

# Prairie River Notes

A publication of Prairie Rivers Network

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The Illinois Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

Summer 2009

## Preserving Riverside Habitat Through Wildlife Action Plans

The federally-mandated State Wildlife Action Plans are the first nationwide attempts to focus on preserving the habitat that all wildlife needs for survival. The plans are a major shift away from preserving single species to a strategy that would preserve the habitat necessary to prevent the loss of entire networks of interconnected wildlife.

Illinois' Wildlife Action Plan identifies 32 Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs), which are unique in regards to topography and wildlife. In some COAs, intense agriculture production will be the main challenge, while in others it may be the existence of waterways that have been heavily modified in a way that has destroyed natural habitat.

This spring, Prairie Rivers Network began working with David Myers of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Southern Illinois University to pilot the first phase of a portion of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. We are focusing our initial efforts on the Vermilion River COA, which includes the North Fork, Salt Fork, and Middle Forks of the Vermilion River and the Little Vermilion River system and their smaller tributaries. In hopes that the Illinois Plan can protect and connect large portions of river and riverside habitat for wildlife movement, PRN plans to be involved in other COAs in a similar manner in the coming year, including those along the Mississippi River.

It is the goal of the Illinois Plan to form local COA Partnerships consisting of property owners and managers

who share a conservation philosophy and set of objectives and who recognize that their property exists in an area with significant or potentially significant wildlife habitat resources.



These partnerships provide opportunities for local expertise to guide conservation efforts and allow local conservation organizations to have an impact regionally and at the state level. Because many land managers, watershed groups, and private landowners already have conservation goals in place, the partnerships provide opportunities for the members to share information and develop shared goals for protecting wildlife habitat. Participation in COAs is voluntary. If you are a landowner or manager, or just want to get involved in helping protect wildlife habitat in your area, contact Kim Erndt at [kerndt@prairierivers.org](mailto:kerndt@prairierivers.org) for more information.

Prairie Rivers Network believes the partnerships hold great promise because they make management a bottom up, not a top down endeavor: a private landowner's voice can be heard as clearly as a state land manager's. We believe that Illinois' Wildlife Action Plan and the partnerships created within can facilitate shared decision making and creative solutions to coordinate habitat protection on land with many different owners and uses. Ultimately, we hope this process will result in a shared vision to preserve the natural areas we all value.

For more information on the State Wildlife Action Plan visit: [www.wildlifeactionplans.org/illinois.html](http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org/illinois.html)

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## A Message From Our Board President

After a long winter, most of us appreciate the chance to get outside more and enjoy the beauty of our local rivers. Especially at this time of year, I am reminded why I am committed to preserving our natural areas and the water that sustains life, and why I have chosen Prairie Rivers Network as the focus of my charitable giving.

As President of the Board of Directors and a member for 19 years, I am committed to PRN because this organization is uniquely effective among environmental groups. I have seen the passion and commitment of PRN members and staff, and have been impressed by the organization's ability to use every dollar wisely. I particularly want to support the work to move beyond protection to restoring waterways and habitat that have been degraded.

As an individual, I can't do much more than I am currently doing. And yet I will do more

in the future through "planned giving." I have made Prairie Rivers Network one of the beneficiaries of my estate.

Planned giving ensures that Prairie Rivers Network has a solid foundation for its work regardless of the political or economic climate. There are many ways to give, and PRN can help you find out how to make a plan that suits your goals.

I encourage you, when you get that inspired feeling this summer, to contact Executive Director Glynnis Collins to find out about how you can plan to do more for Illinois' rivers in the future.



Jon McNussen,  
President of the Board of Directors



*... 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 PRN at Kickapoo

Join fellow river enthusiasts and naturalists for a walk with Prairie Rivers Network along the Middle Fork of the Vermilion, Illinois' only National Scenic River.

We will have two knowledgeable and engaging naturalist leading the walk. Lara Darling has over 11 years of experience and received the 2008 Environmental Education Association of Illinois' Educator of the Year. Susan Biggs Warner has over 25 years of experience, with a specialty in the historic uses of plants by Native Americans and Pioneers.

