



Protecting Illinois' Rivers for People, Fish, and Wildlife

## HOW TO STOP A COAL MINE

BY TYLER ROTCHE

Canton-area residents are celebrating after winning an eight-year battle to halt the North Canton coal strip mine – successfully protecting Fulton County communities and their right to clean water.

The strip mine would have polluted Canton Lake, endangering the drinking water supply for more than 20,000 people. Residents also cited a long list of other threats posed by the mine that were inadequately addressed through the regulatory process.

The hard-fought victory by the Canton Area Citizens for Environmental Issues, Sierra Club's Heart of Illinois Group, and other clean water advocates is a testament to the power of communities when they stand together to assert their basic rights. The successful effort to block the strip mine serves as an inspiration to those facing similar threats across the state.

### Polluting a Public Water Supply

The North Canton Strip Mine, to be operated by Capital Resources

Development Company, LLC, would have been the first strip mine in Illinois allowed to discharge pollution into a public water supply. While many would expect essential resources like Canton Lake to be a top priority for protection, the state-issued permit authorized the strip mine to locate just over a mile upstream, compromising the drinking water for more than half of Fulton County's residents and placing an undue burden on the Canton water treatment plant and local tax payers.

### An Irresponsible Operator

The mining company, Capital Resources, is an affiliate of Springfield Coal Company LLC, a notorious rogue operator that has racked up hundreds of violations at other sites for illegal and dangerous water



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pollution. Over the course of just 8 years at the Industry Mine in Schuyler and McDonough counties, Springfield Coal Co. violated their water pollution permit over 600 times! Yet that abysmal record did not dissuade the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) from authorizing the mine and jeopardizing Canton's drinking water.

### A Lengthy Legal Battle – Funded by Bake Sales

The North Canton coal mine was originally permitted by the state of Illinois in 2008. A subsequent appeal by local residents went through five years of review before IDNR finally denied the permit in 2013, pronouncing that it failed to correctly identify and protect a branch of Copperas Creek, a tributary to Canton Lake which Capital Resources had dismissed as "Ravine 6."

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## FAREWELL FROM GLYNNIS

After ten years with Prairie Rivers Network, it is difficult for me to say farewell. I've been tremendously inspired and grateful to work with this talented group of members, partners, staff and board. As I head west with my family this summer (Nebraska ho!), I'm happy to be leaving the organization in good hands. I hereby turn over my customary "Greetings from Glynnis" spot to our new Executive Director Carol Hays. Carol will start on May 1st. In order to ensure a smooth transition, we will overlap on the job for a month before my last day on May 31st.

Carol most recently ran her own consulting practice, providing



Farewell, Glynnis, and Welcome, Carol!

## CAROL'S CURRENTS

I am very excited and honored to join the talented staff of Prairie Rivers Network. There is no greater satisfaction than to carry your personal mission into your work life. As a committed river steward and environmental advocate, I welcome the opportunity to fully invest my time and leadership as I work with the staff to further expand Prairie Rivers' impact across Illinois. In the coming months, as I get to know you – our

technical and capacity support for non-profit and community groups. She's been very involved in environmental and water issues locally, and has extensive political experience, both in Illinois and elsewhere. She holds a PhD in Political Science from SIU where she studied the influence of environmental groups on wetlands protection. I'm really pleased that we've found someone with a breadth of experience – management, campaigning, fundraising – to steward Prairie Rivers Network into the future.

With gratitude and warmest regards,

members, supporters and partners – who are committed to ensuring Prairie Rivers Network continues to bring expertise and leadership to the protection of Illinois' waters, I look forward to sharing my vision and expertise for how we can work together to grow our network of support and mobilize more and more Illinoisans in our shared mission.

Thank you for your support during this time of transition,

## 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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**Prairie Rivers Network is Illinois' advocate for clean water and healthy rivers.**

**We champion clean, healthy rivers and lakes and safe drinking water to benefit the people and wildlife of Illinois.**



## 2014 Annual Report

Thanks to our members, supporters, staff and board of directors, Prairie Rivers Network continued its trajectory of growth in 2014. Our programs are strengthened by a growing network of people and organizations that allow us to have more influence in pursuit of clean water and healthy rivers in Illinois. I am so pleased to be able to share with you the evidence, in both progress and financial stability, of another strong year for Prairie Rivers Network.

- Glynnis Collins, Executive Director

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## IMPROVING POLICIES

Much of our work is carried out in partnership with other groups and organizations. Through our effective working relationships, we punch above our weight in protecting clean water and healthy rivers in Illinois. We owe special thanks to all of our partners.



