



National Fish Habitat Initiative

A Clean Water Illinois Fact Sheet

Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, chairman of the Illinois River Coordinating Council (IRCC), requests your support to include the IRCC in a new and valuable federal initiative called 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.

A brief habitat assessment, performed by several Illinois River Coordinating Council members found 21 possible projects that could benefit from the initiative, including: restoring habitats, decreasing streambank erosion, increasing fish migration, and re-establishing fish communities to restored habitat.

At the January 27th IRCC meeting, the Council voted to petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to become a regional partnership of the NFHI. On February 1st, Lt. Governor Quinn hand delivered a written request to USFWS Director Dale Hall.

Letters of support are needed to buttress the Illinois River Coordinating Council's request to become a NFHI partner.

We ask you to write Director Hall, and copy the Lieutenant Governor's Office, requesting that the IRCC be designated a regional partnership. See below for background, talking points, and addresses.

Background:

Since 1900, 123 aquatic freshwater species have become extinct in North America. Of the 822 native freshwater fish species in the U.S., 39% are at risk of extinction. Forty-three percent of federally-listed threatened and endangered species rely to some extent on wetland habitats. As you can see, the need to protect, restore, and enhance aquatic habitats has never been greater.

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.

The NFHI plans to achieve its goals by:

- Implementing fish habitat protection, restoration and enhancement through development of new partnerships and expanded support of existing partnerships;
- Mobilizing national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals;
- Measuring and communicating the status and needs of aquatic habitats; and,
- Providing national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats.

The Partnerships, formed around geographic areas, keystone fish species, or system types are proposed as the primary work units of the Plan. The IRCC would be a partner based on the geographic area of the Illinois River Watershed.



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The Council is a broad stakeholder organization that was created by legislation in 1997. Members include representatives of state and federal agencies involved in watershed resources, as well as citizen representatives from a wide range of interests including agriculture, business, conservation, and the environment.

Suggested points to include in a letter of support to Director Dale Hall, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

- The Illinois River Coordinating Council is a broad stakeholder organization. Members include representatives of state and federal agencies involved in watershed resources, as well as citizen representatives from a wide range of interests including agriculture, business, conservation, and the environment;
- The expertise and existing partnerships within the IRCC will aid the Council in providing leadership on fish habitat protection, restoration and enhancement;
- The wide reaching interests protected by the IRCC can direct regional organizations and agencies to focus attention on habitat goals;
- State and private members of the Council can aid in the effort to leverage funding through state and private funding sources; and,
- The Council has already assessed habitat needs in the Illinois River Watershed and has sited 21 possible projects, including: restoring habitats, decreasing streambank erosion, increasing fish migration, and re-establishing fish communities to restored habitat.

Addresses & Carbon Copies:

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CC:

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Lt. Governor Pat Quinn

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