

**Illinois River Coordinating Council
August 18, 2005 DRAFT Meeting Minutes
Lewis and Clark Community College**

Call to Order:

Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

Roll Call:

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

Citizen Members

Richard Worthen, Michael Reuter, Nancy Erickson (for Dr. Wendell Shauman), and Cynthia Fox (for Margaret Frisbee.)

State Agency Members

Steve Chard (Agriculture), Terry Weldin-Frisch (DCEO), Debbie Bruce (DNR), Mike Hine (IDOT), and Marcia Willhite (IEPA)

Ex-Officio Members

Ron Fisher (US FWS), Gary Loss (for Colonel Duane Gapinski, US ACE), William Kruidenier (for Dean Robert Easter, Dean of the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, U of I), Chris Urban (US EPA), Gary Johnson (USGS), William Gradle (USDA – NRCS), and Jim Ross (USDA – FSA).

Members Absent

Lee Bunting (Citizen Member), Brad McMillan (Citizen Member), Daphne Mitchell (Citizen Member), Roy Deda (US ACE), John Rogner (USFWS), Captain Terrance Carter (US Coast Guard) and Doug Wilson (USDA – Rural Development)

Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Quinn asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 6, 2005 meeting held at the Illinois State Library. Richard Worthen moved to accept and Marcia Willhite seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by the Council.

Opening Remarks:

Chairman Quinn stated that the mission of the IRCC is to protect the Illinois River and its tributaries and that the Council has made important progress in the efforts to improve

the river system with respect to navigation, environment as well as recreation. He thanked everyone for their efforts on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Chairman Quinn also thanked Dr. Dale Chapman, President of Lewis and Clark Community College, for allowing the council to meet on the campus.

Dr. Chapman spoke about the National Great Rivers Research and Education Field Station. The building will be an LED certified facility and will build upon the 4 years of research already done by the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC). He passed around information about the NGRREC internship program and thanked Chairman Quinn for placing two interns in Quinn's office over the summer.

Member Comment Period:

Debbie Bruce – IDNR gave an update on the Land Owner incentive Program (LIP). This program was created by the U.S. FWS to help landowners protect and restore habitats that benefit at-risk species. IDNR was awarded \$705,000 to go towards the Lower Sangamon River Valley. \$525,000 will go to projects on the ground, and will fund an estimated 50 projects or 2,000 acres of habitat to conserve species in need. The remaining funds will build a statewide program. She thanked the Council for its support of this program. She stated that out of the 43 states competing for funds, Illinois received the fifth highest monetary amount.

Update on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:

Jim Ross – USDA – Farm Service Agency gave an update on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). On August 16, 2005 at the Illinois State Fair, Governor Blagojevich announced the reopening of the CREP program. \$10 Million was put in the State Budget for the program. The Federal government will match the state contribution with \$40 million. Ross estimated that approximately 15,000 acres would be enrolled with CREP funds. Sign up for the program is tentatively set for two weeks in mid-November. The acres will probably be awarded funding through a lottery system. In the past, it has been on a first come first serve basis but waiting lists have grown too large.

Debbie Bruce provided background on CREP. The USDA started the program in 1997. It was set up as an opportunity for States to partner with the USDA to work on areas on areas of national significance. In 1997, Illinois submitted a proposal for 232,000 acres to be enrolled in the Illinois River watershed. The program was set up to reduce nutrients and sediment flow into the Illinois River and to increase habitat for waterfowl and upland game species.

Marcia Willhite stated that the EPA endorses this program for its positive impact on water quality. She also said that in the future targeting acres could be an option. This would ensure that highly erodible acres would be enrolled in the program.

