

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **PILOT KNOB HILL - OHEYAWAHI SOON TO AGAIN BE "A HILL MUCH VISITED"**

*City of Mendota Heights and Great River Greening Dedicate Historic Interpretive Markers and Commemorate Beginning of Phase II Restoration*



The City of Mendota Heights and Great River Greening, a nonprofit regional leader for community-based restoration of natural areas and open space will dedicate historic interpretive trail markers recently installed in Phase I and celebrate the 2008 purchase of 18.5 acres of land for Phase II and the beginning of Phase II restoration. The ceremonies which include Mayor John J. Huber, State Representative Rick Hansen, Pilot Knob Preservation Association leader Gail Lewellan, artist Seitu Jones, and Great River Greening Executive Director Deborah Karasov will take place at Pilot Knob Road on Thursday, June 25 at 11:30 AM.



The historic trail markers were designed in consultation with the Mdewakanton Dakota Community by prominent Saint Paul artist Seitu Jones recognized nationally for his public art. Funded by the Minnesota Historical Society State Grants In-Aid Program, the trail markers feature reproductions of Seth Eastman's paintings of Pilot Knob, its surroundings, and the Dakota together with text relaying the cultural and historical significance of Oheyawahi – "a hill much visited."

In addition to the dedication of the signage, the ceremonies will commemorate the purchase of 15 acres and the beginning of restoration of Phase II restoration. [Working with Great River Greening, the City of Mendota Heights has undertaken a multi-year plan to restore by 2017 the native prairie and oak savanna that once covered this site. The timeline for the restoration is as follows: 2006 to 2009: Site Preparation and Seeding Phases, 2010 to 2013: Plant Establishment Phase, 2014 to 2017: Maintenance Phase.](#)

Prairie and oak savanna are the historic vegetation that was present before European settlement and the associated fire suppression and removal of nomadic herds of bison and elk. We know this from the original government land survey of the 1840s, the soil types, and accounts from inhabitants at the time.

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*restoring the land,  
renewing communities*

## Dedication– Page Two

Prairie and oak savanna are some of the most imperiled ecosystems in Minnesota, and host to a number of rare and endangered species. Prairie and savanna need our help if we are to retain this important part of Minnesota's natural heritage for future generations.

In 2006, the DNR did a comprehensive strategy for wildlife species with greatest conservation need. Pilot Knob Hill is located in a top rated area for wildlife needs and opportunities; prairie and savanna restoration were identified as top priorities to enhance these wildlife species.

Prairie and savanna are predicted to do well in Minnesota's warming climate. By engaging in restoration, the transition to prairie and savanna is done in a controlled manner, and the wood is put to good use. This area may prove to be a seed source for additional prairies and savannas in the future. Prairie and savanna may also be a future source of permanent vegetative grass biofuels, while also supporting wildlife and water quality. In short, prairie and savanna represent the greatest ecological value for the site, while addressing some future concerns.

Major partners in protecting this site include City of Mendota heights, Dakota Farmland and Natural Area Program, Friends of the Burrow Farm Fund of The Saint Paul Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Remediation Grant Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Metro Greenways Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Natural and Scenic Program, Minnesota Environment and Natural resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative –Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community, Pilot Knob Preservation Association, and The Trust for Public Land.

Restoration and Capital Improvement Funding and Volunteer Assistance has been provided by Acacia Park Cemetery, Archie D. and Bertha H. Walker Foundation, Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas Program, Dakota County Technical College, City of Mendota Heights, Friends of the Minnesota Valley, Pilot Knob Preservation Association, Great River Greening, Dakota Soil and Water Conservation District, Matt Entenza, Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, Pollution Control Agency Supplemental Environmental Fund, Representative Rick Hansen, Sierra Club, and Starbucks.

Known to Dakota people as Oheyawahi, "a hill much visited," Pilot Knob at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers is a place of distinctive historical, cultural, and environmental importance, a sacred site, and a landmark of the Midwest's beginnings.

It was from this prominence that the Dakota in 1851 signed a treaty granting the United States 35 million acres of tribal lands west of the Mississippi, forever changing the course of Minnesota's history. The National Trust for Historic Preservation calls Pilot Knob Hill one of the state's most significant historical and cultural resources.

Its restoration represents an historic opportunity to protect a significant piece of cultural history and restore native prairie and savanna that has all but disappeared from the urban landscape.

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