

# “I AM CONSERVATION”



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Missouri River Relief is working to clean up a stretch of the Osage River. The focus has been a string of illegal dumps, including a massive 100-year-old dump spilling down a bluff into the river. Since 2008, 400 volunteers have removed 44 tons of trash from the area by hand, including 580 tires.

## Stream Team 1875, Missouri River Relief *by Jim Low*



Becoming a standout among Missouri's 4,000 hard-working Stream Teams is no small feat. By any objective measure, however, Missouri River Relief is an outstanding example of citizen activism.

Since its formation in 2001, MRR has organized 55 river cleanups that have removed 537 tons of trash, ranging from beer cans to classic cars, from the Missouri River and its flood plain. This Columbia-based group is not content to remove trash from Missouri's stretch of

its namesake river. Last summer, MRR marshaled 2,000 volunteers who removed 57 tons of trash from Yankton, S.D., to the Mississippi River confluence.

MRR also has dozens of water-quality monitoring trips, hundreds of workshops, public meetings and programs and hundreds of trees planted to its credit. But the group's greatest achievement is getting more than 12,000 volunteers into direct contact with the Big Muddy. The experience radically transforms participants' attitudes toward the river. Mistaken notions of a dangerous, ugly ditch dissolve in the face of a majestic river that is rich in fish, wildlife and recreational potential.

Ten years ago, the Missouri River was one of the loneliest outdoor venues in Missouri. On a trip down the river today, you meet campers, kayakers, birdwatchers, anglers, hunters, pleasure boaters and recreationists of every stripe, whose first exposure to the river came during MRR-sponsored river cleanups. A river that once had almost no friends now has a growing host of passionate promoters, thanks to Missouri River Relief. For more information, visit [www.riverrelief.org](http://www.riverrelief.org), or write to Missouri River Relief, PO Box 463, Columbia, MO 65205. ▲