

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **MILLION ACORN CHALLENGE 2009 GREAT WEIGH-IN AND PLANTING TO BE HELD AT AFTON STATE PARK**



Seventeen metro area youth groups are gathering Saturday, September 19 to celebrate the third and final year of Great River Greening's Million Acorn Challenge. From Stillwater on the east to Minnetonka on the west; from Apple Valley in the south to Lindstrom in the north; youth groups throughout the metropolitan area are converging on Afton State Park Saturday, September 19 to plant thousands of acorns they have collected during the past few weeks.



The fifty young people chosen to represent their various youth groups play a vital role in filling a forest gap that cannot be seeded by direct hardwood seeding. Eighty-five acres in Afton State Park are being seeded into oak forest as part of a restoration project to return the area to its original oak forest. The project, part of a valley wide For the Birds Initiative will provide for continuous forest canopy resulting in needed habitat for diverse and rare species.

Approximately five acres of the project area is too small to employ the equipment used in direct hardwood seeding, a relatively new high density planting technique that mitigates against animal foraging of the seeds. Youth participating in the Million Acorn Challenge will hand-plant the thousands of acorns they have collected thus providing the beginning of closing the gap in the forest canopy.

The 2007 Million Acorn Challenge resulted in the collection of 92,000 acorns which were planted in the Como Woodland area that had been devastated by August severe weather. The twenty-two youth groups participating in the 2008 Challenge more than tripled that number to 380,000 acorns. The goal is to achieve the collection and planting of approximately 525,000 acorns in the 2009 Challenge resulting in a total of one million acorns collected and planted over the course of the three year Million Acorn Challenge.

In addition to having the satisfaction of restoring a vital habitat to our area, the youth groups are vying for the honor of having collected the greatest number of acorns in this, the third year of the Million Acorn Challenge.

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renewing communities*

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The collected acorns will be weighed, prize checks presented, and then the acorns planted at Afton State Park between 9:00 AM and Noon Saturday, September 19, 2009.

The participating youth groups are: Boy Scout Troop 226, Lakeland; Chisago Lakes Agriculture Department, Lindstrom; Cub Scout Pack 561, Saint Paul; Cub Scout Pack 419, Coon Rapids; Girl Scout Troop 51693, Fridley; ; Girl Scout Troop 11232, Mound; Girl Scout Troop 11638, Minneapolis; Girl Scout Troop 52350, Saint Paul; Girl Scout Troop 12870, Minneapolis; Girl Scouts, Roseville; Journey Home school Co-op, Nowthen; Junior Girl Scout Troop 12870, Minneapolis; Roots & Shoots & Ladders, Stillwater; Schlack Youth Group, Litchfield; School of Environmental Studies, Apple Valley; Sunrise Middle School, White Bear Lake; and Willmatt Hill Gang, Minnetonka.

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Funding for the For the Birds project, a partnership of Great River Greening, Afton State Park and the Minnesota Science Museum, is provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) through Greening's participation in the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership.

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