



Protecting Illinois' Rivers For People, Fish, and Wildlife

ASIAN CARP'S WATERSHED MOMENT

BY ROBERT HIRSCHFELD

At this moment, there are countless Asian carp steadily making their way northward, swimming upstream throughout the Mississippi River basin, and encroaching into new territory in South Dakota, Minnesota, and most infamously, into the manmade canals on the outskirts of Chicago. These canals connect the Mississippi River basin with a jewel of the Midwest, the Great Lakes.

The Chicago Area Waterway System represents ground zero for the threat of a full-scale Asian carp invasion into the Great Lakes.

Asian carp are well-known as an insidious and malignant invader, outcompeting native species and leaving millions more Asian carp in their wake of disruption.



Follow us on Twitter @PRN_Carp

The fight against Asian carp has reached a critical juncture. The groundwork that is being laid now, by Prairie Rivers Network and our many partners, will help determine the course of an entire region, including its greatest water resources—the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River.

At risk are not only the well-being of our waters and wildlife, but billions of dollars annually in the Great Lakes region's fishing and recreation industries.

This is a big problem in need of a big solution. A solution constructed from a grand vision that sees beyond a fish, a canal, and the 2 volts of electricity currently used to repel carp.

Presently, the last line of defense between the carp and the Great Lakes is a small stretch of electrified water in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. The Army Corps of Engineers, tasked with operating this “barrier,” continues to offer assurances that the electric barrier is working, but their actions belie such assertions.

Inquiries by Prairie Rivers Network revealed that the Corps knew for months that the barrier may not be effective against smaller carp. In response, the Corps decided to raise

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the voltage of the barrier. Within a week of raising the voltage, the Corps again lowered the voltage, citing safety concerns.

Meanwhile, Asian carp DNA continues to be found past the electric barrier, raising concerns that some live carp have moved across the barrier and towards the Great Lakes. Further, the Corps has released a study indicating that Asian carp is only one of 39 high-risk invasive species poised to transfer between the Mississippi and the Great Lakes via the Chicago Area Waterway System. Many of these other species would not be deterred by electrified water.

There are real solutions, however. The construction of a permanent, physical barrier in the Chicago Area Waterway System would effectively prevent the transfer of carp and all other invasive species by

[//continued on page 7//](#)

GREETINGS FROM GLYNNIS

Call me crazy, but as a born and bred Buffalo Gal, I spend this time of year eagerly scanning the skies looking for the first snowflakes of winter. I understand that I am in the minority, but I hope that all of you are looking forward to some (other!) aspects of the holiday season and the beginning of a new year with anticipation.

All of us at Prairie Rivers Network are looking forward to the new year, as we will be celebrating our 45th anniversary. Thanks to members like you, who have made an investment in our organization, we have had many victories in 2011. Prairie Rivers Network worked with our partner organizations and concerned citizens around the state to reduce pollution and improve riverside habitat. An insert in this issue lists many of those accomplishments.

This time of year can also be a time to set goals for the future. And we need your help to achieve new victories in 2012. If you have not already, please take a few minutes today to renew your membership with Prairie Rivers Network.

In this issue are updates and calls to action on some of our top priorities we will be continuing to work on in 2012.

Robert Hirschfeld writes about how the Asian carp threat has the potential to be a game-changing opportunity for Chicago. Stacy James updates us on some positive developments in our fight for better, more fair regulation of pollution from factory farms. Traci Barkley shares a call to action to help residents of Canton, Illinois say no to a strip mine upstream of their water supply proposed by a company with a track record of water pollution at other Illinois coal mines.

As always, it was a great pleasure to get together with so many members and friends at our Annual Dinner in October. Our speaker, Gene Karpinski, of the League of Conservation Voters, was inspiring in his urging us all to “show up” with our strong support for clean water and a healthy environment in the face of a historic anti-environment backlash in Washington, DC.

One way to “show up” and have fun at the same time is to join our running/walking team at the Illinois marathon (see page 7).

With warmest wishes,



Glynnis



Glynnis Collins, left, visiting with members at the Annual Dinner

prairieriversnetwork

...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 Network helps individuals and community groups become effective river conservation leaders.

