

**Illinois River Coordinating Council  
January, 27 2006 Meeting Minutes  
Zone Community Center, Chicago**

**Call to Order:**

Marc Miller, Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Marc Miller, Office of the Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the roll:

**Citizen Members**

Lee Bunting, Michael Reuter, Brad McMillan, Daphne Mitchell, Nancy Erickson, and Margaret Frisbie.

**State Agency Members**

Debbie Bruce (DNR), Mike Hine (IDOT), and Marcia Willhite (IEPA)

**Ex-Officio Members**

Matt Sprenger (US FWS), Gary Loss (for Colonel Duane Gapinski, US ACE), Colonel Gary Johnston (US ACE), Chris Urban (US EPA), Robert Holmes (USGS), Sue Maraccini (USDA – FSA) and John Rogner (US FWS).

**Members Absent**

Richard Worthen (Citizen Member), Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, U of I, William Gradle (USDA – NRCS), Commander Dave Fish (US Coast Guard), and Doug Wilson (USDA – Rural Development).

**Approval of Minutes:**

Marc Miller asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 4, 2005 meeting held at Holiday Inn City Centre, Peoria. Brad McMillan moved to accept and Robert Holmes seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by the Council.

**Member Comment Period:**

**Margaret Frisbie – Friends of the Chicago River** announced that 2006 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Friends of the Chicago River. Many events are scheduled through

September 30, 2006 to celebrate this milestone. The Michigan Avenue Bridgehouse Museum will be opening in June.

**Gary Loss – U.S. ACE** reported that the O & M budget for the Illinois Waterway was down \$10 Million from what is needed to obtain full level of services. A lot of the maintenance crews have been sent to Louisiana and Mississippi to help with the hurricane clean up effort. Under Section 519, the Illinois River Basin has eight new projects approved for a total of 16 projects in the critical restoration category approved for construction. The comprehensive plan for these projects will be the subject of public meetings in the month of March.

**Robert Holmes – USGS** gave an update on the stream monitoring gages. IEPA gave some funding to keep the stream gages running until July 12, 2006, while IDNR will fund the gages until September 30, 2006. USGS is hopefully that in next federal fiscal year we will see federal monies for the operation of the gages.

**Debbie Bruce - IDNR** spoke about the Spoon River Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUP) Project. Cedar Creek, a tributary to the Spoon River, was chosen as a pilot project for this program. NRCS and Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts began accepting applications for streambank stabilization projects on December 20, 2005. After the final cutoff date, on March 1, 2006, for applications any EQIP funds not allocated to projects on the Cedar Creek demonstration watershed will be made available to the rest of the Spoon River Watershed.

**Marcia Willhite – IEPA** mentioned that the draft version of the Conditions of Illinois Water Report is available on IEPA's website. The report includes the list of 2006 list of impaired waters.

**Michael Reuter - TNC** gave an update on Emiquon. About 100,000 people visit the Emiquon site annually. They are working on an educational plan and an adaptive management plan for ecological restoration.

### **Update on Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP):**

**Sue Maraccini – USDA-FSA** gave an update on CREP. There was a two-week sign up period in November. 1118 landowners offered 34,000 acres for enrollment into the Federal side of CREP and 19,000 acres into the State side. A lottery was held on December 27, 2005, to select the acres that would be enrolled. 826 offers were accepted. 22,5000 acres were enrolled on the Federal side and 14,076 acres were added on the State side. All the accepted landowners have until April 1, 2006 to confirm their enrollment.

## **Calumet River Corridor Planning:**

**Aaron Rosinski and Alan Mammoser – South East Environmental Task Force** discussed the Calumet Corridor Vision. The Calumet Corridor Vision is an open space project for the Calumet Region, including the City of Chicago, the south suburbs and Indiana. The Vision seeks to promote eco- and cultural tourism and environmental improvements along the Calumet River. The South East Environmental Task Force has identified riverfront parcels for visitors to enjoy open space and learn about the unique history of the Southeast Chicago's industrial corridor.

## **Corridor Transportation, Economic Development and Other Uses:**

**Marcus Arnold – South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA)** discussed transportation and economic elements of the Calumet. In 2001, SSMMA received an Illinois Tomorrow Grant. As part of the continuing grant project, they are looking at transportation in the Calumet corridor and how it relates to economic development.

## **National Fish Habitat Initiative:**

**Rob Simmons – US-FWS** gave a presentation on the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI). The mission of the NFHI is to work with regional and local partners to focus attention and resources on the protection, restoration, and enhancement of aquatic habitat and reverse declines in fish and other aquatic species. This national effort will provide, plan for and fund improved aquatic habitats. The goals of NFHI include: protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems; prevent further degradation of fish and aquatic habitats and increase the quality and quantity of fish sustained by our nation's waters, and increase self-sustaining aquatic systems that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species.

