The Lincoln Heritage Water Trail
Sangamon River

June 2014

prepared for:

ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL
RESOURCES

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The Lincoln Heritage Water Trail

A Study of the Potential for Enhancement and Use of the Sangamon River Corridor, Decatur to Petersburg, Illinois

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Introduction

The Sangamon River winds through the heart of The Prairie State of Illinois. It takes in the populations of Taylorville, Decatur, Springfield, and Petersburg as well as many smaller communities before joining forces with Salt Creek and the Illinois River. The 85-mile section of the river between Decatur and Petersburg has particular significance. Abraham Lincoln lived and traveled along the route during his young adult life.

The Thomas Lincoln family moved from Indiana and settled along the Sangamon River in Macon County in 1830. The site is the present day *Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Memorial*, eight miles west of Decatur. The Lincolns built a cabin and stayed there through the brutal winter of 1830-1831, known now as *The Winter of the Deep Snow*. The following spring at age 21, Abraham Lincoln left his family and headed downstream in a canoe with two other young men. In Springfield a merchant contracted them to build a flatboat and transport provisions down the river to New Orleans. They built the boat in Sangamo Town northwest of Springfield. However, only a few miles into their trip the boat was grounded on the mill dam at New Salem. Local residents helped free the boat and the three men completed the trip. Lincoln then returned to New Salem where he tried business ventures including surveying in the area and laying out towns and roads. When his interest turned to law and politics, he campaigned to clear and straighten the Sangamon River for commercial steamboat navigation. Later he obtained a US patent for a devise that raised boats through shallow water. Today *Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site*, 2 miles south of Petersburg is a popular visitor attraction.

Although the river scenery probably looks much as it did in Lincoln's time, the significance of the river in day-to-day life has changed dramatically. The river is no longer used for travel and commerce as it was in the early 1800s. Early settlements along the river which were based on riverside mills and ferry crossings have disappeared. The watershed draining into the river, then prairies and forests, is now largely cropland.

The river supplies most of the water for the local population, although many people today hardly notice its existence. Little has been done to take advantage of its potential for recreational use as well as its wildlife and aesthetic value. Canoes, kayaks, and other small craft can navigate the river. Picnicking, camping, and day use areas can be provided along its banks. Hiking trails, bicycling routes, and scenic drives could be developed along its corridor. Commercial operations including boat and bicycle rentals, guided adventure tours, camping, fishing and hunting are all possible.

This stretch of the Sangamon River, Decatur to Petersburg, has the direct historical connection with the life of Abraham Lincoln as well as many opportunities for outdoor recreational activities. The significance of the route was first formally recognized in 1965 when Illinois Governor Otto Kerner designated the ***Lincoln Heritage Canoe Trail*** through this area.

This study addresses the 85 miles that includes the original ***Lincoln Heritage Canoe Trail***. It is being done in the run-up to year 2015, the 50th anniversary of the trail's state designation. The study looks at the current physical conditions of the river corridor including sites and facilities now available for recreational use. It identifies recreational opportunities along the route and discusses the improvements that could make it possible. It also lays out priorities for improvements along the route recognizing that they may take years as funding is secured from a variety of sources.

Many people contributed to this study including staff of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Meetings were held in three locations to gather information and opinions from representatives of local governments, civic and special interest organizations, and other stakeholders. The plans were presented to the Illinois River Coordinating Council, chaired by Lt. Governor Sheila Simon.

Lincoln Heritage Water Trail – Planning Objectives

The study provides recommendations to improve the quality and usability of the river corridor with these overall objectives in mind.

1. Promote awareness and stewardship of the river and the associated environments.
2. Recommend river-based recreation and eco-tourism opportunities along the corridor.
3. Emphasize the heritage of the river, particularly its historical connection to Abraham Lincoln.

The River Corridor – Its Physical Condition

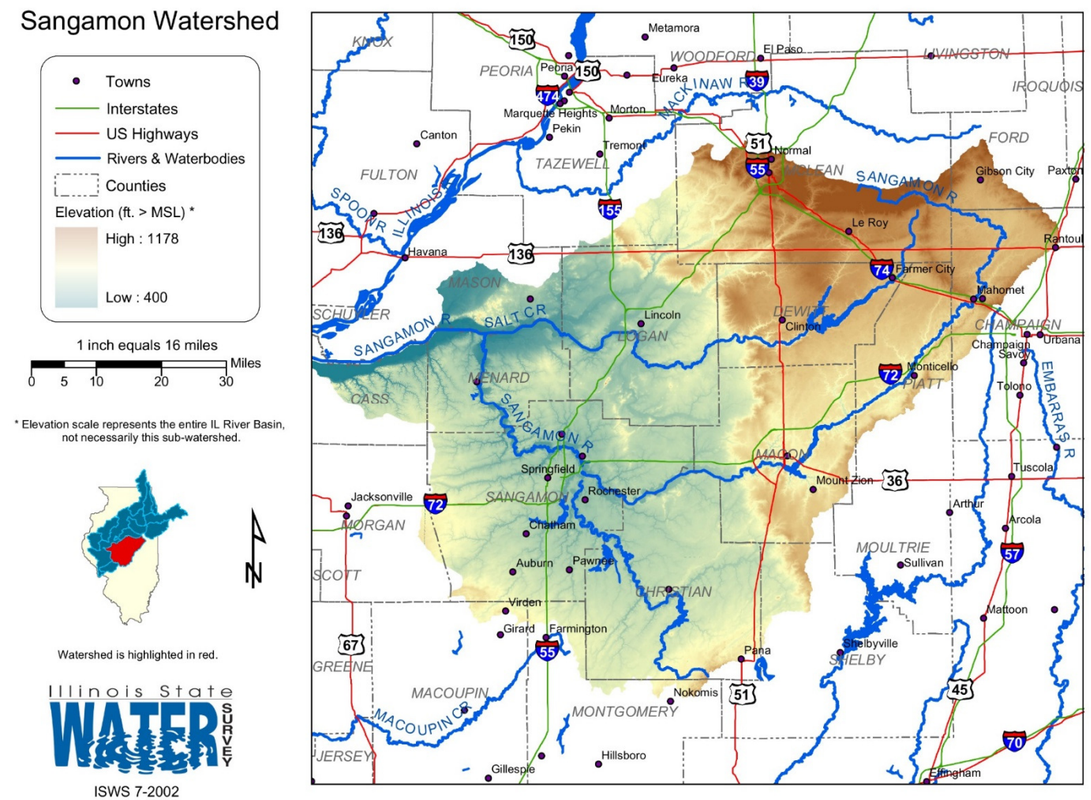
The 85-mile stretch of the Sangamon River between Decatur and Petersburg winds through the relatively flat landscape of central Illinois. It collects the storm water run-off from more than 3,000 square miles of surrounding land. This watershed includes cropland, pasture, some forest and prairies, and several urban areas as well. The river also carries treated discharge from municipal water treatment systems in Decatur, Springfield, and other communities.

