

# Prairie River Notes

A publication of Prairie Rivers Network

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The Illinois Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

Winter 2007

## Use Attainability Analysis in Chicago Area Waterways

Significant progress has been made in improving water quality in the Chicago Area Waterways System and the Lower Des Plaines River. After 30 years of lower use designations and protections than the rest of the waters throughout the state, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has recognized the improvements in the Chicago and South-Suburban waterways and has submitted proposals to the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) that would require tighter water quality standards by changing designated use to better represent what can be attainable.

The federal Clean Water Act requires each state to designate “uses” for every water body in the state. The “uses” designated for a water body might include such things as providing drinking water, swimming opportunities, or a trout fishery. Once a use has been established for a water body, water quality standards to protect that use can be adopted and enforced. The IEPA’s proposals to the IPCB would change the uses of the lower Des Plaines River from the current “secondary contact and indigenous aquatic life” to aquatic life and recreational uses that would require more stringent water quality standards including higher dissolved oxygen levels and lower bacteria levels which would make the water safer.

PRN has partnered with the Environmental Law and Policy Center, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Chicago River, Alliance for the Great Lakes, Southeast Environmental Task Force, Illinois Paddling Council and Openlands Project to work towards the strongest designated uses and water quality standards for these waterbodies. In short, this

means cleaner and safer rivers. In practice, this means presenting science-based arguments for protecting public health through disinfection and protecting fish populations by reducing thermal pollution from large industrial dischargers along the waterways. It will be a tough fight and we’ll need help.

Public opinion is a very important component to successfully arguing that the designated use of these waterways should be changed. Our trustees in the IPCB will need to hear from citizens; those who do

not want their state and local governments to give up on improving waters near where they work, live, and recreate and who want to improve waters for local fish and wildlife.

Victor Hugo once said “The sewer is the conscience of the city.” History passes

through the sewer- it tells everything. Of course, what was once the “sewer” in Hugo’s time, and a place to stay away from, is now, in great part due to the efforts of the City of Chicago and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, a river system once again valued as a natural and recreational resource for the residents of Illinois’ largest city- a waterway through which not only history has passed but from which great future tales will flow. We encourage you to help write the next great chapter in the story- rivers safe for recreational use and stable and vibrant with healthy fish communities.



### Attend a Public Hearing and Voice Your Concerns

**First hearing 1-28-2008 10 a.m. Chicago**  
**Second hearing 3-10-2008 10 a.m. Joliet**

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# 40th Anniversary Dinner Celebration

Thank you to all who joined us at our Annual Dinner, where we celebrated our 40th Anniversary. And thank you to those who were unable to attend but generously donated. You helped raise over \$69,000 in donations, pledges, and ticket sales. Our staff and board enjoyed talking with all of our members.



Dixie Jackson with Tom and Sue Smith

We would also like to thank our past and current board members for their presentations on our founders, our friends, and our future. Virginia Scott explained how a small group of passionate conservationists planted the seed for Prairie Rivers Network 40 years ago by fighting for a cause they believed in – preventing the damming of the Sangamon River and thereby keeping one of their favorite recreational spots, Allerton Park in central Illinois, from being flooded.



Director of Illinois Department of Transportation and Bruce Hannon with petition opposing dam project (1970s).

Brian Anderson spoke of the important relationships that help make our work possible, and Eric Freyfogle expressed



Bruce Hannon with Kyle & Phyllis Robeson

that the next few years are critical to natural areas around the state as rapid growth and environmental challenges from new technologies and increasing water quantity demands threaten our rivers. PRN is so thankful for the support from friends like you as we continue to promote river stewardship and educate the general public about the absolute importance of protecting our rivers to ensure that we all have an adequate supply of clean water now and in the future.



