

Dear fellow Prairie Rivers Network supporters,

I am co-owner of Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery with my wife Leslie Cooperband, and we have been members of Prairie Rivers Network since arriving in Champaign over 10 years ago.

I am asking you to please support Prairie Rivers Network by becoming a first-time member, renewing your membership, or making a special year-end donation even if you already gave earlier this year.

Why am I asking you to support Prairie Rivers? I believe in the work that they are doing. I would like to share with you my op-ed piece that was published in the News-Gazette earlier this year.

Like most farmers, I'm up at 5 a.m. and I quit after 8 p.m., maybe. In between, my life is filled with hard work and hope. I'm a little different in that in addition to growing diversified crops, I raise dairy goats for milk and cheese. So, some of my problems are different. Goats will wear you out keeping them in their fence. There isn't one that doesn't fancy himself as an escape expert although it is clear that they haven't a clue what they are escaping to besides "over there."

Like every farmer, my treasure is the land. Whether it's grazing or growing, soil is the primary resource of all farmers and we take our stewardship of the land seriously. But an equally important resource is water. Without enough good quality water, otherwise productive soil is worthless.

Nobody appreciates the value of clean, abundant water more than a farmer. That's why a current controversy is so surprising.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers have proposed a rule to clarify which waters are regulated under the Clean Water Act. This is in response to the confusion generated by two Supreme Court decisions that have left farmers wondering which are covered and which are not.

The rule only affects those waters that were already covered by the Clean Water Act. It does not disturb existing exemptions in the Clean Water Act for common farming practices like plowing, cultivating seeding, minor draining and harvesting. Those are acknowledged and reinforced in the rule. In fact, the rule applies to fewer waters than were historically covered under six of the previous seven presidents. And it doesn't cover ground water, which is the source of water for most of my area's farmers.

So, if farming exemptions under the Clean Water Act are unchanged and the rule only affects waters already covered under Clean Water Act, why do so many farmers oppose it?

Well, we farmers are, as a rule, independent people. If we weren't we probably wouldn't be farming. We don't like the government telling us what to do with our land. But beyond that, those who might lose sales if pollution is controlled, among them the fertilizer industry, have spread extensive misinformation, some of it ridiculous. For instance, consider the following claims.

Claim: "This rule will regulate all ditches." Fact: The proposed rule regulates fewer ditches.

Claim: "This is a land grab by the feds." Fact: The rule does not regulate land or land use.

Claim: "This is a massive expansion of federal authority." *Fact:* The rule actually protects fewer waters than before the Supreme Court cases and only those already covered under the Clean Water Act.

Claim: "A permit will be needed for walking cows across a wet field or stream." *Fact:* Normal ranching activities, including moving cattle, do not need permits.

I sometimes share the same suspicion of the government that other farmers do. President Eisenhower captured it best when he said, "Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil, and you're a thousand miles from a corn field." But this isn't about the government. This is about me, my family, their families, my neighbors. It's about the 30 million people who get water from the Great Lakes. It's about the dead zones of algal blooms, fish kills and the toxic drinking water. It's about a temporary ban on tap water in Toledo thanks to toxins in Lake Erie. These are all the results of polluted runoff from many sources but most of it farm runoff that makes its way into the streams that feed into the Great Lakes or the Mississippi River or other large iconic waters of our nation. These Great Waters benefit me and my community and I am responsible for what I put in them.

No one has a right to pollute: not chemical companies, not oil companies, not power companies, not cities, not golf courses, not farmers. We don't get a pass just because our product is food and our lofty mission is feeding the country's people. We know how important fertilizers and crop protection pesticides are for raising a crop, but we have to remember that, the instant it leaves our land and hits our neighbor's or that creek, it can cause problems that make it a pollutant.

We would be justifiably furious if our water source was polluted upstream, killing our crops or sickening our livestock or poisoning our well. So why should we think it okay to pollute it ourselves (even unintentionally) and send it downstream with ruinous effects on other resources?

