

Prairie River Notes

A publication of Prairie Rivers Network

Volume 8, Issue 3

The Illinois Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

Fall 2006

1st Annual Rolling River Ride Big Success

On Labor Day weekend, 127 adults, 40 children and 155 volunteers participated in the first annual Rolling River Ride for the Illinois Environment. The event, which was underwritten by the Grand Victoria and Lumpkin Family Foundations, raised over \$75,000 to support the work of Prairie Rivers Network, the Illinois Environmental Council, and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance.

Fifty-six sponsors and activity partners contributed time, money, and volunteers to make the ride and the eco-expo a success. The Title Sponsor was the Rush-Copley Medical Center in Aurora who also helped market and staff the event and



fielded a team of enthusiastic riders to boot. Presenting Sponsors included the Beacon News in Aurora, the Courier News in Elgin, Z Frank Chevrolet and LaSalle Bank from

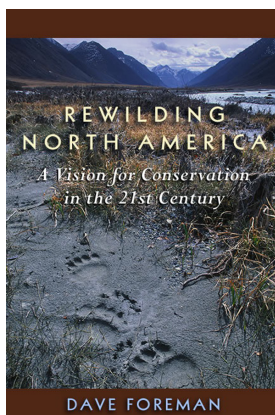
Chicago and philanthropist and PRN supporter Michael Scully from Springfield. Lead Sponsors included the Boston Foundation Philancon Fund.

The weekend kicked off Friday night with a VIP reception at the Homestead Bed and Breakfast hosted by PRN Board member Brian Anderson and his wife Karen. Saturday morning dawned clear and crisp with perfect weather for riding.

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PRN Annual Dinner - Nov. 3rd

Prairie Rivers' annual dinner will be held on Friday, November 3rd at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Urbana. Last year we had a record turnout of over 300 people. Help us have another great year by bringing friends and family and introducing them to Prairie Rivers Network.



Our speaker this year is Dave Foreman whose commitment to conservation began as a child exploring the beauty of New Mexico's vast landscape. From his early beginnings as an Eagle Scout and grassroots organizer, to his work with several national organizations, Foreman has been a passionate leader in environmental conservation for over 35 years. In 2003, he co-founded the Rewilding

Institute, a nonprofit organization that is bringing together conservation biologists, citizens, and resource management agencies for the purpose of designing scientifically-based,

practical guidelines for managing and restoring natural resources and wilderness areas.

Foreman will discuss the innovative concept of "rewilding conservation" detailed in his recent book "Rewilding North America: A Vision for Conservation in the 21st Century" and inspire us to achieve healthier, more diverse river ecosystems in Illinois for the humans, wildlife and other living things dependent upon them.

PRN's annual dinner is a fun and entertaining evening that allows us to personally thank all of our members for their generous support and dedication to Illinois' rivers and streams. It is also an opportunity for our members to network and share ideas.

Invitations have been mailed. For more information, please contact us at 217-344-2371 or vnudelman@prairierivers.org.

We hope to see you and a friend there!

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Surface Discharging Septics-Still a Problem

In June of this year, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency issued a draft permit under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) that would regulate surface discharging septic systems throughout the state for the first time. This was a direct result of efforts by Prairie Rivers Network, the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Law and Policy Center over the past two years to regulate the use of these systems. Until now, these systems—that discharge treated wastewater directly to the ground's surface, a collection tile, a drainage way, or a body of water—have been operating without NPDES permits, in violation of the Clean Water Act. The draft permit sets limits on the amount of pollution that can be discharged by these systems and requires them to be tested twice per year to ensure that systems are functioning as they should and not allowing untreated waste or dangerous pathogens to be discharged to local waters.

Surface discharging systems are prevalent in some parts of Illinois, particularly rural areas with soils that are unsuitable for traditional subsurface septic systems. The Illinois Department of Public Health estimates that there are around 140,000 active systems in the state, with nearly 5,000 more installed annually.

When properly maintained, surface discharging systems can adequately treat domestic sewage and wastewater. Unfortunately, studies have shown that these systems are often not operated properly, resulting in a failure rate of

between 20 and 60%. Failing systems discharge minimally-treated or untreated sewage, along with disease causing organisms it may contain, directly to the ground surface or to a body of water. Larger surface discharging systems (systems serving several houses) have been regulated by IEPA since 1997. Results of monitoring required of these systems show that they frequently do not meet permit effluent limits, highlighting the need for regulation of this type of system as a means of protecting water quality and public health.