Until mid-1800s the watershed of the Sangamon River was covered with native prairies and forests. Although flooding occurred at this earlier time, much of the precipitation was able to percolate into the ground where plants absorbed moisture and ground water was recharged. Today, the vegetative cover is substantially different. Hard surfaces of roads, parking lots, and roofs do not allow water absorption. In fact, as runoff flows across these surfaces it collects debris and pollutants which can enter the river system. On agriculture land run-off can carry silt from exposed soils and residue of agriculture fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides.

This stretch of the Sangamon River is not currently impounded, although several small dams along the route once impounded minimal areas. Just above the section, however, the Sangamon River has been dammed to form Lake Decatur that provides both municipal water and recreational opportunities in the city. Two tributaries, the South Fork and Sugar Creek, have been impounded to form lakes in Taylorville and Springfield.

Along most of this corridor, the river meanders through a wide floodplain of lowland forests and farm fields. In some areas banks are being undercut by the river and in other areas oxbow lakes have been created as the river changed course. These are natural features along the river. In certain locations, however, the natural configuration of the river has been altered. Through a couple areas, the river bed has been straightened and earthen levees built along its banks. This channelizing is intended to increase the usability of adjacent farmland by directing the river flow and controlling flooding. In a few other locations, small lakes along the river are remnants of sand and gravel extraction operations. In some location extraction is still ongoing.

Farmland now borders much of the river, along with intermittent residences, farmsteads, and recreational cabins. A couple large landfills and a few industrial plants are located near the river in Decatur and Springfield. Although some of these structures can be seen from the river, most views are of the vegetated flood plain. More common reminders of nearby populations are trash and debris along the river banks. Some local efforts are underway to enforce regulations and clean-up the river.



Public Facilities along the River

There are several parks and nature areas along this 85-mile length of the river. They have a range of facilities that contribute to public use along the route.

- Lincoln Park, a facility of the Decatur Park District
- Rock Springs Nature Center, a Macon County Conservation District site west of Decatur
- Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Memorial, managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), west of Decatur
- Wheeland Park, a municipal park in Riverton
- Rail Splitter State Habitat Area, managed by the IDNR, at I-55 North rest stop
- Riverside Park, Carpenter Park, and Gurgens Park clustered north of Springfield and managed by the Springfield Park District
- Sangamon River State Fish and Wildlife Area, managed by the IDNR, northwest of Springfield
- Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, managed by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, south of Petersburg
- Hurie Park and Riverside Nature Park, municipal parks in Petersburg

These sites and their facilities can be incorporated in the river trail. Most sites offer boat access to the river, although the access at the Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Memorial is currently closed. All the sites have trails except the Rail Splitter State Habitat Area and the Sangamon River State Fish and Wildlife Area. Rock Springs and Lincoln Park have paved trails suitable for bicycling. The others have hiking trails with access to the river. Other trails are being considered for future development including an extension of the Sangamon Valley Trail that would cross the river on an old railroad bridge north of Springfield. New trails are being planned near Sherman and Petersburg. These and other facilities are discussed in detail by county, in report sections that follow.

Scenic driving opportunities along the Sangamon River are minimal. A few sections of roadway offer scenic views such as those at Lincoln Park, Riverside Park, Lincoln's New Salem Historic Site, and the Irwin Bridge Road. At several bridges and other vantage points the river can also be seen and appreciated.

River-focused Organizations and Activities

Several organizations within the area provide programs and activities that highlight the river. The Macon County Conservation District headquartered at Rock Springs Nature Center provides public awareness events and tours along the river. Similarly at Riverside and Carpenter Park in Springfield, the local Sierra Club and Friends of the Sangamon River hold riverside cleanups and invasive plant species control efforts within the flood plain.

Menard County Trails and Greenways centered at Lincoln's New Salem Historic Site is active. The group organizes river clean-ups and promotes special events along the river. They started an annual canoe race and river float. The event attracts participants from both local and distant locations.

The new Lincoln Heritage Water Trail Association is organizing to become involved in all aspects of the water trail. The association will address both the historical significance related to Abraham Lincoln, and the scenic and recreational opportunities of the river.

Local Involvement

Involving local units of government and organizations in this planning work was essential. The river corridor study area is expansive, covering 85-miles in length and cutting through four counties. The range of interests related to the river is great, including all manner of conservation and recreation matters. Three meetings were held early during the planning process to determine current involvement, level of interest, and concerns about river-related matters.

A list of stakeholders with connections to the Sangamon River was developed. This included units of government, public and private educational institutions, and groups involved with environment, recreation, and other civic matters. Telephone calls and letters to the groups invited representatives to attend a planning meeting in their geographical area. Three meetings were held.

- Macon and Christian counties, March 17, 2014 at Rock Springs Nature Center in Decatur
- Sangamon County, March 21, 2014 at Nelson Center in Springfield
- Menard County, March 21, 2014 at Lincoln's New Salem Visitor Center in Petersburg

These meetings began with an overview of the project by Louis Yockey, project manager with the IL Department of Natural Resources, a general analysis of the corridor, and preliminary ideas for its use and improvement. Each participant was then asked to identify the organization they represented and to describe the following.

- Involvement with the Sangamon River
- Current facilities or activities it sponsored
- Future plans and programs
- Concerns and issues

A discussion followed regarding the river corridor and its potential. Most participants also completed a comment form. Information generated during these meetings and some follow-up conversations were used to refine, redirect, and/or add to the preliminary concepts.
General consensus was found in seven areas.

1. General public awareness of the Sangamon River is minimal, and perceptions are often predominantly negative.
2. Abraham Lincoln's life on the river could be much better interpreted.
3. Boating on the river is hindered by the very few locations available for public access. On the upper half of the corridor, boating is minimized by its designation as "non-navigable waters" where its legal use is not clearly understood.
4. Scenic qualities of the river could be improved by private landowners, possibly with incentive programs, by civic organizations, and the general public. Additionally, enforcement of land use regulations and control of fly dumping would add to the quality of the area.
5. Environmental quality of the river can be improved by encouraging best management practice programs to control water flow and pollution both in adjacent lands and from urban and agriculture areas in the watershed.
6. The river corridor has potential for improvement as a local asset and a tourist attraction. Information and programs need to be developed to promote facilities. Over time, additional recreational opportunities -- bicycle and hiking trails, boating routes and access points, scenic driving routes, and park facilities -- could be added. Interpretation of historic sites could be provided, and special events held at one or multiple sites along the way. Businesses could be encouraged to offer goods and services to users of the river corridor.
7. Organizations interested in river-related matters could cooperate to improve communication and publicity, undertake joint ventures, and increase opportunities for funding.

