



Dear Friends,

As a board member of Prairie Rivers Network for over 20 years, I donate my time and support Prairie Rivers Network financially because I believe in its vision for Illinois' rivers and streams:

- ✓ **Clean water** – Our rivers, lakes, and streams should be clean enough for swimming and fishing, to supply drinking water, and for responsible use by farmers and industry.
- ✓ **Healthy water flows** – Rivers and streams should be free from major changes to their natural flows because those changes can worsen flooding and droughts, disrupt healthy plants and animals, and deplete drinking water supplies.
- ✓ **Edible fish** – Waterways should support a wide range of commercial and sport fish that reproduce naturally and that everyone can safely eat.
- ✓ **Resilience to climate change** – Illinois' 120,000 miles of rivers should provide a framework of connected natural areas and habitats, allowing plants and wildlife to thrive and adapt to changing climates.
- ✓ **Protecting the best** – The state's cleanest and healthiest streams should enjoy special legal protection to keep them that way.
- ✓ **Rare plants and animals** – Rare plants and animals in and around rivers should receive special protections to aid their survival and recovery.

I am asking you to please support Prairie Rivers Network by becoming a first-time member, renewing your membership, or making an extra year-end donation.

You will feel good knowing that your donation will be used to champion clean, healthy rivers and lakes and safe drinking water to benefit the people and wildlife of Illinois.

2013 has been a year of dramatic environmental events. We are already living with the early effects of climate change—record storms, flooding, droughts, and ice melts. And with political gridlock the new norm, it is up to us to protect our environment. The good news is that Prairie Rivers Network has accomplished some big things this year. You can read about some of our accomplishments in this newsletter.

We could not achieve these successes without the support of our members and donors. It is never easy asking for money, but we need *your help* to raise \$37,000 to reach our \$150,000 donation goal for this year. **The money we raise now will allow us to operate at full strength next year.**

What are we up against in 2014? Fossil fuels, agricultural pollution, invasive species, destruction of wetlands, and inaction on climate change all threaten our land and water.

- Our report on the impact of the coal industry on the Illinois state budget will help change state leaders' underlying assumptions about coal's role in Illinois. Coal drained our state budget of \$20 million in 2011 alone. Coal is not only bad for the environment; it is bad for our economy.
- Asian carp threaten the Great Lakes' \$7 billion fishing industry. But structural improvements in Chicago are possible that will address the Asian carp threat while cleaning up the water.
- The overdue Farm Bill can link crop insurance that our farmers want with conservation practices that we need.
- US EPA must finally set nutrient pollution limits which will help sewage treatment plants modernize and help reduce the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

Prairie Rivers Network has been working with supporters like you for 45 years. Our scientists, staff attorney, and policy specialists go behind the scenes to get things done. We push Illinois EPA to fully enforce our laws. We advocate for new and better policies when existing laws aren't enough to safeguard clean water. We partner with agencies, other non-profits, and everyday citizens to be more effective. The reality is: it takes money to do this.

Member donations pay staff salaries and keep the lights on and computers running. Member donations allow us to help communities work on local problems, like fighting the sand mine that threatens Starved Rock State Park, or fighting the Bulldog coal mine that threatens the beloved Salt Fork River.

Our rivers are sources of inspiring beauty, exceptional recreation and are home to much of Illinois' great wildlife.

Will you help protect our rivers?

Will you help ensure clean water?

Thank you for your support and caring about clean water and healthy rivers.

Sincerely,



Jon McNussen
President, Board of Directors

P.S. Prairie Rivers Network is a registered 501(c)(3) environmental non-profit working to protect our rivers and streams for people, fish, and wildlife. Your tax-deductible donation will help protect our vital water resources and river habitats so that you can be sure that the water you drink, swim, boat, and fish in is clean and safe, and will be there for future generations.



Protecting Illinois' Rivers for People, Fish, and Wildlife

THE ENERGY WATER NEXUS

BY TRACI BARKLEY

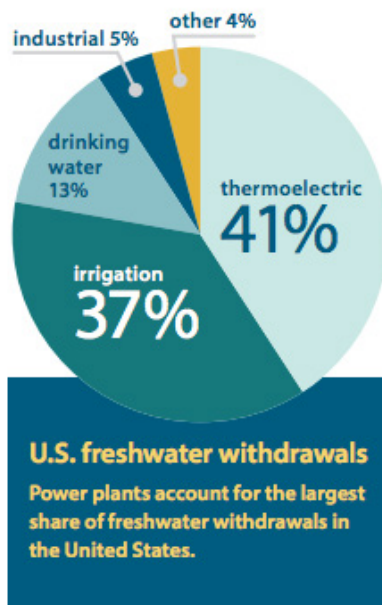
Our energy choices have a direct effect on our water resources. Water used in generating electricity comes from lakes, rivers and aquifers – the same sources we rely on for our drinking water supplies, irrigation for agriculture, recreation, and healthy fish and wildlife communities.

