

**Illinois River Coordinating Council
Minutes of the Thursday, March 27, 2003 Meeting
Illinois State Library - Springfield, Illinois**

Call to Order: Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:23 a.m. and thanked Dr. Nani Bhowmik for providing the large, color maps of the Illinois River Watershed for the meeting attendees. Ms. Harmony Dean, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, called the roll.

Roll Call:

Citizen Members

Lee Bunting, Bud Davis, Dr. Wendell Shauman, Brad McMillan for Mary Alice Erickson, Michael Reuter for Claudia Emken, Margaret Frisbie for Laurene von Klan

State Agency Members

Terry Weldin-Frisch for Acting Director, Jack Lavin (Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity), Debbie Bruce for Acting Director Joel Brunsvold (Illinois Department of Natural Resources), Marcia Willhite for Director Renee Cipriano (Illinois Environmental Protection Agency), Michael Hines for Acting Director Tim Martin (Illinois Department of Transportation), Mike Beatty (Illinois Department of Agriculture).

Ex-Officio Members

Ross Adams, Gary Loss for Colonel William Bayles and Philip Bernstein, Bill Franz for Tim Henry, Robert Holmes, Steve Mozley for William Gradle, Jim Ross (for William Graff), Bill Kruidenier for Dean Robert Easter, John Rogner, Doug Wilson

Members Absent

Dr. David Pfeifer, Captain Raymond Seebald

Chairman Quinn recognized Michelle Wood, representing United States Senator Peter Fitzgerald, and Anne Dougherty, representing United States Senator Dick Durbin.

Approval of Minutes of the December 12, 2002 Meeting: Jim Ross stated that date of the CREP extension on page 4 should be changed from December 3, 2007 to December 30, 2007. A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Bud Davis, seconded by Marcia Willhite, and unanimously approved.

Opening Remarks: Lt. Governor Quinn opened the meeting by stressing that now is the time to act on important environmental issues facing Illinois like the restoration and preservation of the Illinois River Watershed; however, it is also a difficult and challenging time in both state and federal government, where both are affected by budget deficits and other funding issues. He stated that challenging times like these offer an opportunity to look at issues from a different perspective to make sure that the programs are on course and reaching their targets, and to innovatively find opportunities to reach the Council's goals.

During the current legislative session, the Governor had to submit his final budget by May 31st, and from now until the 31st, the Lt. Governor would be looking to pass far-reaching environmental legislation. Clearly, the most important thing the Governor and the citizens of Illinois have before them is the budget. The Governor's core priorities/core functions are education, public safety, and health. Others are environment, water and air. In the meantime what the Lt. Governor is looking to further is a "Clean Water Initiative" put on the ballot or passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor to address the many waterways of Illinois – not just on the Illinois River Watershed. The initiative will be on the legislative agenda, but securing money is a problem for the initiative.

The Lt. Governor would like to continue the good work of the Council and thanked all the people who had been involved in this effort from beginning; whether involved in local, state or federal government or the

private sector, part of the environmental movement or involved in agriculture, it really has been a team effort. He hoped that together, the Council would continue the same kind of teamwork. He stated that there was an exciting opportunity to make history over the four years here and to look back on this time and say that we were able to do the things necessary to make the Illinois River and its basin better than we found it. He said that is his mission and that it is also Governor Blagojevich's mission.

The Lt. Governor stated that he believed that working together in a not-for-profit manner for a good cause could make a huge difference. He stated that the Council was here to do just that, and he was looking forward to getting to know each and everyone that was present, and working together on this important mission.

Lt. Governor Quinn ended his comments by thanking members of the Council for their support and for the work that they have done over the last four years and asked each Council member to make a few remarks regarding their perception of the mission of the Council and their vision for the future.

Michael Reuter – The Nature Conservancy (representing Claudia Emken)

Michael Reuter thanked the Lt. Governor and IRCC council members and expressed, on behalf of the Nature Conservancy, their excitement about the next four years and the continuation of the important work, which the Council has started.

Reuter reported that The Nature Conservancy has been working since about 1951 with individuals, communities and businesses to protect about 98 million acres of land around the world. TNC's mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Conservancy has been successful because they work closely with communities, businesses (including 50 percent of the companies in the Fortune 500) and individuals (1 million members); b) practice sound science that achieves tangible results, and c) employ a non-confrontational approach.

The Illinois River, Reuter said, has deeply touched the lives and livelihoods of more than 500 generations of people in Illinois, starting 12 thousand years ago with Native Americans who depended on its diversity and abundance for sustenance. Early in the last century, the Illinois was the most productive inland commercial fishery in the U.S.; the reported harvest of 24 million pounds was 10% of the total U.S. harvest in 1908. Like fish, waterfowl were harvested recreationally and commercially. And the Illinois was considered the most productive mussel stream, per mile, in the country. Today, the river provides opportunities for recreation, water for drinking, a catalyst for industry, a transportation corridor, and a home for native plant and animal communities. The watershed of the Illinois River and its tributaries drains more than 44 percent of the state; 90 percent of Illinois' human population and a remarkable diversity of plant and animal communities live and are supported by the river. Some of the most ancient residents of this planet, the sturgeon and paddlefish, are found here--and at least one plant species, the decurrent false aster, is found nowhere else in the world, Reuter said.

Reuter noted that the Illinois River is a global treasure in our midst—ranking among the Nile, Amazon, and Upper Mississippi as a world-class large-floodplain river ecosystem. In 1992, the National Research Council identified the Illinois as one of only three functioning large-floodplain river systems remaining in the United States where restoration is practical. But it is also a river at risk, threatened by heavy sedimentation, unpredictable and erratic water level fluctuations, isolation of floodplain habitats, and pollution including high levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, and other agricultural, industrial, and municipal chemicals.

Reuter said TNC's vision for the Illinois River is one and the same as the IRCC: A naturally diverse and productive Illinois River Basin that is sustained by natural ecological processes and managed to provide for compatible social and economic activities. This is no coincidence. TNC was instrumental in forming the Illinois River Strategy Team, which created the Integrated Management Plan for the Illinois River and

led to the Illinois River Coordinating Council. TNC has focused most of its efforts at key sites, which reflect critical issues facing the Illinois River, hoping to learn lessons that can be replicated more broadly. TNC invested more than \$1M per year in operating funds for the Illinois River and over the past few years have invested another \$22M in capital.