Macon and Christian County Stakeholders
Agricultural Watershed Institute
Association of IL Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Christian County Highway Department
Christian County Soil and Water Conservation District
City of Decatur
Community Foundation of Macon County
Decatur Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
Decatur Audubon Society
Decatur Park District
Heart of the Sangamon Ecosystem Partnership
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Department of Transportation
Illinois Raptor Center
Lincoln Heritage Water Trail Association
Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Monument
Macon County Conservation District
Macon County Farm Bureau
Macon County Highway Department
Macon County Historical Society
Macon County Soil and Water Conservation District
Millikin University
Sanitary District of Decatur
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Decatur
Various Interested Residents

Sangamon County Stakeholders
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum
Association of IL Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Benedictine University of Springfield
City of Springfield
Friends of the Sangamon Valley
Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau
Illinois Audobon Society
Illinois Department of Transportation, District 6
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
Illinois Sierra Club
Illinois State Historical Society
Illinois State Museum
Lincoln Heritage Water Trail Association
Lincoln Memorial Garden
Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition
Lower Sangamon River Resource Conservation and Development Inc.
Rolling Meadows Brewery
Sangamon County Administrator
Sangamon County Highway Department
Sangamon County Historical Society
Sangamon County Soil and Water Conservation District
Sierra Club, Sangamon Valley Group
Springfield Audobon Society
Springfield Bicycle Club
Springfield Citizens Club
Springfield Metro Sanitary District
Springfield Park District
Springfield – Sangamon County Regional Planning
The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
The Sangamon Conservancy Trust
Tri-Harder Promotions
U of I Extension Services (Logan/Menard/Sangamon)
United States Department of Agriculture
USDA, Sangamon County
Village of Riverton
Village of Sherman
Various Interested Residents

Menard County Stakeholders
City of Petersburg
Friends of the Sangamon Valley
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
Illinois River Watch
Illinois State Museum
Kayaking Team Dirt Clod
Lincoln Heritage Water Trail Association
Lincoln's New Salem Historic Site
Menard County Board
Menard County Highway Department
Menard County Soil and Water Conservation District
Menard County Tourism Council
Menard County Trails and Greenways
New Salem Lincoln League
Petersburg Chamber of Commerce
Sangamon River Chapter of IL Audubon Society
Tri Harder Promotions
U of I Extension Services (Logan/Menard/Sangamon)
Various Interested Residents

Planning for the Lincoln Heritage Water Trail

This planning project is focused toward 2015 which will be the fifty-year anniversary of the **Lincoln Heritage Canoe Trail** designation by then Governor Otto Kerner. While reinforcing the original purpose of this trail, this study looks anew at opportunities to increase the recognition and appreciation of the Sangamon River.

What are the current conditions of the river corridor? What public facilities exist now that can be utilized and eventually enhanced as user needs develop? How can greater recognition and use of the river be fostered? How can existing and possibly new organizations and groups work together to achieve greater results?

To meet the established Planning Objectives, the following is recommended.

1. Promote awareness and stewardship of the river and the associated environments.

The future of the Sangamon River as a resource depends on public recognition and protection.

- **Establish an organization** to coordinate activities, programs, and projects throughout the corridor. Forums, events and newsletter publications (print and digital) could be developed to disseminate information and promote communication among land owners, communities, and government agencies.

- Develop a **Public Awareness Program** with input of all those potentially taking part. Local economic development departments, nature organizations, civic groups, and local businesses can all participate in the effort.

- Provide a series of **public events** by different groups to promote conservation practices, recreational uses, and historic understandings and aesthetic appreciation of the river.

- Devise ways to **educate individuals and various groups** about the importance of the river environment. Both digital and printed media can be employed. Displays and hand-out materials can be provided at the river information hubs. Programs for environmental groups as well as civic organizations, group homes, and churches can be offered. Opportunities for active, hands-on participation will appear to some people. Others may be interested in assisting by providing financial donations.

- Install a series of **markers** at significant locations and record by GPS points. The marker locations would be useful for river appreciation or use, including scenic views, historic sites, interpretative locations, river access points, demonstrations of resource management practices, and other river-related sites. Markers can be located along roadsides and trails, or within parks and other public sites.

- Develop a **conservation easement program** to preserve vegetation and habitat along the river. Easements are legal agreements between a land owner and public agency that establish acceptable land management practices to prevent erosion and improve habitat. Compensation is typically provided to property owners if land value is reduced as a result of the easement. Where property has minimal value, such as in flood-plain areas, easements may simply allow certain public use with the assurance of no liability to the landowner.

- Focus on **resource protection along tributaries**, especially sections that are close to the river. Enlist existing organizations such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Water Districts, and Sanitary Districts to initiate practices that improve water quality and reduce flooding. Promote conservation practices farther upstream as well. Grants and tax incentives could be put in place to encourage projects with long-term benefits.

- Enforce existing **regulations** and promote new regulations where they are needed. Floodplain zoning can restrict development along the river and in floodplains where structures disturb the natural quality of the environment and can be damaged by flooding. Regulations requiring erosion control during construction keep silt from washing into creeks and rivers where it degrades water quality and fills the streams.

2. **Recommend river-based recreational and eco-tourism opportunities along the corridor.**

- Create a **website and other electronic connections** for river activities and programs. These outlets can provide information about the corridor – maps, history, upcoming events, contact information, links to other related sites, etc. They can also be used as a forum for information, new ideas, and discussions. It would be readily accessible by all using various electronic devises. Provide links to recreational sites and businesses along the route, and encourage those sites to provide links to the River Corridor website.

- Develop **information hubs** at established along the river. Interpretive displays would be provided and printed material offered concerning the river resources and opportunities. These hubs would be located at the three primary public sites along the route -- Rock Springs Nature Center in Macon County, the I-55 rest stops in Sangamon County, and the New Salem Historic Site Visitor Center in Menard County. These locations have attendance of both a local and tourist populations.

- Provide **information for potential users** about opportunities including maps, descriptions of support facilities, contacts for info concerning water levels for boaters, links to services - boat and bicycle rental, guides, etc.

