7. SUMMARY OF COORDINATION, PUBLIC VIEWS, AND COMMENTS

This section provides a summary of the public views and comments associated with efforts to educate and involve individuals and groups with an interest in the study. The section concludes with a summary of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) coordination and correspondence.

A. PUBLIC VIEWS AND COMMENTS

1. Public Involvement. This section discusses activities undertaken to involve the public throughout the development of the Illinois River Basin Restoration Comprehensive Plan (Plan). The public includes the study's cost-sharing partner, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR); elected congressional representatives; Federal, State, county, and city governmental agencies; environmental groups/organizations; farm bureaus; levee and drainage districts; businesses; media; and the unaffiliated general public. The scoping process, that is, the effort to discover the significant issues of any given project, associated with the Corps planning process was also applied to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping requirement at the appropriate level. Informal discussions concerning this program have taken place with the appropriate points of contact of the States of Wisconsin and Indiana. In addition, the States of Wisconsin and Indiana will be provided the Plan for review and comment during the public review process.

Throughout any planning effort, the Corps of Engineers (Corps) strives to inform, educate, and involve the many groups who may have an interest in the plan. This coordination is paramount to assuring that all interested parties have the opportunity to be part of the planning process.

One process used for coordination is the public involvement process. Public involvement is the exchange of information with various segments of the public, designed to reduce unnecessary conflict and achieve consensus. The goal is to open and maintain channels of communication in order to fully consider public views and information in the planning process.

An effective public involvement program must identify and respond to as many affected publics as possible throughout the study process and consider their input in the study's decision-making process. Content analysis is the method employed to identify public opinion, study concerns, and potential controversy. It ensures that the public involvement plan is responsive to the level of interest and concern expressed by the public, and it assesses the effectiveness of the public involvement techniques.

The main avenues for providing information to and receiving feedback from all of the publics were through the study's newsletters, open houses, and public meetings. Newsletters provided points of contact for the publics' questions and comments. The open houses and public meetings allowed for an information exchange between the attendees and the study team. The public also was made aware of study activities via the study website (www.mvr.usace.army.mil/ILRiverEco/default.htm).

The following is a discussion of the two major public involvement efforts—Study Initiation Open Houses and Public Meetings—that were conducted during the study process.

2. Study Initiation Open Houses. In November 2000, a study newsletter was mailed to over 1,600 addresses notifying the public of the study's initiation and inviting them to attend a cost-sharing signing ceremony and a public open house following the ceremony. The newsletter also described the study area; provided the study background; discussed coordination efforts; invited the public to attend one of six additional public open houses scheduled throughout the study area; and listed the Corps and Illinois DNR points of contact for comments or questions. In addition, three news releases to media outlets (television, radio, and newspaper) in the study area provided information about the cost-sharing signing ceremony and the public open houses. The cost-sharing signing ceremony and first open house were held in Peoria, Illinois, on November 29, 2000. The ceremony, sponsored by Congressman Ray LaHood (IL-18), formally signified the partnership formed by the Rock Island District of the Corps of Engineers and the Illinois DNR to execute this study.

Six additional open houses were scheduled to be held in December 2000; however, due to inclement weather, three of the meetings were rescheduled for February 2001. A supplemental newsletter and news release announcing the rescheduled meetings were issued in January 2001.

Copies of the newsletter, supplemental newsletter, and news releases are attached in Appendix A. The newsletters also are available on the study's website. The following table shows the dates and locations of the open houses.

Date	Location
November 29, 2000	Gateway Center Peoria, IL
December 4, 2000	Interstate Center Bloomington, IL
December 5, 2000	Kankakee Civic Auditorium Kankakee, IL
December 6, 2000	Beecher Community Building Yorkville, IL
February 20, 2001	Pere Marquette State Park Lodge Grafton, IL
February 26, 2001	Starved Rock State Park Lodge Utica, IL
February 27, 2001	Western IL University Union Macomb, IL

a. Purpose. The purpose of the open houses was to provide the public with the opportunity to learn about the ecosystem restoration study; 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. The open house format allowed ample opportunity for the public to visit the displays at their convenience, and to talk with Corps and Illinois DNR study team members.

b. Displays. The Corps provided three display with study information—maps, photographs, and graphic—on Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Study, Illinois River Watershed Restoration Efforts, and Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Study Efforts.

The Illinois DNR provided several displays explaining river modeling, sediment budget, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Watershed Conservation 2000, dredging, and plants and sediment block. A video entitled *Constructing Riffles and Pools for Stream Rehabilitation* also was available for viewing. The Illinois State Water Survey provided extensive material on a summary of research on the Illinois River and Peoria Lake.

c. Attendance. Total open house attendance for all locations was 195. The numbers were smaller than anticipated; however, attendees did spend considerable time viewing the displays and discussing relevant topics with study team members. Attendance at each location is as follows:

Location	Attendance
Peoria	72
Bloomington	14
Kankakee	37
Yorkville	8
Grafton	17
Utica	32
Macomb	15

d. Public Comments. Open house attendees were asked to complete a comment sheet at each session. Sixty-one percent of the attendees completed comment sheets. Overall, comments were very favorable regarding the open house format, displays, and the goals of the study. The table below summarizes the responses from study-specific question on the comment sheets. As some statements were not answered, not all rows total 100 percent.

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I support ecosystem restoration efforts along the Illinois River and its tributaries.	94%	5%	0%
In the Illinois River Basin, the principal problems limiting aquatic and associated fish and wildlife habitat are:			
• loss of backwaters and side channels due to sedimentation	90%	2%	2%
• destabilized tributary streams	87%	3%	2%
• changed hydrologic regimes and water fluctuations	80%	10%	2%
• other impacts on the system	53%	14%	0%
In my opinion, study and eventual restoration efforts should focus on:			
• watershed/tributary restoration	80%	3%	0%
• side channel and backwater restoration	75%	5%	1%
• water level management	50%	20%	2%
• floodplain restoration and protection	71%	9%	2%

The comment sheet also provided space for additional participant comments, summarized as follows:

Issues supporting the restoration study efforts included:

- the study and projects are long overdue
- the study needs to be completed before it is too late
- the interested groups need to work together to be more effective and successful

The principal problems affecting aquatic habitat in the Illinois River Basin were described as:

- farmland erosion
- agricultural contaminants in river
- sediment
- lack of aquatic plant growth

Many additional remarks about the study efforts stated that all four of the focus areas are interrelated, and that by addressing these issues solutions to other problems would fall into place naturally.

e. Open House Summary. This series of public open houses covered a wide geographic region throughout the study area. The open houses met the objective of providing residents in the study area the opportunity to meet with study representatives and to comment on the range of study alternatives. Although there were not a large number of attendees, those who did attend offered many comments that assisted the study team as they worked toward selecting a preferred comprehensive plan alternative. In addition, those in attendance who were not on the study's mailing list were added to the list.

