

Fracking meeting held in Carbondale

CARBONDALE, IL (KFVS) -

Hundreds of people came out to put in their two cents on the possibility of hydraulic fracturing in Illinois.

The state Department of Natural Resources was all ears during the meeting Thursday night at the student center.

Fracking uses a high-pressure mixture of water, sand and chemicals to crack and hold open thick rock formations, which releases trapped oil and gas.

Opponents say it pollutes the atmosphere, contaminates drinking water and destroys the ecosystem. Gas companies say that's not true.

Saluki Waterfowl Hunt a success for all



10 HOURS AGO • BY [LES WINKELER](#)

[LES WINKELER](#)



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WARE — Technically, the Saluki Waterfowl Hunt is a fundraiser for the SIU athletic department.

SIU Athletic Director Mario Moccia said it is more than that.

“These things go hand-in-hand. It’s a friend-raiser,” he said. “When you are in a pit with a donor, that’s when you get to know them. It’s a good way to meet people on their turf.”

The fifth annual event was Thursday at Grassy Lake Hunting Club in Ware. Collin Cain, the club's owner, turns the club over to Saluki athletics for the day.

"Every dime we make goes to SIU, even the guides, it all goes to SIU," he said. "I played basketball in high school and I've always loved it. I graduated from SIU."

More than 20 hunters took part in Thursday's hunt. Moccia and SIU basketball coach Barry Hinson spoke to the hunters before going into the field.

The waterfowl hunt was actually started by Cain and former SIU basketball coach Rich Herrin during the 1990s. The hunt was eventually discontinued, but resurrected five years ago.

"Things have changed with gun laws," Moccia said. "We were able to work through the red tape. We got approval.

"Collin is a great supporter of ours and donated to Saluki Way. It's a great deal."

And, in all likelihood there is not another athletic fund raiser like it in the NCAA.

"I don't know of any other university that does this," Moccia said. "Even at the University of Missouri, and there are a lot of duck hunters out there. This is a unique way to get a segment of people who don't play in golf tournaments."

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Riverlands Bird Sanctuary a unique place near St. Louis



10 HOURS AGO • BY [LES WINKELER](#)

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WEST ALTON, Mo. — Location, location, location.

About 25 miles south of the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi rivers and five miles north of the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, the Riverlands Bird Sanctuary may be the most perfectly placed refuge in the nation.

To migrating waterfowl the region must look like a huge flashing neon “Vacancy” sign.

“It’s a really unique area of the country,” said Lane Richter, an ecologist with the Audubon Society. “We have visitors come in from all over the world to see the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. If you haven’t seen the confluence, it’s definitely something to check out.”

And, it’s infinitely more popular with waterfowl and marsh birds.

Riverlands, operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, sits on the west bank of the Mississippi River, directly opposite Alton. The refuge encompasses 3,700 acres, including 1,200 acres of restored prairie and marsh land.

The Audubon Society operates the Audubon Center at Riverlands.

“We’re affiliated with the national Audubon Society,” Richter said. “We are locally supported. We raise money to run the center.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns and operates the Riverlands Bird Sanctuary. Audubon has developed a partnership with them over the years. The local Audubon chapter was involved with a lot of the restoration activities here for over two decades.”

The strong partnership between Audubon and the Corps, and the proximity to St. Louis, made Riverlands a natural site for the Visitor Center.

It also helps that birds literally flock to the area.

In early December more than 400 trumpeter swans called the sanctuary home. Dabbling ducks sat on virtually every puddle, while divers fed on Ellis Bay and the Mississippi River.

“It’s (trumpeter swan population) steadily increasing,” Richter said. “The first trumpeter swans arrived in 1991. There were only five individuals. It took us to the mid-2000s before we were even over 100. Since 2005 they’ve really started to increase significantly.”

“The first ones will arrive around the last week of October, the first week of November. At least some of them will stay to the end of February. If we have an unseasonably warm winter, sometimes they’ll leave by mid-February. They are a real hardy bird. As long as we have some food and there is open water, they are pretty content.”

The area is also a popular destination for eagle watchers during the winter.

“Last year about 35,000 people came to the center,” Richter said. “The first eagle season (the first year the center was open) we had there were 12, 15,000 people came in just to see the eagles.”

Riverlands undergoes a transformation with each season. During the spring and fall, shorebirds abound in the wetlands. Richter said 21 species of shorebirds were documented last year.

In the summer, herons and egrets flock to the site.

Another unique feature of Riverlands is the ability to flood the wetlands without pumping water.

“It’s a really cool system,” Richter said. “If you go to Columbia Bottoms, or a lot of other areas, a lot of those areas depend on diesel powered pumps. Here, the wetlands are 15-20 feet below the river channel. There are some gravity flood gates. As long as they can anticipate what the water level is going to be, they can adjust the wetlands to the depth they would like.”

The visitor center is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Guided hikes are held on a monthly basis, more regularly during heavy migration periods.

For more information, call 636-899-0090.

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Winkeler: It's been a year full of wonderful blessings



15 MINUTES AGO • BY [LES WINKELER](#)

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Once again, I'll dispense with a Christmas wish list.

I find it more uplifting, and in keeping with the season, to give thanks for the many blessings bestowed upon me during 2013.

