



STATE OF ILLINOIS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Illinois River Coordinating Council Quarterly Meeting

**Thursday, October 28, 2010
1:30 PM**

**Chicago Botanic Garden, Auditorium
Glencoe, Illinois**

**Department of Natural Resources
Springfield, Illinois**

Minutes

Call to Order and Roll Call

Director Marc Miller, Department of Natural Resources, called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM, and welcomed members and guests. Olivia Dorothy, Department of Natural Resources, called the roll.

Citizen Members

Lee Bunting, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River; Reggie Greenwood, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association; Daphne Mitchell; Wendell Shauman, Illinois Farm Bureau; and Richard Worthen.

State Agency Members

Director Marc Miller, Department of Natural Resources; Charles Perino, Department of Transportation; Jared Thornley, Department of Agriculture; and Terry Weldin-Frisch, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Ex-Officio Members

Lee Albright, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Lt. Colonel David Bitner, US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District; Roy Deda, US Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District; Jamie Diebal, US Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency; Harry Guntheroth, US Coast Guard, Sector Upper Mississippi; Bill Kruidenier, University of Illinois, College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences; Marshall Plumley, US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District; Cathy Pollack, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Chris Urban, US Environmental Protection Agency; and Doug Yeskis, US Geological Survey.

Sustainability and the Plant Conservation Science Center – Bob Kirschner, Chicago Botanic Garden

Opened in September 2009, the Chicago Botanic Garden's 38,000-square foot Plant Conservation Science Center provides laboratories and teaching facilities for scientists, land managers, students and interns whose research is critical to the Garden's efforts to save our planet by saving our plants. The building's construction and maintenance regime was recently awarded a Gold LEED rating by the U.S. Green Building Council. The landscape surrounding the building was designed with an eye to maximize runoff water quality remediation

and habitat enhancement. A one-acre rain garden/bioswale complex receives all runoff from the adjoining parking lot and service drive as well as excess runoff from the building's extensive green roof. The building's landscape is serving as a pilot project for The Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™), an interdisciplinary effort to create voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction and maintenance practices.

Director Miller commented that many of the green infrastructure elements used in this building Governor Quinn has promoted for many years to reduce stormwater and improve water quality.

Greenwood asked if the Garden has developed data on how much water is being held by the rain garden to meet the Cook County Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) ordinance. Kirschner responded that the Garden is developing data on plant species. Unfortunately, the site has a layer of clay that reduces the amount of infiltration compared to normal soils in the area. This prevents them from being able to research the amount of percolation through the rain garden. Rain gardens provide the benefit of filtering and improving the quality of the runoff as well as recharging the shallow ground water table. Unfortunately, this rain garden does not accomplish the shallow water ground recharge.

Approval of Minutes

Shauman moved to approve IRCC minutes from August 4, 2010 meeting in Alton. Frisbie seconded. Minutes approved with no corrections unanimously.

Acting Chairman's Remarks

This will be the last meeting Director Miller will serve as Acting Chair of the IRCC. Hopefully, the Council will continue to have many successes under the guidance of the next Lt. Governor. The IRCC has been a model on how to bring the public, state and federal agencies together to work on river issues.

Governor Quinn had many accomplishments with the IRCC. Mud to Parks was established and several projects were funded. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program was reopened and expanded to the Kaskaskia Watershed. Efforts began to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes and remove them from the Illinois River. The Dam Safety Initiative helped save lives through public education, warning signs and actual dam removal. Water quality standards for the Illinois River improved. The Economic Development section of the Illinois River Integrated Management Plan Technical Report was revised and updated.

Member Comment Period

Shauman thanked Director Miller for his tenure as Acting Chair. It has been a pleasure working with him.

Greenwood commented that Lake Riverdale, south of Chicago, is a unique underdeveloped natural area that can be restored. He requests IDNR set up a meeting with MWRD and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to discuss available opportunities and development of a master management plan. Director Miller responded that IDNR would draft a letter requesting meeting with Greenwood and USACE Rock Island.

Urban announced the Great Lakes Initiative through US Environmental Protection Agency will have a new round of funding. She will provide information in November. Thanked Director Miller and Lt. Governor Quinn for their great work with the Council, especially the work Lt. Governor Quinn did for eagle habitat.

