

Illinois River Coordinating Council

January 27, 2005 Meeting Minutes

Starved Rock State Park

Call to Order: Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Roll Call: Marc Miller, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, called the roll: Citizen members present were: Lee Bunting, Richard Worthen, Doug Blodgett (for Michael Reuter), Brad McMillan, Daphne Mitchell, Dr. Wendell Shauman, and Cynthia Fox (for Laurene von Klan). State Agency Members present were: Mike Beaty (Agriculture), Terry Weldin-Frisch (DCEO), Virginia Yang (DNR), Tom Brooks (IDOT), and Marica Willhite (IEPA). Ex-Officio Members present were: Ross Adams (US FWS), Gary Loss (for Colonel Duane Gapinski, US ACE), Roy Deda (US ACE), William Kruidenier (for Dean Robert Easter, Dean of the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, U of I), Chris Urban (for Tim Henry, US EPA), William Gradle (USDA – NRCS), Sue Maraccini (for William Graff, USDA - FSA), John Rogner (US FWS) and Doug Wilson (USDA – Rural Development). Robert Holmes (USGS) and Captain Terrance Carter (US Coast Guard) were absent.

Approval of Minutes: Chairman Quinn asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2004 Meeting held at the Bradley-Bourbonnais Sportsmen's Club. Mike Beaty moved to accept and Cynthia Fox seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by the Council.

Opening Remarks: Chairman Quinn thanked the staff of Starved Rock State Park for the use of their facilities and also thanked everyone for attending the press conference on the lodge veranda. He also recognized Daphne Mitchell, a citizen member of the council from the Starved Rock area. He thanked Daphne for her service on the council and her tremendous commitment to the Illinois River.

Member Comment Period:

Doug Blodgett – The Nature Conservancy talked about the importance of public education in ecosystem services and restoration and getting people out on the river to build an educational link. Through a gift from the Caterpillar Corporation, TNC will launch a Great Rivers Center for Conservation and Learning. This center will be used to further the understanding of river restoration. The University of Illinois at Springfield will locate a field station on the Emiquon preserve to study restoration activities and provide useful information on future adaptive management.

Brad McMillan – Office of Congressman Ray LaHood followed up Vickie Clark's Scenic Byway presentation by saying that the designation will allow the state to tap into specific federal funds associated with the federal program. These funds could be used for

outdoor watching of eagles, river centers, etc. He also mentioned that as the USACE's navigation study moves forward this year on the upgrade of lock and dams the environmental restoration component of that study would be a significant source of funding. Congressman LaHood wants to see good coordination with the IRCC, TNC, experts on the river, etc to ensure that the good efforts by all these groups not be forgotten in the study.

Cynthia Fox – Friends of the Chicago River discussed upcoming activities and events being planned by the Friends of the Chicago River. There are numerous public outreach events including Chicago River Day on May 14. They are also planning a canoe race on August 8 to connect people to the river and provide a different experience on the river.

John Rogner – United States Fish and Wildlife Service spoke about rain gardens. They have worked to spread the idea of rain gardens in schoolyards, along boulevards and city streets and backyards. Rain gardens reduce flooding in urban areas by storing water, allowing it to slowly percolate into soils. Rain gardens also provide habitat for butterflies and birds and can become learning tools in schoolyards. Mr. Rogner also mentioned current discussion at FWS about removing the bald eagle from the threatened species list. This would be a positive statement on the hard work to save the species.

Gary Loss – United States Army Corp of Engineers stated that the Corps is currently looking at the revisions to Section 519 of Illinois Rivers 2020, giving the USACE construction authority. He also spoke about the Upper Mississippi Navigation Study and the ecosystem work they plan on doing with FY 05 funds. There are 19 initiatives along the Illinois River. They include backwater restoration on the Peoria Middle Pool, working with the TNC at Emiquon and reducing short-term water fluctuations on portions of the river. They are still waiting to get construction authority for most of their projects. Finally, the Annual Partnering Meeting for the State of Illinois will be held on March 24, 2005 in Springfield. During these meetings the five USACE districts that work with the State of Illinois get together and compare programs.

Chris Urban – United States Environmental Protection Agency stated that the Sangamon River watershed was selected as a finalist for the federal Watershed Initiative announced by President Bush a few years ago.

Daphne Mitchell – Citizen Member announced that It's Our River Day will be held September 17, 2005. To find out more information about IORD visit the Lieutenant Governor's website or call his office. She also thanked Toby Miller, Starved Rock State Park Interpreter, for his dedication to the park and his work with the visitors to the park.

Bill Kruidenier – University of Illinois announced that the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center is having a Nature-Based Tourism Symposium on April 22, 2005 at Lewis and Clark Community College. Ted Eubanks, Fermata, Inc., will be speaking and hosting a discussion section.

Lee Bunting – Citizen Member applauded the Lieutenant Governor and his Office for putting together the Conservation Initiative. The Illinois Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts looks forward to working with Lieutenant Governor Quinn on this initiative.