Conservation is work. But we farmers have innovated before with techniques like grassy swales and terraces and tile drain controls much to the betterment of the environment. There is much that can be done to abate runoff with existing techniques. You manage the water by managing the land and no one knows more about that than a farmer.

The proposed rule benefits tourism, recreation, fisheries, the water supply, and, yes, the farmer. Any legislative attempts to block its implementation should be opposed and the farmer's should be the first voice heard.

Please join me in supporting Prairie Rivers Network because they are working to make sure the Clean Water Act works as it was intended when it became law over 40 years ago – ensuring safe, clean water for all Americans.

If you already gave this year, please make a special year-end donation.

If you haven't given this year, **please send in your donation today.**

Your friend and local farmer,



Wes Jarrell





Protecting Illinois' Rivers for People, Fish, and Wildlife

Businesses Show Love #4cleanwater



Social media campaign to launch in new year.



#4cleanwater is a social media campaign that gives voice to those who love clean water and know we need laws to protect it. In the next few months we hope that supporters of EPA's clean water rule will participate, with a particular emphasis on businesses, by using this hashtag to tell decision makers that clean water is essential to their bottom line and the American economy.

Special thanks to our friends at Big Grove Tavern, Blind Pig Brewery, Kickapoo Landing, Common Ground Food Co-op, H2O Salon & Spa and Prairie Fruits Farm and Creamery for their enthusiastic support of the campaign to help U.S. EPA pass the new clean water protection rule. They took time from their busy days to shoot photos and video with Prairie Rivers' staff, and will join many others throughout the country tweeting in support of our smallest, most vulnerable streams.

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GREETINGS FROM GLYNNIS

As many of you know, I'll be leaving Champaign-Urbana in mid-2015 when my family moves to Lincoln, NE. The search for a new Executive Director for Prairie Rivers Network is underway. I'm extremely grateful to our board of directors; they are working hard to ensure that the next person to fill this role (and write this column!) will be able to continue our trajectory of growth and track record of effectiveness. We'll keep you posted, here and in e-news, as this transition progresses.

As 2014 comes to a close, I want to thank you for all that you do, whether in your personal or professional life (and for many of you it is both) to make Illinois a better place to live. Thank you for the many ways you strive to protect our natural heritage for those that come after us. It is a privilege to work with you.

Wishing you peace and renewal in the coming holiday season and beyond,



PRN IMPROVES FACTORY FARM REGULATIONS

BY STACY JAMES

After almost five years of meetings, hearings, and public comment periods, Illinois has finally adopted updated rules that regulate pollution from factory farms. Prairie Rivers Network sat at the table throughout, so we have much to celebrate! The rules are a vast improvement over what has been on the books since the 1970s.

Factory farms require regulation because of the vast amounts of livestock waste produced on small parcels of land. This waste is stored outdoors in manure stacks or ponds, or indoors in concrete pits beneath the animals. A large factory farm may produce several million gallons of waste annually. The ammonia, bacteria, and pharmaceuticals in the waste need to be stored and disposed of responsibly so that they do not pollute groundwater or streams.

The new rules require factory farms to take additional steps that will

decrease the likelihood of water pollution. Factory farms must follow a management plan that specifies exactly how the waste will be managed during its life cycle to follow environmental standards.

At the factory farm, livestock must be kept out of streams so that they do not defecate in the water. Managers must conduct weekly monitoring of the waste storage structures to check for problems. Storage structures must be designed to hold at least six months' worth of waste. Factory farms can only discharge waste in the event of unusually heavy storms.

When land-applying livestock waste to agricultural fields, a number of precautions must be taken. Waste cannot be applied when precipitation is expected or when fields are wet. Application is also prohibited on steep slopes and where topsoil is too thin to prevent groundwater contamination.

