

Conservation



Final Report of the New Conservation Congress  
October 24 – 25, 2009

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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## **Executive Summary**

On October 24 and 25, 2009, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) hosted the New Conservation Congress at its headquarters in Springfield. A diverse group of about 140 conservationists and outdoor supporters participated in the Congress.

IDNR Director Marc Miller stated the objective of the Congress: to work together and find solutions to three key issues facing conservation today; natural resources funding, public access, and building the next generation of outdoor and conservation enthusiasts.

**Public Access:** With limited public land for outdoor recreation, and a large population, outdoor recreationists must compete for public open space or depend heavily on private landowners. At the same time demand for access to private land is increasing, obtaining access becomes more challenging due to changing population patterns, cultural changes, controversial issues around public waters, and heavy impacts of agriculture and urban sprawl.

**Youth Recruitment and Retention:** Youth participation in outdoor activities is declining, with negative effects on children's physical and mental health. Past generations were more connected with the natural world. The U.S. population has shifted more to metropolitan areas, and entertainment is found in screen media or other structured, sedentary activities. Not only does this affect the funding base for conservation, through a declining base of recreators paying license fees, it also means breaking the chain of transmission of knowledge about the natural world and outdoor activities to future generations.

**Conservation Funding:** A high quality environment is key to economic development. Outdoor recreation is a major generator of jobs. Conservation assures basic ecosystem services (water supply, air, soil quality, resilience to climate change) that underlie our quality of life. Conservation and outdoor activity also enhance the health and well being of adults as well as children. Illinois is woefully behind with only about 1% of its land protected, at the same time that pressures on open space and habitat are increasing. IDNR's special fund balances are declining alarmingly. Other states have taken bold approaches to conservation funding, which have overwhelmingly been supported by voters. Illinois needs a stable, adequate, long-term funding source for conservation.

Director Miller challenged the participants to play a role in the future of conservation in Illinois. "The job isn't done when you walk out those doors. Our constituents must be engaged in finding solutions and together we will unearth a way to succeed."

Participants reviewed information gathered through mechanisms for public input leading up to the Congress. These included recommendations from the Public Access, Youth Recruitment and Retention and Conservation Funding Committees of the IDNR's Natural Resources Advisory Board, that held meetings and discussions across the state over the previous four months, and the results of a voluntary online survey in which over 6000 state residents voiced their opinions.

Together with the Congress itself, these input mechanisms are part of an ongoing dialogue between IDNR and its constituents, which will continue after the Congress event.

## ***RECOMMENDATIONS***

Participants developed and prioritized over 20 key recommendations for action in the months ahead. Below are the recommendations in each issue area deemed by Congress participants as most critical for immediate action.

### **Access to Public and Private Lands**

- Restore, through legislation, liability protection for all recreational land uses allowed by private landowners.
- Develop a new program through establishment of a dedicated funding source to advocate and research new methods of expanding access on private land, including incentives for landowners.
- Develop and implement a plan to acquire more land for public outdoor recreation.
- Develop a model State Heritage Water Trail.

### **Youth Recruitment and Retention**

- Update and adopt the Environmental Literacy Plan for Illinois to encompass non-formal educators and include more outdoor components.
- Work with partner organizations to develop mentoring programs to pass on the safe and ethical outdoor traditions in Illinois.
- Provide conservation education for youth in schools; improve and enhance marketing, advertising and promotion of existing youth programs and activities.
- Educate youth on conservation and natural resources, in schools and through informal programs with nonprofits.

### **Conservation Funding**

- Immediately develop a master action plan outlining conservation and natural resources funding needs and how to pay for them.
- Approval of pending legislation (SB 1846) to increase existing hunting, fishing and other fees and administrative implementation of new and existing fees to shore up and enhance conservation programs, with guarantees that fee revenues are used only for the purposes intended.
- Implement a stable, sustaining, and dedicated long-term funding source for conservation in Illinois, focused on the benefits of conservation and outdoor recreation programs for economic development, tourism, public health, education, agriculture and private land stewardship, and the state's cultural heritage.
- Proactively communicate IDNR plans and programs, as part of restoring trust.

Several organizations stepped forward to state their willingness to take the lead on key recommendations. Director Miller summed up the results of the Congress. "The messages we heard from those participating in the new Conservation Congress are clear: Illinois citizens and constituent organizations interested in conservation and natural resources protection want action and are ready to provide the leadership needed to get things done. The Conservation Congress process is just the beginning. I am delighted the participants in Conservation Congress have pledged their support to the job of pursuing and implementing these recommendations."

The full report of the Conservation Congress 2009, along with this Executive Summary, can be found on IDNR's website at <http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/cc.htm>.

## ***SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS***

Over 6,000 Illinois residents participated in an on-line survey of opinions about conservation and outdoor recreation during September and October 2009.

89% strongly agree that "All residents of the State of Illinois benefit from conservation or open space, whether or not they personally utilize or recreate on these spaces."

Most (68%) place equal value on State parks and lands' conservation and recreation. The rest are split between more value for recreation (15%) and more value for conservation (17%).

Half thought that reducing liability to landowners is the most important thing the IDNR can do to facilitate access to private lands and water for recreation; purchasing more land, improving landowner/recreationist relations and other actions were also viewed as important.

95% of respondents think children spend too little time outdoors and in nature-related activities. Half had been involved in youth mentoring and 80% support it as a way to increase youth involvement in the outdoors, though many need more information on how to do so.

58% thought there should be increased funding from general state taxes; 74% agreed with increased fees or licenses for consumptive recreation like hunting and fishing; 44% with fees or licenses for other types of recreation like hiking, camping or trail use; 83% with fees charged to extract natural resources, and 86% with state tax credits for conservation such as private donations of easements.

91% would be willing to pay higher fees or new fees – if they were sure that the state would use those funds to support the activity for which they are charged.

82% wanted IDNR funding increased to maintain and repair state parks; 76% supported more funding for environmental protection programs; and 73% to purchase more land. Over 70% of respondents also felt that funding for education and outreach should be increased.

## Attachment A: Participant list

First Name	Last Name	City	Affiliation/Organization
Kent	Adams	Effingham	NWTF
Jerry	Adelmann	Chicago	Openlands
James	Anderson	Grayslake	Lake County Forest Preserve District
Karl	Arnold	Greenview	Greenview, IL
Mark	Badasch	Collinsville	Collinsville Area Recreation District
Judith	Baron	Gardner	Des Plaines Fish and Wildlife Area
Jim	Barr	Blue Mound	Decatur Audubon Society/ Audubon Council of Illinois
Judy	Beck	Glenview	Glenview Park District
Calvin	Beckmann	O'Fallon	City of O'Fallon
Ted	Beier		President, Kaskaskia Watershed Association
Jerry	Beverlin	Dawson	United Bowhunters of Illinois
Lenore	Beyer-Clow	Woodstock	Openlands
J.R.	Black	Kankakee	Northern Illinois Anglers Association
Kirsten	Blackford	Paxton	IL Pheasants Forever Youth Council
Jeff	Blackford	Paxton	IL Pheasants Forever Youth Council
Tim	Brenner	Urbana	Champaign County Pheasants Forever
Patricia	Brown	Cottage Hills	The Nature Institute/EEAI
Bill	Brown	Marseilles	IL Association of Snowmobile Clubs
Debbie	Bruce		Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Bill	Bruhn		National Wild Turkey Federation
Robert	Bryant	Eldred	Migratory Waterfowl Hunters

John	Buhnerkempe	Chatham	Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources
Fran	Caffee		Sierra Club
Brian	Caskey	Wheaton	Wheaton, IL
Dave	Cassens	Springfield	IDNR
Douglas	Chien	Chicago	Sierra Club
Gary	Clark	Springfield	Department of Natural Resources
Tom	Clay	Springfield	Illinois Audubon Society
Mike	Clifford		Illinois Smallmouth Alliance
Linda	Cole	Aurora	Sierra Club
Glynnis	Collins	Champaign	Prairie Rivers Network
Andrew	Coresta	Chatham	Chatham, IL
Russ	Crawford	East Peoria	Elected CC Delegate-1st 3 Congresses
Joel	Cross	Springfield	IDNR
Tim	Cummings		
Domenico	D'Alessandro	Algonquin	D'Alessandro & Associates
Rosemarie	DeWitt	South Holland	Thornton Twp. Hwy.
Olivia	Dorothy		IDNR
Janette	Dove	Cobden	Shawnee Trail Conservancy
Mark	Duntemann	Oak Park	Natural Path Urban Forestry Consultants
Melissa	Eaton	Peoria	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Tom	Eckels	Lake Villa	Lake Villa, IL
Jesse	Elam	Chicago	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Claudia	Emken		Yates City, IL
Nancy	Erickson	Bloomington	Illinois Farm Bureau

Ted	Erikson	Chicago	Chicago, IL
Tami	Evans	Springfield	IDNR
Christine	Favilla	Elsah	Sierra Club
Jesse	Felix	West Chicago	West Chicago Park District
Carol	Fialkowski	Burr Ridge	Chicago Wilderness
Audrey	Fischer		International Dark Sky
Dennis	Flanagin	Lansing	Lan-Oak Park District
Ted	Flickinger	Springfield	Illinois Association of Park Districts
Jo Ann	Fritz	Dundee	Prairie Coast Paddlers
Mel	Gajewski	Scheller	Quail Unlimited
Kathleen	Garness	Forrest Park	Chicago Botanic Gardens Plants of Concern
Warren	Gayle	Orien	Quad City Conservation Alliance
David	Gillespie	Chatham	Illinois Forestry Association
Richard	Glazebrook		Kaskaskia Watershed Association
Rafael	Gutierrez	Springfield	IDNR-Law Enforcement
Walter	Haas	Rockford	Muskies Inc.
Elizabeth	Hagen-Moeller	DeKalb	Environmental Education Association of Illinois
Amy	Hardwick	Virginia	Cass County SWCD Chair
Fran	Harty	Monticello	The Nature Conservancy
Tom	Hayes	Ipava	Ipava, IL
Harry	Hendrickson	Rochester	IL Science Teachers Association
Tim	Hickmann	Springfield	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Reinee	Hildebrandt	Springfield	IAA, INPS, LOESS
William	Hill		

Adele	Hodde	Springfield	IDNR
Edward	Hooser	Mahomet	Friends of the NRA of Champaign County
Jeff	Hopkins		IDNR
Michael	Howard	Chicago	Fuller Park Community Dev.
Amelia	Howard	Chicago	Fuller Park Community Dev.
Charles	Jackson	Springfield	Illinois Environmental Council
Marie	Johns	Crete	Midwest Soaring
Jim	Johnston	Springfield	Soaring
Valerie	Keener	Springfield	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Paul	Kelley	Hudson	Illinois Trappers Association
John	Kidd	Chicago	Fishin Buddies Inc.
Denny	Kirkham	Greenville	Quail Forever
Jolie	Krasinski	Chicago	Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation
Aaron	Kuehl	Oakford	Pheasants Forever
Vicki	Lea	Springfield	IDNR
Matthew	Lechner		Shawnee National Forest
Kerry	Leigh	Oakwood Hills	Oakwood Hills, IL
Thomas	Lindblade	Rockford	Illinois Paddling Council
Marcia	Lochmann	Godfrey	Lewis and Clark Community College/NGRREC
Larry	Lucas	Chicago	DNR Natural Resources Advisory Board
Conor	Lucas	Chicago	Chicago, IL
Walter	Lynn	Springfield	Lynn & Associates
Ben	Magers	Paxton	Pheasants Forever
Richard	Mark	St. Louis	IDNR Advisory Board