Mitchell thanked Director Miller and Dorothy for all their service. She is very proud of the Council's accomplishments and looks forward to continuing their great work.

Deda commented that USACE finished the bypass barrier. There was an event on site on October 29th. Barrier 2B should be online by spring 2011. USACE will begin safety testing in January and February. Miller

asked if barrier 2A will need to come down to do any maintenance activities prior to 2B going online. Deda responded no, 2B will be fully operational before we do maintenance on 2A.

Deda added that the Corps initiated the Great Lakes Mississippi River Basin Study to identify solutions to prevent the exchange of invasive species between the two drainages. The scoping meeting is in December.

Frisbie thanked Council for their support of water quality improvements before the Pollution Control Board (PCB). PCB found in favor of IEPA's recreational use standards. She also thanked IRCC for its work on invasive species, especially the focus on Asian carp.

Frisbie also asked IRCC to encourage MWRD to continue their work with Friends of Chicago River on implementing the North Branch Dam plan. Friends and MWRD did a feasible study of the North Branch Dam/Chicago to develop a modification plan and worked for two years modeling a way to implement the plan. MWRD pulled out citing safety issues. She will provide additional information to the IRCC.

Frisbie also commented that it has been an honor and pleasure to work with Director Miller on the IRCC and looks forward to working with him in the future.

Peoria Island – Marshall Plumley, US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island

The construction phase of the Peoria Riverfront Ecosystem Restoration project was initiated in 2009. This project is being constructed under the Illinois River Basin Restoration Program (Section 519; WRDA 2000) and is cost shared by the State of Illinois. High water last year and earlier this year have been a challenge, however Stage I and II are proceeding concurrently at this time. The dredge channels around the island are complete and the island geotube perimeter is nearly complete. Dredging of the backwater area has begun and the interior of the island is being filled. Finally, riprap has been delivered and installation will begin within the next few weeks. Stage I and II are expected to be complete in 2011.

Worthen asked how soon the dredged areas will fill with sediment. Plumley responded that the Corps has completed a sediment rate analysis with the feasibility study and concluded that to preserve the ecological benefits at that depth will require maintenance dredging every 25 years.

Frisbie asked if this is the first of more than one project. Plumley responded that the Corps has a construction authorization for 16 projects in various stages.

Director Miller commented that the Council needs to encourage full funding in the president's budget.

Plumley added that there are site inspections every other Friday and the public is welcome.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – Debbie Bruce, Department of Natural Resources

IDNR and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded the Illinois Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to include both the Illinois River and Kaskaskia River basins in Illinois. CREP is a voluntary, incentive-based federal, state and local conservation program that works with private landowners to establish conservation practices on erodible lands that help reduce runoff and sedimentation of waterways and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.

CREP has a successful history and the expansion of the program to the Kaskaskia watershed will pay big dividends for the environment in Illinois. This expansion would not be possible without the dedication and leadership provided by Governor Quinn, who has worked for years to enhance conservation efforts in Illinois.

CREP is a partnership between the USDA, FSA, IDNR, Illinois Department of Agriculture, 66 Soil and Water Conservation Districts and many other federal, state, local and non-governmental agencies and groups to

promote water quality and wildlife habitat enhancements. Additionally, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service plays a key technical assistance role and established a CREP Advisory Committee under the State Technical Committee comprised of government agencies, agricultural, environmental and conservation organizations that provide policy guidance for the program.

The program works with landowners to provide both federal and state incentive payments and technical assistance in retiring flood-prone or environmentally-sensitive land through conservation practices that reduce sediment and nutrient runoff, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. Conservation practices available under CREP include permanent native grasses; tree planting; hardwood tree planting; permanent wildlife habitat, non-easement; filter strips; riparian buffer; wetland restoration; rare and declining habitat; and wildlife food plots.

CREP participants receive incentive payments, annual rental payments and cost-share assistance from FSA, and participants who choose one of the State Conservation Easement options receive additional cost-share assistance and a one-time lump sum payment based on soil rental rates and the duration of the easement. Since 1998, landowners in Illinois have voluntarily enrolled 126,500 acres in CREP in the Illinois River basin. The original goal was to enroll 232,000 acres in the program, and the expansion of CREP to the Kaskaskia River basin will allow enrollment of the remaining 105,500 acres in both watersheds.