In Illinois, nearly 90% of our electricity is generated at water-intensive nuclear and coal-fired power plants. Most of these facilities are built along large bodies of water because of their enormous water needs. Both nuclear and coal-fired power plants circulate vast amounts of water to carry waste heat away from the reactors and boilers. At coal-fired power plants, boiling water is used to produce steam that spins electricity-generating turbines. Much of this water is lost or consumed due to evaporative cooling and will not return to its source. The water that is discharged to streams and rivers is polluted with heat, water treatment additives and concentrated salts and metals, threatening downstream users, fish and wildlife.

The typical 1,000 megawatt nuclear power reactor can power about one million homes. It needs almost 30

million gallons of water per hour to operate – that is 23 Olympic-sized pools worth of water, every hour. A coal fired power plant uses around 24 million gallons of water per hour to produce the same amount of electricity. Water needs are even greater for coal when you consider coal mining and processing, as well as coal ash disposal – all of which can require up to 3,000 gallons of water per ton of coal. That means the average household is using a quarter to a half million gallons of water per year on power generation.

Many of our water-intensive power plants are now nearing the end of



IN THIS ISSUE //

Greetings from Glynnis	2
Annual Dinner Round Up with River Steward and Outstanding Public Servant Awards and Dollarocracy	3
2013 Accomplishments	4-5
The Great Ethanol Swindle.....	7

their lives. Fossil fuel extraction costs are rising, supplies are becoming depleted, and we are increasingly aware of pollution impacts at the local and global levels. As noted in a recent report from the Union of Concerned Scientists, “the heat waves and drought that hit the U.S. in 2011 and 2012 shined a harsh light on the vulnerability of the U.S. power sector to extreme weather, and revealed water-related electricity risks across the country.”

At the state and regional level, the investments we make in the next generation of our electricity system will help determine the fate of our water supply for decades to come. Renewable energy technologies such as wind and solar require considerably less water to produce electricity. When value is placed on both water supply and quality, more of the true costs of both coal and nuclear are exposed.

//continued on page 7//

GREETINGS FROM GLYNNIS

This issue of *Prairie River Notes* attests that energy issues are increasingly important in our work. The relationship between energy and water isn't widely appreciated by the general public (although it probably is by many of you!). All major forms of energy production involve some degree of water use and water pollution. Unfortunately, we rarely see lawmakers seriously consider water impacts when making energy policy, leading to undesirable, unintended consequences – see our article on the ethanol mandate on pg. 6. We can't afford to ignore the inextricable link between our water future and our energy future.

The controversy over the possible sale of wastewater from Urbana-Champaign's sewage treatment plants to a chemical plant in another watershed highlighted several issues about water supplies that leave Illinoisans and our rivers vulnerable. We don't have policies and institutions in place to answer questions like: When is it OK to export water from its basin of origin? How do we protect streams from being drawn down too much by water users? How do we

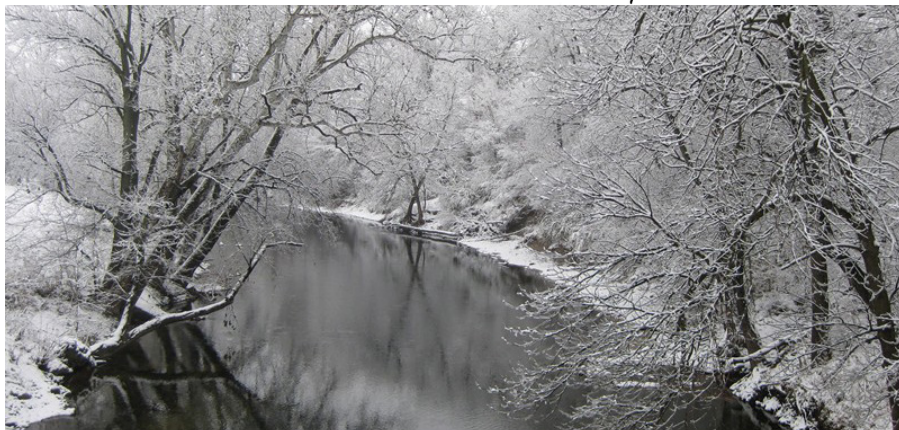
navigate potential water conflicts by encouraging efficient uses, those that provide the most social benefit per gallon?