3. Team Meetings to Discuss Goals and Alternatives. Following the Study Initiation Open Houses, team members from the Corps and the Illinois DNR study met several times to develop goals for ecosystem restoration and alternatives to address these goals. Regular stakeholder and inter-agency steering committee meetings were also held. In addition, the study was discussed at the 2001 and 2003 Governor's Conferences on the Illinois River.

4. Site-specific Open Houses. Site-specific open houses were held for Waubonsie Creek in Oswego and Montgomery, Illinois, in July 2002, and for Pekin Lake in Pekin, Illinois, in August 2002.

a. Waubonsie Creek Open Houses. Two site-specific open houses were held for the Waubonsie Creek project in July 2002. The first open house was held on July 1, 2002, at the Illinois Village Hall, Montgomery, Illinois. The second open house was held on July 9, 2002, in the Community Room of the Law Enforcement Center (Police Station), Oswego, Illinois. The open house was publicized in at least two local newspapers and through open house invitations mailed to 243 individuals on the study mailing list, including congressional representatives; Federal, State, county, and city agencies/representatives; businesses; media; and the general public.

Purpose. The purpose of the open houses was for the public to view the proposed project plan and talk one-on-one with the study team during the public review phase. The open house also served as a forum for gathering comments on the recommended plan.

Format. One open house session was held from 5-8 p.m. at each location. Subject matter experts from the Corps of Engineers and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources were available to answer questions on all facets of the proposed project.

Displays. The Corps of Engineers provided photographs and graphics of the project area, a display depicting the Illinois Waterway System, information about the Waubonsie Creek Development Study, and general Corps of Engineers information. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources provided two complementary displays addressing the proposed environmental effect of the project.

Attendance. Approximately 19 visitors attended the open house in Montgomery; approximately 22 attended in Oswego.

Public Comments. Meeting attendees were asked to complete a comment sheet. Twelve comment sheets were returned at the Montgomery open house; 16 were returned at the Oswego open house.

All of the respondents agreed that the open house provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding about the study's goals and purposes, while most agreed that the open house provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding about the study's preferred comprehensive plan alternative. All agreed that the open house provided an opportunity for everyone to offer comments about the study's preferred comprehensive plan alternative and that they had a change to talk to a study team member. All felt that the information provided on the displays was valuable in helping them understand the study's recommended plan. In addition, the majority agreed that they understood how the Waubonsie Creek Site Specific Project fit in with the overall purpose of the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Study.

None of the attendees disagreed with the plan. There were few actual comments; however, some expressed concern about debris removal and some expressed their desire to see the project progress more quickly.

Summary. Both open houses met the objective of providing residents in the study area an opportunity to meet with study representatives, to hear how the study plan was selected, and to ask questions and offer feedback on the preferred comprehensive plan alternative.

b. Pekin Lake Open House. An open house was held August 6, 2002, in Pekin, Illinois. The purpose of the open house was to provide information on the study status and on the alternatives being considered for restoring the environment within the Illinois River watershed along the Pekin riverfront and to gather comments on the alternatives. Corps of Engineers, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and Illinois State Water Survey representatives were present at the open house to discuss the study with the public on a one-to-one basis and to receive the public's comments.

A total of 55 people attended the open house. Of those, 27 percent (15) returned comment sheets.

Overall, comments were very favorable regarding the open house format, displays, and the goals of the study. A strong majority of attendees agreed:

- That the open house provided an opportunity to gain information and a better understanding of the study, that the materials and displays were informative, and that they had a chance to talk to a study team member and offer comments about the study.
- That the goal of the study should be to create and restore aquatic, wetland, and terrestrial habitats and provide ancillary recreation benefits.

The majority of questions asked during the question and answer sessions were directed at how the project would affect boating, fishing, hunting, water quality, and flood heights. Ducks Unlimited provided formal written comment on the project that raised several issues. The issue of most concern regarded the adequacy of a 1,000 gallon per minute groundwater well and pump to provide water to

the Northern Unit. Subsequently, the study team reevaluated the well and pump design and made appropriate modifications to address these comments.

> **Summary.** The public open house met the goals of informing the public about the proposed alternatives, providing an opportunity for one-on-one discussions with the study team, and serving as a forum for gathering comments on the recommended plan.

Public open houses will be held at additional site-specific locations where study results show projects to be justified and funded.

5. Public Meetings - 2003. After the study team developed draft goals and preliminary alternatives, a round of meetings with the public was scheduled. In November 2003, a study newsletter was mailed to a distribution list that had grown to over 1,900 addresses. The newsletter summarized the November and December 2000 and February 2001 open houses; focused on the study's goals and alternatives; and invited the public to attend one of a series of public meetings to be held in December 2003. The Corps and the Illinois DNR points-of-contact for comments or questions were again listed. A news release was issued to media contacts in the study area. Copies of the newsletter and news release are attached in appendix A.

The following table shows the dates and locations of the public meetings.

Date	Location
December 1, 2003	Knights of Columbus Hall Mt. Sterling, Illinois
December 2, 2003	Wildlife Prairie Park Hanna City, Illinois
December 3, 2003	Quality Inn and Suites Bradley, Illinois
December 4, 2003	Hilton Lisle/Naperville Lisle, Illinois

a. Purpose. The purpose of the public meetings was to provide a study update; discuss the draft alternatives being considered at this point in the study; discuss the level of restoration for areas within the Illinois River Basin; and to gather public comments on the draft alternatives.

b. Format. Two sessions were held at each location: an open house from 2-4 p.m. and a public meeting from 6-8 p.m. The afternoon session was informal and allowed ample opportunity for the attendees to visit the displays and talk to Corps and Illinois DNR study team members on a one-to-one basis. The evening session consisted of a formal presentation beginning at 6 p.m., followed by questions and answers and statements.

c. Displays. The Corps provided two displays which included a study map; information on the vision, goals, and alternatives of the program; and complementary photographs.

The Illinois DNR displays consisted of a poster on Natural Grade Control and Stream Channels and two videos entitled *Constructing Riffles and Pools for Stream Rehabilitation* and *Watershed Causes of Channel Erosion.*

Handouts included the November 2003 study newsletter, a copy of the slides used during the formal presentation, and a comment sheet. These handouts, plus the full text of the presentation, were made available on the study's website.

d. Attendance. A total of 153 persons attended the public meetings, as follows.

