

**Illinois River Coordinating Council
October 4, 2005 Meeting Minutes
Holiday Inn City Centre, Peoria**

Call to Order:

Marc Miller, Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call:

Erica Ott, Office of the Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the roll:

Citizen Members

Richard Worthen, Michael Reuter, Brad McMillan, Daphne Mitchell, Dr. Wendell Shauman, and Todd Main (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), Chuck Shae (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), Robert Holmes (USGS), William Gradle (USDA – NRCS), Lisa Scott (USDA - FSA), Commander Dave Fish (US Coast Guard), and Doug Wilson (USDA – Rural Development).

Members Absent

Lee Bunting (Citizen Member) and John Rogner (US FWS).

Approval of Minutes:

Marc Miller asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2005 meeting held at Lewis and Clark Community College. Dr. Wendell Shauman moved to accept and Michael Reuter seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by the Council.

Member Comment Period:

Each member of the Council introduced him or herself and spoke briefly on their involvement with the IRCC.

Doug Blodgett – TNC presented The Nature Conservancy's Frank Bellrose Illinois River Valley Conservation Award. This award recognizes those who make outstanding contributions to the Illinois River Watershed. Dr. Nani Bhowmik and Dr. Mike Demissie, both of the Illinois State Water Survey, received the award for their work on the Illinois River throughout their careers.

Discussion on the Carp Barrier:

Chuck Shea – U.S. ACE began the discussion on the carp barrier by discussing the Corps' two electric fish dispersal barrier projects. The demonstration barrier is in operation 24/7 and will continue to operate full time until the completion of the second barrier. The second barrier will be comprised of two sub barriers that can be operated simultaneously or individual. This barrier should be activated in the spring of 2006. The State of Illinois is the non-federal partner for the second fish barrier and will become the owner and operator of the barrier when the project is complete. There are two pieces of legislation in Congress that would remove Illinois from those responsibilities and make the Federal Government 100% responsible for operation and maintenance of the barrier. These pieces of legislation are the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act and the Water Resource Development Act.

Commander Fish – U.S. Coast Guard discussed the navigation component of the electric fish barrier. All vessels are prohibited from loitering in the vicinity of the electric dispersal barrier. All personnel on open decks must wear a Coast Guard approved Type I personal flotation device while in the vicinity until subsequent field testing determines the waters in the area do not pose significant risk to human life. This winter the Coast Guard will be handing out pamphlets to recreational boat groups to make them aware of the regulated navigation area of the electric fish barrier.

Update on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:

Lisa Scott – USDA-FSA gave an update on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). There will be a new sign-up period for CREP starting November 14th through November 25th. A lottery will be used to fairly select landowners from a pool of qualified applicants. Approximately 15,000 acres will be enrolled.

Debbie Bruce – IDNR will examine whether or not they can take additional state acres after the land is selected for enrollment by the federal lottery. If funding remains, they will look into ways of enrolling more state acres.

Update on Scenic Byway:

Vicki Clark – Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (PACVB) provided a brief update on the successful designation of the Illinois River Road Scenic Byway. This designation is not only a marketing tool for the Illinois River it also provides for additional funding opportunities. Over 20 different agencies and organizations worked with the PACVB to achieve the scenic byway designation.

Chairman Quinn thanked everyone for their teamwork on the byway proposal and encouraged the use of this designation as a marketing tool for the Illinois River and nature-based tourism.

America's Wetlands:

Dr. Len Bahr – Louisiana Governor's Office of Coastal Activities showed a slideshow and gave a presentation on the wetlands of Louisiana and the destruction of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The loss of wetlands contributed to the devastating effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Wetlands are not only the kidneys of river systems they protect coastal areas from the flooding that is associated with tropical storms. Dr. Bahr suggested that the strategy to protect coastal cities, especially New Orleans, and the preservation of wetlands ecosystems should be reexamined. Dr. Bahr suggested rebuilding the wetland by using sediment from the Illinois River system to fill in areas of marshes and wetlands that have been lost. There is a pilot project being considered between Illinois and Louisiana that would barge down sediment from Illinois and fill in some destroyed wetlands.

Chairman Quinn mentioned that the Illinois Attorney General's office made a legal settlement with Dynergy and the settlement includes money for a supplemental environmental project. Money from this settlement will include funding for Mud to Parks projects.

Update on Mud to Parks:

Dr. John Marlin – IDNR-WMRC gave an update on various Mud to Parks programs. Dr. Marlin mentioned that the Dynergy settlement could go to projects such as the Pekin Lake Project, which would remove sediment from the lake for final cover on a Tazewell County landfill, or the Duck Island project, which would restore fish habitat and elevate the surface of the island to promote growth of higher quality floodplain hardwood forests.

Dr. Marlin believes that a pilot project transporting Illinois River sediment to the Gulf Coast for the restoration of wetlands is feasible. Technically it would be possible to send 5 – 10 barges of sediment from Illinois to Louisiana. The main problem would be funding. Dr. Marlin estimated that at today's prices it would cost about \$500,000 to ship 10 barges full of sediment.

Public Comment Period:

John Grigsby thanked the Lieutenant Governor for his support in the efforts to stop the mine at Banner. Concerns with the mine include the drainage of household wells in Banner, destruction of habitat for ospreys, bald eagles, and river otters, and damage to archeological artifacts.

Tom Edwards mentioned that Banner marsh has some of the cleanest water and is home to many species of birds, animals, and plant life.

Mike Hine – IDOT has worked with Dr. Marlin on sediment issues and stated that IDOT is interested in the idea of using sediment from the rivers as material on construction projects.

Tom Tincher – mentioned that the Heartland Water Resources Council has the goal of aggressively pursuing local uses for sediment removed from the river. Some ideas include the 10 Mile Creek area, disposal of biosolid materials by the Greater Peoria Sanitary District, and replacement of topsoil on farmland in Mason County.

Dan Silverthorn – stressed the importance of economic development for the Illinois River. Mr. Silverthorn is chairman of the Port Authority.

Laura Perna suggested park district renovation projects as a potential for Mud to Parks.

The next Illinois River Coordinating Council Meeting will be held Friday, January 27, 2006 in the Calumet River Watershed. Location and Time will be announced at a later date.

Meeting Adjournment:

Chairman Quinn asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Wendell Shauman moved to adjourn the meeting and Brad McMillan seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion. Chairman Quinn adjourned the meeting at 9:15 pm.