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PROTECTING ILLINOIS' RIVERS  
FOR PEOPLE, FISH, AND WILDLIFE.





We strive to promote the lasting health and beauty of Illinois' rivers and streams to benefit wildlife and future generations. *PRN* uses sound science to stand up for strong, fair laws to protect clean water and natural areas. And, by providing information and hands-on assistance, we help people become effective river conservation leaders.



Allerton Mansion — Allerton Park, Monticello, IL

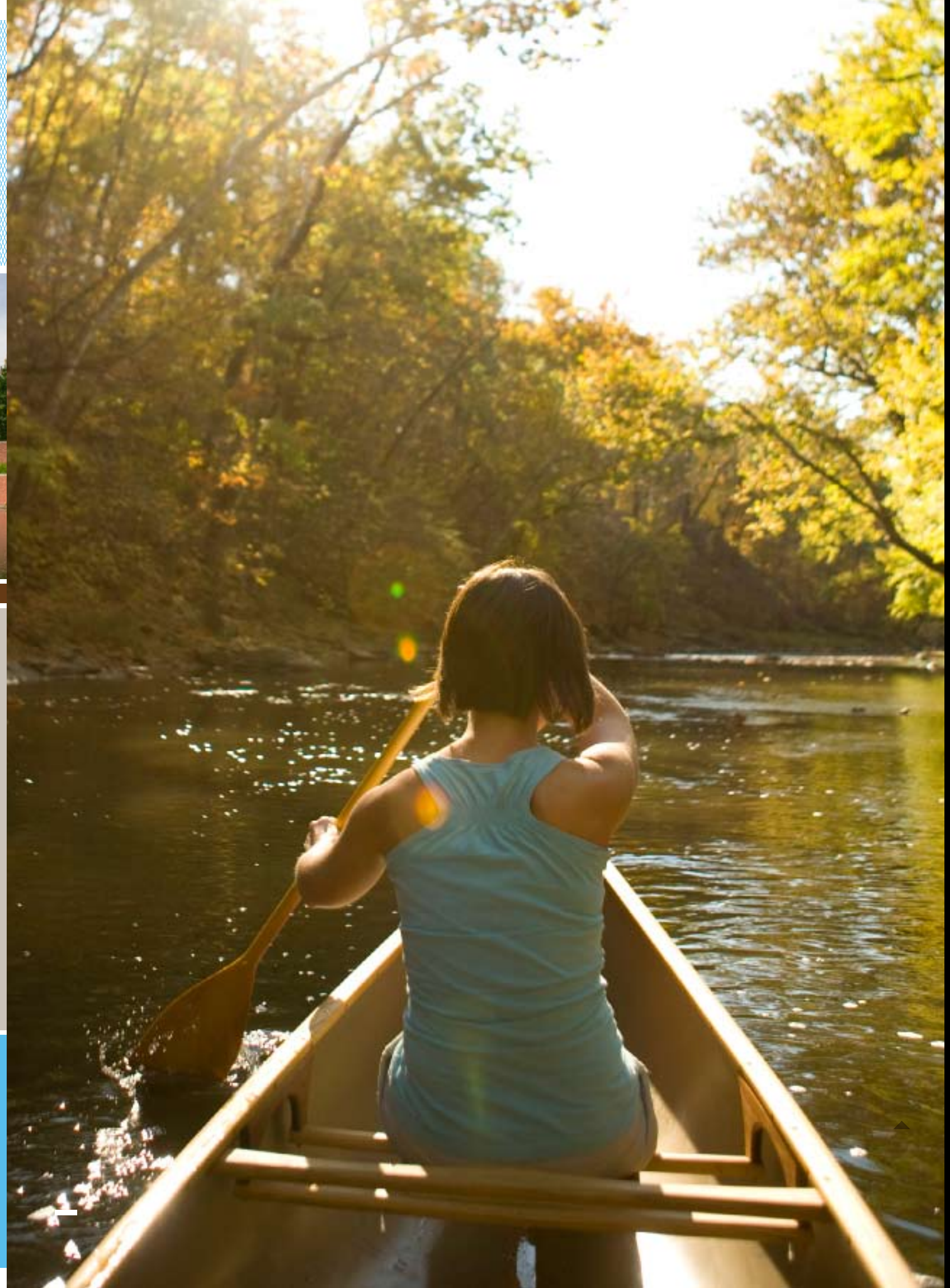
**OUR HISTORY** // **Prairie Rivers Network** was established in 1967 by Bruce and Patricia Hannon to oppose construction of a dam that would have created the “Oakley Reservoir” on the Sangamon River near Monticello. The reservoir would have put an Illinois treasure, Allerton Park, under water. Originally named “The Committee on Allerton Park,” this group of concerned and dedicated citizens successfully halted the Oakley project and went on to fight other dams, reservoirs, and costly water projects that would have permanently damaged the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and their tributaries.

