

# Prairie River Notes

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The Illinois Affiliate of National Wildlife Federation

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## Dissolved Oxygen Changes Opposed

Prairie Rivers Network and numerous other conservation and angling groups around the state are objecting to a proposal filed before the Pollution Control Board by the Illinois Association of Wastewater Agencies (IAWA) to modify the water quality standard for dissolved oxygen in state waters. If adopted, IAWA's proposal would allow polluters to discharge wastewater with very low levels of oxygen. They would also be able to discharge higher levels of some pollutants that cause low oxygen levels in the streams where they are dumping. Both would mean less oxygen in the stream water. Concerns regarding the proposal are wide ranging, but if adopted, the new standard would be unprecedented in the country and represent a departure from current thinking on dissolved oxygen needs for aquatic life.

Specifically, the proposed standard is inconsistent with the USEPA's recommendations for dissolved oxygen levels needed for the protection of fish species in Illinois. By lowering the state's dissolved oxygen standard during the months of July through February, it would cause less oxygen to be available during summer months when several species of fish in Illinois are known to spawn. With less oxygen available during these sensitive early life stages, numerous fish species, such as the smallmouth bass (a game species highly prized by Illinois anglers), could suffer growth impairment or increased mortality.



Collection of Illinois mussels

In addition to having negative impacts on fish species in Illinois, the proposed rule could also have significant effects on other aquatic life. While information is limited, studies have shown that mussels and other macroinvertebrates found in Illinois streams are "far less tolerant of prolonged exposure to hypoxic (low oxygen) conditions than most fish." Of further concern, IAWA's supporting documentation indicates that pesticides and other toxicants have been shown to further reduce invertebrate tolerances to low oxygen. Pesticide use in Illinois is greater than almost any other state, and much of it ends up in our rivers, so it seems likely the impacts of low oxygen on invertebrates could be serious. For all these reasons, groups around the state are objecting to the IAWA's proposal to weaken the dissolved oxygen standard for Illinois waters.

If you share these concerns, contact the Pollution Control Board and ask them to oppose the IAWA proposal. Send a letter to Chairman Phillip Novack, Illinois Pollution Control Board, 600 S. Second St., Suite 402, Springfield, IL 62704. Tell him that fish and aquatic life in Illinois rivers, lakes, and streams need oxygen to grow and survive, and that the IAWA proposal will deny that oxygen and should be rejected.

## Clean-up Brings Volunteers to the River

If you visit the Salt Fork this fall, you'll find this lovely recreational stream winding through Champaign county an even more appealing place to fish, canoe, or enjoy an autumn walk, thanks to almost 300 volunteers who turned out for the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Salt Fork River Clean-up.

On Saturday, October 2, more than ten canoe teams pulled junk from many miles of the stream. Land crews scoured flood plains. A hardy group wrestled old appliances and other trash from a dump that had grown, illegally, on a road embankment above the stream. Others, working in john boats, pulled trash from woody debris caught under a bridge abutment.