Opponents of IEPA's new permit and the accompanying monitoring requirements, including the Onsite Wastewater Professionals of Illinois, a trade group, and some local health departments, have objected to the regulation of these systems, and have enlisted the assistance of a few state lawmakers. There has been coverage of the issue in at least five central Illinois newspapers, much of it containing misleading or inaccurate information. IEPA plans to hold several public hearings on the draft permit late this year. Prairie Rivers Network staff will attend these hearings to continue to press for IEPA to comply with the Clean Water Act and regulate these point source discharges of pollutants, but local citizen support is also important. For more information about how you can support the new rules to require proper monitoring and maintenance of these systems, visit our website at www.prairierivers.org.

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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Mississippi River Restoration Program



Boat Riders on the Mississippi

The Mississippi River is one of the most noticeable and important landforms of North America. It is a huge natural feature that has imposed itself upon the landscape for millennia, especially during frequent periods of flooding, providing incalculable benefits to the watershed. The river has also had immeasurable influence upon the development of the United States since Europeans began to explore, exploit resources, and colonize the middle areas of the continent. Providing reliable navigational access to the river to support resource extraction has been an important criterion for this development. In the middle of the 19th century the task to manage the river, primarily for navigation purposes, was given to the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Corps has spent a significant portion of their available resources performing this mission. The most imposing component of this management is the lock and dam system built within the Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS) primarily during the 1930s and 1940s which turned this portion of the naturally flowing river into a series of relatively static lakes or pools.

Unfortunately, this century-long focus of river management to support commercial navigation, and confining the channel with levees, and watershed pollution, have all had detrimental affects upon the river system ecology. Concerns about these ecological problems have existed nearly since the start of the river system exploitation, but serious efforts to attempt to stem the tide of degradation did not begin

until the late 1960s when a greater focus on environmental protection developed and national pollution laws were established. Efforts to address specific degradation caused largely by Corps engineered impoundment structures began in the middle 1970s and were formalized through the establishment of the Environmental Management Program (EMP) in 1986. The EMP, also managed by the Corps, has been constructing restoration projects along the river since then, spending about \$15 million per year.

After 20 years of EMP restoration efforts on the UMRS most experts believe that the river is not recovering but is instead continuing to degrade and will require significant increases in funding for restoration efforts to be successful. Over the last decade or so the Corps has been developing the Navigation and Environmental Sustainability Program (NESP), which has been promoted as a means to increase restoration funding to potentially \$100 million per year, while also spending several billions on additional navigation improvements and lock expansions to accommodate projected increased commercial traffic. Because a projected increase in traffic is uncertain, major lock expansions and navigation upgrades have been the subject of intense debate, but authorization of this project is imminent.

PRN recently received funding from The McKnight Foundation to support our efforts to work with others in the basin to improve and increase restoration efforts. Our primary goals will be to promote an engaged and mobilized citizenry on behalf of the river system and restoration; to educate and seek the support of decision makers within the state; to seek increased funding to support restoration efforts; and to press for protection and restoration of wetlands, side channels, and wildlife corridors as the priority in forums where decisions regarding planning for and expenditure of restoration dollars are being decided. You can meet our new river restoration staffer, Brad Walker, on page 6.