The Kaskaskia River watershed is the second largest river system in Illinois, flowing for 292 miles from east-central Illinois where it flows into the Mississippi River. Diverse habitats in the Kaskaskia River watershed include the largest contiguous hardwood bottomland forest in the state, two of the most significant grasslands in the state and habitat that is a key part of the Mississippi River flyway.

Counties now part of CREP are Adams, Bond, Brown, Bureau, Calhoun, Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clinton, Coles, Cook, DeKalb, DeWitt, Douglas, DuPage, Effingham, Fayette, Ford, Fulton, Greene, Grundy, Hancock, Henderson, Henry, Iroquois, Jefferson, Jersey, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Knox, Lake, LaSalle, Lee, Livingston, Logan, McDonough, McHenry, McLean, Macon, Macoupin, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Mason, Menard, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Peoria, Perry, Piatt, Pike, Putnam, Randolph, St. Clair, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, Stark, Stark, Tazewell, Vermilion, Warren, Washington, Will and Woodford.

The CREP expansion does not increase the total CREP cost estimated at \$700 million, with USDA contributing \$580 million and Illinois contributing \$120 million. Sign-up for enrollment under the expanded CREP agreement will begin later this year, and is scheduled to continue until the goal of 232,000 acres is complete. Enrolled lands remain under a CREP contract for up to 15 years.

Bruce added that IDNR was recently awarded another USDA grant for \$525,250 to implement an incentive program promoting public access for hunting and fishing. The Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP) will begin enrolling landowners in the Illinois River and Kaskaskia River watersheds later this year.

The federal grant for IRAP is from the USDA Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program. The new program will include a Fishing Access Campaign targeted in the Kankakee River watershed, a Youth Turkey Hunting Campaign to be implemented with the National Wild Turkey Federation and a Large Landowner Campaign to allow access for hunting, fishing and other compatible recreational opportunities.

IRAP will provide incentives and liability waivers to landowners who allow free public access to their properties for recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing, boating and other activities compatible with the land and water conditions. Landowners enrolled in IRAP will sign three year leases with opt out provisions. Landowners do not have to enroll in CREP but the program is for CREP eligible areas. In the first year, IDNR hopes to provide access to 100 youth turkey hunting sites; two new access points for fishing, canoeing and boating on the Kankakee and Iroquois Rivers; walk-in fishing access for 200 acres of impounded water; walk-in fishing access for five miles of non-navigable streams; and access to 500 acres for youth deer hunting on large landowner properties.

This program hopes provide the state's 323,000 hunters, 780,000 fisherman and millions of other recreational users with additional opportunities. Landowners interested in the new program or more information should contact the IDNR Office of Resource Conservation.

Urban asked if landowners apply to IDNR online. Bruce responded that eventually the process will be online. Applications for the leases for hunting will be available through IDNR. The fishing and canoe access leases will be available through the local Soil and Water Conservation District.

Director Miller commented that one of IDNR's biggest challenges is providing recreational access for the population. Illinois ranks fifth in the nation in population, but ranks only 48th for public lands available for recreation. It is very hard to provide opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors. With this voluntary, incentive based program IDNR hopes to leverage the CREP program while also focusing on engaging youth.

Mitchell asked if communities along the watershed or along rivers have municipally owned land can apply to this program. Bruce responded that the USDA definition of private land for this program is any landowner that is not a governmental entity. A municipality cannot enroll their property but if there is a large corporate landowner it is possible they might be eligible. IDNR field staff would have to evaluate the property.

Vermilion River Update – Bob Mool, Department of Natural Resources

Last summer, Lonestar Industries closed a section of the Vermilion River after a series of accidents. IDNR has worked with Lonestar Industries for 14 months to reopen this section of the river and a lease has been negotiated. IDNR will lease ground from the company to provide public access to the river as part of a dam safety initiative. As part of the lease agreement, signs and hanging buoys will be placed before and around the dam alerting people of the dangers and moving traffic to the right of the dam. IDNR will submit an administrative rule to establish a section of water as a restricted area where blocks will also be placed.

