

OPENING ADDRESS

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Good Morning and Welcome! At this time I would like to convene the Opening Session of the 2007 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System. I am Bob Frazee, Natural Resources Educator with University of Illinois Extension and am serving as Co-Chair for this conference.

It is exciting to be a part of the interest and enthusiasm that is being generated by holding this eleventh biennial conference on the Illinois River System. However, of the eleven conferences which have been held, this is our first truly *international* conference.

Last night, as part of the Illinois River Coordinating Council meeting, which was held as part of our conference, Lt. Governor Pat Quinn made the exciting announcement that he recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the state of Mazovia in Poland to designate the Wisla (pronounced Vis-la) River as a "Sister River" to the Illinois River. We are very privileged that the Polish government has sent Ms. Anna Ronkiier-Dolanska, the Mazovian Curator for Environment, to join us for our conference to learn about our Illinois River. Anna is essentially the Director of Environment for the state of Mazovia. This relationship is very similar to our own Doug Scott, who is our Director for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Also joining Anna in her visit to our conference is Kamila Jarzabek, Interpreter with the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs for Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn. Would they please stand and let's all give them a hearty "Illinois River Conference" Welcome!

The theme for this year's conference is "The Illinois River: Continuing Our Commitment". During the next two days, our conference speakers will be showcasing not only the significant progress that has occurred during the past twenty-two years, but will be looking through the crystal ball to explore what promises lie ahead for the Illinois River System and "Continuing Our Commitment" to protect and enhance this important natural resource for future generations.

I'm sure from time to time, that many of you have been asked by some of your neighbors, friends or just people you talk with on the street "What makes the Illinois River System so important that you are devoting a part of your life, or your career to studying, researching or protecting it?" I don't know the response that you may have given, but here are a few facts as to why our Illinois River System should be important to *all* the citizens of Illinois!

- The Illinois River is *our state's most important inland water resource*.
- Unfortunately, it is also *one of our state's most threatened waterways*.
- This Illinois Waterway –stretches from Lake Michigan in Chicago to Grafton-- 345 miles.
- It is the only navigational link between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico.
- It is part of the third largest river system in the world – the Mississippi River System.
- It drains 18.5 million acres in three states.
- Nine major rivers enter the Illinois River: Chicago, Des Plaines, Fox, Kankakee, Vermilion, Mackinaw, Sangamon, Spoon, LaMoine.

- Land in 54 Illinois Counties drains into Illinois River.
- It occupies 44% of the land area in our state.
- Twenty-two counties border the Illinois River.
- Over 90% of our state's population lives in the Illinois River Watershed.

The Bottom Line is that we need everyone's help to protect this valuable resource! In the next two days you will learn what's being done by individuals, groups, and agencies at the local, state, and federal level to promote environmental stewardship of our Illinois River System. To help you remember everything being discussed at this conference, our Conference Planning Committee has provided each of you with a bright blue, Illinois River Conference notebook – we hope you find this useful with your note-taking.

I am very pleased to report, we have over 300 individuals registered. This conference provides a true indication of the tremendous interest that is being generated by people in all walks of life in protecting our Illinois River System for the future! In looking over the registration list, we have a very diverse group of participants in terms of their backgrounds and the groups and agencies they represent. This is tremendous!

With this diversity in mind, I would like to encourage each of you, throughout this conference, to actively seek out individuals with *different* opinions and viewpoints on river management. Share your thoughts and concerns with each other, open your minds to new perspectives, and explore the opportunity for compromise. A tremendous opportunity for networking will occur this evening during our barbecue on the Peoria Riverfront.

Our Planning Committee envisions this conference to be more than just a gathering to hear speakers, eat some good food, and visit in the hallways (although these are important components of any good conference). Instead, we hope this conference will educate, enthuse, and empower you, so that on Thursday, you will leave being motivated to aggressively work to protect and enhance our state's most important inland water resource – the Illinois River.

The Governor of Illinois, Mr. Rod Blagojevich, recognizes the tremendous importance of the Illinois River System to our state and further realizes that it also provides Illinois with a key environmental challenge. Consequently, the 2007 Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System has been designated a Governor's Conference. A special Governor's proclamation has been issued to emphasize our state's commitment to conscientiously manage this important natural resource for the benefit of future generations. This Proclamation reads as follows:

WHEREAS, the Illinois River System is a critical component of our state's geography, history, economy, and ecology; and

WHEREAS, many attributes are threatened as a result of the cumulative effects of human activities that have significantly altered the Illinois River system; and

WHEREAS, our state is embracing an integrated approach to large river management and is working in a coordinated and continuous manner for this river; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of the Illinois River Coordinating Council, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the Illinois Conservation 2000 Program, Illinois Rivers 2020, and the Open Lands Trust Fund are important milestones in efforts to protect the resources of the Illinois River; and

WHEREAS, the theme of for the 2007 Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System is "The Illinois River: Continuing Our Commitment;" and

WHEREAS, the conference will be taking place October 2 – 4 at the Holiday Inn

City Centre in Peoria, Illinois;

THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim October 2007 as ILLINOIS RIVER SYSTEM MANAGEMENT MONTH in Illinois, and encourage all

citizens to recognize the economic, recreational, social, and environmental benefits of conserving to properly utilize the resources of the Illinois River Basin.

Signed, Governor Rod Blagojevich

This Proclamation will be on display at the front of this room throughout the conference and will also be printed in the Conference Proceedings. Unfortunately, Governor Rod Blagojevich is unable to attend this Illinois River Conference, as a veto session begins for state lawmakers today in Springfield.

