



Protecting Illinois' Rivers for People, Fish, and Wildlife

AVERTING A WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CRISIS

America has a proud history of bringing wildlife back from the brink. A century ago, prized game species like elk, geese, wood ducks, pronghorns, black bears, and striped bass were at extreme risk—now they are thriving.

Today we face a new conservation crisis as emerging diseases, invasive species, and extreme weather threaten wildlife at a scale inconceivable just a few decades ago. Thousands of species of birds, mammals, fish, frogs, turtles, butterflies, and plants are slipping through the cracks.

All Americans benefit from healthy fish and wildlife populations, but currently 80 percent of the funding for our state wildlife agencies comes

from just one small slice of the population—hunters and anglers. Sportspeople have long supported wildlife conservation efforts by paying taxes on shooting, hunting, and fishing gear, and through the purchase of licenses, permits, and stamps.

For decades, this model of conservation worked to preserve game species, but too often there is not enough money to help imperiled wildlife that are not hunted or fished. In many cases, there is limited funding until a species is officially listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, a bill that was originally intended to be an “emergency room” measure.

Waiting until a species, such as the iconic monarch butterfly, is in danger

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of extinction is hardly ideal. Taking a more proactive approach would be good for wildlife, good for businesses, and good for taxpayers. Healthy lands and waters create billions of dollars in economic value. Natural landscapes filter our drinking water, protect communities from storms, and improve our mental and physical well-being.

In 2014, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies convened dozens of leaders in various fields, including CEOs and scientists, to recommend innovative funding approaches to address the fish and wildlife crisis.

Following the panel’s final recommendation, the bi-partisan Recovering America’s Wildlife Act was introduced in the U.S. House in June 2016; if passed, it would send as much as \$1.3 billion annually from existing energy and mineral leases on federal lands and waters to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program. This funding will allow us to conserve the thousands of species

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Bobcats were nearly eliminated from Illinois but have made a remarkable recovery.

CAROL'S CURRENTS

In June I attended my first National Wildlife Federation Annual Meeting—a great opportunity to gather with all 50 state and territorial affiliates and focus on our shared vision for the future of conservation in America. Among the many threats wildlife and wild places face—from climate change to pollution to the privatization of public natural resources—among the most serious is a future without broad support from the next generation. We are raising a generation of kids who average less than 10 minutes a day outdoors in unstructured play, learning to explore and love nature while developing a sense of awe about a world that is bigger than themselves.



Although research is revealing that exposure to nature can make a real difference in our physical and mental health, we are increasingly disconnecting ourselves and our kids from nature. In the process, we risk losing the next generation of conservationists—kids growing up with the dream of devoting their professional and personal lives to protecting nature. Without these experiences, kids are denied opportunities to learn why and how to safeguard nature, and the chance to

practice those skills while young. It is critical that those of us who are active in the conservation movement pass along our knowledge and experience to a generation that will be challenged by a rapidly changing world.

Prairie Rivers Network has accepted this challenge, and is working to connect kids to our vision for Illinois' waters and wildlife.

On a beautiful spring break afternoon, I joined Springfield Girl Scout troop #6195 to talk about the threats from the 80+ coal ash impoundments that line Illinois' rivers, threatening to poison area wildlife and the drinking water of thousands of Illinoisans.

We did an experiment with water and sand to learn how easy it is for coal ash mounds to become destabilized. We identified the many heavy metals and elements from the periodic table that are found in coal ash. We looked at a jar filled with coal ash and noted how, like dust, it could easily blow through the air and be inhaled.

We also talked about the beautiful, imperiled monarch butterfly and the steps these Scouts could take to protect habitat for monarchs and

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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WHY I GIVE TO PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK

Caleb Curtiss, monthly donor and member

I support Prairie Rivers Network because I believe that our natural environment should be preserved in ways that enhance our experience as human beings who choose to live, work, farm, and raise our families in the state of Illinois. The river system that we share here breathes life into our communities; when we protect it, we're protecting ourselves and our families. When PRN works with lawmakers to prevent legislation that imperils our waterways or when they hold accountable corporations that don't take their role as stewards within our communities seriously, they are standing up for the people of Illinois: me, you, our children, our grandparents. Our rivers are beautiful and ancient, useful and vulnerable. I care about our waterways, so I support Prairie Rivers Network. If they weren't standing up for our river systems here in East Central Illinois, nobody would.