Location	Attendance	Afternoon/Evening
Mt. Sterling	36	20 afternoon/16 evening
Hanna City	30	16 afternoon/14 evening
Bradley	78	28 afternoon/50 evening
Lisle/Naperville	9	3 afternoon/6 evening

e. Public Comments. Public meeting attendees were asked to fill out a comment sheet after each session. A total of 43 sheets, or 28 percent, were returned. Most of the 43 respondents agreed that the meeting provided an opportunity to gain information and obtain a better understanding of the study. Overall, comments were favorable regarding the open house format and displays, and over 75 percent of the respondents felt that attending the meeting was worth their time.

Respondents' primary areas of interest in the study are:

Area of Interest	Percent
Environmental	35%
Personal Interest	16%
City/County Government	12%
Regional Planning	12%
Agriculture	7%
State Government	5%
Other Business/Industry	5%
Education	2%
Federal Government (Congressional)	0%
Federal Government (All Other)	0%
Media	0%
Recreation	0%
Waterborne Industry	0%
No Answer	6%

Attendees were asked to agree or disagree with statements concerning the appropriateness of alternative plans. Data is given in the following table.

Study Process Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I understand the principal ecosystem restoration problems which are being addressed by this study.	91%	5%	4%
The range of alternative plans presented to maintain and restore biodiversity and sustainable populations of native species is appropriate.	77%	12%	11%
The range of alternative plans presented to reduce sediment delivery to the Illinois River is appropriate.	67%	7%	26%
The range of alternative plans presented to restore aquatic habitat diversity of side channels and backwaters is appropriate.	70%	19%	11%
The range of alternative plans presented to improve floodplain, riparian, and aquatic habitats and functions is appropriate.	70%	21%	9%
The range of alternative plans presented to restore and maintain fish passage is appropriate.	56%	35%	9%
The range of alternative plans presented to reduce unnatural water level fluctuations is appropriate.	51%	37%	12%
The range of alternative plans presented to improve water and sediment quality in the Illinois River and its watershed is appropriate.	60%	19%	21%

The public was asked additional questions about the study; responses are as follows:

- The majority of respondents agreed that the restoration goals are appropriate to achieve the desired ecosystem restoration needs in the Illinois River Basin.
- Most agreed that the alternative plans presented address the appropriate range of alternatives for ecosystem restoration in the Illinois River Basin.
- The major concerns expressed by respondents were related to sediment delivery and funding issues.

f. Public Meeting Summary. The public meetings met the objective of discussing both the alternatives being considered in the study and the level of restoration for areas within the Illinois River Basin, and gathered the public's comments on the draft alternatives. The dialogue between study team personnel and the public was informative, and feedback received will be used by the study team in selecting a draft preferred comprehensive plan alternative.

6. Public Meetings - 2006. Following completion of the draft Illinois River Basin Restoration Comprehensive Plan, a series of public meetings was held during the public review period for the document. In February 2006, a newsletter announcing the public meetings was mailed to nearly 3,200 names on the study distribution list. The mailing also contained a study brochure that highlighted project goals, problems, and recommendations. A news release was issued to media contacts in the study area. Copies of the newsletter, brochure and news release are attached in appendix A.

Date and locations of the public meetings were:

Date	Location
March 7, 2006	Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center Utica, Illinois
March 8, 2006	Hilton Garden Inn Kankakee, Illinois
March 9, 2006	Holiday Inn Express Oswego, Illinois
March 14, 2006	Gateway Center Peoria, Illinois
March 15, 2006	Pere Marquette State Park Grafton, Illinois
March 16, 2006	Dickson Mounds Museum Lewistown, Illinois

a. Purpose. The purpose of the public meetings was to discuss and gather feedback on the draft preferred comprehensive plan alternative for the Illinois River Basin Restoration Comprehensive Plan.

b. Format. Two sessions were held at each location from 2-4 p.m. and from 6-8 p.m. Both sessions contained a formal presentation followed by a question and answer session. Corps of Engineers and Illinois Department of Natural Resources staff were present to speak to the public one-to-one.

c. Displays. The three Corps of Engineers displays were titled: Illinois River Basin Restoration Study (provided general information); Illinois River Basin Restoration System Alternatives; and Illinois River Basin Restoration Critical Restoration Project Status.

Handouts included the February 2006 study newsletter, the study brochure, a copy of the slides used during the formal presentation, and a comment sheet. These handouts, plus the full text of the presentation, were made available on the study's website. Fact sheets for some of the site-specific projects were also made available at the meetings.

d. Attendance. A total of 170 persons attended, as follows.

Location	Attendance
Utica	22
Kankakee	40
Oswego	11
Peoria	67
Grafton	7
Lewistown	23

e. Public Comments, Public meeting attendees were asked to fill out a comment sheet after each session. A total of 49 sheets and one attendee statement were returned. Subsequent to the public meetings, ten letters and one form letter (containing 163 signatures) were submitted for the record.

The majority of respondents conveyed continued support for the study and stated that the recommended Alternative #6 would be a very good plan to restore the ecological integrity of the Illinois River Basin system. Primary areas of concern expressed by respondents included:

- Need to focus on headwaters as the source of sand and sediment
- Need to focus on sand-bed load as well as sediment
- Prioritization of projects
- Overall cost of the plan is expensive and perhaps prohibitive
- Costs and efficiencies of fish passage component
- Partnering with other agencies to accomplish the work
- Consider more natural, as opposed to engineered, solutions for restoration

Overall, comments were very favorable regarding the meeting format and displays, and 84 percent of the respondents felt that attending the meeting was worth their time.

7. Summary of Public Involvement Process. The public was kept informed and involved throughout this process through several avenues—newsletters, public open houses, public meetings, and the study's website. These activities provided the public with numerous opportunities to provide feedback to the study team. This feedback was used by the study team during the plan formulation process; thus, the draft preferred comprehensive plan alternative has been influenced by the public involvement process. In addition, the study's mailing list grew to almost 3,200 names, primarily as a result of the public involvement activities. Therefore, the goals of the process—(1) opening and maintaining channels of communication with the public in order to give full consideration to public views, and (2) gathering information for use by the study team—were met.

B. NEPA COORDINATION

Section 519 of WRDA 2000 defines the Illinois River Basin as the Illinois River, Illinois, its backwaters, its side channels, and all tributaries, including their watersheds, draining into the Illinois River. Upper reaches of this program area are located outside the Illinois State boundaries, confined to the southeast corner of Wisconsin (headwaters of the Fox and Des Plaines Rivers) and the northwest corner of Indiana (headwaters of the Kankakee and Iroquois Rivers). The original coordination efforts for this program did not include any area outside the boundaries of Illinois. In the event that future projects associated with the program are proposed within the state boundaries of Wisconsin and/or Indiana, individual coordination with appropriate Federal and State agencies would be conducted for compliance with NEPA and other Federal laws and policies applicable to all plans recommended for implementation.

