



Protecting Illinois' Rivers for People, Fish, and Wildlife



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**What benefits have you seen and do you expect to see in the future?**

In the second year of planting annual rye grass, we averaged 246 bushels of corn to the acre. And on a farm that is light timber soil, that just blew my mind.

I'm expecting my yields to go up and up as we build our organic matter. When we had the drought in 2012, we had some cover crop residue covering the ground in the spring. Along with the no-till, I think that kept our soil cooler. We still had excellent yields in 2012 even though it was one of the worst droughts going back 30 years.

**Why do you say that conventional methods can't keep working?**

They would continue to work for a while, but there's a lot of great civilizations that perished from turning their farmland into a desert. And that's where we're headed if we continue what we've been doing.//

To read the entire interview, go to:  
[prairierivers.org/cover-crops-interview](http://prairierivers.org/cover-crops-interview)

**Why do you use cover crops?**

Dad always said, and I'm sure he heard it from his father, "Leave the farm better than you found it."

Secondly, I believe cover crops are going to make me money long term by recycling nutrients, slowing down soil erosion, and getting me more organic material in my soil. I feel that tillage is not sustainable long-term.

I've read where we've lost half of our organic matter; the virgin prairie soils were 7% organic matter and now we're running about 3.5%. The guys who have done cover crops long-term, I'm talking 20-25 years, they're getting back to about 5% again, which is outstanding.

And by putting cover crops on I can save money on inputs - my fertilizer and some of my herbicides - because cover crops recycle nutrients and have a deterrent effect on some of the weeds.

I'd like to tell you that I'm doing this to save the prairie rivers and the environment and the Gulf of Mexico's hypoxia problem. But that's probably number three down the list for me. I'm doing it to make the farm better. I'm doing it to save money on inputs and make money with higher yields.

**For those unfamiliar, explain what cover crops are. Are these crops that you market and sell?**

No, our cash crops are still corn and soybeans. Cover crops are just an interim, to keep something green growing when there's nothing else out there. There are microorganisms in the soil that feed off the crop roots and the residue. If you have cover crops, you can keep those microbes healthy. They still have something to eat through the lean times. I've been told there's more microbes in a teaspoon of soil than there are people on the earth.

## CAROL'S CURRENTS

We won one for clean water last month! In response to our legal appeal, the Illinois Appellate Court ruled that three significant waste water treatment permits issued by the Illinois EPA to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) violate the Illinois Environmental Protection Act. The permits allowed MWRD—the largest sewage treatment system in the world—to continue discharging high levels of the pollutant phosphorus to Illinois waters, ultimately polluting the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Too much phosphorous fuels algae growth, which robs rivers and lakes of oxygen, kills fish and other aquatic life, and can make water undrinkable. It also fouls our lakes with the green scum of noxious algal blooms each summer. Technology for removing phosphorus is available and widely used. As a result of this victory, the Illinois EPA will have to redo MWRD's permits to ensure the district's discharges don't continue to foul our waters with algae.

### [Accelerating Illinois' Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy](#)

Nearly half of phosphorus (P) entering our waters is from farmland soil runoff with every rain, along with nitrogen (N) that flows from our heavily tiled farmlands. Illinois' Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, published by the IEPA in July 2015, sets an ambitious goal to reduce N and P runoff from agricultural sources by 45%. We are encouraging farmers

statewide to adopt conservation practices such as reduced fertilizer use, conservation tillage and cover crops. These practices nourish and retain soil and keep nutrients out of water and on the land where they belong. 60% of Illinois' farmland owners now reside off the farm, renting their lands to tenant farmers. Many of these landowners may not be aware of steps they can take to reduce nutrient pollution from their fields. We are partnering with a few Soil and Water Conservation Districts to send a newsletter that prepares off-farm landowners to work with their farm team to utilize conservation cropping practices and do their share to reduce nutrient pollution.