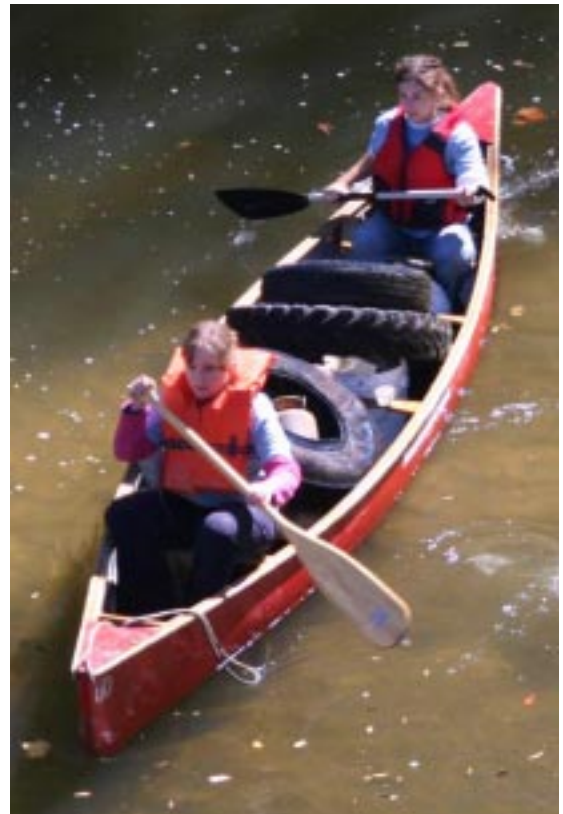
When the clean-up ended, a huge dumpster of rusting appliances, farm equipment, and other metals was ready for recycling. Another dumpster held trash – ranging from old records to a matching loveseat and chair – destined for the landfill. 75 tires were stacked for recycling. The stream, the wildlife in and along it, and the humans who enjoy it were freed of the mess and menace of the trash.

Although this clean-up focused on the Salt Fork, it's a good example of how concerned citizens in any community can join forces to benefit their local stream. The Salt Fork clean-up was co-sponsored by Prairie Rivers Network, Salt Fork River Partners, the Champaign Chapter of Izaak Walton League, and the Champaign County Forest Preserve. Volunteers included canoe clubs, University of Illinois and

Parkland College students, scouting groups, a church youth group, a teacher and his students, and individuals of all ages. Local businesses joined in the effort by helping fund the event, printing posters, and providing refreshments, gloves for workers, and raffle prizes. Landowners along the stream gave the crews access to their stretches of the river and its corridor.

Prairie Rivers Network was proud to be part of this project to enhance the Salt Fork and build awareness of and appreciation for this local treasure. We urge others throughout the state who are aware of a stretch of river in need of help to consider forming a coalition to clean it up. We'd be happy to provide a clean-up "action plan" and lessons learned from our seven years of work along our local stream.

For more information on how to run a clean up on your local stream, contact Kim Erndt at (217) 344-2371.



Supporters of the event included the **Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Chris' Lawn Service and Water Gardens, Weiskamp Screen Printing, Busey Bank**, and many more businesses and individuals from Champaign County.

## Illinois Stream Team

Prairie Rivers Network is delighted to present Illinois Stream Team, an exciting new volunteer monitoring program that allows participants to investigate chemical and physical aspects of water quality. In September, 18 trainees representing seven different organizations and institutions joined us at our first full day workshop that included discussions of goals for monitoring, instruction on designing a sampling plan, and demonstration of and hands on experience conducting tests offered in the monitoring kits.

The monitoring kits contain simple equipment necessary to measure eight basic, important water quality parameters: dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, orthophosphate, nitrate, alkalinity, turbidity, and flow. These tests were selected and the training program and materials were developed following several months of research by Prairie Rivers staff and interns into other volunteer monitoring programs in Illinois and other states. By balancing affordability and reliability in our methods, and making this program available to anyone who would like to participate, we hope to complement and fill a few gaps in existing volunteer programs.

We are continuing to work with Illinois EPA to demonstrate that the data collected by our volunteers is reliable and, therefore, informative for the Agency. Additionally, participants at our first training were enthusiastic as they discussed uses for the program, beyond any uses that the state may have for the data.



Some intend to evaluate the effectiveness of practices to minimize siltation from construction activities; others hope to increase interest and participation in their watershed organizations; still others plan to investigate the effect of a variety of pollution sources on water quality.

Further, with the online data entry, retrieval, and analysis system that Prairie Rivers Network is developing in partnership with Dr. Bryan Heidorn with the University of Illinois, College of Library and Information Sciences, people will be able to review and compare water quality in watersheds throughout the state.

Prairie Rivers Network plans to offer at least two training courses each year that will be open to any organization that plans to use the monitoring kits. Please let us know if you might like to join us!