Quincy Bridge on the Mississippi

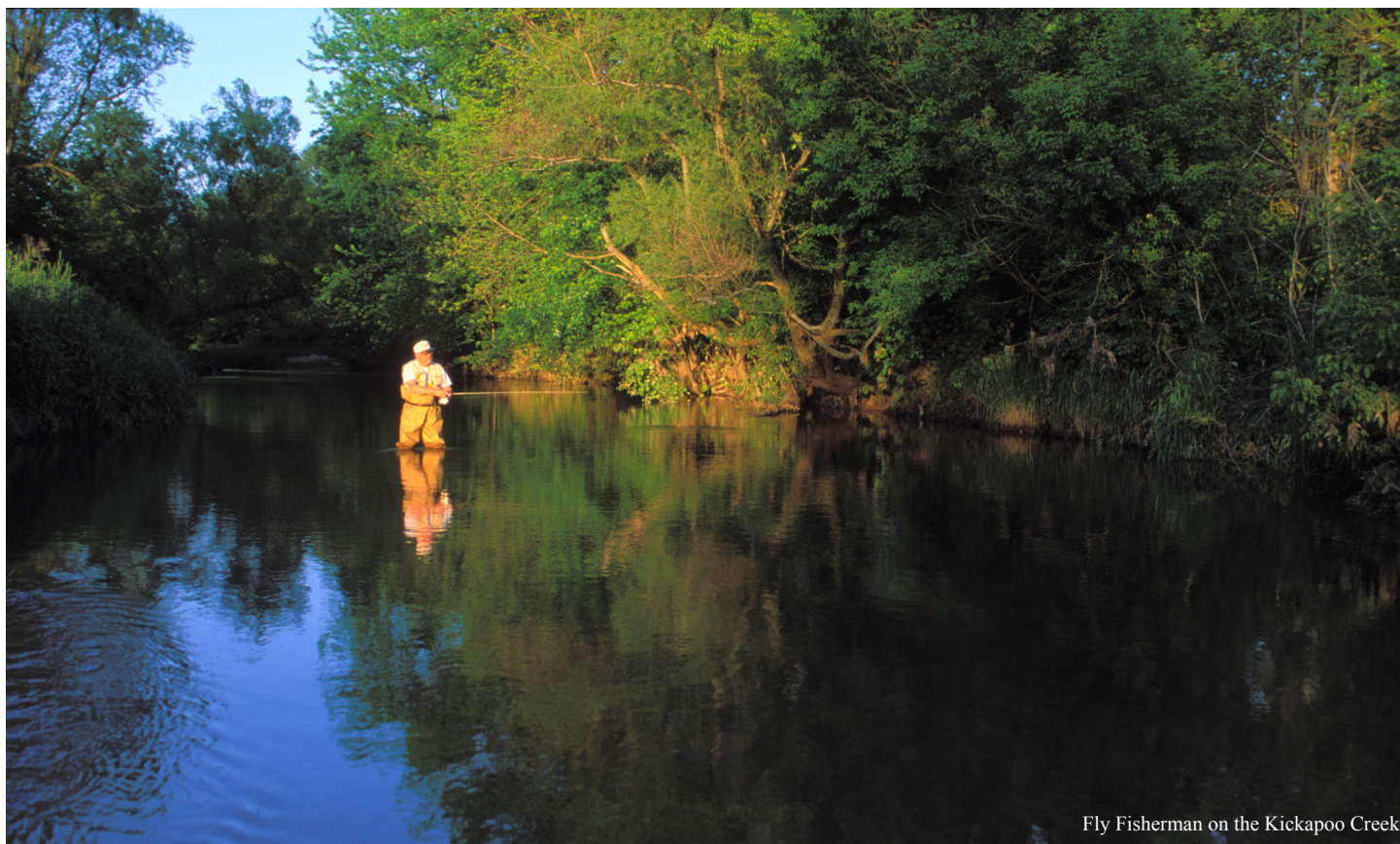
Recommend Outstanding Resource Waters!

The streams of Illinois vary greatly in ecological and recreational quality. The highest quality streams still meander as they historically did, are relatively free of pollutants, contain many native species, and are buffered by prairie or forest habitat. Unfortunately, such streams are rare and vulnerable to degradation from nearby and upstream development. The good news is, in 2002 Illinois EPA adopted what are known as antidegradation regulations, which were intended to prevent or minimize the reduction of water quality in streams and other waters. One component of the regulations is the opportunity for high quality waters to be designated as Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs). ORWs receive preferential treatment over other water bodies in that generally water quality must not be lowered and new and expanded effluent discharge permits cannot be issued. Sounds great, right? But just one problem: we do not have any ORWs in Illinois! It is not that we lack qualified streams but at this point, none have been designated as ORWs.

In order for a stream, wetland, or other water body to be designated an ORW, it must be nominated and its ecological and recreational values identified and documented. Nominations can come from citizens, organizations, and governments. The Illinois Department

of Natural Resources (IDNR) has taken some initial steps to determine potential candidates for nomination. Prairie Rivers Network, the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Law & Policy Center are working with IDNR on the nomination process, and will be gathering information on the recreational value of streams around the state. Ultimately, the nomination must be approved by a vote at the Illinois Pollution Control Board.

