



## NEWS RELEASE

### Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources South Central Region

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**DATE:** September 11, 2008  
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**SUBJECT:** 120 Tons Removed  
**WISCONSIN RIVER DEBRIS CLEAN-UP**

**FITCHBURG** – Debris from flooding earlier this summer has now been cleaned-up along an approximate 20-mile stretch of the Wisconsin River downstream from Lake Delton, Department of Natural Resources Secretary Matt Frank announced today.

“The Lower Wisconsin is safer for navigation and free of debris again, thanks to our dedicated contractor, hard-working volunteers, landowners and close coordination between DNR, Columbia and Sauk counties, the village of Lake Delton, the Friends of the Lower Wisconsin, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, FEMA and Wisconsin Emergency Management. Together we delivered a clean up weeks ahead of schedule and because we used a non-profit organization and volunteers, close to a quarter million dollars less than projected,” said Frank.

A non-profit group, Living Lands and Waters of East Moline, IL, spearheaded the effort which resulted in the removal of about 120 tons or 240,000 pounds of debris from 109 piles along the river between Lake Delton and Portage.

Thirty-one community volunteers, many helping for three or more days, worked on the clean-up over the project’s 24-day span, removing 99 percent of the debris by hand, according to Tammy Becker, education coordinator for Living Lands and Waters.

About 97 percent of the debris consisted of wood from walls, tresses and flooring and an estimated 3.5 tons or 7,000 pounds was recycled. All 632 pounds of metal taken from the river was recycled.

Living Lands and Waters was awarded an initial \$77,025 contract by DNR to remove 89 piles of debris. During the clean-up, the group found 20 more piles, which were cleaned up under a contract increase to \$92,430.

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The following counties are in the South Central Region: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk.

The Public Affairs Manager for DNR South Central Region is Greg Matthews, (608) 275-3317

DNR has applied for a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursement and the agency will fund at least 75 percent of the cost while Wisconsin Emergency Management will cover half of the remaining cost. A preliminary agreement calls for Sauk and Columbia counties, the Village of Lake Delton and DNR to split the remaining cost four ways.

“Gov. Doyle has made recovery from the June floods a top priority. We couldn’t have taken on this project and completed it so quickly without the commitment and help of federal funding supplied by FEMA. They – and our county and village partners -- were open to a unique, flexible approach for the debris problems in the river. The results speak for themselves,” said Frank.

“This has been one of the most memorable projects we’ve ever worked on, given the circumstances and what we were able to accomplish in a short period of time,” said Chad Pregracke, founder and president of Living Lands and Waters. “Dozens of volunteers dedicated time and sweat to assist in this worthy cause,” he added.

Unprecedented flooding during June led to significant amounts of debris deposited in the Wisconsin River, including the homes washed away when County Highway A breached at Lake Delton. The breach, caused by heavy rainfall, created a new channel from Lake Delton to the Wisconsin River approximately 700 feet long by 370 feet wide and 30 feet deep.

The breach drained the 267-acre lake of more than 600 million gallons of water, washed out County Highway A and sent debris downstream into the Wisconsin River.

“The flood waters are gone, but our work is ongoing. The Wisconsin River clean-up is one of a number of projects DNR is participating in to help our communities rebuild,” said Frank. “We’re inspecting dams, assisting wastewater treatment plants, and working with DOT and Lake Delton to restore the lake.”