Susanne	Masi	Glencoe	Chicago Botanic Garden
Michael	Mason	Riverton	IDNR
Denise	Maxwell		Illinois Trail Riders
Joseph	Mayer	Chicago	Chicago Astronomical Society
Chris	McCloud		IDNR
Don	McFall	Springfield	IDNR
Jim	McFarlane	Rockford	Illinois Federation for Outdoor Resources (IFOR)
Marc	Miller	Springfield	IDNR
Mike	Moomey	Springfield	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Kelly	Neal	Springfield	IDNR/Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
Erik	Neidy	Wheaton	Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
Richard	Nichols	Springfield	Assn. of IL Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Mark	Nitzsche		
Jack	Norman	Columbia	Sierra Club
Jacques	Nuzzo	Decatur	Illinois Raptor Center
Judy	Ogalla	Monee	STAND (Shut This Airport Nightmare Down)
Daniel	Olson	Mahomet	Champaign County Forest Preserve District
Tom	Palmisano	Chicago	Mayor Daley's Fishing Advisory Chicago
Bob	Park		
Susan	Parks	Oak Park	Parks Consulting Group
Jack	Philbrick	Rockford	Retired Forest Preserve Director
Ken	Polhamus	Galena	Galena, IL
Mike	Polhamus		
Gwen	Pollock		Illinois Science Teachers Association
Greg	Prosen		Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited

Mike	Redmer	Barrington	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Jill	Riddell	Chicago	Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
William	Rigsby	Arrowsmith	ABATE of Illinois
Alley	Ringhausen	Alton	Great Rivers Land Trust
Nick	Ripley	Washington	Pheasants Forever
Eleanor	Roemer	Chicago	Friends of the Parks
John	Rogner	Springfield	IDNR
Jeff	Rosecrans	Brimfield	Wildlife Prairie
Richard	Rupp		Trout Unlimited and Chicago Fly Fishers
Terry	Rush	Pittsfield	Pike Co. Farm Bureau
Marc	Sanson	Springfield	Springfield, IL
Eric	Schenck	Canton, IL	Ducks Unlimited
Joseph	Schranz	Lyons	Midwest SOARRING Foundation
Susie	Schreiber	Winnetka	Waukegan Harbor Citizen's Advisory Group
Tim	Schweizer	Springfield	Illinois Dept of Natural Resources
Diana	Seitz	Decatur	Illinois Raptor Center
Joe	Seten	Champaign	IFOR
Tracy	Shafer	Springfield	IDNR
Sheryl	Siebert	Chenoa	Chenoa, IL
Jenny	Skufca	Springfield	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Maggie	Soliz	Leland	Pizzo & Associates, Ltd.
Jennifer	Sousa	Quincy	Trees for Tomorrow/ University of Illinois Ext.
Richard	Spangler	Smithfield	Spoon River Partnership
Anne	St. John	Quincy	Trees for Tomorrow/ City of Quincy
Gretchen	Steele	Coulterville	Coulterville, IL
Mike	Stevens		IDNR

Deborah	Stone	Springfield	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Terri	Treacy		Sierra Club
Mary Jo	Trimble	Carterville	IFOR, Field Trial Clubs of IL
Colin	Tysoe		Sierra Club
Peter	Veit	Naperville	Horsemen's Council, IL Trail Riders
Sonia	Vogl	Oregon	Prairie Preservation Society
Robert	Vogl	Oregon	Friends of the Rock River
Tom	Wall	Peru	Better Fishing Association of Illinois
Madonna	Wallace	Skokie	LEDchic
Barry	Welbers	Spring Valley	Better Fishing Association of Northern Illinois
T. Tim	Werner	Bumcombe	Bumcombe, IL
Karen	Werner	Bumcombe	Bumcombe, IL
Dick	Westfall	Springfield	IDNR
Beth	White	Chicago	The Trust for Public Land
Chuck	White	Effingham	Carlyle Lake Assoc./ Carlyle Waterfowlers
Gloria	Williams	Springfield	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Christine	Williamson	Chicago	Sierra Club
Sandy	Wilson	Springfield	Illinois Trail Riders @ Prairie Trail Riders
Karen	Witter	Springfield	IL Department of Natural Resources

## **Attachment B: Full Report**

### ***Introduction***

On October 24-25, 2009 Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) hosted the new Conservation Congress at its Headquarters in Springfield. A diverse group of about 140 conservationists and outdoor supporters, plus IDNR staff, participated.

The Congress was an important step in a series of activities aimed at listening to constituents across the state and gathering ideas for working together on three important topics: Public Access, Youth Recruitment and Retention, and Conservation Funding.

The ultimate objective of the Congress was to provide DNR leadership and appointed and elected state officials with ideas and policy recommendations on ways to enhance our natural resources and create outdoor recreational opportunities for all Illinoisans.

### ***Congress Agenda***

#### **Day 1**

Call to order  
Welcome from Director Miller  
Congress background and process  
Public Access committee report and discussion  
Youth recruitment and retention committee report and discussion  
Conservation funding committee report and discussion  
Congress survey Results Review  
Breakout discussions

- Public access
- Youth recruitment and retention
- Conservation funding
- Breakout discussion summaries

Close

#### **Day 2**

Call to order  
Review results of breakout sessions  
Develop list of priorities for working together in the next 1 -2 years  
Share actions currently being led by constituents  
Review next steps  
Close

## ***Director Millers' Welcome***

The tradition of the Conservation Congress began nearly two decades ago, and while there had been a recent hiatus, the idea of holding a Congress is more important than ever at this time. Participants are here to propose ways to ensure – through professional management – the sustainable use of those natural resources and the recreational opportunities they afford. The result of the Congress is to propose and advocate actions that can be taken by elected and appointed officials to protect and conserve the natural resources of the State of Illinois.

There are many challenges to overcome. Illinois ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the amount of public land per capita. The public land we have cannot meet the conservation and recreational needs of the state. Our youth is increasingly isolated from nature and the outdoors. An appreciation and love of the outdoors during childhood is an important factor in developing future stewards of the land. Finally, funding is tight state-wide. IDNR has faced significant cuts in professional staff, and the resources to keep parks open, maintain them and provide programming are fragile. Dedicated and sustainable funding sources must be found to protect and maintain our natural resources.

Director Miller challenged the participants to play a role in the future of conservation in Illinois. "The job isn't done when you walk out those doors today. Our constituents must be engaged in finding solutions and together we will unearth a way to succeed."

DNR understands that collaborative efforts between government and constituents are the best ways to make progress in addressing these challenges. The purpose of the Congress is to start the process of coming together to find the solutions and work together to implement them.

Thanks were extended to the Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus for underwriting a portion of the expenses of the Congress weekend.

## ***Congress Context and Process***

The October 24-25 2009 Conservation Congress was a key event in IDNR's ongoing efforts to engage its constituents. Its focus was public access, youth recruitment and retention and conservation funding. The new Conservation Congress event was open to both representatives of constituent organizations and to interested individuals.

Participants listened to information gathered through various mechanisms for public input leading up to the Congress. These included recommendations from the Public Access, Youth Recruitment and Retention and Conservation Funding Committees of the IDNR's Natural Resources Advisory Board, which held meetings and discussions across the state over the previous four months, and the results of an online survey. A PowerPoint of the Congress process overview can be found at: <http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/CCProcess.ppt.pdf>

Over several months, a series of meetings were held across the state, hosted by the Natural Resources Advisory Board. Three Committees were formed in areas critical to protecting and

enhancing our natural resources: 1) Public access for recreation, 2) Youth engagement and connection to nature, and 3) Conservation funding. Over 150 people participated in 13 meetings at 10 locations around the state. Each Committee also had an internet “suggestion box” for individuals to submit ideas even if they could not attend meetings. Each Committee issued a report, with background, issues, solutions and recommendations (summarized below).

The online survey, which included 33 questions, was available for five weeks during September and October 2009. Solicitations to participate were distributed widely to IDNR’s contact lists and by constituent entities. 6,075 people responded, representing all but one of Illinois’ 102 counties. General characteristics of respondents include:

- 52% male, 48% female
- Almost half over 50 (46% over 50 yrs old, 41% 31 – 50 yrs old, 13% 19 – 30 yrs old, .5% under 18)
- 31% have children living at home
- 26% lived in rural settings, 20% small non-metro area towns, 19% small non-metro area cities, 27% large metro area suburbs, and 9% in Chicago.

Respondents noted that they were affiliated with a wide variety of interests and organizations, from international and national organizations, birding, hunting, youth, fishing, trails and land conservancy organizations, to organizations organized around very local sites and issues.

Park or open land recreation activities that respondents pursued in the last 5 years are varied:

- 92% observe wildlife, 90% hike, 85% picnic, 69% boat or paddle, 67% bike;
  - 36% hunt, 56% fish, 12% recreate with motorized vehicles;
  - 32% have participated in a volunteer stewardship or ecological monitoring activity, and 26% have participated in an IDNR-sponsored family activity; and
  - We were reminded in write-in comments that horseback riding was not on our survey.
- There was overwhelming agreement that “All residents of the State of Illinois benefit from conservation or open space, whether or not they personally utilize or recreate on these spaces.” (89% strongly agree, 5.6% somewhat agree)
  - Most respondents place equal value on State parks and lands’ conservation and recreation value to them personally (68%). The remainder split evenly between more value to recreation (15%) and more value to conservation (17%).

Together with the Congress itself, these input mechanisms are part of an ongoing dialogue between IDNR and its constituents, which will continue after the Congress event.

Small breakout groups with no more than 12 participants were organized around the three topics. Led by a facilitator, the breakout groups spent several hours in the afternoon discussing the topic and identifying the priorities for collaboratively moving forward with IDNR.

The facilitators for the breakout groups compiled and integrated their findings and developed a lists of priorities that were presented to the Congress attendees on the following day. Over twenty priority recommendations were identified across the three topics.

The attendees were then charged with further prioritizing the recommendations by asking the question: "Which of these recommendations are the most important for DNR and its continents work on together in the next 12 – 18 months?" A prioritization exercise followed.

Each Congress participant was given seven "stickers" that they could allocate across the 20 focus areas identified in the breakout groups on Day 1. They were told they could indicate stronger priority by placing more than one sticker on a specific focus area. It was noted that that each of the twenty recommendations identified in the breakout groups was deemed important by the Congress since the list came from the breakout group discussions and prioritization. However, for the purpose of this exercise, participants were asked to focus on which recommendations were most critical for the near term. Blank flip chart pages were also provided, for additional write-in comments.

**The following three sections, on Public Access, Youth, and Funding summarize the NRAB Committee report findings and recommendations and the key Survey results, and lay out the full recommendations resulting from the October 24-25 2009 Conservation Congress along with discussion points about those recommendations from Congress participants.**

### ***Public Access Summary***

#### **Public access committee findings**

The Public Access committee met in Springfield, Quincy, and Bartlett with 64 people attending. One of the major issues the IDNR faces is meeting the public demand for access to the outdoors. With limited public land for outdoor recreation, and a large population, outdoor recreationists must compete for public open space or depend heavily on private landowners. At the same time demand for access to private land is increasing, obtaining access becomes more challenging due to changing population patterns, cultural changes, controversial issues around public waters, and heavy impacts of agriculture and urban sprawl. Parcelization of land ownership, exurban development, and habitat loss and fragmentation are having a profound effect on providing access for outdoor recreation.

