

CONSERVATION CONGRESS – REGIONAL MEETING

John A. Logan Community College, Carterville, IL

Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Sustainable Extraction-

- Post-mining use – shooting sports – ex: Grand National, Sparta
- Wildlife habitat – better funded management of lands, removal of invasives – ex: Pyramid – autumn olive – use as educational tool, too
- Field trials – appreciate the landscape of reclaimed lands, want to partner – wish to expand field trials – ex: Pyramid. Utilize partner volunteers. Foster relationship.
- DNR – promote these uses to industry, post-mining benefits to public, broaden uses, lack of crowds – other recreation users like mountain bikes, OHVs, ATVs – encourage responsible use
- Some recreational uses not compatible – ex: horses incompatible with biking/hiking – current trails are not in condition to support bikes, improve maintenance working with partners
- Schedule? Incompatible recreational uses – ex: like mushrooming/turkey hunting – split weekends – mountain biking/horses?
- Foster improved ability to work with private industry – lots of opportunity to partner
- Be a model for reclamation – ex: provision of habitat for prairie birds, teach, model this
- The size of these reclamations should be able to support diverse groups of users – see Land Between the Lakes model
- Post-mining concerns – water resources – acids, heavy metals, clean up toxic – need strict reclamation plans for lagoons – don't use the word streamline, suggests a quickened process
- Investigate dry processes for coal – no water goes out of system until clean
- Strip mines – ex: Burning Star – use for youth hunts, waterfowl
- Steps DNR can take to ensure quality of reclaimed land – Sahara Woods good example
- Use for rocks/boulders – climbing opportunities – skilled volunteers with support of The Access Fund – liability insurance is available – make use of groups, want to partner
- Concerns – oil and gas expansion, make sure we have more robust regulations to protect water
- Regulations in place prior to actions – groundwater concerns

Resource Harvest –

- Used to provide covey of quail to landowners – need more habitat support

- Need good programs to support – expansion of federal programs – incentives for conservation planning – support for staff from management
- Union County Tree Farm – great resource – reopen it, support it
- Little Grassy is another great resource for landowners – revisit our resource services to landowners, i.e. fish hatcheries, nurseries
- At hatcheries and nurseries, material could be received from distributors, if no staff to grow material
- Cooperation with Southern Illinois University or any university with programs like forestry, aquatics, outdoor recreation – recruit, use as volunteers
- Habitat Management funding – DNR should support burn association – more money for public/private coops
- Southeast IL Burn Assoc. – excellent model – replicate statewide
- DNR – pay attention to fed funding – have funds kept in place for match
- Advertising campaign – let the public know that their license purchases provide money toward match – P-R, D-J money
- Woodworking collection – DNR permit for collection of dead and down – careful to leave areas for no collection for provision of habitat

Resource Protection –

- Trails, Campsites – SIU recreation requires hours for service – want to help
- Trail and campground design is important – sustainable design – (International Mountain Biking Assoc. – may have Great Lakes staff) IMBA Guidebook – DNR should dust off trail design books
- Use as example – Cove Hollow Trail – extreme erosion in Shawnee – re-routed, partnered with IMBA
- Partner with user groups – all want to help – IDNR is not hampered by budget but by cooperative agreements – start now, make connection, schedule work
- Roadblocks everywhere with DNR, hard to coordinate with the agency – ex: Pyramid – want to give cabins – can't figure out how to help
- Staffing problem? Figure out how to let public/industry give you things
- Not about money. Put staff where the constituents recreate. Promote people resources with natural resources. Host programs. Promote in urban areas what is going on at sites
- Need legislators to support Pyramid and use a model statewide – great Friends model – statewide, eliminate red tape
- Nat'l Parks Assoc is good model for accepting donations for funding

- Diverse recreational opportunities are not just regional – visitors come from northern Illinois and want to participate in activities that southern Illinois is requesting – biking, climbing – they come to participate where the natural resource is
- IL is 49th of 50 states in state protected lands – protect state parks from impacts – fracking, mining, logging

Access –

- Friends of Giant City – volunteers/visitors want to do trail work, want bike trail
- Engaging new individuals – mountain biking – no entry level or beginner trails in southern IL – Lk Murphysboro, N end of Rend Lake would be great – need multiple levels of opportunity – DNR should be leader
- Access private property – blanket liability – legislative (ex: Vermont) - if hurt, can't sue landowner
- Horse riders accessing conservation corridors – easements for access
- Hike/bike trails – ex: Land Between the Lakes – atypical partnership – one time dirt bike event funds trail care all year
- Mountain bikers need loop, need race locations – as money generators
- Want to bike on trail at Giant City (ex: Xterra for resource support)
- Re-implement environmental ed programs – teach children and families – trunks are good, but need naturalist assistance, get interpreters back in parks
- Explore corporate sponsorships for events, sites – ex: shuttle funded by LL Bean at Nat'l Park
- Is DNR willing and able to do corporate
- The not-for-profit approach – co-manage, ex: Bear Island with The Nature Conservancy – more volunteer support
- Improve outreach messages and marketing, promotion of opportunities – TV shows like Kentucky Afield
- DNR – get up to speed – alternative recreation, DNR remiss is recognizing new users – mountain bikers, rock climbers are the new hunt/fish – let us bring money
- Ferne Clyffe State Park – Cedar Bluff – back side, good access, no good reason not to use – The Access Fund can help with liability – but, compare injury rate to tree stand injuries, much less injury to climbers
- Revisit landlocked public lands – taxpayer dollars, climbers will hike in
- Adequate access for equestrians, expand access for bike, trail runners, rock climbers, other alternative

Building Bridges –

- Youth hunts are good, but youth are doing other things, too. Partner with private – DNR missing opportunities – more effort toward events – Nat’l Hunt and Fish – give kids opportunities to participate
- Climbing, biking, hiking – easier access, more opportunity
- Partner with existing days/events (national) – ex: youth mountain biking day – support high school outdoor recreation opportunities – all ages, all schools
- Some Illinois State Parks have beautiful visitors centers underutilized – need naturalists, professional guides for schools, families, bring people closer to nature
- DNR should be partner and support Master Naturalist Program – host at parks
- Better use of traditional and social media to get the word out about DNR opportunities
- Support cultural diversity – recognize international populations are using our services – ex: programs and services in Spanish.