

June 16, 2021

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Office of Water Resources
1 Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702

RE: Illinois Water Plan Public Comments (submitted via email)

Illinois State Water Plan Task Force:

Please accept the following comments on behalf of Prairie Rivers Network.

We appreciate that the State of Illinois has undertaken the process of revising the State Water Plan. This is a critical moment in the state's history in regards to the future of our water resources. Climate change is already altering weather patterns and precipitation. Water supplies are stressed in parts of the state. Many of the state's waters continue to be frayed by agricultural and industrial pollution decades after the passage of the Clean Water Act. The state's plan needs to address the various threats and issues of the 21st century to ensure that the state has plentiful, clean water to sustain the health and well-being of all the people of Illinois, as well as the health and functioning of its natural resources, its wildlife, and its lakes, rivers, and aquifers.

Some of the draft recommendations released last month are a laudable first step in achieving the above goal, but many fall far short. What has been released to date seems very preliminary. It appears that the State is not giving the water plan the resources and consideration it deserves. Multiple subcommittees have not even released recommendations, including the Water Quality subcommittee. To be this far into the process and still have no recommendations on something as important as the quality of the water that millions of Illinois residents drink is, frankly, an embarrassment. We encourage the state to not rush the release of the plan, but rather to give all topics their proper due. While many of these issues are urgent and timely, there is no benefit to releasing a water plan that does not adequately address the most important water issues of our time. We suggest that the Task Force takes the time it needs so that the final plan is thorough in its recommendations for robust protection of Illinois' water.