As we went to press, the trustees of the Sanitary District approved a resolution promising to maintain minimum discharge levels to the creeks. Of course, this positive outcome is far short of the forward-looking holistic water planning that is needed in this and other communities across Illinois.

As 2013 winds down we can look forward to a new year of promise. Slowly, but surely, our society is realizing new and smarter ways to live and work with our rivers, thanks to the work of Prairie Rivers Network and our many partners. You can read a synopsis of the year's achievements in this newsletter. I am deeply grateful to our staff and board of directors for their hard work, day in and day out. And equally important, I am grateful for our Network of members, supporters, and partners. Our vision and victories belong to all of us!

With warmest wishes,

Glynnis Collins



prairieriversnetwork

Prairie Rivers Network champions clean, healthy rivers and lakes and safe drinking water to benefit the people and wildlife of Illinois.

Drawing upon sound science and working cooperatively with others, we advocate public policies and cultural values that sustain the ecological health and biological diversity of water resources and aquatic ecosystems.

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ANNUAL DINNER ROUND UP

Thank you to all of you who attended our 15th Annual Dinner in October. The staff and board of directors had a wonderful time visiting with our members and celebrating the successes you made possible. We invite you to view pictures from the dinner at:

www.flickr.com/photos/prairieriversnetwork

Outstanding Public Servant & River Steward Awards

Kevin Cummings and Suzanne Smith

Each year, we celebrate outstanding river conservationists and their actions on behalf of Illinois' rivers and streams.



Award winners Kevin Cummings and Suzanne Smith with Clark Bullard and Traci Barkley

Kevin Cummings received the Outstanding Public Servant award for a distinguished career spent researching and fostering critically important freshwater mussels, often called “the livers of the rivers.” And for her many years of dedicated volunteer work protecting the Salt Fork and Middle Fork Rivers, Suzanne Smith was presented the River Steward award.

DOLLAROCRACY

Keynote Speaker Robert McChesney

BY ROBERT HIRSCHFELD

Media scholar Dr. Robert McChesney did not sugarcoat his critical message to those assembled at Prairie Rivers Network's 2013 Annual Dinner: *Democracy is in peril. The situation is dire. And it's up to us to do something about it.*

Dr. McChesney's keynote address related the thesis of his most recent book, “Dollarocracy: How the Money-and-Media Election Complex is Destroying America.”

McChesney's penchant for big ideas and thorough research was evident as he described, in gory detail, how money in politics is destroying our democracy and casting a dark cloud over our future.

And this frightening conclusion was not delivered lightly, or as a bit of hyperbole. McChesney drove home his point, giving concrete examples of how a few individuals

and corporations with vast reserves of wealth are buying elections and subverting the will of the people.

And while this problem is not a new one, the last few decades have seen the balance of power shift dramatically toward big-moneyed interests and corporations. The much-analyzed *Citizens United* Supreme Court case is just the latest and most well-known in a string of decisions that has unleashed a storm of money into our democratic process, leading to our present crisis. A crisis which has been summed up by Jimmy Carter as such:

“America no longer has a functioning democracy.”

Those words were uttered by a former President of the United States. Let that sink in. It is a shocking and frightening claim. That such a statement didn't reverberate around this country, sending people out into the streets to demand reform, is testament to the second part of McChesney's message: the corporate media are complicit in this state of affairs. In fact, they benefit from it.

The election cycle now never ends, and a flood of political ads, mostly negative, is keeping corporate media afloat at a time when they are otherwise badly hurting for revenues. This is the new business model for old media.

Prairie Rivers Network appreciates our business sponsors! Please support these community partners who support Illinois' rivers.