Rebecca McBride, member

I frequently look to Jane Goodall for inspiration, and I turn to one of her quotes in particular for hope and determination:

"I like to envision the whole world as a jigsaw puzzle...If you look at the whole picture, it is overwhelming and terrifying, but if you work on your little part of the jigsaw and know that people all over the world are working on their little bits, that's what will give you hope."

That's why I give to Prairie Rivers Network. For those of us who live in Illinois, Prairie Rivers Network empowers us to work on our little bit of the puzzle in the most effective way possible. By connecting individuals like me with the fabulous expertise of PRN, we can effectively and powerfully create change. And to me, there is nothing more important than water, our Earth's life blood.

David Sherwood and David Bullock, members and fundraisers

First Presbyterian Church of Urbana (FPCU), which is certified as an Earth Care Congregation by the Presbyterian Church USA, is committed to sustaining the health of planet Earth. Because water is required for all forms of animal and plant life, there is a moral obligation to protect this finite resource for both present and future generations. The goal of Prairie Rivers Network to "champion clean, healthy rivers and lakes and safe drinking water to benefit the people and wildlife of Illinois" is one that the FPCU Earth Care Team enthusiastically supports through participation in the annual Prairie Rivers Network Illinois Marathon Fundraiser (prairierivers.org/run).



PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK ANNUAL DINNER - OCTOBER 21

We are so excited about the upcoming Prairie Rivers Network Annual Dinner on Friday, October 21st! Please make plans to join Prairie Rivers Network's staff, board members, and your fellow river enthusiasts for conversation, good food, and fun as we celebrate the rivers of Illinois.

Our keynote speaker will be George Hawkins, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer of DC Water.

Not only does Mr. Hawkins provide clean water to the residents of our nation's capitol, he is also one of the nation's premier speakers on the future of water. Against the backdrop of the ongoing lead crisis and America's aging and inadequate water infrastructure, Mr. Hawkins will illustrate how we meet the needs of a growing population, delivering clean, safe, reliable water to all Americans.

Under his leadership, DC Water has been transformed into an innovative, customer-oriented enterprise. DC Water is implementing the \$2.6 billion Clean Rivers Project to nearly eliminate combined sewer overflows, investing \$950 million to reduce nutrient pollution to the Chesapeake Bay,

and finishing a \$470 million waste-to-energy program to produce a marketable nutrient-rich soil amendment and generate 13 megawatts of green power. George has also tripled the program to replace water infrastructure.



Keynote Speaker: George Hawkins

DC Water has been the recipient of almost every major award in the industry, including most recently, the 2016 US Water Prize for its resource recovery efforts.

A few of us at Prairie Rivers Network heard Mr. Hawkins speak in D.C. recently and we

immediately wanted to

bring his message to you, our members and friends. If you can speak with as much passion about water infrastructure as Mr. Hawkins does, you deserve to be heard!

We look forward to spending an inspiring evening with you. See more at:

PrairieRivers.org/dinner

Look for your invitation in the mail in mid-September.//

WHO IS YOUR RIVER SUPERHERO?

Who is your River Superhero? Nominate them for Prairie Rivers Network's River Steward Award! This annual award honors a volunteer who is working above and beyond to protect the waters of Illinois.

Nominations are due by September 23, 2016. The award will be presented at the Annual Dinner on October 21.

Please e-mail Sarah Scott at sscott@prairierivers.org the following information for consideration:

- Nominee's contact information and your contact information
- Summary of nominee's river conservation efforts, general background information concerning the river/watershed of interest, and the specific work for which the nominee deserves recognition.