At the Mackinaw River, starting in 1992, they had demonstrated a scientific method and community-based approach to conserving streams in an agricultural context. In a paired watershed study in the Upper Mackinaw River they have learned that 1) increased outreach does increase Best Management Practices (BMP), 2) that these BMP's do reduce nitrates and suspended sediment, but 3) so far that these reductions are not sufficient to meet our ecological goals. This may be due to a) the lag effect, and they will be sufficient over time, or b) they need more, perhaps different BMP's, or changes in land use.

At Spunky Bottoms, a 2,026-acre preserve established in 1997, Reuter said TNC was demonstrating innovative strategies for floodplain management. Working with their partners the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), TNC was re-establishing natural floodplain plant communities in a leaved area that was recently farmed unprofitably, and TNC was designing a management structure to provide aquatic organisms such as fish, mussels, amphibians, and reptiles, access to these restored areas, critical habitats required for many of them to complete their life cycles. As such reconnection projects are rare, Spunky can provide an important model for floodplain restoration and management. Reconnecting the restored habitats to the Illinois River will give TNC a first-hand opportunity to better understand how connectivity between a river and its floodplain sustains biological diversity, ecological functions, and ecosystem integrity.

At Emiquon, 40 miles south of Peoria, TNC is undertaking our boldest restoration project. Just a century ago, this area's abundant wildlife resources created a Mecca for both recreational and commercial harvest of waterfowl and fish. In 1908, approximately one-half of the record harvest of 24 millions pounds of commercial fish in Illinois, went through the numerous fish markets immediately adjacent to either end of the Emiquon area. But like Spunky Bottoms, at Emiquon the river was isolated from its floodplain by levees in the 1920s, and lands that once supported natural plant and animal communities were converted to row crop agriculture. Working in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), TNC had acquired 9,000 acres of former floodplain habitat and adjoining bluff lands and uplands at Emiquon. The largest private conservation acquisition in Illinois, Emiquon will be the anchor site of the Conservancy's Illinois River protection work. As the largest wetland restoration project in the Midwest, TNC aspires that Emiquon will provide a science-based model for large floodplain habitat restoration to be replicated throughout the Upper Mississippi and Illinois River valleys. TNC had also made investments to ensure it can become a model for nature-based tourism development as well, as we are also concerned about demonstrating positive local economic impacts.

The Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy is also leading an initiative focusing on the Upper Mississippi River system, of which the Illinois River is an integral part, focusing on flow naturalization, bluff-to-floodplain restoration, and promotion of ecologically compatible land uses in the watershed. We are in the final stages of developing a map identifying the most important areas for biodiversity conservation in the watershed.

Reuter stated they have also formed a partnership with the State of Mato Grosso, Brazil, to share lessons learned on the Upper Mississippi with the Pantanal/Upper Paraguay River. The Pantanal is a wetland about 20% larger than the state of Illinois. The State of Illinois also signed this Memorandum of Understanding. The Pantanal is a system that shares many ecological and economic (e.g., soybeans, agribusiness) resources with TNC, although the Brazilians do not have as readily exchangeable amount. TNC had aspired to become informed about a system in much more pristine condition, and help them make critical decisions about the sustainable development of that system.

In closing, Reuter put forth the Nature Conservancy's recommendations for the Illinois River Coordinating

Council to: coordinate, support and expand tangible work undertaken in the basin. Local initiatives like the Peoria Lakes Basin Alliance function as an entity that considers and works toward a long-term vision for the river and struggles with the key issues that threaten that vision. (e.g., complexity of storm water management), A solution would require contributions from floodplains, urban areas, farmlands, and the City of Chicago to integrate their work on the Illinois River with ongoing efforts for the Upper Mississippi River System. These contributors would also need to bring resources to the river and support local initiatives, particularly for watersheds and floodplains.

Brad McMillan – Chief of Staff, Congressman Ray LaHood (representing Mary Alice Erickson)

Brad McMillan thanked Lt. Governor Quinn and stated that Congressman LaHood had an opportunity to meet with the Lt. Governor in Washington several weeks ago and the Congressman was very impressed with the enthusiasm and deep commitment of the Lt. Governor to continue the efforts that everyone in the room had made on preserving and restoring the Illinois River.

The Congressman's district actually encompasses twenty counties and approximately 300 miles of the Illinois River. It goes all the way up to the Hennepin area where the Hennepin-Hopper project of the Wetlands Initiative is located; all the way down to Adams and Pike counties, so he had a keen interest in what they were attempting to do on the river. Congressman LaHood spearheaded the efforts as part of the Illinois Congressional delegation on the Illinois Rivers 2020 program. Lt. Governor Corinne Wood played an instrumental role out in Washington in getting that \$100 million authorization that they were able to get in 2001 for Illinois Rivers 2020.

McMillan wanted people in the room to know that authorization does not mean appropriation and they still have a long road to go, and that they have to keep a long-range perspective. He stated that what LaHood's administration believed that the rivers are something that is important for future generations and is Illinois' greatest natural resource. He was aware that the state has its own budget concerns and obviously, at the federal level, since 9/11 and the war with Iraq, some spending priorities had changed as well.

He stated that, as long as LaHood is the congressman from the 18th Congressional District, the Illinois River would be a top priority for him. And he hopes to stay around for a long time into the future. The River is too important. They were looking forward to partnering with Lt. Governor Quinn on the efforts. They were going to have to keep the Illinois Congressional Delegation apprised of what they were doing; they had to keep this on their front burner.