- Increase the number of **organized river-based events** and publicize.

- Provide **needed facilities** for various users.

  Boaters: convenient vehicular access for loading and unloading, stable shoreline conditions for put-in and take-out, potable and wash water, restrooms, shelters.

  Bicyclists: good-quality, scenic bicycle trails and connections with regional trails and roads/streets, convenient vehicular access for loading and unloading, potable water, restrooms, shelters.

  Hikers: good-quality, scenic hiking trails and connections with regional trails, convenient vehicular access, potable water, restrooms, and shelters.

  Along with the above basic facilities, improvements such as information kiosks, vending machines, food concessions, convenience stores, and campgrounds can add enjoyment and offer additional recreational opportunities. Over time, sites can be upgraded to serve needs of the public.

  In addition to boat access at the established recreation sites, boaters can put-in or take-out at road crossings where the rights-of-way provide suitable conditions. More of these may be designed as they are explored and found to be suitable.

- Designate scenic driving routes, an enjoyable activity for many. Routes could include sections of roadway that follow the river and area where views are exceptional. Routes might also include historic iron bridges - Bolivia Bridge, Chinquapin Bridge, and the abandoned railroad bridge by the Springfield airport – that span the river. Only the Bolivia Bridge is still in use. The old concrete bridge also remains in place alongside the active bridge on Rte. 29 north of Springfield.

- Encourage new and expanded businesses to serve the growing ecotourism. Currently, a canoe rental and guiding business operates from Petersburg. Horse riding stables are located near Springfield's Riverside Park. Bird and game hunting is offered by outfitters on private property nearby.

  Other business opportunities could be seized. Bicycle rental, guided adventure tours, private campgrounds, motels, repair shops and convenience stores all directly relate to needs of users of the river corridor. In addition, food service of all types (cafes, bar and grills, restaurants) can increase the pleasure of visitors. Shopping opportunities (gifts, crafts, antiques, etc.) can expand visitors' interests and lengthen their stays.

- Encourage cities and towns along the river to highlight the river environment as a way of emphasizing the resource. Views of the river could be provided along streets, for motorists coming to town or driving through. Sidewalk or trail connections could be made from downtowns and residential neighborhoods to the riverfront. Parks or scenic overlooks could be developed along the river. River-front festivals and other special events could be held there. Businesses could provide cafes, restaurants, and other ventures to take advantage of the river environment.

3. **Emphasize the heritage of the river, particularly its historical connection to Abraham Lincoln.**

   More than anything, this will take the conscious inclusion of historic information about the river as programs and activities are developed.

- Include historical information in all informational materials and promotional efforts about river-based opportunities.

- To the extent suitable, provide information and access to some of the archaeological sites along the river.

  Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park, the Lincoln Family cabin site, relics of an old grist mill, and the old cemetery.

  Camp Butler, a major mustering camp and prisoner site during the Civil War near Riverton.

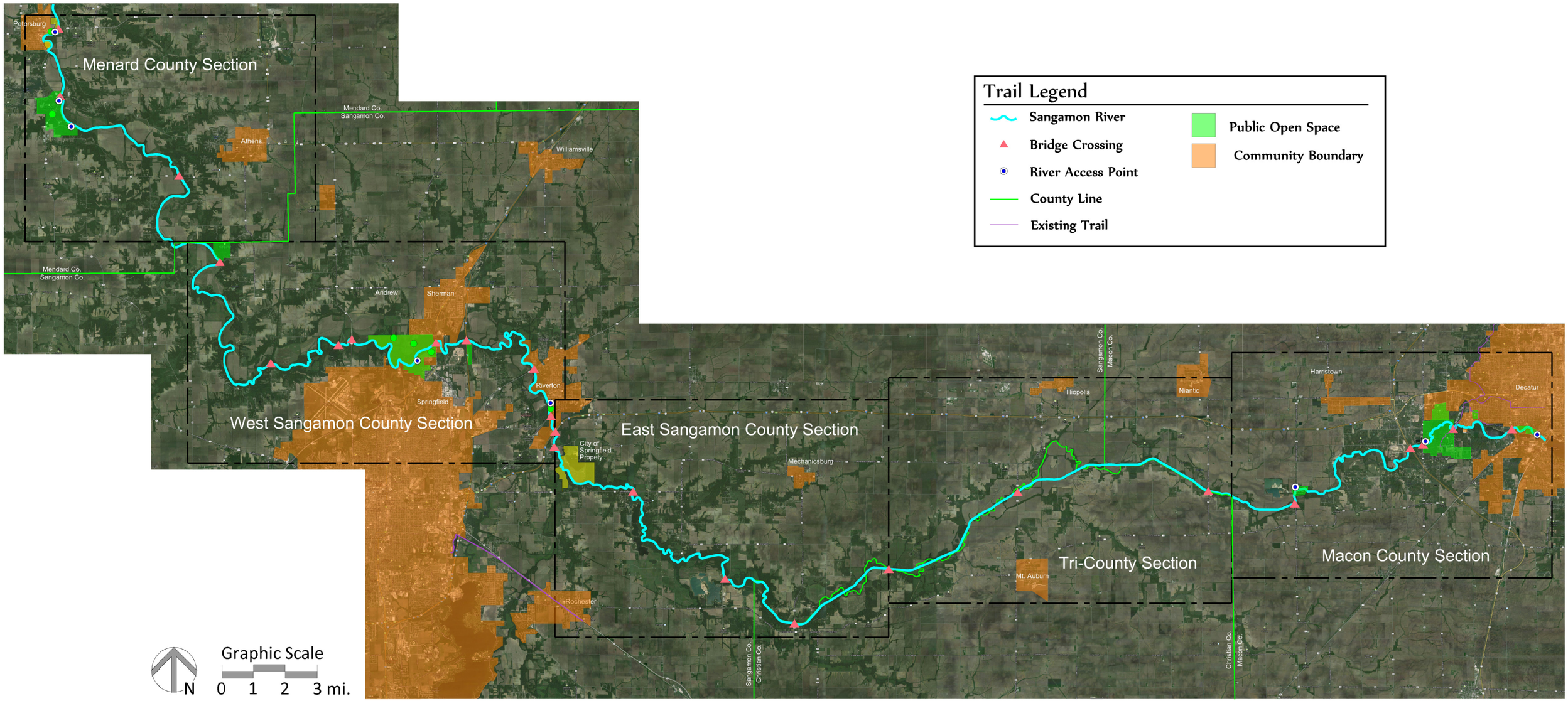
  New Salem State Historic Site, a reconstructed village of log homes, stores and a saw mill. Extensive interpretation, demonstrations and special events are held regularly throughout the year.