The discussion from these meeting resulted in four recommendations:

- Recommendation # 1 is to restore liability protection for private landowners who open their lands for recreation.
- Recommendation # 2 is to develop an access program within the Department of Natural Resources to open up public and private lands to outdoor recreation.

- Recommendation # 3 is to create a State Water Trails Plan and a Model State Heritage Water Trail.
- Recommendation #4 is to create Starparks in every Illinois State Park and/or recreational/conservation area.

Complete documentation of the committees' findings can be accessed at:

Private Lands Executive Summary:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/summary\\_access\\_report\\_public\\_private.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/summary_access_report_public_private.pdf)

Private Lands full report: [http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full\\_access\\_report.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full_access_report.pdf)

Private Lands PowerPoint presentation:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/AccessPrivateLands.ppt.pdf>

## Public access survey results

- Most respondents (95%) currently use state or federal public land for recreation. Private land was seldom or never used, perhaps because of the types of activities most survey respondents engaged in
- If they had to find other places to recreate, most (71%) would find other public land or would find land out of state
- Almost all are willing to travel to long distances to recreate. 1/3 would travel either 1 – 1.5 hours, 1.5 – 2 hours, or over 2 hours to recreate
- More people (over 75%) favored government (local, state, federal) lands being part of a public access program rather than commercial or private lands.
- There was no overwhelming majority of opinion about ways for DNR to facilitate access to private lands and water. Almost half said that reducing liability to landowners was the most important way that DNR could help. Many felt the State highest priority should be for the State to purchase more land. Many felt strongly that DNR should not advocate legislation to improve private land legislation
- Very few people favored cash payments from the state as an incentive to landowners to open their lands. However, about 75% were open to cost sharing, technical assistance or free labor

## **Public Access Recommendations in Order of Priority**

**1) Liability protections for all recreational uses** – 58 prioritization “votes”; 43 individuals “Restore liability protection through legislation, for all recreational uses when allowed by private landowners.”

Discussion comments:

- Current trespassing laws would apply
- This protection would only be for land owners who voluntarily open their lands to public access
- The word “when allowed” means that specific rules would need to be followed

- The parallel focus for DNR should be to continue to purchase more public lands – the message that the state needs more public land should be included

**2) Advocate new methods to expand access** – 37 prioritization “votes”, 28 individuals  
 “Develop a new program in IDNR through establishment of a dedicated funding source such as a stamp or special fee to advocate and research new methods to expand access on private lands, including incentives for private land owners.”

Discussion comments:

- Use a different word than “stamp” because of the narrow connotation of the term
- Incentives should include leases and tax credits
- What are ways that other public entities, like universities, can open up access to their lands?
- Public access should also include water sports, such as sailing, kayaking, like in Shelbyville and Carlyle

**3) State Heritage Water Trail** – 18 prioritization “votes”, 6 individuals  
 “Develop the proposed model for the State Heritage Water Trail.”

**4) Increase awareness of recreational opportunities** - 13 prioritization “votes”; 13 individuals  
 “Develop strategies to increase awareness of recreational opportunities currently available on public land.”

**5) Inform users about their obligations and opportunities** – 6 prioritization “votes.”; 3 individuals  
 “Produce outreach materials about current Illinois law, trespass law, and private property rights to inform individual users about their obligations and opportunities to approach private landowners about accessing their properties.”

Discussion comments:

- This information should also be for groups that might get access from state programs

**6) Liability insurance programs**- 4 prioritization “votes”; 3 individuals  
 “If legislative action fails, consider liability insurance programs through user groups or landowner coalitions.”

**7) Statutory definition of navigable waterways** - 2 prioritization “votes”; 1 individual  
 “Explore with stakeholders the legislative feasibility to modify the statutory definition of navigable waterways.”

Discussion comments:

- We need to think at a state level for navigable waters

**8) Star Park** - 1 prioritization “vote”

“Forward the star park proposal to Land Management for consideration of fiscal impact to the department and for possible implementation.”

Discussion comments:

- Star parks would be a “new use.” There should be feasibility studies about it – and other new uses, like tobogganing -- to understand how to do it
- Star Parks should be evening only, with other uses during the day – the goals should be to have multi-use areas
- For dark skies, we should partner with organizations like Protecting the Night Sky and migratory bird groups

**9) Model to minimize light pollution - 0 prioritization “votes”**

“The State of Illinois should become a model to minimize light pollution on new construction managed by the capital development board”

## ***Youth Recruitment and Retention Summary***

### **Youth Committee findings**

The Youth Recruitment and Retention committee met in Springfield, Rockford, Godfrey, Moline and Glencoe with over 30 participants. Youth participation in outdoor activities is declining, with negative effects on children’s physical and mental health and education. Past generations were more connected with the natural world. The U.S. population has shifted more to metropolitan areas, and entertainment is found in screen media or other structured, sedentary activities. Not only does this affect the funding base for conservation nationally and at the state level, through a declining base of recreators paying license fees, it also means breaking the chain of transmission of knowledge about the natural world and outdoor activities to future generations.

These meeting resulted in the following recommendations:

1. Educate, in schools and through informal programs, youth on conservation issues and natural resources.
2. Market, promote, and advertise existing programs and activities.
3. Develop, with non-government partners, a mentoring program that will pass on the hunting and outdoor traditions.
4. Improve access to land, people, and resources that offer recreational and educational opportunities for youth.

Complete documentation of the committees’ findings can be accessed at:

Youth Recruitment and Retention executive summary:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Executive_Summary.pdf)

Youth Recruitment and Retention full report:  
[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Report\\_final.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Report_final.pdf)

Youth Recruitment and Retention PowerPoint presentation:  
<http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/Youth.ppt.pdf>

## **Youth survey results**

- 95% of the respondents feel that children spent too little time outdoors and in nature-related activities
- Over 65% of families regularly spend time with their children in non-consumptive activities that do not require special equipment or expense (wildlife observation, picnicking, biking or hiking). Another 60% fish with their children. The activities least experienced with children were hunting, motorized vehicles and stewardship activities. When asked what they would like to do more frequently, they listed the same activities that they currently do. Additional activities included horseback riding, camping, nature photography and activities with grandchildren.
- Only about 25% of families with children find it difficult to learn about and find outdoor activities with their children. The most used ways to find out about family and youth outdoor activities included: local newspaper, the internet, word of mouth and organizations they already belong to/receive newsletters from, like Boys Scouts or the Forest Preserve or Park Districts.
- There was not much consensus over ways for the State to foster an appreciation for nature and the outdoors. More favored school-based programs, such as mandatory conservation education or physical education classes. Hunter safety classes for youth were the least popular, by almost half of the respondents. Many write-in comments about youth hunting were very negative – and emotional in tone, perhaps because the majority of families in the survey were not hunters.
- A majority were open to ideas about local, school and organizational incentives to increase youth interest in outdoor activities.
- The topic of youth mentoring was interesting to many. Half had been involved in youth mentoring in the past and would consider it in the future. While 80% supported it as a way to increase youth interest in the outdoors, a third needed more information before considering being a mentor.
- Several write-in comments reminded us that they spend a lot of time outdoors with grandchildren, so not to focus just on parents.

## **Youth Recruitment and Retention Congress Recommendations in Order of Priority**

**1) Environmental literacy plan** - 51 prioritization “votes”; 35 individuals

“Update and adopt the Environmental Literacy Plan to include outdoor components that results in youth recruitment and retention.”

Discussion comments:

- At the last Congress there was a recommendation for EL for IL.

- ENTICE teacher training (trains teachers about how to teach about the environment) is very effective and should still be a DNR priority. Programs like ENTICE are part of this recommendation
- We need to update and adopt environmental literacy. Add the word “adopt” to the recommendation
- Curriculum decisions are political – we need to be involved from the start

**2) Mentoring programs** – 26 prioritization “votes”; 22 individuals

“With partners, develop mentoring programs that will pass on to younger generations safe and ethical outdoor traditions.”

Discussion comments:

- Include scouting programs
- Mentoring programs have to take kids outdoors and expose them to a positive experience, and then they will want to do it on their own or with their family
- DNR could co-op with existing programs, like the buy-bow archery, in which a child buys a bow that can grow with them. These programs teach them how to do it and how to have fun

**3) Market, promote and advertise** – 19 prioritization “votes”; 16 individuals

“Market, promote and advertise youth programs and activities.”

Discussion comments:

- The youth jamboree concept is included in this recommendation

**4) Educate youth in schools and informal programs** – 19 prioritization “votes”; 18 individuals

“Educate youth in schools and through informal programs with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on conservation issues and natural resources.”

Discussion comments:

- Use a term other than NGOs.
- Partners might include parks and forest preserves and existing organizations that already provide outdoor education
- We should not forget about formal education to adults, for example on hunting skills and the use of ATVs
- We should think about education on ALL forms of outdoor activities, and avoid using terms like “consumptive” and “non-consumptive” which tends to divide people
- We need to understand how to compete with indoor activities

**5) Support outdoor activities** – 11 prioritization “votes”; 11 individuals

“Provide and support outdoor activities to promote awareness and appreciation of our natural resources for our youth.”

Discussion comments:

- DNR needs to take a leadership role in youth recruitment with other state departments. We should re-engage the Conservation Education Advisory Board for Youth Involvement

**6) ISBE support** – 9 prioritization “votes”; 7 individuals

“ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) should dedicate staff and resources to promote teaching conservation in schools.”

**7) Improve youth access** – 7 prioritization “votes”; 6 individuals

“Improve access to land, people and resources that offer recreational and educational opportunities for youth.”

## ***Conservation Funding Summary***

### **Conservation funding committee findings**

The Conservation funding committee met in Bartlett, Sparta, Chicago and twice in Springfield and engaged about 60 people. A high quality environment is key to economic development. Outdoor recreation is a major generator of jobs. Conservation assures basic ecosystem services (water supply, air, soil quality, resilience to climate change) that underlie our quality of life. Conservation and outdoor activity also enhance the health and well being of adults as well as children. Illinois is woefully behind in meeting the needs, with only about 1% of its land protected, at the same time that pressures on open space and habitat are increasing. Other states have taken bold approaches to conservation funding, which have overwhelmingly been supported by voters. Their conclusion was that Illinois needs a stable, adequate, long-term funding source for conservation. To accomplish this, it is time to engage new partners and fundamentally change the debate on conservation to one of preserving the future of our state while seizing advantages in the global economy.

The committee developed eight high-level strategic recommendations:

1. Implement a stable, adequate, long-term funding source for conservation in Illinois by creating fundamental new partnerships.
2. Develop a “master action plan” to create these partnerships, and to develop and test program and funding options.
3. Adopt a radically broad approach to conservation as the foundation of economic development, education, health, livable cities and sustainable high-quality life for residents of Illinois.
4. Pursue short-term measures to enhance conservation programs and funding that do not impede progress towards the long-term goal of stable long-term funding.
5. Commit many parties to carrying out pieces of the action plan. It cannot be done by or even led by government alone, or by any single constituent organization.
6. Commit the Department of Natural Resources to full, open transparent information exchange in its role as partner.
7. Recognize that this effort may take years. Short-term crises need to be addressed, but they cannot be allowed to derail the main effort.

8. Be ready with the arguments and the coalition in support of conservation when new revenues are put in place to help solve the State's overall fiscal crisis. Conservation must be at the table.

