

MINUTES FROM THE 7th Meeting of the Illinois Fish and Wildlife Action Team

February 20th 2008 10:00 am – 2 am

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL
DNR Board Room – 3rd Floor

Members Present: Kim Erndt , Dick Little, Don King, Eric Schenck, Jim Herkert, Jim Renn, Jim Ross, Joel Cross, Kevin Bennett, Marshall Plumley, Mel Gajewski, Mike Conlin, Mike Redmer, Nick Giannettino, Randy Nyboer, Randy Heidorn, Richard Nichols, Rudy Habben, Tim Schweizer, Trent Thomas, **Interested Parties:** John Rogner & Luella Roberts (US Fish & Wildlife Svc), Debbie Bruce, John Buhnerkempe, Glen Kruse, Mike Mason (IDNR), Debbie Newman (IL Nature Preserves Commission), Karen Hagerty (US Army Corps), Steve Widowski (US Forest Svc), Jennifer Christman (Ducks Unlimited)

INTRODUCTIONS/ Opening Statement.....Mike Conlin, Office Director, IDNR Office of Resource Conservation

***** Next meeting June 4th, 2008 10 am – 2 pm *****

*** ROUND TABLE - Updates from Action Team members ***

American Fishery Society – Trent Thomas – Annual meeting will be last week in February in Peoria, IL.

Chicago Wilderness - Jim Anderson – Not present

Ducks Unlimited – Eric Schenck – Working on Doris Duke Foundation's Lands Protection Initiative opportunities in Lake County. Transferred to IDNR 800 acres. A major renovation project at Crane Lake at Sanganois State Fish and Wildlife Area in Mason County. Eric introduced Jennifer Christman who works for DU as a grant specialist and is assisting Eric in the Doris Duke project.

Farm Service Agency – Don King – Don said that CP33 has started with 20,000 acres, added 7,500 then added 30,000 acres with 13,500 left to assign. The SAFE program was awarded Jan 19th, 2008. 45 proposals approved in Illinois. Acres involved include: 500 acres in Mercer County; 2000 acres in Sangamon Co.; 1500 acres in 8 counties in western IL.

IDNR – Leslie Sgro – budget issues – could not attend.

IL Assoc of Soil, Water and Conservation Districts – Rich Nichols – Just came back from a trip to Ohio where his group visited a company called FDC Enterprises which has been very successful in planting Warm Season grasses. Because this company guarantees their work and results, AISWCD will decide at its March board meeting if it will market this method in partnerships with land owners. They are excited about the growth success that this company has. Their first year growth looks like the third year growth that land owners are seeing now. Working on prairie grasses but have not had the same success in planting forbs. <http://www.fdcenterprises.com/>

IL Audubon – Tom Clay – On Cass River, bought 303 acres. Looking at property in Gardens of the Gods in Shawnee Forest. Partnering with Lincoln Park Zoo developing a new program called “Flying Wild.”

IL Endangered Species Protection Board (ESPB) and Illinois Natural History Survey - Randy Nyboer - The five year relisting of Illinois T&E species is starting. The last one done was in 2004. He has been working on the IL Natural Area Inventory – it has hired 5 new ecologists who will start soon. The INAI will celebrate its 150th anniversary this year.

IL Farm Bureau – Nancy Erickson – Working with land owners promoting conservation programs. Conference next week.

IL Federation of Outdoor Recreation– Joe Seten – Not present

IL Fisheries Assoc - Trent Thomas- Annual meeting coming up last week of February in Peoria.

IL Forestry Development Council – Dick Little – IL Forestry Inventory done, report will be out this summer. Forested land in Illinois has increased between 200,000 – 300,000 acres.

IL Nature Preserve Commission - Randy Heidorn – Close to their 500th nature preserve. 88,000 acres now protected in Illinois. INPC is now the largest land trust in Illinois. Focusing on the IL Wildlife Action Plan’s Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA’s) as they work with partners such as the in the Quad City area of IL. to address invasive species issues. Working with the Land Trust Alliance and the Prairie State Conservation Coalition in the NW part of the state.

IL Sierra Club – Rudy Habben – Working with Congress on No Child Left Inside but no action will be taken until new administration arrives in 2009 and probably no implementation will occur until 2010. Will be looking to partner with other NGO’s, like Issac Walton, as their funds are tight right now.

National Turkey Federation – Kent Adams – Could not attend

Prairie Rivers Org – Kim Erndt – Working with farmers.