And that's where you come in! Citizen input on streams and wetlands that could be potentially designated as ORWs is very important. The best candidates will be those that are popular among recreationalists for water activities such as fishing, swimming, canoeing, and birding. Also important will be the support of local watershed and environmental groups that are advocates for the protection of the nominated waters. And finally, there should be economic opportunities associated with streams targeted for designation, such as the existence of businesses like canoe outfitters or campgrounds. We really want to hear from you on this topic, so please contact Stacy James at sjames@prairierivers.org or 217-344-2371 if you have any nomination ideas. This is a very important opportunity for citizens to play an active role in the protection of our state's waters.



Fly Fisherman on the Kickapoo Creek

Nominations Invited for River Steward Award

On November 3rd, Prairie Rivers Network will announce the recipients of the second annual River Steward Award. This award was designed to celebrate Illinois' rivers and those who protect them. One of the most important things we can do is recognize and honor the individuals who provide us with leadership and inspiration to protect the state's rivers and streams for people, fish, and wildlife.

There are many dedicated citizen volunteers around our state that spend countless hours working to protect Illinois' rivers. They spend their time teaching children the value of rivers, protecting and restoring wetlands and bottomland forests, working with local municipalities to minimize stormwater threats, etc. Too often, their outstanding efforts and successes are not known outside of their local community. Prairie Rivers Network wants to recognize and celebrate the people on a state-wide level.

River Stewards will be honored at the Prairie Rivers Network's annual dinner. The honoree and a guest, as well as the nominator, will be invited to attend the dinner for the awards ceremony. The award recipient will also be announced to the river conservation community around the

state, announced to the media in a press release, and posted on our website.

If you know someone you would like to nominate as the next River Steward, e-mail Kim Erndt, Watershed Organizer at kerndt@prairierivers.org or, visit our website at www.prairierivers.org and click on the River Steward link on the front page to download the instructions on how to nominate. Nominations are due by October 16, 2006.



Great Lakes Compact: Protecting, Restoring & Improving Illinois' Water

The Great Lakes are the largest group of freshwater lakes in the world, covering an area more than 90 thousand square miles. They contain twenty percent of the earth's fresh surface water, yet only one percent of this amount is newly replenished each year; the remaining water consists of glacial melting from the last ice age over 10,000 years ago.

Supporting a diversity of water ecosystems, from wetlands to rivers to underground aquifers, the health of the Great Lakes and its water dependent plant and animal species have been subject to degradation for decades. Negative impacts from the continued pollution and poorly planned consumption of Lake Michigan waters affect Illinois residents who now and who will in the future depend upon its resources for drinking water, commercial and recreational fishing and boating, and manufacturing.

Attempts to protect the Great Lakes began almost one hundred years ago with the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty signed by the United States and Canada. Since then, additional laws and agreements have been signed with the intended purpose of protecting the Great Lakes, but none of these offer legally enforceable standards or guidelines.

In December 2005 the eight Great Lakes Governors and the Premier of Ontario signed the Annex 2001 Charter, a good faith agreement to establish a comprehensive set of standards and guidelines for protecting, restoring, and improving the Great Lakes ecosystems. Making these standards legally binding now requires each state legislature to pass the Annex provisions, commonly referred to as "The Great Lakes Compact," into law.

Recognizing the urgent need for comprehensive, legally enforceable Great Lakes resource management and protection standards, Prairie Rivers Network will be working with the National Wildlife Federation and other groups around the state to support passage of the Great Lakes Compact in Illinois. PRN's efforts will include educating and supporting citizens and groups as they work towards making the Great Lakes Compact law in Illinois.

For more information about our efforts on the Great Lakes Compact, contact csmith@prairierivers.org or visit our website at www.prairierivers.org.

Rolling River Ride Big Success (continued from page 1)

The event featured bicycle rides of five different lengths ranging from 15 to 100 miles, along the Fox River, through rolling hills, past woodlands, and scenic farms. Rest stops included Silver Springs state park, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Homestead Bed and Breakfast, Fox Valley Winery vineyard, and Millbrook Junior High School.

Top Fundraisers included the Raguse Family, who raised \$2,270. According to the Raguse's, they decided to ride after experiencing a life changing event in March. Dave Raguse became very ill and Dave and Nancy decided to quit smoking, eat healthy, and exercise. They took up biking and decided to join the Rolling on the River effort, fundraising on behalf of the Illinois environment. Their story is just one of many, and was an inspiration to all of us who were associated with the event. The Top Fundraising Team was the Speed Roadsters DD, two teenage boys that raised \$2,172 and rode 25 miles for the cause.