It was a momentous year for me, from spotting my first whooping crane, to watching short-eared owls hunt at Pyramid State Park, to visiting Oregon's spectacular Crater Lake.

No animal sighting has ever been as moving as the moment I saw my first whooping crane last winter. Since I was a child leafing through the bird section of World Book Encyclopedia, seeing a whooping crane was a dream.

Word got out last winter that a pair of cranes was hanging around Union County Refuge. It took three trips, but my wife and I finally spotted the magnificent birds one bright, clear afternoon.

To be looking at this magnificent creature, and knowing only about 500 exist in the wild, it's both exhilarating and humbling.

Just a few weeks later, we were at Pyramid State Park watching short-eared owls scouring open fields for mice, moles, voles and other critters.

We looked on in amazement when one of the owls picked a furry morsel off the ground. The bird was flying off to enjoy its dinner when a northern harrier streaked toward the owl.

The harrier T-boned the owl with such ferocity that the mouse was dislodged and sent plummeting downward. We watched in disbelief as the owl tucked its wings, dove headlong toward the ground and snatched the mouse about 15 feet from the ground.

That's Discovery Channel stuff, a once in a lifetime experience.

And, I'll never forget our trip to Crater Lake.

There are no words to describe the wonder and majesty of this special place. Nothing in the English language does justice to the deep blue of the water and the impeccable reflection of the rim.

Suffice it to say that the words, "Oh my God," are inadvertently uttered the moment you lay your eyes on the lake for the first time.

And, Mother Nature doubled down on my "Oh my God" moment.

Each year prior to vacation I pick out my "must see" species. Last year it was the Clark's nutcracker. A nutcracker flew directly in front of me seconds after ascending the Crater Lake rim.

Finally, I'm thankful for residents of Southern Illinois who have dedicated their time, talents and cash to keep fracking out of this paradise we call home.

If I do have one wish for the coming year it is that more people will come to understand that it's not worth wagering our spectacular natural heritage for short-term economic gain.

There are no do-overs if our water is fouled.

Merry Christmas to all!

LES WINKELER is the outdoors writer for The Southern Illinoisan. Contact him at les.winkeler@thesouthern.com, or call 618-351-5088.

Outdoors Notes 12-20



10 HOURS AGO

Crab Orchard to host annual Christmas Bird Count for Kids

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge will host its third annual Christmas Bird Count for Kids. The event is scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon Jan. 11.

The Christmas Bird Count, which began more than 100 years ago, is one of the oldest wildlife surveys in the world. Kids and families around Southern Illinois will have a chance to become citizen scientists by taking part in this old tradition with a new twist, the Christmas Bird Count for Kids.

A Binocular Boot Camp will kick off the event, after which kids will divide into teams and head out into the field with volunteer experts to count and record the species of birds they locate. Teams will meet back at the Visitor Center after the count for snacks and hot chocolate and to tally their results.

This event is designed as a way for families to have fun outdoors and learn more about local birds. Kids of all birding abilities are encouraged to participate. Participants should come dressed for spending time outdoors. You may bring your own binoculars or borrow some from the Refuge. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Registration is not necessary, however large groups are asked to call ahead. For more information, please contact the Visitor Center at 618-998-5933.

IDNR hosts Christmas tree disposal

Individuals looking for a place to dispose of Christmas trees may drop them off at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources district office south of the intersection of Old Route 13 and Route 148 west of Marion.

Biologists will turn the trees into fish habitat. Local municipalities are also encouraged to call the IDNR office if they are interested in donating collected trees. The annual Crab Orchard Lake fish attractor project is scheduled for Feb. 22.

Trees will be accepted until that date. Ornaments, lights, and tinsel should be removed prior to drop-off. For more information, please contact Chris Bickers or Ana Tooley at the IDNR office at 618-993-7094.

— The Southern

ADM seeks to expand carbon capacity

685,000 metric tons stored in first phase of Decatur project

By Tim Landis

Business Editor

Archer Daniels Midland Co. has diverted 685,000 metric tons of carbon emissions from ethanol production to underground storage in the past two years and is seeking regulatory approval for another 5 million tons.

The sequestration of carbon dioxide at the ADM plant in Decatur is among the largest such experiments in the country on ways to reduce emissions linked to global warming, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

DOE has contributed \$141.5 million toward the \$208 million cost.

Carbon dioxide injections begun in November 2011 at a rate of about 1,000 tons a month are expected to continue through next year.

“We expect to reach our permit limit of 1 million tons in December 2014,” company spokeswoman Jackie Anderson said in an email.

Researchers are monitoring sandstone formations at depths of 7,000 feet to help determine the long-term viability of carbon storage for reducing fossil-fuel emissions, including from biofuels and coal.

The Illinois Basin Decatur Project is one of two planned by ADM.

Anderson said the company is awaiting regulatory approval of the second, even larger carbon-storage project.

“We will be able to inject 1 million tons per year for five years through this project,” said Anderson, “bringing the total combined projects to approximately 6 million tons.”

Anderson said the goal is to begin the second sequestration project in early 2015.

Sandstone storage

More than 4.5 million metric tons have been stored at six of eight sequestration sites across the country, according to a summary provided by DOE.

The largest, in an oilfield near Natchez, Miss., has stored more than 3.5 million metric tons of carbon at a depth of 10,000 feet since April 2009.

