

Prairie River Notes

Volume 7, Issue 1

A publication of Prairie Rivers Network
The Illinois Affiliate of National Wildlife Federation

Spring 2005

Water Rules!

Local Advocates Learn How to Put Good Laws to Work



Waterfall on the Fox River

Citizens across Illinois value their streams as wonderful places to hike, fish, watch wildlife, and canoe, among other activities. However, unchecked urban growth is threatening to compromise these activities by polluting streams in many parts of the state. On February 26th, Friends of the Fox River were hosts for Chicago-area residents and clean water advocates who gathered in Batavia for a day long workshop on protecting their streams from potential degradation associated with rapid urbanization and sprawl.

Richard Acker of Openlands Project and Cindy Skrukud of the Sierra Club joined Prairie Rivers Network's Beth Wentzel in presenting several stream protection tools available through the federal Clean Water Act and state and local regulations. The speakers led discussions on opportunities to encourage smarter growth using Facility Planning Areas, or local sewer system boundaries, which often guide future development. They also discussed strategies to limit pollution that is discharged to local streams and to limit stream and wetland habitat destruction through federal Clean Water Act permitting programs.

Particular emphasis was given to opportunities for citizens to effectively participate in programs to control stormwater, which carries dirt and other pollution from construction sites and developed areas to our rivers. This included an exciting new presentation to teach participants to identify problems at construction sites and to report those problems to enforcement agencies.

In a productive conclusion to the day, each participant identified, and committed to taking, specific actions in his/her community using the information and skills acquired to protect local streams. Prairie Rivers looks forward to continuing to work with participants in carrying out those action plans!

To find out about future workshops, to get information on the materials presented, or to schedule our presentation, "Construction Sites, Water Quality, and You" for your group, call 217-344-2371 or e-mail your request to info@prairierivers.org.



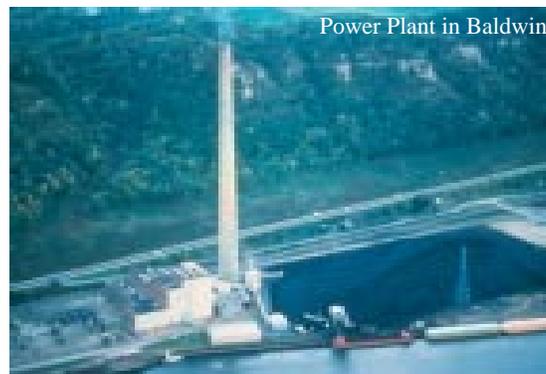
Citizens at the Workshop

Dynergy Settlement Benefits Illinois Air and Water

On March 7, 2005, environmental groups from around the state announced they had settled a Clean Air Act (CAA) lawsuit against Dynergy Midwest Generation (DMG), which will result in cleaner air and water in Illinois. The lawsuit was first filed by the federal government in 1999 and joined by environmental groups and the Illinois Attorney General in 2003.

In the suit, the U.S. alleged that DMG violated provisions of the CAA by modifying its coal-fired power plant in Baldwin, Illinois without installing modern pollution controls as required by the law. Following the Bush Administration's issuance of new regulations exempting similar modifications from the CAA, it appeared the U.S. would not pursue the case, abandoning key legal arguments in a post-trial brief.

The Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) in Chicago then filed a motion to intervene on an emergency basis on behalf of Prairie Rivers Network and three other Illinois environmental groups—the American Bottom Conservancy, Health and Environmental Justice St. Louis, and Illinois Stewardship Alliance. The motion was granted, along with a similar motion filed by the Illinois Attorney General. As interveners, ELPC and the Illinois Attorney General stepped in to make the key legal



Power Plant in Baldwin

arguments that the U.S. was no longer willing to make. This led to negotiations to settle the case.

As a result of the settlement, DMG will install \$500 million worth of air pollution control equipment on the Baldwin plant and four others it operates in the state. It will pay a \$9 million civil penalty and spend \$15 million on environmental mitigation projects. Several of these projects will directly benefit Illinois' rivers, fish, and wildlife. Specifically, natural land and habitat along the Illinois River in the St. Louis area will be protected, and sediment from the Illinois River will be used to create and enhance wetlands and along the river between two of DMG's plants.

In addition, DMG will give the Department of Natural Resources a 1,135 acre tract that it owns along the east side of the Middle Fork River—the state's only nationally designated Scenic River—providing a link between Kickapoo State Park and the Middle Fork State Fish and Wildlife Area. The land will be permanently protected, maintaining an important wildlife habitat corridor and increasing recreational opportunities along the river.