McMillan said he was encouraged that the Lt. Governor and his staff, including Claude Walker and Matt Fitzgerald had seen the projects at Peoria Lakes and the Pekin Lake. This prompted him to tell a little story, a few years ago, they were trying to figure out a way that they could really emphasize the sedimentation problem that was going on in Peoria Lakes. His cohort, John Marlin, and he, came up with a scheme and they got 20 johnboats and they set those out from the Chillicothe dock. And on those johnboats, they had one expert from either the IDNR or Fish & Wildlife with one state legislator and the Congressman. They all had poles in their hands. They toured all around Peoria Lakes, and they were able to stick the poles into the lake and see that the actual depth in much of the lakes was one foot or two feet. When they were near the artificial islands in Chillicothe, one of those nasty carps jumped on a boat – his boat – and it was a real face-to-face example for all who attended of what they are up against.

McMillan said it is important that they do not forget the great progress that has been made. He remembers back when he first began getting interested in these issues, people were worried that the sediment contained in the Illinois River was contaminated and that it was going to cause a big problem. But due to the great research of John Marlin and others, they found that it is not the case. The soil is good soil and it is well below the environmental thresholds and they can use it in good, productive ways whether to build islands or otherwise. John recently took 900 tons of Peoria Lakes' sediment up to

Chicago a couple months ago for a land reclamation project.

Congressman LaHood and McMillan were also recently out on a pontoon boat with Don Hey and Ray Pyott looking at the Hennepin-Hopper project which is remarkable – what has happened up there in such a short time frame. They had been down to Spunky Bottoms and seen how that wetland had been restored in such a short period of time. Emiquon has potential as well. There is so much on the horizon that they can look forward to.

There is one point McMillan wanted to stress on behalf of the Congressman, remarks echoed by the Lt. Governor in his opening comments. The partnerships at the IRCC are the best they have ever seen in government from the local level to the state level to the federal level and it is bi-partisan. There are a lot of great minds and deeply committed people in the room. He believes that if they continue to work together as a team and keep the long-range perspective in mind, they will see great things. And, they will be able to look back and the Illinois River Restoration project will truly be a model for the nation.

Dr. Wendell Shauman, Illinois Farm Bureau:

Dr. Shauman stated that he was representing the Illinois Farm Bureau and believed that farmers have a pretty good history in implementing a lot of the projects that the IRCC has helped to finance. The histories of the conservation programs and those that have worked best have been cost-sharing and incentive based programs. They all can agree that one accomplishes more with a carrot than with a stick. And, as farmers, they are pretty proud of the Illinois Farm Bureau's record in participating in conservation practices. Illinois farmers are some of the nationwide leaders with the successful Illinois CREP program and acceptance of no-till farming.

At the same time, Shauman said the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers are Illinois' highways to the world. Farmers depend tremendously on export markets to sell the crops. Farmers look to the river as a dual provider – farmers run their goods up and down the river. Farmers know there are some people who are frustrated with that – but the loss of the river as transportation for farmers would be a huge blow to agriculture. Farmers have been working hard to find a way to co-exist and work together. A lot has been done already.

For the future, farmers encourage increased financing for technical support, something commonly heard from conservation districts. Dr. Shauman said Conservation district personnel are underpaid, great to work with and, highly respected by the farming community. Farmers certainly want their support to help to do a better job with conservation practices and implementation. As you look at CREP funding, Illinois has done a terrific job of securing dollars, but there is more demand than funding. For the future, there is certainly work that needs to be done in this area.

Bud Davis (retired, Caterpillar)

Bud Davis updated the Council on his retirement from Caterpillar as of January 1, 2003, but stated that he would still be representing Caterpillar with his appointment on the Council. He recognized many Peoria-area residents at the meeting, and welcomed them, thanked everyone for attending and their hard work on behalf of the Illinois River.

Davis acknowledged that the IRCC has accomplished a lot, but the general consensus was that the IRCC should accomplish a lot more. The strategy team put together recommendations nearly a decade ago with the release of the Integrated Management Report. There were several issues that were identified and some work has been done on them, however, he felt that there could be greater leadership by the Council in these areas and more work to be done.

Davis stressed the need to balance priorities better with the commercial, economic, ecological and beautification aspects of the river, which need to be maintained. He added that the Council really needed to prioritize specific projects and review the output of the Council and funding to determine if it is

in line with the recommendations of the Integrated Management Report.

Davis closed his remarks by thanking the Lt. Governor and expressing his optimism for the future of the IRCC.

Lee Bunting, Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD):

Mr. Bunting thanked the Lt. Governor for his efforts as Chairman of the Council and for organizing the first meeting of the new administration. Mr. Bunting represents the 98 Soil & Water Conservation Districts across Illinois whose mission is to keep the soils in the out of the watersheds and when the soil gets down to Peoria Lakes, it is considered a loss. Soil & Water Conservation Districts work at the local levels with the local watersheds through ecosystem partnerships.

Bunting noted that AISWCD works with many partnerships: National Resource Conservation Service, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency on the CREP and 319 grants and the various agencies that administer these programs. They are crossing their fingers that during this legislative session they can work hard to ensure appropriate funding of these programs. The 98 members Soil & Water Conservation Districts look forward to continuing to work with the Council.

Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River (representing Laurene von Klan):

Ms. Frisbie stressed that while her remarks may be brief, she hoped they would be meaningful. Friends of the Chicago River was founded in 1979 to protect the plant, animal and human communities. Over the years, FCR has seen a lot of improvement made to the Chicago River, a tributary of the Illinois River, but they know there is still much work to be accomplished. Their work is ultimately the Council's work.

The most important thing FCR wanted to stress to the Council, Frisbie said, is the need for action. And, although many people had already mentioned it, they would like to see leveraging of the relationships of the members of the Council so that they were on the ground projects that will improve water quality, and educate and energize people about the projects they are doing. FCR would like to see more citizen involvement; whether through the Illinois River Sweep or linking communities through watersheds, FCR believes that the state needed a "Call to Arms" to keep the progress moving forward.

Mike Hine, Illinois Department of Transportation (representing Acting Director, Tim Martin):

Mike Hine thanked the Lt. Governor and stated that the Illinois Department of Transportation has the opportunity to partner with almost every agency and group that was present in the room and on the Council. Erosion and sediment control are important issues to them also. Agricultural is concerned with keeping sediment on the land, the Nature Conservancy and other environmental groups are concerned with clean water, and the groups were concerned about flooding. IDOT's goal was to keep soil and sediment on the land and out of the water.