Special thanks to The Lumpkin Family Foundation and the Lt. Governor's office whose grants made the development of this program possible. Thanks also to Dr. Bob Williams at the Rivers Program for his input into the development of our program, the Champaign County Forest Preserve for providing the facility for our training, and Natalie Galatzer, our intern who was instrumental in putting it all together.



## **Illinois EPA Proposes Phosphorous Limit**

A recent proposal by the Illinois EPA would require polluters to reduce phosphorus levels in their discharges to 1 mg/L in any case where a new or expanding discharge is proposed which would exceed that level (a 1 mg/L limit means that each liter of water discharged by a polluter can only contain 1 mg of phosphorous).

This proposal, which will significantly reduce algae growth and other water quality impacts, represents the first real requirement to reduce phosphorous for discharges to streams in Illinois. Currently only discharges to lakes and tributaries to lakes have to

reduce phosphorous. Prairie Rivers, the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Law and Policy Center have been pushing for a limit for several years and strongly support IEPA's proposal. Not only is it good for water quality, it is imminently achievable, as demonstrated by the longstanding and successful phosphorous limit of 1 mg/L established in the 1970's for discharges to streams that flow to the Great Lakes.

Citizen support for the phosphorous standard is needed! Please write the Pollution Control Board, 600 S. Second St., Suite 402, Springfield, IL 62704 and tell them to approve the IEPA proposal to limit phosphorous.

## **Storm Drain Stenciling Adventure**

On September 18th, Prairie Rivers Network celebrated It's Your River Day with the Village of Savoy by testing out Prairie Rivers Network's new Storm Drain Stenciling Adventure Kits. After filling up on doughnuts, coffee and juice (courtesy of Savoy Public Works Department), volunteers from the Village of Savoy, Parkland Community College, and the University of Illinois deployed for a morning of stenciling storm drains in Prairie Meadows sub-division. This is all part of our "Be River Smart Illinois!" campaign, an effort to improve water quality and inform the general public of steps they can take to protect their rivers.

Five teams of volunteers, wearing bright orange safety vests, put out traffic cones and scrubbed curbs with wire brushes to remove grass, dirt and debris. Wearing

safety goggles, dust masks and gloves, two volunteers from each team carefully stenciled "DUMP NO WASTE – DRAINS TO RIVERS" onto the curbs next to storm drains. Other team members walked the neighborhoods to deliver door hangers, inform residents of the stenciling project, and pick up trash and debris that could eventually find it's way down the storm drain to the river.

At the end of the event, the parking lot of the Savoy Public Works Department was full of smiling volunteers who walked away feeling they spent the morning doing something that will contribute to the health of Illinois' rivers.

Thousands of drains still remain to be stenciled here in Champaign County, and we are planning to lend our Storm Drain Stenciling Adventure Kits to interested groups throughout the state. If your Girl or Boy Scout troupe, church group, watershed organization or neighborhood association—in Champaign County or elsewhere—would be interested in borrowing the kits, please contact Prairie Rivers Network at (217) 344-2371.

Complementing our stenciling program, our "Be RiverSmart Illinois!" campaign has made its way to the Champaign Urbana transit system. Look for our colorful signs on the back of MTD buses, reminding people that the water flowing down their storm drains flows to their river. Our RiverSmart program was made possible by a grant from RiverNetwork.



## New Board Members Elected

Prairie Rivers Network is pleased to announce that Carolyn Grosboll and Dr. Brian Anderson, both long-time employees of the Department of Natural Resources, have been elected to the Board of the organization. The appointments were confirmed at the August 28th Board meeting.

“We are extremely pleased that Carolyn and Brian have agreed to join our Board,” said Eric Freyfogle, Board President. “Both have long, respected careers and extensive experience in natural resource conservation in Illinois that will be invaluable to Prairie Rivers Network and to our river conservation efforts in the State.”

