

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director Douglas P. Scott
Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System
Panel: "Illinois River – State Focus and Vision"

----- On April 11, 2007, Governor Rod Blagojevich proclaimed October 2007 as Illinois River System Management Month in Illinois and encouraged the citizens of Illinois to recognize the economic, recreational, social and environmental benefits of conserving to properly utilize the resources of the Illinois River basin.

----- One of the key missions of Illinois EPA is to monitor and protect the water resources of Illinois, which we rely on for drinking water, fishing and recreational use and other environmental and economic benefits. One of the most dramatic improvements in river quality has taken place on the Illinois River.

---- In the early 1970s, the Illinois River was just another dirty old stream--- a receptacle for trash and industrial waste and siltation. But after 30 years of point source pollution control efforts and more recently an increased focus on nonpoint source pollution reduction, water quality has continued to improve dramatically. Twenty-five years ago, commercial fisheries were severely threatened by several different pollution sources. Now, more

species and numbers of sport fish can be found as well as the “macroinvertebrates” or bugs that the fish eat. Anglers from throughout the Midwest flock to the Illinois to catch walleye, sauger, crappie (crop-e), largemouth and smallmouth bass.

---- All segments of the Illinois River now meet Aquatic life criteria except the lowest segment that flows into the Mississippi River and the majority of the mainstem Illinois River has been assessed as having “good” overall quality, fully supporting designated uses.

----- The improvements demonstrate both the mission of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the efforts that we have made since the Agency began in 1970 to improve the quality of our lakes and streams.

----- Since 1970, many things have changed.

Major ones include:

- ◆ Implementation of the federal Clean Water Act in 1972 and Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974
- ◆ Implementation of the state Environmental Protection Act in 1970
- ◆ Anti-degradation rules adopted by the Illinois Pollution Control Board in 2002.

---- The Illinois EPA has continued to monitor the water quality of the Illinois River and its tributaries.

---- There are eight IEPA Ambient Water Quality Monitoring Sites on the main channel of the Illinois River.

- ◆ Water Chemistry is collected nine times year.
- ◆ Locations are Hardin, Valley City, Havana, Pekin, Peoria, Lacon, Hennepin, Marseilles

----- There are 250 Intensive Basin Survey Sites in the Illinois River basin.

- ◆ This is a Joint monitoring program with IDNR
- ◆ Each site is monitored once every five years. This equates to monitoring at 50 to 60 sites each year.
- ◆ Monitoring includes “ bugs, fish, habitat, sediment and chemistry”.
- ◆ Some sites also include monitoring for fish contaminants.

----- Improvements are due primarily to point source controls, such as additional treatment requirements and limits on discharges from wastewater treatment plants, with added benefit from nonpoint source management programs that reduce urban and agricultural runoff.

----- To date, more than \$7 billion has been invested in efforts to regulate point source discharges in Illinois, utilizing a mix of federal and state dollars for low interest loans whose repayment goes back into the fund to be loaned to other applicants.

----- One of the major tools we now have to evaluate and come up with solutions for restoring our rivers is the TMDL or Total Maximum Daily Load study.

----- It determines the greatest amount of a given pollutant that a water body can receive without violations water quality standards and designated uses, and sets pollution reduction goals necessary to improve the quality of the impaired waters.

----- So far, 10 TMDLs have been completed in the Illinois River basin addressing about 70 segment-impairments.

----- Another TMDL is in process that contains eight additional segment-impairments, with contractors recently awarded for another eight TMDLs in the Illinois River Basin containing a total of 175 segment-impairments.

----- Many of our current efforts are focusing on nonpoint source pollution issues. More than 100 citizen groups across Illinois are currently working on identifying and implementing ways to protect local rivers, streams, lakes and groundwater, many of them in partnership with Illinois EPA.

- ◆ Since 1990, the Illinois EPA has dedicated more than \$34 million (34,102,359) of Clean Water Act Section 319 funding for 161 nonpoint source pollution control projects in the Illinois River basin.

- ◆ Best management practices implemented in the Illinois River basin under Section 319 since 1990 have included 268,474 ft. of streambank and shoreline stabilization, 15,201 ft. of stream channel stabilization, 119,504 acres of nutrient management, 57,572 ft. of terraces, 63,392 ft. of water & sediment control basins, and 502 acres of wetland restoration.
- ◆ Best management practices implemented under Section 319 since 1990 have reduced the pollutant load to the Illinois River by an estimated 17,014.2 pounds per year of nitrogen, 1,494,877 pounds per year of phosphorous, 951,718 pounds per year of total suspended solids, and 69,860 tons per year of sediment.

An example of a recent 319 project is:

----- Springdale Creek Restoration in Peoria: A Section 319 grant through Illinois EPA is being used to stop erosion along a creek that runs through an historic bluff side cemetery here in Peoria, with the creek emptying into the Illinois River.

----- The project, which includes riprap, blankets, rock vortex, re-sloping and vegetation, will stabilize the creek and its banks. As with many of our other projects, local volunteers will also provide hundreds of hours of labor as part

of this project, including collecting and planting native plant species and conducting educational seminars.

----- Other projects within the Illinois River Basin include watershed management planning, best management practices implementation and outreach efforts

---- In 2004, Illinois EPA began a new program of subcontracting with several state Soil and Water Conservation Districts, with the majority of them in the Illinois River Basin, to implement a pilot Construction Site Erosion Control Project. Those partners include the DeWitt, Macon, McHenry and Winnebago SWC District Offices. District staff complete on-site NPDES Construction Stormwater Permit inspections and provide technical assistance in implementing best management practices to minimize runoff to nearby water bodies.

---- Any construction site larger than one acre now requires a NPDES Construction Permit. This program has been successful in identifying problem areas but more importantly in avoiding construction site erosion before it happens. The Agency is interested in expanding the participation of the District Offices and has already entered into additional subcontracts with the Kane/DuPage, Kendall and Peoria

County Soil & Water Conservation Districts and hope to include more in the future.

----- Hundreds of conservation practices have been installed in the Illinois River watershed by dozens of our partners through the Section 319 program. Traditional practices such as terraces and waterways are dotting the landscape along with porous pavement parking lots, green roofs and miles of rural and urban streambank stabilization.

----- Water quality issues and challenges still remain, but Illinois EPA will continue long-term monitoring of the River and its watershed, and will continue to implement programs that will help the stakeholders of this watershed improve the water quality of the Illinois River and its tributaries.