

## **Governor's Conferences on the Management of the Illinois River System Introduction and History**

In 1985, a group of concerned scientists, citizens and river activists began to focus new attention on the growing problems of sedimentation and erosion along the Illinois River and its tributaries. Collectively, this group of individuals formed the nucleus for the planning committee for the First Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, which was held at the Hotel Pèrè Marquette, Peoria, IL on April 1 - 3, 1987. Governor James R. Thompson believed bringing various state and federal agencies and organizations together in a common forum would help begin the process of discovering solutions to these problems.

Since 1987, this conference has continued to be held on a biennial basis in Peoria – midway on the Illinois River between Chicago and Grafton. Governors Jim Edgar, George Ryan, and Rod Blagojevich have continued this strong tradition by providing a Governor's designation to this conference, thus demonstrating the high priority being placed upon our natural resources.

Over the past twenty years, conference attendance has grown from 150 to over 350 participants who represent a diversity of backgrounds, agencies, organizations, and communities. Each conference planning committee presented an agenda designed to continue the tradition of bringing the latest in developments and management techniques to those working towards protecting the Illinois River System for future generations.

The Heartland Water Resources Council of Central Illinois has served as the local administrative entity for organizing the 1989 - 2005 Conferences. Throughout the years, the University of Illinois Water Resources Center compiled the Conference Proceedings and Abstract/Speaker Information Booklets, while the Illinois Department of Natural Resources provided funding for printing these resources. Over sixty local, state, and federal agencies and organizations currently serve as Conference Co-Sponsors and a number are now providing financial support of the conference. The following four individuals have faithfully served on all ten of the State Conference Planning Committees by sharing their knowledge and expertise: Bob Frazee, University of Illinois Extension; Steve Havera, Illinois Natural History Survey; Gary Clark, Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources; and Rick Mollahan, Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Glenn Stout, University of Illinois Water Resources Center, provided leadership for organizing the First Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System by serving as the first Conference Chair. Subsequent conference leadership has been provided by:

1989	Bob Frazee, University of Illinois Extension, Chair
1991 - 1995	Bob Frazee, University of Illinois Extension and Roberta Parks, Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce, Co-Chairs
1997 - 2003	Bob Frazee, University of Illinois Extension and Steve Havera, Illinois Natural History Survey, Co-Chairs
2005 - 2007	Bob Frazee, University of Illinois Extension and Kim St. John, Natural Resources Conservation Service-Prairie Rivers Resource, Conservation and Development, Co-Chairs

Over the past twenty-two years, the Governor's Conferences on the Management of the Illinois River System have served as an important forum to bring together local, state, and federal leaders to create awareness of the problems of soil erosion and sedimentation, identify important river research initiatives, develop working coalitions, apply conservation practices to the watershed, prepare new river and watershed legislation, and provide for state and federal funding to address the problems of the Illinois River System. The foundations for the following programs can be directly attributed to successful interagency and multi-disciplinary cooperation, fostered at the Governor's Illinois River Conferences and subsequently implemented at the local, state and federal level:

- Development of low-cost Streambank Stabilization Methods with state and federal funding;
- Formation and development of numerous watershed treatment programs for landowners, funded through U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts; (Examples include: USFWS Partners for Wildlife and Fish Program has assisted landowners in restoring over 6,000 acres of habitat along the Illinois River; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Projects completed at Swan Lake, Banner Marsh, Lake Chautauqua, Stump Lake, and Peoria Lake Islands; USFWS established the 11,122 acre Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge of which the Service now owns 2,114 acres and The Nature Conservancy owns 7,063 acres; IDNR completed land acquisition efforts at the Double T Fish and Wildlife Area, the Duck Ranch at Henry, IL; TNC's and IDNR's Spunky Bottoms restoration of 2,000 acres; The Wetland Initiative's 2,500 acre Hennepin Hopper restoration effort; The Audubon Society's purchase of Plum Island; and Ducks Unlimited's Spring Lake acquisition and restoration.)
- Formation and operation of the Illinois River Coordinating Council;
- Development of the Integrated Management Plan for the Illinois River System;
- Illinois Conservation 2000 Programs and Funding;
- Illinois River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – led by efforts of U.S. Congressman Ray LaHood – 123,000 acres presently enrolled;
- Illinois Rivers 2020 Initiative;
- “Mud to Parks” Dredging & Re-Use of Sediment from the Illinois River; and
- Island construction on the Illinois River utilizing dredging sediment.

## Conference Proceedings

Conference Proceedings have been compiled by the University of Illinois Water Resources Center for each of the biennial Illinois River Conferences. The Illinois Rivers Decision Support System, affiliated with the Illinois State Water Survey at Champaign, Illinois has a section of their webpage devoted to providing the Conference Proceedings for each of the past ten conferences at <http://ilrdss.sws.uiuc.edu/> Included for each conference is the conference agenda, topics, speakers, printed presentations, conservation tours, exhibits, public forums, and related activities. Listed below are the files for the first ten Governor's Conferences on the Management of the Illinois River System.

- File 1            1987 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, April 1 - 3, 1987, Hotel Père Marquette, Peoria, IL
- File 2            1989 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 3 - 4, 1989, Hotel Père Marquette, Peoria, IL
- File 3            1991 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 22 - 23, 1991, Hotel Père Marquette, Peoria, IL
- File 4            1993 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, September 21 - 22, 1993, Hotel Père Marquette, Peoria, IL
- File 5            1995 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 10 - 11, 1995, Hotel Père Marquette, Peoria, IL
- File 6            1997 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 7 - 9, 1997, Holiday Inn City Centre, Peoria, IL
- File 7            1999 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 5 - 7, 1999, Holiday Inn City Centre, Peoria, IL
- File 8            2001 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 2 - 4, 2001, Holiday Inn City Centre, Peoria, IL
- File 9            2003 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 7 - 9, 2003, Holiday Inn City Centre, Peoria, IL
- File 10           2005 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System, October 4 - 6, 2005, Holiday Inn City Centre, Peoria, IL

Proceedings from the 2007 Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System will be available to download from the Illinois Rivers Decision Support System website <http://ilrdss.sws.uiuc.edu/> as a PDF file by the end February.

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