Stacy working with the Save our Sandy grassroots organization to fight a factory farm that could pollute their local stream.

## ADVOCATING FOR COAL ASH DISPOSAL RULES THAT WILL PROTECT PEOPLE AND RIVERS

Our work over several years demanding accountability for coal ash pollution emboldened the Illinois EPA to propose new rules for closure of coal ash dumps at power plants. During the rulemaking process, we testified in support of stronger provisions in the rule, while acknowledging what an important step the Agency's action was. We expect to see the rule finalized in 2015.



Traci with members and supporters at a press conference addressing the problems with coal ash pits along the Middle Fork.

## FEWER BARRIERS TO CIVILIAN INVOLVEMENT IN OVERSIGHT OF COAL INDUSTRY

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources answered our call for greater oversight of coal ash dumps and improved transparency and public participation in the permitting process for coal mines. The Department commenced inspections of all coal ash dumps in the state for stability hazards. Data from the inspections will help us identify and advocate for solutions to the more urgent threats.

## NEW RULE WILL REDUCE POLLUTION FROM FACTORY FARM WASTE

Illinois adopted a new rule requiring factory farm operators to manage waste more responsibly. By presenting evidence of water pollution problems this waste has caused, and countering industry claims, our staff were integral to getting this new rule.



*Stacy talks to cattle rancher Dan Allen about his opposition to the construction of a large hog operation in his community.*

## FIGHTING COSTLY AND DESTRUCTIVE MISSISSIPPI RIVER MANAGEMENT

We joined a lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, challenging a costly and destructive approach to management of the Upper Mississippi River. If successful, this challenge will have far-reaching implications for the Mississippi and other rivers.

## SAVING THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Our #4CleanWater social media campaign is giving voice to the majority of people and businesses who support sensible and scientific based protection for clean water. This campaign is in response to aggressive, untruthful attacks by some agriculture and development industries on a new EPA rule that ensures that small streams are protected under the Clean Water Act.



*Robert shooting video on Jordan Creek for Prairie Rivers Network's Waters of the U.S. campaign.*

## CONSERVATION AWARDS

We are very proud and honored to be named the National Wildlife Federation's Affiliate of the Year for 2014. Each year, the award recognizes one of NWF's 49 state affiliates for conservation accomplishments.



*Robert, Glynnis, and board member Clark Bullard accepting our NWF Affiliate of the Year Award.*

## PROTECTING LAND AND WATER

### HABITAT CONSERVATION ALONG THE ILLINOIS RIVER

We initiated the Middle Illinois River Conservation Partnership to restore and connect habitat along the River, pursuing a vision for a healthy Illinois River system that supports people and wildlife.



*Our vision for a healthy Illinois River includes valuable backwater wetlands for recreation, habitat, and water quality.*

We continue our efforts to protect Starved Rock State Park from a frac sand mine that would welcome the park's 2 million annual visitors with dust and blasting noise. We also worked with LaSalle County to improve its Comprehensive Land Use Plan to protect valuable habitat and water resources along the Illinois River near the park from the frac sand rush now underway there.

### VERMILION RIVER DAM REMOVAL

The City of Danville voted to remove two obsolete dams on the Vermilion River, one of which has been responsible for several deaths. Over the years, Prairie Rivers Network



*Elliot explores the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, Illinois' only National Wild and Scenic River.*

has assisted with the effort to deal with these dams, sharing resources on the benefits of dam removal, and helping to secure the state funds that will pay for the removal.

### REDUCING FOX RIVER POLLUTION

We negotiated stricter limits on phosphorus pollution for several sewage treatment plants in northeast Illinois. This is the same pollution that shut down Toledo's water supply for several days this summer. Stricter pollution limits will mean a cleaner, healthier Fox River.



*Member support makes protecting rivers like the Fox River possible. Thank you.*

### RE-VITALIZING THE CHICAGO RIVER

As part of an advisory group to Congress on Asian carp and other invasive species moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River, we are advocating for solutions that will help revitalize the Chicago River – reducing pollution and improving flood control, habitat, and recreational access.

# HELPING PEOPLE PROTECT CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY RIVERS

## TAKING ACTION

Our new River Action Team (affectionately known as the RATs) is ready to take action with phone calls, visits to policy makers and letters to the editor when those voices can really make a difference. This year they cut their teeth calling for protection of the Mahomet Aquifer. They are currently mobilizing to support U.S. EPA's clean water rule.