Keynote Speaker  
Charles Wilkinson

**Congratulations!**

**Mike Musinski**

*Volunteer of the Year*

**Mary Pat Holtschlag**

*River Steward Award*

**Thank you again for your support!**



*... 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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Brad Walker - Mississippi River Restoration Coordinator  
Linda Jacobson - Support Staff  
Amanda Thornton - Support Staff



# Highlights of 2007

## Clean Water

### **Cleaning up Our Disinfection Exemption Program**

– We contributed to an overhaul of the Disinfection Exemption Program for wastewater treatment plants at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) resulting in IEPA reviewing 20 years of exemptions and applying a more stringent and judicious process for new exemption requests.

### **Marathon Oil, Robinson Refinery**

– We prevented 2 proposed permits that would have authorized excessive loading of pollutants to already impaired streams. We have also negotiated an improved permit and are working for the rehabilitation of two streams badly damaged from Marathon's historical wastestream.

### **New Lenox Waste Water Treatment Facility**

– After 4 years of challenging IEPA's approval of a wastewater treatment facility's expansion request that would negatively impact Hickory Creek in Will County, we have received a favorable ruling from the Illinois Pollution Control Board that will likely improve the implementation of anti-degradation policies that are set to protect streams throughout Illinois.

**Use Attainability Analysis** – Worked in collaboration with other Illinois environmental organizations to ensure that IEPA proposes upgraded use designations and improved water quality standards for the Chicago area waterways.

## Habitat Protection

**Mississippi River Habitat Restoration** – We began a new effort to work with local citizen groups along the River to build support for projects that will restore wetlands, side channels, and wildlife corridors.

**Healthy Land – Healthy Water** – We've been working to bring together landowners, farmers,

watershed groups, and experts to join efforts to increase the quality and amount of land that provides habitat for wildlife, protects stream corridors, and helps improve water quality.



### **Mississippi River Clean Water**

**Collaborative** – We continued our work with eleven other groups along the Mississippi River to improve water quality throughout the river system and the Gulf of Mexico.

**Keeping on Cleaning Up** – We helped organize river clean-ups and habitat restoration days along the Salt Fork River, the La Moine River, and Boneyard Creek. The Boneyard Creek Community Day was a winner of this year's Governor's Hometown Award.

## River Stewardship and Awareness

**Don't Rush to Flush!** – By partnering with other not-for-profits, and state and federal agencies, we began using an education campaign to discourage the improper disposal of unwanted and unused medications. Most drugs are not eliminated by traditional water treatment methods and end up in our rivers and streams where they can harm fish and wildlife.

**Mississippi River Education** – In order to build awareness about the multitude of issues the Mississippi River faces, we collaborated with other environmental groups, educational institutions and teachers to create an education program for high school students that live along the Mississippi River.

**Cleaning and Conserving Rain Water** – We've been teaching citizens interested in reducing stormwater runoff around their homes or businesses to build rain gardens.

**Illinois Stormwater Patrol** – We trained citizens to monitor stormwater runoff at construction sites and elsewhere, and to be on the lookout for pollution in their local streams.

## Ballast Water Lawsuit

Since the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, over 70 percent of non-native animal introductions have been attributed to the release of contaminated ballast water into the Great Lakes or from biofouling (the undesirable accumulation of organisms) on the hulls of ocean-going ships. Scientists predict that additional invasions to the Great Lakes will occur if effective safeguards are not placed on the discharge of ballast water from ocean-going ships. Conservation groups led by the National Wildlife Foundation (NWF), including PRN, plan to file a citizen suit against several shipping companies, demanding compliance with the Clean Water Act.

In short, this lawsuit aims to force ocean-going ships to comply with US law to stop invasive species introductions. Invasive alien species are recognized as one of the leading threats to biodiversity and impose enormous costs on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, as well as human health. As an example in Illinois, the zebra mussel was accidentally released into Lake St. Clair in 1988 in ship ballast water and now has spread throughout the Mississippi, Illinois, and Ohio Rivers as well as many other inland lakes. These are voracious filter feeders, outcompete native animals, foul boats, and clog intake pipes. Estimates of damage due to zebra mussels are now in the billions.