Complete documentation of the committees' findings can be accessed at:

Conservation Funding executive summary:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/Executive\\_summary.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/Executive_summary.pdf)

Conservation Funding full report:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full\\_report\\_privatelands.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full_report_privatelands.pdf)

Conservation Funding PowerPoint presentation:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/Funding.ppt.pdf>

### **Conservation funding survey results**

- There was widespread openness to increasing non-tax sources of revenue sources to fund conservation and outdoor recreation.
  - 86% of respondents were open to state tax credits for conservation, such as for donations of easements.
  - 75% felt that fees for consumptive activities like hunting and fishing could be increased and 44% felt that non-consumptive activities should have a fee. This could reflect the survey demographics where fewer respondents engaged in consumptive activities.
  - 58% agreed that general state taxes should be increased for conservation and outdoor recreation.
- The write-in comments indicated a high level of distrust in government's ability to cut wasteful spending, and use taxed money for its purpose. Specifically, there was fear of DNR-targeted monies being "swept" into the general fund.
- Reasonably priced park entry and/or parking fees were listed often in the write-in comments, citing that even non-consumptive activities should contribute via fees.
- Respondents were generally favorable to higher or new existing fees.
  - Over 80% favored fees *IF* the money would be used by DNR for DNR priorities. Several write-in comments showed concern that DNR fees would be used in the State's general fund instead.
  - 75% felt it was fair for an increased fee to cover the cost of supporting the activity, including impact, damage or maintenance.
  - Write-in comments indicated some mistrust of government because of so little transparency about where money is currently being spent or how much is really needed. These respondents felt that the State should first eliminate waste and costs before charging any additional fees or taxes.
  - Some comments urged that the State parks should be accessible to all and feared that an entry or usage fee would be a barrier for lower income residents. To them, a general tax spread over the entire population would be better.

- Respondents felt that DNR needed more resources/funding to focus on maintaining existing parks, purchasing and restoring more land and educating people about the environment.
  - The highest priority for increased future funding was for the maintenance and repair of state park facilities (82 % wanted to increase funding a little or a lot).
  - The next highest areas of priority were for the protecting wetlands and habitats and purchasing of more open space.
  - Over 70% of respondents also felt the funding for education and outreach should be increased.
  - There was less priority placed on increasing funding levels to provide consumptive and non-consumptive recreational activities.

## **Conservation Funding Recommendations in Order of Priority**

### **1) Master plan – 74 prioritization “votes”; 44 individuals**

“Develop a master plan for a long-term funding source through expanded partnerships.”

Discussion comments:

- The master plan should be an action plan. It should be developed immediately. It shouldn't mean a long, drawn-out process
- We (constituents) need help from DNR to get this kick-started – how can we capture the passion that is in this (Congress) room?
- The master plan should include detail, about how the funds will be used, why certain funds are desirable, what the funds will be used for etc. It should all include a range of funding options including federal funds.
- We need to create a laundry list of what we need to do to capture federal funds, or we could miss an opportunity. DNR will have to be ready when federal funds are available.
- Can we find new finding sources like film companies (have them pay to film on our properties)?
- Have we looked at what other states have done?
- We need to look at both traditional and non-traditional partnerships. There are already some partnerships that we can use for cost-sharing programs, such as the Kaskaskia Watershed.
- The master plan should include both short and long-term objectives, and then work on the “first down” for the next 2 years.
- We need to use the master plan to “build the road” rather than just “patch the problems.” If we suffer a little in the short term we might be better off in reaching our goal for a long-term funding source.
- We all need to be active in electing people who will vote to support this and our agenda. Each organization at Congress should encourage its members and constituents to act, through active lobbying and voting.
- What role could “greening” companies play?
- The master plan will help DNR to be a better partner in the future. It will help us all to leverage out political influence, because it will show we have “done our homework” .

- The master plan should include topics, such as job creation, that are important to securing federal dollars – how will it improve the economy?

**2) Implement long-term funding source** – 55 prioritization “votes”; 39 individuals

“Implement a long-term funding source through expanded partnerships.”

Discussion comments:

- Include that the funding source should be a state source of funding.
- “Long-term funding” should mean not only state sources of funding but also the ability to capture available federal funding.

**3) Pass SB1846** – 53 prioritization “votes”; 38 individuals

“Immediately pass SB1846 and quickly implement new fees and fee increases through Administrative Rule, accommodating those who cannot afford to pay.”

Discussion comments:

- Fees will include existing fees, mineral and water fees, consultation services, vendor and license fees and access fees. They should be competitive for activities already occurring. Will they be additive?
- Many states have a daily use fee for parks.
- There should be feasibility studies to understand if the cost of collecting the fees is worth the revenue.

**4) Proactive communication** – 36 prioritization “votes”; 25 individuals

“Be more proactive communicating IDNR plans, programs and projects, as part of restoring public trust.”

Discussion comments:

- DNR should focus on rebuilding trust first
- Can the organizations represented in this room start to form a coalition to make some of these changes happen?
- Website improvements should be a priority, with more information. A plus would be ways to add other electronic media to communication options

***Other Ideas***

The following topics were added by participants on flip charts for the prioritization exercise. Several, such as the plan to purchase more land, are existing IDNR priorities and were not covered, per se, in the breakout groups. Some Congress constituents wanted to ensure that these priorities were also highlighted. Others, such as the youth jamboree and the role of partners in funding, are included in the breakout topics for the funding master plan and youth programming promotion. Some Congress constituents wanted to ensure that these ideas were highlighted.

**1) Plan to purchase more land:** 21 prioritization “votes”; 18 individuals

**2) Funding partnerships** – 8 prioritization “votes”; 7 individuals

“Actively pursue partnerships with Federal and local governments, NGOs, private corporations, user groups and vendors to better leverage existing funds.”

**3) Funding source deadlines** - 1 prioritization “vote”

“Actively pursue partnerships with funding sources and create a list of current deadlines so as not to miss out.”

**4) Participatory funding process** - 1 prioritization “vote”

“Assure that all related interests and partners are given the opportunity to participate in the funding plan.”

**5) SB1846 fee increase language** - 1 prioritization “vote”

“Regarding SB1846, make working clear pertaining to all existing and potential newly established fees across the board so that the brunt of increase does not rest solely on hunters and fishermen.”

**6) Urban program partners** – 3 prioritization “votes”; 1 individual

“Work more with urban programs to tap into that large population.”

**7) State-wide youth recruitment plan** – 4 prioritization “votes”; 2 individuals

“DNR should take the lead in developing a youth recruitment plan for the whole state.”

**8) Youth jamboree** -- 0 prioritization “votes”

“Make sure the idea of an annual youth jamboree is included in the master plan of outreach to youth.”

### ***Next Steps and Constituent Actions***

The following are among comments offered by the Congress attendees about the ways in which their organizations were ready to engage:

- Trust for Public Lands (Beth White, 312-750-9820) –They are putting together proposals to get funding for a feasibility study on what it would take for Illinois to get to the next level in public land availability, They are willing to share the best practices that they have compiled from around the country, such as funding options beyond taxes. Also, PPW – Partners for Parks and Wildlife -- invites all to its next meeting.
- Lenore Beyer-Clow (Openlands312-863-6264) – Openlands will be working on reducing liability of landowners who provide access to their property for recreation, working with and educating legislators.
- Illinois Association of Park Districts (Ted Flickinger – 217-523-4554). Invites all to its mid-year legislative conference in January. They have meetings with members of the state legislature. The Congress participating organizations can be a part of this.

- Quad City Conservation Alliance representative (Warren Gayle 309-526-8750) would like to volunteer to be on an Executive Committee to plan the next Congress.
- Revenue Resource Managers Meeting (Jack Philbrick - Retired Forest Preserve District) – would like to share best practices for generating revenue at parks with DNR
- Illinois Science Teachers Conference (Gwen Pollack ) – November 4-6 in Springfield, will have exhibits about Youth Engagement and will include information from the Congress.
- All organizations attending the Congress should create positive messages to their constituents when communicating what happened at the Congress, so that we can continue to build the trust and partnerships between our organizations and DNR. How can the people in this room stay engaged with each other? Form a coalition? Share email addresses from attendee list?

Also at the end of the second day of the session, participants were asked to fill out a form, if they wished, identifying up to three issues that they think IDNR should work on with its constituents in future events, that could include issues not covered under the rubric of the three topics of Funding, Youth, and Access. The largest number of comments were elaborations on the three issues covered in the October session: 35 addressed funding, 28 access issues, and 16 youth issues. In addition, 19 comments addressed ideas for public outreach and education, and 13 the formation of partnerships with entities outside IDNR. The remaining comments addressed a wide variety of issues with one or a few comments on each; these included park management and repair, control of endangered species, care of natural areas, addressing climate change, supporting the proposed Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge, specific issues with particular hunting or fishing programs or regulations, and several others.

Director Miller summed up the results of the Congress. “The messages we heard from those participating in the new Conservation Congress are clear: that Illinois citizens and constituent organizations interested in conservation and natural resources protection want action and are ready to provide the leadership needed to get things done. The Conservation Congress process is just the beginning. I am delighted the participants in Conservation Congress have pledged their support to the job of pursuing and implementing these recommendations.

## **Attachment C: Public Access Breakout Group Detail**

The Public Access breakout groups developed the following priorities:

- 1) “Restore liability protection through legislation, for all recreational uses when allowed by private landowners.”

- 2) "Develop a new program in IDNR through establishment of a dedicated funding source such as a stamp or special fee to advocate and research new methods to expand access on private lands, including incentives for private land owners."
- 3) "Develop the proposed model for the State Heritage Water Trail."
- 4) "Develop strategies to increase awareness of recreational opportunities currently available on public land."
- 5) "Produce outreach materials about current Illinois law, trespass law, and private property rights to inform individual users about their obligations and opportunities to approach private landowners about accessing their properties."
- 6) "If legislative action fails, consider liability insurance programs through user groups or landowner coalitions."
- 7) "Explore with stakeholders the legislative feasibility to modify the statutory definition of navigable waterways."
- 8) "Forward the star park proposal to Land Management for consideration of fiscal impact to the department and for possible implementation."
- 9) "The State of Illinois should become a model to minimize light pollution on new construction managed by the capital development board"

### ***Public Access breakout Group A***

**Facilitator:** Mike Mason

**Participants:** Kent Adams – National Wild Turkey Federation, Karl Arnold – Greenview, Illinois, Lenore Beyer-Clow – Openlands, Tom Eckels – Lake Villa, Illinois, Nancy Erickson – Illinois Farm Bureau, Edward Hoosier – Friends of the NRA Champaign County, Captain Bill Keim – Lake Villa, Illinois, Tom Wall – Better Fishing Association of Illinois

Introductions and ground rules were covered and followed by a review of the four recommendations as listed in the Executive Summary.

- No new recommendations were put forth.
- Group suggestions tended to be word-smithing.
- The group wanted to amend recommendation #1 by adding the phrase "and or water" to the Title. The change would then read - Restore liability protection for private landowners who open their land **and/or water** for recreation.

- The group agreed to amend recommendation #2 by adding the phrase “on a voluntary basis” in reference to private lands. The change would read - Develop an access program within DNR to open public and, private lands on a voluntary basis, to outdoor recreation.
- The group discussed the validity of the “single use” recommendation #4 elevated to the level of a main recommendation. It was discussed and agreed that it be removed provided it was addressed by the Office of Land Management.

### **Recommendation #1 - Liability protection for landowners who open their land for recreation.**

The Group believed this was a priority issue of the Recommendations. The approach items were prioritized using the orange dots.

