



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

SHEILA SIMON – LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Illinois River Coordinating Council Quarterly Meeting

Friday, September 16, 2011

**Brookfield Zoo
Brookfield, Illinois
1:30 PM**

MINUTES

Call to Order and Roll Call

Lt. Governor Simon called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests to the third quarter meeting of the Illinois River Coordinating Council. Olivia Dorothy, Office of Lt. Governor, called the roll.

Citizen Members

Lee Bunting, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Doug Blodgett, The Nature Conservancy; Daphne Mitchell; Nancy Erickson, Illinois Farm Bureau; Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River; and Reggie Greenwood.

State Agencies

Steve Chard, Department of Agriculture; Val Keener, Department of Natural Resources; Rob Sulski, Environmental Protection Agency; and Terry Weldin-Frisch; Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Ex-Officio

Ken Barr; US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island; Louise Clemency, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Jim McLean, US Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago; Christine Urban, US Environmental Protection Agency; and Doug Yeskis, US Geological Survey.

Absent

Richard Worthen; Department of Transportation; Science Advisory Committee; National Great Rivers Research and Education Center; US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service; US Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency; US Coast Guard; US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development; Illinois Sustainable Technology Center; Illinois Geological Survey; Illinois Natural History Survey; Illinois State Water Survey; and US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis.

Approval of Minutes

Weldin-Frisch moved to approve the minutes from April 13, 2011. Mitchell seconded. Minutes approved unanimously with no corrections.

Chairman's Remarks

The Council will review the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the Illinois River and discuss the education-related tactics and hear presentations from groups working on river education. This weekend is It's Our River Day, visit the website, Itgov.illinois.gov, for a map of events. Members of the Science Advisory Committee were appointed this week to work with experts at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC) to advise the River Coordinating Councils. The next meeting is October 4th, at 6:30 PM in Peoria at Hotel Pere Marquette. This will be part of the Governor's Conference on the Illinois River System.

Measurable Outcomes Status – Olivia Dorothy, Lt. Governor’s Office

Members were assigned to be on ad hoc committees at the last meeting in April. Each committee was assigned a measurable outcome from the IMP, which was written 15 years ago. This is the first part of a comprehensive review of the IMP to rewrite and update the plan. Each portion of the plan will be critically evaluated, first looking at the seven measurable outcomes. The IMP identified these measures as the goals that indicate a successful restoration. Each committee will have five minutes at the next meeting to review their findings and conclusions.

Yeskis commented that his group is not sure how to measure the objectives because the IMP is very vague on timeframe and measurement process. Dorothy responded that Nani Bhowmik, Illinois State Water Survey, should be able to assist because he was an original author. Additionally, it is acceptable to conclude that the measurable outcomes cannot be measured due to unavailable data or other factors.

Yeskis asked about the timeline. Dorothy responded that at least a draft IMP should be written by 2013.

Progress of IMP Education Objectives Discussion – Olivia Dorothy, Lt. Governor’s Office

In the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the Illinois River Watershed, the education recommendation was written 15 years ago to “increase public awareness of the history of conditions in the Illinois River, the past efforts that have been beneficial, and the need to implement the recommendation in this plan throughout the Illinois River Watershed.” Several tactics were developed to implement these objectives.

The first tactic was “to create a speakers bureau to connect presenters and audiences interested in the plan.” There is no record this was ever accomplished.

A tactic was to “provide more information about the strides that agricultural industry has made in soil and water conservation, as well as problems and solutions in the watershed – what individuals can do.” Erickson mentioned that every year, the Illinois Farm Bureau sends out updated information to farm bureaus on conservation and water quality. Chard added that there is a Conservation Partnership annual report (<http://www.agr.state.il.us/pdf/2008conservationannualreport.pdf>).

A tactic was to “increase media coverage to farmer’s best management practices, and other activities that benefit the watershed.” Farm Week (www.farmweeknow.com) and other State of Illinois press releases accomplish this task. Erickson added that the Illinois Farm Bureau interview experts and advertise conservation workshops on the radio. Erickson added that Thought Waves are sent to country farm bureaus to upcoming meetings. Chard added there are conservation tillage seminars around the state that farmers can use.

