

MINUTES FROM THE 5th Meeting of the Illinois Fish and Wildlife Action Team

July 17th 2007 10:00 am – 2 am

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

Members Present: Leslie Sgro, Joel Cross, Mike Redmer, Nancy Erickson, Tom Clay, Randy Heidorn, Joe Seten, Gene Barickman, Tom Schwartz, Jim Herkert, Kevin Bennett, Ms. Terry Savko, Kent Adams, Eric Schenck, Rudy Habben, ACOE, Tim Schweizer **Topic experts:** Dr. Jeff Walk – **Interested Parties:** Debbie Bruce, John Buhnerkempe, Glen Kruse, David Thomas

INTRODUCTIONS/ Opening Statement.....Leslie Sgro, Wildlife Action Team Chair

***** Next meeting Sept 25th, 2007 10 am – 2 pm *****

ROUND TABLE - Updates from Action Team members

IL Farm Bureau – Nancy Erickson

The Illinois Farm Bureau has continued to work with AG producers to utilize conservation practices. The EQUIP program continues to be an important program. Also, LIP is actively being promoted to landowners, including publicizing deadlines for project applications.

DUCKS Unlimited – Eric Schenck

- Ducks Unlimited is working on identified strategic focus areas, including the Middle IL River COA. The Wightman Lake Restoration project is on-going, which includes a 15 mile reach of IL River and wetlands restoration. The Army Corps of Engineers COE is involved with this project as well the State and NRCS.
- Update on the Sangamon River / IL River confluence project: This is a public and private land project involving over 1,000 acres. Land protection and restoration work is on going. A grant from Clean Energy is being used for land acquisition.
- The Rockwood Island project is being conducted with USFWS and grants from the Conservation 2000 program.
- The Ducks Unlimited regional office has hired a land protection staff position,. This new staff position will likely involving spending time on Illinois projects.

The Nature Conservancy – Jim Herkert/Kevin Bennet

- The TNC closed on purchase of an additional 34 acre property in the grassland preserve in Ogle county, bringing the total preserve acreage to 2,780.

- Discussion and plan are being made with UIS for an educational field station at Emiquon. Construction on this new facility is expected this fall. A handout was provided on the availability of real-time water quality data from the Emiquon site.
- A compendium of papers presented at the Spunky Bottoms symposium was distributed.
- An update on legislation for State Acres for Wildlife will be provide later during the meeting.
- The Prescribed Fire Bill passed the Illinois House and Senate.
- Funding for I-Space is being considered at the 100 M level in a new capital budget.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Mike Redmer

Chicago Wilderness is looking for a new executive director. In early May, Chicago Wilderness created a new Bird Working Group. Efforts are on-going to coordinate efforts addressing wetland issues in northern Illinois counties including McHenry, DuPage, Kendall and Cook counties.

IL Dept of Ag - Terry Savko

An update on wind-farms was provided. Coordination is being worked out with DECCO regarding Enterprise Zones planned for non-agricultural areas. In conjunction with IL Farm Bureau, landowner meetings have been held to address with new pipeline (Rock Express Pipeline). This is a new 42 inch natural gas pipeline is owned by a Texas company. Agricultural drainage tiles and topsoil recovery are issues being addressed. The pipeline is to be located in the vicinity south of I-72. Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreements are being developed.

U.S. Army Corps of Eng - Rock Island District - An update of the WRDA bill progress prior to Congressional recess was provided.

A new website tool for Coordinating with Partners was presented, with handouts being made available. This tool identifies all work the Corps is engaged in with partners. Information about activities and projects is arranged and organized by watershed. Maps will be interactive on the Corps website.

IL Nature Preserve Commission - Randy Heidorn – The INPC serves as the State's Land Trust. Staff are working within many of the COAs identified in the Wildlife Action Plan. The INPC is developing protection agreement in several areas throughout the state. Aug 7th is the next commission meeting to be held in the Chicago area.

IL Natural History Survey – Dave Thomas - Issued a general request asking partners to provide and identify research priorities.

Illinois EPA – Gregg Good -

- Illinois EPA developed an SWG project pre-proposal, in conjunction with various partner groups, for an update of the Wetland Inventory.
- The Agency is working with the IDNR - INHS and OREP on development of a wetland IBI.
- An update of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Commission – WQ Committee was provided. Issues addressed include coordination of water regulatory issues (e.g. standards / fish

consumption advisory) and involves Upper Mississippi River states and USEPA Regions 5 and 7.

IL Endangered Species Board – Randy Nyboer

- The next 5 yr revision of list has been initiated. Technical Advisory Groups for species groups will be meeting. Federal-listing of Bald Eagle may be considered in IL. The process is just starting.
- COAs Savanna Depot (Lost Mound) IDNR has 300 acres. Hanover Bluff / Mississippi Palisades all part of COA. 47 listed plants and animals are there. 110 SGNC on the Depot site . Wetland / Grassland birds are important species present there. Large areas where conservation biology practices are working. The site was visited by USFWS NW refuge head in DC.

Pheasants Forever - Tom Schwartz

- Pheasants Forever has been actively involved in this session in a variety of state legislation. Efforts on legislation have included i-SPACE for providing funding for land acquisition. Conservation groups have really come together as part of this legislation and will provide a framework to build upon in the future.
- Senate Bill 17 Conservation Land Stewardship – The House & Senate has approved. It comes down to implementation in Ad-Rule private / public sector.
- Habitat Wheel project is on-going and linked to the Wildlife Action Plan.
- An update on the SAFE Proposal, coordinated with Illinois Turkey Federation and TNC and Illinois Audubon Society will be provided later on in the agenda.
- An Aug 7th town meeting for Habitat Wheel with private landowners will be held in Hillsboro. Over 100 landowners are expected to attend. An update on available Incentive programs will be included. programs.
- Four habitat staff planted over 3,500 acres in warm season grasses.