The NEPA scoping process for the EA included coordination letters, public meetings, newsletters, and regularly scheduled meetings with the non-Federal sponsor.

Although a certain amount of risk and uncertainty is inherent for any such undertaking as this, the human environment would not be exposed to any unusual or unique risks or any extreme uncertainties that could lead to significant effects on the human environment. Risk and uncertainty for Goals 1 through 5 can be found in Section 3, of this report, *Plan Formulation*. Given the beneficial nature of this ecosystem restoration program, implementation activities should not result in highly controversial impacts on the quality of the human environment. Overall project uncertainty is reduced by incorporating a comprehensive monitoring plan as well as adaptive management techniques.

All coordination letters from the Rock Island District for this program are found at the end of this section. Coordination was initiated early and continued throughout the plan formulation process. The following agencies received the NEPA coordination letter dated March 24, 2003:

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 5
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chicago Field Office
Natural Resource Conservation Service
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Scientific Research & Analysis
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Resource Conservation
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Resource Conservation, Wetland Watershed & EMP Program Administration
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Director
Illinois Department of Agricultural, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Water Resources
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Watershed Management Section
Illinois Department of Transportation
Illinois River Coordinating Council
Izaak Walton League
Izaak Walton League, Heartland Water Resource Board
Illinois Sierra Club
The Nature Conservancy, Illinois River Project Director

The Illinois Department of Agriculture, Division of Natural Resources responded by letter dated April 3, 2003. The department described the importance of the agricultural industry in Illinois. It stated it is essential that all restoration projects be designed and implemented in a manner that is as compatible as possible with the agricultural community. The department also stated that balancing environmental restoration goals while protecting the integrity of agricultural operations should be one of the guiding principles for this program. In addition, the department highly recommended that the Corps closely coordinate with agricultural groups and organizations—such as local soil and water conservation districts, levee and drainage districts, and county Farm Bureaus—on all Illinois River restoration

projects. The department urged the Corps to look for opportunities to achieve multiple environmental objectives in planning restoration activities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office, responded by letter dated April 22, 2003. To comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the office enclosed a map of the Illinois River Basin and a map of Illinois, with endangered species information included by county. Also included was a more specific description of federally-listed species within Illinois and each species' habitat distribution status.

The Director of the Illinois DNR responded by letter dated April 28, 2003. The DNR recommended that any developments associated with the Plan should be carefully designed to ensure the sensitive resources of Illinois (e.g., wetlands, backwater lakes, threatened and/or endangered species and habitat, natural areas, high quality woodlands, etc) are not inadvertently harmed. The DNR further suggested that future restoration efforts may need to be designed with possible timeframe restrictions (avoidance windows), and expressed the need for pre-construction surveys to avoid impacting sensitive resources (e.g., freshwater mussels, bat roosting areas, etc.).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office, responded by letter dated August 10, 2005, stating that, contrary to the Coordination Act Report, May 2004 furnished to the District, and after informal consultation with the District, it is mutually agreed that it is not possible to address Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with a programmatic Biological Assessment. After more information is known concerning the specific restoration projects; individual, site specific and species specific Biological Assessments would be prepared, as necessary.

HAGERTY/dmd/5286

March 24, 2003

Planning, Programs, and
Project Management Division

SEE DISTRIBUTION LIST

The Rock Island District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is currently undertaking a Feasibility Study for the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration project in Illinois. This study will result in the Illinois River Basin Comprehensive Plan with an integrated programmatic environmental document. This study is being conducted under the Corps of Engineers General Investigations (GI) Program in partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, under the authority of Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970 and the Illinois River Basin Restoration Authority, Section 519 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000.

The study area encompasses the Illinois River watershed within the State of Illinois. This study will investigate reducing impacts to the fish and wildlife habitat in the Illinois River Basin and providing opportunities in water and related land resources projects and planning services within the Illinois River watershed. Specific attention will be given to identifying opportunities for restoring degraded ecosystem structures and functions, including the ecosystem's hydrology and plant and animal communities, to a less degraded or more naturalized condition.

There are generally two types of efforts occurring: (1) system evaluations focused on assessing the overall watershed needs and general locations for restoration, and (2) site-specific evaluations focused on developing detailed restoration options for possible implementation at specific sites. The focus of this letter is on the system level study for restoration opportunities. All current and future site-specific projects will be coordinated separately.

The basin-wide restoration opportunities fall into four focus areas, as follows:

a. Watershed/Tributary Restoration – Evaluate options to address tributary degradation and instability, looking at stream and wetland restoration, water retention, conservation easements, and riparian buffers.

b. 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.

c. Water Level Management – Evaluate options to reduce rapid fluctuations and naturalize flows.

d. Floodplain Restoration and Protection – Evaluate floodplain use, potential restoration of floodplain function, and value of/potential for acquisition/use of conservation easements.

The proposed study has not been addressed in previous National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents prepared by the Rock Island District. The Comprehensive Plan, with an integrated programmatic environmental document, will evaluate an array of alternatives and recommend an optimum combination of features for achieving ecosystem restoration benefits. The Comprehensive Plan for this study is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2004.

At this time, we are requesting your comments concerning this study and information regarding any significant existing resources or environmental concerns associated with restoration of the Illinois River Basin, including, but not limited to, riparian, floodplain, and aquatic resources. Specifically, any endangered species, critical aquatic habitat, wetlands, land-use plans, floodplain issues that could be adversely affected by the proposed study, and other issues or problems associated with this study should be reported at this time.

Please provide any comments you may have regarding the proposed study within 30 days of the date of this letter. More information regarding this study can be found on our web site at http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/ILRiverEco/default.htm. If you have any questions, please call Ms. Karen Hagerty (biologist) of our Economic and Environmental Analysis Branch at 309/794-5286. Written comments may be sent to our address above, ATTN: Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division (Karen Hagerty).

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

John P. Carr
Acting Chief, Economic and
Environmental Analysis Branch

MFR: Initial Coordination Letter for
the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration
GI/519 Study, Illinois River Basin, IL.