**Date:** Saturday, June 20th (Rain Date is June 27th - check website for weather update)

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
Adult walk starts at 10:00. Family walk begins at 10:30.

**Place:** Kickapoo State Park, 10906 Kickapoo Park Road, Oakwood, IL; 217/442-4915  
Kickapoo State Park is off of I-74 just West of Danville.  
Meet at the Clear Lake pavilion near the south end of the RiverView Trail.  
(Follow signs to Clear Lake or Kickapoo Landing Boat Rental)

**RSVP:** Tue, June 16th to Steph at 217/344-2371 or sadams@prairierivers.org.  
*Registration is limited.*

- Bring water, binoculars, and field guides if you have them.
- Bagels, fruit, and lemonade will be available after the walk.
- Go to [www.PrairieRivers.org](http://www.PrairieRivers.org) for more directions and park map.

## Film Review: Poisoned Waters

This April, PBS ran an episode of the news program Frontline looking at water pollution in the U.S., more than thirty years after the passage of the Clean Water Act. The episode, *Poisoned Waters*, used examples from the Chesapeake Bay and Puget Sound to highlight water pollution issues nationwide.

Are the issues raised relevant to Illinois rivers? The major threats discussed in the film should be familiar to PRN members and regular readers of our newsletter: polluted runoff from agriculture and cities, widespread pollution from “legacy” pollutants, a stew of low levels of drugs and other harmful chemicals in drinking water supplies. The threats are the same in Illinois.

Polluted runoff from agriculture and cities are the biggest pollution sources here in Illinois, just as they are in Chesapeake Bay and Puget Sound. We too deal with widespread pollution from PCBs even though use of these chemicals was halted in the 1970s - advisories against eating large quantities of predator fish species are in place across the state due to high levels of PCBs in their bodies. Our rivers and drinking water sources contain low levels of hundreds of chemicals whose adverse effects on humans (alone, or in combination) are suspected but unquantified.

*Poisoned Waters* stressed that citizen engagement is essential for these problems to be addressed. Most of the decisions affecting water pollution are directly or indirectly in the hands of elected officials. They are able to stand up to industry lobbyists if they have the vocal support of their constituents. In the film, Robert Kennedy Jr. points out that the Clean Water Act passed during a Republican administration as a direct result of the first Earth Day, the largest public demonstration in US history, where 10% of the population participated.

At Prairie Rivers Network, we continue to work to engage citizens and help them vocalize their support for clean water to decisionmakers. We also need to find common ground with new partners and constituent groups to leverage more voices in support of clean water. **Your PRN membership supports clean water; letting your elected officials know directly about your support for clean water issues is also an important way you can contribute to solutions – sign up on our website to receive alerts about when your voice will help on specific clean water issues.**



You can watch *Poisoned Waters* online at: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/poisonedwaters/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/poisonedwaters/)

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## Illinois Legislature Passes Bills for Safe Pharmaceutical Disposal

During the 2009 session of the Illinois General Assembly, PRN has strongly supported two bills introduced by Senator Susan Garrett, 29th District, to reduce the amount of pharmaceuticals entering our rivers and streams. Both of these bills have passed the Senate and House and now await Governor Quinn's signature to become law.

Senate Bill 178 provides some guidance for facilities that collect unused/unwanted medicine so that their disposal is safe for people and the environment. The bill amends the Illinois Environmental Protection Act to require facilities accepting unused/unwanted medicines (including one-day collection events) to be clearly identified, accept items only from private individuals, and manage and secure collected pharmaceuticals in a manner preventing their release into the environment or possession by unauthorized individuals.

We are disappointed that an earlier amendment of the bill took out a provision that would have required health care providers to display a poster created by the IEPA with information on proper pharmaceutical disposal and drop-off locations. We will continue to advocate for increased

participation by health care providers in educating the public and in offering them proper disposal solutions.