The ADM project is among three that rely on storage in sandstone saline formations.

CO₂ from ethanol production is captured and compressed, then transported more than a mile to

the storage site, according to the DOE summary.

A statement released with the summary indicated the Mount Simon Sandstone formation provides “exceptional geologic opportunities to safely and permanently store these emissions.”

The Mount Simon Sandstone also underlies one of the nation’s largest concentrations of coal-fired power plants, according to an analysis by a carbonsequestration project at MIT.

“This makes the Mount Simon Sandstone formation one of the most significant carbon-storage resources in the United States,” the MIT analysis says.

Regional partnerships

The Illinois State Geological Survey and the Midwest Geological Sequestration Consortium are tracking the ADM storage results in partnership with geological agencies in Indiana and Kentucky.

There are seven such regional partnerships nationwide.

Illinois survey director Donald McKay said the ready supply of CO₂ emissions from ADM has helped keep the Decatur project on schedule.

“Many of the others are having problems finding a source (of CO₂),” McKay said.

A September update from the sequestration consortium concluded sandstone formations at Decatur have met expectations for containing carbon, but that more results are needed.

“Environmental monitoring will continue for at least three more years, but likely longer,” the report states.

What about coal?

The initiative on the ADM grounds in Decatur is one of two major carbonstorage projects in Illinois. The other, FutureGen 2.0, remains in the planning stages. The Sierra Club last week sued in federal court in Springfield, arguing the \$1.3 billion project should meet tougher pollutioncontrol standards.

FutureGen developers propose carbon storage at a site in northeast Morgan County.

The CO₂ would be carried by an underground pipeline from a converted coal-burning plant 30 miles to the west at Meredosia.

A position statement posted on the Sierra Club national website questions whether sequestration will be technically or financially feasible for reducing carbon emissions.

Sequestration experiments are important, according to the position statement, but results likely will take years. In the meantime, the Sierra Club argues, the focus should be on renewable-energy alternatives to coal. While the ADM project uses emissions from ethanol production, Illinois Coal Association president Phil Gonet said he believes the Decatur project will have long-term benefits for coal.

“What we hope is, it will prove you can successfully and safely reduce CO2 through underground storage,” said Gonet, who testified in favor of the ADM project and FutureGen at a U.S. EPA “listening tour” in Chicago last month.

Illinois coal production is expected to hit 50 million tons this year, up from 48.5 million tons in 2012, said Gonet.

He said 85 percent of the coal is sold out of state, including export markets.

Harvest numbers concern hunters

By Chris Young

Staff Writer



Logan Probst, a senior at Teutopolis High School, killed this buck during the opening day of the traditional firearm deer hunting season. PHOTO COURTESY OF KEITH PROBST.

News that the firearm deer season numbers were down 25 percent from last year lit up the hunting forums and social media last week.

From cold weather that kept some hunters at home to the unknown effects of the most recent epizootic hemorrhagic disease outbreak, everyone had a theory.

EHD is a viral disease spread by biting midges. Most deer get sick and die very quickly.

The state tracks reports of deer killed by EHD, but not all deer that succumb are found and reported.

This year's outbreak was unusual because of back-to-back summers of drought conditions that favor the disease.

Already, deer numbers were on the way down due to efforts to meet targets set the Joint Task

Force on Deer Population Control set up by the Illinois General Assembly.

The task force recommendation (made in 2008) was that deer/ vehicle accidents should be reduced by 14 percent from their peak in 2003.

To achieve that goal, a number of steps were taken. For example, permits for late-winter seasons were sold over the counter, rather than through the usual lottery system.

Long-time Stark County bowhunter Bob Burns summed up the feelings of many hunters.

“I have been bow hunting for 35-plus years,” he said. “This year bowhunting was very much like hunting deer in the late 1970s in Illinois.

“Bowhunting is a way of life for me and I certainly hope the Illinois DNR gives this problem we have with EHD a great deal of thought and consideration.”

Burns said the EHD outbreak seems to have been more serious than the number of reports suggests.

“The DNR did a great job of managing the herd to get the number of deer we have had the last five years,” he said. “Now we will see if they have the management skills to compete with Mother Nature.”

Burns points out the financial importance of deer hunting for DNR and the state’s economy.

“I certainly hope they come up with a plan,” he said. “Can you imagine what kind of a financial impact no deer hunting would have on so many aspects of the Illinois economy?”

In the question and answer section below, Illinois Department of Natural Resources deer project manager Tom Micetich addresses some of these topics, and answers some frequently asked questions.

DNR says 1,220 EHD cases reported

By Chris Young

Staff Writer



Deer forage in a soybean field at dusk. Many hunters complained of seeing fewer deer this fall. CHRIS YOUNG/ THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER.

Questions and answers, with Tom Micetich, deer project manager, Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Prairie State Outdoors:

Is there a final number for EHD (epizootic hemorrhagic disease) cases reported?

Micetich: We had 1,220 reported from 63 counties this year.

PSO: Can the number of EHD cases reported be extrapolated into an estimate of how many deer were affected? Or are they best used to spot trends?

Micetich: EHD is a virus that kills deer somewhere in Illinois every year. The impact of EHD tends to be fairly localized. Seldom can a measurable impact on harvest attributable to EHD be detected at the county, let alone statewide level. We had reports of just under 3,000 deer dead in 87 counties during 2012, and this year we've had 1,220 from 63 counties.