We created a mini-documentary on factory farms and a series of videos in support of U.S. EPA's clean water rule. Visit our YouTube channel to watch the stories of real people affected by and fighting against pollution:

[youtube.com/PrairieRivers](http://youtube.com/PrairieRivers)

## GATHERING SUPPORT

With support from Prairie Rivers Network, an unprecedented variety of Vermilion County leaders have joined the call of residents for a responsible closure plan for the coal ash dumps at the retired Dynege Vermilion power plant. These dumps threaten both groundwater and the Middle Fork River.

## TELLING STORIES

With new video production capabilities, we are bringing important clean water issues to more people than ever.

## Statement of Activities

for the year ended December 31, 2014

### Revenue and Support

Donations	\$178,684
Grants	\$629,688
Investment Income	\$486
In-Kind Donations & Reimbursements	\$16,328
Sales & Miscellaneous Revenue	\$11,333
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$836,516</b>

### Expenses

Programs Salaries	\$306,036
Programs Taxes & Benefits	\$47,629
Direct Programs Costs	\$289,967
Fundraising (including salaries & taxes/benefits)	\$92,743
Management/General (including salaries & taxes/benefits)	\$40,684
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$777,059</b>

### Net Assets\*

Beginning of year	\$410,449
End of year	\$469,906

### Membership and Fiscal Management

Prairie Rivers Network's revenue comes mainly from private foundation grants (75% of 2014 revenue, some of which is earmarked for 2015 spending) and member donations (21% of 2014 revenue). Over 80% of 2014 expenditures were in pursuit of our clean water and healthy river programs. Fundraising and administrative operations combined accounted for 17% of spending.

Over the past ten years, the organization has experienced a compounded annual growth rate of over 10%.

\*Net assets at the beginning of the year include grant funds received in previous years earmarked for work in 2014. Similarly, net assets at the end of the year include grant funds earmarked for 2015 work.

Our finances are audited each year by an independent certified accountant and are available upon request. Our Federal 990 tax forms are also available upon request or through [guidestar.org](http://guidestar.org).

# Thank You Members and Supporters!

## Community Partners

A special thank you to our community partners. We encourage you to support and thank those businesses and organizations that protect our rivers and streams.

### Businesses

#### Platinum \$5,000 and above

McKenzie Wagner, Inc.\*

#### Gold \$1,000–\$4,999

Common Ground Food Co-op  
Enterprise Holdings Foundation  
Fox Development Corporation \*  
Marco Technical Documentation  
Patagonia-Enviro Department \*\*  
UpClose Marketing and Printing \*

#### Silver \$500–\$999

Art Theater Co-op  
Blue Moon Farm  
Champaign Telephone Company  
Hartke Engineering and Surveying  
Paul's Machine & Welding Corporation

#### Bronze \$250–\$499

Anderson Farms  
Elliott counseling Group  
Neutral Cycle \*  
Prairie Fruits Farm \*  
Progressive Asset Management  
Seventh Generation

#### Members \$1–\$249

A.M.S. Incorporated  
Aveda \*  
Brown, Hobbs, and McNurray Insurance  
Busey Bank Investment Group  
Champaign Surplus \*  
The Chicago Community Trust  
Columbia Street Roastery \*  
Country Road Greenhouse  
Destihl \*  
Green Yoga Spa  
Ikumihimo.com \*  
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International Galleries \*  
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Pizza M \*

### Groups/Public Entities

Bangs Lake Advisory Committee  
Champaign County Audubon Society  
First Presbyterian Church of Urbana  
Friends of Kickapoo Creek  
Laborers Local Union #393  
Middlefork Audubon Society  
National Wildlife Federation  
Northwest Illinois Audubon Society  
Prairie Group of the Sierra Club  
SCARCE  
Vermilion County Conservation District

We are grateful to our donors and funders, especially those who have been with us for many years. Your support ensures that the fight for clean and healthy rivers is carried on, and that the voices of the people make it to Springfield and Washington D.C. to combat the special interests that would avoid accountability for polluting and degrading natural resources.

### Foundation Grantors

The Educational Foundation of America  
Grand Victoria Foundation  
Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation  
The Joyce Foundation  
The McKnight Foundation

National Wildlife Federation  
Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Inc.  
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Rockefeller Family Foundation  
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The Bruce Hannon Friends of Illinois Rivers recognizes those members who have pledged an annual gift of \$1,000 or more to sustain the work of Prairie Rivers Network into the future. Members of the Bruce Hannon Friends of Illinois Rivers are highlighted in our donor listing below.