### [Lead Pollution: A Concern for Illinois Communities](#)

Recent revelations of high lead levels in drinking water are likely just the tip of the iceberg. Aging water pipes, corrosive water treatment additives, and lead fittings and fixtures in homes are a toxic combination. We are working on state legislation that improves lead monitoring, public education on lead exposure risks, and public notification of high lead levels in drinking water. We also support bills introduced by Rep. Duckworth and Rep. Quigley that strengthen public notification requirements in the federal lead and copper rule and provide grants for reducing lead in tap water. This is an important time for us all to raise our voices to demand clean water.



## 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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VICKIE NUDELMAN  
Operations Manager

ANDREW REHN  
Water Resources Engineer

TYLER ROTCHE  
Water Policy Specialist

SARAH SCOTT  
Administrative Assistant

### ENDOWMENT UPDATE:

We are excited to announce Carol Wock's generous gift of ALL of her certified organic farmland to the Endowment in honor of her late brother Charles Goodall.

[www.PrairieRivers.org/legacy](http://www.PrairieRivers.org/legacy)



**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.**



# prairieriversnetwork 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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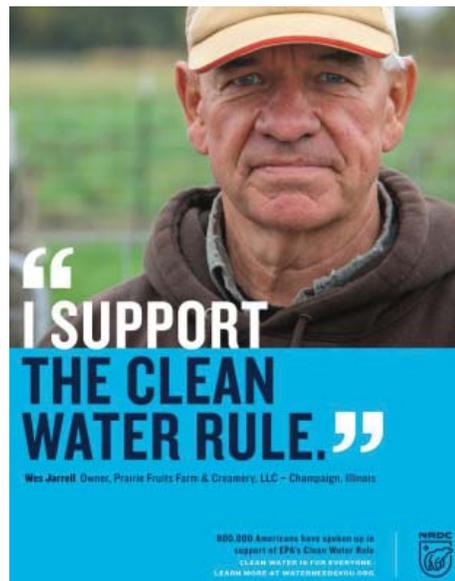
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Champaign, IL 61820  
(217) 344-2371

[prairierivers.org](http://prairierivers.org)

Thanks to our members, supporters, staff and board of directors, Prairie Rivers Network continued its trajectory of growth in 2015. 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.

We are especially proud of our “Clean Water is Good for Business” campaign to protect the Clean Water Act, our most important clean water law. Our campaign was used by our national partners and our video was featured on the U.S. EPA’s website. **We also received national recognition for our campaign leadership and creative video and social media work.**

- Carol Hays, Executive Director



## CLEAN WATER & HEALTHY RIVERS: *Protecting Vulnerable Habitat & Vital Waters*

Much of our work is carried out in partnership with other groups and organizations. We thank them for effective working relationships to protect our rivers and streams.

### DEFENDING THE CLEAN WATER ACT

The **U.S. EPA finalized the long-awaited Clean Water Rule**, which protects the nation's smallest, most vulnerable streams and wetlands that give life to our larger river systems. We worked with many groups across the country to support EPA's efforts to clarify clean water protections.

We helped garner and amplify important voices like small businesses and farmers in support of the Clean Water Rule through our widely popular social media campaign: #4cleanwater.

Because a federal court has placed a temporary hold on the rule, we continue to work hard to see that the rule is upheld.

### PROTECTING WILDLIFE HABITAT

We successfully coordinated the Middle Illinois River Conservation Collaborative — bringing together conservation entities to acquire, restore, and protect floodplain habitats along the Illinois River. This effort led to the **addition of 283 acres to The Wetlands Initiative's Dixon Waterfowl Refuge**, an acquisition that will restore upland habitats, protect a rare seep, and reduce agricultural pollution on the site.



*Elliot at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge.*

### REDUCING THE THREAT OF INVASIVE SPECIES

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 revitalization of the Chicago River** as a necessary component of any invasive species solutions. We developed consensus recommendations for Congress to fund robust and aggressive programs to protect against Asian carp now, while we work on long-term solutions for dozens of other invasive species.