In order for our organization to have legal standing in this lawsuit, we need a few declarations from PRN members describing how they have been impacted by the presence of aquatic invasive species, such as:

Boat owners, due to:

- a) required boat cleaning or maintenance to prevent hitchhikers like invasive plants or zebra mussels,
- b) restrictions on use of boats in certain waterways due to cross-contamination issues,
- c) direct damage due to zebra mussels or other invasive species.

Anglers, due to:

- a) fishing hole impacted by presence of invasive plant,
- b) prey of choice in decline due to competition or disturbance by invasive species,
- c) change in choice or price of bait,
- d) snagging of line due to spiny water flea or fishhook water flea.

Business owner, due to:

- a) intake pipes clogged by zebra mussels,
- b) additional maintenance requirements, or damage to or loss of property because of invasive organisms.

If you have been impacted by invasive species, please contact Traci Barkley at [tbarkley@prairierivers.org](mailto:tbarkley@prairierivers.org) or 217/344-2371.

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## NWF Report: Great Lakes Needs Improved Resource Management

On November 30th the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), of whom Prairie Rivers is the Illinois affiliate, released a report entitled “Climate Change and Great Lakes Water Resources.” The report includes a short overview of the current science on global climate change, which estimates that average global temperatures will increase approximately 3 to 7 degrees in the next century. Air, land, surface and groundwater temperatures will all increase.

The report notes that within the Great Lakes region climate change impacts such as receding lake levels, reductions in oxygen availability, and declines in native species will degrade water quality and disrupt aquatic ecosystems. It is not a stretch to say that these changes will affect river health as well. Ecological

consequences such as these could significantly impact drinking water supplies and economies such as commercial fisheries that are essential to Illinois’ economy.

Great Lakes water resources will also become increasingly vulnerable as hotter, drier regions will need additional water. NWF’s report concludes by discussing how the Great Lakes Compact addresses the need for comprehensive water conservation planning and clear standards for approving water withdrawals. The Compact, now passed by Illinois and Minnesota, will not become effective until passed by all remaining Great Lakes states. For more information on the Compact, visit [www.prairierivers.org](http://www.prairierivers.org) or view NWF’s report at [www.nwf.org/news](http://www.nwf.org/news).

# Don't Rush To Flush!

Do you know that every time you flush medicine down your toilet or sink, you risk sending it to your local waterway?! It's true, most people do not realize that our bodies, medicine chests, bathrooms, and kitchen sinks are the starting point for contaminants entering our rivers. The pharmaceutical and personal care products that we consume, put on our bodies, or don't use and flush down the toilet or pour down the drain can harm fish and wildlife. Pharmaceuticals include both prescription and over the counter medications, and nutritional supplements. Personal care products with harmful ingredients range from soap to cosmetics and fragrances.

While your wastewater typically goes into a municipal wastewater treatment plant, wastewater treatment cannot remove most of the chemicals and other compounds in pharmaceuticals that degrade water quality and that can cause harm to aquatic species. For example, estrogens or other endocrine disruptors (compounds that affect normal hormonal levels) and anti-depressant and obsessive-compulsive medications.

Endocrine disruptors affect an organism's ability to send or receive messages relayed by hormones or messages that provide instructions about hormone production. A 2006 USGS study specifically notes native fish populations downstream of a wastewater treatment plant showed symptoms of endocrine disruption, or a "feminization effect;" these impacts include fish developing both female and male reproductive organs and decreased numbers of males in the population.

Studies on the effects of anti-depressants and obsessive-compulsive regulators on aquatic life note the chemicals contained in these medications are likely the primary cause of other aquatic species disorders, including premature spawning in shellfish and the inability of damaged fish fins to heal. They also cause slower heart rates in the Daphnia water flea, an organism many larger aquatic species feed on. A

lowered heart rate is one indicator of potentially broad physiological effects that could be affecting other organisms in the ecosystem as well.

