

<i>Mackinaw River Watershed Council</i>	Presidents Report 🍁
By Mary Jo Adams	Summer, 2003

Greetings to the members of the Mackinaw River Watershed Council!

It has been quite a long time since a newsletter has been sent out to our members....and for that, please accept my apologies. The past two years have been ones with lots of change, and the transition from being supported by staff from The Nature Conservancy to being a totally volunteer supported organization have been challenging. I'll attempt to briefly highlight some of the changes that our group has undergone.

As previously mentioned, our lead organization, The Nature Conservancy, decided to streamline its operations in Illinois and focus their efforts in Central Illinois in other areas. The TNC office in Eureka was closed, and staff were moved to the Peoria office. It was hard to say good bye to our friends Ryne, Karen, Tim, and Doug, and we wish them well in their new positions. The Kellogg Foundation Project in McLean County is almost completed, and TNC will remain involved in the Mackinaw Watershed as a member of the newly organized Mackinaw River Ecosystems Partnership.

This brings me to the next significant development. Last year, the C-2000 Ecosystems program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources updated and changed the guidelines for partnerships belonging to this program. The Mackinaw River Watershed Council did not meet some of the criteria required, one of which was having a diverse representation of other groups and communities in the watershed. So, last September, many groups were invited to an organizational meeting, and over the course of the fall and winter, a Partnership structure was set up, and by-laws were written and approved by the group. This new group is called the Mackinaw River Ecosystem Partnership, and it will hopefully take over the responsibilities as a partnership within the C-2000 Ecosystems program. The Mackinaw River Watershed Council will remain an organization that represents the landowners living and working in the watershed, and will be a member of the new partnership that includes The Nature Conservancy, ParkLands Foundation, Audubon, Pheasants Forever, Illinois State University, Eureka College, Heartland College, Mackinaw Canoe Club, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, and McLean/Tazewell/Woodford County NRCS/SWCD. Individuals can also belong to the new Partnership, and if you are interested on being a part of this group, please let me know. You can subscribe to an email listserve that will keep you up to date on what is going on.

One of the responsibilities of the C-2000 Ecosystems partnerships is to review and rank applications for watershed projects that are submitted through the C-2000 program. This year, both groups (The Council and the Partnership) worked together to review and rank the four projects that were submitted. Our rankings were sent in, and the projects are being reviewed and ranked by the staff of IDNR. The grant applicants should be

notified this fall if their projects have been approved by C-2000. This year, a total of 246 applications were submitted, requesting over \$14, 824,000 in funds. Although the statewide budget crisis will limit spending again this year, it is hoped that there will be about \$5.5 million for projects. Let's hope that the Mackinaw will get at least one of our projects selected for funding! Other news from C-2000 is that Jason Beverlin, our Ecosystems Administrator, has a new position in IDNR, and Jim Hemingway is now in that position. Many thanks to Jason for working so closely with the Council and for being such a tremendous resource person. Thanks also to Jim, for jumping right in and helping with the new Partnership and C-2000 projects. If you wish to contact Jim, his number is 309-446-9184.

So, the good news is that conservation work is continuing in the Mackinaw River Watershed. The bad news is that it takes continuing effort from committed volunteers to keep things going, and volunteers are harder and harder to come by these days. If any of you reading this are interested in volunteering your time, please let us know! There is lots to do, and we can find different jobs for everyone. You can contact me at 309-376-2010, or email me at zcreek@aol.com. You can also contact Vice President Les Luginbuhl at 309-923-6831, or Secretary/Treasurer Karen Garman at 309-348-4414 (email is garman96@yahoo.com).

Speaking of volunteers, I want to end with a big round of thanks to several members of the Council. Thanks to Les, for taking over the responsibility of the drill that the Council purchased with funds from C-2000. Thanks to Karen, for taking on the huge responsibilities of Secretary/Treasurer (which includes sending out this newsletter)! Thanks to Donna Woodrow, former Treasurer, for keeping such good books and records. Thanks to Kevin Coulter, former President, Terry Giannnoni, former Vice-President, and Sally Breese, Board member from McLean County, for all of their many years of service on the Board. Your help and dedication is greatly appreciated.

Please try to attend our Annual meeting in August. It's a good way to get involved, and to find out what's going on and what you can do. Let's all keep up the good work being done "To preserve and enhance the natural resources of the Mackinaw River." Thanks so much,