[//continued on page 6//](#)

prairieriversnetwork

Prairie Rivers Network champions clean, healthy rivers and lakes and safe drinking water to benefit the people and wildlife of Illinois.

Drawing upon sound science and working cooperatively with others, we advocate public policies and cultural values that sustain the ecological health and biological diversity of water resources and aquatic ecosystems.

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ANNUAL DINNER ROUND UP

Thank you to all who attended our Annual Dinner in October. You can view all the fun photos from the evening at: www.flickr.com/prairieriversnetwork

Award Winners

Kevin Green, Joy Schmoll, & Pete Leki

Each year, Prairie Rivers Network celebrates outstanding river conservationists.



Kevin Green, Joy Schmoll, Pete Leki

Vermilion County Board member Kevin Green received the Outstanding Public Servant award for his work protecting the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River. Green supported the call for responsible closure of Dynegey's leaking coal ash dumps along the Middle Fork by bringing the issue before a variety of local leaders.

Artist Joy Schmoll was named Volunteer of the Year for her design donations of logos, flyers, and t-shirts.

Pete Leki was presented the River Steward award for his many years championing and transforming the much-neglected and abused Chicago River. As an ecology teacher, Leki has inspired generations of students to know, love, and restore the river, as well as the community that lives along its banks.

NATURE'S TRUST

Keynote Speaker Mary Christina Wood

On Mother's Day in 2011, a legal challenge was issued in all fifty states and in federal court, charging that climate change—and the government's unwillingness to address it—is a violation of the rights of the young, and of future generations.

The basis for the action resides in the “public trust doctrine,” an ancient legal principle that asserts public property rights to essential resources. The public trust doctrine, rooted in the moral imperative to leave the world a better place for our children, requires government, acting as trustee, to protect our natural inheritance such as air and water for all humanity.

The innovative legal ideas underlying these landmark cases were explored by our Annual Dinner keynote speaker, law professor Mary Christina Wood, who drew from her latest book, *Nature's Trust: Environmental Law for a New Ecological Age*.

Professor Wood explained why the seminal environmental laws of the 20th century are failing to address our most pressing problems, including pollution, habitat loss, and climate change. Professor Wood described how regulatory agencies, captured by the industries they are meant to regulate, are now in the business of permitting the pollution they were created to prevent.

Professor Wood concluded her remarks with a story that beautifully illustrated the scope of her work and ideas. A few years ago, new development near her family home in the Pacific Northwest threatened the spawning grounds of the last remaining population of chum salmon along the lower Columbia River. In response, local community members rose up and claimed, as a matter of right, that the salmon must endure, that the river must remain, and that this should be done in the name of future generations, both of fish and humans. The legal rights of these future generations, having already vested, trump the designs of those that would exploit and destroy our resources. //

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Creamery, Bev Rauchfuss	



2014 Accomplishments



Clean, healthy rivers and lakes and safe drinking water to benefit the people and wildlife of Illinois.



PEOPLE

Helping people protect clean water and healthy rivers.

TAKING ACTION

Our **new River Action Team** (affectionately known as the RATs) is **ready to take action** with phone calls, visits to policy makers and letters to the editor when those voices can really make a difference. This year they cut their teeth calling for protection of the Mahomet Aquifer. They are currently mobilizing to support U.S. EPA's clean water rule.



TELLING STORIES

With new video production capabilities, **we are bringing important clean water issues to more people than ever.** We created a mini-documentary on factory farms and a series of videos in support of U.S. EPA's clean water rule. Visit our YouTube channel to watch the stories of real people affected by and fighting against pollution:

youtube.com/PrairieRivers

GATHERING SUPPORT

With support from Prairie Rivers Network, **an unprecedented variety of Vermilion County leaders have joined the call of residents for a responsible closure plan for the coal ash dumps at the retired Dynegy Vermilion power plant.** These dumps threaten both groundwater and the Middle Fork River.