A tactic was to “provide conservation education for absentee landowners.” Erickson commented that the county Farm Bureaus hold meetings with landowners, including absentee landowners. Buntings added that Soil and Water Conservation Districts host tours for landowners on conservation practices.

A tactic was to “promote incentive based programs for landowners to restore/establish native vegetation, vegetative filter strips, woodlands, and permanent vegetation in riparian corridors.” A number of incentive programs are in place at the State and federal level including Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/CREP/Pages/default.aspx), Conservation Stewardship Program (www.dnr.state.il.us/stewardship), Conservation Reserve Program (www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp), Farmable Wetlands Program (www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=fwp), Grassland Reserve program (www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=grp), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/index.html), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/index.html), and Wetland Reserve Program (www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp_ewp/wrp_index.html).

A tactic was to “prevent the introduction of more exotic or invasive species in the area.” Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has an exotic species program and an Asian Carp Control Committee

(www.asiancarp.org) that is part of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Program (www.iisgcp.org/il-ans/index2.html). The Corps' Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (glmris.anl.gov) reviews the feasibility of physically separating the two water bodies to prevent invasive species from migrating. There are several state, federal, international, and non-governmental partnerships that are working to protect the Great Lakes by studying and preventing the movement of invasive species between the Illinois River and the Great Lakes. They include the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (greatlakesrestoration.us), the Great Lakes Commission (www.glc.org), and Alliance for the Great Lakes (www.greatlakes.org).

Another tactic was to “create a comprehensive guide to the Illinois River Watershed Information Sources for use in the formal and non-formal education system.” Several groups have education materials that meet learning standards for teachers and other organizations including IDNR (dnr.state.il.us/education), NGRREC (www.ngrrec.org/education), and Friends of the Chicago River (www.chicagoriver.org/education).

The tactic “to establish a ‘Friends of the Illinois River Watershed’ organization was accomplished by the Friends of the Illinois River (www.friendsoftheillinoisriver.org).

Another tactic was to “develop four comprehensive modules (early elementary, late elementary, middle school and high school) that help achieve state standards and pertain to the Illinois River’s history, the plan, and what students can do to make a difference.” Illinois State Museum (www.museum.state.il.us/ismsites/dickson/schoolprograms.html) and IDNR (dnr.state.il.us/education) have several programs that can be used as a resource for teachers.

The final tactic was to “create several mobile Illinois River Watershed exhibits, work with museums in the watershed that could tour regions of the watershed for one or more years, and then become installations in the museums.” The Shedd Aquarium (www.sheddaquarium.org/worldwaters.html) has an Illinois Rivers exhibit, and the Illinois State Museum and Dickson Mounds (www.museum.state.il.us/exhibitions) has information on Illinois River History.

Additional comments can be sent to Marc.Ayers@illinois.gov.

Climate Change Education – Matthew Mayer, Brookfield Zoo

It is important to recognize that everyone comes from different backgrounds but must work together to protect rivers and lakes. Conservation must be inclusive, reaching every community, person, income, and ability.

Brookfield Zoo annually receives 2.3 million guests, 110,000 member households, and over 500,000 members. The Zoo generates over \$150 million in economic activity for Illinois’ economy and over 2,000 jobs.

Brookfield Zoo serves as extension of the classroom and works with teachers so they can effectively address our nations failing science education system. Having effective and equipped teachers will have global implications.

Brookfield Zoo is a national leader for protecting endangered species. Last year, a litter of African Wild Dog pups were born. Only three litters were born in the United States last year, Brookfield Zoo is the only facility where all pups survived. Each pup is vaccinated, micro chipped, weighed, and cared for by doctors.

Another achievement of the Zoo is the Addax Antelope, which was recently added to the critically endangered list. The Zoo has had them since 1935, and bred them since 1941. Less than 300 Addax Antelope exist in the wild. Most are located in Chad. Thanks to a successful breeding program, Brookfield Zoo will have a diverse and sustainable population in the facility and one day, introduce back them into the wild.