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FACTORY FARMS: 2 STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

BY STACY JAMES

Prairie Rivers Network works with partners across the state to reduce water pollution from factory farms. Livestock waste pollutes Illinois' water with disease-causing bacteria, antibiotics, ammonia, nitrates and algae blooms. In the most egregious cases, streams turn brown with raw sewage that kills all wildlife inhabitants. Pollution happens when waste storage structures leak or spill, a far too common occurrence that often goes undetected until there is a fish kill. Another way that streams become polluted is when too much manure is applied to farm fields as fertilizer and rain or melting snow carries the waste into nearby streams.

Factory farms are one of the least-regulated sources of pollution. Some regulations exist but they do not require adequately stringent manure management practices. State government is also underfunded to inspect factory farms and prevent problems from happening in the first place.

Consequently, we are seeking changes at the state level that would make a significant impact on Illinois' rivers. We are focused on strengthening the rules that govern factory farms, and increasing the revenue available to the Illinois EPA for inspections. Fortunately, these efforts are proving fruitful, and we have made new allies along the way.

2 Steps Toward Cleaner Water

After two years of advocating for rule changes that would require



Stream brown with livestock waste from nearby factory farm

more responsible livestock waste management, the Illinois EPA adopted several of our recommendations! The draft rules limit how much manure and liquid waste can be applied to farm fields. Applicators will be prohibited from applying waste close to ditches and other conduits that lead to streams. And the waste storage capacity requirements will be increased, so that overflows and untimely land application are less likely to occur.

While the draft rules look good, they must be approved by the Illinois Pollution Control Board. The Board will hold public hearings and accept public comments, and it is likely there will be stiff opposition from industry. We have serious concerns that industry action will water down the rules, and that the Board will be sympathetic to claims that stringent regulations are too expensive for factory farms.

Another key advancement we have been advocating for is pollution permit fees. This is a needed source of revenue to fund livestock permitting programs. All other water pollution permit applicants are required to pay a fee, and most of our neighboring states already charge permit fees to factory farms.

The good news is that the IEPA committed to us that they will run a fee bill in the General Assembly in 2012. After much pressure and a nearly-successful run in 2011 by our coalition of groups, the IEPA will run a bill even if there is Farm Bureau opposition.

Prairie Rivers Network saw the need for a permit fee bill a year ago and spent last spring working to get our bill passed. We had a number of supporters, but several legislators got cold feet because it was going to be a close vote and the Farm Bureau was lobbying hard against the bill.

In 2012, we will work to pass the permit fee bill and defend IEPA's proposed livestock rule from industry attempts to remove positive reforms. We will be spending a lot of time in Springfield talking with legislators and attending IL Pollution Control Board hearings about the proposed rule.//

How Can You Help?

There is much work yet to be done in order to achieve real and final improvements in Illinois' livestock regulatory program. If you care about this issue and want to help us with lobbying or other activities, please contact Stacy at 217.344.2371 or sjames@prairierivers.org.

INTRODUCING THE BRUCE HANNON FRIENDS OF ILLINOIS RIVERS

and the River Legacy Society

BY ERIC FREYFOGLE, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Since its beginning in 1967, Prairie Rivers Network has been sustained by conservation-minded people who believe in its work enough to have invested in it. With private donations in hand, staff members have reached out to foundations for further support, multiplying the individual gifts. The resulting record speaks for itself: *Over the past decade, Prairie Rivers has enjoyed a growth rate of a full ten percent each year*—and this in times of economic turmoil and cutbacks in foundation giving.

This spring, Prairie Rivers Network has begun two efforts to recognize the vital contributions of its donors and to encourage continued engagement. The move is part of a larger effort by staff and the Board to expand programs and effectiveness. Donors giving annually are invited to become charter members in the Friends of Illinois Rivers, a group of supporters who commit to give at least \$1,000 per year. The Board hopes to enroll, as an interim goal, 45 charter members by October 2012, just in time for the organization's 45th anniversary. Goals thereafter are 60 Friends by 2016 and 100 Friends by 2021. As this newsletter goes to press, 40 members have enrolled as charter Friends, so the interim goal is very much in sight.