It's Our River Day:

Joanne Skoglund – Friends of the Illinois River spoke to the Council on It's Our River Day (IORD). IORD, which is a celebration of Illinois Watershed through education, recreation, and conservation, will be held Saturday, September 17, 2005. Mrs. Skoglund gave a brief history of IORD, explaining that it grew out of the Illinois River Sweep program. Illinois River Sweep is an annual cleanup sponsored by the Friends of the Illinois River and started in 1999. IORD was formed to get communities to plan and participate not only in river cleanups but also in events that foster education, recreation, and conservation. Events include canoe trips, hikes, fishing clinics, cleanups, water quality testing, and aquatic plants classes. IORD events are posted on the www.cleanwater.il.gov website. This website can be used to find events to participate in or it can be used as a resource to aid in the planning of an event.

Cynthia Fox talked about IORD events that are taking place in the Chicago area. There are 4 river cleanups, 2 invasive species removal workdays, a local park fundraiser, and a public canoe trip. She also mentioned that the Friends of the Chicago River has partnered with the City of Chicago to transform the Michigan Avenue Bridge Tour into the new Chicago River Museum. The project should be completed within the next 6 months.

Marc Miller mentioned that the main goal of IORD is to educate Illinois citizens about the natural resources of Illinois. The Community Action Group of the Council created the IORD concept after the Lt. Governor called on the group to identify ways to increase public participation and education. Miller stressed the importance of promoting IORD and expanding it as a statewide event.

Update on Mud to Parks:

Dr. John Marlin – IDNR-Waste Management Research Center gave an update on various Mud to Parks programs. Dr. Marlin said that the soil structure at the former U.S. Steel site in Chicago is forming nicely. Some money from the proposed Dynege settlement can be used for Mud to Parks programs. The proposed projects include taking sediment from Pekin Lake and using it as final cover on a local landfill and also adding topsoil on Duck Island near Rice Lake to promote the growth of higher quality of floodplain hardwood forest. Characterization of Kankakee River sand shows that it is the wrong size and shape to use in cement. However, there are more potential uses, but the biggest issue with using the sand out of the Kankakee River is transportation. There has been a lot of discussion about moving Illinois River sediment to other parts of the state as well as other parts of the country, especially coastal Louisiana. Extensive talks have taken place with the state of Louisiana to get a project going to restore wetlands and the coastal marshes.

Illinois River Sediment Budget:

Nani Bhowmik – IDNR, –Illinois State Water Survey presented a study by the ISWS, “The Sediment Budget of the Illinois River.” The sediment budget for the river was determined by analyzing sediment data collected between 1981 and 2000. The amount of sediment deposited in the Illinois River valley was calculated by determining the difference between the computed total inflow from the tributary streams and the outflow at Valley City, about 61 miles upstream of the junction of the Illinois River and the Mississippi River. The tributary streams delivered an average of 12.1 million tons of sediment to the river per year. The measured sediment load in the Illinois River at Valley City averaged 5.4 million tons per year. This left, on average, about 6.7 million tons or 55% of the sediment delivered by tributaries is deposited within the valley every year. The Spoon River delivers the most sediment per unit area among the major tributaries to the Illinois River. In general the lower Illinois River receives much more sediment from its tributaries than the upper Illinois River. This 20-year sediment budget can serve as a basis for measuring our progress towards reducing sediment in the Illinois River Valley.

Upper Mississippi River Navigation Report and Water Resources Development Act:

Gary Loss – US Army Corps of Engineers spoke about on-going projects along the Illinois River. The Water Resources and Development Act, when passed, gives authorization to the US ACE to study and construct projects. WRDA 2005 passed the House on July 14 and the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee passed its version on July 1, it has not passed the full Senate. Both the House and the Senate versions of the WRDA bill have language that authorizes construction of navigation improvements and ecosystem restoration. However, only the Senate version of the FY06 Appropriations has federal dollars for the US ACE to continue working on projects in the Illinois River Basin. The US ACE has a number of projects that could be implemented on the Illinois River. US ACE is waiting for authorization and funding.