One of the Brookfield Zoo’s most popular transformations was Maggie, an Orangutan. Maggie turns 50 this year and is one of the oldest Orangutans in North America. The species is critically endangered on two islands of Indonesia due to the decimation of rainforest habitat for palm oil. Faced with hyperthyroid, digestive, and obesity issues, the Brookfield team gave Maggie a makeover, improving her health and well being.

Another star of the Brookfield Zoo is a dolphin named Tapeko. Tapeko is pregnant and the Zoo is able to monitor the fetal development of her calf. Brookfield Zoo is the only zoo in the United States with a CT scanner, allowing 90% more detail on scans for their animals.

Brookfield Zoo also houses the world's oldest cockatoo. Cookie the cockatoo is now in retirement at 78 years old. Cookie came from a zoo in Toronto, Australia. Cookie was part of the original collection, opening on July 1, 1934 and has been retired since September of 2009. Cookie has some age related symptoms and the Brookfield Zoo is working with nutritionist to ensure Cookie stays healthy.

Brookfield Zoo's Great Bear exhibit is a \$27 million, privately funded project that will create \$48 million in economic activity and add 350 construction jobs. The zoo also has a Conservation Leadership Center under construction. This is a 4.5 million dollar project with 500 thousand coming from IDNR funding and certification.

Brookfield's new Climate Literacy Zoo Education Network asks people to take conservation into action. The objective is to discuss ways to save the natural world and save our rivers and lakes. The Zoo will show people what is they want to save and why it is worth saving. A \$1 million grant is being used to engage and get the feelings of partners in the zoo to see where people's attitudes lay in terms of climate change. What people think about climate change and how they see themselves and other animals relating to climate change will also be addressed. Brookfield Zoo and other zoos in the nation have to take in polar bear cubs due to increased temperatures melting the ice caps and glaciers the bears use for habitat.

Brookfield Zoo has potential to reach more than 20 million visitors annually with information about climate change and the impact it has on wildlife and the environment. Through partners, the zoo can reach as many as 100 million people. The Brookfield Zoo will work with top science organizations to help get this done.

Teacher Resources – Val Keener, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Resources for teachers are for grades 5-9 and were developed in 1995. The resources include lessons, student activities, videos, and related supplemental items. Major revisions started in 2010 to create a web based program, and partnership with RiverWatch, which is a citizen scientist program where certified volunteers collect data annually. There is also a stream discovery program that integrates stream sampling with service learning for youth.

There are also summer internships available for college students. These are 10 week programs and offer projects related to the Illinois, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers. The 2010 intern project lesson plan covered topics such as "River of Riches," which discussed locks, dams, barges, and river-related careers. Students learn how tourism affects communities along the river and generates income. The history of transportation on the river - why barges are used and how they compare in transporting material versus rail car or semitrailer - are also discussed. Students also learn the effects of locks and dams on the river and how wildlife is affected. Students can do a self assessment to see what job would fit them best and have them fill out job applications.

Video podcasts are also available for viewing. There are seven of them discussing the economic impacts on local communities as well as how tourism affects the communities at large. Physical factors including plants, animals, and invasive species interactions are included in these podcasts. Thanks to an intern who was fluent in Spanish, some of these podcasts are in Spanish.

Environmental Management Program Teacher's Guide – Ken Barr, US Army Corps of Engineers

This is the 25th anniversary of Upper Mississippi River Environmental Management Program (EMP), which has restored over 100 acres of river ecosystems. The EMP Teachers Guide is designed to educate students on efforts to preserve the economic integrity of the Upper Mississippi River system. The Corps is looking for innovative ways to print the materials.

The guide is available online in PDF format and comes with test questions. The Guide is designed for use with 5th and 6th graders and includes five Units: 1) An introduction to the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) Watershed 2)

Introduction to UMR Ecosystems 3) Introduction to Mississippi River History and culture 4) Introduction to the UMR at Work 5) Introduction to A Shared Resource - Our Mississippi. "Our Mississippi Educational Activities about the Upper Mississippi River" is available on the Rock Island District Corps of Engineers web site and on CD.