Finally, DMG agreed to install and commence operating by June of 2007, new equipment that will reduce mercury pollution from their Vermilion power plant by up to 90%. Coal-fired power plants are the last unregulated source of mercury emissions in the U.S., and Illinois currently has a statewide fish advisory in effect because of mercury pollution. The Vermilion plant will be one of the first in the nation to utilize the system known as activated carbon injection on a regular basis, with the goal of 90% mercury reduction. It will demonstrate that such reductions are possible now and should be the requirement for all power plants around the country.



Middle Fork of the Vermilion River

Watershed Roundup

There are many exciting things happening in the watersheds of Illinois and with spring and its warmer temperatures just around the corner, we hope to see more and more friends out on the rivers.

Friends of Kickapoo Creek, in McLean County, have been making more waves. Hot off the press is their new full color brochure, which the group was able to get printed for free. The brochure educates readers about the Kickapoo Creek watershed, the group and its cause, and features photographs of the creek taken by well know photographer, Robert Shaw. Drake Zimmerman continues to lead the group's efforts in fighting new residential developments that pose a threat to the creek. In addition, this February three members of the group drove to Springfield to apply for non-profit status (501c(3)). Congratulations everyone! The **Mackinaw River Partnership** has been busy preparing for their involvement in the Sustainable Living Fair in Bloomington this Earth Day, April 22nd. Be sure to check out the Prairie Rivers Network/ Mackinaw River Partnership booth at the Fair. Also, be sure to sign up for the bus tour of the river on Saturday the 23rd of April.

On March 12, the **Vermilion River Task Force** had a Watershed Wide Meeting to present the ideas in their



Middle Fork of the Vermilion River



Mackinaw River

watershed plan to the public. The group also took this opportunity to increase community involvement by scheduling Storm Drain Stenciling Adventures, signing up members for our Illinois Stream Team, and booking construction site monitoring presentations.

Judy Sacotnik of **Middle Fork Canoe Outfitters** along with Kevin Green, and individuals from **Leadership Danville** and **Keep Vermilion County Beautiful** have done an outstanding job of preparing for the Vermilion River Clean-up to be held this April 22nd (Earth Day). This group shows what a little determination and hard work can do for a community and a river. Thanks to Judy's ideas and leadership this will be a very successful and fun clean-up.

In the Chicago area, **Friends of Salt Creek** have been busy planning several "Meet the Creek" days and clean-ups starting this spring.

Plans for the **Sangamon River** clean-up this coming September are moving along very nicely. The clean-up will take place on September 17th which is, Illinois' "It's Our River Day" and the day of the Monticello town celebration. We will be sure to keep you informed as things progress.

We are happy to inform you of some of the great work that is being done to preserve and protect Illinois' rivers. However, there is much more happening around the state, and we encourage you to get involved. Be sure to check out our **River Happenings Calendar** on our website for more information on all of these events, or if your watershed group has some news to share, send it to kerndt@prairierivers.org.

Construction Sites, Water Quality, and You

CONSTRUCTION SITE CHECKLIST

- Are natural features (e.g. trees, wetlands, streams) protected with fencing or other barriers?
- Is there vegetation surrounding the edge of waterways?
- Is construction being conducted in phases to minimize erosion?
- Are storm drain inlets protected?
- Is bare soil covered with straw, mulch, or fabric?
- Are slopes graded or terraced to prevent soil erosion?
- Are site exits covered with gravel to keep soil on site?
- Are there silt fences (black material) installed around the site?
- Do the silt fences prevent soil from leaving the site?

If you answered NO to any of the above, the site may be in violation of IEPA permits and should be reported.

Locations of IEPA Field Offices:

www.epa.state.il.us/about/locations.html

IEPA's online Citizen Complaint Form:

www.epa.state.il.us/pollution-complaint/form-online.html

Violators in your area:

www.epa.gov/enviro/index_java.html

IEPA Helpline: 1-888-372-1996

Prairie Rivers Network

www.prairierivers.org 217-344-2371



As spring approaches, you will probably see many construction projects underway in your neighborhood. If you notice a lot of dirt coming off the site, this can be a serious problem for rivers and wildlife. The EPA estimates construction site runoff rates to be typically 10-20 times greater than those from agricultural fields and 1,000 to 2,000 times greater than those from forested lands (EPA, Jan 2000).

Dirt tracked into roads or washed off the construction site is picked up by stormwater runoff and flows into streams smothering streambeds, destroying habitat, and muddying the water, making it difficult for fish to see their prey. Fortunately, you have the ability to help prevent this.