// In 1984 the Committee on Allerton Park was renamed Central States Education Center (CSEC), and the group focused on empowering people in the Midwest to preserve their natural resources. CSEC crossed political and social boundaries, bringing people together to take action on a range of threats to nature, from irresponsible landfill designs to destructive dam projects. CSEC became Prairie Rivers Network in 1998, reflecting our current focus on issues that impact Illinois' rivers.

// PRN is Illinois' only statewide river conservation organization and the state affiliate of National Wildlife Federation. Our relationship with the Federation gives us access to the resources of this national conservation leader and allows us to share expertise with other affiliate groups nationwide.

**WHAT WE DO** // Much of our work aims to make sure the policies intended to protect rivers are actually doing so. This focus involves keeping a statewide perspective on issues, but it also includes providing assistance to local people and working on local problems, where policies are ultimately put into practice.

As detailed in the coming pages, our work focuses on protecting clean water and river habitats across Illinois, and on empowering citizens to do the same in their communities. Our efforts aim to safeguard our resources for future generations.





# PROGRAM OVERVIEWS

CLEAN WATER

By working to prevent pollution, we improve the quality of water flowing in Illinois’ rivers and streams for the people, fish, and wildlife that depend on it.

CLEAN WATER ACT ENFORCEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

PRN advocates for effective and full implementation of the federal Clean Water Act to restore Illinois’ polluted waters and keep clean waters clean.

PRN USES PROVISIONS OF THE FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT TO:

- » Hold the state accountable for protecting our waters from new sources of pollution;
- » Strengthen policies that determine allowable pollution levels;
- » Strengthen restrictions on individual polluters; and
- » Work with communities and developers to institute better land management practice and polluted runoff controls.

CLEAN WATER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

PRN reaches out to members of the public and special groups to encourage actions that reduce water pollution.

AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS REFORM

PRN works for improvements in the administration of state and federal agricultural programs to ensure that they consider the effects of agricultural production on water quality, aquatic life, and stream flows. We promote the use of agricultural practices that significantly reduce the amount of polluted runoff that degrades Illinois’ rivers.

GULF OF MEXICO DEAD ZONE REDUCTION

The Gulf of Mexico “dead zone” is an area (about the size of New Jersey) that is so polluted that marine life can’t survive there for several months each year. It is caused chiefly by polluted runoff from cropland in the corn belt that enters the Mississippi River and travels to the Gulf. Illinois contributes more of this pollution to the Mississippi River and Gulf than any other state.

PRN promotes the development and implementation of new state and local policies that reduce Illinois’ contribution to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, thereby also improving the health of rivers within Illinois.

HEALTHY STREAM FLOW & HABITAT PROTECTION

We strive to protect natural flow levels in streams and to protect and restore natural areas along waterways; these protections support healthy fish and wildlife communities, reduce flooding problems, and protect our water supply.

WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION

Increasing water demand for growing cities, crops, and industrial uses, threaten our rivers. There is no system for planning and tracking water use in Illinois, and no system to detect if excessive or poorly-planned water use takes too much flowing water from rivers and streams. A comprehensive system for maintaining adequate public water supplies while ensuring reliable water flows for fish, wildlife, and recreation is needed.

PRN is exploring policies to regulate surface and ground water withdrawals and balance the needs for water flowing in streams with human uses.

CROPLAND DRAINAGE REFORM

Engineered systems that remove standing water from agricultural fields are needed to maintain the unparalleled productivity of Illinois croplands. However, these systems tend to cause harmful fluctuations in water flows and destroy fish and wildlife habitat – leading to long term problems with downstream flooding, water pollution, and depleted fish and wildlife populations.

PRN tracks the latest research on better drainage practices and promotes policies and practices that provide necessary drainage while reducing damage to our rivers and streams.