- Under approach, the group suggested that IDNR work closely with ALL organizations and not just “Outdoor” organizations.
- Private property rights were a topic of concern in terms of voluntary participation by landowners and what responsibilities go with use of private lands.
- Actively working with the Governor and Legislature to increase their understanding of the issue and the need to amend the Act was the highest priority. **(10 dots)**
- The second priority was “Providing examples of landowners or recreational activities which are being impacted by the current law, illustrating the need to change it. **(7 dots)**
- The third priority was to negotiate with the Illinois Trial Lawyer’s Association to introduce language that will reinstate protection for broad recreation and conservation purposes. **(6 dots)**
- Coordinating local support by reaching out to recreation and conservation organizations who in turn can contact their members to spread the work, talk to local media and contact legislators as concerned constituents was the lowest priority **(1 dot)**

### **Recommendation #2 - Access to lands for public recreation**

It was recommended and the group agreed to add “paddling” to the objective.

- The group discussed the approach # 2 and agreed that it should include a “citizen” as a member of the committee referenced.
- The first approach was deemed the highest priority by the group who felt it was very important for IDNR to take the primary lead on efforts to increase access. **(11 dots)**
- Establishing a committee to maintain and further this agenda was the second priority. **(6 dots)**
- Creating an access stamp was the lowest priority. **(3 dots)**
- A fourth approach recommended was to have IDNR to work proactively to increase access to corporate lands/rail roads for recreation. **(4 dots)**

### **Recommendation #3** –

It was discussed and recommended by the group that the Title reflect that the State Water Trails Plan and the Model State Heritage Water Trail be “**on public water and private water with permission**”

#### Part 1 Water Trails Plan

- Navigable water – legal definitions of public waterways needed to include a recreational use test modeled after Wisconsin or Minnesota. Current definition is based on commercial use.
- Landowners’ rights need to be addressed.
- Expand public access to Illinois rivers streams **and lakes**
- The group decided that the approach that IDNR should coordinate with Metro Greenway Planning Councils, Ecosystem Partnerships, municipalities..... should include “private riparian owners” in identifying waterways to be included in the plan and in implementing the recommendations of the plan. This “approach” received **8 dots**
- The second “approach” IDOT, CDOT and other transportation providers should consider in their assessment of projects, any potential impact on and/or possible improvements to existing and proposed water-trails, including providing access where toad improvements cross rivers received **8 dots**
- IDOT, CDOT and other transportation providers keep existing accessible sites open when rebuilding bridges and other structures. **(7 dots)**
- The final approach to extend availability of BAAD grant funding to Not-for-Profit organizations was the lowest priority of the group. **(1 dot)**

#### Part 2 – Heritage Water Trail

- The first approach was a high priority with the Group - IDNR should approach potential partners such as Museums, Historical Societies, Forest Preserve and Park Districts, Metro Greenway Planning Councils, Ecosystem Partnerships, municipal, county and regional planning agencies, local business, private **(insert “riparian”)** landowners, paddling clubs and other recreational users, and create a planning coalition. **(8 dots)**
- The group also ranked the second approach as a high priority - IDNR should consider safety, emergency access, impacts on existing wildlife and habitat, environmental problem areas, the location and protection of unique natural resources, waterway hydrology and the design and on-going maintenance of launch-sites. **(8 dots)**
- IDOT, CDOT and other transportation providers should be asked to consider providing access over existing bridge and other state owned rights-of-way. This approach ranked third in priority with **(7 dots)**.
- IDNR should design, produce and place trail signage, maps, and marketing materials which are consistent with the existing Northeastern Illinois Water Trail System. As well as unobtrusive historical interpretive signage and or self guiding interpretive materials

for use on the river. **(1 dot)**. This was a low priority because it was thought that any signage etc, would not last in a flood prone area along the proposed Sangamon River.

**Recommendation #4** Star Parks

- Single use item that would be better addressed by the Office of Land Management.
- Re-direct to the Office of Land Management to address where appropriate and as funding allows.

**Parking Lot – New Ideas or statements turned in at the end of the facilitation**

1. Open Forest Preserve Districts for access to hunting as well as creating easier access to State Park Hunting.
2. Change the legal definition of navigable waterways to accommodate recreational needs.
3. Take recommendation #4 (Star Parks) to the Office of Land Management.

***Public Access breakout Group B***

**Facilitators:** Tim Hickmann, Gloria Williams

**Participants:** Tim Brenner – Champaign Co PF, Tom Clay - Illinois Audubon, Paul Kelley - Illinois Trapper’s Assoc, Terry Rush – Pike Co Farm Bureau, Stacey Rigsby – A.B.A.T.E., Sonia Vogl – Friends of Rock River, Audry Fisher – International Dark Sky Assoc.,

The group reviewed (in order) the recommendations found in the Executive Summary of the Public Access Committee report.

**Recommendation 1 -** Liability Protection for landowners who open their land for recreation

The Group believed this was the #1 Issue of all the Recommendations made by the Committee

- Hunting, trapping, fishing, etc. should be covered
- The recommendation needs to be all inclusive for other recreational uses
- Clarify trapping in the language of the recommendation
- There should be a difference between **fee access and free access**  
Those charging a fee have commercial liability insurance– example: outfitters/other services
- What type of approval is required (written vs. verbal permission) to qualify?

## Trespass concerns

### Approaches/Possible Solutions

- Have participant carry liability insurance for the landowner
- Organizations carry liability insurance (for their participants) to protect the landowners
- Other uses need to be included: paddling, stargazing, bird watching, trapping, photography
- Possibly add fee to licensing process (vendor/point of sale processing fee) to cover liability insurance policy (Group insurance) for landowners
- Department used to have a liability waiver card that participants would sign and give to landowners

### **Recommendation #2 - Access to lands for public recreation**

- Seek out other publicly owned property such as Forest Preserve Districts, Universities, to expand recreational opportunities
- The public needs guidance on determining what uses are compatible with the particular piece of property – better information on what is currently offered
- Private landowners could use help from DNR technicians to determine what type of recreation their land can support
- Land type/use classification systems for existing public lands is needed

### Approaches/Incentives

- Offer grant fund dollars to landowners
- Reassess eligibility of current grant programs to promote access, giving priority to landowners who will allow access
- Consider partnership with private land trusts, NGOs, not for profits, etc.
- Modify grant programs to include liability insurance policies when public access allowed (example: OHV program allows grantees to acquire insurance)

### Stamp Program (recommended by the Access Committee) discussion

- How would it be enforced?
- Add more criteria, especially to define user groups
- Offer large tax incentives such as universities receive
- Insure stamp monies **stay** in dedicated funds
- Scope of program from landowners perspectives – should be menu driven (landowners determine what specific uses to allow on their property)
- Follow the existing model for Access Illinois (Tri-county)

### **Recommendation #3 -**

#### Part I Water Trails Plan

- Navigable water – definitions of public waterways needed – maybe needs to change
- Enforcement with respect to landowners' rights. Access to private property is not a right, it's a privilege

- Recommendations #3 & #4 (Water trails/Star Parks) are just different types of specific issues, just like hunting, bird watching, trapping, etc. Should these be separate recommendations? We need to **refocus** these recommendations under the larger issue of access to public and private lands.
- How do you define public use for waterways

#### Part 2 – Heritage Water Trail

- Committee-driven involvement needed
- Good example to expose the issue – try one first to see what will work and what approaches (legislative vs. Incentive based) will be palatable to the public

#### **Recommendation #4** Star Parks

- Just another type of use that needs better access (see note above)
- Diversity – maximize diversity of usage on public/private lands
- Designate areas in all parks – light pollution reduction
- Set up observatory – (move to parking lot for further discussion)
- State need to make efforts to reduce light pollution in all areas
- CDB specifications – construction
- Add stargazing to recreational list on the “menu” for private landowners

#### **Parking Lot – New Ideas**

- Star Observatory on state park  
Walnut Point – existing structure; needs rehab - work with Land Management  
Jim Edgar Panther Creek – an area was set aside years ago
- Beekeeping on public lands – allowable (currently allowable with Site Supt approval)
- Meet with IL. Farm Bureau to learn about costs for access – find common ground with private landowners
- Develop off-road riding areas to be able to train ATV and motorcycle riders so our young riders are good stewards of the land and so they are trained in the safe operation of their machines. Would like to be able to use OHV Grant Funds on IDNR lands to develop an off road safety Park.

### ***Public Access breakout C***

Participants originally assigned to Public Access Breakout were merged into other Public Access groups

## ***Public Access breakout D***

**Facilitator:** Joel Cross

**Participants:** Jerry Beverlin – UBI, Karen Cooney – Lake Villa, IL, Christine Favilla – Sierra Club, Susie Schreiber – Waukegan Harbor Citizen’s Advisory Group, T. Tim Werner – Bumcombe, IL, Bill Brown – Illinois State Snowmobile Association, Mike Stevens – Legislative Liaison, Sandy Wilson – Illinois Trail Riders @ Prairie Trail Riders, Tom Lindblade – Illinois Paddling Council, Fran Caffee – Sierra Club

### **PART I - the group briefly discussed what they learned from the morning session.**

Comments included:

- Conservation groups have been talking about public access issues for a long time, but now should focus on what we can do legislatively.
- Expressed interest in getting email addresses for all participants.
- Didn’t see the public survey, but was interested in the report on the results.
- Need to publicize committee meetings more.
- Set-aside more time for break-out groups.

### **PART II - Review of Public Access Committee’s Executive Summary.**

All four recommendations in the Executive Summary from the committee’s report were reviewed in order. Committee members present in the group provided valuable background information about the content of the report and resulting committee recommendations. Results of the review included:

- Recommendation #1 (Liability Protection for private landowners who open their land for recreation) was the most significant recommendation to deal with, this recommendation was the #1 issue; and, the majority of the groups’ time should be focused here.
- No new recommendations were identified by the group.

### **PART III - Ranking of High Priority Ideas for Moving Recommendations Forward**

Recommendation #1 – Restore liability protection for private landowners who open their land for recreation.

1. A formal coordination committee needs to be created to organize efforts to restore liability protection. This broader committee would work to move the objectives and approaches forward.
2. A coalition of supporters should be built to provide for networking between conservation groups and provide for quick communication. IDNR should start with the contact list for this Conservation Congress and expanded from there.

3. An outreach and education effort is needed targeted specifically at legislators. This could include phone calls and letter writing campaigns with conservation group members contacting their own representatives directly.
4. The existing bill that has been introduced that would provide liability protection needs more direct support and tracking by the coalition created.

Recommendation #2 – Develop an access program within IDNR to open public and private lands to outdoor recreation.

1. Funding needs to be in place for staff to run an access program within IDNR. A diverse set of compatible state funding sources is needed to match federal funding so as not to threatened eligibility requirements. Several examples were discussed including the stamp proposal and other types of user fees.
2. IDNR needs to first look at leases, then purchasing areas to provide access as part of an access program.
3. There needs to be a pre-negotiated and standardized pricing structure for leasing property for public access.

Recommendation #3 – Proposals to create a State Water Trails Plan and a Model State Heritage Water Trail

1. Develop a coalition of stakeholders to access State Water and Heritage Trails and provide for information related to the historical significance of these resources.
2. Needs to be a voluntary and cooperative effort among all stakeholders, especially with IDOT.
3. Increase more focus outside of Northeastern Illinois.
4. Dedicate staff within IDNR to initiate the model State Heritage Water Trail.

Recommendation #4 – Create Star Parks in state-owned recreational/conservation areas.

1. IDNR should facilitate a meeting with Department site staff to determine where this recreational use could be made available. These meetings need to address and consider the operational and fiscal impact on the Department.