RiverWatch in the Classroom – Marcia Lochman, National Great Rivers Research and Education Center

Great rivers have always served as focal points for great endeavors - large discovery expeditions, the development of major metropolitan centers, the emergence of agriculture, and ultimately the rise of civilization itself. NGRREC works to advance understanding of rivers by conducting research that contributes to understanding big rivers and their watersheds; soliciting community and other stakeholder input to ensure that our research is relevant and responsive to societal needs; and building and disseminating a corpus of research and expertise that contributes to sound river management and the continuing sustainability of healthy and productive big river systems.

At the same time, there is a commitment to develop and implement education and outreach programs that extend and apply the knowledge gained from research to foster greater understanding, stewardship and informed decision making about river resources. Since NGRREC's constituency spans multiple ages, disciplines, and stakeholders, education programs are designed and delivered in a variety of methods to meet the needs of each audience served. NGRREC aims to sustain the quality of river environments for the future by providing standard-based school programs, a statewide citizen scientist river monitoring program, a successful internship program, and a series of symposia that cut across disciplines to address river issues.

A unique partnership between the University of Illinois, Lewis and Clark Community College and the Illinois Natural History Survey, NGRREC joins with numerous local, state and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations to accomplish the task of informing others about our great river resources.

Environmental Literacy for Illinois Strategic Plan – Val Keener, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The strategic plan for environmental literacy helps individuals understand environmental issues and how environmental quality is impacted by human decisions. People use this knowledge to make informed decisions and well reasoned choices to take social and political action. In 1995, the original plan was created and is typically updated every five years. In 1998 there was a revision and in 2000, it received unanimous approval by Conservation Congress. In 2005 it underwent a revision and was sent for Conservation Congress recommendations in 2009. A revision was initiated in 2010 and approved in 2011. A key difference with this plan from previous years is the strategies are assigned to groups for completion.

The No Child Left Inside Act is an expansion of the National Environmental Education Act. It was introduced in the U.S. House in 2007. It was also introduced into the 110th, 111th, and 112th Congresses but has not yet passed. The goal is to provide funding for states environmental education and programming for outside the classrooms. It was included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and introduced separately in both houses of congress on July 14th, 2011 as a standalone bill. It has 15 cosponsors including Senator Dick Durbin and Mark Kirk's bipartisan support. Also supporting the bill is Jesse Jackson Jr. and Jan Schakowsky. It has also received leadership from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), IDNR, and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA).

The plan relates to other initiatives such as Race To The Top, 21st Century Skills, Common Corps Standards, and STEM Learning Exchanges. The plan was endorsed by Governor Pat Quinn in executive order 10-7 in April 2010. IDNR, IEPA, and the ISBE continue to lead the implementation. Efforts are needed to get the word out that the plan exist and how to fund and implement it further.

Member Comment Period

Frisbie commented that the IDNR, Cook Country Forest Preserve, Metropolitan Water Reformation District, and the Friends of the Chicago River put together a task force on dam modification and removal of 4 dams in the north branch which will open up miles of stream for fish and paddlers.

Urban commented that requests for proposals on the environmental education grants just came out on September 12th and the closing date is on November 8th. These are for the larger grants up to \$92 thousand. The emphasis is

on underserved or underprivileged communities. The Chicago Horticultural Society just received a grant to do education programs on science related careers. For more info, you can visit www.epa.gov/epahome/grants.htm

Blodgett announced that The Nature Conservancy is still awaiting notification on the Ramsar designation of Emiquon. The Council is invited to hold future meetings at the Dickson Mounds facility.

Greenwood is interested in looking at business practices, especially larger companies who are involved in reducing pollution and creating innovative techniques to reduce hazardous waste. The environmental literacy program might be able to show businesses how to obtain or find out information on such practices.

Dorothy commented that a group was going to convene on USDA's Farmable Wetlands Program, CP 39. Unfortunately, this meeting has not taking place yet due to staff reductions.

McLean commented that the Corps is looking at late October or early November to increase operating parameters for the electric barriers. Research has been conducted and no additional safety concerns are present at this time. The Corps study is prepared for independent peer view. Maintenance on twin barrier system is also underway.

Public Comment Period

Cindy Skrukud, Sierra Club, told the council that this weekend was the 5th year for It's Our River Day. At the event will be a river clean up, bands, and kayaking demonstrations.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM.