



File photo: John Weiss / weiss@postbulletin.com

A towboat pushes barges down the Mississippi River last summer, heading toward the Red Wing Lock and Dam. The Corps of Engineers said lockages at that site and other locks-and-dams during 2015 were close to the 10-year average, but tonnage of cargo carried was down.

Barge cargo flows below average

More than 88 million tons move through Mississippi locks

BY JOHN WEISS
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Tonnage of barges pushed up and down the Mississippi River in this region was below the 10-year average in 2015 and less than half of the peak year of 1983.

Total tons were 88,618,448 passing through any or all the locks last year compared with the peak of 184,887,000 tons in 1983, according to statistics of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in St. Paul.

The number of commercial tows moving through the 13 locks and dams in the Upper Mississippi River system also dropped a bit below the 10-year average last year, but stayed relatively the same compared with the past several years.

The 13 are from the Upper and Lower Saint Anthony Falls locks and dams in the Twin Cities down to Lock and Dam 10 downriver to Guttenberg, Iowa.

The peak years for commercial river usage were followed by

lower usage. Much of the tonnage was of soybeans and corn being shipped downriver to be used in the southern United States or to be shipped abroad.

About 10 years ago, however, commercial tonnage began to drop. In 2002, tonnage was 144,513,599, but it dropped nearly in half to 73,722,588 in 2008 and has stayed below the 100-million-ton mark since then. Before that, tonnage fell below the 100-million-ton mark only once in about 30 years.

Part of the drop has been attributed to more Midwest corn being used locally to make ethanol. But the overall reason is more complex and includes cost of hauling freight across oceans, Gary Genz, chairman of the board of directors of the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association, said in 2014.

About 40 percent of Minnesota corn goes into making ethanol, he said. But farmers began to plant more corn, and yields per acre are also rising, according to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

“Corn supplies domestically and exports of corn internationally have generally remained steady despite rising ethanol production,” the department said

in an ethanol report.

Key statistics for 2015 lockages in this region are:

- **Lock and Dam 2, near Hastings:** 3,026 lockages, compared with the 10-year average of 3,039. There were 1,280 commercial navigation lockages with 7,407,470 tons of commodities. The corps also locked 3,714 recreation vessels during 1,715 recreation lockages and there were 31 lockages from various government agencies. In 2014, there were 2,452 combined lockages.

- **Lock and Dam 3, Red Wing:** 4,609 lockages last year while the 10-year average is 4,512. There were 1,454 commercial navigation lockages with 7,388,270 tons of commodities and 3,135 lockages of 8,940 recreation vessels and 20 government vessels. There were 3,775 combined lockages during the 2014 season.

- **Lock and Dam 4, Alma, Wis.:** 3,698 lockages during the 2015 season with 1,289 commercial navigation of 8,056,760 tons of commodities, with 2,311 lockages of 5,021 recreation vessels and 98 government vessels. There were 3,075 combined lockages in 2014.

- **Lock and Dam 5, south of Minneiska:** 2,896 lockages during the 2015 season. Of those,

there were 1,266 commercial navigation lockages of 8,088,680 tons of commodities along with 1,589 recreation lockages of 3,208 boats and 41 governmental lockages. In 2014, there were 2,542 combined lockages.

- **Lock and Dam 5A near Fountain City, Wis.:** 3,158 combined lockages during the 2015 season. There were 1,305 commercial navigation lockages of 8,054,840 tons of commodities along with 1,818 recreation lockages of 4,128 recreation vessels 35 lockages governmental lockages. There were 2,845 combined lockages in 2014.

- **Lock and Dam 6, Trempealeau, Wis.:** 3,072 combined lockages during the 2015 season. There were 1,417 commercial navigation lockages of 9,809,200 tons of commodities along with 1,620 lockages of 3,773 recreation boats and 35 lockages of government agency vessels. There were 2,726 combined lockages in 2014.

- **Lock and Dam 7, La Crosse:** 3,290 combined lockages. There were 1,718 commercial navigation lockages of 9,823,570 tons of commodities as well as 1,538 lockages of 4,673 recreation boats and 34 lockages of government vessels. There were 3,577 combined lockages in 2014.

On this anniversary, a reminder we all have stories to tell



JEN'S WORLD
JENNIFER KOSKI
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Well, happy anniversary to you and me, reader-friends. This month marks the 10-year anniversary of this column.

On Jan. 4, 2006, the first Jen's World (though it wasn't called that at the time) printed right here on B1. I remember how nervous I was to turn that first story in. (“What if they don't like it?”) I remember that my headshot was on the front cover, top right. (“Introducing new columnists ...”) I remember running down to our neighborhood Greenway gas station to buy an extra copy. (“Actually, maybe I'll take two.”)

In that first column, I wrote about the weekend I'd just spent in Aurora, Minn., celebrating Christmas with my husband's family. I wrote about how we played cards at my mother-in-law's kitchen table with Jay's aunts and uncles, while the boys — my little kindergartner and preschooler — watched cartoons in the living room.

Some things haven't changed in the last 10 years.

I am writing today's column a day after returning from Aurora for Christmas with Jay's family. Just yesterday, I sat at my mother-in-law's kitchen table, playing cards with his aunts and uncles.