- Promote programs specifically focused on settlement along the river, personages involved, the 1965 designation as the *Lincoln Heritage Canoe Trail*.

- On the River Corridor website and electronic media, provide links to historic sites along the route and other sources of historic information. Encourage historic sites to provide links to the River Corridor website.

The Lincoln Heritage Water Trail - Project Area

June 2014



Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Massie Massie & Associates

Macon County Section – Analysis

Attributes

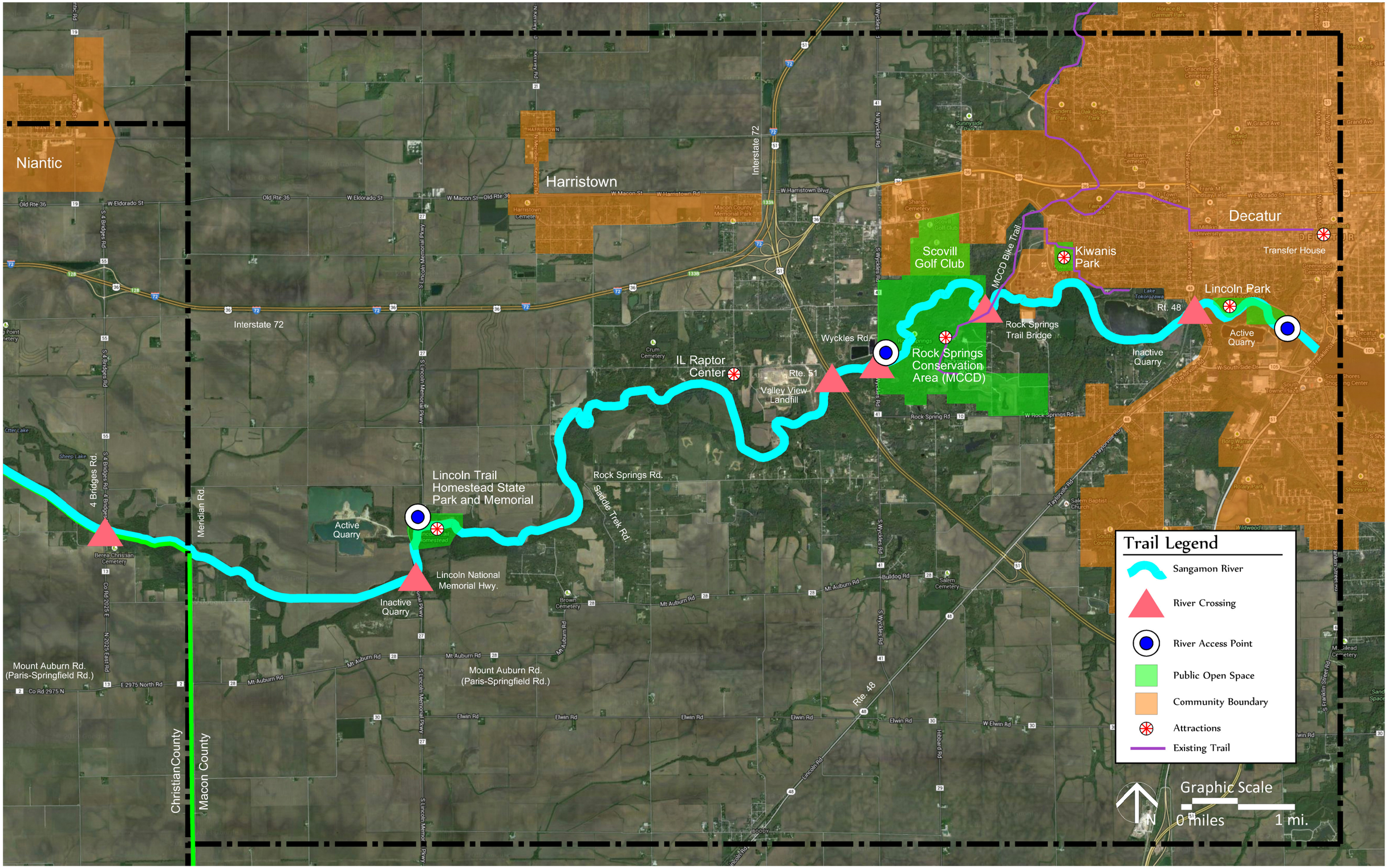
1. The river has a natural meandering course with forests on both sides through much of the area below the Lake Decatur dam.
2. The river corridor cuts through municipal areas in Decatur and nearby Harristown.
3. There is good access to the river from highways and local roads.
4. Several public sites near Decatur provide recreational opportunities and conservation needs.
5 Environmental education and recreation programs are provided by public agencies and local schools and organizations.
6. Recreation trails and historic routes exist in the area.

Concerns

1. This section of the river is not a designated “navigable water” so is not recognized for boating use.
2. At times low water levels make boating difficult.
3. Two of the three existing river access locations are now closed for public use.
4. Debris along the river, adjacent land use impacts, and storm water pollution are concerns.
5. Interpretation about the history and heritage of the area including its connection to Abraham Lincoln is lacking.

Macon County Section - Analysis

June 2014



Macon County Section – Proposed Water Initiatives

1. Acquire land along the river or secure easements or other agreements with private land owners to provide for recreation and conservation. Land acquisition or easements, and their future management, would be done by the unit of government most suitable. Those might include the Decatur Park District, the Macon County Conservation District, the Macon County Highway Department, the City of Decatur and the Illinois Department of natural Resources and Illinois Department of Transportation.