Illinois Audubon – Tom Clay

- Illinois Audubon echoed Pheasants Forever comments about partnership developed through addressing legislative issues and it's importance in building coalitions.
- They are working on a 316 acre tract within the Cache River Basin with IDNR.
- The Illinois Audubon is building a new statewide headquarters in Springfield. The timetable for completion is about one year.

Natl Wild Turkey Federation – Kent Adams

- Works continues on the National North American Turkey Plan. This Plan should be available sometime next year.

- Restoration activities on Private lands continues with NRCS 270 habitat plans. These plans include forestry, invasive species issues. Using Superfund to match projects.

US Forestry Svc -

- Shawnee National Forest – New Plan has been adopted. Prescribed burning has been accomplished on 4,500 acres this year and will continue next year as well. Beginning in 2003, 3000 acres were burned and this number of acreage has increased to 4,500 acres in 2007.
- Efforts continue to build additional staff. Looking to fill a position for Mid Mississippi River Project coordinator.
- Big Muddy assessment completed and will implement reforestation efforts from impacts by the floods in the 1990's. Native plants are being provided by IDNR Nurseries. Other seed collection efforts continue for oak-species and warm weather grasses. There is increasing interest in Kane species. Weed management for control of invasive species is being undertaken. There is a proposal for a pine species thinning project.

Sierra Club - Angler and Hunter outreach efforts have been continuing for inner cities and focuses on improving fish & wildlife habitat. The Sierra Club is working to support the 100 Million for Land Acquisition part of the I-Space legislation. Handout: Sierra Club Partnerships Program – Hunter / Angler outreach mini-grant guidelines. Grants will range from \$2,500 to \$5,000. dollars.

IDNR - Leslie Sgro Deputy Director of IDNR

- Leslie updated the team on the IL Natural Area Inventory -
- The Illinois Attorney General office accepted 1,135 acres that was part of a 15 M lawsuit settlement. This land connects with the Middle Fork State Fish & Wildlife Area and Kickapoo State Park., creating 4,000 acres of habitat and waterways. Dredging work and other land acquisitions are being done with part of the 15 M settlement.
- Illinois Pollution Control Board went to first notice on the decision on the Dissolved Oxygen water quality standards. The joint IDNR/IEPA recommendations were accepted by the Board in their decision. This sets up the framework for work on development of Tiered Aquatic Life Use Designations.

OLD BUSINESS

- **State Wildlife Grant update:** Joel Cross updated the action team members on the status of the 2007 round of State Wildlife Grant funding .
- **IFAWAT IDNR Work Group update:** Joel Cross gave the action team an update on what the IDNR work group has been doing and that they have already met once and a next meeting is going to be scheduled soon.
- **Status of the Comprehensive Conservation Survey -** Joel Cross discussed the new direction of the conservation survey and that it will now be used as a tool to “poll” conservation partners and the general public to assess what they feel the priorities need to be in the implementation of the Wildlife Action Plan. After a discussion, a consensus indicated that the new direction of the survey was valid and that an effort to locate the best people to provide a polling survey should be initiated.

- **Status of the SharePoint “wiki” site:** Comments were sought as to the members experience with using the SharePoint site. Several had password problems. Overall though, everyone felt that the site was beneficial for the Action Team to use as a communication tool.

NEW BUSINESS - Ducks Unlimited’s Eric Schenck gave an update on the Doris Duke Foundation’s Lands Protection Initiative. A handout was provided.

LUNCH was provided by IDNR

NEW BUSINESS CONT’D –

SAFE Project Proposal - Jeff Walk (TNC), Tom Schwartz (PF) and John Buhnerkempe (IDNR) presented their joint proposal for the SAFE grant funding to be administrated by the Farm Service Agency and solicited input from the team members which resulted in a lively discussion resulting in valuable comments. A handout was provided.

NEW tasks for Action Team consideration:

- **Quantify the Action Plan’s goals/objectives** - a discussion was held on this topic and a summary of the goals will be posted on the Action Team’s “wiki” site.
 - COAs: Boundary Delineation – The GIS information for the COAs will be posted on the Action Team’s “wiki” site for review and comment.
 - Develop an over-all marketing campaign - This topic and the Economics topic will be assessed using comments from member at the meeting and summarized on the Action Team’s “wiki” site.
 - Economics of implementing the IL Wildlife Action Plan See above **

Discussion Topics for Action Team input:

- Measuring progress toward Action Plan implementation: What is progress?

The visual schematic’s group discussion’s comments:

- 1) SWG Project Evaluation
- 2) Acreage addition by Natural Division should be identified using the ideas of Restoration / Protection and not acquisition / management. Also use the following:
 - Targeted habitat by Natural Division
 - Stream miles by Natural Division
- 3) Number of acres under private / incentive programs
- 4) Number of partnerships / coalitions developed working to implement the Wildlife Acton Plan,
- 5) Include time and funding leveraged through partnerships.
- 6) Linked habitat type through various programs (e.g. aquatic links to terresteerial benefits (watersheds)
- 7) “Low-Hanging fruit” concept “Signature Projects” w / field trips
- 8) Clean Water /Clean Air benefits (e.g. biotic indices) [what’s good for animals if good for people]
- 9) T/E improvements in status

10) Number of SGCN in 2010 [680 in 2005]

- Implementation Schematic: Where have we been so far?

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The Team picked Sept 25th Tuesday 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:

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