This past winter, Hine reported, IDOT provided extensive training to over 1400 contractors and IDOT staff and placed a much heavier emphasis on erosion control. And hopefully, with the projects this next construction season, they will see some benefit out of these efforts. Some of their projects have included the purchase of property to convert to wetlands – approximately 2,000 acres of land in the Illinois Watershed alone. In the future, IDOT will be in touch with many agencies and organizations there to help convert the wetlands.

Marcia Willhite, The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (representing Director Renee Cipriano):

Willhite reported that IEPA is the state agency with the responsibility of managing programs focused on regulating point sources of water pollution as well as providing Section 319 funding for voluntary projects related to non-source point pollution. Water quality is the IEPA's focus with the Illinois River Watershed and the Council. In 2002, Illinois celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, and in reflecting upon the progress that was made, IEPA noted that the Illinois River made substantial progress

in that thirty-year amount of time. Notably, they saw that as they monitor the waters and assess whether these waters are meeting their designated uses, they saw that the Watershed has really changed from being poor and fair quality to, at least when looking at the main stem, mostly good to partially good, which IEPA views that as progress. The program is seen in the type of fish people catch from the Watershed that informs IEPA that the aquatic life use support is there. But, as glowing as that progress looks, we still have substantial work to do. There are still areas, mainly in the tributaries, that are impaired or in an at risk situation.

Section 319 funding was IEPA's primary tool for working with non-source point pollution, Willhite said. Since 1998, IEPA had devoted about \$17.4 million in federal funds on projects within the Watershed to focus on reducing non-source point pollution. Since IRCC met last fall, President Bush proposed a Watershed Initiative, \$21 million worth of funding that would be focused on building successful watershed partnerships to protect and restore the nations water resources. Illinois submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency three watershed projects for consideration of funding: the Fox River, the Kankakee River, and the Upper Des Plaines River. Since the federal budget had been proposed, the original \$21 million had been decreased to \$15 million to be appropriated, and they are hoping that Illinois will be very competitive in getting at least one of the awards for a project within the Illinois River Basin.

Willhite stated that coordination among the efforts of the various parties is the most important role for the Council so we were complementing and not duplicating each other's work. Instead of going various ways, we can inform each other what the types of projects being implemented. Illinois EPA supports the idea of focusing on an adaptive management and assessment process for the Watershed to look at the status, evaluate what the effects are of their current project implementation in case they needed to change something, or continued to assess their progress. At the national level, the non-source point pollution programs are getting a lot of scrutiny. IEPA are being asked to verify where they spent the money and what results they had achieved. An adaptive management process through the Council would have helped them demonstrate what programs had been successful in Illinois in those efforts.

Michael Beatty, Illinois Department of Agriculture:

Mr. Beatty deferred comment from the IDOA as it was his first week with the agency. However, he stated that he was looking forward to working with the Council. As a person who was raised along the Illinois River, he mentioned that he could relate to both the public and private concerns regarding the preservation and restoration of the Illinois River Watershed.

Terry Weldin-Frisch, Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity (representing Acting Director Jack Lavin):

Mr. Weldin-Frisch stated that he was representing Acting Director Jack Lavin, who was very interested in the Illinois River Coordinating Council and the Department's role partnering with the Council on behalf of protecting and preserving one of Illinois' greatest treasures. The Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity has worked on several projects regarding the Illinois River. Weldin-Frisch remarked that in his experience with the projects along the river, he worked with people who are very passionate and intelligent, care greatly about the work being done. DCEO has been able to build some strong relationships with these caring people.

Currently, DCEO is working on the issue with the Missouri River and the potential impact that it would have on commerce along the Mississippi River. The rivers are truly the highways of the world and the Illinois River has huge impact on Illinois in a global economy. Mr. Weldin closed his remarks by stating that DCEO is looking forward to continuing to work with the Council to understand the long-term implications of the river on the global economy and the infrastructure that we have in place today.

At this time, Lt. Governor Quinn acknowledged the presence of former congressman, David Phelps, who now works for the Illinois Department of Transportation. He also stated that Acting IDNR Director Joel

Brunsvold had earlier stopped by the Council meeting,

Debbie Bruce, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (representing Acting Director Joel Brunsvold):

Ms. Bruce stated that Director Brunsvold was excited about the Council's first meeting of the new administration and the opportunities for IDNR and all the other partnerships with the other Council meetings. The Department has been involved in the Illinois River Watershed restoration for over a century since the scientific surveys began. It has been a focus for the agency, and the partnerships that have been formed with federal and state agencies and local organizations truly serve as a model for the nation.

Many programs in DNR, Bruce noted, have been emulated throughout the country. The CREP program in Illinois is a leader for the country with more acres enrolled than any other state. The Department, in coordination with other federal and state agencies, hosted a CREP Forum in Peoria with attendees from over 33 states who came to hear how Illinois has created key partnerships for water quality, habitat, and socio economic purposes.

Bruce stated that this is the right time to forge ahead. With budget constraints at the federal and state levels, now is the time to band together once again. Ms. Bruce felt the need to reorganize the working groups of the Council, which have proved successful in the past. It is important to look at the old Integrated Management Plan and determine where the IRCC stands. It is important to keep the Congressional Delegation informed as to what types of things the Council needs.

Doug Wilson, USDA Office Rural Development:

The USDA Rural Development has enjoyed a very good working relationship with the state of Illinois on a variety of projects, Wilson said. USDA Rural Development has forty different programs currently working in the state. They also work with the IDCEO on rural water systems and waste disposal.

The Illinois River brings to mind conservation and recreation. But there is another component within the plan that has not been highlighted as much as it should be. Wilson noted economic development and transportation. One of the main purposes for USDA Rural Development's participation in the Council is for these two components. They would like to be part of the development of these two areas. Communities along the river have access to a natural resource that not only may provide them with a water supply and recreation activities, but they can also utilize that for economic development with local festivals for tourism purposes or for attracting businesses to their area. While agriculture uses the river for exports, many other industries use the river to move products. USDA has rural development programs to help grow those businesses with funding and loan programs.

