

**14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Governor's Conference on the  
Management of the Illinois River System  
October 1-3, 2013  
Four Points by Sheraton  
Peoria, Illinois**

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

**by  
Laura L. Keefer  
Illinois State Water Survey  
Prairie Research Institute  
University of Illinois  
Champaign, Illinois**

Good morning! I am Laura Keefer, co-chair of the Illinois River Conference planning committee and on behalf of the entire planning committee and fellow co-chair, Chris Davis, I welcome you to the 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Governor's Conference of the Management of the Illinois River System.

The planning committee selected the conference theme of:

***THE ILLINOIS RIVER: WORKING LOCALLY – REACHING GLOBALLY***

Today there will be plenary speakers and concurrent sessions that will present locally-driven environmental, agricultural, and economic activities in the Illinois River System, as well as some of the connections and interactions with activities on a global scale. In essence, what we learn about and accomplish in the Illinois River System has application, bearing, and connections with the rest of the world.

We have an outstanding lineup of featured speakers from The Nature Conservancy, Caterpillar, Inc., Illinois Farm Bureau, Shauman Farm, and the Mississippi River Distilling Company. We have 12 concurrent sessions covering topics on the Illinois River waterway itself, natural resources in the river, Illinois River communities, agriculture, wetlands, aquatic invasive species, trail designation discussions, and results of scientific studies with a window into future monitoring technologies. We think you'll enjoy these presentations.

Now we have had our challenges with the federal government shutdown. Not only are we missing representatives and our colleagues from the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Dept. of Agriculture, US Fish & Wildlife, and US Geological Survey but we spent most of yesterday morning trying to find 5 substitute speakers and presentations and a moderator. We were fairly successful but highly encourage you to check for changes by consulting the session posters outside the conference rooms.

Some highlights for today are the Digital Technologies Open House – be sure to locate the gold ticket in your conference bag. For every exhibit you visit at the open house it will be initialed by that exhibitor, and several people with the most initials will be winning some cool techy-type door prizes but you need at least 3 initials. And tonight there is the *Spirit of Peoria* riverboat tour with some pleasant river music, food, and something special from the Mississippi River Distilling company. *Hmmmm wonder what that could be?* Also in your conference bag is a conference evaluation form and we highly encourage you to fill this out and leave it at the registration desk when you depart the conference.

Finally, we are also missing one more colleague at this conference. Kim St. John, a long time planning committee member and co-chair for 3 Illinois River Conferences passed away a year ago this month after a 5-year courageous battle against ovarian cancer. In celebration of Kim's life and contributions to this conference a slideshow has been created with contributions of pictures from her family and colleagues. You can find this slideshow down the hall just before the elevators, along with ovarian cancer lapel stickers to wear today and a book for all who knew and worked with Kim to write fond thoughts and remembrances. After the conference this book will be given to Kim's husband who will be joining us on the Riverboat Tour along with her parents.

Now to give you an additional welcome from the host city of this conference since its inception in 1987, **I'd like to introduce City of Peoria Councilman, Eric Turner.**

Thank you Councilman Turner.

**It is time to begin this conference with our first Plenary Session and will turn things over to the moderator, Mike Demissie, Director of the Illinois State Water Survey.**