Senate Bill 1919 prohibits health care institutions, employees and partners from using disposal methods that send unwanted and unused pharmaceuticals into a public wastewater system (e.g. by flushing them down toilets or sinks).

Research on the effects of pharmaceuticals on aquatic life and humans continues to build the case that this is a major source of pollution. It is clear that there is no current effective, affordable method for completely eliminating pharmaceutical chemicals during wastewater treatment. **At this time, keeping unused and unwanted pharmaceuticals out of the wastewater system is the best preventative measure citizens can take for their rivers and streams.** You can do this by purchasing only the amount of prescription and over-the-counter medicine you need and by properly disposing of unwanted and unused medications. Visit our website for more information on how to dispose of medicine: [www.prairierivers.org/rivers/preventing-water-pollution/pharmaceuticals/](http://www.prairierivers.org/rivers/preventing-water-pollution/pharmaceuticals/)



# Prairie Rivers Network 2008 Annual Report

Prairie Rivers Network's staff and board of directors would like to personally thank all of new and long time members for their generous support in 2008.

From reducing pollution from sewage treatment plants, to holding agencies and coal companies accountable, to protecting headwater streams from ill-conceived drainage projects, and to helping local groups protect rivers and riverside habitat, PRN is proud to be Illinois' leader in river

protection, conservation, and restoration. And we could not have done all of that great work without your contributions and support. A brief list of our 2008 accomplishments can be found at [www.prairierivers.org/about/accomplishments/](http://www.prairierivers.org/about/accomplishments/).

We ask you to continue to support us and help us fight to keep pollution out of our rivers and the water we drink and to restore our rivers to their natural beauty. Together, we can safeguard our rivers and clean water for future generations.

## We Are Honored to Recognize the Following Individuals, Groups, and Business for Their Generous Support of Our Work in 2008

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*Every effort has been made to ensure that our recognition of supporters is correct. We apologize for any errors or omissions and urge you to notify us of any mistakes.*

## **2008 Financial Statement**

### **Revenue**

Donations	\$135,984
Grants	\$261,998
Investment Income	\$2,832
In-Kind Donations	\$19,030
Sales & Miscellaneous Revenue	\$6,742
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$426,586</b>

### **Expenses**

Salaries	\$219,386
Payroll Taxes & Employee Benefits	\$45,589
Program Costs	\$102,800
Fundraising (including salaries)	\$49,389
Management and General	\$36,856
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$454,020</b>

## Clean Water and You: Choosing the Best Household Products

Some of the chemicals found in our household products are toxic to humans and harmful to the environment as they become more concentrated in our water supply. In the future these chemicals may be limited by government regulations, but until then, concerned consumers want to buy the least harmful products.

Unfortunately, wading through the information about chemicals in our household products can be very confusing. Many companies do not list all the chemicals that are found in their products and are not required to by law (thus the mysterious “and other ingredients”). Even when all chemicals are listed, how does a consumer find out which are harmful and why?

It is easier to find information about chemicals considered harmful to humans, but much more difficult to find clear information for the layperson on the effects on fish and wildlife.

Here are three tips to help you make the most informed consumer choices:

First, consider making your own cleaners at home, using environmentally-safe ingredients such as vinegar and baking soda. There are many cleaning recipes available online:

- [www.epa.state.il.us/p2/less-toxic-products.html](http://www.epa.state.il.us/p2/less-toxic-products.html)
- [nemo.uconn.edu/tools/publications/clean\\_waters/cwfact2.pdf](http://nemo.uconn.edu/tools/publications/clean_waters/cwfact2.pdf)

Second, buy products that disclose all ingredients and strive to meet a higher standard of safety.

- The U.S. EPA’s Design for the Environment Formulator Program partners with companies who use safer ingredients in cleaning products. Look for their label on products.



•Seventh Generation, a brand of household products, has developed a handy “label reading guide”:

[www.seventhgeneration.com/show-whats-inside/cleaning-products-ingredients-guide](http://www.seventhgeneration.com/show-whats-inside/cleaning-products-ingredients-guide).