Mr. Bill Kruidnier, University of Illinois college of Agriculture and Environmental Science (representing Dean Robert Easter)

Kruidnier said the college reflects the diversity of interests represented in the room, from agriculture to natural science to the role of nature, and human health and well-being. Illinois is a highly farmed state and yet a highly urbanized state as well, which is unusual in this country. The College is well positioned to help on a number of the issues facing the IRCC.

Mr. Kruidnier distributed a pamphlet on a new idea being proposed by the College and its partners (Illinois Natural History Survey and the Army Corps of Engineers) to build a Research & Education Center on the Lewis and Clark campus as well as a River Field Station near the confluence of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois rivers. The purpose of the Great Rivers Research and Education Center would be to develop sound watershed and river management strategies to protect valuable natural resources and maintain their viability for public use and education. They are looking to the future to educate the young people and are hoping to attract national funding and international interest. Mr. Kruidnier ended his remarks by stressing the College's willingness to work with the members of the

Council on furthering this project as well as the other river restoration projects.

Gary Loss, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District

The State of Illinois is split between three districts that work together to give one voice for the Corps: the Rock Island, Chicago and St. Louis Districts. There are two supervising authorities that gave the Corps responsibilities on the Illinois River: the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 authorized a feasibility study, which is currently underway, and scheduled to reach conclusions later this year, and are optimistic that it will lead to construction authorization of projects for improvements on the Illinois River.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2000 created more opportunities for the Corps to do a comprehensive plan, including training and an authorized construction plan to construct critical restoration projects. These projects will happen provided they are no larger than \$5 million over a 10-year period and a total of \$100 million.

The appropriation bill of FY'03 just passed weeks ago included a \$2 million appropriation to begin construction as part of this authority. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working on trying to get some funding beginning this calendar year, Loss reported.

There was authorization for a feasibility study for the Peoria Islands – which Loss called the Peoria Riverfront project – however, most of the focus of that study has switched to the Peoria Lake area with dredging and island construction. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a feasibility study that allowed for the approval of a \$15 million project. This project will be ready for authorization in the next federal authorization bill in '03 or '04.

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers also has programs regarding the Upper Mississippi Comprehensive Plan with a navigation study looking at the next fifty years with an environmental component. The U.S. Army Corps intended to have recommendations for that in the summer of 2004. The President's Budget for 2004 includes \$33 million for Upper Mississippi Environmental Management Plan, which also applies to the Illinois River.

Loss reported there will be a number of public hearings later this fall on a number of the programs mentioned. He encouraged everyone to participate and give the Council your feedback to let the USACE know if they are moving in the right direction. As far as the appropriation process goes, the letters that are sent to the Congressional members do have a lot of impact.

John Rogner, Chicago Office of the Fish & Wildlife Service:

COFWS has an “urban/suburban” focus, Rogner stated. The Chicago area really does have an impact on the Illinois River; however there are some programs that really don't apply to COFWS's focus area such as the CREP program. Rather, they focus on issues such as urban/suburban storm run-off, and mining (which is rapidly destroying the landscape). They work in partnerships with groups such as Chicago Wilderness to deal with issues like “smart/growth”, and the Army Corps of Engineers to deal with ecosystem management and restoration projects on the Des Plaines and Kankakee Rivers.

Rogner said working with partnerships is the COFWS's modus operandi; it is actually stated in their mission statement. One of their core priorities is the Endangered Species Act, for which they put species on the list and take them off in coordination with other federal agencies. They are linked with many federal agencies, specifically the Army Corps as they are mandated to work with them in water planning and other conservation issues.

COFWS has a program called “Partners for Fish & Wildlife” which complements the CREP program, through which they provide funding and technical assistance to help Illinois' fish & wildlife populations. This program depends on the willingness of landowners to participate and of course, the availability of funding.

Rogner reported that COFWS works closely with a creation of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the local ecosystem partnerships under the “Conservation 2000” program.

Rogner reiterated the need to reevaluate the focuses of the IRCC, to take a look at the Integrated Management Plan to make sure the IRCC is on course, and to adopt an adaptive management strategy. He also stressed the need to increase the advocacy efforts of the Council and to carve out a greater role for the Science Advisory Committee.

Ross Adams, National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System was established about one hundred years ago under Theodore Roosevelt and established Pelican Island, off the coast of Florida. It has grown to 539 refuges total, at least one in every state. Adams feels the increase in refuges is an example of how caring and motivated constituents can aid in the creation of refuges.

NWRS just celebrated the centennial year of the System and as part of the celebration, asked students of Meredosia High School, in Meredosia, Illinois, to think ahead to what the quality of life would be in 2103. They focused on what the citizens of that era would need: good, quality food, safe drinking water, a safe place to live, freedom to travel around the country without a fear of attack or terrorism, and after all the basic needs are met, the students suggested that environment and wildlife. Adams reported that during the last 20 years he has seen great progress along the Illinois River in securing these natural resources, and the Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge in Havana is in the best shape its ever been.

Bob Holmes, United States Geographical Survey

Mr. Holmes began by thanking the Lt. Governor, and stated that he represented the USGS. He is chief of the Illinois District that the USGS had set up to meet the local needs. They are a science agency within the Department of the Interior, and they have no regulatory responsibilities. They are primarily interested in data, Holmes said noting their earthquake program and their national mapping program. USGS has a fairly large data collection program throughout the United States – they collect data at over 7,000 sites. It’s a very popular website. The weather service and corps use a lot of that data for their forecasting, and projects. They also have a national weather quality assessment project.

There are two large projects along the Illinois River: the Illinois River Basin, and Emiquon part of a comprehensive effort across the country to measure water quality trends on a national scale. A number of years ago, in order to keep USGS relevant to state and local needs, Congress allocated part of their money to making sure that they have matches on the state level. So, in order for the USGS to conduct science projects they would have to have a partner locally, either state or local. This provision has enabled them to make sure that we stay attuned to what the local governments or state governments need.