Not all dead deer are found. Not all deer found dead are reported. We compile what is shared with us and include information in news releases. The data provided in our news releases are raw numbers provided by the public. There are no "fudge factors" or multipliers applied.

In areas with significant losses, hunters will find fewer deer.

While the numbers will rebound in a year or two, it will take a little longer for the return of an older age structure, if a number of mature animals were lost.

Those concerned with low deer observations where they are hunting should merely back off on

their doe harvest until numbers return to a more desirable level.

PSO: Can deer develop resistance to EHD?

Micetich: Yes. There are numerous serotypes (variations within a species) of the virus, however, and exposure to one type may not afford immunity to any of the others.

PSO: How close are we to meeting the targets of the Illinois General Assembly's Joint Task Force on Deer Population Control?

Micetich: The statewide deer-vehicle accident rate goal was met for the first time in 2012. However, there are still individual counties with some work yet to be done.

As counties reach their goal rates, they are removed from the late antlerless seasons, except in counties where chronic wasting disease (CWD) may be a concern.

There have been about a dozen or so counties that have been removed in the past two years. Pending 2013 data analysis, there are a number of others that will come out next year.

PSO: Some hunters are asking if there will be changes to the late-winter seasons. Are any changes being considered?

Micetich: There won't be any changes to this year's late-winter season (Greene County was previously announced as being closed).

There are counties that remain well above their goal accident rates, which do not have adequate doe harvest to curb herd growth, and/or reduce deer numbers. Those counties are the ones that are open to the late-winter seasons.

If deer numbers have declined to less than desirable levels, again, hunters are advised to back off of their doe harvest. Just because a season is offered does not mean you must hunt it.

Hunters and property managers may want to talk with those hunting and managing surrounding property to share their concerns. Problems exist when neighbors have differing ideas for managing the same deer. While one may want more deer, a neighbor who has lost acres of crops to deer may have other ideas.

PSO: How big a factor was the cold weather? Could it have actually helped if deer numbers were down by keeping some hunting pressure off ?

Micetich: Deer numbers are down statewide, in most places. You likely recall that was the mandate from the General Assembly through the Joint Task Force on Deer Population Control in its 2008 report to our director.

While many make jokes about a weather report included in the firearm season deer harvest news releases, it is there for a reason. It is not provided as an "excuse," as some believe. It is there so that when we look up past years' firearm news releases, we can get the weather conditions at the same time.

Like it or not, adverse weather does affect hunter participation and deer movement. Hunters that elect not to hunt, or spend fewer hours doing so, will be less likely to kill a deer.

We will know more about hunter effort, by season, when the annual hunter surveys are conducted at the conclusion of this year's hunting seasons.

PSO: Has there been an overreaction to the firearm season numbers? Is it just a statistical blip that will sort out over time?

Micetich: I believe that many are citing a 25.5 percent statewide reduction in the firearm harvest as proof positive that the herd has been destroyed. It should be pointed out that the archery harvest is currently within 2 percent, and muzzleloader was about 2.5 percent lower than last year. Of course, individual counties vary.

PSO: Any other thoughts?

Micetich: Annually, biologists from the Forest Wildlife Program evaluate every county open to firearm deer hunting.

Permit quotas (eithersex and antlerless only) for firearm and muzzleloader seasons are adjusted as needed; and doe harvest is reviewed to determine if the late-winter or CWD season is needed to achieve goals.

Disease, hunter success, deer harvest, deer-vehicle accident rates and damage complaints are among things considered in that analysis.

The hunter and landowner surveys conducted this past summer at open houses and online, will also play an important part of this year's decision-making process.

Archery, muzzleloader numbers down from 2012

Staff report

Muzzleloader and archery deer hunting totals are down slightly from last year.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources released muzzleloader and up-to-date archery totals Wednesday morning.

Illinois muzzleloader hunters killed a preliminary total of 3,486 deer during the three-day muzzleloading rifle deer season Dec. 13-15.

Last year, 3,576 deer were taken.

Sex ratios were 55 percent does (1,904) and 45 percent males (1,582).

DNR Forest Wildlife Program manager Paul Shelton said counties in the northern and southern parts of the state tended to exceed last year's results, while most central Illinois counties fell short of last year.

The top five counties were Pike (152), JoDaviess (100), Union (95), Jackson (97) and Fulton (85).

Archery hunters have killed a preliminary total of 52,166 deer through Dec. 15. Figures for the same time period last year were 53,034.

Sex ratios to date are 49 percent does and 51 percent males, with buck harvest during the past seven days at 43 percent.

The top five counties were Pike (2,271), Fulton (1,489), Jefferson (1,289), Adams (1,114) and JoDaviess (984).

County-by-county tables and comparisons with last year can be found at www.prairiestateoutdoors.com.

Calendar sales support youth programs

Staff Reports

The Illinois Conservation Foundation's 2014 wall calendar is now available.

The calendar, once a part of OutdoorIllinois magazine, includes hunting and fishing season information and dates for other outdoors events statewide.

Proceeds from the sale of this calendar support youth conservation education programs in Illinois. The 9-inch-by-12-inch calendars cost \$15 each. Two can be purchased for \$29 or three for \$41.25.