At this time, it is my pleasure to recognize my co-chair for this conference, Kim St John. Kim is the Coordinator for the Prairie Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Office, USDA/NRCS located in Henry, IL. Kim will be chairing the conference sessions tomorrow. Kim, thank you for the excellent leadership you have provided to this conference.

This year, the University of Illinois Office of Conferences and Institutes has been serving as the administrative entity for handling the registration, organization and many other arrangements necessary to make this a successful conference. Michelle Chappell is the Administrative Coordinator and Karen Nichols is the Program Specialist. Please join me in thanking Michelle and Karen for their efforts in organizing this conference.

Two years ago, following the 2005 Illinois River Conference, a statewide planning committee was formed to begin making plans for the conference convening here today. These committee members are listed on page 9 of your Conference Brochure. They have done an outstanding job of developing the program and making the necessary arrangements. Would the planning committee members please stand and be recognized.

In just a couple of weeks, this Planning Committee will be reconvening to begin making plans for the 2009 Illinois River Conference. If you would like to be part of the 2009 Illinois River Planning Committee, please let Kim St John or me know and we'll be sure to send you the meeting details.

This year, we are especially indebted to a number of agencies and organizations for providing significant financial contributions to enhance the quality of this conference. Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze Financially Supporting Sponsors are listed on page 7 of the Conference Brochure. These contributions have enabled our Conference Planning Committee to provide a complimentary meal for our speakers and moderators - a gesture that I'm sure is greatly appreciated. The Supporting Sponsors are also providing complimentary parking for conference participants for those individuals who are using day parking only.

I am also pleased to announce that we have over 60 co-sponsoring agencies and organizations that have assisted in promoting this conference and are committed to protecting and preserving the Illinois River System. They are also listed on page 7 of the Conference Brochure. We welcome each of you and thank you for helping to make this conference a success!

I am pleased to recognize Nancy Erickson, Illinois Farm Bureau, and Scott Wallace, Peoria County District Conservationist for the USDA/NRCS, who were responsible for organizing yesterday's very successful Conference Conservation Tour. Tour participants explored many features of the Illinois River Valley - from recreation resources to historic cultural resources and from backwater wetland restoration to the multiple aspects of a working waterway. Thank you

Nancy and Scott, for an outstanding Conservation Tour!

Yesterday, our conference was very pleased to host the Quarterly Meeting of the Illinois River Coordinating Council. Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn and the members of the Coordinating Council shared their vision of what the Illinois River could be in the future. It is my pleasure to introduce Marc Miller, Senior Policy Advisor for Lt. Governor Pat Quinn and Staff Coordinator for the Illinois River Coordinating Council. Marc was responsible for organizing and conducting yesterday's evening meeting of the Illinois River Coordinating Council and the Open Public Forum & Discussion.

Jennifer Fackler, Program Specialist with the Environmental Council at the University of Illinois, compiled our Conference Abstracts and Speaker Information Booklet and is also serving as our Proceedings Editor. Jennifer is unable to attend this conference, so speakers, before you leave, please provide the Conference Registration Desk with a CD of the paper that you will be presenting if you do not want your PowerPoint included in the Proceedings.

Two other individuals I would like to recognize are Aaron Yetter and April Burgett, who co-chaired our Exhibits Committee. This year, through April & Aaron's leadership, we have 30 educational exhibits. Thank you, for your help in organizing the exhibits.

Before we proceed with the program, I would like to recognize the efforts of two individuals, who are truly unsung heroes in my mind. They include Jay Solomon and Somjad Puangngern with University of Illinois Extension. Jay and Somjad are the technology wizards who will be working behind the scenes to ensure that the speaker's PowerPoint presentations work properly and the conference is kept on schedule. Thanks for a great job!

Throughout our two-day conference, please refer to the Abstract and Speaker Information Booklet for the agenda and for more complete information regarding the speaker's topic and personal background.

On behalf of the planning committee, I hope that you will find this conference to be exciting, informative, educational, stimulating, and enjoyable.

At this time, it is my pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Jim Ardis, Mayor of the City of Peoria. Jim will officially welcome you to the friendly City of Peoria, situated midway on the Illinois River between Chicago and Grafton.

The Opening Session of our eleventh biennial Illinois River Conference examines the Illinois River System by providing a State Focus and Vision. The Moderator for our Opening Session is State Senator David Koehler from the 46th District. He serves as Vice-Chairperson of the Local Government Committee and is also a member of the Appropriations, Commerce & Economic Development, and Transportation Committees. All of these committees are directly involved with management of the Illinois River Watershed. Senator Koehler will introduce the speakers for our Opening Session.

Thank you State Panel members for your insight and direction for the Illinois River for the future. We are now adjourned for a mid-morning break located in Conference Room III & IV. We will reconvene promptly at 10:35 am for the Federal Focus & Vision Panel.

Our Conference Planning Committee felt it was important to also hear from our federal partners. For the second half of our morning session we will learn about the Federal Focus and Vision for the Illinois River. It is now my pleasure to introduce our Moderator for this next session, Dr. Dennis Campion. Dr. Campion is the Associate Dean for the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences with University of Illinois and he is also my boss. I would like to thank Dr. Campion for providing me with the opportunity to serve as the Conference Co-chair for the past ten conferences and for being very supportive of my Extension programming in the Illinois River Basin.

Thank you, Denny, for serving as our Session Moderator.

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