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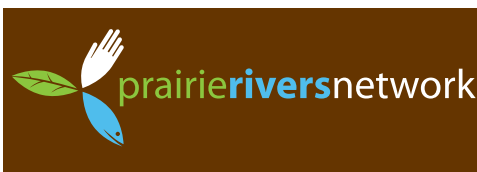
SILVER

First Mid-Illinois Bank and Trust
National Wildlife Federation
Common Ground Food Co-op

BRONZE

Blue Moon Farm
Anderson Farms
Russ Rybicki, AIF Progressive Asset Management
Silver Lux Photography

//continued on page 7//



2013 Accomplishments



Improving Policies

US EPA must set federal regulations for the safe disposal of toxic coal ash.

Coal ash is the second largest industrial waste stream in Illinois. Until we get new rules, it will continue to be handled with little oversight, endangering water and public health.

Prairie Rivers Network has been working as part of a national coalition to get these much-needed regulations. A federal court ruled in our favor, ordering the U.S. EPA to develop new coal ash disposal rules.

The Illinois EPA has proposed new comprehensive rules for the closure of coal ash ponds at coal-fired power plants.

Our work over several years investigating and highlighting pollution from coal ash ponds in Illinois has led to this important development.

Prairie Rivers Network has confirmed agreement between the Illinois EPA and the Illinois Attorney General on three concepts necessary for effective rules:

- (1) public participation;
- (2) financial assurance; and
- (3) long-term protection for groundwater.

We are preparing to defend the agency proposal against industry attacks during the rule-making process.

Our report on the impact of the coal industry on the Illinois state budget will help change state leaders' underlying assumptions about coal's role in Illinois.

The report documented state revenue related to the coal industry in Illinois, along with expenses and foregone revenue (through subsidies and tax breaks). The net impact for 2011 was a drain of \$20 million on the state budget.

Support for re-engineering Chicago's waterway system to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes grows.

The man-made canal system in Chicago connects the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River basin, leaving both systems vulnerable to devastation from invasive fish, plants, and disease.

Prairie Rivers Network has been working with a coalition of Illinois and Great Lakes organizations to promote major re-engineering of Chicago's waterways to restore the natural separation between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.

In June, Governor Quinn publicly supported the idea, saying, "Ultimately, I think we have to separate the basins. I really feel that is the ultimate solution."

Plans for near-term structural improvements are underway. They will address the Asian carp threat while improving water quality and paving the way for full separation.

Ruling means more accountability for US EPA on nutrient pollution.

Nutrient pollution from sewage treatment plants, farms, and city streets is fouling Illinois waters, killing aquatic life and causing the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

The U.S. EPA has waffled for over a decade on setting legal limits for this pollution. A federal court recently ruled in our favor, requiring the agency to make a decision on this important legal tool. This gives us leverage as we keep the pressure on EPA to use all the tools they have to reduce nutrient pollution.

Moratorium on new sand mines in LaSalle County provides time to improve mining operations affecting the Illinois River.

The Illinois River has seen a boom in sand mining because it is one of the few places in the U.S. with sand that is the right texture for use in hydraulic fracturing (fracking) operations.

Unfortunately, the moratorium came after the LaSalle County Board approved a controversial new mining operation adjacent to Starved Rock State Park; Prairie Rivers Network and our partners continue to fight that project.

Now we are working with other groups, citizen activists, and government to craft improved planning for sand mining and the protection of natural corridors along the Illinois River.

Protecting Land and Water

Illinois and Mississippi Rivers

Chicago's Stickney sewage treatment plant (the largest in the nation) will finally start removing phosphorus and nitrogen pollution from its wastewater thanks in part to years of pressure and a federal lawsuit.

The Stickney plant is a major source of nutrient pollution to the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, and ultimately to the Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone.

Saline Branch and Copper Slough

Public outcry created a space for Prairie Rivers Network to work with the Urbana Champaign Sanitary District to protect the Copper Slough and Saline Branch of the Salt Fork by maintaining minimum discharges from its two sewage treatment plants if a water sale to Cronus Chemical happens.

Vermilion County and Salt Fork River

The proposed Bulldog coal mine in East-Central Illinois would have taken water from the Salt Fork River to wash coal and then discharged polluted water back to the river.

We worked with residents and advocates to slow the development of the coal mine: the Village of Homer will not sell water from the Salt Fork River, a proposed railroad spur needed for transporting coal was blocked, and leasing of mineral rights has slowed.

Big Bureau Creek Watershed

More farmers in the Big Bureau Creek watershed north of Peoria have incorporated cover crops and grassed waterways into their farms thanks to our outreach efforts. These practices decrease soil erosion and nutrient pollution.

Sangamon River and Saline Branch

Prairie Rivers Network worked with concerned citizens to get the Illinois EPA to force the Rantoul Foods hog slaughterhouse to clean up its act. We helped neighbors address problems with management of vast quantities of manure generated by the facility and thereby reduce pollution entering the Sangamon River and Saline Branch of the Salt Fork River.

Chicago and Calumet Rivers

This fall, Chicago's Metropolitan Water Reclamation District broke ground on new sewage disinfection facilities at two of its plants that discharge to the Chicago and Calumet Rivers as a result of pressure by a large coalition that included Prairie Rivers Network. This will make the rivers much safer for recreation.

Strengthening the Network of River Advocates

Heartland Coalfield Alliance

Founded by Prairie Rivers Network, the Heartland Coalfield Alliance continues to grow. The Alliance works to "make a just transition from the current coal economy to a clean and sustainable energy economy in America's Heartland."

In June, we welcomed over 75 people from eight states to a retreat in Southern Illinois. Leaders from across the nation worked with attendees to build the skills, networks, and campaigns we need to ensure that the true costs of coal are borne by the industry, as we work to create a cleaner energy future.

River Bend Wildland Trust

Over the past two years, Prairie Rivers Network convened habitat conservation groups working along the Mississippi River in Illinois to foster better coordination of activities and identification of needs. An early outcome of the work was the formation of a new land trust targeting important bottomland habitat in the Quad Cities area.

Sharing Compelling River Stories

In June, staff members Elliot Brinkman and Robert Hirschfeld paddled stretches of the Illinois River from Chicago to St. Louis as part of a new storytelling and media initiative. Carrying cameras and microphones, they met with members of our network throughout the state, capturing interviews, videos, and photos of those that work, live, and play along the river. We will develop and distribute these stories that address the challenges and opportunities facing the Illinois River and its communities.



Prairie Rivers Network staff thank you for supporting our work.

THE GREAT ETHANOL SWINDLE

BY ELLIOT BRINKMAN AND ROBERT HIRSCHFELD

It's no secret that corn is king in Illinois. Corn dominates the physical landscape, the halls of political power in Springfield, and the economy outside of the Chicago metro area. Two-thirds of the state is in row crops, the vast majority of which alternate between corn and soy. Cropland has replaced the prairie, as well as much of the backwater wetlands of our big rivers' floodplains—land that is critical to wildlife habitat and marginal for growing corn.

But all this corn is not grown just to feed an ever-expanding global population. The production of ethanol as a fuel, and its financial support by the government, has turned farms into energy fields, while the upward pressure on the price of corn from artificially stimulated demand has incentivized farmers to plant corn on every last acre, resulting in the loss of sensitive conservation land. This brand of intense monoculture cropping, ubiquitous in Illinois, also stresses and pollutes water supplies.

The ethanol boom fully commenced in 2005, when the U.S. EPA created the Renewable Fuel Standard. The program requires increasing amounts of ethanol be blended into gasoline every year, with a goal of 36 billion gallons by 2022. U.S. ethanol production has recently been hovering around 13 billion gallons annually. Even at this level, over one-quarter of the corn grown, both in Illinois and the U.S. at large, is used for ethanol production. The fields that once filled our bellies are now fueling our gas tanks.

Since the passage of the ethanol mandate, corn prices have soared, resulting in more acres of corn planted at the expense of Illinois' best and last-remaining conservation lands. To understand why, a brief policy lesson is in order.

The 1985 Farm Bill formally established the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which presented a simple strategy to increase good land-use practices on farms. Landowners with marginal and environmentally sensitive

land were paid to retire the land from production for 10 to 15 years. Today, as CRP contracts expire, those same landowners are re-plowing these acres and planting corn. With corn prices more than tripling during the life of their CRP contracts, who can blame them?

The ethanol mandate is currently being exposed as poor policy in the national press. The drawbacks are multiple. As mentioned, it eliminates conservation lands. It raises the price of food. It is water-intensive. It requires the application of more chemicals that run off into streams and pollute our waters. There is even debate as to whether it takes more energy to produce than is available in the final product. Thus, even if you ignore the other costs, ethanol is not economically viable without a raft of subsidies.

We must take advantage of opportunities to overhaul failed policies when they arise. At the same time, we must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It's well known that the oil industry is behind much of the ethanol criticism. We don't want the collapse of one alternative fuel—never the preferred one among environmentalists—to hinder progress on other, more environmentally friendly biofuels and renewables.