   Lincoln Park to Wyckles Road

   - New river access and conservation or park site near the Rte. 48 Bridge
   - Emergency access location near the water treatment plant and Kiwanis Park
   - New river access near the Rock Springs Trail Bridge
   - Enhanced river access at Wyckles Road Bridge

. Wyckles Road Bridge to Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Memorial

   - Emergency access location at Valley View Landfill via West Hill Road
   - Controlled river access at the Illinois Raptor Center on West Hill Road
   - New river access and possible river crossing at Saddle Trek Road and Rock Springs Road
   - Restore and enhance river access at Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park

. Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park to 4 Bridges Road Bridge (Niantic Road)

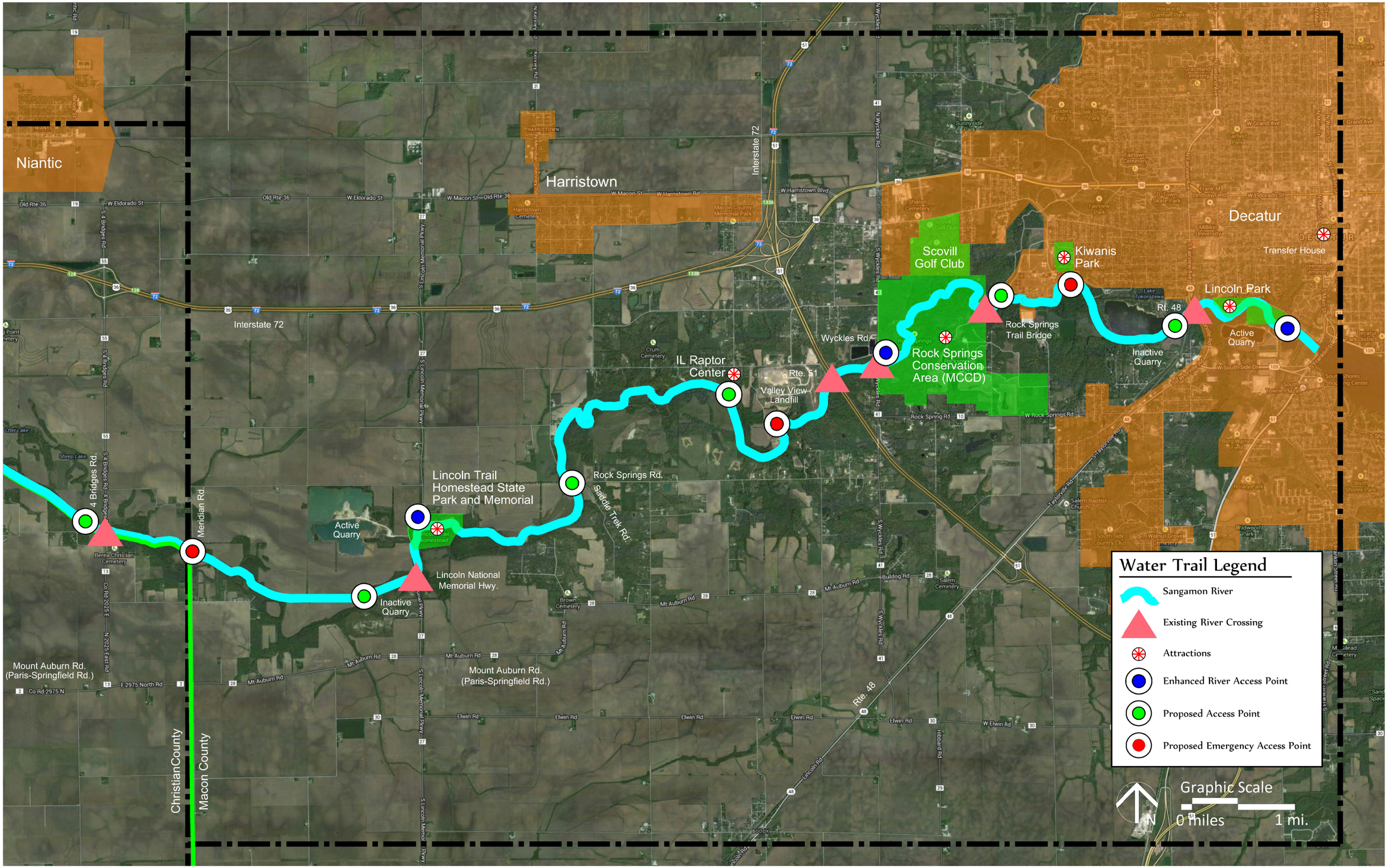
   - New (or emergency) access at inactive quarry site
   - Emergency access location at Meridian Road
   - New river access at 4 Bridges Road Bridge

2. Create a Water Resource Center to educate the public about river environments, water dynamics, conservation and best management practices.

3. Form a Sangamon River Alliance consisting of agencies, businesses, civic organizations and others interested to promote river-related events and actions to encourage river corridor preservation.

Macon County Section - Proposed Water Initiatives

June 2014



Macon County Section – Proposed Land Initiatives

1. Acquire land and old quarries near the Rte. 48 Bridge to provide a new public river access and to complete the trail connecting Lincoln Park to the Rock Springs Trail. The park or conservation area could offer new recreational activities, preserve floodplain forests, and offer habitat research/observation close to a large population and Millikin University.

2. Acquire land and develop a new river access where Saddle Trek Road turns to become West Rock Springs Road. This is an abandoned river crossing that has public right-of-way on both sides of the river. This could be a satellite site or a riparian extension of the nearby Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Monument.

3. Acquire lands and inactive quarries west of Lincoln National Memorial Highway to expand river access and to create new recreational or conservation opportunities.

4. Extend Rock Springs Trail to the Wyckles Road Bridge access area along either the north or south side of the river.

5. Designate a bicycle and pedestrian trail along rural roads north of the river from the Wyckles Road Bridge access area to Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and on to 4 Bridges Road Bridge. This would be a shared-road-trail.

6. Designate a river valley driving route from downtown Decatur to Rock Springs Nature Center along West Main Street and Route 48, then to Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park on the historic Paris-Springfield Road (Macon County Hwy. 28).

7. Install interpretive signs or stations to provide information about the river, special events and sources of information, etc. Signs could be located at the trail hubs and other locations.