MasterCard or VISA orders can be placed at the secure Illinois Conservation Foundation website www.ilcf.org or by phone at (217) 785-2003.

Checks and money orders can be mailed to Illinois Conservation Foundation, ATTN: Wall Calendar, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271.

Deer taken outside Wisc. CWD zone tests positive

The Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources says a deer taken outside the chronic wasting disease management zone in Grant County has tested positive for CWD.

The DNR says the buck was killed near the center of the county and registered Nov. 24. The buck was taken about four miles from where a deer was shot and tested positive in 2012.

The DNR's CWD operations supervisor Don Bates says the state has focused surveillance around the fringes of the CWD management zone to better understand how the disease spreads. Sampling of deer in the peripheral areas is voluntary, so the DNR partners with private businesses to collect samples.

The agency says the second positive test in Grant County doesn't change any remaining hunting seasons.

Mich. deer numbers down because of snow, disease

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan authorities say this year's deer harvest appears to be down significantly from 2012 because of weather, disease and rule changes.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources said Thursday that early checks show the number of deer shot during the 2013 firearms hunting season fell in all regions of the state.

The season ended last Saturday.

The DNR says the drop was about 15 to 20 percent in the Upper Peninsula and about 10 percent in the southern Lower Peninsula, with a slight decline in the northern Lower Peninsula.

It says deer were hit by heavy, late snow in the Upper Peninsula and an epizootic hemorrhagic disease outbreak two summers ago in the South.

It says new antler point restrictions on young bucks also played a role.

Fracking opponents give regulators an earful

By [Patrick Yeagle](#)



Roy Wehrle of Springfield testifies at a public hearing in Decatur about proposed regulations to hydraulic fracturing. About 250 people showed up to the meeting, mostly in opposition to fracking.

PHOTO BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Hundreds of people turned out Tuesday evening for a public hearing in Decatur to point out holes in proposed regulations for a controversial oil and gas extraction technique. The meeting was one of several held around the state at which environmentalists, landowners and others spoke up to oppose the rules and the extraction technique itself.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources held a public meeting Dec. 17 at the Decatur Civic Center on proposed regulations of hydraulic fracturing, which is used in some states to free up deposits of oil and natural gas trapped in shale rock deep underground. The Illinois General Assembly passed a law to officially legalize “fracking” in June 2013, and IDNR is now tasked with creating a regulatory structure to implement the law.

Fracking involves the injection of millions of gallons of water, sand and chemicals about 5,000 feet underground to crack shale formations. The process allows pipes to extend up to two miles in any direction from a well site.

While industry experts say the process is safe, reports of contaminated groundwater, increased earthquake frequency and other problems in states where fracking is already legal prompted citizens from around Illinois to organize in opposition.

About 250 people attended the hearing on Dec. 17, according to IDNR spokesman Tim Schweizer. At least two social justice groups, Illinois Peoples' Action and Fair Economy Illinois, bused people from Springfield, Bloomington-Normal, Peoria and Champaign-Urbana to Decatur.

IPA members focused their comments mainly on what they called the "dirty dozen," 12 of the rules they deem the worst. Speakers from the group said the rules will fail to protect the environment, leave toxic waste unmitigated and provide only token protections for residents near fracking sites. They also claimed IDNR let the oil and gas industry write the rules, pointing to certain provisions like a relatively small \$50 fine for violating a certain regulation, which one speaker noted is less than the cost of a speeding ticket.

Roy Wehrle, a professor emeritus of economics and public affairs at the University of Illinois Springfield and an adjunct professor of business at Millikin University in Decatur, addressed a panel of IDNR officials at the hearing, saying the regulations as proposed don't do enough to prevent volatile organic compounds, which are substances that sublime into the air at low temperatures, from escaping out of fracked wells and causing health problems for people nearby. He warned that Illinois could look like parts of China, where VOCs have created smog so thick that it obscures buildings.

"How serious are these volatile chemicals and compounds? The answer is they are very serious to the health of our people," Wehrle said. "Smog causes the tissue of the lungs to disappear, to deteriorate, to decay, and the lungs are unable to repair this tissue once it is destroyed."

Braze Smith, an environmental scientist and organic farmer from Union County in southern Illinois, said part of his job as a scientist was tracking the spread of underground toxic waste plumes. He believes the testing requirements in the proposed rules are woefully inadequate to establish useable data about whether fracking has any effect on groundwater supplies.

"What we have here now is a situation in which we're going to inject a problem and then basically not track it," Smith said.

Sherry Procarione of Oakley, Ill., outside of Decatur, was the only member of the public to speak in favor of fracking. Procarione is running for U.S. Senate in the upcoming 2014 election as a write-in candidate on the Republican ballot. She said fracking has happened in Illinois for about 70 years without incident. She was referring to low-volume fracking, which is far smaller in scale, uses far less water and doesn't extend horizontally underground.

Procarione dismissed the environmental concerns of other speakers, saying the issue came down to the right of a property owner to do what they wish on their own property.

"What we need to remember is we don't need to fix what isn't broken," she said. "There is no empirical or anecdotal evidence for more rules."

After the public comment period concludes on Jan. 3, 2014, IDNR will submit its proposed rules to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, a legislative body tasked with approving regulations.