WILDLIFE CRISIS continued from page 1

at greatest risk. It will also protect the interests of hunters and anglers by ensuring that existing funding streams are used for recovering game species, as originally intended.

New revenue will be used by each state to safeguard wildlife and their habitat as laid out in existing, but unfunded State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans provide accountability and oversight because states must use these funds on work identified within the Action Plans. The plans are updated every ten years with the latest science, require public input, and are approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Millions in new funding for Illinois' Wildlife Action Plan would expand protections for 36 species of special concern, including 23 endangered, 8 threatened, and 5 watch-list species such as the prairie-chicken, barn owl, short-eared owl, northern harrier, upland sandpiper, Eryngium stem borer, king rail, least and American bittern, loggerhead shrike, ornate box turtle, and monarch butterfly. Implementing actions in the plan will make a difference for these and other species that are threatened by climate change, development, and intensive agriculture.



The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan would help protect the gray bat.

Already the Iroquois County State Wildlife Area and the Hooper Branch Savanna Nature Preserve have seen a fantastic recovery of native sedges and forbs as a direct result of implementing a comprehensive hydrology plan. As a result, Illinois Department of Natural Resources staff continue to find new populations of endangered plants in areas that were previously too dry. And recovery of native plants means recovery of native wildlife. This spring, two endangered Blanding's turtles were observed in ditches now plugged and holding water. By holding more surface water longer into the summer, high quality sedge meadows are

protected, ensuring their long-term viability for the animals that depend on them.

In addition to accelerating the plan for the Iroquois County State Wildlife Area and other high priority areas in Illinois' Wildlife Action Plan, conservation efforts funded by the Act could include reintroducing imperiled species, conserving and restoring important habitat, and fighting invasive species and disease.



Photo by Dmitry Azovtsev

States could also use a portion of the funds for wildlife-related recreation such as wildlife viewing, nature photography, and trails. And these funds can improve conservation education that will activate the next generation of wildlife stewards, paying dividends far into the future.

Adequate funding is the key to protecting species long before they become endangered. Allowing state fish and wildlife agencies to step in earlier will create new jobs, foster regulatory certainty for businesses, and ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit the full diversity of our nation's fish and wildlife.

Please join Prairie Rivers, the National Wildlife Federation, and a growing, bi-partisan coalition calling for passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

As Theodore Roosevelt once said, "The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value." //

TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT AMERICA'S WILDLIFE
www.prairierivers.org/protect-wildlife

ENDOWMENT FOR RIVERS: INVESTING IN OUR NEXT 50 YEARS AND BEYOND

As our Golden Anniversary year (2017) fast approaches, we are taking stock. We are reflecting with pride on our founding accomplishments - saving one of Illinois' great rivers, a beloved park and natural area, and some of the richest farmland in the world from the destructive ravages of a dam.



Our founders' efforts ensured that the Sangamon River and Allerton Park were preserved for future generations to enjoy. We proudly carry on their legacy today.

Over fifty years with you by our side, we have helped communities fight off dirty coal mines and protect their drinking water, saved critical wetlands, increased wildlife habitat, and protected the Clean Water Act. Now we are fighting to protect drinking water from threats like coal ash, lead, pharmaceuticals, and toxic algal blooms caused by nutrient pollution. We all want a legacy of clean water that our children and grandchildren can safely drink and enjoy, and that will provide habitat to sustain our precious wildlife.

We created the Prairie Rivers Network Permanent Endowment for Rivers to be a lasting investment, ensuring that Prairie Rivers Network can continue to meet the challenges of our changing world as we enter our next half-century. Our Endowment funds are soundly and ethically invested so that we can count on their proceeds for years to come.

There are so many ways you can invest in our future. You can give a gift to one of our named funds, like the Charles Goodall Memorial Fund—established in honor of Charles' long-time pursuit of farming practices that protect the earth and water, or the Eric Freyfogle Fund—honoring

Eric's leadership and commitment to the protection of Illinois' rivers and lands. Or if you want to honor someone's commitment to conservation, you too can name a fund within our Endowment and encourage others to invest there.