Dr. Anderson is currently the Chair of the Department of Biology and Physical Sciences at Lincoln Land Community College. Before that he worked for many years at the DNR, most recently as the Director of the Office of Resource Conservation.

Ms. Grosboll, who also serves on the Board of the Illinois Audubon Society, was until recently the Director of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, a position she held for almost a decade. Previously, she was a staff attorney for the Illinois Legislative Reference Bureau where she drafted legislative initiatives for the General Assembly.

Also new to the Prairie Rivers Board is Anne Phillips, who was elected at the May meeting. Ms. Phillips is the Reference Librarian at the Urbana Free Library. A committed conservationist, she was a long-time volunteer with the organization prior to her election to the Board. Besides water issues, she is particularly interested in consumer economics and behavior and the ways these might be influenced in more environmentally productive ways.

The appointments are all for three year terms which are renewable.

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## New Watershed Organizer Hired

Prairie Rivers Network has hired a new Watershed Organizer! Kim Erndt comes to the organization from Living Lands and Waters, the Mississippi River group that works to connect people to the river through clean-ups and educational programs. Kim has Bachelor's and Masters degree's in Biology from Central Missouri State University. Previously, Kim worked for the US Geological Survey conducting watershed assessments.

Kim will be working to increase the capacity of watershed groups around the state, and developing new programs and activities to help connect people in Illinois to their rivers. If you have a question would like Kim to attend your next meeting, or want to plan a storm drain stenciling adventure email her at [kerndt@prairierivers.org](mailto:kerndt@prairierivers.org).

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## Conservation Groups Initiate Fundraising Collaborative

Prairie Rivers Network, the Illinois Environmental Council Education Fund, and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance are pleased to announce that they have hired Marise Robbins-Forbes to serve as the joint development director for their organizations.

Ms. Robbins-Forbes, who has degrees in both environmental and biological sciences, most recently served as the Executive Director of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. Prior to that she was the Director of Development for Baby Talk in Decatur, a nationally known non-profit organization that supports early childhood development. She began her development career at Millikin University, first as the Associate Director of Major Gifts and Director of Grant

Development, and then as the Director of Academic Grant Development and Legislative Affairs.

In her role as the Development Director, she will work with each organization individually to plan outreach events, cultivate new donors, and expand membership. She will also work to plan an annual event or events that will feature the work of the three organizations jointly, highlighting the complementary nature of their efforts.

This unique collaboration, sponsored jointly by The Lumpkin Family and the Grand Victoria Foundations, is intended to build sustainable long-term fundraising capabilities for each of the three organizations.

## Citizen Participation Needed for Great Lakes Protection

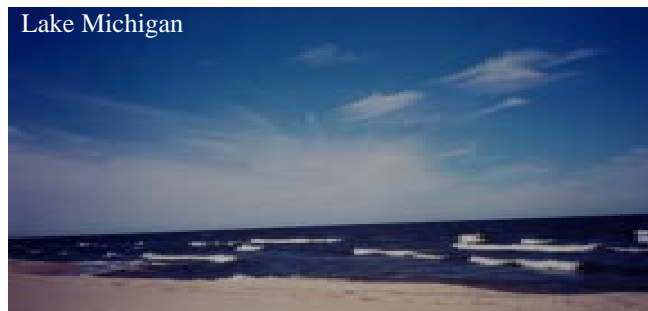
A truly unique resource, the Great Lakes hold twenty percent of the world's freshwater. Although vast in size, the Great Lakes water supply is finite with only one percent of its water replenished each year. As communities from both inside and outside the Great Lakes Basin face increasing demands for water, Great Lakes waters and ecosystems have become more vulnerable to harmful impacts resulting from large water withdrawals.