Copies Furnished:

Mr. Jim Mick
Havana Field Headquarters
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
700 South 10th Street
Havana, Illinois 62644

Copies Furnished (Continued):

ATTN: CELRC-PM-PM (Linda Sorn)
District Engineer
U.S. Army Engineer District, Chicago
111 North Canal Street, 12th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60606-7205

ATTN: CEMVS-PM-F (Tamara Atchley)
District Engineer
U.S. Army Engineer District, St Louis
1222 Spruce Street
St Louis, Missouri 63103-2822

Dist File (PM-M)
PM-A (Hagerty)
PM-A (Deiss)
PM-A (Bollman)
PM-A (Jackson)
PM-M (Thompson)
ED-DM (Sunderman)
ED-HH (Schwar)
ED-DN
OD-I (Granados)
OC

IL RIVER ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION 90X 13 MAR 03 (DRAFT)

ERIC BERMAN
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MGMT AGENCY - REG 5
536 S CLARK ST 6TH FLOOR
CHICAGO IL 60605

ROBERT HOLMES
DISTRICT CHIEF
US DEPT OF INTERIOR-US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
221 N BROADWAY AVE
URBANA IL 61801

DONALD KATHAN
US ENVIRON PROTECTION AGENCY - REG 5
77 W JACKSON BLVD (B19J)
CHICAGO IL 60604-3507

RICHARD NELSON
FIELD SUPERVISOR
US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
4469 48TH AVE CT
ROCK ISLAND IL 61201

JAMES RASMUS
US COAST GUARD
FOOT OF WASHINGTON ST
EAST PEORIA IL 61611

JOHN ROGNER
CHICAGO FIELD OFFICER DIRECTOR
US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1250 S GROVE SUITE 103
BARRINGTON IL 60010

CHIEF, ENVIRONMENTAL
US ARMY ENGR DIV - DETROIT
477 MICHIGAN AVE
DETROIT MI 48226

OWEN DUTT
RIVER NAVIGATOR
ATTN: CEMVS-PM-N
US ARMY ENGR DIST - ST LOUIS
1222 SPRUCE ST
ST LOUIS MO 63103-2833

GENE FLEMING
PD-E
US ARMY ENGR DIST - CHICAGO
111 N CANAL ST - 12TH FLOOR
CHICAGO IL 60606-7206

WILLIAM GRADLE
STATE CONSERVATIONIST
NATURAL RESOURCE CO NSERVATION SERVICE
211 W PARK CT
CHAMPAIGN IL 61821

BILL GRAFF
DIRECTOR
FARM SERVICE AGENCY
US DEPT OF AGRICULTURE
3500 W WABASH PO BOX 19273
SPRINGFIELD IL 62707

ACTING DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION
IL DEPT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ONE NATURAL RESOURCES WAY
SPRINGFIELD IL 62702-1271

BRIAN ANDERSON
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH & ANALYSIS
IL DEPT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ONE NATURAL RESOURCES WAY FLR 001
SPRINGFIELD IL 62702-1271

JOEL BRUNSVOLD
DIRECTOR
IL DEPT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ONE NATURAL RESOURCES WAY
SPRINGFIELD IL 62702-1271

1

IL RIVER ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION 90X 13 MAR 03 (DRAFT)

CHRISTOPHER STONE
EXEC DIRECTOR
IL DEPT OF AGRI-BUR OF SOIL & WATER/AISWCD
EMERSON BLDG 2520 MAIN ST
SPRINGFIELD IL 62702

SCOTT STUEWE
WETLAND WATERSHED & EMP PROG ADMIN
OFFICE OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION
IL DEPT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ONE NATURAL RESOURCES WAY
SPRINGFIELD IL 62702-1271

DONALD VONNAHME
DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF WATER RESOURCES
IL DEPT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ONE NATURAL RESOURCES WAY
SPRINGFIELD IL 62702-1270

BRUCE YURDIN
MANAGER
WATERSHED MANAGEMENT SECTION
IL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
1021 N GRAND AVE E
SPRINGFIELD IL 62702

DIRECTOR
IL DEPT OF AGRICULTURE
PO BOX 19281 PO BOX 19281
SPRINGFIELD IL 62794-9281

TIMOTHY MARTIN
SECRETARY
IL DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION
2300 S DIRKSEN PKWY RM 300
SPRINGFIELD IL 62764

PAT QUINN
IL RIV COORDINATING COUNCIL
214 STATE HOUSE PO BOX 7347
SPRINGFIELD IL 62791-7347

IL SIERRA CLUB
200 N MICHIGAN AVE STE 505
CHICAGO IL 60601-5908

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE
1125 SPRING BAY RD
EAST PEORIA IL 61611

DOUG BLODGETT
IL RVR PRJ DIR
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY
11304 N PRAIRIE RD
LEWISTOWN IL 61542

RICHARD EICHELKRAUT
HEARTLAND WATER RESOURCE BOARD
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE
208 WILSHIRE DR
WASHINGTON IL 61571

Illinois Department of Agriculture

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Division of Natural Resources
State Fairgrounds • P.O. Box 19281 • Springfield, IL 62794-9281 • 217/785-4233 • Voice/TDD 217/785-2427 • Fax 217/524-4882

April 3, 2003

Ms. Karen Hagerty
Department of the Army
Rock Island District, Corps of Engineers
Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division
Clock Tower Building-P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004

Dear Ms. Hagerty:

We are in receipt of Mr. John P. Carr's March 24, 2003 correspondence regarding the Feasibility Study that is underway for the Corps of Engineers' Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration Project in Illinois. Mr. Carr has invited all interested parties to provide comments pertaining to the study and information concerning significant natural resources or environmental concerns. Hence, the Illinois Department of Agriculture is conveying the following comments.

The agriculture industry plays a prominent role in the Illinois River Basin. The 26,000-square mile watershed contains more than 10 million acres of some of the most productive farmland in the world, which represents approximately 50% of Illinois' agricultural economy. In addition, through natural resource conservation programs such as Illinois' Conservation 2000 Program, the federal-state Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, and the USDA Farm Bill Programs, Illinois' agricultural producers are installing conservation practices at an accelerated pace to protect soil and water resources throughout the basin. Undoubtedly, agriculture has a huge stake in the restoration of the Illinois River Basin.

It is our understanding that four components comprise the basin-wide restoration initiative: 1) Watershed/Tributary Restoration, 2) Side Channel and Backwater Restoration, 3) Water Level Management and 4) Floodplain Restoration and Protection. Certainly, these are laudable goals for protecting and enhancing the Illinois River Basin. However, it is essential that all restoration projects be designed and implemented in a manner that is as compatible as possible with the agricultural community. For example, water level management schemes should take into account how the manipulation of water levels will affect agricultural operations in the basin. The same concern applies to the restoration of floodplain function, in terms of potential impacts to agriculture. Balancing environmental restoration goals with protecting the integrity of agricultural operations should be one of the guiding principles adhered to by the Corps of Engineers as they proceed with the Illinois River Restoration Comprehensive Plan and the integrated programmatic environmental document.

We highly recommend that the Corps of Engineers closely coordinate with agricultural groups and organizations on all restoration projects for the Illinois River. Examples include local soil and water conservation districts, levee and drainage districts and county Farm Bureaus. These groups and organizations have broad local knowledge that will be valuable to the Corps of Engineers as restoration plans are developed and implemented.