How can we keep unwanted/unused pharmaceutical and harmful personal care products from entering our rivers? Permanent collection or take-back facilities are the best way. The advantage of permanent collection facilities is that they: 1) offer a continuous, known place for people to return their unused and unwanted

pharmaceuticals; 2) are kept secured for safety; 3) guarantee that pharmaceuticals returned will be destroyed. Another option is organizing your community's one-day pharmaceutical collection event yourself by partnering with your local municipality and the sheriff's department, or by asking pharmaceuticals to be included in your local hazardous waste collections.

In Illinois, permanent facilities and collection days are not available in most parts of the state. If there are no collection sites available to you, there are steps you can take to properly dispose of your unused, expired or unwanted medications:

- 1) do not flush pharmaceuticals down the toilet or sink
- 2) disguise its content (take off label)
- 3) make the medications unpalatable for humans and animals (mix with kitty litter, coffee grounds, etc.)
- 4) place it in a sealed bag before throwing in the trash.

Adequately addressing the problem of improper pharmaceutical disposal requires developing a comprehensive statewide program that ensures accessibility, security, and safe, permanent destruction of collected contaminants. PRN is working with School and Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education and other organizations throughout the state to educate citizens, municipalities and health care providers on this issue. If you are interested in a presentation for your group or would like more information, please contact Cecily Smith at 217/344-2371 or [csmith@prairierivers.org](mailto:csmith@prairierivers.org).





## Why They Support Prairie Rivers Network

Prairie Rivers Network is lucky to have many long time and new supporters. It is because of them that we are able to continue to protect the rivers and streams of Illinois for people, fish, and wildlife, and we wanted to share some of their stories in our newsletter. If you would like to share your story of why you support us, please e-mail us at [info@prairierivers.org](mailto:info@prairierivers.org).

### Ira and Lynn Wachtel, Champaign Surplus

Ira and Lynn Wachtel, owners of Champaign Surplus, have been members of Prairie Rivers Network for several years. A family-run business since 1947, Champaign Surplus has a unique blend of new and old, rugged outdoor, and knowledgeable staff.

With their passion for outdoor adventures and protecting the environment, becoming a member of PRN was a natural fit. From kayaking to hiking to running a business, Ira and Lynn are keenly aware that clean water is essential for a healthy community.

Champaign Surplus has found unique ways to support PRN. From sponsoring Nordic Walking workshops

and riding as a Green team at our Rolling on the River Ride, to selling our "Report River Pollution" stickers at their store, to nominating PRN to receive Patagonia grants, we thank Champaign Surplus for their support.

Ira and Lynn support PRN because they "were undergraduates together at the U of I during the days of 'Save Allerton Park', and have always had great respect and a fond place in our hearts for the dedicated work of Prairie Rivers' founders, members and supporters. Every time we ride our bikes through Allerton, we are grateful for PRN's important work."

Thanks Ira and Lynn!

### Looking for a Fleece this Winter or Great Holiday Gifts?

Champaign Surplus has teamed up with Mountain Hard Wear and the Grassroots Outdoor Alliance to sell \$90 Men's and Women's Micro Ozone Zip T fleeces to benefit Prairie Rivers Network.

Champaign Surplus will donate 33% (\$30.00) of every specially-made Grassroots Outdoor Alliance Logo Fleece to Prairie Rivers Network. So hurry over to Champaign Surplus at 303 S. Neil St. in Champaign and get your fleece today.

### Jill Wagner and Royse Wagner, Inc.

Prairie Rivers Network is very grateful to Jill Wagner and her creative team at Royse Wagner, Inc. for working with us as a pro-bono client.

The creative team at Royse Wagner has been donating their time and talent to work on several marketing items for PRN, including:

- designing a new website, which we will unveil in early 2008;
- creating our 40th Anniversary materials, including a history booklet that will be available early 2008;
- incorporating our new logo into professional messaging materials; and

- helping us design and implement our Clean Rivers - Healthy Communities campaign to build awareness of the general public about the importance of clean water and protecting our rivers.