Talk with your financial advisor about how a donation to the Prairie Rivers Endowment may lower your tax burden. Leave a lasting legacy for the rivers you love by naming the Prairie Rivers Network Endowment among your inheritors.

Together we've met the many challenges to Illinois' rivers, water, and wildlife for nearly 50 years. With a gift of any size to our Endowment for Rivers, you can join the Prairie Rivers Network Legacy Circle, and help ensure another 50 years of success.

Our rivers and wildlife are counting on you.//



THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SUPPORT CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY RIVERS

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MONTHLY GIVING

Gift Membership

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prairierivers.org/membership

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Become a Member or Renew your Membership

- \$25 Student Membership \$50 Basic Membership
 \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail (to receive E-news & Action Alerts): _____

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

CAROL'S CURRENTS continued from page 2

other pollinators. As a result, this troop has committed to establish new monarch habitat both at the church where they meet and at the school nearby. And they will be asking their mayor to sign the Mayor's Monarch Pledge to take steps to make their community monarch-friendly.

During another spring break week, we enjoyed visits by a middle school intern interested in pursuing a career in conservation, giving him insight into the work we do each day to protect the rivers, water, and wildlife of Illinois. We're happy to report that he ended his week still enthusiastic about his conservation future!

PLANT MILKWEED PLEASE!



At a recent celebration of monarchs, kids showed their support for pollinators by creating a paper quilt.
Photo by Stephen N. Kemp/SNK Photography

In April, an ambitious group of Urbana youth, ages 4-10, took on the Illinois Marathon 5K challenge as a PRN team. Not only did they run the 5K, together they raised over \$1,000 for us! In May that same group joined me in calling on Urbana Mayor Laurel Prussing to take the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. We visited with the Mayor in Council chambers, and each member of the little group asked the Mayor if she could take one action in the Monarch Pledge. And then the two youngest members of the group (both aged 4) shouted out, "Plant milkweed, please!"

When 4 year olds can tell us how to protect nature, we know we're moving in the right direction!!//

Carol



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Please share this newsletter with a friend when you are done.

YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS NEEDED
 Renew your membership or become a new member today because clean water is worth protecting.
prairierivers.org/membership



Happy Trails, Tyler!

Tyler Rotche has left PRN to hike the Pacific Crest Trail. We are grateful to Tyler for his contributions to Illinois' waters and communities.

Welcome back, Kim!

Kim Erndt-Pitcher has rejoined the staff to protect Southern Illinois communities from coal pollution. Kim previously worked for Prairie Rivers Network from 2004-2009 as a watershed organizer and wildlife and river restoration specialist.

UPCOMING EVENTS//



CHECK OUR ONLINE EVENTS CALENDER FOR THESE EVENTS AND MORE

FILM: THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING
 based on the book by Naomi Klein
 September 14, 6:30 pm
 Channing-Murray Foundation, Urbana

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ENVIRONMENTAL HAPPY HOUR
 September 15, 5-7pm, Pizza M in Urbana

MISSISSIPPI RIVER DAY OF ACTION
 September 17, various locations

MISSISSIPPI EARTHTONES FESTIVAL
 September 17, Alton, IL

GREAT LAKES RESTORATION CONFERENCE
 September 20-22, Sandusky, OH
<http://conference.healthylakes.org/>

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER CONFERENCE
 October 13-14, Quad Cities
<http://www.riveraction.org/umrc/>

PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK ANNUAL DINNER
 October 21, I Hotel, Champaign

PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK HAPPY HOUR
 December 2
 location TBD, Champaign-Urbana

PHOTO ATTRIBUTES (C) //
 David Hale, masthead
 David Kidd, pg 4
 Dmitry Azovtsev, pg 5
 Jason Lindsey, masthead, pg 6
 Stephen N. Kemp/SNK Photography, pg 7



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



Designate Prairie Rivers Network to receive your ESI workplace giving contributions.



Earn Money for Prairie Rivers Network while you shop at Schnucks - prairierivers.org/schnucks