

CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBARRAS RIVER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

"Giving Nature a Helping Hand"

SPRING

2003

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ERMA

P.O. Box 278

Toledo, IL 62468

Ph: (217) 849-3762

E-mail: erma@rr1.net

ERMA HOLDS 10TH ANNUAL BANQUET

The Embarras River Management Association (ERMA) held a successful 10th Annual Meeting and Dinner on March 11, 2003 at 6:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building at Greenup, Illinois. After the welcome by Greg Sherwood, Watershed Coordinator, Danielle Finney of Martinsville led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance, and then beautifully sang a solo rendition of the National Anthem. Doyle Purcell, Chairman of the North Fork Conservancy District, delivered the invocation, followed by a delicious dinner catered by Niemerg's Steak House of Effingham. During dinner, piano music was provided by Amy Blankenbeker of Martinsville.



(L-R) Butch Fisher-ERMA Secretary; Rollie Spaniol-ERMA Treasurer; Todd Thacker-ERMA President; Bill Gradle-NRCS State Conservationist; Dirk Rice-ERMA Vice-Pres.

Following introductions, an entertaining slide presentation was given on the activities of the Lawrenceville High School "River Watchers" by Whitney

Crawford, LHS student and member of the group. The LHS "River Watchers" is a group of students in teacher and group sponsor John Clark's Biology II class. This group has been monitoring the condition of the Embarras River at Lawrenceville for the past ten years.



Whitney Crawford

The evening's agenda also included informative updates given by Dan Meinhart on the National Trail Ag Coalition, Tom Benjamin on the Lincoln Heritage Resource Conservation & Development District, and Vince Gutowski on the Hurricane Creek Watershed pilot project.



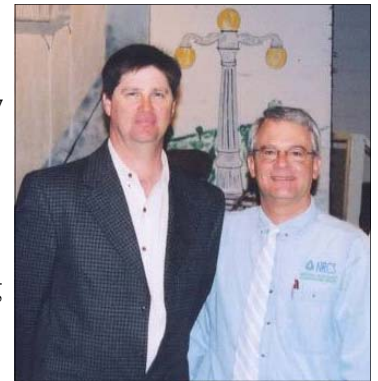
During the business meeting, the Officers for the 2003 ERMA Board of Directors were elected as follows: President-Todd Thacker, Crawford Co.; Vice-President-Dirk Rice, Champaign Co.; Treasurer-Rollie Spaniol, Coles Co.; Secretary-Butch Fisher, Douglas Co.; Director-at-Large-Vince Gutowski, Coles Co. (Continued on Page 3)



On April 8, 2003, as part of their community outreach program, Marathon Ashland Petroleum LLC donated \$900.00 for conservation education events in Crawford Co. Pictured is David Saad (far right), Marathon Community Outreach Coordinator, presenting the check to Dana Sanders & John Pearse of the Crawford Co. SWCD, and Todd Thacker of ERMA.

NEW ERMA PRESIDENT

Todd Thacker (pictured here with Bill Gradle) was elected as the new President of ERMA at the Annual Meeting. Todd is a 5th generation land owner in a family that has owned land in the Embarras River Watershed since 1851. As a strong proponent of conservation, Todd has taken advantage of many conservation programs to improve his land. Besides CRP, he utilized a C-2000 grant to improve wildlife habitat by planting prairie grass and thousands of trees. In addition, he cooperated with U.S. Fish & Wildlife to create a water impoundment on the property. Todd is a 1979 graduate of Red Hill High School and is employed by Lytle Electric of Robinson IL. He enjoys hunting, fishing and canoeing with his two sons, and has the goal of leaving the land and the river for his sons to enjoy in better condition than he found it.



ERMA HOSTS INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON RAINFALL SIMULATOR UNITS

A vital component of the Embarras River Management Association's (ERMA) plan of work is an aggressive conservation education outreach program. ERMA was recently notified that its project titled, "Rainfall Simulator/Crop Residue Demonstration Unit", was selected for funding under the EPA Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Project. The rainfall simulator unit provides a very effective visual demonstration of the power of a raindrop on the soil surface, and the value of vegetation or crop residue in reducing soil erosion and nutrient leaching, while improving soil moisture retention. These units will be an effective conservation education tool to be utilized at conservation field days, tours, schools, and other events.



Participants inspected the rainfall simulator and trailer and offered suggestions for improvements.



Butch Fisher demonstrated the rainfall simulator.