WETLANDS PROTECTION

PRN is working for better enforcement of the existing law (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act) that protects streams and wetlands, critical habitat for fish, wildlife, and birds. We are also supporting efforts in the US Congress to clarify the federal government’s jurisdiction over these resources. We want regulatory agencies to protect those resources fully rather than wasting time and resources in costly litigation with polluters over what waters are protected.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER RESTORATION

Illinois has a longer border with the Mississippi River than any other state. The Mississippi is one of the longest rivers in the world, and is an essential part of our national heritage. The river has been dramatically altered by navigation and flood control projects. Unfortunately, we now know that many of these projects caused more problems than they fixed. PRN is working with state and federal groups to prioritize and get funding for projects that will restore the river to a more natural state, and that will benefit riverside communities in Illinois through less frequent flooding, cleaner drinking water, and healthier fish and wildlife populations.

RIVER STEWARDSHIP & AWARENESS

We link Illinois residents to the rivers around them, helping them become more aware of river health and encouraging them to take action to protect local waterways.

TRAINING AND HANDS-ON ASSISTANCE

PRN provides support to help local river conservation groups get established, increasing the network of people around the state that can act as the eyes and ears of Illinois’ rivers and streams.

As PRN provides groups with the technical assistance they need to become more effective river advocates, they gain increased influence with the agency staff and elected officials who are key decision makers on clean water issues. When groups become aware of pollution problems, they have the know-how and connections to explore causes and seek solutions.

GRASSROOTS RIVER STEWARDS

PRN is empowering a grassroots movement of individuals by providing opportunities for involvement in river conservation work independent of local groups so citizens of all interests can get involved.

RIVER AWARENESS EDUCATION

PRN is increasing the awareness of the general public, public officials, and lawmakers about the importance of clean water and how they can protect our rivers and streams.

PRN seeks to turn ordinary citizens into responsible environmental stewards, able and willing to speak up for the health and beauty of their chosen natural homes. In the long-run, only an engaged citizenry that cares about its rivers can ensure their continued protection.

## OUR SUCCESS STORIES

» Clean Water

- : PRN led the development of one of the toughest state policies in the U.S. to keep new sources of pollution from degrading the quality of our biologically richest streams.
- : PRN contributed to an overhaul of the Disinfection Exemption Program at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, which has reduced the amount of potentially harmful bacteria released into rivers from sewage treatment plants.
- : PRN is reaching out to pharmacies and consumers to provide education on how flushing unused medications down drains and toilets pollutes river water. We are partnering with groups to sponsor “take-back” programs, where people can turn in medications to pharmacies for proper disposal.
- : PRN has prevented or modified countless pollution dumping permits that would have authorized excessive loading of pollutants to already degraded streams.

» River Stewardship & Awareness

- : PRN has helped river conservation groups across the state get started and bring in new members by holding local river clean-ups and other events on the Sangamon River, Boneyard Creek, Salt Fork River, and La Moine River.
- : PRN has distributed our Rain Gardens brochure around the state, and held training sessions to show people how to reduce stormwater pollution from homes and businesses by creating a beautiful landscaping feature that is also beneficial to native birds and wildlife.
- : PRN’s Toolkit for Watershed Groups provides tools on communications, resources, and management so groups can become effective river conservation organizations.
- : PRN’s Construction Site Monitoring program teaches individuals how to spot construction sites that are polluting local waters and what to do to correct the situation.

» Habitat & Stream Flow

- : PRN helped write and pass laws making it illegal to clearcut trees along the state’s largest rivers.
- : PRN developed “A Citizen’s Guide to Illinois’ Agricultural Drainage Practices and Law” to help educate river advocates and farmers on how drainage affects our rivers and how to improve drainage practices.
- : PRN has partnered with landowners, farmers, citizen groups, and experts to increase natural buffer areas around croplands to provide habitat for wildlife, protect streamside vegetation, and help keep waters clean.
- : PRN has prevented or modified countless wetland and stream fill permits that would have authorized unnecessary destruction of these dwindling natural areas.







**OUR RIVERS AT RISK** // Almost 90% of Illinois stream miles are unsafe for swimming because of pollution. Almost 40% are too polluted to support healthy populations of fish and other wildlife. Contaminants in the bodies of some fish make them unsafe to eat except in small amounts.



#### TOP THREATS DEGRADING OUR RIVERS

- » Pollution in water running off of agricultural fields, city streets, and parking lots
- » Pollution from treatment plants and industrial facilities
- » Dredging streams and destroying natural areas along streambanks, particularly in agricultural areas

// Scientific studies show that the average stream in Illinois has only fair habitat quality, and lacks the natural features (rocky streambed, winding channels, streamside forests) that are important for fish and wildlife.