Mitchell asked when the river will be open for rafting. Director Miller responded that IDNR has a lot to do to make sure this section of the river is safe before it can be opened to the public. Mitchell thanked IDNRs work on this important issue in her area.

Mool thanked Lonestar for working hard with IDNR to reach a solution that would benefit all parties.

Director Miller thanked Representative Mautino for his efforts on this issue.

Asian Carp Accomplishments – Marc Miller, Department of Natural Resources

Governor Quinn has been working though the IRCC since 2004 to address and prevent Asian carp movement. He explored market based solutions with DCEO and fish processing businesses for harvesting; worked with USACE to increase funding for the original barrier, submitted language to fund it at 100% and requested funding for an additional barrier; and requested USACE to increase voltage on the original barrier.

Over the past eight months IDNR has led a team of federal, state and local partners to sample and control potential Asian carp populations in the Chicago Area Waterway System above the electrical barrier. Sampling has occurred on a biweekly basis by agency crews and contract commercial fishermen. Crews have spent over 150 hours on the water and deployed nearly 50,000 yards of nets, and have collected or observed well over 2000 individual fish. This has resulted in a single bighead carp collected in Lake Calumet in June.

In addition to routine monitoring, IDNR led targeted removal actions to eliminate carp from the Chicago Area Waterway System when their presence was detected by eDNA or conventional sampling. Three such actions triggered by positive eDNA detections took place in May and June in the North Shore Channel (electrofishing and netting), Little Calumet River (rotenone action) and Bubbly Creek (electrofishing and netting). Another

took place at Lake Calumet and the Calumet River during June after the Lake Calumet bighead carp was collected through routine sampling. The rotenone action alone produced over 120,000 lbs of fish.

Below the electric barrier in the Marseilles and Dresden Pools, commercial fishermen have been contracted by IDNR to remove Asian carp and reduce propagule pressure on the barrier. To date we have harvested over 52 tons of Asian carp from these pools.

IDNR is promoting the development of Asian carp commercial products to further reduce populations in the lower river and alleviate propagule pressure on the barrier. Activities over the past 8 months include sponsorship of a marketing summit, establishing population baselines to measure change, toxicological analysis of fish flesh, and development of an incentive program for commercial fishermen.

IDNR conducted inspections of bait shops to determine if Asian carpminnows are showing up in live bait shipments. None have been observed. Water samples will be analyzed for carp eDNA to verify observations.

IDNR is preparing to lead an effort to defend the barrier if necessary during the next scheduled maintenance shutdown next February. Intensive sampling occurred in the Lockport Pool using electrofishing, experimental gill nets, trammel nets, a purse seine, midwater trawls, minnow fyke nets and hydroacoustic sonar runs. This produced a total of 6588 fish representing 27 species. No Asian carp were collected or observed.

The data developed through these efforts have led to the conclusion that Asian carp in the Chicago Area Waterway System, if present, are there in very low numbers. With Great Lakes Restoration Initiative support, IDNR will continue monitoring, suppression and rapid response actions as needed through 2011. IDNR is also an active participant in the Great Lakes Commission study of alternatives for separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River drainages, contingent on maintaining beneficial uses of the waterway.

USACE has several projects to prevent fish passage between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. USACE is nearing completion of Barrier 2B, scheduled for operation by February 2011. This will complete the barrier system and provide redundancy in the protection against Asian carp upstream movement. They completed construction of the bypass barrier fence between the Des Plaines River and Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. This will greatly diminish the risk of Asian carp bypassing the electric barrier and moving from the Des Plaines River to the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal during flood events. They also completed the construction of an earthen berm across the I and M Canal, which will prevent Asian carp from bypassing the barrier by moving up the I and M Canal and entering the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal through culvert connections. Additionally, they initiated the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study which will study and propose alternatives for preventing the exchange of invasive species between the two drainages.

Other Business

The next meeting will be under the next Lt Governor.

Public Comment Period

Patty Wojner, Lake County Stormwater Management, appreciates the IRCC and the work of Director Miller and Governor Quinn.

Adjournment

Mitchell moved to adjourn. Wendall seconded. Meeting adjourned at 3:15 PM.