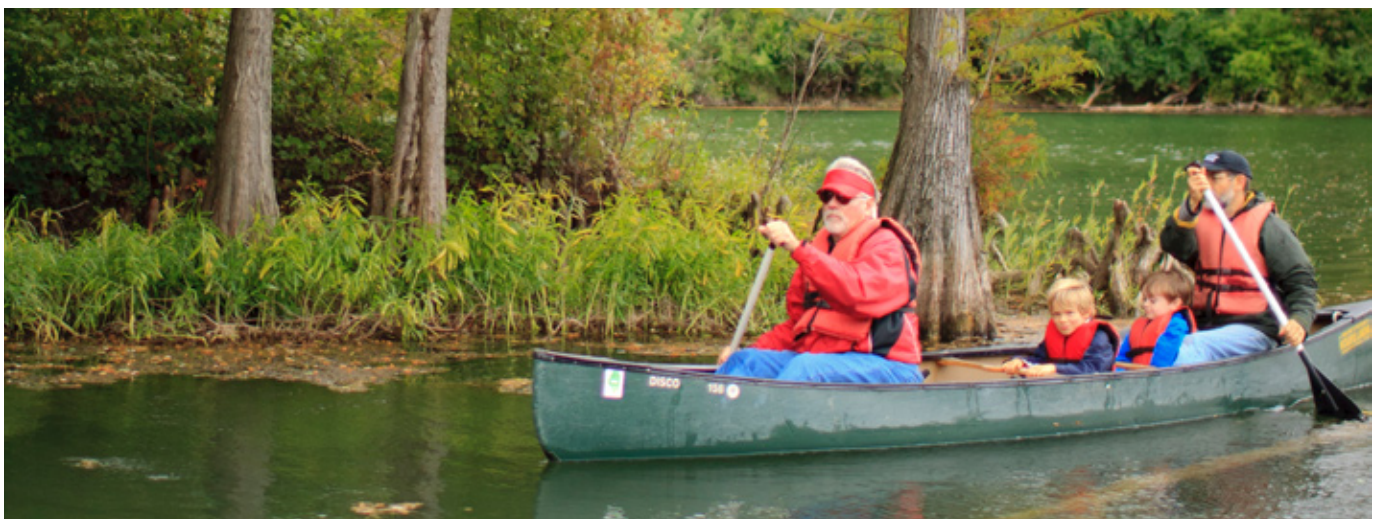
For donors who have given at this level, joining the Friends group will be easy. For others—a growing number, we hope—donations at this level will represent an important increase in their involvement in the organization. Increased donations are vital if Prairie Rivers Network is to reach out

to foundations beyond the state and region—to national-level foundations with household names that are beginning to take interest in the rivers, streams, and lakes of Illinois.

If you are able to become a Friend, please say so! The easiest way to do this is through recurring giving, where you automatically make a contribution to Prairie Rivers Network each month.

For many donors, a better way to support Prairie Rivers Network is through a bequest or other delayed gift. Deferred giving can take many forms, from a simple bequest in a will, to the designation of Prairie Rivers Network to receive life insurance proceeds, to a variety of more complex arrangements. Deferred gifts go directly to Prairie Rivers Network operations, for immediate use, and to help sustain our programs over time. To encourage deferred giving, the Board has created the River Legacy Society. Its ranks will include supporters who have made plans in their wills or otherwise to make gifts in the future. Friends and Legacy Society members will be recognized (if willing) and invited to occasional special gatherings.

Please contact Glynnis at 217.344.2371 or gcollins@prairierivers.org to get more information.//



STATE PROPOSES TO ALLOW SERIAL POLLUTER TO OPEN A NEW MINE

Help Canton Lake Residents Protect Their Drinking Water - Tell State Regulators to DO THEIR JOBS!

BY TRACI BARKLEY

Residents in Canton are worried about their drinking water. Unfortunately, they have good reason to be. Canton Lake, Copperas Creek, and the people who rely on them are under threat from a proposed 1,000-acre strip mine a mile upstream of the Lake.

Canton Lake not only supplies 20,000+ people with drinking water, many residents and tourists value this area for hunting and fishing in Copperas Creek, the source for Canton Lake.

Any coal strip mine would be cause for concern; it strips the land of trees and vegetation, regrades the land, affecting drainage patterns, and creates water pollution. This would be bad for drinking water. But in this case, there is even more cause for concern. The operator of the mining company behind the proposal for the North Canton Mine (Capitol Resources Development Company) is the same operator for the company (Springfield Coal Company) that runs the Industry Mine in Northwest Illinois. Springfield Coal Company is being sued by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan because the Industry Mine's environmental compliance record is one of the worst for coal mines in Illinois. The case was originally brought by Prairie Rivers Network and the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club in 2009 due to the mine's continuous violations of its current water permit dating back at least to 2004 and with over 300 Clean Water Act violations in the past six years.