Mayor rules out petcoke ban

Mayor Rahm Emanuel on Thursday ruled out a ban on petcoke in favor of regulations that, a community leader warned, do not go far enough to contain the ugly byproduct of the oil refinery process coating Chicago's Southeast Side.

Peggy Salazar, director of the Southeast Environmental Task Force, questioned why Emanuel is giving petcoke storage companies as long as two years to enclose their large bulk material storage facilities.

Smaller storage facilities and deliveries would be required to install wind barriers, under the draft regulations.

"We don't think it's enough. Why would you allow something that is negative to the health of the community to be in existence for two years?" Salazar asked.

Emanuel declared his opposition to the Chicago ban on petcoke proposed by Ald. Edward Burke (14th) after joining Salazar and Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan on the Southeast Side to announce the new regulations with the owner of one of three petcoke storage sites.

"A lot of people for years wanted to just ban the coal plants. It couldn't be done. The companies would have looked at throwing it out. You would have spent a lot of money in the court. And it would not have succeeded," the mayor said.

"We need a regulatory structure to protect communities. The idea that you can ban it, I'm not sure will do the protection that you need to do and immediately would be thrown out of court and we would be no closer" to helping anybody.

Madigan agreed with Emanuel that petcoke is a "national problem" that requires both federal and state solutions.

Questions have been raised about whether City Hall was slow to respond to the mounting anger on a Southeast Side that's been Chicago's dumping ground for decades because of Emanuel's decision to abolish the city's Department of Environment shortly after taking office.

On Thursday, the mayor placed the blame on the shoulders of former Mayor Richard M. Daley — without uttering the name of his predecessor and political mentor.

"We hadn't done anything as a city in the last nine years knowing full well this [Whiting] plant was being built. We're catching up to what we should have done when Indiana took action," he said.

Tempers flare at Bourbonnais park board meeting

Jon Krenek

jkrenek@daily-journal.com

815-937-3370 | Posted: Tuesday, December 17, 2013 10:35 am

Emotions boiled over into public outbursts at the Bourbonnais Township Park District Board of Commissioners meeting Monday as residents shared their opinions of district's recent attempt to acquire the former Hidden Cove Sportsplex.

At one point, Wayne Delabre, board president, told the audience of about 20 people he would contact the police if those making public comments wouldn't stop interrupting each other.

"If we're going to interrupt the meeting we'll have to contact the police department and have people escorted out who are being disruptive," said Delabre, who later told The Daily Journal the police were not called.

Most residents at the meeting were critical of the park board for pursuing a deal to obtain the 15.4-acre development through a 10-year lease-to-own agreement offered by Bourbonnais businessman Steven Smith. The deal fell apart last week. The residents who expressed support for the park district's efforts on Monday were interrupted by its detractors.

"Every once in a while a governmental body comes up with a good idea, and I pay my taxes, too," said Josh Martin, of Bradley, a retired Bradley police officer and former school board member for Bradley Elementary School District 61.

Martin was interrupted by OUTRAGE President Darrell Bruck Jr., one of the park district's chief critics, to which Martin replied, "I have no respect for fringe groups. I didn't interrupt you."

Bruck told The Daily Journal he interrupted the meeting because a two-minute time limit the board set for public comments prevented him from discussing issues Martin was raising.

"He was bringing up issues I intended to address and I wasn't allowed to address them," Bruck said. OUTRAGE, a government watchdog group, urged residents to attend the meeting and six of the eight residents who spoke were against the acquisition of the complex.

Some carried signs saying "No No No" written in red ink and "No Hidden Cove. No Taxes." Voters rejected the park district's November 2012 referendum to purchase the complex outright by a vote of 9,421 to 5,655 — a key sore point among those who spoke.

"It was brought to the voters and a majority said 'no.' It's discouraging to know you still pursued it," said Darlene Wielczko, of Bourbonnais. "I can see why people start to feel radically about this and lose their composure."

Wielczko said the idea sounded like, "a wonderful plan for our kids," but that many people simply cannot afford more property taxes. Detractors said they were in favor of a park district

offering bicycle trails and open spaces with amenities such as picnic areas rather than multimillion dollar facilities.

Bruck said OUTRAGE would consider a ballot measure to dissolve the park district if it pursued any further attempts to acquire the complex. Hollice Clark, the park district's executive director, said the district will not be dismissing any future opportunities that might come to acquire it.

Neither Delabre nor Clark offered any reaction to comments made at the meeting or to the tone of public comment session.

"As a public agency we have to give everyone the right to speak," Clark said. "When they've done that they should allow everyone else to speak."

Animal control finds illegal traps on coyote in town

Craig Sterrett
Editor

Illegal, unmarked traps are suspected in the case of a coyote found Wednesday in a La Salle neighborhood and euthanized by La Salle County Animal Control.

Carla Margis of 23 Heather Drive snapped a photograph of a coyote that was hunkered down in bushes near her house. She didn't know until later why "the poor thing" was lying in her yard. Later Wednesday morning, La Salle County Animal Control officer Gary Wind received a call about the coyote in Margis' yard in the subdivision southeast of the Chartres Street post office.



+ click to enlarge

Submitted photo
Carla Margis of La Salle snapped this photo of a coyote under her bushes at her house Wednesday morning.