Utilizing the EPA grant along with private donations, ERMA plans to build six rainfall simulator units to be shared among the twelve NRCS/SWCD offices located in the Embarras Watershed.

In order to make this project as successful as possible, ERMA hosted an informational meeting on Monday, April 7, 2003 at the ERMA office in Toledo, IL. Attending the meeting were NRCS/SWCD personnel from the counties of Douglas, Coles, Clark, Cumberland, Effingham, Jasper, Crawford and Lawrence; the coordinators of the Lincoln Heritage and the Wabash Valley RC&Ds; and representatives from the IEPA and the state NRCS office. A prototype rainfall simulator unit was set up for inspection, along with all of the associated educational materials and equipment, and a cargo trailer for housing the unit. After a demonstration of the unit, the meeting was opened up for discussion and suggestions on ways to improve each aspect of the project, including equipment design and operations, presentation materials, and education scenarios. It was the consensus of those attending that this project will prove to be a valuable conservation education tool in the work to protect and enhance the natural resources of the Embarras River Watershed.

ERMA HOLDS 10TH ANNUAL BANQUET

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Greg Sherwood, Watershed Coordinator, delivered the following report on ERMA's activities: *"Last Spring, we developed the successful "Legislator Conservation Education Reference" book and provided it to our federal legislators. Through this book and our personal contacts, we strived to educate our legislators on the importance of providing support for conservation programs and conservation technical assistance. During the year we met with key staff for Senators Durbin and Fitzgerald, and met personally with Congressmen Johnson and Phelps. The highlight of the summer was the roundtable discussion that we hosted for Senator Durbin at the ERMA office in August.*

Throughout the year, we strived to improve communication and cooperation with county, state and national conservation agencies and organizations, and as a result have established good working relationships with them. For example, we participated in conservation education field days with the NRCS/SWCD offices in the counties of Douglas, Jasper and Clark, and collaborated with the Lawrenceville High School River Watchers for National Water Monitoring Day and River Cleanup Day.

We have been actively seeking grants in order to fund various projects in the Embarras Watershed. Recently, we were notified that we had successfully secured an EPA 319 grant to build six rainfall simulators that will be shared among the twelve NRCS/SWCD offices in the watershed. These units can be utilized at conservation education field days to effectively demonstrate the destructive processes of soil erosion, sedimentation and nutrient runoff, and the protective advantages of crop residue cover and vegetative filter strips.

Recently, we instituted a new "Corporate Partnering" program, whereupon we work hand-in-hand with various businesses and corporations located in the watershed that have expressed a desire to fund projects that will improve the environment and protect the natural resources of the communities where they reside.

In summation, we feel that we can best serve the watershed by focusing on conservation education, seeking funding sources for conservation projects through grants and corporate partnering ventures, and maintaining close working relationships with our legislators and the conservation agencies and organizations in the Embarras Watershed."

The special guest speaker for the evening was Mr. William J. Gradle, State Conservationist of Illinois, who presented an informative program on the conservation programs and opportunities provided for in the new Farm Bill. Mr. Gradle commended ERMA for becoming a premier watershed organization and for its many conservation achievements. He suggested that ERMA update its 1996 Resource Management Plan, due to the increased scope of work it will be facing. Mr. Gradle concluded with the announcement of an impending grant for ERMA, that will enable it to continue its progressive conservation work.



Bill Gradle visits with Rolie before the meeting.

Before closing the meeting, Watershed Coordinator Greg Sherwood thanked Mr. Gradle for his presentation, and encouraged audience members to take active roles in promoting ERMA and its conservation work throughout their home counties. Sherwood then expressed appreciation to the First National Bank in Toledo for their support and generous provision of office space for ERMA. He also thanked U.S. Soy of Mattoon for providing soy-bean treats, and the businesses that donated the door prizes.



Greg Sherwood, Watershed Coordinator, gives his presentation at the Annual Meeting of ERMA.



Joe Bergbower presents his hand-crafted turtle that he donated for the grand door prize to the winner Cliff Carroll.



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Embarras River News

ERMA...Lending Nature a Helping Hand

Are Your Dues Up To Date?

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Become a Member of ERMA Today...

ERMA is a non-profit organization funded through membership dues and grants. Join in our efforts to promote conservation and preserve the natural resources of the Embarras River Watershed. Become an active member; Volunteer for projects; Share ERMA's goals with friends, neighbors and local businesses; Encourage their membership and support.

\$20.00 One Year Membership

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