For the past 15 years, Royse Wagner, Inc., has been creating advertising and marketing that gets results. They combine gut instincts with a healthy dose of logic, research, and strategic direction.

We thank them for all of their creative work!

To learn more about Royse Wagner, Inc., visit their website at [www.roysewagner.com](http://www.roysewagner.com).

# Join Prairie Rivers Network!

## or Give a Gift Membership!

### Looking for the Perfect Gift?

A membership to PRN is the perfect gift for avid hikers, fishermen, paddlers, birders, or anyone who is concerned about the health of Illinois' rivers and streams. A one-year gift membership includes quarterly newsletters, action alerts and the knowledge that you are helping to protect the environment of Illinois. We will send a card announcing your gift. For those giving a gift membership of \$100 or more, we will send *Paddling Illinois*, a 153 page book with detailed paddling information for Illinois' rivers and streams.

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

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> \$15 Student Membership          | <input type="radio"/> \$25 Basic Membership             |
| <input type="radio"/> \$50 <input type="radio"/> \$100 | <input type="radio"/> \$250 <input type="radio"/> \$500 |
| <input type="radio"/> Other \$ _____                   |   |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (to receive Action Alerts): \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your support!*

All members receive our newsletter and action alerts. Your contribution to Prairie Rivers is tax deductible.

Make checks payable to: Prairie Rivers Network, 1902 Fox Drive, Suite G, Champaign, IL 61820

## Inspiring the Next Generation of River Stewards

In September, 60 students from Alton and Southwestern High Schools participated in a day-long workshop on the Upper Mississippi River System. Prairie Rivers Network partnered with the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville, and the Sierra Club to create a curriculum on the Upper Mississippi River System, which currently was not being covered in high schools along the Mississippi River.

Students were able to tour the Melvin Price Locks & Dam and National Great Rivers Museum facility near Alton. They also visited the beautiful campus of Principia College located on the bluff above the Mississippi River, where they discussed two related river issues: the Gulf of Mexico “Dead Zone” and Floodplain Reconnection, and finished by making short presentations on possible solutions.

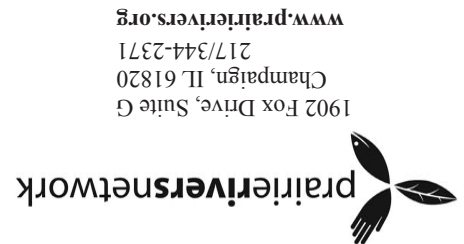
River experts from the Illinois Natural History Survey (John Chick), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Curt McMurl), the Natural Resources Conservation Service

(Drew DeRiemacker) and The Nature Conservancy (Todd Strole) provided their time and knowledge, assisting the students in developing their solutions. The session ended with interesting and informative comments by the experts to the students regarding the students' solutions and career opportunities in environmental and conservation fields.



Our hope is that more schools will begin covering the Mississippi River in their curriculums. Exposing all students to river issues, as well as other environmental issues, can only help in how well we are able to resolve difficult environmental problems.

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## Mark Your Calendar!

### **Stormwater Forum**

January 16, 2007

Hilton Garden Inn, Champaign

Contact Stacy James at  
sjames@prairierivers.org or 217/344-2371

### **UAA Public Hearings**

First Hearing, January 28, 2008, 10 a.m., Chicago

Second Hearing, March 10, 2008, 10 a.m. Joliet

Contact Traci Barkley at  
tbarkley@prairierivers.org or 217/344-2371

### **Solo Canoeing Class**

February 19, 2008 (first class starts)

James B. Conant High School, Schaumburg

Contact Tom Lindblade at  
lindbladet@sbcglobal.net

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**

### Photo Attributes

Jason Lindsey, www.perceptivevisions.com: pages 1, 3, 7, & border

Prairie Rivers Network: pages 2, 5, & 7

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 PRN to receive your contributions.

