

Prairie River Notes

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The Illinois Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

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PRN Watches Factory Farms



Factory farm buildings with large sewage lagoons.

Prairie Rivers Network is broadening our clean water work by initiating a new campaign called the Illinois Factory Farm Watch. Factory farms, also known as confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), house thousands of livestock and poultry in buildings or feedlots for the purpose of mass meat, egg, or dairy production. Factory farms generate huge amounts of sewage which is stored in underground pits, man-made lagoons, or dumped into huge manure piles. Waterways become contaminated during storms when rain carries sewage into the water. Sewage is often sold or given to nearby farmers who apply it as fertilizer, but all too often there is more supply than demand and the sewage is over-applied to the factory farm's own fields using trucks or an irrigation spray system. When managers are desperate to get rid of the waste, they have been known to dump it into nearby streams. Some have even created underground piping systems for this very purpose. Massive fish kills have resulted from this illegal practice.

Recently Stacy James, PRN's Water Resources Scientist, traveled to a "Pure Farms, Pure Waters" summit in North Carolina, sponsored by Waterkeeper Alliance. She met people from around the country who are working to reduce the negative impacts of factory farms. Some of these people were members of watershed or environmental groups that are battling a particular proposed or existing factory farm. Other attendees were lawyers, scientists, consultants and

family farmers. All concurred that we need to return to the old way of small, diversified farms where the animals can be outside and eat growing vegetation.

Factory farms will continue to dominate the market until we change agricultural policies and the way we eat and grow our food. In the meantime, what can we do? One angle is to make sure that pollution from factory farms is regulated as required by the Clean Water Act. Like sewage treatment plants, factory farms are considered "point sources" of pollution and must have a wastewater permit if waste from the facility reaches a stream or lake. The majority of factory farms claim to be no-discharge facilities, but the reality is that most facilities eventually contaminate nearby waterways or groundwater.

PRN will demand that discharging factory farms have permits while working with state and federal agencies to reduce the likelihood of discharges occurring. We will also be monitoring streams around specific facilities to determine whether they have been contaminated by illegal discharges. Some of this monitoring will be done by volunteers and some by paid scientists. In the event that violations are found, we will ask that Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) conduct an inspection and take the appropriate enforcement actions, or we will initiate our own lawsuit.

What Can You Do?

- If you know a factory farm is discharging sewage into a waterway, report the incident by calling IEPA at 888/372-1996 or fill out their online pollution complaint form at www.epa.state.il.us/pollution-complaint/.
- If you live near an operational factory farm and suspect illegal discharges, call PRN at 217/344-2371.
- Reduce your consumption of meat/eggs/dairy and/or buy these products from smaller producers with a reputation for conservation-mindedness.

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Big Turnout for Grant Workshop



This February, PRN partnered with the Illinois Lake Management Association to offer a workshop titled “Grant Opportunities and Funding Options for Lake and Watershed Projects.” This workshop was part of PRN’s continuing effort to build capacity and increase the skill sets of individuals working on clean water issues in Illinois. With over 70 people from around the state in attendance, the workshop was a huge success.

Attendees learned about available grants and other funding sources for projects focused on improving lake and stream health, as well as tips on how to write and submit funding proposals. Presenters included Amy Walkenbach (Illinois EPA), Tammy Watson (Illinois DNR), Hal Pyle (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Trent Thomas (Illinois DNR), Dick Hilton (Wonder Lake Homeowner’s Association), and Tom Ryan (Lake Sara Forever Foundation). They addressed dozens of funding programs from over 10 agencies.

If you were unable to attend the workshop, we invite you to visit our website for more information. Go to www.prairierivers.org and click on “Capacity Building Workshops” in the Topics menu on the right side.

You can view the PowerPoint presentations, a list of grant programs, and other workshop handouts. PRN will keep the list of grant programs updated, so keep checking it every few months!

Funding for this and future Capacity Building Workshops is provided by a grant from Illinois EPA and USEPA. Be sure to watch our website for details of upcoming workshops. **A big thanks to all of the great speakers and to those of you who attended in February!** We look forward to seeing you again at future workshops.

For more information, please contact Alison Meanor at ameanor@prairierivers.org or 217/344-2371.



... 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, PRN helps individuals and community groups become effective river conservation leaders.