Some things have changed in 10 years.

One of my boys — now a high school sophomore — missed our weekend away because he was on the other side of northern Minnesota with the Nordic ski team. My eighth-grader sat at that card table with us this year — and bested me most hands.

Clearly, I could fill this newspaper with what has changed in the last decade — starting with those kids and ending with the lines on my face. But what I've been thinking about this morning is how much I've learned.

For starters, I have learned what a fabulous, A-plus, primo procrastinator I am. Don't get me wrong: I'm no deadbeat. I make 99 percent of my deadlines. But, oh, I can sure find a lot of things to do before I finally sit down to write.

Case in point: Roughly three hours ago, I told my husband I was going to write today's column. And then I changed the sheets on our bed, wrapped a birthday present for a friend, did the dishes BY HAND, folded laundry and wrote a thank-you card. And then, THEN, when I finally sat down at the computer to get this thing done already, I returned five emails, watched 32 minutes worth of Golden Globe recap videos, cleaned up my desktop and read a couple articles about David Bowie.

And then I remembered I should plug in my phone.

And take a shower. Because I'm so much more productive when I'm clean.

But now that I sit here, finally, at my computer, I can tell you that I've learned more important things in the last 10 years, too.

I've learned that when we write our stories and experiences down, it helps us to live them more fully. It helps us to remember them more clearly later. And, I believe, it helps us better understand how we feel about them. And this is true for me whether I do my writing here, in the P-B, or in the red Mead notebook I carry in my bag.

I've learned that my favorite part of this column is connecting with readers — discovering that I've made them laugh or cry or think or take on some adventures of their own. I've learned that we share so many common experiences. And that most people are friendly, and funny, and kind.

And, yes, I've learned that some people aren't kind. And that not everyone is going to like what I have to say, or agree with me, or even think I should be in the newspaper. And I've learned that that's OK, too.

But most of all, I've learned that everyone has a story to tell. Like the guy who creates the sets at the theater. And the woman who works at the Kwik Trip. And the doctor who repaired my son's broken arm. And the middle school student taking a tour of Rochester Magazine.

And these people don't only have stories — but stories that will make you laugh, and that will break your heart, and that will make your chest swell with joy or pride or awe.

Every single one of them. Of us. One of my favorite parts of being a writer is helping people tell those stories. This year, I'll certainly keep telling my own tales — but I hope to tell even more of yours, too.

So don't be surprised if I start grilling you in the grocery store. Or the theater. Or your kids' school. Or when you accidentally call my line looking for the circulation department. Because, remember: We're all in this together.

Jennifer Koski is associate editor at Rochester Magazine. Her column appears Wednesdays. Send comments to jkoski@postbulletin.com.

State honors local STEM conservation enrichment course

BY HANNAH YANG
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AUSTIN — A joint program serving students in Austin, Albert Lea, Hayfield, Lyle and Southland has been honored by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Project E3, a STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) conservation enrichment program for grades 4-6, was honored as a Promising Integration Program. It caters to students who demonstrate the potential of high performance with further enrichment through in-depth and complex curriculum.

Upon receiving news

about the recognition, David Wolff, coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services for the Austin Public Schools District, said he was “honored and humbled.”

“This was an initiative that stemmed from the collaboration between our Integration and Gifted & Talented departments to impact the students in our region,” Wolff said.

Project E3 started in August 2014. Wolff spent part of the summer and fall working with leaders from different districts and meeting with interested families.

The sessions start each year in November and



Project E3 students use kick nets that they created to collect macro invertebrates in Wolf Creek in Austin. The environmental and conservation program serving students in Austin, Albert Lea, Hayfield, Lyle and Southland has been honored by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Contributed photo

improving water quality.

This year, the students will examine the human impact on the environment and the effects on animal habitats around the world from the arctic to the Amazon, and right at home in Austin.

“The project has received a lot of interest,” Wolff said. “Students are very interested in programs that are focused on hands-on, real-world experiences. The students have enjoyed integrating technology with the natural world.”

then reconvene one Saturday each month through June. The students also meet for 20 days in June and July.

Currently, 90 students are enrolled in the program and are benefiting from Project E3 by meeting with students from other schools in Southeast Minnesota. Wolff said the students became more aware of their impact on the environment and learned “to be good stewards of the earth.”

“Project E3 challenges the students to think in creative and critical ways and supports their readiness for the upcoming school year,” Wolff said, “which reduces the ‘summer slide’ on academic development.”

Several topics were tackled by the students, including mapping local watersheds, researching why the Cedar River was polluted, designing systems to clean and filter the water as well as developing a plan for

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TO DO

The Rochester Civil War Roundtable will be at 7 p.m. today at the History Center of Olmsted County, 1195 West Circle Drive SW. Details, [page B6](#).

LOOK AHEAD | Southeast MN

THURSDAY ►

From the corner of Grit and Graceful, Fillmore County's unique road names. [Back Roads](#).



FRIDAY

Who won the Beat the Odds scholarships at Rochester Community and Technical College?

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◀ Two people died in a fire at an Amish farmhouse on Monday.