We also urge the Corps to look for opportunities to achieve multiple environmental objectives (e.g., nutrient management, carbon sequestration) in planning restoration activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment with regard to the Feasibility Study. The Illinois Department of Agriculture will furnish comments in the future when site-specific projects are disclosed by the Corps of Engineers.

Sincerely,

Mike Beaty, Division Manager
Division of Natural Resources

Copy: Acting Director Tom Jennings, IDA
Tom Doubet, IDA
Cheryl Day, IADD
Chris Stone, AISWCD
Kevin Rund, IFB
Gary Clark, IDNR

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Rock Island Field Office
4469 48th Avenue Court
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
Phone: (309) 793-5800 Fax: (309) 793-5804

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/RIFO

April 22, 2003

Mr. Jack Carr
Acting Chief, Economic and
Environmental Analysis Branch
U.S. Army Engineer District
Rock Island
Clock Tower Building, P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004

Dear Mr. Carr:

This responds to a letter dated March 24, 2003, from your office asking for initial coordination comments on the Feasibility Study of the Illinois River Ecosystem Project. As described in the letter, the feasibility study will have two general objectives: (1) system evaluations focused on assessing the overall watershed needs and general locations for restoration, and (2) site-specific evaluations focused on developing detailed restoration options for possible implementation at specific sites. This information request is specifically concerned with the system level study for restoration opportunities.

To comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, we have enclosed a map of the Illinois River basin delineated with all counties which lie within the watershed and a map of the entire State of Illinois, with endangered species information included by county. A more specific description of federally listed species within Illinois and their habitat distribution status are also enclosed.

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) looks forward to working with the Corps of Engineers to formulate alternatives which benefit trust species and to help protect the natural resources of the Illinois River system.

This letter provides comments under the authority of and in accordance with provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.); and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. If you have any questions please contact Mr. Kraig McPeek of my staff at (309) 793-5800 ext 514.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Nelson
Supervisor

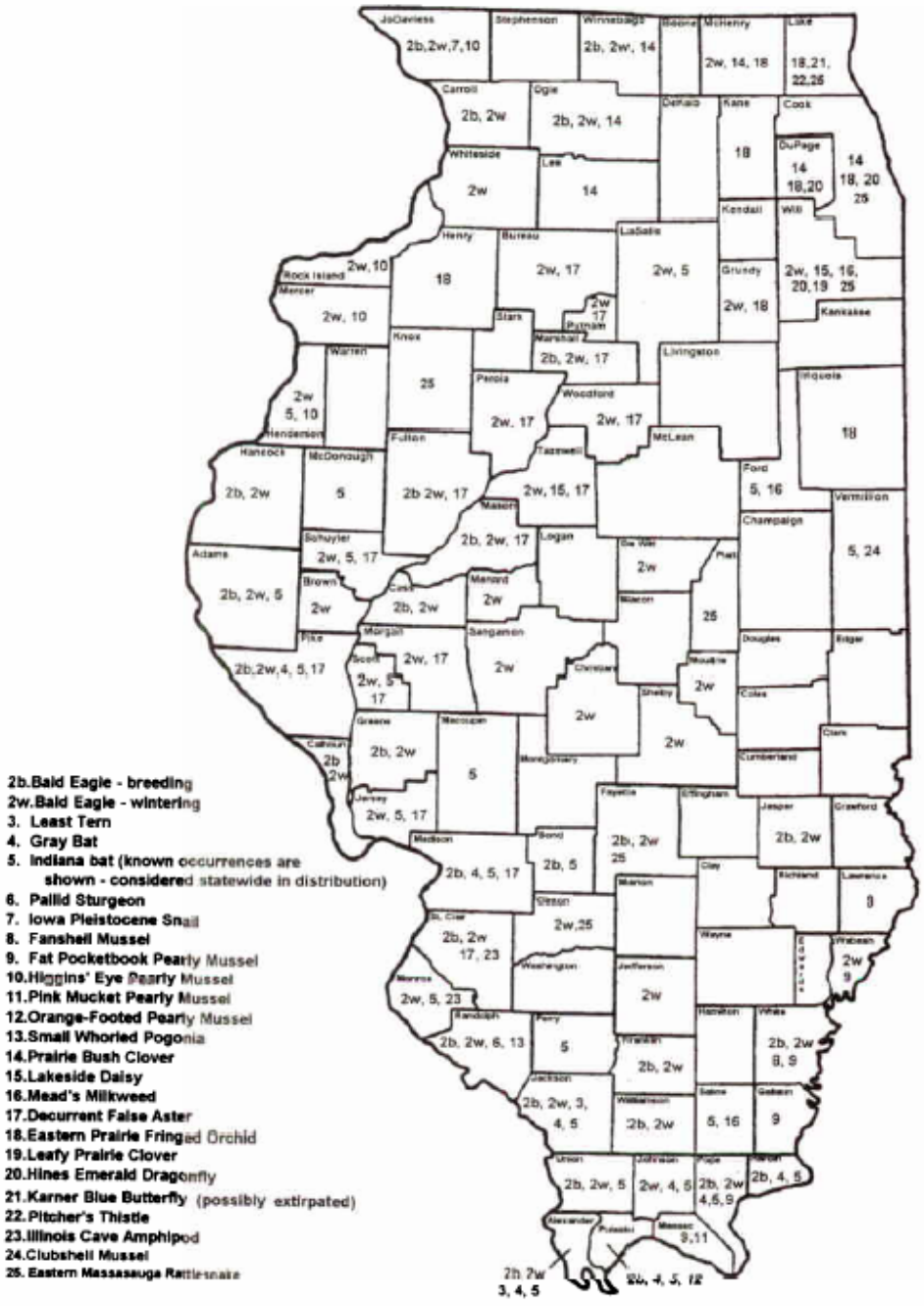
Enclosures

G:\Office Users\Kraig\Illinois Ecosystem study\Initial Coordination Letter to Corps.doc


Counties that fall w/in
the IL River watershed
U.S.
FISH & WILDLIFE
SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Lake Michigan
McHenry
Lake
De Kalb
Kane
Du Page
Cook
Lee
Kendall
Will
Henry
Bureau
La Salle
Grundy
Putnam
Kankakee
Stark
Marshall
Livingston
Henderson
Knox
Warren
Woodford
Iroquois
Peoria
McDonough
Tazewell
McLean
Ford
Fulton
Hancock
Mason
Vermilion
De Witt
Schuyler
Logan
Champaign
Menard
Piatt
Adams
Brown
Cass
Macon
Morgan
Sangamon
Scott
Pike
Christian
Shelby
Greene
Macoupin
Montgomery
Calhoun
Jersey
IL River Basin
IL River Counties
State of IL
Lake Michigan

Current Distribution of Federally-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species in Illinois