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Join Us at Kickapoo (Save the Date)

Who: All members, families, friends

Why: Celebrate our park with a naturalist-led walk along the banks of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River with Prairie Rivers Network staff and board of directors

When: June 20th (rain date June 27th)
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Where: Kickapoo State Park, Danville
(Riverview Trail)

Water Watch

For nearly two decades, PRN has worked to prevent the pollution and degradation of Illinois' rivers. Water Resources Scientist, Traci Barkley, and Water Resources Specialist, Kim Knowles, review permit applications for wastewater discharges from municipal, mining and industrial practices that have the potential to harm Illinois waterways. Here is an update on some of their latest work:

Challenged dam proposal for Sangamon County

Summary: A new dam has been proposed for Horse Creek in Sangamon County that will bury over 100 acres of wetlands, 80 acres of streams and more than 1,500 acres of forest. Proponents claim Hunter Dam is needed to create a backup water supply for the City of Springfield, but we believe there are more sustainable and less environmentally harmful ways of ensuring an adequate water supply.

Current actions: PRN and Sierra Club joined together to challenge the dam. We gave testimony at a public hearing and wrote extensive comments in opposition to the project. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) is now in the process of reviewing nearly 1,500 pages of mostly negative comments received from the public. A decision on whether to permit the dam is expected from the IEPA in mid-2009.

Looking forward: PRN is talking to elected officials and providing support to citizens of Springfield concerned about the negative impacts of Hunter Dam.

Appealed coal mine permit, Franklin County

Summary & Current Actions: PRN and partners, Environmental Law and Policy Center and the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club, have appealed a permit issued by IEPA for discharges of pollution into the Middle Fork of the Big Muddy and into Akin Creek from the proposed new Sugar Camp coal mine. We objected to this permit because we believe the mine must use enhanced pollution treatment methods in order to avoid the further destruction of these streams; the Middle Fork of the Big Muddy and Akin Creek are already damaged from decades of agricultural and mining activities and should be protected from further decline.

Challenged the weakening of water quality protections for Spring Creek, Sangamon River and Illinois River

Summary: PRN opposed a petition filed by Springfield's City Water Light & Power (CWLP) asking the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) to allow the CWLP coal-fired power plant to discharge increased amounts of the pollutant boron into Spring Creek and the Sangamon and Illinois Rivers.

Current actions: Traci Barkley testified at two public hearings before the IPCB challenging CWLP's assertions that it could

not afford to treat its waste to remove boron adequately and criticizing the company's failure to thoroughly assess the impact of greater amounts of boron on fish, mussels, and insects in these streams. Traci's testimony provided important insight to the IPCB on how boron harms stream ecology. She was also able to show the IPCB that viable methods of removing boron are available.

Looking forward: We expect the IPCB to rule on CWLP's petition this spring.

Speaking out against polluting ethanol plant on Drummer Creek, Ford County

Summary: The IEPA is proposing to grant another weak permit to an ethanol plant that will discharge pollutants into Drummer Creek. Drummer Creek has been rated a "Biologically Significant Stream" by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources because there are many different kinds of fish and other species living in the stream. A public hearing on One Earth Energy's permit application was held on March 16th in Gibson City.

Current actions: PRN opposes this permit because, as currently written, it fails to protect clean water in Drummer Creek. Traci and Kim attended the hearing and demanded that One Earth Energy be required to adopt responsible water use practices and other practices to limit the amount of pollution that will be discharged into the stream.

Looking forward: We expect a decision from IEPA on the permit by this summer.



Senators Introduce Two Bills on Proper Disposal of Medications

In response to the continuing concerns of citizens, health-care providers, scientists, environmentalists and others, Illinois' 96th General Assembly is considering several bills related to proper disposal of medications. Senate Bill 178, introduced by Senator Susan Garrett, and House Bill 4249, introduced by Representative Sandra Pihos, amend the Illinois Environmental Protection Act by adding provisions on household waste drop-off facilities and one-day collection events.

Recognizing that certain types of household-generated waste, including unwanted and unused pharmaceuticals and personal care products "pose a greater threat to human health or the environment," SB 178 and HB 4249 require drop-off facilities or one-day collection events that accept household hazardous waste. Collection points must be clearly identified and secure, wastes collected must be managed in a way to protect against release of the waste, and wastes may only be held for a certain time before they must be transported to a facility for destruction.

In addition, the bills require the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to develop and implement a public information program on proper disposal of medications and locations of drop-off sites, and to create educational signs that will be distributed to health care providers and

must be displayed in their offices (SB 178), or that can be downloaded (HB 4249). Another bill introduced by Senator Garrett, SB 1919, prohibits health care institutions from flushing or disposing of unused medications into public wastewater or septic systems. **Prairie Rivers Network supports SB 178, SB 1919 and HB 4249 as needed steps towards reducing the amount of pharmaceuticals in our rivers and streams.**

Other pharmaceutical-related bills introduced this session are SB 2155 (Senator Iris Martinez), creating the Unused Medicine Disposal Act, and HB 333 (Representative Jack Franks), creating the Prescription Drug Repository Program Act. As the legislative session proceeds, PRN will monitor the progress of these bills and support them if appropriate.