*Robert discussing the threat of Asian carp while on a boat tour of the Chicago River.*

### REDUCING NITROGEN & PHOSPHORUS POLLUTION

Illinois finalized its plan for reducing the nitrogen and phosphorous pollution that clogs our waters with noxious algae, depletes oxygen, and contributes to the Gulf of Mexico dead zone. Prairie Rivers Network sits on the state's policy committee to address nutrients and will work for aggressive reduction of this harmful pollution.

## SAVING WETLANDS

Prairie Rivers Network is **co-leading a campaign to stop a highly destructive Army Corps project** that would devastate fish and wildlife on the Middle Mississippi River and put Illinois river towns at great risk of flooding. The New Madrid levee would destroy more than 50,000 acres of wetlands that provide vital spawning and breeding habitat for fish and wildlife. The **campaign has gained support of key leaders** like Senator Dick Durbin, and state floodplain experts.

## FIGHTING BAD RIVER MANAGEMENT

Navigation practices and outdated infrastructure continue to degrade the health of our largest rivers. With a coalition of regional and national partners, we are **advocating for small-scale, non-structural alternatives for navigation** as preferable to new locks and dams.



*Overlooking the Mississippi River.*

We object to costly and destructive navigation projects while promoting the importance of wetlands and green infrastructure for environmental protection and flood risk reduction.

## ENERGY & WATER: *Reducing the threats from coal mining & coal ash*

### ACHIEVING STRONGER FEDERAL REGULATION OF COAL ASH

In April 2015, the U.S. EPA finalized the first-ever regulations for the storage and disposal of toxic coal ash. **Years of advocacy—including testifying, organizing, commenting, and, ultimately, bringing a lawsuit—finally forced the U.S. EPA to regulate coal ash dumping** and closure requirements for these dumps.

### WORKING FOR STRONGER ILLINOIS REGULATIONS OF COAL ASH

We are **working to achieve strong state rules regarding the closure of coal ash dumps in Illinois**. Strong state rules are needed to close several gaps left by the federal coal ash rules, and ensure that responsible clean-up and monitoring is required at all of the state's polluting coal ash dumps.

### EXPANDING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Responding to calls for fairness and transparency, Illinois DNR is advancing proposed rules that will improve the ability of citizens to participate in coal mining permitting.

**Expect improved public access to important permit documents, earlier notice of mining plans, and an end to IDNR's adversarial positions during permit hearings.**

### THWARTING THE BULLDOG MINE

The proposed Bulldog coal mine in East-Central Illinois originally planned to begin mining in January 2014. We **worked with residents and advocates to highlight discrepancies and flaws in the mine's permit applications**, which prompted serious review and extensive questioning of the permits. As it stands, the **Bulldog mine has not secured either of the permits it needs to begin mining.**



*Tyler testifying at one of numerous hearings on coal ash.*

# Membership & Financials

## PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK ENDOWMENT



In 2015, we introduced the Prairie Rivers Network Endowment, a permanent investment fund to enhance and sustain the work of Prairie Rivers Network. The Endowment is an investment in Illinois' future and an opportunity to leave a legacy of clean water and healthy rivers for future generations.

Prairie Rivers Network's Legacy Society is a group of dedicated members whose outstanding support and long-term vision allows us to protect the rivers and streams of Illinois and the countless wild species that inhabit them now and into the future.

We thank the following Legacy Society members who have given or pledged to the Prairie Rivers Network Endowment.

Ellyn and David Bullock  
 Glynnis Collins and Nick Brozovic  
 Jean Flemma and John Epifanio  
 Jane and Eric Freyfogle  
 Nancy Goodall  
 Rosemary Laughlin

Anna Keck and Jason Lindsey  
 Jon McNussen  
 Becky Mead  
 Reneé Potter  
 Bill Van Hagey  
 Carol Wock

## Statement of Activities for the year ended December 31, 2015

### Revenue and Support

Donations & Special Fundraising Events	\$212,740
Grants	\$379,401
Investment & Dividends	\$13,381
In-Kind Donations	\$4,740
Miscellaneous	\$14,464
Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	(\$12,183)
<b>Total Revenue \$</b>	<b>\$612,543</b>