USGS also operates the Upper Midwest Environmental Science center, which is in Lacrosse, Wisconsin. They monitor on a number of issues on the Upper Midwest Environmental Center program that was mentioned earlier. It’s a Corps effort to do this monitoring.

Lastly, Holmes mentioned, the Midwest National Resources Group that a federal effort to get the federal agencies together to look at issues and plug it for that, and Ross has been the leader of the Illinois River focus area, and Holmes feels he has done a fantastic job coordinating folks. He views his role as a guest of this council, and he is here to exchange information and hear what the state needs on the Illinois River. So even though the USGS is a non-voting member, he knows he shares part of the view with a lot of federal groups, he appreciates being part of this because it keeps them in tune with what the needs are in terms of...

Bill Franz, Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. Franz stated that he was representing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. While the Agency is responsible for implementing a variety of federal environmental statutes, covering everything from air to hazardous wastes, EPA's role in protecting and restoring water quality in lakes and rivers and assuring clean and safe drinking water is particularly relevant to this Council.

USEPA works with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to carry out this mission. Illinois EPA is their partner in the effort; indeed, in Illinois, the State has the lead in implementing most of the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act programs. Over the past 30 years this partnership has resulted in significant progress in improving water quality through the investment in infrastructure, management and regulation of point sources, and the establishment of water quality standards. Continued progress will require that they increasingly focus on the more difficult task of managing non-point sources. This effort will require additional partnerships with the State and additional Federal agencies of the type afforded by the Illinois River Coordinating Council, Franz said.

The Illinois River and work of the Council are important to the USEPA for a number of reasons, Franz said. First, USEPA, nationally, has been promoting the watershed protection approach for many years; States like Illinois have adapted the approach to fit their situation. While USEPA often think of watersheds at a smaller scale than the Illinois River basin, the same concepts apply at the large scale: characterization and prioritization of the problems facing the system, holistic view of the sources and potential solutions to the problems, partnerships to implement the solutions, monitoring to track progress, and adaptive management, all decided through a public forum. The IRCC, through the Illinois River 2020 initiative and other efforts, has played an important role to promote watershed protection in the Illinois River system.

Second, built into the concept of watershed protection is the flexible use of the tools available to tackle the problems facing a watershed, Franz continued. USEPA is interested in promoting innovative use of new tools and approaches, and they believe that, under the leadership of the IRCC, the Illinois River provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate innovation. For example, USEPA recently published an updated Water Quality Trading Policy. USEPA believe that the Illinois River is ripe with opportunity to use trading to more efficiently and effectively reduce the loadings of nutrients and sediments into the system than if they simply relied on the traditional regulatory programs.

Also inherent in the watershed protection approach is the need for effective partnerships, Franz said. Various government and non-government entities have tools or programs at their disposal that are critical to effecting water quality improvements. Different players bring new perspectives to the discussion. Experience shows that watershed protection works when the different groups, with their different perspectives and abilities, work together as partners toward a common end. The IRCC membership reflects the importance of a wide array of programs and interests and represents an excellent vehicle to foster the partnerships that will continue to improve the Illinois River. While he was speaking of partnerships, Franz said, he wanted to highlight the national and regional efforts to build and strengthen the partnership between the Environmental and Agricultural programs. The national water quality report underscores the importance of nutrient and sediment runoff as water quality problems, and the same issues are important to the Illinois River. USEPA and the Federal and State Agriculture agencies both have programs that are designed to reduce this runoff. The challenge for sister agencies are to ensure that the programs focus on the most important problems and complement each other to the extent possible. In Illinois, agriculture's existing conservation reserve enhancement program has resulted in tremendous numbers of conservation easement signups, with attendant benefits to the water quality within the Illinois River basin. Under the latest Farm Bill additional non-point source control measures can be implemented through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Conservation Reserve Program. USEPA wants to ensure that the Clean Water Act non-point source program funds complement these efforts by filling gaps or measuring the benefits of their efforts and are working toward that end with the Illinois EPA. USEPA is particularly interested in ensuring that they monitor the water quality benefits of the conservation programs. Through monitoring they can gain knowledge regarding

the success of these actions, make adjustments to achieve greater gains, and present the public with information, Franz commented.

The final reason, Franz said, he would like to highlight for USEPA's interest in the Illinois River is that the IRCC actually plays out far downstream in the Gulf of Mexico, where a dead zone reemerges year after year. That dead zone has been linked in large part to the delivery of excess nutrients, specifically nitrogen, in the water reaching the Gulf by way of the Mississippi River. Much of that nitrogen is believed to originate from right here. USEPA has a responsibility to work with other federal agencies and the states to tackle the problem of Gulf Hypoxia; the public expects the size of the dead zone to shrink. They were interested in working with the IRCC to ensure that the efforts of the IRCC, the member agencies, and the public, to improve the Illinois River are considered in light of the nitrogen originating in this basin. Where the efforts, whether conservation easements under CREP or wetland habitat restoration by the Fish and Wildlife Service have reduced nitrogen loading, USEPA would like to know it and to be able to present it as a part of the national hypoxia discussion. Where they have information suggesting that other approaches or a different focus area would be more effective toward that end, they would like to be able to offer that information for consideration by the Council.

Franz concluded by stating he hoped his remarks have been of use to the Council. USEPA looks forward to continuing to participate on the Council and toward the continued improvement in the Illinois River.

Steve Mozley, USDA (NRCS) Natural Resources Conservation Services

Mr. Mozley began by thanking the Lt. Governor for having him. They would like to express their appreciation for the opportunity to be there and be a part of the council. There are several USDA agencies in this partnership, and according to Mr. Mozley, all of them are quite proud of their contributions. NRCS is a technical agency - it's the National Resources Conservation Service and primarily they are interested in working with private landowners. The goal of working with private landowners is to accommodate to the needs of the environment while attempting to complete the objectives of the landowners. NRCS provides landowners with total conservation planning and engineering design, and to make conservation economically viable for them.

Mozley stated that NRCS staff work closely with the local communities to identify concerns, and adapt conservation plans to the individual problems of the community. Through this method, they can also help some of the key partners in NRCS's attempts at conservation. Also, Mozley stated, he believes in incentive based relationships with landowners, and that these have been beneficial in the past.

