

Ripple Effect #76

“The Power of One,” “The Power of Many”

At the Land and Water International Summit Conference to be held in Fargo on January 22-24, these two title themes will merge with the conference’s own theme, “The Power of a Dream,” in a celebration of the organization’s 25th year.

For the Red River Basin Commission (RRBC), formerly The International Coalition for Land and Water Stewardship in the Red River Basin (TIC), began with a dream of working together to combat the flooding here in the Red River Basin, which, year after year, impacts farms and communities alike. At that time, most people and communities were left to fight flood waters on their own.

The beginnings of TIC demonstrated the “power of one.” It wasn’t just that it was a single person who was responsible for the new organization. But one can, still today, point to the person who went to his friend about the problem of flooding, to that friend who had the political savvy to pull together informal flood meetings, to the city and mayor of Grand Forks that hosted the 1st Summit Conference, to the person who made the motion 25 years ago to found the organization – and the list goes on.

Founding TIC also demonstrated, of course, the power of the many. Many flocked to the first meetings. A good number of those went on to carry out the difficult task of organizing across multiple jurisdictions – including an international boundary – developing friendships along the way that opened up for the first time the perspective and potential for managing Red River Basin waters as a whole.

Many of those who held this vision of cooperating to manage the Basin’s waters, who made a difference as individuals and then went on to develop and shape the organization, will be honored at the upcoming 25th Summit Conference. So it seems appropriate that the speaker for the conference’s public event, Simon Jackson, is also a person with a dream, who, by harnessing the power of many to his dream, has achieved amazing results.

Jackson’s dream is to save the Kermode or “spirit bear,” a white, genetically unique subspecies of black bear found on Canada’s west coast in the world’s last large area of intact temperate rainforest. Its origins yet uncertain, the “spirit bear” in First Nation legend was created by Raven as a reminder of the last ice age and a promise of ongoing life lived in peace and harmony.

Jackson has demonstrated “the power of the many” through successfully amassing a global network of young persons towards his goal of preserving the area where the last 400 “spirit bears” in existence live. With one voice joined to another and then another, today over six million young people in over 65 countries are working to save the Kermode bear.

And Jackson comes to Fargo to help us see “The Power of One,” the title of his talk. His work to protect the Kermode bear’s genetic pool has become the most supported conservation initiative in Canadian history, one that *Time Magazine* in 1999 rated as the top environmental issue in the world. Jackson’s work has resulted in a number of significant land-use agreements at both provincial and federal levels, including the historic land-use plan of 2006 that protects two-thirds of the threatened area. Jackson’s efforts have also caught the attention of the popular media – a movie about the “spirit bear” is due to be released world wide in Spring 2008.

You have the opportunity to hear Jackson’s account of his work first hand on **Tuesday, January 22 at 7 p.m.**, at the **Ramada Inn Plaza Suites in Fargo**. The talk is free and open to the public. If you wish additional information about the full Land & Water International Summit Conference, you may contact the Red River Basin Commission office at 218-291-0422, e-mail staff@redriverbasincommission.org or go to the website at redriverbasincommission.org.

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.



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FROM THE
**Red River Basin
Commission**