Ross Adams – United States Fish and Wildlife Service mentioned the importance of the Illinois River for the migration of waterfowl and waterfowl hunting. There will be a waterfowl workshop at the Dixon Mounds Museum on February 11, 2005 featuring waterfowl artwork and winners of the Junior Duck Stamp Contest.

Topic: Conservation Initiative

Chairman Quinn introduced the Conservation Initiative, which proposes to fund several conservation projects in the State of Illinois. The Conservation Initiative would provide a dedicated source of revenue for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). However, the State must come up with funding to receive a four to one match in federal dollars. In order to provide the funding, the 20-year-old landfill gas loophole would be closed. This loophole benefits a handful of landfill operators, some of which are out-of-state companies. Illinois is the only State in the Union that provides this loophole and the federal government provides a number of incentives to operators to capture landfill gas. The Conservation Initiative would help fund CREP as well as fund Conservation 2000 at the IDNR and IL Department of Agriculture. Lastly, closing the loophole would provide a dedicated source of funding for the Department of Natural Resources to ensure that they have sufficient staff for conservation programs and state parks.

Topic: Eagles and Nature-Based Tourism

Mark Werner – Eagle Nature Foundation presented a slide show on eagles. He gave a narration on the story of bald eagles in Illinois, starting with the decline of bald eagles from DDT and habitat destruction and finishing with the return of the eagles and how they can boost nature-based tourism in Illinois. Mr. Werner would like Illinois to be known for eagle tourism like Colorado is known for snow. In order to do this, Mr. Werner is creating an Eagle documentary that he hopes will be shown all across the country to promote winter eagle tourism in Illinois. The film will be ready for viewing as early as the first quarter of 2006.

Vickie Clark – Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (PACVB) said that the PACVB is currently in the third phase of the Scenic Byways application, and will submit the application at the end of February. The decision will be made on the Scenic Byway designation by September 2005. The Scenic Byway designation acknowledges the resources of the Illinois River area and the opportunities for nature-based tourism. It also allows the State to tap into federal and private foundation funding. Ms. Clark thanked Chairman Quinn, the Council, DCEO, and IDOT for their support of the proposal.

Topic: Individual Conservation Efforts

Jim Kleinwachter – The Conservation Foundation spoke about the Conservation @ Home program. As part of this program, the foundation works with private homeowners and developers to use environmentally friendly practices that can be applied on suburban landscapes. These practices include rain gardens, planting native plants that require less water and have deep roots that keep water from rapidly percolating and disconnecting downspouts and teaching landowners to collect the downspout water for use in their gardens.

Kim Erndt – Prairie Rivers Network talked about what Prairie Rivers is doing to get communities involved through the “Illinois, Be River Smart” campaign. This educational program encourages citizens to reduce their water quality impacts by changing their day-to-day activities. Most of this education is done through media outlets such as pamphlets, bookmarks, television ads and signs on mass transit buses. Prairie Rivers also has storm drain stenciling kits. Volunteers can use these kits to stencil “Dump No Waste – Drains To River” on the curb next to the storm drain.

Topic: Nutrient Trading

Donald Hey – The Wetlands Initiative spoke about nutrient farming. This concept will provide for wildlife habitat, flood control, sediment control and better water quality in the waterways. Nutrient farms are farms where wetlands are created on floodplains and bottomlands in place of fields of corn or soybeans. These wetlands capture nitrogen, phosphorus, carbon, sediment and floodwaters. In order to meet new criteria from the U.S. EPA, wastewater treatment facilities in Illinois will find it necessary to upgrade its system to a more expensive and energy-intensive treatment. Wetlands could be installed to reduce the amount of nutrients and avoid the economic costs to water treatment facilities. The landowners that create wetlands instead of growing corn and soybeans could see a net profit of \$300 per acre. The Wetlands Initiative has started a nutrient farming pilot project on the Illinois River at Goose Pond. This site should take nitrogen levels from 6 milligrams per liter to less than 1 milligram.

Topic: Big Bureau Creek Assessment

Jeff Boeckler – Illinois Department of Natural Resources introduced a study underway on Big Bureau Creek, a tributary to the Illinois River. The study rose out of concerns about sedimentation, recreation, flooding, and preservation of the watershed, and has many contributors including State agencies, consulting firms, and local groups. In order to assess the stream individuals conducted assessments on aquatic insects, fish, mollusks and riparian, mollusks surveys, and riparian vegetation.

James Adamson – V3 Consultants discussed additional aspects such as streambank erosion and sedimentation assessments. Remaining tasks include data entry, visual observations by canoe, and compiling a GIS database. They hope to do some stream

bank stabilization, design detention storage basins, and land owner education on riparian zones.

Topic: Current Projects at Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

Terry Kohlbuss – Tri-County Regional Planning Commission gave an update on issues that are under development in the tri-county area. The Peoria City Council will be considering passage of a Stream Buffer Ordinance. These buffers address stormwater and water quality problems but also provide the opportunity for hiking paths and utility easements. Two other ordinances are also under consideration. The Unified Stormwater Ordinance will strengthen existing ordinances to reduce erosion/sedimentation and improve water quality in stormwater draining from future development sites. The Ravine Overlay District has funding from IDNR's Conservation 2000 program and will place additional requirements on development on or near bluffs/ ravines to reduce erosion. Terry drafted a letter to the Peoria City Council from the IRCC in favor of the above-mentioned ordinances.