Conservation Security Program:

Bill Gradle – USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services gave an update on the Conservation Security Program (CSP). CSP was created by the 2002 Farm Bill and recognizes landowners that exhibit good stewardship. Due to a lack of available funding, application opportunities were limited. Current Illinois’ watersheds included in the CSP are the Kishwaukee, middle Wabash River, and the lower Kaskaskia River. Currently there are 466 approved applications with 147,832.08 acres under contract. It is expected that more watersheds will be accepted into the program. Proposed 2006 CSP watersheds in the Illinois River System include the Upper Sangamon and the Des Plaines Rivers.

Storm Water Authority Act:

Mike Fruth – Metro East Regional Stormwater Office spoke to the Council regarding the Stormwater Authority Act/Senate Bill 1910. Senate Bill 1910 is a tool Madison, St. Clair, Monroe, Kankakee, Grundy, LaSalle, Kendall, Boone, and DeKalb can use to create stormwater-planning committees. These committees are established through referendum and are funded through the county boards. The committees are made up of 6 county board representatives and 6 municipal representatives. Senate Bill 1910 passed both the Illinois House and Senate and is waiting to be signed by the Governor.

Other Business:

Bob Frazee – University of Illinois Extension announced that the 2005 Governor's Conference on the Illinois River will be at the Holiday Inn Centre on October 4, 5, and 6. Registration is \$125 is received before September 18, after that there will be a \$20 late registration fee. The next IRCC meeting will be held at the Conference during the first evening. This conference is the 10th biannual conference on the river and it will focus on showcasing the progress made in the last 20 years.

Public Comment Period:

Terry Ingram – Eagle Nature Foundation made a few comments about Bald Eagles. The foundation appreciates all the effort that went into saving Plum Island and the Eagles that use that habitat. He stressed that importance of saving eagle habitat. If the habitat is not saved the birds will move on to different areas. The Foundation provides nature based tourism opportunities. They offer Bald Eagle bus tours during the winter and also a Bald Eagle Fest. The Fest will be held October 8, 2005 from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm at the Apple River Community Building.

Michael Reuter – The Nature Conservancy gave a brief update on Emiquon. At the last IRCC meeting, there was discussion about an unnatural groundwater connection that could set back restoration. It appears that the groundwater will not hamper progress made in the area. The community has gotten involved in order to help document the changes that occur in the area. Documentation is done by journal writing, photo taking, and picture drawing.

John Marlin – spoke about “Time Talks: The Geology of Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks.” The publication was put out the Illinois State Geological Survey and gives the geological history of Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks.

Christine Favilla – Sierra Club thanked the IEPA for all of the work they have done in trying to reduce phosphorus levels in the rivers. Favilla asked what progress the IEPA and other state agencies are making to regulate and inspect discharge septic systems.

Marcia Willhite responded to Ms. Favilla by saying that small septic system falls under regulation of the Clean Water Act. The IEPA is working on developing a permit program in cooperation with the Department of Health to regulate these systems. Ms. Willhite said that the most important regulation for septic systems is proper maintenance. She said that the agencies are very committed to developing a program despite the challenges of developing it.

Nani Bhowmik gave a report on the progress made by the Scientific Advisory Committee over the past year. The committee has met 4 times and discussed and made decisions about the Hydrological Observatory, progress made on the Integrated Management Plan for the Illinois River, impaired watersheds, the US ACE navigation study, and Illinois River 2020.

Richard Worthen mentioned that diversion of water from Lake Michigan is an issue that the Council should address.

Rick Granados – Operation Manager for the Illinois Waterway, US ACE stressed the importance of water control and the structures that keep the water flowing and also create the pools along the river. Without the water control a lot of the initiatives that depend on water levels will certainly be impacted.

The next Illinois River Coordinating Council Meeting will be held October 4, 2005 at 6:30 pm at the Holiday Inn Centre in Peoria. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the 10th Annual Governor's Conference on the Illinois River.

Meeting Adjournment:

Chairman Quinn adjourned the meeting at 4:07 pm.