Quail Unlimited – Mel Gajewski - They planted approx 3000 acres in prairie grasses so far. Work with land-owners on CRP’s CP33 program and it has been very successful.

The Nature Conservancy – Jim Herkert – Annual 2007 report on Mediwin due out soon. They used 8,240 hrs with 420 volunteers on restoration. Working in the Shawnee Forest. Working at Emiquon and latest count showed that 20,000 ducks have returned to the area. Limited hunting has now been approved. **New IL TNC Director, Ms. Leslee Spraggins**

Kevin Bennett – Kevin will be participating in the Prescribed Fire Council meeting coming up. IL State Gov’t signed new **HB1638** “Prescribed Burning–Allowance” (Prescribed Fire) (Provides that the property owner and any person conducting a prescribed burn under this Act shall be liable for any actual damage or injury caused by the fire or resulting smoke upon proof of negligence (instead of gross negligence). Provides that nothing in the Act shall be construed as affecting any obligations or liability under the Environmental Protection Act or any other federal laws or rules that apply to prescribed burning.

US Army Corps of Engineers – Marshall Plumley – Asked team members to help by sending Marshall GIS information about project that they are conducting in and around the IL River and the Illinois River / Mississippi Confluence. There is a POLICY SYMPOSIUM - The Dirksen Congressional Center in partnership with Institute for Principled Leadership in Public Service at Bradley University is holding an important public policy symposium entitled "Protecting the Illinois River...A Time for

ACTION!" The symposium will be held on March 7, 2008 at the Gateway Building on Peoria's riverfront from 1 to 5 p.m.

US Forest Service – Nicholas Giannettino – Will use prescribed burn of 5,000 Acres in 2008. Planned to restore 4,200 Acres of wetlands and some upland habitat. Have been spending a lot of time handling “historic resources” issues in plan of work. Will restore 350 Acres in floodplain. Their Forest Plan coming along, about three quarters done now. Working in Big Muddy watershed restoring approximately 100 Acres.

USFWS – John Rogner – John updated the team on the progress of the land purchase for the high quality piece of land that lies between North Branch Preserve and Glacial Park LWR in McHenry County as the proposed **Hack-Ma-Tack National Wildlife Refuge** in the McHenry – Lake county area. John said the proposal is gaining momentum among local groups and even developers. John said that the USFWS has restored 11,000 acres to grassland.

Mike Redmer – Mike said that IDNR ecologist assigned to Northern Illinois has begun a partnership with various groups to address the issue of water control structures. Working on boundary delineation by group. Cook County Forest Preserve received a large sum of money and are looking to co conservation projects in the Upper Des Plaines River area.

OLD BUSINESS

Joel Cross gave an update on the Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) delineation project, passed out a development document for the on-going process of delineating the COA's boundaries and also passed out an “atlas” of each of the 31 COA's to some of the organizations present. Due to printing difficulties, there were not enough atlases for every organization.

******* Those organizations who did not receive an Atlas of the COA's PLEASE email me so we can mail them out to all of you.....thank you !**

NEW BUSINESS

SIU Conservation Opportunity Area SWG 07 project update:

Joel Cross gave an update on the SWG 2007 project by Southern IL University to define planning processes for the 31 COA's identified within the IL Wildlife Action Plan.

Farmland and Prairie Wildlife Partnership: An Approach to Action Plan Implementation

SAFE Project Update - John Buhnerkempe – gave an update on the **S.A.F.E. project**. The SAFE project group is working on achieving the proposals wildlife objectives in the two areas, Grand Prairie / Southern Till Plain. There are lots of challenges.

- Workshops will be started with landowners soon.
- Identify what monitoring needs to be done to see if the proposed model is working.
- Make sure that as the project goes forward that they are meeting all of the identified S.A.F.E. requirements.

Jim Renn – Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator - gave a update for the recently launched 2008 State Wildlife Grant process with a deadline of April 11th, 2008 for pre-proposals. New enhanced SWG webpage gives an applicant all of the resources they might need to fully understand and complete a pre-proposal and access to valuable resources for the approved applicants to understand the requirements to complete their full Grant Segment come August 2008.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The Team picked June 4th, 2008 for the next meeting of the IL Fish and Wildlife Action Team. It will be at IDNR building again, in the same room, 10 am - 2 pm and lunch will be provided.

Minutes prepared by:

James Renn - Illinois Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator
IL Department of Natural Resources
Office of Resource Conservation
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702-1271
217-785-5907
217-785-2438 fax
james.renn@illinois.gov

Send all comments/ changes/ improvements to Jim Renn