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**Irene and Clark Bullard**  
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## HOW TO STOP A COAL MINE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

With the permit ostensibly “denied,” the community was surprised to soon learn that IDNR viewed this as only a partial denial – asserting that the rest of the permit had been approved, pending revision.

Illinois DNR issued a revised mining permit in July 2013, despite flagrant violations at the company’s other mine sites, prompting another legal challenge by community groups.

In January 2015, on the eve of a court hearing, and in the face of continued staunch local opposition, Capital Resources finally asked the agency to withdraw the permit application, effectively ending the strip mine before it could begin operations.

There is no question that the citizens of Canton fought long and hard for this victory. Yet the question remains: why was it so difficult, time-consuming, and expensive to stop an existential threat to a drinking water supply? As area residents were unable to rely on state regulators to fully enforce the law, they were forced to hire expert witnesses and legal counsel, funded through bake sales and garage sales, to see that state mining laws were implemented properly.

### Mine Permit System Concerns - Fixing the Problems

The fact that the Illinois DNR authorized a strip mine, to be located a mile upstream of a public water supply, and to a company with extensive ongoing pollution violations, raises grave concerns about the cozy relationship between state regulators and the coal industry.

Moving forward, Prairie Rivers Network will continue to work alongside our partners in the call for transparency and accountability for the coal mining industry and state mining regulators. With clearer definitions for streams and wetlands that agency staff adhere to, communities facing the impacts of coal extraction can expect higher protections for their watersheds.



**“We ALL did it! When I see the trees on the horizon as I am driving home, it is the greatest feeling to see the beautiful scenery rather than a dirty coal mine causing destruction and hardship for people.”**

**- Brenda Dilts, Leader of the Canton Area Citizens for Environmental Issues**

Years of violations at Springfield Coal Company mines also highlight the need for stronger enforcement practices. Permit applications from repeated bad actors (or close corporate “affiliates”) should not be granted or renewed – doing so presents a clear danger to the surrounding community’s health and miners’ safety.

Agencies granting permits have the opportunity and duty to go to greater lengths to consider the impacts of mining on the local land and hydrology – North Canton presenting a clear example regarding the risks to a public water supply.

Finally, the engaged citizens of Fulton County illustrate the need for a permitting process that is accessible to local residents. Making documents searchable and available allows residents with local knowledge to protect their land and water — in this case, properly identifying a branch of the Copperas Creek as more than a “ravine,” and thus providing it greater legal protection.

### Canton Lake Protected

There is no doubt that the North Canton permit should have received more scrutiny from the very beginning. Instead, Canton residents had to wage an eight-year battle to prove to the state that coal mines don’t belong next to drinking water supplies.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Canton Area Citizens for Environmental Issues, an important piece of Fulton County has been successfully protected for fishing, hiking, boating, and safe drinking water for years to come. //



The coal mine would have polluted beautiful Copperas Creek.



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Goodbye and best wishes to Water Resources Scientist Traci Barkley, who is leaving Prairie Rivers Network. After victories reducing pollution from sewage treatment plants and winning more protection for Chicago waterways, she developed our coal program, helping residents across Illinois fight illegal pollution and unwanted mines. Thank you, Traci, for your decade of service!

**UPCOMING EVENTS//**



**CHECK OUR ONLINE EVENTS CALENDER FOR THESE EVENTS AND MORE**

**EARTH WEEK HAPPY HOUR**

April 19, 4-5:30 pm  
 Escobar's in Champaign

**CHICAGO RIVER DAY**

May 9  
 contact Friends of the Chicago River  
[www.chicagoriver.org](http://www.chicagoriver.org)

**ENVIRONMENTAL LOBBY DAY & EARTH DAY**

April 22  
 Let's go to Springfield! Contact the Prairie Rivers Network office to participate in Environmental Lobby Day.

**DES PLAINES RIVER CANOE & KAYAK MARATHON**

May 17  
[www.canoemarathon.com](http://www.canoemarathon.com)

**RUN FOR YOUR RIVERS**

at the Illinois Marathon, Champaign-Urbana  
 April 24-25  
 Donate to help the PRN team:  
[www.prairierivers.org/run](http://www.prairierivers.org/run)

**PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK'S ANNUAL DINNER**

November 6

PHOTO ATTRIBUTES (C) // Jason Lindsey, masthead  
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