According to Clean Water Act regulations, soil must be contained on site to the extent possible and construction sites may not harm streams. To comply with the law, each construction site greater than one acre must develop and implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. The plan describes the steps the contractor will use to prevent soil from leaving the site. Unfortunately, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) does not have the resources to review and enforce these plans. Municipalities also do not frequently monitor sites to ensure that plans are followed. It is up to local citizens to ensure that the law is being followed.

If you are concerned about runoff from a construction site, request a copy of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan from the developer. These documents must be made available to the public. You can also conduct your own spot inspections of the site using the attached list. If your review reveals that runoff from the site is not being prevented, report it to your local municipality's public works department and your local IEPA field office.

Earth Day River Happenings

Don't forget that Earth Day is April 22nd and there are plenty of river related events occurring around the state that we encourage you to check out. Here are just a few:

- Danville, April 22nd: Vermilion River Clean-up – Come out in your old clothes and shoes and help us cleanup the banks of the Vermilion. Contact: Judy Sacotnik at sacotnik@insightbb.com.

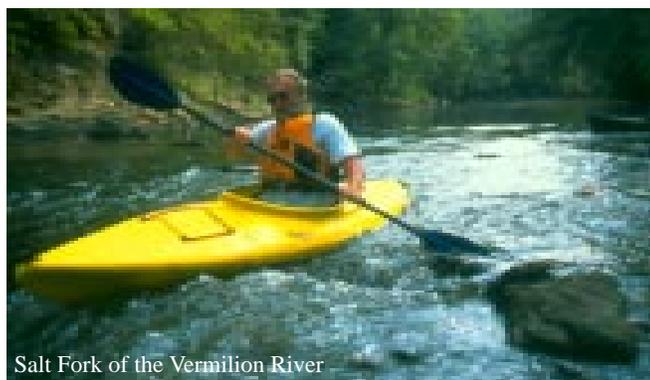


- Godfrey, April 22nd and 23rd: Public symposium on Great River Issues “A Confluence of Interests: Nature and tourism in river cities and rural areas” at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center. Register online at www.stlouisearthday.org/05Symposium/NationalGreatRiversProgram.htm
- Bloomington, April 22nd and 23rd: Sustainable Living Fair at the Illinois Wesleyan’s Shirk Center. Contact: Julie Elzanati 309-454-3169, eac@ecologyactioncenter.org

For more river events in your area visit our **River Happenings Calendar** at www.prairierivers.org. Click on the “Events Calendar” link. If you would like to advertise an event and recruit volunteers, please e-mail Jane Li at jli@prairierivers.org. Include the date, time, location, contact information, and a brief description of the event.

Introducing Vickie Nudelman

Prairie Rivers Network is happy to welcome Vickie Nudelman as our new Office Manager and Fundraising Associate. Vickie received her BS in Computer Information Systems and Marketing from Florida Atlantic University. Prior to moving to Illinois, Vickie worked for the Mississippi Center for Community and Civic Engagement as the program coordinator of a service-learning grant that focused on improving civic education by utilizing college students as tutors for K-8 students in after-school programs. Vickie also previously worked as a technical writer where she coauthored several computer textbooks.



Members Only Sale!

Saturday, May 21st from 6 to 9 PM, **Champaign Surplus** will close its doors to the public and open them to Prairie Rivers members only! Everything in the store will be 10% off with additional specials to be announced that night. Light refreshments will be served, so come out and gear up for this spring's river trips at the best sporting goods store in east central Illinois. Thanks to Champaign Surplus owners Ira and Lynn Wachtel for sponsoring this generous sale.

Several things are happening this legislative session that could have an impact on the waters and streams of Illinois.

SB 2076, sponsored by Sen. Don Harmon, would ban the sale of dishwashing detergent and other cleaners that contain phosphorus. Phosphorus in home wastewater ends up at your local sewage treatment plant. If not removed before the plant releases its treated water, it can cause algae growth and loss of oxygen in the receiving stream. A proposal is pending to require treatment plants to limit their discharge of phosphorus, and reducing it in home wastewater will facilitate this effort.



SB 1695, sponsored by Sen. Terry Link, would create a Wetlands Protection Program for the last remaining wetlands in Illinois. The bill passed out of its Senate committee, however, a bill that would weaken existing county wetlands programs in northeastern Illinois also passed, **SB 761**, sponsored by Sen. James Clayborne.

For more information on the status of these and other bills, the Illinois Environmental Council has a bill status chart at: www.ilenviro.org/2005_legislation.htm

Of significant concern is Governor Blagojevich's proposal to take money from the hundreds of **dedicated state funds** to pay for other programs. Among the funds targeted are Open Space Land Acquisition and Development, Natural Areas Acquisition Fund, Conservation 2000, Illinois Clean Water Fund, Used Tire Management Fund and many more environmental and conservation related funds. Currently a list of those funds is available at the State Journal-Register's website: www.sj-r.com/.