Third, avoid these five problem ingredients in store-bought cleaners:

•**Phosphate** was banned from laundry detergents, but is still widely used in automatic dishwasher detergents (labeled as sodium orthophosphate, sodium tripolyphosphate or others; some products are labeled “contains no phosphates”). Phosphates cause eutrophication, an increased growth of algae that uses up too much oxygen and kills fish.

- **Triclosan** is used in anti-bacterial soaps. It is very toxic to aquatic organisms and persists in the environment over long time periods. There is also concern that overuse of anti-bacterial products may lead to increased bacterial resistance, making it harder to kill germs and unwanted bacteria in the future. Studies have shown that washing hands with antibacterial soaps is no more effective than using plain soap and water. To get clean hands, make sure you wash long enough (at least 15 seconds--long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” twice!); it is scrubbing with soap that physically removes the germs from your hands. Use of an alcohol-based gel sanitizer is OK--these are effective if they are at least 60% alcohol, which physically destroys the germs and does not create bacterial resistance.
- **Bleach** (sodium hypochlorite) is acutely toxic to fish and can bind with organic matter to form toxic compounds that persist in the environment. Instead, use soap and water—most household tasks don’t require bleach.
- **Methylisothiazolinone** a preservative found in detergents and hand dish soap, is toxic to aquatic organisms with long-term persistence in the environment.
- **Lauramidopropylamine oxide** is found in cleaning, laundry, and dish washing products and is toxic to aquatic life.





## Support Prairie Rivers Network

### There Are Many Ways to Give:

**Cash** Grain Stock Bequests

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### Recruiting New Members

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*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

## Kickin' It at Kickapoo

*River protection depends on people who have the opportunity to fall in love with a natural place.*



*"I have a wish for humanity: that all of our children would become field naturalists as they grow up. Imagine living in a society where every youth has the chance to explore the Earth on foot and in hand, getting to know its creatures on a first-name basis." -- Gary Paul Nabhan*

Research shows that the outdoor experiences of our youth provide the foundation for a lifelong ethic of stewardship. This is why Prairie Rivers Network has teamed up with Illinois Public Media (Champaign-Urbana's PBS affiliate), Kickapoo State Park, the U of I College of Media, the

Danville Public Library and Keep Vermilion County Beautiful on a project to connect teens and their families with Kickapoo State Park. Middle and high-school students from the Danville Boys and Girls Club will produce video Public Service Announcements, aimed at other teens, to encourage them to visit and use the park.

Prairie Rivers Network's part is to lead the youths in a day of fun activities in the park this June, including canoeing, fishing, photography, and exploring a stream. In conjunction with the project, the teens will talk with their peers about barriers to visiting the park and create strategies to encourage more teens and families to take advantage of this great, free resource.

Some of the public service announcements will be shown on WILL TV during this September's airing of the new Ken Burns documentary *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*. The project will culminate in a public celebration at the Danville Public Library on September 1, where all the student videos will be shown.

PRN encourages you to invite young people in your life to take an outing to your local state park and help cultivate our next generation of nature advocates.

You can visit PRN's website for links to more information and photos from this event.

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217/344-2371  
[www.PrairieRivers.org](http://www.PrairieRivers.org)

## Mark Your Calendar!

### Join PRN at Kickapoo

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

Kickapoo State Park

Contact: Steph, [sadams@prairierivers.org](mailto:sadams@prairierivers.org)

### Watershed Workshop:

#### Using On-line Data and Tools for Your Watershed

June 22, 2009 - Chicago

August 7, 2009 - Champaign

Contact: Alison, [ameanor@prairierivers.org](mailto:ameanor@prairierivers.org)

### National River Month

June 2009

### Smart Irrigation Month

July 2009

### It's Our River Day

September 19, 2009

[www.standingupforillinois.org/cleanwater](http://www.standingupforillinois.org/cleanwater)

### PRN Annual Dinner

November 6, 2009

I Hotel and Conference Center, Champaign

### Photo Attributes

Jason Lindsey, [www.JasonLindsey.com](http://www.JasonLindsey.com): page 1 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.