We need an energy policy that caters to the interests of the people, the land and the water, not a policy that props up a few industries that use their outsized wealth and power to game the system. //



prairie rivers network

Illinois Marathon | 5K, 10K, Half, & Full

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YOUR RIVERS**



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YOUR STREAMS**

April 25-26, 2014

Join in the fun.

Help fundraise for Prairie Rivers Network or just walk/run with the team.

PrairieRivers.org/Run

ANNUAL DINNER ROUND-UP: DOLLAROCRACY *continued from page 3*

The noble pursuit of journalism, which was considered so vital that its freedom was enshrined into the Constitution, is now cashing in on the degradation of our democracy.

That leaves us in a bind. We can't enact policies that the majority supports because a few with money are buying the results they want. And we can't hold the politicians and their financial backers accountable because real investigative journalism has broken down. McChesney summarized the state of affairs, "We are off the democratic grid."

What are we to do? And what is the import for a clean water and river protection organization?

Prairie Rivers Network bills itself as an environmental organization, and though that is certainly true, we are also a democracy-in-action group. Our staff, with the support of our members, is doing the work of democracy—attending agency meetings, working with legislators, proposing new policies, navigating the courts, and reporting on the news.

Our members have asked us to speak for them, to speak for the water and the land, and to put the democratic structures in place that keep those essential resources - our real wealth - clean and plentiful. But if the democratic

system moves increasingly out of our reach and control, it will make impossible the job of protecting our water, our wildlife, our natural places.

Our goals—which are also your goals—are accomplished by playing by the rules of democracy. But as Dr. McChesney indicated in his speech, those rules are being rewritten. And the new rules could make difficult, if not impossible, the dramatic reforms that are so necessary.

"We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both."
- Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis

Huge, moneyed interests "are a permanent lobby for a broken status quo." A quick look through this newsletter indicates that big industries, including fossil fuels and agriculture, are blocking

reforms and progress.

McChesney lauded the work of Prairie Rivers Network, noting that an organization like ours must be fostered. Successful groups doing the work of democracy are not easy to come by, and don't spring up overnight. The organizing and policy work that Prairie Rivers specializes in constitute the path forward, not only to protect our water and natural places, but to preserve the democracy from which all of our greatest environmental victories have sprung. //

ENERGY NEXUS *continued from page 1*

At the same time that Prairie Rivers Network is working to change and strengthen laws and policies that will protect water supplies and move us towards a cleaner energy future, there are several ways that we as consumers can be a part of a water-smart energy solution that can dramatically reduce carbon emissions and water use.

- Enroll in an energy saver program to IID energy usage and savings
www.cubenergysaver.com
- Switch to providers of renewable energy
www.citizensutilityboard.org/ciElectric_cubfacts_alternativesuppliers.html
- Reduce your energy usage
www.epa.gov/greenhomes/ReduceEnergy.htm

- Weatherize your home
energy.gov/public-services/homes/home-weatherization
- Install attic and wall insulation
- Repair or replace your furnace
- Weatherize windows and doors
- Unplug appliances when not in use
- Turn down the thermostat

As we prepare for the cold winter months ahead, consider that the steps and investments you make in weatherizing your home, lowering your thermostat, switching to a renewable energy provider and taking shorter showers, for example, are reducing both your carbon AND water footprints. //



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Happy Holidays



**CHECK OUR ONLINE EVENTS CALENDER
FOR THESE 2014 EVENTS**

LOBBY TRAINING - JANUARY OR FEBRUARY
LOBBY DAY IN SPRINGFIELD - APRIL OR MAY
GREEN POLITICS NIGHT WITH THE SIERRA CLUB - APRIL

ROUND-UP FOR PRN AT THE COMMON GROUND FOOD CO-OP
Urbana, IL
March 2014

RUN FOR YOUR RIVERS AND WALK FOR YOUR STREAMS
Illinois Marathon Races
Champaign-Urbana, IL
April 25-26, 2014

**PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK'S
ANNUAL DINNER**
Champaign, IL
October 10, 2014

PHOTO ATTRIBUTES (C) //
Union of Concerned Scientists, 1
Sue Smith, 2
Lisa Janes, 3
Jason Lindsey, masthead
Prairie Rivers Network, masthead



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National Wildlife Federation.



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receive your contributions.



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