Mr. Mozley, in closing, stressed good communication as being the basis for strong relationships, and through these relationships, the efforts of the Council will be effective.

Dr. Nani Bhowmik, Science Advisory Council (SAC):

Dr. Bhowmik, on behalf of SAC, expressed his gratitude to the Lt. Governor for his efforts concerning the Illinois River, and his support of SAC. The SAC was originally charged with advising on scientific and technical issues related to the Illinois River, but the SAC realizes that they do not have the resources to make all of the improvements they would like to. Dr. Bhowmik presented some recommendations for the Council that he hoped they would take under advisement.

The SAC believes that the Illinois River 2020 Program would be more successful if the strategies were reviewed by an "independent panel", or otherwise known as the "blue ribbon panel". The members of this panel could be SAC members, or it could be totally free of them. Regardless, the members should be selected in close coordination with state and federal partners.

The SAC would also like the IRCC's approval on five recommendations to better serve and utilize the talents that the Council has:

1. An adaptive management and assessment process should be developed for the Illinois River 2020. SAC should review the proposed process.
2. A process should be developed to assess the progress towards the goals of the Illinois River 2020. SAC should review the proposed assessment process.
3. Project selection criteria should be developed and that SAC review these criteria against available scientific knowledge.
4. SAC should review and make recommendations on priority areas of research and monitoring.
5. IRCC should expect review of the "State of the Basin" reports. SAC recommends that "State of Existing Knowledge" reports be produced that SAC will review for the IRCC. These "State of the Basin" reports must be produced every two years, and the Illinois River Basin's restoration efforts go for an extended period. SAC should work with the DNR Illinois River Basin Technical Team and the Monitoring and Assessment Teams under the Auspices of IRCC.

Dr. Bhowmik closed his remarks with by placing an emphasis on the appointment of the "A Blue Ribbon Panel" which would add a scientific validity to projects being conducted on the Basin, and secure national and international recognition for the activities on the Illinois River. He thanked everyone for listening.

CREP Update: Debbie Bruce, IDNR

Ms. Bruce began by passing out a packet of information, including a map of CREP recipients across the state, and where they are located. She stated that IDNR will release up to twenty thousand acres per year depending on where their budget is on monitoring conservation practices. In the view of the Agency, the worst thing a landowner can do is to go into debt with either the state or the federal government.

Ms Bruce stated IDNR has sixty-seven thousand acres by which waterfall habitat would benefit. She does not mean that these acres are mandatory, however. This is why she had attached the expenditures by county, state, and federal, and the cost goes back to the counties. Other programs have definitely helped implement this to the other agencies.

**Illinois Rivers 2020 Update:
Brad McMillan, representing Congressman LaHood's Office:**

Congressman LaHood's office will stay on top of legislation that is passed this year. They will keep the council posted. They need to make sure that the IRCC, and The Rivers 2020 Program, receives the money.

Mark Beorkrem, Illinois Stewardship Alliance:

Mark Beorkrem stated that this is a strange year for the budget, both at the state level and the federal level. Generally, it is better if the Illinois Stewardship Alliance fights for the conservation incentives. There is legislation right now he thinks the council needs to pay attention to. They need to get \$2 million right now for planning activities through either the Fish and Wildlife Service or the Corps of Engineers. On the wetlands issue, as the Lt. Governor mentioned earlier with the situation at the state level, and protecting isolated wetlands, federal legislation has been introduced (HR 962 and S 5473). A piece of legislation passed on Tuesday in the House, HR 961, is the Upper Mississippi River Basin Protection Act, which is a science based public-private partnership to address the sediment and nutrient loading in the rivers. They council needs to be in touch with these issues, because Illinois is going to play a big part in this.

Mark ended his comments by thanking the Lt. Governor for the opportunity to update the Council on these important issues.

New Business Period

Michael Reuter:

Reuter thought the IRCC needed to reflect on what makes big projects work. Chesapeake Bay and the Everglades restoration projects and the Upper Mississippi projects are just a few examples. The IRCC needed to look at what has worked and ask what are the lessons learned in these projects.

Mark Beorkrem, Illinois Stewardship Alliance:

Beorkrem echoed Reuter's comments on the regional and national groups who have focused on restoration and they are working right now on a package that they hope to have available in May, including locks improvement issues and basin restoration are what ISA will be working with the DNR in the five states. They were also involved at the national level with the "Green Group," a coalition of the 10 biggest environmental groups in the country.

ISA has established the upper Mississippi River basin restoration as one of their top priorities. In the future, ISA hopes to increase their participation in significant advocacy work for Illinois rivers. ISA also wishes to work with Congressman LaHood's Office, Senators Durbin and Fitzgerald's Offices, as well as other political officials. The next 24 months will be critical because that timeframe is when their political affiliations have an impact on the Illinois River legislation.

They would like to ask for time at the next meeting to give a presentation.

Brad McMillan:

Brad McMillan mentioned that Congressman LaHood's office had been in contact with the Office of Lt. Governor Quinn and had discussed the suggestion of having the last quarterly IRCC meeting on October 7th, in conjunction with the Conference on the Management of the Illinois River. He estimated between 250 – 300 attendees at the event and he believed it would be a good idea to combine the events for better information sharing and networking.

Lt. Governor Quinn

Dates of upcoming IRCC meetings were discussed. The 7th of October meeting would be in the evening and in Peoria, in conjunction with the IL River Conference.

Public Comment Period:

Terry Ingrala, National Eagle Foundation:

Mr. Ingrala is the Executive Director of the Nature Eagle Foundation. Someone at the meeting said that the rivers are the highways to the world, but to the eagle, Ingrala said, it is their world. He reminded everyone that bald eagles are great, both as a species, but also as a piece of national iconography.

