

# MACKINAW RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Fall, 2003

**PLEASE ATTEND THE LAST AND FINAL MACKINAW RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL MEETING...When: 7:00 pm, Tuesday, November 18, 2003 at the Eureka Farm Bureau Building**

**On the agenda: discussion and finalization of the Council Treasury. Awards and Thank-you's.**

## ***Thoughts and Reflections.....from your Editor and President, Mary Jo Adams***

It is with a profound sense of regret and sadness that I announce that this is the final newsletter of the Mackinaw River Watershed Council. For those of you who have been to the Council meetings for the past few years, this is not a surprise. Once we lost the support and direction from The Nature Conservancy, the Council gradually lost its energy. We never seemed to get a clear or consistent idea of what we wanted to do, and were not able to recruit new volunteers to keep us moving forward....perhaps because we didn't know where it was we were going! I think that all of us are still committed however, to the original mission of the Council, which is:

***“To preserve and enhance the natural resources of the Mackinaw River Watershed through education, good management, and voluntary cooperation while respecting property owner rights.”***

Our objectives were large and comprehensive ones, crafted over a difficult and long three-day work session. (Those of us on the original Planning team will never forget those three days!) These objectives are as follows:

- ❖ To promote the preservation of natural, scenic, recreational and water resources of the Mackinaw River watershed and its tributaries.
- ❖ To foster the preservation of land in the Mackinaw River watershed for use in agriculture.
- ❖ To reduce the water volume, velocity, and the frequency of flood events in the Mackinaw River watershed.
- ❖ To decrease bank erosion and increase vegetation along stream banks in the Mackinaw River watershed.
- ❖ To increase the average index of Biological Integrity in the Mackinaw River watershed
- ❖ To reduce sediment flows, soil erosion, and untreated sewage entering the Mackinaw River watershed
- ❖ To achieve these objectives while respecting private property rights

In looking back at these objectives, I believe that we have achieved successes in most. Through funding through IEPA and IDNR, we have been able to preserve and enhance natural areas in the Mackinaw watershed, most notably with the purchase of The Nature Conservancy's Chinquapin Bluffs Preserve in Woodford County, and the enhancement of natural areas owned by The Parklands Foundation. Small landowners have also benefited, with the installation of many different types of BMP's on their land, such as installation of ponds, wetlands, streambank stabilization, tree plantings and prairie restorations. With the help of funding from the Kellogg Foundation, we have shown that many agricultural BMP's can have a significant influence on water quality. We have helped to support educational efforts in the watershed, most notably the successful Wilderness Camp for 4-6<sup>th</sup> graders. Added together, I do think we have made a difference. I think that most of the challenges still remain however, especially the impacts from increasing urbanization and the sewage issues, which were never directly addressed. Yes, there is still a lot of work to be done if our lofty objectives are ever to be reached. But it isn't possible to get done by a small, though committed group of volunteer landowners. However, the good news is that while the Mackinaw River Watershed Council may be dormant, a new group, the Mackinaw River Ecosystems

Partnership, has stepped in to continue to work towards our objectives set so many years ago. We now have many groups, or “partners”, who are willing to direct efforts towards a healthy, sustainable Mackinaw watershed. Their interests, energy, and expertise will be invaluable. And individual landowners don’t need to feel left out. Your active participation in the Partnership is welcome and encouraged. Dates of meetings for 2004 are as follows:

- ❖ January 3 at Heartland Community College, Normal (C-2000 grant writing)
- ❖ April 20 at Eureka College, Eureka
- ❖ July 20 at Heartland Community College, Normal
- ❖ October 19 at Eureka College, Eureka

All of the meetings will begin at 5:00 pm. For further details, or to subscribe to the Mackinaw Partnership listserv, please call me at 376-2010, or email me at [mjadams@ilstu.edu](mailto:mjadams@ilstu.edu).

So, to all of you who have been a part of the Council for all of these years, please accept a sincere thanks for your contributions. The time and efforts invested by all of you has been tremendous. I think that we can all be proud of our successes. I hesitate to thank each of you individually in the newsletter, because not only would the list be quite lengthy, but I’m sure that I would inadvertently leave someone’s name out. But here is my best effort, and if I’ve forgotten you, please accept my apologies in advance!

- ❖ Chris Davis, Illinois EPA
- ❖ Meg Bushnell, Jason Beverlin, and Jim Hemingway, Illinois DNR
- ❖ Michael Reuter, and the entire staff of The Nature Conservancy
- ❖ Kent Bohnoff, Jim Rutherford, and Dave Bishop, McLean Co. NRCS/SWCD
- ❖ Mark Jacobs, Diane Freeman and Suzanne Middleton, Woodford Co. NRCS/SWCD
- ❖ Tim Malone and staff, Tazewell Co. NRCS/SWCD
- ❖ Kim St. John, Prairie Rivers RC&D
- ❖ Sally Breese, Terry Giannoni, Jim Ondeck, Paul Kelley, Lonnie Meiner: McLean Co. Board members
- ❖ Tim Baer, Kevin and Karen Garman, Philip Golden, Lorn Schlappi, Donna Woodrow: Tazewell Co. Board members
- ❖ Kevin Coulter, Dick Dickenson, Les Luginbuhl, Daryl Nichols, Woodford Co. Board members
- ❖ All of the Planning team members and Action team members
- ❖ **THANKS SO MUCH TO YOU ALL!!!**