Richard Worthen made a motion to approve the letter and have it sent on behalf of the Council. Daphne Mitchell seconded the motion. The council approved the letter unanimously.

Topic: Integrated Management Plan, Economic Development

Doug Wilson – United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development discussed the idea of updating the economic development section of the Integrated Management Plan for the Illinois River Watershed. He mentioned that a Task Force is being developed by Chairman Quinn in order to rewrite the economic development portion of the plan. The Task Force would work towards identifying barriers on or next to the river that impede transportation, work on finding remedies for the impediments, identify the market and economic benefit of the river and work to stimulate entrepreneurship of existing business and non-traditional business related to the watershed.

Chairman Quinn suggested appointing Doug Wilson USDA – Rural Development, Richard Worthen – Citizen Member, Mike Reuter – Citizen Member, Vickie Clark – Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Karen Hobbs – Center for Neighborhood Technology, Dr. Geoffrey Hewings – University of Illinois Regional Economics Application Laboratory, Dr. Edwin Herricks - University of Illinois Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Terry Weldin-Frisch – Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to the Economic Development Task Force.

Brad McMillan made a motion to appoint the above mention to the task force. Dr. Wendell Shauman seconded the motion. The Council approved the appointees.

Chairman Quinn asked the task force to meet as soon as possible and review the current economic development section of the management plan.

Other Business:

Chairman Quinn recognized Dr. Nani Bhowmik for all his efforts as the head of the Science Advisory Committee.

Chairman Quinn asked John Marlin to briefly discuss his work on Mud-to-Parks. Mr. Marlin said that they are currently working with companies around Illinois to possibly use sediment from the Illinois River as topsoil or fill material. Talks are continuing with Louisiana about using the sediment to help restore wetlands. Along the coast of Louisiana, about 25 square miles of wetlands are lost a year. There are also talks of restoring Duck Island, near Banner Marsh. The sediment would be used in the reforestation efforts on the island. The removal of the sediment from the river would create deep-water habitat for aquatic species. They are hoping to get funding from the Clean Energy Community Foundation.

Chairman Quinn mentioned that the Clean Energy Community Foundation has \$250 M to fund projects dealing with renewable energy, energy efficiency and habitat restoration.

Brad McMillan made a motion for John Marlin to draft a joint letter from the Council to the Clean Energy Community Foundation in support of the Duck Island project. Richard Worthen seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion.

Brad McMillan reminded the group that there is \$242 M of federal funds set aside for Illinois with the Conservation Reserve Program. He stressed the importance of getting funding this state legislative session.

Chairman Quinn suggested that the Council make a resolution to urge the Illinois General Assembly to get funding for the state Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program this legislative year. Brad McMillan made the motion for the council to make the resolution and Richard Worthen seconded it. The Council approved the motion for the resolution.

Public Comment Period:

Pam Grivetti, President of the Starved Rock Foundation, thanked Chairman Quinn for his genuine and continued interests in natural resources and efforts in trying to reinstate jobs at the DNR. Pam spoke on how Starved Rock State Park has lost almost half of its regular employees and ninety percent of its summer help since the 1980's. In the last five years, Starved Rock has had visitors from all 50 states and 84 countries. It is the visitors to the park that will suffer from recent layoffs.

Daphne Mitchell made a motion that the Council send a letter to the General Assembly in support of the reinstatement of a proper number of employees at the Starved Rock

Visitors Center. Richard Worthen seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion.

John McKee was at the meeting as a spokes person for the Illinois Audubon Society. He talked about his disappointment with the current administration's and general assembly's actions regarding the Department of Natural Resources and the flora, fauna, and natural lands it is charged with protecting and managing. He thanked Chairman Quinn for his support of natural resources and Plum Island and asked for his continued support.

Dr. John Lavieri spoke about a continuing study on the Little Vermillion River. They have completed an assessment and a written plan and are working towards implementation. He mentioned the importance of Starved Rock to bring tourists to the area and talked about some projects that La Salle is doing to bring in tourists. These projects include putting a canal boat in the canal and renovation on historical buildings.

Mark Carr – Memco Barge spoke briefly about Memco Barge and said that they would like to play an appropriate role in the Economic Development Task Force.

Chad Pergracke mentioned that Living Lands and Waters will be working on the Illinois River from May to July. They will be hosting teaching workshops and clean ups, and they are more than happy to help with any Illinois River projects.

Katie Troccoli talked about properties determined to be in a floodplain and how trying to get information between IDOT and FEMA can be problematic. To get some information you have to write a freedom of information act request. She asked Chairman Quinn if he would help make it easier to get the essential information on floodplain properties.

Chairman Quinn said he would take a look to see if IDOT was responsive with required information.

The next Illinois River Coordinating Council meeting will be held April 6, 2005 at the State Library in Springfield.

Meeting Adjournment: Chairman Quinn adjourned the meeting at 3:16 p.m.