



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Rock Island District

ILLINOIS RIVER ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION FEASIBILITY STUDY NEWSLETTER

Notice of Study Initiation and Public Open Houses



November 2000

CORPS OF ENGINEERS & DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES COST-SHARING SIGNING CEREMONY PLANNED

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources entered into a feasibility study cost-sharing agreement in August 2000 and became “partners” in a combined effort to identify opportunities to implement ecosystem restoration and to evaluate recommendations made in the State of Illinois’ *Integrated Management Plan for the Illinois River Watershed* and determine if there is a Federal interest (environmental benefits exceeding costs) in their implementation.

The public is invited to attend a 9 a.m. ceremony on November 29, 2000, as Colonel William J. Bayles, Rock Island District Commander, and Mr. Brent Manning, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director, formally initiate the study and their agencies’ partnership throughout the feasibility study. The ceremony is sponsored by Congressman Ray LaHood, who has provided Congressional support for the study and **has** a strong interest in Illinois River Basin restoration. The ceremony will be held at the Gateway Center, 200 North East Water Street, Peoria, Illinois. The study is scheduled for completion in 2004.

OPEN HOUSE TO FOLLOW

Seven public open houses will be held throughout the study area. The purpose of the open houses is to provide the public the opportunity to learn about the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Study by visiting numerous study displays and to exchange information with study team members.

The first open house will be held at the Gateway Center after the Federal and State signing ceremony. Representatives from the Corps of Engineers and the Department of Natural Resources, as well as other participating Federal and State agencies, will be available *at any time* from 9:30 a.m. to noon and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. to meet with the public to discuss on a one-to-one basis information on the range of alternatives for restoring the environment in the Illinois River watershed and to gather comments on the alternatives and problems in the area.

Several displays will be available to explain the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Study. All interested members of the public are encouraged to attend the open house, visit the displays, talk to agency representatives, and provide comments. The comments received at this open house will be considered during the study and will be part of the official NEPA scoping process.

Open houses also will be held in Bloomington, Kankakee, Yorkville, Utica, Macomb, and Grafton. Please see page 3 of this announcement for more information.

STUDY AREA

The study area includes the entire Illinois River Basin and its tributaries. The Illinois River is part of the Illinois Waterway System, extending 327-miles from Lake Michigan at Chicago, Illinois, to the Illinois River's confluence with the Mississippi River at Grafton, Illinois. Major tributaries included in the study are the Fox, Des Plaines, Kankakee, Iroquois, Vermilion, Mackinaw, Spoon, Sangamon, and LaMoines Rivers.

STUDY BACKGROUND

The Corps of Engineers performed a reconnaissance study and identified Federal and State interests in implementing ecosystem restoration projects and recommended continuation into the feasibility phase. The feasibility study is estimated to require 3-1/2 years to complete.

The study will identify Federal and State interest in addressing the loss of fish and wildlife habitat due to problems related to the loss of backwaters and side channels due to sedimentation, destabilized tributary streams, changed hydrologic regimes and water fluctuations, and other impacts on the system caused by human activity. Study efforts will focus on two areas: (1) system evaluations focused on assessing the overall watershed needs, priorities, and general locations for restoration, and (2) site-specific evaluations focused on developing detailed restoration options for possible implementation at specific sites.

The study will look at ways to partner with State, Federal, and local entities to address alternatives in four broad categories:

(1) Watershed/Tributary Restoration - evaluate options to address tributary degradation and instability looking at stream restoration, wetlands creation/restoration, water retention, conservation easements, and riparian buffers.

(2) Side Channel and Backwater Restoration - consider opportunities to restore aquatic habitats in these areas including off-channel deep water habitat, backwater lakes, side channels, islands, etc.

(3) Water Level Management - evaluate options to reduce rapid fluctuations and naturalize flows.

(4) Floodplain Restoration and Protection - evaluate floodplain use, potential restoration of floodplain function, and value/potential for acquisition/use of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) easements.

The feasibility study will conclude with a report identifying solutions to restoring the Illinois River Basin ecosystem that are in the Federal interest (environmental benefits exceeding costs), if any. Recommendations coming out of the study could include restoration efforts along the Illinois River itself, restoration in and along the tributaries, and restoration efforts in adjacent upland areas. The report will then be forwarded to the Corps' higher headquarters for consideration and processing to the Administration and Congress.

COORDINATION

Throughout the study period, the Corps of Engineers will coordinate not only with our cost-sharing partner, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, but also with Federal, State, and local governmental agencies. These agencies include the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and multiple county and city officials.

Coordination also will be maintained with members of the general public and non-governmental organizations. Newsletters providing study updates will be produced at critical times during the study period. Two additional sets of meetings with the public are planned and will be announced in study newsletters.

ADDITIONAL OPEN HOUSE LOCATIONS

Public open houses for the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Study will be held at the locations listed below. The public is encouraged to attend an open house *at any time* between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., view the displays, talk to study team representatives, and provide comments.

Monday, December 4

Interstate Center
East Conference Room
2301 West Market St
Bloomington, IL

Tuesday, December 5

Kankakee Civic Auditorium
(Kankakee Valley Park District)
803 Eighth (8th & Charles)
Kankakee, IL

Wednesday, December 6

Beecher Community Building
908 Game Farm Road
Yorkville, IL

Tuesday, December 12

Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center
Starved Rock State Park
Route 178 & Route 71
Utica, IL

Wednesday, December 13

Western Illinois University
University Union
Grand Ballroom
1 University Circle
Macomb, IL

(NOTE: Because of construction, the University recommends that visitors enter the campus by taking University Drive to Western Avenue. Several parking lots are available near the Union.)

Thursday, December 14

Pere Marquette State Park
Grand Ballroom
Route 100, Great River Road

Grafton, IL

NEED DIRECTIONS?

If you need directions to any of the open house locations, please call or email Ms. Sue Simmons, Corps of Engineers, at the phone number or email address listed below.

COMMENTS?

If you have technical comments or questions about the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Study, please contact Mr. Brad Thompson, Project Manager, at 309/794-5256 or by email at bradley.e.thompson@usace.army.mil.

You may write to Mr. Thompson at the following address:

District Engineer
U.S. Army Engineer District, Rock Island
ATTN: CEMVR-PM-M (Thompson)
Clock Tower Building – P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004

The contact for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources is Mr. Jim Mick. Mr. Mick can be reached at 309/543-3316 or by email at jmick@dnrmail.state.il.

You may write to Mr. Mick at the following address:

Mr. Jim Mick
Illinois River Basin Coordinator
Region III Fisheries Administrator
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
700 South 10th Street
Havana, Illinois 62644

If you are aware of someone who may wish to be added to the study's mailing list to receive newsletters and future study mailings, please ask him/her to contact Ms. Sue Simmons at 309/794-5573 or by email at suzanne.r.simmons@usace.army.mil.

Your Comments Are Important To Us!