In response to this threat, the Great Lakes state governors and premiers of Ontario and Quebec developed the Great Lakes Water Resources Compact, which was released in draft form for public comment on July 19<sup>th</sup>. This document recognizes that the rivers, lakes, and groundwater of the Great Lakes Basin form a single hydrological unit and need to be protected as such. The Compact further requires that decisions regarding future proposed large removals of water meet criteria relating to conservation, protection, restoration and improvement of the Great Lakes Basin.

Recognizing the importance of citizen participation in the process, Prairie Rivers Network has held public informational meetings in Chicago, Champaign and Carbondale. In early September, Prairie Rivers

presented testimony on the Compact at the first regional hearing held by the Council of Great Lakes Governors in Chicago. In addition, we have been working with other Illinois environmental groups to encourage public input. When the final version of the Compact is issued in early 2005, Prairie Rivers will continue to work with these groups to build support within the legislature for enacting the Compact into state law.

Lake Michigan



The comment period for the draft Compact ends on October 18, 2004. Support is needed to ensure the critical standards and requirements contained in the draft are not weakened. Information on submitting comments via mail or online can be found on the Council of Great Lakes Governor's website at [www.cglg.org](http://www.cglg.org).

## *Prairie Rivers Network*

The Illinois Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

*...strives to protect the rivers and streams of Illinois and to promote the lasting health and beauty of watershed communities. By providing information, sound science, and hands-on assistance, Prairie Rivers helps individuals and community groups become effective river conservation leaders.*

### Board of Directors

Eric Freyfogle, <i>President</i>	Urbana
Jon McNussen, <i>Treasurer</i>	Villa Grove
Michael Rosenthal, <i>Secretary</i>	Glencoe
Brian Anderson	Rochester
Clark Bullard	Urbana
Greg Foster	Urbana
Charles Goodall	Sidell
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Virginia Scott	Springfield

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Kim Erndt—Watershed Organizer
Beth Wentzel—Watershed Scientist
Dixie Jackson—Office Manager
Olivia Dorothy—Support Staff
Maggie Bruns—Events Coordinator
Natalie Galatzer—Intern

# Join Prairie Rivers Network!

## Or Renew Your Membership!

### Membership Categories:

- ☐ \$15.00 Student Membership
- ☐ \$25.00 Basic Membership
- ☐ \$50.00 Friends' Membership
- ☐ \$100 River Steward
- ☐ Other

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street, P.O. Box \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email (to receive Action Alerts) \_\_\_\_\_

### Make checks payable to:

**Prairie Rivers Network**  
809 S. Fifth Street  
Champaign, Illinois 61820

*All who join **Prairie Rivers** will receive our newsletter and action alerts. Your contribution to **Prairie Rivers** is tax deductible.*

### Protect Illinois' rivers and streams:

Join Prairie Rivers Network — the only state-wide organization in Illinois working solely on river issues. Your donation will help fund our efforts to bring science and technical information to bear in issues affecting all of our state's flowing waters. Your name on our membership roster will add strength to our campaign to restore and protect Illinois' rivers and streams.



### Already a member?

Please hand this membership application to friends, neighbors, or colleagues and help get more people excited about protecting Illinois' rivers.

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Champaign, Illinois 61820  
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[www.prairierivers.org](http://www.prairierivers.org)

## Mark Your Calendar!

### **Prairie Rivers Network Annual Dinner**

Friday, November 12, 6pm  
Hawthorn Suites, Champaign, IL  
For tickets call (217) 344-2371

### **Illinois Audobon Plum Island Clean-Up**

Saturday, October 23, 9am - 12pm  
For more information call (815) 673-5544

### **Big River Education Workshop**

Living Lands and Waters  
Sunday, October 24, 9am - 5pm  
Plum Island, IL  
For more information call (309) 236-0725

### **Bald Eagle Days**

Missouri Department of Conservation  
January, 2005  
For more information call (573) 751-4115

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Prairie Rivers Network is a member of Earth Share of Illinois. If you participate in a workplace giving campaign, look for ESI and you can designate Prairie Rivers Network to receive your contributions.