"It is totally out of character" for a coyote to be that close to a house and to not run away, Wind said.

He said he believes a postman who was delivering mail wound up "eyeball to eyeball" with the coyote by the time he noticed it in some bushes.

"I guess the mailman came and got startled by it pretty good," Wind said.

Wind said he showed up and euthanized the coyote, and afterward realized the severity of injuries it had suffered from leg traps it had on both front feet. He said bare bone was exposed and its front feet were broken. He said neither of the traps, nor the wires or chains dangling from them, were marked with addresses or names of the trapper.

"It is trapping season and they can be legally hunted and trapped," Wind said. He said he believes the coyote was trapped illegally, and he was calling Illinois Conservation Police on Wednesday afternoon.

Wind said he was glad he received a call because he would not have wanted the coyote to become bolder around people and also would not have wanted to see the wild animal suffer a slow, "horrible" death.

Finding the coyote with traps on it in town concerns him for another reason. He said when people set traps close to town, they occasionally trap people's dogs. He said he removed people's dogs that had been caught in leg traps last year but he hadn't seen it happen yet this year.

Companies see new energy potential in old hydro dams

Posted on [12/20/2013](#) by [Kari Lydersen](#)



The Williams Dam in Indiana will soon be producing power again. (Photo by Cindy Cornett Seigle via Creative Commons)

[Century-old dusky photos](#) show the herculean effort made to construct the Williams Dam on the White River in southern Indiana.

The building of scaffolds, the digging of pits, the pouring of concrete, created an impressive structure that began to take shape in 1910, was swamped by floodwaters in 1913 and generated electricity until the turbines were shut down in the 1950s.

Now the Boston company [Free Flow Power](#) says it is close to reopening a hydropower plant at the dam, part of a nascent resurgence of hydropower in the Midwest.

The overhaul will cost about \$12 million and be capable of generating 4 MW, the company says. The plant would sell power through long-term purchase agreements or on the wholesale market, said Free Flow vice president Tom Feldman.

Feldman said the plant's power could be competitive with the power sold from nuclear and natural gas plants in the region, and it could help Indiana or other states meet their renewable energy standards since hydropower qualifies as a renewable energy source.

The price of electricity generated at the Williams dam "would not be a significant premium compared to the current wholesale market," Feldman said.

"There's going to be a change between the prevailing wholesale price for power now and in 2016. The key takeaway from our perspective and what we've heard from other entities is that hydropower is

cost-competitive,” he said. “In the grand scheme of things it is a small part of the energy mix – it’s not going to displace coal or natural gas – so we’re looking to identify sites where hydropower can be a component of the energy mix.”

Issues with variability

The restarted hydropower plant will be a “[run-of-river](#)” operation, meaning that they won’t change the amount of water pooled above the dam but will go with the flow that will vary depending on season and weather. The unpredictability of varying flows is not an ideal situation for power distribution and sale – solar and wind face similar challenges. But Feldman said that based on 30 years of flow data measured on site at the dam, the company is able to offer dependable estimates to potential electricity buyers and investors.

Bolstering hydropower could be a growing trend in the Midwest, where hydropower makes up just a fraction of the regional power supply – from a tenth of a percent in Illinois to about three percent in Wisconsin, [according](#) to the National Hydropower Association.

Recently the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* [reported](#) that Wisconsin-based Renewable World Resources is refurbishing archaic Midwest dams to greatly increase their power generation, including a \$2.3 million investment to double the output of the Cataract dam in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Renewable World Resource’s dams, like Free Flow’s, are run-of-river setups.

Feldman said there are 80,000 dams nationwide that are not generating electricity but in many cases could be. Most are owned by state governments or the Army Corps of Engineers.

‘Tremendous untapped resource’

The Williams dam, which is owned by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, is the furthest along of about 50 government-owned dams where Free Flow is looking to install hydropower operations. The 20 other projects they consider in advanced stages of development include six on the [Muskingum River](#) in Ohio.

“There’s a tremendous untapped existing resource out there – what Free Flow is trying to do is make beneficial use of existing infrastructure with minimal impact on the community,” said Feldman.

He said the company has been working with neighbors and other stakeholders for several years to hear and address concerns. He added that Free Flow is trying to create a “win-win situation” in part by building a new ADA-compliant fishing platform above the dam, which is already a popular fishing spot – even hosting [events](#) for the Indiana Catfish Association. The company says the new plant will create 25 construction jobs and two highly-skilled permanent jobs.

Free Flow expects to get their license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in early 2014, after about three years working with the commission on licensing issues. They hope to secure power purchase agreements and start operation by mid-2016. The department of natural resources will continue to own the actual dam, and through a lease arrangement Free Flow will own

and operate the hydropower plant.

Feldman said the company is hoping to enter a bilateral purchase agreement where one entity buys power from the dam — an ideal candidate would be the [Crane Naval Base](#) nearby. Selling to utilities or rural electric cooperatives — in or out of the state — would also be possible. Feldman said they much prefer to deal with in-state customers.

“We are committed to seeing this through to commercial operation,” said Feldman. “And looking forward to working with IDNR to execute a lease agreement that ensures there’s hydropower producing emission free electricity for generations.”