### Expenses

Program Staff Salaries	\$291,175
Program Staff Taxes & Benefits	\$49,995
Direct Program Costs	\$122,372
Fundraising (including salaries & taxes/benefits)	\$67,032
Management/General (including salaries & taxes/benefits) \$	\$37,326
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$567,900</b>

### Net Assets

Beginning of year	\$342,372
End of year	\$387,015

### Donations & Fiscal Management

Prairie Rivers Network's revenue comes mainly from private foundation grants (62% of 2015 revenue, some of which is earmarked for 2016 spending) and member donations (34% of 2015 revenue). Over 80% of 2015 expenditures were in pursuit of our clean water and healthy river programs. Fundraising and administrative operations combined accounted for 18% of spending.

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 \*\*  
Fox Development Corporation \*  
Patagonia-Enviro Department \*\*  
UpClose Marketing and Printing \*\*

#### Silver \$500–\$999

Blue Moon Farm  
Elliott Counseling Group  
Marco Technical Documentation  
Paul's Machine & Welding Corporation  
Share Power Responsible Investing

#### Bronze \$250–\$499

Champaign Telephone Company  
Hartke Engineering and Surveying  
Kickapoo Landing\*\*  
Neutral Cycle\*

#### Members \$1–\$249

Art Theater Co-op\*  
Big Grove Tavern\*  
Brown, Hobbs, and McMurray Insurance  
Caterpillar Foundation  
CDC Paper & Janitor Supply  
Champaign Surplus\*  
Color & Grain  
J.T. Pierce Custom Lawn  
Krannert Center for the Performing Arts\*  
Lester Financial Group  
Manifold  
Pizzeria Antica\*  
Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery\*  
RENew Design\*  
Swearingen Farms  
Treadway Clay\*  
Upper Sangamon River Conservancy\*

### Groups/Public Entities

Bangs Lake Advisory Committee  
Champaign County Audubon Society  
Des Plaines River Association  
First Presbyterian Church of Urbana Green Team  
Illinois Smallmouth Alliance  
Laborers Local Union #393  
National Wildlife Federation  
Northwest Illinois Audubon Society  
Prairie Group of the Sierra Club  
SCARCE  
Vermilion County Conservation District  
Wesley United Methodist Church

We are grateful to all of our donors and funders, especially those who have been with us for many years. Your annual support ensures that the fight for clean and healthy rivers is carried on.

### Foundation Grantors

Alliance for the Great Lakes  
The Educational Foundation of America  
The Energy Foundation  
Environmental Law and Policy Center  
Grand Victoria Foundation  
Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation  
The Joyce Foundation

The Lumpkin Family Foundation  
The McKnight Foundation  
Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Inc.  
RE-AMP  
River Network  
Rockefeller Family Fund  
Walton Family Foundation



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.

### Headwaters Circle \$5,000 and above

**Irene and Clark Bullard**  
**William J. Davey**  
**Jane and Eric Freyfogle**  
**Kim Kramer and**  
**Melissa Orlie**  
**Anna Keck and**  
**Jason Lindsey**  
**Chris and David Main \*\***  
**Jon McNussen**  
Carol Wock

### River Defenders \$2,500–\$4,999

**Nancy Goodall**  
**Susan and Lewis Hopkins**  
**Sharon and Jack Paxton**

### River Protectors \$1,000–\$2,499

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**Ralph Alexander**  
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Maggie Bruns  
**Glynnis Collins and**  
**Nick Brozovic**  
**Ellyn and David Bullock**  
**David Delaney**  
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Anne Ehrlich  
**Jean Flemma and**  
**John Epifanio**  
**John Gilpin**  
**Bruce Hannon**  
**Patricia Hannon**  
**DiAnne and Terry Hatch**  
**Dixie and Gary Jackson**

**Karen Carney and**  
**Rob Kanter \*\***  
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**Sherrill and**  
**Richard Worthen**

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 Tim Bannon  
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 David Riecks \*\*  
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 George and Myra Gordon  
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 Libby Johnston  
 Morgan Johnston  
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 Duane Kimme  
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 Margaret and Ed Krol  
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 Rob Krumm  
 Piyush Labhsetwar  
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## ILLINOIS' SELF-BONDING PROBLEM

BY TYLER ROTCHE

This April, the world's largest privately owned coal producer, Peabody Energy Corporation, filed for bankruptcy protection. Companies responsible for more than 45 percent of U.S. coal output are now in bankruptcy.