Go phosphorus-free for Illinois rivers!

While phosphorus was banned from laundry detergent years ago, it is still used in most dishwashing detergents. If you want to go phosphorus-free in your dishwasher, Consumer Reports recently rated the effectiveness of several detergents, and three powders that were phosphorus-free were rated at very good or excellent: Trader Joe's brand, Seventh Generation, and Ecover Natural.

Prairie Rivers Network

Protecting Illinois' Streams

...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.

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Join Prairie Rivers Network!

Or Renew Your Membership!

Protect Illinois' Rivers and Streams:

Join Prairie Rivers Network — Illinois' statewide organization dedicated to water issues. Your donation will help fund our efforts to bring science and technical information to bear on issues affecting all of our state's waters. You will add strength to our campaign to restore and protect Illinois' rivers and streams for people, fish, and wildlife.



Green Frog

Yes, I want to help protect our rivers and streams.

- \$15 Student Membership \$25 Basic Membership
 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50
 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail (to receive Action Alerts) _____

Thank you for your support!

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.*

Prairie Rivers Network's Dedicated Members

Prairie Rivers Network is grateful to have so many dedicated members throughout Illinois. In this newsletter we would like to give a special thanks to over a hundred individuals and families who have been supporting us for at least five years.

Ralph and Stephanie Alexander
Charlene Anchor
Michael Ander
Walter and Charlotte Arnstein
Debora Auble
Sandy Bales
Hal and Ann Barnhart
Frank Beal
John Beck
Eric Bina and Marianne Winslett
Mary Blair
John and Linda Braden
Gerald Brighton
Clark and Irene Bullard
Ellyn and David Bullock
Angelo Capparella
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John and Beth Chato
Joe Conover and
Janet Gates Conover
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Earl and Lynda Creutzburg
Donald and Lorraine Crumme
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Dan Eads
Craig Eckert
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Anne and Gert Ehrlich
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Beth and Richard Engelbrecht-Wiggans
Karen Ennen and David O'Brien
Philip and Lynn Fiscella
Charles Frank
Bob Freeman
Eric and Jane Freyfogle
John Gilpin
Ralph Ginn
Charles and Nancy Goodall
George and Myra Gordon
Samuel Gove
Theodore Gray and Jane Billman
Daniel Grayson and
Carol Livingstone
Bill and Glennie Hamel
Bruce Hannon
Phil Hoebing
Gary and Dixie Jackson
Eric and Naomi Jakobsson
Jane Johnson
Judith Joy
Roger and Becky Klink

Robert Krumm
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Larry and Glenn Larimore
Bruce and Marj Larson
Jane and Raymond Leuthold
John and Barbara Lourance
David and Chris Main
Margaret Marchi
Sammy and Gloria Mariage
John and Diane Marlin
Greg McIsaac
Robert McKim
John and Khris McMahon
Jon and Patricia McNussen
Larry and Susan Miller
Walter and Jane Myers
Jean and David Nanney
George Ordal
Jack and Sally Paxton
Sigrid and Alan Pilgrim
Michael Podolsky
Thomas and Beverly Rauchfuss
Michael and Karen Retzer
Bruce Reznick and Robin Sahner
Kenneth and Marlyn Rinehart
Bruce Rittmann

Walter Robinson and Susan Fahrback
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Michael Rosenthal and Annice Moses
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Cynthia Skrukrud
Dennis Wandell and Lucy Whalley
Robert and Emily Watts
Doris Westfall
Curtis and Janice Wilson
Ralph and Gretka Wolfe
Richard Worthen
Jeanne-Marie Wyld
Barbara Wysocki and Dwain Berggren

Wanted: More members dedicated to Prairie Rivers! After you are done reading this newsletter, please pass it on to someone else who loves the outdoors. Share the news about Prairie Rivers Network, and the work we are doing to help communities around the state protect their rivers.

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Protecting Illinois' Streams
809 South Fifth Street
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217-344-2371
www.prairierivers.org

Mark Your Calendar!

Members Only Sale at Champaign Surplus
Saturday, May 21, 6-9 PM
Champaign Surplus
303 S. Neil St., Champaign

Prairie Rivers Network Ice Cream Social
Sunday, June 5, 2-4 PM
Lake House, Crystal Lake Park
1505 N. Broadway Ave., Urbana

Earth Day April 22nd

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Earth Share
OF ILLINOIS