The Illinois River is a tremendous home for the Bald Eagle, Ingrala said. There are more birds coming every year. They have a real problem so that the resources can be managed so that this bird can continue to fly and enjoy the area. The habitat the eagles are using is being chewed up. The NEF has a confrontational way of operating. If the highway is coming through, the NEF will try to stop it. When the central Illinois expressway came through, Pike County tried to get them to move just a quarter mile north and not destroy the valley. They lost that fight. Now that the valley has been destroyed the eagles cannot use it.

The NEF stopped the strip-mining of Rice Lake, which takes up 3,000 acres along the Illinois River. This was a long hard fight, and he was on that witness stand for some time. Ingrala stated that the land that DNR owns has not been preserved for the eagles. Instead, the National Eagle Foundation had to step in and fight for the Rice Lake habitat. They have several roosts right now.

Two or three of the DNR plots of land have been destroyed because of their land management practices. He would like to see the Council address these issues and make sure that we have places here where the eagle can continue to fly. There are over 600 eagles on the Illinois River in wintertime in Illinois. Ingrala does not know where those roosts along the Illinois River are located. Ingrala does, however, know of 54 roosts along the Mississippi, Illinois, and Wisconsin Rivers, and he has found 42 of them himself. The rest of the roosts need to be found, so that the birds have a place to habituate. NEF needs grants to locate the remaining roosts. They need grants so IRCC can preserve them. NEF have stepped in and bought some land where they were going to tear down habitats, which proved to be expensive.

Ingrala's organization has had their sights set on some land down there along the Illinois River right now. There is more land to be saved and set aside for eagle habitats. Illinois has a great concentration of eagles because Illinois has a large food source, but they need a habitat to survive. Illinois is losing older, healthy birds, and the mature birds have been on a four-year downward trend. Ingrala is worried as to why Illinois is not producing more mature birds. He thanked the Lt. Governor for his time and asked for the state's support.

Terry Kohlbuss, Tri-County Planning Commission:

Terry Kohlbuss introduced himself as the Director of the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission. He wanted to highlight an initiative that could use some additional attention, points relating to some of the tributaries of the Illinois River. There are three points. One is that the Corps of Engineers is required to put on some sort of maintenance program for the projects they are going to do. And it is reasonable to think that that maintenance program in this case is having the plans in place to reduce the sediments in the river. In other words not having silt move back in after the Corps cleans it up. The fact is Kohlbuss noted there is 25 years worth of sediment in these smaller tributaries in the pipeline now working its way to the river. If the state is not careful, then we will have another problem in 25 more years. He believes the continuation of Illinois Rivers 2020 is necessary for the future of river protection programs and feels the state is almost ready to start implementing some of those plans. He was very pleased to hear some of the things he has heard today and thanked the Council.

Jerry Adelman, Openlands Project:

Mr. Adelman introduced himself and wanted to underscore John Rogner's points about the diversity of this watershed and the importance of Eastern Illinois in a strong coalition. Obviously, it is critical for statewide support on initiatives, which needs to include the six county area, Adelman said.

There are a lot of connections, which the state has not made as fully as it should. The Chicago Wilderness Program has underscored the importance of the habitat and restoration efforts it has made. The Chicago Wilderness Program is also partnered with state and federal governments and not-for-profit aesthetic groups. There is also a watertrails plan for northeastern Illinois that has a great deal of support. It was the first in the country to tie in some of the points today about recreation and tourism and economic development.

There are several kinds of watershed initiatives, which Adelman suggested the state should start looking at the broader watershed, not just at the narrow rivers and streams, but at land use and smart growth. He knows that the Lt. Governor has been briefed on Chicago's Metropolis 2020. There are business communities getting behind better land use, better coordination. The rivers and streams tie our communities together. And in the city of Chicago, there are extraordinary opportunities for restoration. The Wetlands Initiative has been working with the Friends of the Chicago River and others in demonstration projects such as the restoration project of Bubbly Creek, one of the most notorious and polluted streams in this watershed. This could be a national demonstration project that the IRCC could get significant funding for because it would show the potential for high yield results. He felt these were interesting connections in this whole movement, and just wanted to mention them to the Council.

Bob Frazee, University of Illinois Extension:

Bob Frazee represented the University of Illinois Extensions and wanted to the showcase activities of the upcoming Conference on the Management of the Illinois River, October 7th – 9th. Lt. Governor Quinn suggested web casting the meetings to involve more people, especially students.

Marc Miller, Prairie Rivers Network

Mr. Miller said rivers and streams of Illinois were unique, and possess a great deal of diversity and habitat. Stream corridors also offered an opportunity to reconnect fragmented habitat. Prairie Rivers Network continues to be supportive of the CREP program, and would like for the state to adequately address water quality problems such as nutrients, which is the number one pollutant in Illinois streams, and how it relates to the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Illinois should do more to promote recreation along our rivers and streams. According to a recent DNR draft plan on recreation, wildlife viewing, fishing and hunting create \$4 billion in economic output in Illinois, 43,000 jobs, and generate \$315 million in state and local taxes.

Miller said the state could do more to increase the economic significance by restoring and protecting Illinois' water quality and wildlife, as well as increasing recreational access and promoting the state's natural resources. For example, many of Illinois' surrounding neighbors encourage Illinois residents to spend their tourism dollars to go to Wisconsin, Indiana, and Missouri. One of the Missouri campaigns entices people across the Mississippi because "Missouri is where the rivers run." The rivers run in Illinois as well. These messages contribute what he labels an Illinois natural resources self-esteem problem, where the state does not fully appreciate or promote what it has. Miller concluded by saying Prairie Rivers Network looks forward to working with the Lt. Gov. and IRCC in the future.

Bill Rutherford, Forest Park Foundation:

Rutherford discussed his 60-year career of fighting for the environment.

Other Business:

The IRCC meeting schedule for 2003 was set for the following dates and locations:

June 26, 2003 – Starved Rock Conference Center and Lodge, Utica

September 12, 2003 – Chicago, location TBD – In conjunction with the “Chicago River Summit”.

October 7, 2003 – Peoria, in conjunction with the Conference on the Management of the Illinois River, The Holiday Inn: City Centre 300 East Ohio St., Chicago, IL

Adjournment:

Lt. Governor Quinn adjourned the meeting at 12:42pm.