Partners

Much of our work is carried out in partnership with other groups and organizations. Through our effective working relationships, we punch above our weight in protecting clean water and healthy rivers in Illinois. We owe special thanks to all of our partners.



Stacy James working with the Save our Sandy grassroots organization to fight a factory farm that could pollute their local stream.

Awards

We are very proud and honored to be named the National Wildlife Federation's Affiliate of the Year for 2014. Each year, the award recognizes one of NWF's 49 state affiliates for conservation accomplishments.



Robert Hirschfeld, Glynnis Collins, and board member Clark Bullard receiving our NWF Affiliate of the Year Award.



PLACES

ILLINOIS RIVER

We initiated the Middle Illinois River Conservation Partnership to restore and connect habitat along the River, **pursuing a vision for a healthy Illinois River system** that supports people and wildlife.

We continue our efforts to protect Starved Rock State Park from a frac sand mine that would welcome the park's 2 million annual visitors with dust and blasting noise. We also worked with LaSalle County to improve its Comprehensive Land Use Plan to

Protecting special Illinois places, for today and the future.

protect valuable habitat and water resources along the Illinois River near the park from the frac sand rush now underway there.

VERMILION RIVER

The City of Danville voted to **remove two obsolete dams on the Vermilion River**, one of which has been respon-

sible for several deaths. Over the years, Prairie Rivers Network has assisted with the effort to deal with these dams, sharing resources on the benefits of dam removal, and helping to secure the state funds that will pay for the removal.

FOX RIVER

We negotiated stricter limits on phosphorus pollution for several sewage treatment plants in northeast Illinois. This is the same pollution that shut down Toledo's water supply for several days this summer. **Stricter pollution limits will mean a cleaner, healthier Fox River.**

CHICAGO RIVER

As part of an advisory group to Congress on Asian carp and other invasive species moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River, **we are advocating for solutions that will help revitalize the Chicago River** – reducing pollution and improving flood control, habitat, and recreational access.



POLICIES

Improving policies to promote lasting change.

BETTER COAL ASH RULES

Our work over several years demanding accountability for coal ash pollution emboldened the Illinois EPA to propose **new rules for closure of coal ash dumps at power plants**. During the rulemaking process, we

provided testimony in support of stronger provisions in the rule, while acknowledging the importance of the Agency's action. We expect to see the rule finalized early next year.

IMPROVING COAL OVERSIGHT

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources answered our call for greater oversight of coal ash dumps and improved transparency and public participation in the permitting process for coal mines.

The Department commenced inspections of all coal ash dumps in the state for stability hazards.

REDUCING LIVESTOCK POLLUTION

Illinois adopted a new rule requiring factory farm operators to **manage waste more responsibly than ever**. By presenting evidence of water pollution problems this waste has caused, and countering industry claims, Prairie Rivers Network staff were integral to getting this new rule.

FIGHTING BAD RIVER MANAGEMENT

Prairie Rivers Network joined a lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, **challenging a costly and destructive approach to management of the Upper Mississippi River**. If successful, this challenge will have far-reaching implications for the Mississippi and other rivers.

RUNNING FOR RIVERS!

By Keith Schinkoeth, 2013 and 2014 Run for Your Rivers team member and PRN supporter



I've run in the summer, I've run in the fall;
I run mostly for fun and always run in the hall;
I've run sideways, upwards, and top-wise;
And this winter will continue to train;
Through blustery winds, and snow, and likely cold, biting rain;

But please, do not worry, dear reader, I will be just fine;
It is instead these rivers, where I also happen to run, these rivers of mine;
There is this Network of Rivers, you see;
They run though the Prairie in fact;
Well, I run here as well, and they must be kept more intact;

So I've devised a plan, a smart plan, I'm sure you'll agree;
Involving race donations, you, and of course me;
Why not use this habit of moving quite quickly;
To do something, I am sure, to many, seems a slight sickly;
What I plan is to run, to run very far, very fast;
A sort of 26.2-mile dash-in-a-flash;

You might ask, "But, what can I do? I love rivers too!
I swim in them, fish in them all summer through."
Well, if you want them to be there next year and after...
I know! You could run a race too and run even faster!