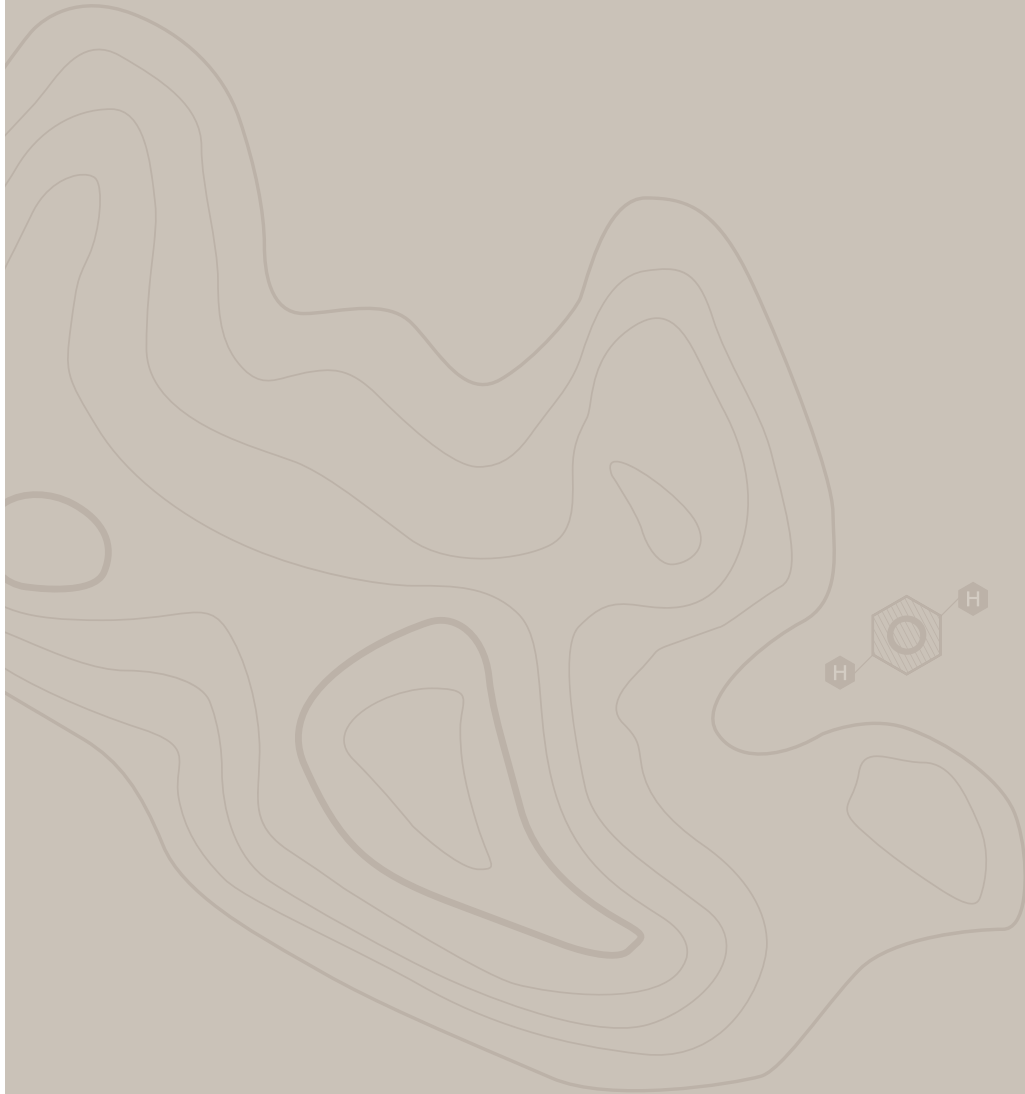
// Of native species once known in Illinois, 20 percent of fish, 20 percent of crayfish, approximately 30 percent of amphibians and reptiles, and over half of all mussels are threatened, endangered, or are no longer found in the state.

Prairie Rivers Network is fighting to keep pollution out of our rivers and the water we drink and to restore our rivers to their natural beauty with the help of concerned citizens around the state.



[WWW.PRAIRIERIVERS.ORG](http://WWW.PRAIRIERIVERS.ORG)





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