You Can Protect Streams from Pharmaceuticals

Sign our petition at

www.thepetitionsite.com/1/protect-Illinois-rivers

You can also send the link to your family and friends.

Fourth Annual Boneyard Creek Community Day



Join Prairie Rivers Network and partners on April 18th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for the Fourth Annual Boneyard Creek Community Day (BCCD).

Due to construction at Scott Park, this year the main registration site will be at the Engineering (Bardeen) Quad on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. Volunteers will clean up trash, remove non-native plants from the creek areas and install stormdrain medallions ("Drains To Rivers – Dump No Trash").

Volunteers will receive a free lunch and entertainment by Chad Dunn and Recycled Rhythms. This year's BCCD organizers are the cities of Champaign, Urbana and their respective Park Districts, the University of Illinois, Champaign County Design and Conservation Foundation, Champaign-Urbana Area Rotary Clubs, Prairie Rivers Network, and Ward & Associates Realtors, Inc.

For more information on registration and sponsorships, visit www.boneyardcreek.org. See you April 18th!

Sound Policies for Sound Rivers

Conservation requires sound public policies, and sound policies arise only when vocal, informed citizens call for them. Money is required for restoration, monitoring, and enforcement. Effective conservation requires coordinated action that is out of reach for individuals acting alone.

PRN calls for Illinois lawmakers to promote better human uses of our waters and lands:

1. DNR funding. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources lacks funds to do its job protecting the state's resources and providing lawmakers and citizens with scientific data. More funding is urgently needed, preferably through a reliable means that is immune from politics.

2. River corridor protections. Rivers and streams are greatly affected by human uses of streambanks and riverside corridors. Illinois needs new, state-wide policies to protect such corridors and to restore the most degraded. Restoration measures should include reconstructed wetlands and other features that help rivers regain health naturally.

3. Water and drainage laws. Illinois laws on water usage and drainage date from the nineteenth century, a time when water was plentiful and drainage simply meant pushing water out of sight. Water has become short. Ecological interconnection is better understood. Vastly better drainage practices are available. New laws and policies could help ensure that water diversions and drainage practices do not destroy aquatic communities and exacerbate flooding and droughts.

4. Information flows. Government can help citizens by providing full, prompt information on proposed pollution and mining permits (by the state EPA, DNR, and Department of Agriculture) and on permits to fill wetlands (Corps of Engineers). They should also make monitoring data and information on permit compliance and violations available online. It is time to harness the power of the Internet to enhance democracy!

5. Monitoring and enforcement. Too many people seem unaware of their duties under current laws, and the state itself knows too little about the conditions of waterways and the actions of polluters. We need better funding for monitoring of both waterways and polluting activities, as well as staff for outreach and education.

6. Wetlands protections. Illinois has lost over 90% of its wetlands and can afford to lose no more. Indeed, reconstruction efforts are needed. PRN is among the many

groups calling on Congress to revise the Clean Water Act to clarify the original plan to protect all of the nation's wetlands and to insist that further wetland losses be mitigated by offsetting restorations.

7. Farm policies. Farmers, farm communities, and river users alike would benefit if federal payments made to farmers were earmarked to reward good land uses, not greater production. Public policies should insist that all landowners act responsibly, in cities and in rural areas.

8. Stormwater inspections. The Illinois EPA should improve its efforts to monitor and improve stormwater runoff by enlisting the help of more Soil and Water Conservation Districts in inspections and enforcement.



Get involved with Prairie Rivers Network's vision and policy work for Illinois' rivers. Look for more information on this project in upcoming publications and on our website. Discuss policy details with us online at www.prairierivers.org.

PRN Thanks Outgoing Board Member, Ward McDonald



Ward McDonald is stepping down from PRN's Board of Directors after six years of service. Ward's legal and business experience, combined with his passion for conservation, provided a valuable perspective for our board.

Ward is a real estate and business attorney with the law firm of Meyer Capel, A Professional Corporation, in Champaign. He is also an adjunct professor at the University of Illinois, teaching finance and law.

He and his wife Diana are avid outdoors people who enjoy spending time at their homes in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and on the Sangamon River here in Illinois where they have planted 50,000 trees as part of a fifteen-year reforestation project.

Thank you, Ward –
we will miss working with you!

New Board Member, Jean Flemma



Jean Flemma joined PRN's Board of Directors in 2008. Jean is a professional staff member for the Committee on Natural Resources in the US House of Representatives and a staff director of the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife, responsible for advising and representing the committee's chairman on issues relating to fisheries, coastal and ocean resources management, endangered species, climate change and adaptation, and wildlife conservation.