Despite these problems, the Illinois EPA has issued a draft permit to allow the operator to dump water pollution from constructing and operating the new mine into Copperas Creek. There are no special provisions of the permit that take into account the mine operator's terrible track record.

Even if the Agency's permit could assure protection of clean water, habitat and existing resources, residents who care about Canton Lake and Copperas Creek face what is an even more depressing problem: lack of enforcement of coal mine water pollution permits.

Dig deeper into public records on pollution from coal mines, as Prairie Rivers Network and Canton Area Citizens

for Environmental Issues have, and you'll find that an IEPA-issued permit to regulate water pollution doesn't mean much if not enforced.

According to the USEPA's Enforcement and Compliance database, the track record for the 72 coal mines with active water pollution permits in Illinois is abysmal: Here are a few highlights:

- In the last three years, 34 coal mines (47%) have been out of compliance with their permit for 6 months or more.
- 40% of coal mines with pollution violations in the past three years (14 of 35) were polluting at levels up to 200 times greater than the allowed amount for some pollutants.

This data is supplied to the Illinois EPA by the coal mine operators themselves. It is hard to say how many more problems might be found if our state regulators actually conducted on-the-ground inspections. Less than 17% have been inspected in the last five years.

What happens when a coal mine does not comply with their pollution permit requirements? Nothing. No formal enforcement actions on behalf of the Illinois EPA have been undertaken at any of the sites and no penalties for noncompliance have been assessed.

Prairie Rivers Network is working with many partners to bring fairness and accountability to issuance and enforcement of coal mine water pollution permits. The industry has long flown under regulators' radar; they have been allowed to operate without modern pollution controls or the expectation that they will be held accountable to the basic standards we have for other polluters. We need to take every opportunity to change business as usual.//

How Can You Help?

Go to prairierivers.org for more detailed information about this gross negligence by the Illinois EPA. You can help by sending a message to the Illinois EPA and Governor Quinn asking the state to deny permits for this strip mine, proposed in an unsuitable location by a rogue operator that has yet to be stopped by the system.

ANNUAL DINNER ROUND-UP

River Steward Award Winner - Scott Hays

BY STEPH ADAMS

Thank you to all of you who attended our 13th Annual Dinner in October. The chance to gather with like-minded river friends, old and new, is one of the highlights of the year for our staff and board members.



Scott Hays accepting River Steward Award

At this year's annual dinner celebrating Illinois' rivers and streams, Prairie Rivers Network presented Scott Hays with the River Steward Award for 2011.

As the founding president of the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy (USRC), Scott Hays has been a tireless advocate for the river, connecting the river and its supporters with partners across the area. He has, according to current USRC president, Bruce Colravy, "an unrelenting enthusiasm and deep passion for this valuable resource."

In 2008, Scott helped found the Mahomet-based USRC—now a group of 80 supporters who want to see the Sangamon River preserved, maintained, monitored and promoted for appropriate public use.

Scott has inspired others to action by organizing activities that help people experience the river for themselves. Both service and recreation have been important to his leadership: He has led clean-up paddles and donated a converted truck bed to carry kayaks and canoes for the USRC.



Please visit prairierivers.org/business-members for links to the above sponsors, and support these local businesses.

"Every group needs a catalyst, someone who is so motivated and enthusiastic that they inspire others to action, and Scott is just that kind of person," said Tim Garrow, a member of the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy.

The Upper Sangamon Rivers is a "Biologically Significant Stream," home to 71 species of fish, 34 species of mussels, and 14 species of large crustaceans. Scott Hays is one of those people who sees the river as a home, both for wildlife and people. Illinois needs more people like Scott. He not only cares about his environment, he also takes action to make it better. Congratulations, Scott, and thank you!//



For more pictures of staff, board, members, and friends celebrating our rivers at the Annual Dinner, visit prairierivers.org