IDNR stresses safety for snowmobile riders

BY SAM VAN CAMP *sports@dancomnews.com*

The Commercial-News

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is reminding snowmobile operators and riders to take extra caution this year when snow falls in Illinois.

Every year throughout the state, people are seriously injured or lose their lives on snowmobiles. Many of these accidents could have been prevented had reasonable and proper precautions been taken.

In most instances, being alert and sober, knowing the trail, and traveling at a reasonable rate of speed for trail conditions can prevent most accidents. In North America, more than 50 percent of snowmobile fatalities involve intoxicated operators.

Last season (2012-2013) in Illinois, 34 reported snowmobile accidents resulted in three fatalities.

“Most snowmobile accidents or fatalities we see could have been prevented had common sense and safety been practiced before and during the ride,” said Illinois Conservation Police Chief Rafael Gutierrez. “It doesn’t matter what your intentions are before you set out to ride – if you aren’t prepared, accidents are more likely to happen.”

While IDNR encourages everyone to take a snowmobile safety class before their first ride of the season, state law requires that persons at least 12 years of age and less than 16 years must have in possession a valid Snowmobile Safety Education Certificate of Competency issued by IDNR in order to operate a snowmobile alone.

While most of the traditional instructor-led safety courses administered by the IDNR have taken place this year, snowmobilers can also satisfy state safety requirements by taking one of two online courses to become familiar with safe sledding practices or to refresh themselves on staying safe. Individuals can earn legal safety certification through either www.snowmobilecourse.com or www.snowmobile-ed.com. Both courses are administered by private companies, and do charge a fee to take the course.

Basic safety tips for safe snowmobiling:

Never consume alcohol before or during a ride

Know your equipment, and make sure that equipment is in proper working order.

Wear sensible, protective clothing designed for snowmobiling, like a full-size helmet, goggles, or face shield to prevent injuries from twigs, stones, ice chips, and flying debris..

Avoid wearing long scarves, which may get caught in moving parts of the snowmobile.

Know the terrain you are going to ride. If unfamiliar to you, ask someone who has traveled over them before. Be aware of trails or portions of trails that may be closed.

Drowning is one cause of snowmobile fatalities. When not familiar with the thickness of the ice or water currents, avoid these areas.

Know the weather forecast, and especially the ice and snow conditions in the area.

Always use the buddy system. Never ride alone or unaccompanied.

Travel at a reasonable rate of speed for your visibility and conditions.

A minimum of 4 inches of snow cover must be present for snowmobile use on state-managed property. Please call ahead to site offices to get the latest snow conditions and trail closures at individual sites. Ignoring these closures can result in a minimum \$120 fine and possible arrest.

For a list of site offices please visit the IDNR website at <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/>

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Weather delays final tests on the Black Hawk statue

By Vinde Wells - Editor

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Portions of the Black Hawk statue have fallen from the icon as evidenced in this recent photo. Photo by Earleen Hinton

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Early winter weather this month has delayed the final tests on the Black Hawk Statue.

Frank Rausa, Sterling, who is heading up an effort to repair the 102-year-old world renowned icon, said experts will likely return in early January to Lowden State Park, where the statue stands on a high bluff overlooking the Rock River.

Three experts, a structural engineer, preservation architect, and conservation architect, will be on the site to do further study of the repairs that are needed to reverse the effects of time and weather and preserve the statue.

"They're going to spend a couple of days doing some sound testing," Rausa said. "We just need a little weather cooperation."

The experts had planned to do the last tests early this month until several snowstorms and frigid weather prevented that.

A team of experts spent nearly a week in October examining the damage to the statue and performing tests.

Engineers used high-tech scanners which allowed them to see inside the concrete to assess its condition and to determine the amount and location of steel reinforcing.

The locations of the steel were then marked on tape placed on the statue's hollow interior.

Another crew scanned the statue with rotating lasers to create an exact 3-D model of the statue.

The testing, which also included ground-penetrating radar work and ultrasonic tomography, was finished Oct. 11.

Created by sculptor Lorado Taft in 1911 as a tribute to all Native Americans and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the statue is situated on a 125-foot bluff. It draws thousands of visitors each year.

The statue has developed cracks, and large pieces of its concrete surface have dislodged. The folded arms of the 50-foot monolith have been especially affected.

The cost for the assessment and repairs was estimated at \$625,000. Much of that money has been raised.

Rausa, a member of The Friends of the Blackhawk Statue Committee, said the price tag for the study and repairs is up to \$700,000 now and could go even higher.

More than half the money already raised for the project came from a \$350,000 grant the IDNR received from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

The rest came from donations, as well as funds raised during the annual Oregon Trail Days festival held at Lowden Park since 2010.

A large contributor was the Jeffris Family Foundation, Janesville, Wis., which gave a \$150,000 matching grant.

Recently the Chicago Black Hawks hockey team got on board with what Rausa said is a sizable donation, although he declined to specify how much.

The statue is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Repair work is expected to begin as soon as the weather is warm enough in the spring.

The sooner, the better, Rausa said, because Black Hawk's condition is steadily deteriorating.

He hopes enough money will be raised so that the original pinkish color of the statue can be restored.

To donate to the statue funds checks can be made out to the Illinois Conservation Foundation and marked for the Black Hawk Statue.

Donations can be mailed to Illinois Conservation Foundation, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield IL 62702.