. As many Minnogram readers know, the WRC is the administrative home of the [Water Resources Science](#) (WRS) graduate program, which welcomed a select cohort of new students this fall. Recently the WRC has expanded its support for the WRS program, using our unique set of connections to aid in students in their professional development. We're hosting a series of professional development workshops and helping students develop professional networks at gatherings events like the Water Resources Conference. I hope you will see some of them there and get a chance to talk with them. Another way we are supporting the program is by sponsoring fellowship to an outstanding incoming WRS student. At the recommendation of the WRS Directors of Graduate Studies, we were pleased to award the inaugural WRC Graduate Student Fellowship to Kirsten Rhude. You can read more

about the fellowship and Kirsten in our [Community News](#) section.

Recent months also brought changes and additions to the WRC staff. We are excited to welcome Lucy Levers as a new research associate. Lucy has an interdisciplinary background in environmental science and economics and specializes in integrated modeling. She earned her PhD from the University of California - Riverside and worked at the USDA-ARS Salinity Lab in Riverside before joining the WRC. We also are excited to welcome Douglas Johnson as our new finance professional, a pivotal staff position to keep all our programs running smoothly. Doug has a wealth of experience in finance roles at various units in the University of Minnesota. Lucy and Doug are also featured in [Community News](#).

Our staff has been growing, but we are not done growing yet. We're developing staffing plans to take on new projects, like a recent [grant](#) award from the Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water Systems (INFEWS) program at the National Science Foundation. We'll be looking forward to filling you in on these projects as they unfold in future issues.

In this issue, you'll find lots to read about recent activities and timely topics. A pair of feature articles by University of Minnesota Extension experts focus on the pressing issue of aquatic invasive species (AIS). Dan Larkin discusses one of the most recently detected aquatic invasives, the [algal species starry stonewort](#). Megan Weber describes the growing [AIS Trackers Program in Minnesota](#), which contributes to a larger citizen science movement across the nation.

I hope to see you at the conference,



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## Retirement just a change of course on Faye Sleeper's road map

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Faye carried this framework into her college studies, majoring in social work. Upon graduation she worked for a few years in corrections, then transitioned into working with troubled young people in residential centers. That work cemented her work management style; learning to stand firm, while seeking out the best that each person has to offer, and helping foster those qualities.

Needing a work life change, Faye did a career assessment at the University of Minnesota, which landed her in cartography, though the world was moving away from paper maps, so she made the switch to environmental policy, a period of time during which she jokingly says "My dream was to sit in a canoe and draw up maps of the Boundary Waters, like they don't already exist!"

An internship at the DNR land section division led in turn to a position at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), in the Construction Grants Program, which provided funding and enforcement of wastewater management rules. At one time, Faye oversaw 150 municipal wastewater facilities in the Brainerd/Detroit Lakes area.

As Faye moved into management and non-source point pollution at the MPCA, she oversaw the development of the Impaired Waters Stakeholder process, a series of meetings with environmental groups, business concerns, agriculture groups, Soil Water Conservation Districts, and cities, with a goal of making changes that would matter to water quality. It was

this work that created the foundation for what became the Clean Land and Water Legacy Act. In reflecting on this outcome, Faye says "Program development is like being in whitewater constantly until the end; satisfying work, but not always comfortable."

Faye was aware of the Water Resources Center through interaction with Deb Swackhamer and Jim Anderson in her work at the MPCA and she was impressed with the work of the center. When the position of co-director was offered to her, she jumped at the chance to move from a regulatory focus to promoting research-based solutions to water problems. Avenues not open to her at the agency blossomed before her. One of many firsts: an invitation to be a co-author of a book chapter about the beginnings of the Clean Land and Water Legacy Act, a process that she really enjoyed. Other opportunities included sitting on the Board of Water and Soil Resources, planning the first and successive Climate Adaptation conferences in Minnesota, developing the Watershed Specialist Training program with Ann Lewandowski, and most recently, aligning the UMN Extension Water Team more closely with the WRC.

"So much variety. Even in the tough times, working with people who have so much knowledge and passion for water . . .so worthwhile. I'm fortunate to have had this opportunity with the WRC to do so many things."

There will be plenty of variety in retirement for Faye. Her immediate future includes European travels and exploring neglected treasures closer to home.

Look for Faye on the water in a kayak, or on her bike, possibly fixing her own broken bicycle chain on the side of the road.



Faye Sleeper kayaking on Mirror Lake in Wisconsin in 2016.

Photo credit: Jane Stone Tonn-Kreski



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