ASIAN CARP'S WATERSHED MOMENT *continued from page 1*

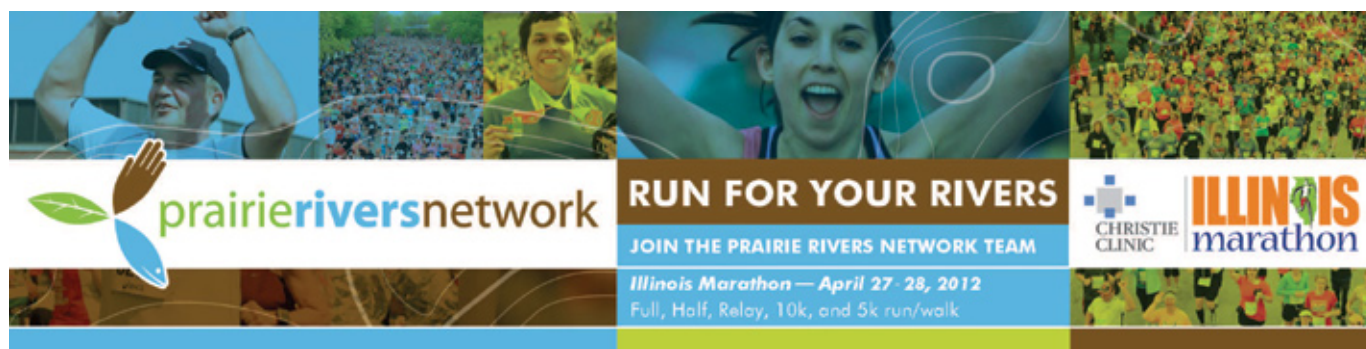
restoring the natural divide between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. Prairie Rivers Network is working towards this solution, and we are gaining momentum.

We have been presented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reimagine the future of our waters. Permanent separation would be a grand project, but one made of workable, achievable upgrades to the Chicago Waterway System, spreading broad benefits throughout the entire Chicago region.

Those benefits are beginning to be identified. The Great Lakes Commission is set to release “Envisioning a Chicago Area Waterway System for the 21st Century,” the results of a year-long study on permanent separation. Prairie Rivers Network, serving on its Advisory Committee, has provided guidance on how the Commission report can live up to its name.

Others have recognized the significance of this moment as well. Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel has announced plans to turn the Chicago River into a major destination for tourists and residents, calling it “the next recreational frontier.” Some of the nation’s best and brightest, like Chicago architect and MacArthur grant winner Jeanne Gang, have been put to the task of planning and designing a bold new future for the river.

Encouragingly, these diverse threads are converging as part of an ongoing and inevitable program to clean up the Chicago River and restore it to a place of prominence within urban life. Permanent separation, the only viable solution to the threat of Asian carp and other invasive species, will be a necessary piece of this river renaissance.//



If you’ve ever thought about participating in one of the Illinois Marathon races (5K run/walk, 10K, half or full marathon, or relay), 2012 is your year!

Prairie Rivers Network is fielding a charity running team. Just sign up for a race through our website and raise money on behalf of Illinois’ rivers and streams.

Not a runner? Commit to walking the 5K and keep your New Year’s resolution to exercise more.

Whatever your level, there is a race for you. Ask a friend to join you in your race and help protect clean water while having fun at the same time.

Benefits of Running for Prairie Rivers Network

- Supporting a cause you believe in – donations that you bring in from the friends, family, and co-workers that sponsor you will go directly to supporting our Clean Water Act enforcement work
- Early-bird registration rate (even though early-bird deadline has already passed) when you sign-up at prairierivers.org/run
- Team tech t-shirt and Prairie Rivers Network hat
- Rain barrel awarded to biggest fundraiser

We need your help. Join in and run for your rivers.

Learn more at prairierivers.org/run

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Happy Holidays

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Action alerts are also sent out periodically when we need your help on an important issue. Stay connected with us. Go to prairierivers.org and click on:



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Like Prairie Rivers Network



We are asking all of our members with Facebook accounts to please “like us” and help spread the word about the work that Prairie Rivers Network is doing.

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Essay Contest

Prairie Rivers Network, in partnership with 1 Mississippi, announce the “Our Upper Mississippi river: Connection, Inspiration, Transformation” essay contest.

Go to prairierivers.org/umressay

MARK YOUR 2012 CALENDARS

IL Marathon - Run for Your Rivers
 April 27-28, 2012

It's Our River Day
 September 15, 2012

Prairie Rivers Network's
 14th Annual Dinner
 October 5, 2012

Clean Water Act 40th Anniversary
 October 18, 2012



Prairie Rivers Network is the Illinois Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

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