



2012 Accomplishments



Protecting Natural Areas Along our Rivers

Prairie Rivers Network is working with local residents and other organizations to **fight a dirty and destructive sand mine right on the doorstep of Starved Rock State Park**. Our efforts have raised the visibility of the issue and garnered the support of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon and the Illinois River Coordinating Council.

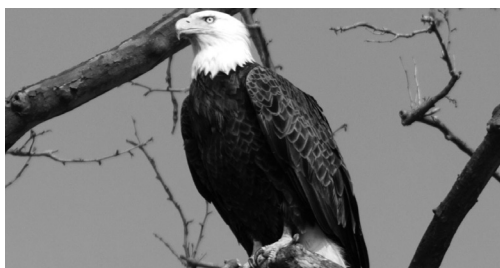
Next step: Explore legal options to achieve needed reforms in permitting process.



Future River Advocates Enjoying Starved Rock State Park

Our work keeps paying dividends long after the victories are won. One example is **the return of bald eagles to the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River**. Thirty years ago, activists (including Prairie Rivers Network founders) fought a plan to dam the river and later won protections that allowed 11,000 acres along 17 miles of the river to begin recovery from a legacy of coal strip mining. Today, a nesting pair of bald eagles has returned to the Middle Fork for the third year -- they have hatched five chicks so far!

Next step: Proper closure of Vermilion Power Plant ash ponds currently leaking into Middle Fork of Vermilion River.



One of the Middle Fork bald eagles. See photographer David Hale's account, including more great shots, at prairierivers.org

Prairie Rivers Network and Friends of the Big Bureau Creek Watershed launched a successful farmer outreach campaign in the Big Bureau Creek Watershed in north-central Illinois. As a result of our efforts, **many farmers have signed up for Farm Bill conservation programs that reduce erosion and nutrient runoff**.

Next step: Develop and implement policies to increase the use of these practices across Illinois.

Bringing Voices of the People to Elected Officials

Prairie Rivers Network has **launched a collaborative effort to separate the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins**. Separation will protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp, improve the Chicago River, and protect both basins from infestation by other invaders via Chicago's canal system. People and organizations are signing on to the coalition's principles, letting us show Governor Quinn and other elected officials the existing broad-based public support for definitive action on the carp crisis.

Next step: Expand the coalition and engage Chicago in planning for separation.



Restoring the natural divide between the Mississippi and Great Lakes basins is a long-term effort

Our campaign in Vermilion County is empowering local residents to fight a new coal mine that threatens their water and their communities. With the legal and technical support of Prairie Rivers Network, local residents understand and influence the backroom deals and bureaucratic processes behind such projects.

Next step: Challenge water deal between coal mining company and local municipality that threatens water supplies.

Holding Polluters Accountable

A new Illinois law requires factory farm owners to pay a permit fee to the Illinois EPA for water pollution permits. All other polluting facilities have paid permit fees for years. Through the permit fees, **factory farm owners, rather than the taxpayers, will finally support the state's program to regulate their pollution**. Prairie Rivers Network first proposed such a law last year, and has worked with concerned residents, lawmakers, and the Illinois EPA to get it passed.

Next step: Strengthen Illinois laws to further reduce factory farm pollution.



Governor Quinn signing new factory farm permit fee into law

The coal industry is working hard to strip the EPA of its authority to protect groundwater from coal ash pollution, a by-product of burning coal. This Spring, industry supporters in Congress attached a rider to a transportation bill that would have forbidden EPA from passing new protective rules. Prairie Rivers Network mobilized our members, our partners and residents living with coal ash pollution to ask Senator Durbin for help in bolstering the wavering resolve of some colleagues who were facing intense industry pressure.

In the final hours, the bad coal ash rider was removed from the transportation bill. We thank Senator Durbin for his pivotal work.

Next step: Continue to wage a multi-pronged state and national campaign for safer coal ash rules.