### **Parking Lot – New Ideas**

- Private development within the Illinois shoreline of Lake Michigan is cutting off access

## **Attachment D: Youth Recruitment and Retention Breakout Group Detail**

The Youth Recruitment and Retention breakout groups developed the following priorities:

- 1) "Update and adopt the Environmental Literacy Plan to include outdoor components that results in youth recruitment and retention."
- 2) "With partners, develop mentoring programs that will pass on to younger generations safe and ethical outdoor traditions."
- 3) "Market, promote and advertise youth programs and activities."
- 4) "Educate youth in schools and through informal programs with NGOs on conservation issues and natural resources."
- 5) "Provide and support outdoor activities to promote awareness and appreciation of our natural resources for our youth."
- 6) ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) should dedicate staff and resources to promote teaching conservation in schools."
- 7) "Improve access to land, people and resources that offer recreational and educational opportunities for youth."

### ***Youth Recruitment and Retention Breakout Group A***

**Facilitator:** Rafael Gutierrez

**Participants:** Mike Clifford, Jesse Elam, Jack Norman, Joe Seten, Richard Spangler & Chuck White

#### **Education discussion summary:**

- Begin with early childhood environmental education through college
- DNR work with experts to draft Master Plan for the state
- Market & Promote: Improve /expand DNR website to make it more user friendly
- Ask Youth how to communicate with them
- Mentoring: Develop individuals available to volunteer and mentor

Youth Group A spent the most time on education, and were very passionate about utilizing formal school programs (kindergarten through college) and informal programs to develop an

interest in conservation and natural resources in today's youth. They also felt that the DNR can market and promote youth recruitment and retention by utilizing the DNR website to promote youth activities, programs and making it a conduit to its informal partners.

## **Education in schools**

### **Formal and Informal Programs**

- Void – no interaction with existing programs
- University Programs
  - Example – SIU
  - Montana has community based conservation programs run by Professor at UM
  - Recruit
  - Mentor
- Environmental Education does not include natural history as part of education
- Start Environmental Education in kindergarten
  - Environmental education decreases as you go up in grade level
  - Problem with schools is they teach to the test
- IGAP (Illinois Goal Assessment Program) needs to stress Environmental Education
  - Federal funding is only to states with leave no child behind programs in place
  - No communication with the State Board of Education
  - Need to make an effort for grants in environmental literacy at state level
  - Good time to get IGAP plan in place
  - State Environmental literacy plan
  - State of Illinois Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights – like the Outdoor Bill of Rights developed by Chicago Wilderness

### **Market and Promotion**

- Recommend to improve DNR website links
- DNR should work with experts to draft a marketing plan for youth recreation statewide and to include agencies programs and partners
- In the past there was a Conservation Education Advisory Board – this should be re-established
- Partner with Pheasants Forever and other groups in restoring private property
- Twitter, Facebook, U-tube – education videos
- Hire more CPOs and give presentations at Schools
- Inter-agency Communication between DNR and Board of Education.
- Improve DNR website
  - Not user friendly
  - Have links on how to find a mentor
  - Where to do different activities
  - Have a blog

- Who is our audience?
  - Build networks of organizations and individuals
- Ask youth how do we communicate with them?
- Coordinators (athletics, church, etc) how do we contact them?
- Sierra Club and Pheasants Forever have youth leaders
  - Parents are involved
- How do other states promote their events?
- With limited staff at parks if we increase marketing can staff handle these events
- Include known youth events and advertise in the Hunting Digest and Fishing Digest
- Develop with non government partners a mentoring program
  - Women in the outdoor type programs and involve kids
- Tie this into marketing and have a good networking exchange
- Develop individuals within not-for-profits available to volunteer and mentor
  - Takes more than one organization to develop these programs
- 4-H first year shooting program
- It's ideal to mentor 1 on 1 with kids and family but also group mentoring
- Develop a mentoring certification program

### **Improve Access for Youth**

- Develop a directory of land owners willing to make land available to youth
- Hunting preserves if made available to youth can be a good promotional opportunity for the club.
- Fishing in urban areas
  - Utilize retention ponds
  - Use fishing as a bridge to other conservation activities
  - Reevaluate the age for a license?
- State Parks are understaffed
  - Visitor Centers are closed
  - Lack of information to orient visitor
  - Provide access to people who have answers
  - Information kiosks – automated

### **Youth Group A voted and advanced the following recommendations:**

#### **Education:**

- Begin with early childhood education through college
- DNR needs to work with experts to draft a Master Plan for youth recruitment for the state

**Market and Promote:**

- Improve/Expand (redesign) DNR website to make it more user friendly
- Ask youth how to communicate with them

**Mentoring:**

- Develop individuals available to volunteer and mentor

***Youth Recruitment and Retention breakout Group B***

**Facilitator:** Jeff Hopkins

**Participants:** Ted Beier, J.R. Black, Patricia Brown, Linda Cole, Jo Ann Fritz, Harry Hendrickson, Amelia Howard, Michael Howard, Ben Magers, Edward Michael, Anne St. John

Group B focused on the educational opportunities for youth, the process of providing that information and relationships with educational (schools) / non-educational (NGOs) programs. They felt by merging two of the original recommendations; 1) Educate, in schools and through informal programs, youth on conservation issues and natural resources, and 2) Develop, with non-government partners, a mentoring program that will pass on the hunting and outdoor traditions, into; Educate youth, through educational (schools) and non-educational (NGOs) partnerships, of consumptive and non-consumptive outdoor activities.

The group added two recommendations:

1) IDNR advocate a post on (or work with) the State Board of Education to encourage a greater focus on outdoor education,

2) IDNR to facilitate a youth outdoor jamboree. This would be done by bringing all the NGOs together for a hands-on activity type of day.

The group did not discuss the other two recommendations, believing that if the new merged one was focused by suggested actions, the remaining two would then work into place.

***Youth Recruitment and Retention breakout Group C***

**Facilitator:** Valerie Keener

**Participants:** Kirsten Blackford, Bill Bruhn, Brian Caskey, Douglas Chien, Warren Gayle, Elizabeth Hagen-Moeller, Marcia Lochmann, Richard Mark, Jacques Nuzzo, Greg Prosen, Gwen Pollock, Nick Ripley

Group C felt that all four of the Recommendations made by the NRAB Youth Recruitment and Retention Committee were important and should be supported. Minor wording changes were made to two of the recommendations to better reflect the emphasis on "youth" and to another recommendation to broaden its scope. Two additional recommendations were proposed: one to ensure that outdoor activities for youth are provided; and one to support the development and adoption of an Environmental Literacy for Illinois plan that includes outdoor components.

### **General Methods for Implementation**

- **Education Recommendation** - provide materials for teaching; provide programs for youth
- **Marketing Recommendation** - develop and implement a marketing strategy for IDNR youth programs; enlist the assistance of non-profit organizations to help promote materials/programs
- **Mentoring Recommendation** - compile lists of organizations willing to help with mentoring; promote DNR volunteer opportunities
- **Access Recommendation** - work with landowners; improve communication about existing opportunities
- **Outdoor Activities Recommendation** - involve youth in advisory capacities
- **Environmental Literacy Recommendation** - support ongoing efforts

### **Recommendations (listed in order of discussion)**

#### **1. Educate, in schools and through informal programs, youth on conservation issues and natural resources.**

- The group voted to revise the wording of the recommendation to the following statement. "Educate youth, in schools and through informal programs, on conservation issues and natural resources."
- How could we implement this recommendation in the following year?
  - Conduct workshops for youth on basic conservation topics.
  - Train teachers in conservation concepts and topics.
  - Sponsor a meeting with school superintendents to let them know what the IDNR has to offer.

#### **2. Market, promote and advertise existing programs and activities.**

- The group voted to revise the wording of the recommendation to the following statement. "Market, promote and advertise youth programs and activities."
- How could we implement this recommendation in the following year?
  - Use IDOT overpasses and bridges on interstate highways to paint messages from the IDNR promoting youth activities.
  - Develop a marketing strategy for the IDNR youth programs.

- Utilize nonprofit conservation groups, like Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever, to help spread the word to youth and teachers.
- Develop a list of nonprofit conservation groups who are willing to help spread the word through their own communication networks. Send email updates to this list.
- Improve networking capabilities between groups.
- Form stronger partnerships.
- Recruit more volunteers.
- Produce commercials for TV and advertisements for magazines and other media outlets.
- Get the Governor involved in showing that he supports youth programs. Do a PSA showing the Governor participating in/leading activities with youth at a state park or have the Governor filmed at a state park inviting families to come to visit and enjoy our resources.
- Work with PTAs and PTOs.
- Clean up the IDNR Web site.
- Staff each of the five IDNR regions with a person who would be responsible for marketing in that region. This marketing team would coordinate marketing efforts for the IDNR.

### **3. Develop, with non-government partners, a mentoring program that will pass on the hunting and outdoor traditions.**

- The group voted to revise the wording of the recommendation to the following statement. "Develop, with partners, mentoring programs that will pass on safe and ethical outdoor traditions.
- How could we implement this recommendation in the following year?
  - Be sure that hunting is included in the program. We removed it from the recommendation to broaden the scope of the recommendation.
  - Compile a list of people who are willing to mentor youth and what they are qualified to mentor. Make the list available to the public through the Web site and other means.
  - Work with school organizations, like FFA and environmental clubs, to mentor other youth.
  - Develop an inventory of organizations that could act as sources of mentors and what they could mentor.
  - Develop a section of the Web page as a source of mentoring information.
  - Improve access to and ease of use for the current IDNR volunteer program information on the Web page.

### **4. Improve access to land, people and resources that offer recreational and educational opportunities for youth.**

- The group accepted the recommendation in its original wording.
- How could we implement this recommendation in the following year?
  - Develop a list of public sites that are accessible for outdoor recreation and post it to the Web page. Include what types of activities are permitted at each site.
  - Promote existing outdoor opportunities more effectively.
  - Review and adopt “best practices” used in other states.
  - Highlight accessible sites on the Web page.
  - Have IDNR staff work with landowners to educate them about the benefits of improving habitat and to show them how to improve habitat for wildlife.
  - Provide a tax credit for landowners who allow youth to hunt on their land.
  - Change liability laws to encourage more people to allow hunting on their land.
  - Educate landowners about what rights they have under current liability laws.
  - Reassure landowners that the IDNR will help them if they allow access for youth hunting and problems ensue due to the hunters or other people.
  - Provide a sign for landowners to post on their property designating it as available for youth hunting.
  - Promote use of both public and private land.

**5. Provide and support outdoor activities to promote awareness and appreciation of our natural resources for youth.**

- The group added this recommendation to ensure that “outdoor activities” would be promoted, since they were not specifically mentioned in any other recommendation.
- How could we implement this recommendation in the following year?
  - Use the Web site to tell people about them.
  - Use Facebook and Twitter to let more people know about outdoor activities.
  - Host an advisory council made up of youth and assign it with the task of investigating how best to reach today’s youth and get them involved in outdoor activities.
  - Offer internships.
  - Educate youth about the outdoors.
  - Create a spokesperson for the outdoors to engage youth and act as a mascot (like Smokey or Woodsy but with a general outdoor activity relationship).

**6. Develop and adopt an environmental literacy plan that includes outdoor components that result in youth recruitment and retention.**

- The group added this recommendation to ensure that an environmental literacy plan for the state is in place should the “Leave No Child Inside” Act be passed by Congress. The Act will make funding available to states with an environmental literacy plan. Funds can be used for environmental education and outdoor recreation.
- How could we implement this recommendation in the following year?

