

Conservation Congress 2014

The Results

Open Forum: Choose Your Topic

Recommendations:

1. Coal reforms announced by IDNR need to continue and be implemented.
2. Need better review and assessments of longwall mines moving into areas of productive farmland with inadequate protections for land and water resources.
3. Need tracking of water quantity withdrawals and environmental impacts related to mining.
4. Need environmental assessments of headwater streams to establish baseline data for assessment of potential impacts of mining on headwaters.

In addition, the following recommendations were provided by a segment of Conservation Congress attendees focused on starlight and light pollution, but were not voted on by the entire group.

1. Every Illinois resident should have an opportunity to view a pristinely dark night sky filled with stars and the Milky Way.
2. IDNR should begin the process of starlight restoration and recovery of the health of the environment, ecosystems and our fellow citizens of Illinois of today's and future generations via significant light pollution abatement.
3. Illinois State Parks in rural settings should work to preserve the night sky darkness because inappropriate night lighting: (a) contributes to light pollution obscuring the sky, (b) has numerous deleterious side effects on wildlife, and (c) wastes energy resources. Select parks should regulate their outdoor use of night lighting in compliance with policies recommended by the International Dark-Sky Association.
4. IDNR ought to be a good example and use responsible "best practices" in reducing light pollution and waste. Every Illinois State Park and other IDNR properties, including IDNR administrative properties, should reevaluate their choices of outdoor use of light at night. IDNR can also build public awareness about the importance of reducing light pollution.
5. Illinois State Parks should provide educational opportunities (through staff/volunteers and appropriate interpretive and observing sites) to visitors to help them learn about the night sky as part of the natural environment.
6. Star Parks and stargazing should be included on websites and brochures and welcomed at all IDNR facilities. This is an issue with locked gates/early closing hours at many IDNR properties.
7. IDNR ought to be a good core collaborating center, inviting interested NPOs, schools, individuals inviting discussion, plans, outreach and use responsible "best practices" in reducing light pollution and waste.
8. IDNR should support Governor Quinn's 2014 proclamation creating Starlight Week (August 9-16) in Illinois. The week starts with International Starry Night, the new initiative envisioned to become the "Star Night" version of "Earth Day" – with public events throughout participating IDNR sites.
9. IDNR should create an official IDNR committee on behalf of Starlight Restoration for Future Generations and Light Pollution Mitigation.