Peabody's bankruptcy marks an important chapter in coal's story of structural decline. The days of coal's dominant position in our energy portfolio are gone – coal supplied one third of electricity generation last year, down from the 50 percent share it claimed at the beginning of the century. The days of coal's dominant position in Illinois employment have been lost to mechanization – Illinois now produces half as much coal as a century ago, with only 4 percent of the miners.

Investors are increasingly turning against coal. Nevertheless, this is not the end of Peabody – this is restructuring.

According to a company spokesperson, “there are no impacts and no effects from today's [bankruptcy] announcement on jobs, on offices or on operations.” In part, they may be correct – this is primarily a time of balance sheet restructuring. U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration data show drastic cuts across the company's mining portfolio, but this effort to stabilize prices in the oversupplied coal market may (or should) have occurred regardless.

The real impact of Peabody's bankruptcy will be most evident in bankruptcy court. Will “balance sheet restructuring” leave the taxpayer to pay for unrestored mine sites?

Given that Peabody's Securities and Exchange Commission 10K filing shows \$1.4 billion in self-bonding liabilities – and only a \$200 million loan secured for reclamation obligations – there is a strong chance that the answer is “Yes.”

Every coal company is required to restore affected mine lands – returning the approximate original contour of the land, minimizing damage to water bodies, establishing permanent vegetation in the area, and bringing the area



*Peabody's abandoned Will Scarlet Mine - the disastrous result of unfunded reclamation obligations.*

to a usable condition. Mining law requires “bonding” to ensure that funds are available in case the company shirks its obligations.

Illinois allows companies to use (a) surety bonds (where a third party agrees to uphold the company's obligations, like an insurance policy); (b) collateral bonds (using cash or other assets); or (c) self-bonds (where a company submits financial information as proof of its financial health).

Today, \$127,690,995.25 in outstanding reclamation bonding is represented by self-bonds, purporting to cover 35 mining areas. The bulk of this amount is held by Peabody Energy, through “Peabody Investments Corp.”

While Peabody has plans for reclamation, the only real guarantee for clean-up is essentially a “too-big-to-fail” stamp given to a floundering company struggling to compete.

After a lengthy bankruptcy agreement, mining regulators might have to settle on less than a 100% payment, leaving insufficient funds for restoration – meaning that the funds would have to be obtained elsewhere.

As Peabody scrambles to stay afloat, Illinois has a closing window of opportunity to acknowledge reality, and ensure that Peabody does not escape mine reclamation responsibilities during bankruptcy.

Illinois communities have worked to ensure fiscal stability amidst a struggling state budget – we don't need to take on liabilities from Peabody and other irresponsible operators.//



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 Please make a special donation right now to our Miles for Monarchs fundraiser because the Monarch butterfly is in trouble.



# Miles for Monarchs//

## THANK YOU RUNNERS AND WALKERS

Monarchs go right through Illinois during their 3,000 mile annual migration. Monarchs cannot survive without milkweed; their caterpillars only eat milkweed plants, and monarch butterflies need milkweed to lay their eggs. Unfortunately, we have lost almost all milkweed and native pollinator plants from the landscape due to urban sprawl and intensive agriculture.

Thank you to the following runners and walkers who are raising money for the Monarch butterfly during their charity races at the 2016 Illinois Marathon:

- Andrea Fain
- Jean Flemma
- Carol and Scott Hays
- Rob Kanter
- Nudelman Family
- Erin Slifer

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Monarchs are beautiful creatures and important pollinators. PRN is working with our partners to promote and coordinate the planting of milkweed and other pollinator plants across Illinois. Please help by making a donation today!

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