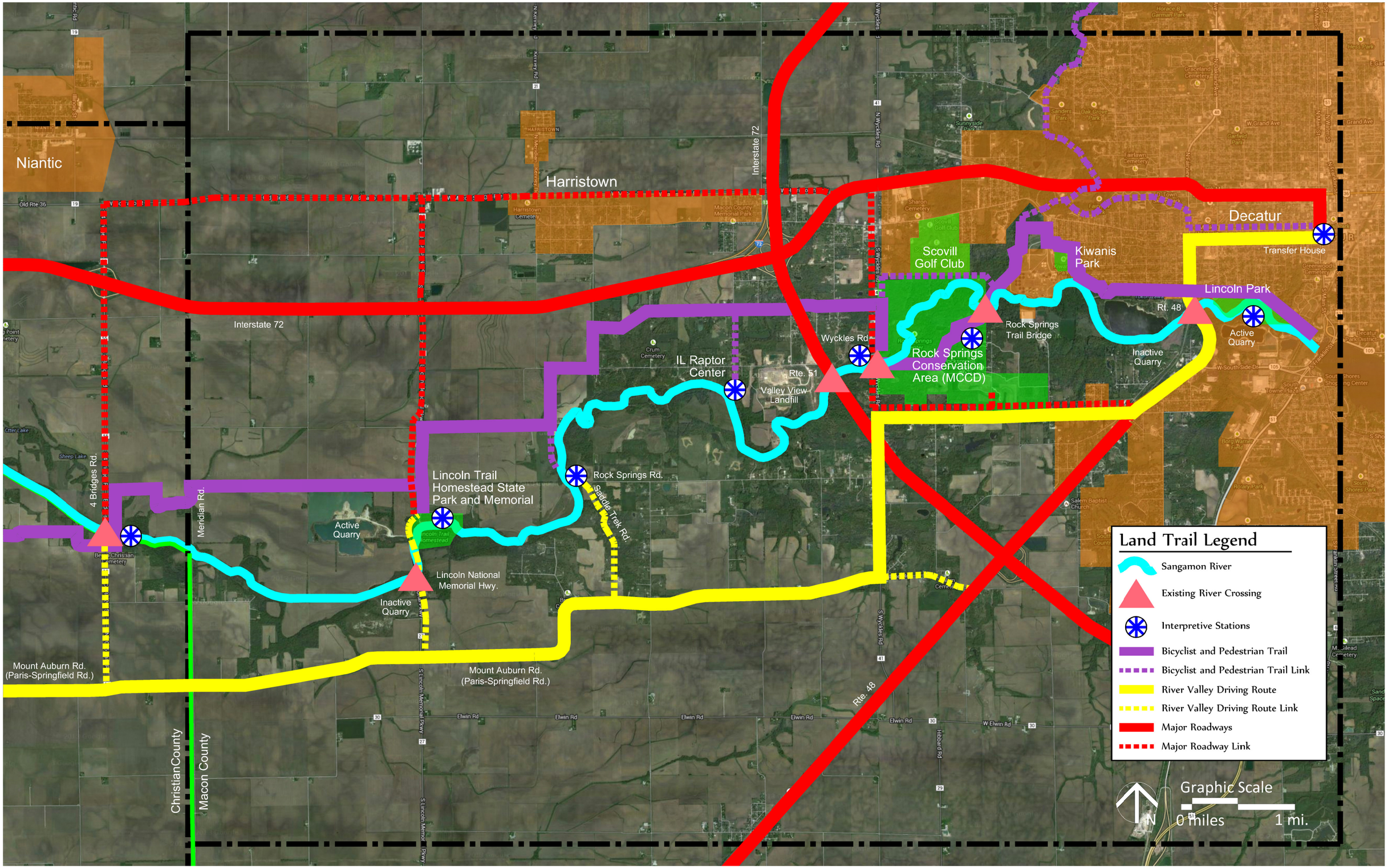
    - The Decatur Transfer House (hub)
    - Lincoln Park
    - Rock Springs Nature Center (hub)
    - Wyckles Road Bridge Access Area
    - Illinois Raptor Center
    - Saddle Trek Road Access Area
    - Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park (hub)
    - 4 Bridges Road Bridge

8. Post informational signs at major roadway links to the river facilities and attractions along the river. Locations might include:

    - Route 48 (via Rte. 36 & Rte. 51)
    - Interstate 72 – Decatur's Rte. 36 exit (via Wyckles Road & Lincoln Memorial Highway)
    - Interstate 72 – Niantic exit (via Lincoln Memorial Highway & 4 Bridges Road)
    - User services - Wyckles Road & Rte. 36 area and within the city of Decatur

Macon County Section - Proposed Land Initiatives

June 2014



Tri-County Section – Analysis

Attributes

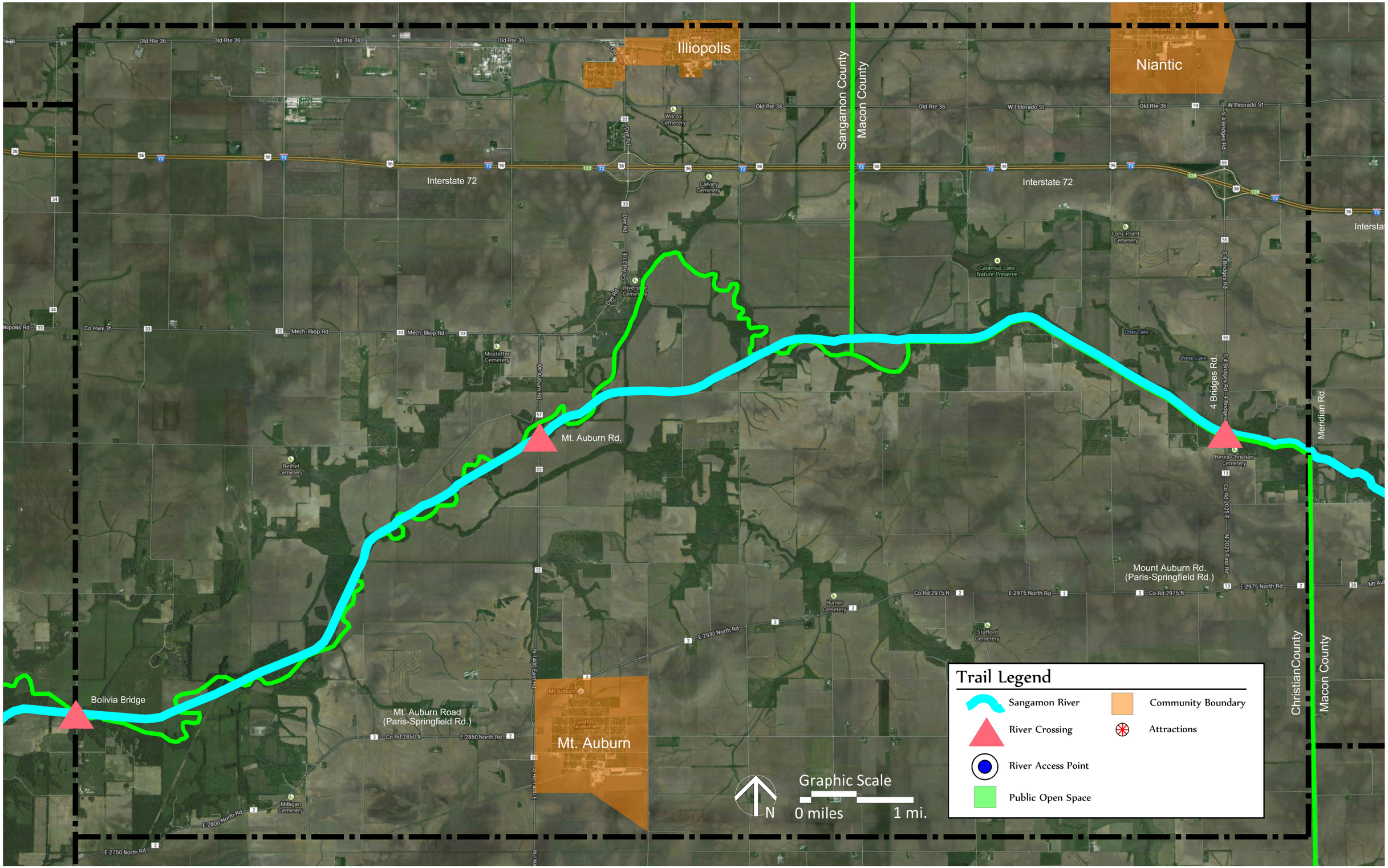
1. The river corridor in this area is a rural landscape with scattered old cemeteries, churches, and farmsteads. Towns of Niantic, Illiopolis and Mt. Auburn are nearby.
2. Interstate 72 is close and provides good access to the river from two exits.
3. The historic Paris-Springfield Road parallels the river the entire distance.
4. The historic iron truss Bolivia Bridge still spans the river.
5. The community of Mt. Auburn is built on an interesting geological formation, a moraine kame or hill of glacial deposits, and was at one time considered as a location for the capitol of Illinois.