US Fish & Wildlife Service - Rock Island, Illinois



DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERALLY-LISTED THREATENED (T), ENDANGERED (E), AND PROPOSED (P) SPECIES IN ILLINOIS

Contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4469 48th Avenue Court, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: (309) 793-5800

Revised November 20, 2001

BIRDS	STATUS	HABITAT	CURRENT DISTRIBUTION	POTENTIAL HABITAT	HISTORICAL RECORDS
Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*	Delisted 8/25/99				
Bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	P (Delisting)	Breeding	Adams, Alexander, Bond, Calhoun, Carroll, Fayette, Fulton, Greene, Jo Daviess, Jackson, Mason, Pike, Pope, Randolph, St. Clair, Union, Winnebago, Williamson	Hancock, Jasper	
		Wintering	Adams, Alexander, Brown, Bureau, Calhoun, Carroll, *Cass, Christian, Clinton, De Witt, Fayette, Franklin, *Fulton, Greene, Grundy, Hancock, *Henderson, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, *Jersey, Jo Daviess, Johnson, LaSalle, Madison, Marshall, Mason, McHenry, Menard, *Mercer, Monroe, *Morgan, Moultrie, Ogle, Peoria, Pike, Pulaski, *Putnam, Randolph, *Rock Island, Sangamon, *Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, St. Clair, Tazewell, Union, Wabash, White, *Whiteside, Will Winnebago, Williamson, Woodford *Counties with night roosts		
Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*	E	Bare alluvial and dredged spoil islands	Alexander, Jackson, Massac, Pope (Mississippi & Ohio Rivers)	Gallatin, Hardin, Pulaski (Ohio River); Wabash, White (Wabash River); Madison (Mississippi River)	
Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*	E	Lakeshore beaches	EXTIRPATED	Cook, Lake (Lake Michigan shoreline	Cook, Gallatin, Lake, Madison, Pope

FISH	STATUS	HABITAT	CURRENT DISTRIBUTION	POTENTIAL HABITAT	HISTORICAL RECORDS
Pallid Sturgeon *Scaphirynchus albus*	E	Large rivers	Mississippi River downstream of confluence with Missouri River	Ohio River below Dam #53	Calhoun, Hancock, Henderson

DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERALLY-LISTED THREATENED (T), ENDANGERED (E), AND PROPOSED (P) SPECIES IN ILLINOIS

Contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4469 48th Avenue Court, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: (309) 793-5800

Revised August 4, 2000

MAMMALS	STATUS	HABITAT	CURRENT DISTRIBUTION	POTENTIAL HABITAT	HISTORICAL RECORDS
Gray bat *Myotis grisescens*	E	Caves and mines; rivers & reservoirs adjacent to forests	Alexander, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Madison, Pike, Pope, Pulaski	Search for bats prior to any cave impacting project, particularly in southern and southwestern Illinois.	Adams, Jersey
Indiana bat *Myotis sodalis*	E	Caves, mines (hibernacula); small stream corridors with well developed riparian woods; upland forests (foraging)	Adams, *Alexander, Bond, Ford, *Hardin, Henderson, *Jackson, *Jersey, Johnson, *LaSalle, Madison, Macoupin, McDonough, *Monroe, Perry, Pike, *Pope, Pulaski, *Saline, Schuyler, Scott, *Union, Vermillion ***Counties with hibernacula** **Critical Habitat: Blackball Mine, LaSalle County**	Statewide - search for bats prior to any cave impacting project, particularly in southern and southwestern Illinois.	Cook, Christian, Jo Daviess, Madison, Morgan, Will

INVERTEBRATES	STATUS	HABITAT	CURRENT DISTRIBUTION	POTENTIAL HABITAT	HISTORICAL RECORDS
Karner blue butterfly *Lycaeides melissa samuelis*	E	Pine barrens and oak savannas on sandy soils and containing wild lupines (*Lupinus perennis)*, the only known food plant of the larvae	EXTIRPATED	Carroll, Iriquois, Jo Daviess, Kankakee, Lake, Lee, Ogle, Winnebago	
Hines emerald dragonfly *Somatochlora hineana*	E	Spring fed wetlands, wet meadows and marshes	Cook, Will, DuPage, (Des Plaines River drainage)		
Illinois cave amphipod *Gammarus acherondytes*	E	Cave streams in Illinois sinkhole plain	Monroe, St. Clair		
Iowa pleistocene snail *Discus macclintocki*	E	North-facing algific talus slopes of the driftless area	Jo Daviess		

REPTILES	STATUS	HABITAT	CURRENT DISTRIBUTION	POTENTIAL HABITAT	HISTORICAL RECORDS
Eastern massasauga rattlesnake *Sistrurus c. catenatus*	CAN	shrub wetlands	Clinton, Cook, Fayette, Knox, Lake, Piatt, Will		Adam, Champaign, Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, DeKalb, De Witt, DuPage, Edgar, Hancock, Logan, Madison, McLean, Mercer, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, Warren

DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERALLY-LISTED THREATENED (T), ENDANGERED (E), AND PROPOSED (P) SPECIES IN ILLINOIS
Contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4469 48th Avenue Court, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: (309) 793-5800

Revised August 4, 2000

MUSSELS	STATUS	HABITAT	CURRENT DISTRIBUTION	POTENTIAL HABITAT	HISTORICAL RECORDS
Higgins= eye pearlymussel *Lampsilis higginsi*	E	Mississippi River; Rock River to Steel Dam	Jo Daviess, Mercer, Henderson, Rock Island **Essential Habitat: Sylvan Slough at Rock Island**	Adams, Carroll, Hancock, Pike, Whiteside (Mississippi River upstream of Dam 22)	
Fanshell mussel *Cyprogenia stegaria (=C. irrorata)*	E	Wabash River	White	Gallatin)	
Fat pocketbook pearlymussel *Potamilis capax*	E	Mississippi, Wabash, Little Wabash, Ohio Rivers	*Hancock, *Pike (Mississippi River); Gallatin, Lawrence, Wabash, White (Wabash & Little Wabash Rivers); Pope, Massac (Ohio River) ***Transplanted populations**		
Pink Mucket pearlymussel *Lampsilis orbiculata (=Plethobasis abrupta)*	E	Ohio River	Massac	Alexander, Gallatin, Hardin, Pope, Pulaski	
Orange-footed pearlymussel *Plethobasis cooperianus (=P. striatus)*	E	Ohio River below confluence with Cumberland River)	Pulaski	Alexander, Massac, Pope	Clark, Crawford, Lawrence, Wabash (Wabash River)
Tubercled-blossom pearlymussel *Epioblasmas torulosa torulosa*	E	Rivers	EXTIRPATED		
White warty-back pearlymussel *Plethobasis cicatricosus*	E	Rivers	EXTIRPATED	Clark, Gallatin, White (Wabash River)	Clark, Crawford, Lawrence, Vermillion, Wabash (Wabash River)
Clubshell *Pleurobema clava*	E	Rivers	Vermillion (N. Fork Vermillion River)		Wabash & Lower Ohio Rivers
Rough pigtoe *Pleurobema plenum*	E	Rivers	EXTIRPATED		Wabash & Lower Ohio Rivers
Ring pink *Obovaria retusa*	E	Rivers	EXTIRPATED		

DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERALLY-LISTED THREATENED (T), ENDANGERED (E), AND PROPOSED (P) SPECIES IN ILLINOIS

Contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4469 48th Avenue Court, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: (309) 793-5800

Revised August 4, 2000

PLANTS	STATUS	HABITAT	CURRENT DISTRIBUTION	POTENTIAL HABITAT	HISTORICAL RECORDS
Prairie bush clover *Lespedeza leptostachya*	T	Dry to mesic prairies with gravelly soil	Cook, DuPage, Lee, Ogle, McHenry, *Winnebago * introduced	Search for this species whenever prairie remnants are encountered	
Small whorled pogonia *Isotria medeoloides*	T	Dry woodlands	Randolph		St. Clair, Tazewell, Williamson
Eastern prairie fringed orchid *Platanthaera leucophaea*	T	Mesic to wet prairies	Cook, DuPage, Grundy, Henry, Iroquois, Kane, Lake, McHenry	Search for this species whenever prairie remnants are encountered	
Mead=s milkweed *Asclepias meadii*	T	Virgin prairies	*Ford, Saline, *Will * introduced	Search for this species whenever prairie remnants are encountered	
Lakeside daisy *Hymenopsis herbacea*	T	Dry rocky prairies	*Tazewell, *Will * introduced		Logan, Menard
Decurrent false aster *Boltonia decurrens*	T	Distrubed alluvial soils	Bureau, Fulton, Jersey, Madison, Marshall, Mason, Morgan, Peoria, Pike, Putnam, Schuyler, Scott, Tazewell, Woodford (Illinois River floodplain; St. Clair (Mississippi River floodplain)	Brown, Calhoun, Cass, Greene, Grundy, LaSalle, Pike (Illinois River floodplain); Alexander, Jackson, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair (Mississippi River floodplain)	
Leafy prairie clover *Dalea foliosa*	E	Prairie remnants on thin soil over limestone	Will (Des Plains River floodplain)		
Dune thistle *Cirsium pitcheri*	T	Lakeshore dunes	Lake (introduced)		Cook
Running buffalo clover *Trifolium stoloniferum*	E	Distrubed bottomland meadows	EXTIRPATED		Cook, Fulton, Hancock, Henderson, Peoria
Price=s potato bean *Apios priceana*	T	Wet floodplain forests, shrubby swamps	EXTIRPATED		Cook

Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources
One Natural Resources Way • Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
http://dnr.state.il.us
Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

April 28, 2003

Mr. John P. Carr
Acting Chief, Economic and Environmental Analysis Branch
Rock Island District, Corps of Engineers
Clock Tower Building, P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004

Dear Mr. Carr:

Reference is made to your letter of March 24, 2003 concerning the proposed Feasibility Study for the Illinois River Ecosystem Restoration project in Illinois. The Feasibility Study will result in an Illinois River Basin Comprehensive Plan with an integrated programmatic environmental document. Your letter requests comments regarding the Feasibility Study, as well as information concerning any significant resources or environmental concerns associated with the Illinois River basin.

The Illinois River basin contains myriad sensitive resources including wetlands and backwater lakes, endangered/threatened species habitat, natural areas, and high quality woodlands, to list but a few. Any developments associated with the Comprehensive Plan will need to be carefully designed to ensure these resources are not inadvertently harmed. We foresee the need to design some elements of the plan to avoid encroachment into natural areas or listed species habitat, possible time restrictions on construction activities to avoid spawning, breeding, and nesting periods, and pre-construction surveys for such things as freshwater mussel populations, bat roost trees, and other resources of special concern.

The details of impact avoidance and minimization will, of necessity, have to be determined after more is known about the various plan elements. However, because of IDNR's partnership in the plan, all of its elements will be subject to a comprehensive environmental review under various Illinois statutes protecting endangered/threatened species, natural areas, nature preserves, wetlands, and cultural resources. These analyses, in addition to reviews of any required Corps of Engineers and/or IDNR, Office of Water Resources permits, will be coordinated through the Department's Division of Resource Review and Coordination.

We look forward to working closely with the Rock Island District in development of the Comprehensive Plan. Please contact Robert Schanzle of my staff at 217-785-4863 if we can provide specific resource information or be of any other assistance at this time.

Sincerely,

Joel Brunsvold
Director

JB:RWS:rs

cc: IDNR/OREP (Tom Flattery, Steve Davis, Robert Schanzle)
IDNR/ORC (Brian Anderson, Debbie Bruce, Jim Mick)
IDNR/OWR (Loren Wobig)
USFWS (Richard Nelson)
Division File

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Rock Island Field Office
4469 48th Avenue Court
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
Phone: (309) 793-5800 Fax: (309) 793-5804

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/RIFO

August 10, 2005

Colonel Duane P. Gapinski
District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Rock Island District
Clock Tower Building, P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004

Dear Colonel Gapinski:

The letter regards the Illinois River Basin Restoration Study (Study), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report (Report) prepared for the study dated May 2004. In our Report, we recommended that feasibility planning include preparation of a programmatic Biological Assessment (BA) pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. During further informal consultation with your staff, we have come to the mutual conclusion that it is not possible to establish program boundaries or the scope of effects sufficiently to support a programmatic approach for the Study.

Many of the objectives for the Study and the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program overlap, and most of the mainstem and floodplain activities proposed as part of the Study are identical to those described in the 2004 programmatic BA and Biological Opinion prepared by our respective offices for the Upper Mississippi River – Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study. As projects proposed under the Study are initiated, informal consultation will allow us to determine whether Section 7 compliance may be expedited in the second tier of the programmatic process established in the Navigation Study, or if compliance will require site-specific consultation. Other actions undertaken outside of the Navigation Study planning area, such as watershed work, will require individual consultation and Section 7 compliance on a project-by project basis.

This letter provides comments under the authority of and in accordance with provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.); and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. We look forward to assisting your office in

Colonel Duane P. Gapinski 2

further planning and implementation of this important program. Questions regarding this letter may be directed to Mr. Bob Clevenstine at the above telephone number, extension 205.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Nelson
Field Supervisor

cc: R3 (Lewis, Szymanski)
Refuges (Steinbach, Mabery)
Illinois DNR (Schanzle)

S:\Office General\Illinois 519\ESA&CAR.doc