Please join our Run for Your Rivers and Walk for Your Streams team at the Illinois Marathon, April 24-25, 2015.

No running experience necessary! Walk the 5K, jog the 10K, challenge yourself to the half marathon or marathon. Better yet, grab a few friends and join as a group like the Lady River Walkers who raised \$1,575 last year. You can do it too.

www.prairierivers.org/run



The Lady River Walkers
at the 2014 10K Finish Line

FACTORY FARM REGULATIONS continued from page 2

Waste must only be applied in amounts that the crops need and will utilize.

While we are pleased with these new pollution control standards, we are still working to fix a weakness in the rules. We believe the owners of large factory farms should have to submit basic information about their facilities to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Because of the potential for large factory farms to pollute, the state should know where they are located, how much waste is produced, and how that waste is stored. The Farm Bureau

and livestock associations oppose disclosing this important information to the public, but a complete inventory of large factory farms will improve the state's ability to prevent livestock waste from polluting our streams and rivers.

Our efforts to improve environmental policies and programs can take years of hard work to accomplish. We invest the necessary time and resources to achieve state-level changes, so that the magnitude of our impact is widespread and long-lasting. Your sustained support helps make such work possible! //



Businesses Show Love

Continued from cover



#4cleanwater

The campaign is designed to stop Congress from interfering with the passage of a new EPA rule that ensures small streams are legally protected under the Clean Water Act. Small streams feed larger river systems and are essential for healthy rivers.

In Illinois, #4cleanwater is targeting Senators Kirk and Durbin, asking them to stand up for the new EPA rule and Illinois waters.

Join in the #4cleanwater social campaign starting in January 2015 and add your voice to the chorus of clean water advocates. Together we can raise awareness and make a difference.



"We need clean water for the pastures, the goats, the milk, and for the beautiful cheese we make."

Leslie Cooperband & Wes Jarrell, Co-owners
Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery



"Clean water is important to my business so I support the Clean Water Rule"

Edith Peacock, Owner/Master Stylist
H2O Salon & Spa



"At Big Grove we source our ingredients from local, sustainable farms, so the quality of the water that goes to growing those crops and raising the animals is of the utmost importance to us. Clean lakes and streams mean healthier food, which means healthier customers."

Beckie Kane, Marketing and Event Coordinator
Big Grove Tavern



"We exist to make sure there are strong, healthy farms bringing healthy local food to our community and a huge part of that is clean water."

Jacqueline Hannah, General Manager
Common Ground Food Co-op



"You have to have a clean, pure water supply to make good beer, and it takes government regulation to protect water."

Chris Knight, Owner & Bill Morgan, Brewmaster
The Blind Pig Brewery



"The Middle Fork River is the crown jewel of our outfitting business. I fully support the EPA's effort to strengthen the Clean Water Act so that we can be sure the water around here is clean and not polluted for our customers."

Tod Satterthwaite, Owner
Kickapoo Landing



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Please share this newsletter with a friend when you are done.

Happy Holidays



BEES IN TROUBLE - LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP

Our insect pollinators are in trouble! Habitat destruction, parasites, disease, and insecticides all threaten bees and other beneficial insects. And these insects are vital to our food system, bringing us apples, almonds, chocolate, and more!

Beeline to our Pollinator Panel to help our bees. You will learn about threats to pollinators and things you can do on your farm or residential property to help them out!

WHEN: Thursday, January 22, 2015, 4-5:30 pm

WHERE: U of I Extension Building Auditorium, 801 N. Country Fair Drive, Champaign

Pollinator Panel Speakers:

May Berenbaum – UIUC
Emil Blobaum – Beekeeper
Jason Bleich – Pheasants Forever
Sandy Mason – UIUC Extension



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