Marc Miller introduced a letter written by Chairman Quinn on behalf of the IRCC to USFWS Director Dale Hall requesting that the IRCC be made a partner in the NFHI. Marc Miller asked for a motion to approve the letter. Daphne Mitchell moved to accept and Michael Reuter seconded the motion. The Council approved the letter. Chairman Quinn will hand deliver the letter during a meeting with Director Hall.

## **Brewster Creek Dam Removal and Sediment Study:**

**Tim Straub and Don Roseboom – USGS** gave a presentation on the removal of the Brewster Creek Dam and the sediment study that accompanied the removal. The dam was removed in a series of six steps over a period of about one year. This process allowed the sediment behind the dam to remain relatively stable. Since the removal of

the dam, the creek has returned to a natural state, rich with aquatic species. The sediment study suggests there was not an excessive amount of sediment released by the dam removal.

Chairman Quinn asked if there are other dams in Illinois that could be removed.

Don said that there are a number of small dams in Illinois that have fallen into disrepair and do not serve the purpose for which they were originally built.

### **Mud to Parks Funding for 2006:**

**Dr. John Marlin – IDNR-WMRC** updated the Council on his recent trip to Louisiana. He met with the Louisiana DNR, Corps of Engineers, coastal restoration groups and others to discuss the possibilities for a Mud to Marshes program. There is a lot of interest in Louisiana to do a demonstration project using Illinois River Sediment from Peoria Lake to restore a section of coastal wetlands. This project would show the feasibility or lack of feasibility of restoring the marshes and wetlands with sediment from Illinois. Senator Durbin is actively seeking funding for this project.

**Marc Miller – Lt. Governor's Office** gave an update on the Dynegy Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) and the funding that will be coming in 2006. Some of the monies from the Dynegy settlement will go toward funding Mud to Parks programs across the state. Funding will go towards sediment sampling, Duck Island dredging and restoration of hardwood forest, and final cover for the Pekin landfill.

Chairman Quinn asked Dr. Marlin to give an update on the original Mud to Parks project, which took sediment from Peoria Lake to create a park in Chicago at the former US Steel site.

Dr. Marlin said the soil formation went very well and there is a tremendous amount of plant growth. He added that contracts have been made to turn the land into a people friendly park.

### **Eagle Viewing in the Calumet Watershed:**

**Benjamin Cox – Friends of the Forest Preserve** discussed the progress made by the Friends of the Forest Preserves, and others, from an eagle's point of view. In recent years, several natural areas have been restored and preserved in Cook County. The Calumet region is home to one pair of bald eagles. Recent efforts to protect and restore natural areas will hopefully bring more eagles to the area in coming years.

Chairman Quinn mentioned that January 28, 2006 is the first annual Eagle Day in Illinois. In May 2005, the General Assembly passed a resolution naming the fourth Saturday in January It's Our Eagle Day.

## **Other Business:**

Chairman Quinn announced that the next IRCC meeting will be Wednesday, May 10, 2006 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield.

## **Public Comment Period:**

Brad McMillan said Congress is working on a new farm bill and that the State needs to find more money for CREP. He asked that everyone continue to advocate for CREP.

Dick Ladzinski asked the Federal agencies to push for more recreational easements and more access to federal land.

Tom Shepherd from the Southeast Environmental Task Force asked Chairman Quinn to continue to endorse a bottle bill. He also asked the Council to push the Calumet Corridor Vision.

Chairman Quinn recognized Jody and Jack Nelson from Indiana. Jody and Jack are members of a Council in Indiana similar to the IRCC.

Judith Lihota from the Calumet Ecological Park Association (CEPA) asked interested members to pick of a copy of CEPA's brochure. She also reminded everyone that water and other parts of nature do not respect state boundaries. She asked that the Council continue to work with Federal partners and other States.

Bob Kelliher another CEPA representative thanked Chairman Quinn and the Council for coming to the Calumet area and for all of the good work that they do.

Marian Byrnes from the Calumet Heritage Partnership mentioned that their group is working towards the restoration of Acme Coke Plant.

Eric Spirm mentioned that there are other stream monitoring gages that are not running due to lack of funding.

Dick Ladzinski ask Gary Loss what critical restoration meant in terms of Army Corps projects.

Gary Loss said the title means work can be done on an approved project without doing a feasibility study.

## **Meeting Adjournment:**

Chairman Quinn asked for a motion to adjourn. Lee Bunting moved to adjourn the meeting and Mike Hine seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion. Chairman Quinn adjourned the meeting at 3:20 pm.