Jean served as Executive Director of PRN from December 2002 - January 2007. Her years on Capitol Hill and with Prairie Rivers Network taught her the power and importance of grassroots activism and the influence of citizens who take the time to learn the issues and get involved to shape policy makers' decisions.

Welcome back, Jean!

New Water Resources Advocate, Alison Meanor



Alison Meanor joined PRN in early 2009 as our Water Resources Advocate. Her work focuses on developing workshops to provide capacity building training for individuals and groups throughout Illinois who are working to improve the health of our rivers and lakes.

About Alison: Alison is an East Central Illinois Master Naturalist; her volunteering focuses on prairie and savanna restoration, environmental education, and volunteer coordination.

Education: Alison has a B.S. in environmental science and has completed graduate studies

in land use ecology and environmental planning. Her research includes conducting an environmental site assessment for a proposed rails-to-trails project and, with the Illinois State Natural History Survey, studying the effects of biological control of purple loosestrife.

Experience: She was previously employed by the U.S. EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office and the Illinois State Geological Survey.

Contact: 217/344-2371 or ameanor@prairierivers.org.

Welcome to the Team, Alison!

Join PRN's Online RiverWeb Community

Do you want to easily keep up-to-date on important river news, action alerts, volunteer opportunities, and PRN work? Visit us online at www.prairierivers.org and

Sign Up for RiverWeb Alerts to join our e-mail list. And don't forget to become a fan of PRN on Facebook.



Support Prairie Rivers Network

There Are Many Ways to Give:

Cash Grain Stock Bequests

Challenge Grants **Endowments**

Raffle Prizes Annuities Trusts

Recruiting New Members

Life Insurance **Living Will**

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Have underperforming stocks? Put them to good use by donating them to Prairie Rivers Network.

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 PRN is tax deductible.

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

Clean Water Starts In Your Own Backyard

Rain and melting snow running off parking lots, driveways, and streets collect and transport fertilizers, pet wastes, oil and other pollutants into our rivers and streams via storm drains. Homeowners have several options available to help reduce the amount of stormwater running off their property: using permeable materials for sidewalks, patios and driveways, planting rain gardens and installing rain barrels.

During warmer months average household water use increases, and approximately 40 percent of that amount is for watering outdoor lawns and gardens. Installing one or more rain barrels not only helps capture water that would otherwise become polluted before entering storm drains, it gives you a new source of water for household uses, helping you to use less water from your tap and to lower your water bills.

Support PRN

Protect Our Rivers

Install a Rain Barrel Today



Through a generous donation by Austin Grammer of Prairie Rain Harvester, PRN has several 55-gallon rain barrels, which we are selling for \$85. All of the proceeds from the sale of these barrels will go to Prairie Rivers Network.

Prairie Rain Harvester uses locally-sourced recycled (canola oil) barrels, which are child and animal safe and also have mesh mosquito/debris screens. If you would like to purchase a rain barrel from PRN, call our office at 217/344-2371.

For Champaign city residents, the Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District is offering a \$25 rebate on Austin's barrels that will be used within town limits (contact Bruce Stickers, 217/352-3536 ext. 6 or Bruce.Stickers@ilnacdnet.net).

For more information on Prairie Rain Harvester rain barrels and sale locations, visit www.prairierainharvester.com.

Rain barrels can also be purchased at:

B. Lime: 12 East Washington Street, Downtown Champaign, Illinois, 217/359.5741. For Champaign City residents, the \$25 rebate will be applied right at the register. This money won't last forever, so don't wait!

In the Chicago area, The Conservation Foundation (contact Jim Kleinwachter, 630/553.0687 ext. 302, jkleinwachter@theconservationfoundation.org) and Chicago Rain Barrel (www.chicagorainbarrel.com) also offer rain barrels for sale.

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
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Champaign, IL
Permit No. 858



1902 Fox Drive, Suite G
Champaign, IL 61820
217/344-2371
www.prairierivers.org

Mark Your Calendar!

Boneyard Creek Community Day

April 18, 2009, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

U of I Engineering Quad, Urbana

esmith@prairierivers.org

Carle Clinic and RxExpress Pharmaceutical Collection Event

April 20 – 27, 2009

At participating Carle Clinic and RxExpress Pharmacies in
Champaign, Mahomet, Monticello, and Urbana

esmith@prairierivers.org

PRN Member Outing at Kickapoo

June 20, 2009, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Kickapoo State Park, Danville

sadams@prairierivers.org

Watershed Technology - Put it to Work! Workshop

June 22, 2009

Chicago, Details TBA

For info visit, www.prairierivers.org

Photo Attributes

Diane Baldwin, Neuse Riverkeeper Foundation: page 1

Jason Lindsey, www.JasonLindsey.com: pages 3, 5, and border

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.