- Send a letter to the Illinois State Board of Education telling them that the effort should take place and asking them to take the lead, as the funding will be deposited with them.
- Work with the Governor's Office of Sustainability to be proactive.
- Work with the state legislature to get support for the program.

#### Additional comments

- Develop a magazine with lesson plans for teachers to use in class.
- Conduct workshops to promote the IDNR and the outdoors.
- Inventory and improve networking capabilities from the IDNR to conservation and natural resources education electronically and through participation at conferences.
- Target parent organizations at state and local levels to engage families about conservation/natural resources education opportunities.
- Partner with the Illinois Science Teachers' Association and Environmental Education Association of Illinois to disseminate programs of the IDNR and its partners.
- Develop a mechanism to communicate with cities, villages, municipalities and townships awareness about needs for public access, liability protection, benefits for community economy, students and future citizens.

#### **Other notes – facilitator summary and synthesis**

##### Education:

- Begin with early childhood environmental education through college
- DNR work with experts to draft Master Plan for the state
- provide materials for teaching; provide programs for youth

##### Market & Promote:

- Improve /expand DNR website to make it more user friendly
- Ask Youth how to communicate with them
- develop and implement a marketing strategy for IDNR youth programs;
- enlist the assistance of non-profit organizations to help promote materials/programs
- IDNR to facilitate a youth outdoor jamboree. This would be done by bringing all the NGOs together for a hands-on activity type of day.

##### Mentoring:

- Develop individuals available to volunteer and mentor
- compile lists of organizations willing to help with mentoring;
- promote DNR volunteer opportunities

##### Access

- work with landowners; improve communication about existing opportunities

##### Outdoor Activities

- involve youth in advisory capacities

## Environmental Literacy:

- support ongoing efforts to revise the Environmental Literacy Plan in preparation for possible passage of No Child Left Inside legislation
  
- Environmental Literacy for Illinois:
  - originally produced in 1995
  - updated in 1998
  - endorsed by Conservation Congress in 2000 and unanimously passed for statewide adoption
  - revised in 2005
  - five-year plan designed for implementing environmental education opportunities in the state
  - main focus has been formal education (classroom teachers)
  - ISBE, through Scientific Literacy, has taken the lead in the past except for the 2005 revision
  - Illinois Environmental Education Advocacy Consortium was the group taking the lead in 2005 with funding from the Environmental Education and Training Partnership
  - plan needs to be revised so that the State will have a current environmental literacy plan when/if the No Child Left Inside Act is passed
  - states need to have an environmental literacy plan in place in order to receive No Child Left Inside funds
  - revisions would place more emphasis on outdoor activities and nonformal education
  - There has never been much money (some grant funds) associated with the plan, so most of it is either not completed or implemented as part of what people are already doing.
  
- Leave No Child Inside Act
  - U.S. House of Representatives Resolution 3036, commonly known as the “No Child Left Inside Act”
  - expansion of the National Environmental Education Act
  - introduced in the House in 2007
  - no action taken for nearly a year
  - House passed on September 18, 2008
  - has not yet passed the Senate
  - apparently very few Illinois legislators are supporting it
  - if passed, states with environmental literacy plans could apply for the money
  - money would go to ISBE
  - agencies, educators, nonformals, communities would apply to ISBE for funds
  - funds could be substantial
  - DNR could use the money for educational activities of all types
  - competitive, matching one- to three-year grants

Illinois State Board of Education

- The Governor should encourage the State Board of Education to focus on conservation and environmental education.

## **Attachment E: Conservation Funding Breakout Group Detail**

The Conservation Funding breakout groups aligned around four priorities:

- 1) "Develop a master plan for a long-term funding source through expanded partnerships."
- 2) "Implement a long-term funding source through expanded partnerships."
- 3) "Immediately pass SB1846 and quickly implement new fees and fee increases through Administrative Rule, accommodating those who cannot afford to pay."
- 4) "Be more proactive communicating IDNR plans, programs and projects, as part of restoring public trust."

### ***Conservation Funding Break Out Group A***

**Facilitator :** Don McFall

**Participants:** Jim Anderson, Susanne Masi, Walter Haas, Charles Jackson, Jolie Krasinski, Christine Williamson, Richard Glazebrook, Denise Maxwell, Rep. David Reis, Rep. John Cavaletto

#### **Discussion ideas -- summary**

- Establish dedicated funding for DNR
- Additional outreach to public and partners
- Pursue alternative funding – private and corporate
- Work with more partners – health care, economic development
- Develop specific strategy for working with partners
- Increase tourism by better promotion
- Place environmental referendum on ballot
- Establish a "Friends of" DNR
- Establish user fees for park users
- DNR should know its users better: survey of users "why are you here for today?", "suggestion box" on IDNR website
- Collect fee on extractive uses (coal, oil, timber, water)
- Resolve conflict between volunteer work and union positions
- Fees should not result in users being excluded from parks
- Collect fees for DNR services that are free now – consultation
- Consider promoting regional conservation districts or forest preserve districts
- Why is participation down? Cost? Cultural issues?
- Use federal dollars better
- DNR should conduct a self-assessment
- Streamline processes to facilitate partnerships

- Concessionaires are DNR partners and need to be engaged/supported

## ***Conservation funding Break Out Group B***

**Facilitator:** Gary Clark

**Participants:** Jerry Adelman, Judy Beck, Melissa Eaton, Aaron Kuehl, Gerry Rodeen, Jill Riddell, Eric Schenck, Jennifer Sousa

### **Recommendations Review and Alignment**

The group basically supported all recommendations of the NRAB Conservation Funding Committee, i.e. Recommendations for funding #1-8. But, the group followed this general conclusion with substantial discussions covering the following points:

- Rec. #1. Must clearly recognize the need for all inclusive partnerships, including such interests as Ill. Dept. of Transportation, the Arts, Museums, therefore don't put any constraints on the needs for a broad base of interests.
- Rec. #1 and Rec. #2 are really linked and should generate a more complete list of active interest in the need for long term funding.
- Rec. 3 can also be combined with Rec. #1 and Rec. #2.
- The group gave a general alignment for Recs. #4-8.

### **Discussion of New Tactical Implementation Ideas**

The Group spent considerable time discussing a new/revised Rec. #2 for a "Master Action Plan." The group concluded that this Action Plan would need to be done in the next 4 – 12 months, that DNR could not be the lead but that the Trust for Public Lands would be a good technical facilitator, and the Partners for Parks and Wildlife Coalition may be a good initial base coalition to start the planning process. The full completion of this plan could be considered as the fulfillment of the original recommendation #1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8. The group also stressed that the Action Plan should clearly explain the outcomes or "gets" for the additional dollars generated. The plan would also need a clear deadline for development. The coalition would need a paid staff, a link on the DNR web site and could be supported by a "post card campaign" showing support with the post cards generated at the spring banquet circuit held by many coalition groups.

The group also generated a new Rec. #1 that stated that a Conservation Congress be held every year, right after the budget address, to track the State's budget in relation to the Action Plan's recommendations. This new recommendation did not make the final cut.

In a discussion of the original Rec. #4 the group generated a new specific action item with a number one priority as follows:

- **Action Item #1. – Immediately pass S.B. # 1846**

In follow-up discussions of this recommendation and the other actions of the original Rec. #4, the group stressed a clear opposition to any further fund sweeps in the future. Also, stressed that DNR review the use of the Conservation Foundation as a tool to initiate some of the funding actions and support.

#### **Report-Out Suggestion to DNR**

- DNR should join the Chicago Climate Exchange
- DNR must fund staff for a new federally approved Coastal Management Program

#### **New Short term recommendations:**

- Short term Action Item – DNR needs dedicated staff to pursue grant programs for connection to state, local and federal programs. The staff would serve as a partner advocate for local grants opportunities.
- Fund C-2000 Ecosystem Partnerships.
- DNR must partner with others for land acquisition, habitat projects, and DNR site developments to generate more bang for the buck. The general theme here was more openness and early transparency in DNR actions. The lack of such openness was the loss of substantial \$\$ for NGO's and others who could have partnered with DNR on many viable projects to improve and enhance many of DNR's actions. This was followed by a comment that the group strongly supported the original Rec. #6 that addressed DNR's need for a full, open transparent information exchange in its role as a partner.

To conclude the work of the group, final wording for three Action Items was generated from the above discussions. These major Action Items were as follows:

**Action Item # 1. – Pass S.B. 1846. (Immediately)**

**Action item #2. – Initiate a campaign to establish long-term funding sources through the involvement of interested partnerships to develop a "Master Action Plan."**

**Action Item #3. – DNR must partner with others for land acquisition and other projects such as site developments and ecosystem projects, to leverage all available state, local and federal dollars. (Openness and transparency issue)**

**Yellow Card Comments** – the group was directed to use available "yellow cards" for any suggestions outside the directed discussion of the group or for issue suggestions that did not concern funding.

The following two comment cards were submitted:

**Yellow Card #1 from Judy Beck**

- Join Chicago Climate Change or contact Delta Institute for information about partnerships
- Utilize graduate students in exchange for partial scholarships - grad students for staff
- Review and revise Illinois Conservation foundation
- Need for a conference Bankers/DNR/NGO re: opportunities

### **Yellow Card #2**

- Use social media: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Facebook has program where you can have a farm and plant & grow. It is not very accurate; why not make it accurate to start getting generation Y thinking about outdoors.
- Use free social media resources available to you.

## ***Conservation Funding break-out Group C***

**Facilitator: Dick Westfall**

**Participants:** Mark Badasch, Mike Clifford, Jesse Elam, Daniel Olson, Jack Norman, Alley Ringhausen, Joe Seten, Richard Spangler, Anne St. John, Chuck White.

Breakout session facilitator observations:

### **Discussion summary**

1. Implement a stable, adequate, long-term funding source for conservation in Illinois by creating partnerships.
  - Why partnerships?
  - (Need a) multi-level approach
  - What is "conservation?"
  - Trust – spend (\$) on what & where?
  - Maintain old partnerships
2. Develop a master action plan to create the partnerships, and to develop and test program and funding options.
  - Involve traditional opponents, e.g., IFB
  - (Must be) actions
4. Pursue short-term measures to enhance conservation programs and funding.
  - (Use) "credit card" (passes) vs. window sticker
  - Communicate (the) how & why

5. Commit many parties to carrying out pieces of the action plan.

- DNR role to provide info to “actors”
- DNR & org’s (need to) work together

8. Be ready with the arguments and the coalition in support of conservation when new revenues are put in place to help solve the State’s overall fiscal crisis.

- (Take into consideration) other State needs

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### Priorities

- #1 – 3
- #2 – 1
- #3 – 1
- #4 – 10
- #5 – 0
- #6 – 1
- #7 – 0
- #8 – 2

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Parking lot

Access – work with agriculture

### ***Conservation Funding break-out Group D***

**Facilitator** Tim Schweizer

**Participants:** Calvin Beckman (City of O’Fallon), Ted Flickinger (Ill. Assoc. of Park Districts), Ray Herman ( Ill. Forestry Assn.), Fran Harty (TNC), Matthew Lechner ( Shawnee National Forest), Richard Nichols ( Assn. of Ill. Soil and Water Conservation Districts), Tom Palmisano (Mayor Daley’s Fishing Advisory Council), Mary Jo Trimble (IFOR & Field Trial Clubs of Ill.), Russ Crawford (citizen & delegate to first three Cons. Cong. Sessions), Marty McManus, (Ill. Dept. of Agriculture)

General comments on presentation by NRAB Funding Committee

Believe dedicated sales tax for conservation programs needed; seemed to be deemphasized in committee presentation; politicians are afraid of taxes.