Concerns

1. This section of the river is not a designated "navigable water" so is not recognized for boating use.
2. The river's meandering course has been straightened through most of this section and only a narrow edge of forest separates it from agricultural cropland on both sides.
3. There are no public river access locations along this section, but people access the river from three roadway crossings
4. There are no public lands or trails along the river for recreational and resource management.
5. Interpretation about the history and heritage of the area including its connection to Abraham Lincoln is lacking.
6. River-oriented environmental education and recreation programs by public agencies or civic organizations are not apparent. The Soil and Water Conservation Service programs are primarily for the agriculture land managers.

Tri-County Section - Analysis

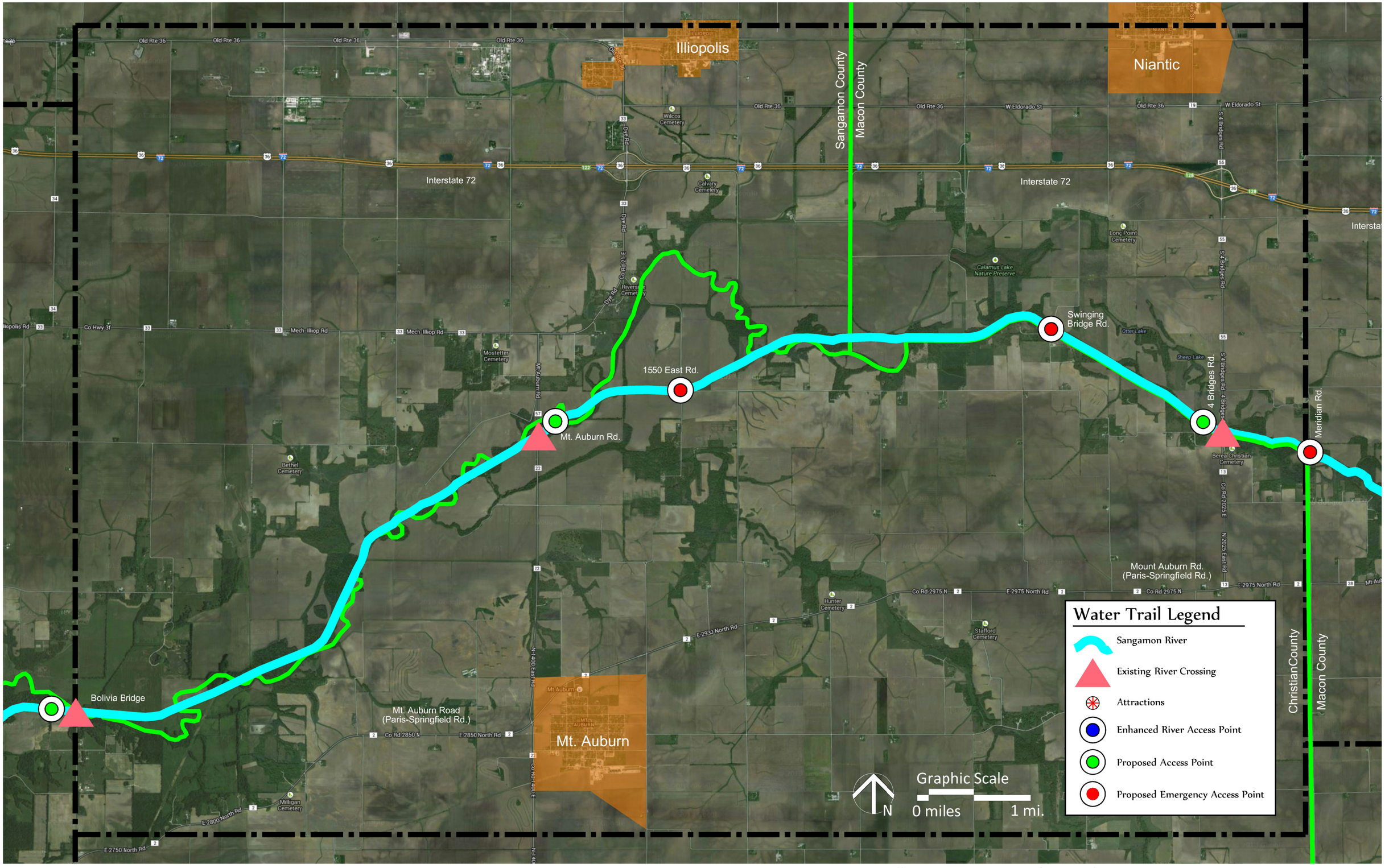
June 2014



Tri-County Section – Proposed Water Initiatives

1. Acquire land along the river or secure easements or other agreements with private land owners to provide for recreation and conservation. Land acquisition or easements, and their future management, would be done by the unit of government most suitable. Those might include the Macon County Highway Department, the Christian County Highway Department and the Sangamon County Highway Department.

    - New river access at 4-Bridges Road Bridge
    - Emergency access location from Swinging Bridge Road west of 4 Bridges Road
    - Emergency access location at 1550 East Road & 3150 North Road east of the Mt. Auburn - Illiopolis Rd where a trail bridge could be located
    - New river access area near the Mt. Auburn -Illiopolis Road Bridge
    - New river access near the Bolivia Bridge

Tri-County Section - Proposed Water Initiatives

June 2014