In-kind donations of more than \$77,000 were also raised. Cyclists were treated to a wide range of organic foods courtesy of Go Go Organics, Organic Prairie, Organic Valley, Maud's Organic Cakes, and others.

An environmental expo featured Nordic walking clinics offered by Champaign Surplus and Leki; canoeing, fly fishing demos, and various other workshops by the Illinois Raptor Center, Openlands, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Trout Unlimited, Friends of the Fox, and the Conservation Foundation; and a kids tent that included activities by Sierra Club. The crowds were also entertained by folk music from Motherlode and the Giving Tree Band.

Our sincere thanks to all of the riders, volunteers, donors, and sponsors that made this event a big success. We look forward to seeing you again next year.



Introducing Brad Walker

Brad Walker was hired by PRN in July to lead our river restoration program. Brad is an Illinois native, has a BS in Civil Engineering and MA in Geography. He worked for many years managing the construction of large public work projects specializing in wastewater treatment plants before changing his path to concentrate on environmental advocacy. Although Brad has not worked specifically

within the Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS) before, he has considerable experience organizing people in environmental-related advocacy activities. Since he was hired he has been learning about the history, management and problems of the UMRS and will use that knowledge to carry our program goals forward in the months and years to come. You can contact him at bwalker@prairierivers.org.

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 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.

- ☐ \$15 Student Membership ☐ \$25 Basic Membership
☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500
☐ 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, 809 S. Fifth Street, Champaign, IL 61820

Honoring PRN Pioneers Bruce and Patricia Hannon

Congratulations to Bruce and Patricia Hannon on their 50th wedding anniversary! In honor of this important milestone, Patricia has made a generous donation to PRN to support our work.



Patricia for their passion and planting the seeds that have grown into a statewide organization helping to protect Illinois' rivers and water quality for people, fish, and wildlife.

In addition to a lifetime commitment to each other, Bruce and Patricia are committed to protecting Illinois' environment. Forty years ago, in the face of a dam that would flood Allerton Park, Bruce and Patricia organized a small group of citizens and started what would one day become Prairie Rivers Network. We thank Bruce and

If you would like to make a donation to PRN as a way to honor family and friends, we would be happy to announce it in our newsletter. Whether it is a wedding gift for a new couple, a retirement gift for a co-worker who never missed a weekend of fishing, or in memory of a grandparent who loved life and the great outdoors, a donation to PRN is a thoughtful way to acknowledge their importance in your life while helping to protect the natural environment that makes our communities great.

Scully Challenge Grant

Help us meet our 2006 Scully Challenge Grant. Thanks to our generous supporter, Michael J. Scully, your gift to PRN will be matched dollar-for-dollar if you donate \$100 or more for the first time.

We are half-way there to meeting the challenge grant. We thank all of our members who gave us \$100 or more for the first time this year. If you can give \$100 to help us receive an additional \$5,000 from Mr. Scully, please donate today!

Congratulations

Randy Plant and Yukiko Hayano

Congratulations to Randy Plant and Yukiko Hayano on their recent wedding. In honor of this wonderful event, Charles and Nancy Goodall have given them a gift membership to PRN.

We thank Charles and Nancy Goodall for their gift membership for the new couple.

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Protecting Illinois' Streams
809 South Fifth Street
Champaign, IL 61820
217-344-2371
www.prairierivers.org

Mark Your Calendar!

World Water Monitoring Day

October 18, 2006

Contact tbarkley@prairierivers.org or
visit www.worldwatermonitoringday.org

Sangamon River Clean-Up

October 28, 2006

Registration 8:30, Clean-Up 10:00 - noon
Contact kerndt@prairierivers.org

PRN ANNUAL DINNER

November 3, 2006 - 6:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker - Dave Foreman

\$35 Per Person

Reservations Required

217-344-2371

Construction Site Stormwater Patrol Training

November 11, 2006

Aurora, 9:30 - 12:30

Contact sjames@prairierivers.org

Photo Attributes

Jason Lindsey: page 7, borders

Prairie Rivers Network: pages 3, 5

Paul E Byrd: pages 1, 6

Robert Shaw: page 4

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.



Earth Share
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