(Side note: We tax cars & trucks – Illinois needs a barge tax for green programs)

Need a plan for how any new funds generated will be spent – and how expenses can be reduced to make dollars go further.

Suggest recruiting tax policy experts to provide advice on best plan.

Need partnerships – the more people involved and benefitting, the more support.

IDNR needs to be an active partner.

Unify the lobbyists of all the organizations involved – strong, united voice.

### Comments and Discussion on NRAB Funding Committee recommendations

#### #1: Partnerships

Cause is doomed if we don't.

Park closure coalition needs to continue.

IDNR needs to be a better partner; be more forthcoming with information, more transparent in what it is doing with money and how it is managing programs.

Need to provide dedicated funds details – and guarantee that dedicated funds aren't swept.

Need to take advantage of non-monetary help (volunteers willing & able – union issues).

Need strategic initiative partnerships – need buy in from related interests (i.e., arts, agriculture and landowners) or won't succeed.

Need 3-legged stool: Land, People, Money

#### #2: Master Plan

This should be #1 – and should be done within 6 months.

(Side note: Participant requests information on IDNR total budget and how it is funded -- i.e., how much general revenue, fees, grants, federal).

Groups and partners need to know what funding is needed, how it will be used, and what's in it for us.

Need immediate commitment to long-term dedicated funding for IDNR.

#### #3: Radically Broad Approach

Should be combined with #1 (partnerships).

Need to add education emphasis, especially in urban areas.

Link available new state education funding to conservation education, field trips, etc.

Fund the Conservation Education mandate.

#### #4: Pursue Short-Term Measures

Link to master action plan

Priority list of IDNR & conservation program needs (specific list)

Make it easier for those with money to provide assistance (kids programs, mentoring, education programs)

Need to better use ICF

Support fee package if they remain affordable for those who can't pay

Some users might be underpaying (services for other units of govt. or developers?)

Fee increases: need to bolster enforcement (CPO) and help biological management of resources (both pay for themselves in added fee revenue)

Don't put a lid on fee changes – make sure we know what other states charge for comparison purposes

Make sure fee payers know what the fees pay for – and don't sweep fee revenue

(Side notes: Should implement forestry management/selective harvest/restoration – could be revenue positive and help state forests; IDNR state nurseries can be revenue positive, especially with carbon mitigation, climate change regulations).

#5 – Commit Many Parties to Action Plan (same as #1)

#6 – IDNR Open, Transparent

Tied to other recommendations – no brainer

#7 – Recognize Effort May Take Years

Unacceptable – need action now

Need Master Action Plan

Remove this from recommendations

#8 – Be Ready With Coalition of Support when New Revenues are put in place

Groups and individuals need to be advocates

Projects and programs needs already identified and new ones need to be ready

#### PRIORITIZATION

- 1) Master Action Plan – needs to be immediate priority so everyone knows need, what funds will be used for; identify “What’s in it for me?”
- 2) Partners need to take lead in developing Master Action Plan – they need to “buy in”
- 3) Immediate commitment to long-term, dedicated funding source for IDNR.
- 4) Action on fee legislation and IDNR rules changes (fees) for short-term help; must keep fees affordable for families and low-income.
- 5) IDNR must be more transparent, accountable; must guarantee that fees pay for IDNR programs and are not swept for other purposes; enforce fees: more CPOs mean more licenses; more biologists mean better hunting & fishing & more license sales – positive for revenue and opportunity.

### ***Conservation Funding break-out Group E***

**Facilitator:** Jenny Skufca

**Participants:** Judith Baron, Dennis Flanagin, Mel Gajewski, Mickey Stewart, Erik Neidy, Jack Philbrick, Mike Redmer, Maggie Soliz, Terri Treacy. Beth White arrived late.

Recommendation #1 discussion: Implement a stable, adequate, long-term funding source

- Develop, foster and sustain meaningful partnerships with IAPD, IPRA – these are strong and active, pushing for OSLAD, visit every representative already, really pushing for “No Child...” – piggyback onto their efforts
- Broaden to include commercial recreation, i.e. Alton partnered with Palmer to do golf course, need more big time partnerships with commercial
- Think outside the box – go to folks with bigger money, reform the tax code
- Long term, stable = source forever, this is what committee meant, taxes = dedicated fund, license fees (this was from the Funding Committee member that was in my breakout)
- Yes, we are all aligned with this recommendation.

Recommendation #2 discussion: Develop a “master action plan” to create partnerships

- Must do Rec. #2 to do #1
- Must be someone other than IDNR
- Master plans are big ideas, who will follow through is the key
- What’s the goal for IDNR – land? Identify goals clearly
- Need feasibility study within IDNR – what does the department need? What are the costs of implementation
- Will need transparency (later recommendation) within #1 and #2
- IDNR has alienated themselves, need to reconnect with customer base
- Yes, we are aligned with this recommendation.

Recommendation #3 discussion: Radically broad approach

- Need many public / private partnerships, program to solicit endowments, opportunities to have parks named after huge supporters
- Need to be forthcoming with specific numbers of utilization of sites and programs
- Don’t forget that open lands are not just for people, stewardship priority for maintenance of ecosystems for native flora and fauna
- Potential and current sites are underutilized – connections with historical sites – sharing funding
- General populace is not familiar with terms used whatever the issue, be clear
- Elected officials are put in a tough spot trying to align with multiple constituency groups – find a way for constituency groups to rally behind common issues of concern – take turns backing each other’s projects – united front
- Difficult economic times – look at foreclosed properties for open space and park potential; create benefits for all community members, ex: floodplain properties, all property values improve near open space
- Urban sprawl at a halt for the moment, big developers gone, consider green technologies, connecting to mass transit, use of brownfields

- Ideal time for re-ignition of Conservation Corps – like national CCC – engineers, etc. run it – capital projects done by unemployed, skilled (or trained) labor
- Yes, we are aligned with Recommendation #3, but feel it is inherent part of #1 and #2

Recommendation #4 discussion: Pursue short-term measures

- Short-term act as springboard for long-term, i.e. federal money available for restoration on contiguous sites to fed lands – look at aerials and consider partnerships across the landscape to create contiguous – need more knowledge
- Take care of what you have – engage volunteers, reconnect with users – ex: Boy Scouts celebrating 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010, big numbers of volunteers, bring it local, rally Scouts to come together with parks.
- We are in depression era mode. Reinvigorate senior programs, provide liability to senior volunteers, let them mow. Need site assessment, cut the fat, let citizens help with what is needed
- Partner for tourism – we have the site, you do the event, both benefit
- Never know what concessions bring in, camping, etc. Must know profit / loss by site
- Need \$ management division; must be “for profit,” fee-generating programs, cost recovery must happen
- Staff review of projects and grants is overdone, should not go on for months, consider costs for review of projects
- State citizens know more about WalMart than their own DNR – must understand reciprocal benefits
- User fees should support other department functions without source funding
- Promote as pro-active, short-term support will pass with the general public if constituency groups unite and support publically
- All users must have fee for use
- Yes, we are aligned with Recommendation #4.

Recommendation #5 discussion: Commit many partners

- Need private foundations, need to engage insurance companies, become beneficiary of life insurance, work with endowments
- Be careful not to dilute budget by taking from for-profits
- This recommendation is inherent in both #1, #2 (long-term) and #4 (short-term)

Recommendation #6 discussion: Transparency

- Dedicated staff to connecting all the dots and fostering partnerships
- This recommendation is also included, as #5, under long-term and short-term

Recommendation #7 discussion: May take years

- Utilize incarcerated juveniles and adults to accomplish tasks – vocational training in ecology, restoration, database, etc. – what are the needs
- Require inmates to “earn” their keep by working at parks, partnership with corrections whereby inmates “pay back” the state for costs of their care

- Include under long-term and short-term recommendation.

Recommendation #8 discussion: Be ready

- Never turn down money, better awareness of \$ availability
- Identify specific “fast-track” to get \$ information and get it
- Currently too many hurdles to take \$, need conservation-ready projects identified
- Be aware that new infrastructure creates new challenges
- Keep up with technology, get information to all users
- DNR needs to adapt, make this a goal, link all information – Facebook the DNR now

Funding E group combined #1 and #2 (long-term). They united around #4 (short-term). They felt that #3 (radically broad approach), #5 (many partners), #6 (transparency), #7 (takes years), and #8 (be ready) all supported the long-term and short-term efforts.

They brainstormed many action items at the end of the breakout which did not fall under the recommendation discussions directly. These included:

- Concerns about double fees, i.e. hunters having to pay to enter park
- Salaries for park administrators are too high, too much fat at top of parks, need more employees that are doing the work
- Levy against landfills toward open space funding – is this a partnership idea?
- What about riverboat money
- Permitting and consultation should not cost the DNR – all costs should be deferred to the applicant
- Conservation lottery game
- Gambling money in Illinois – ad campaign like Oregon “money is doing good things in Illinois”
- Teach general public about natural resource terms like ecological restoration, they learn at parks not in school classrooms
- Need general public on board, need their understanding
- General appeal campaign – not to pocketbooks, but to hearts
- Better, more focused PR
- Re: professional staff, high school students hear no \$, no jobs – so they don’t study – need concerted effort to get young people into these jobs, like teacher recruitment effort
- Don’t discount partners in industry – need a paradigm shift – expand conservationist idea
- Source of revenue in habitat stamps – rethink this. Habitat stamps benefit more than hunters – promote sale of stamps to public in support of open space and wildlife
- Design video games as teaching aids – nature-based, open-ended stations for use at schools and parks – extension leading to awareness – continuum
- We as Conservation Congress participants are the facilitators of environmental literacy – are we ready – DNR should partner with State Board of Ed to make sure we’re on the right path

- Think of who is getting ready to retire with no more soccer games or whatever to deliver to, perfect opportunity for DNR or partner to create program “certified ambassadors” as liaisons with schools and natural areas – use Foxfire as model – need knowledgeable mentors
- Think of humans as part of our natural resources. We win awards in Illinois for the sophistication of our park districts. We have the energy and the brain trust in this state.
- Consider open space mitigation funds similar to wetland mitigation – if farmland converts to development – mitigate – hit the developers making the money.

## Attachment G: DNR Website resources

Full documents can be access through the IDNR website: <http://dnr.state.il.us/>

Conservation Congress: <http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/cc.htm>

Conservation Congress process: <http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/CCProcess.ppt.pdf>

Access to Private Lands Executive Summary:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/summary\\_access\\_report\\_public\\_private.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/summary_access_report_public_private.pdf)

Access to Private Lands full report: [http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full\\_access\\_report.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full_access_report.pdf)

Access to Private Lands PowerPoint presentation:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/AccessPrivateLands.ppt.pdf>

Youth Recruitment and Retention executive summary:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Executive_Summary.pdf)

Youth Recruitment and Retention full report:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Report\\_final.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children/Report_final.pdf)

Youth Recruitment and Retention PowerPoint presentation:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/Youth.ppt.pdf>

Conservation Funding executive summary:

[http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/Executive\\_summary.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/Executive_summary.pdf)

Conservation Funding full report: [http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full\\_report\\_privatelands.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/pdf/full_report_privatelands.pdf)

Conservation Funding PowerPoint presentation:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/nrab/ppt/Funding.ppt.pdf>