

CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBARRAS RIVER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

"Giving Nature a Helping Hand"

FEBRUARY

2004

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ERMA 11th ANNUAL MEETING

As a locally led, "grass-roots", non-profit organization of citizens, ERMA is dedicated to the development and implementation of conservation projects and practices that improve and protect drinking water quality and quantity, reduce soil erosion and stream sedimentation, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, alleviate flooding to communities and cropland, and improve recreational opportunities within the 1.5 million acres of the Embarras River Watershed.

Working together has again produced success for the watershed as 2003 proved to be a banner year for ERMA. A \$400,000 grant was awarded to ERMA as part of the 2003 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. This grant, which is being administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), was made possible through the efforts of U.S. Senator Dick Durbin. As a result of this grant and the hard work of many individuals, ERMA is accomplishing some of its most exciting work for conservation in the Embarras River Watershed since the organization's inception. From development of the rainfall simulators to sponsoring conservation tillage workshops, ERMA is being recognized as a valuable partner in conservation education.

Therefore, to review ERMA's accomplishments over the past year and to share in its exciting plans for the future, plan to attend ERMA's 11th Annual Meeting and Dinner being held on Tuesday, March 9, 2004 at the Greenup Municipal Building in scenic Greenup, IL. Registration will start at 6:00 p.m. with a catered dinner served at 6:30 p.m. by Niermerg's Steak House of Effingham, IL. The evening's program includes presentations from a high school river watchers group and updates from several of our partners in conservation. The special guest speaker will be Carolyn Brown Hodge, Director of Rural Affairs for the Lt. Governor's office. Besides enjoying an entertaining and informative program, this will be a great opportunity to meet with old friends and network with others who share the same passion for the Embarras River Watershed.



Designated as the longest, clear span, wooden covered bridge without a load restriction in the United States, this scenic, covered bridge sits astride the Embarras River just west of Greenup, IL.

CONSERVATION 2000 PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATIONS DUE

The Conservation 2000 Program funds nine programs across three state natural resource agencies. One of the programs benefiting citizens in the Embarras River watershed is the **IDNR Ecosystems Program**. One basic goal behind the Ecosystems Program is to provide funding for grant projects developed by people in recognized watershed areas, called **Ecosystem Partnerships**. The Ecosystem Partnerships are led by councils made up of concerned, involved citizens, as well as communities, public and corporate landowners. Locally, the **Embarras River Ecosystem Partnership** includes all of the area that drains into the Embarras River south of Villa Grove.

IDNR's philosophy of ecosystem management is reflected in their Mission Statement, which is, "*provide leadership to manage, protect, sustain, and promote Illinois' natural and cultural resources*". The Mission of the **Ecosystems Program** is to *monitor, maintain, enhance and restore the biodiversity and ecological conditions of Illinois' landscapes through local partnerships*. Overall, the spirit, intent and vision of the Ecosystems Program is "**...a future in which the Illinois landscape provides maximum natural biodiversity, hydrologic function, and ecological sustainability, and offers the highest quality of life for Illinois citizens by maximizing green infrastructure, native habitat, and connectivity of open space within a sustainable economy.**" It is within these philosophies that the Embarras River Partnership and local landowners must work, in order to be successful in competing for C2000 Ecosystem Project funds. Over the past several years, the Embarras Partnership has been quite successful in obtaining funds for the improvement of the ecosystem within the Embarras River watershed. In the six years since the Embarras Partnership was formed, citizens in the local area have received grant project funds amounting to \$1,590,464, which in addition to \$1,028,600 worth of matching funds, made available a total of \$2,619,064 in funding for projects in the Embarras Partnership area.

Ecosystem Projects sought for FY 05 grants include: **Habitat, Land Acquisition, Education or Outreach, Planning, Resource Economics and Research**. It is the stated goal of the IDNR, to fund Ecosystem Projects Applications that will:

- Acquire, Protect, and Restore High Quality Natural Resources of Local and State Significance.
- Acquire, Preserve, and Restore Habitat Areas which meet Minimum Functional Habitat Area Guidelines; or Ensure Diversity of Habitats.
- Create, Protect, and Restore Adequate Buffer to Protect Sensitive Habitats from Non-Compatible Land Uses.
- Connect Habitat Areas.
- Encourage Ecosystem-Based Best Management Practices (E-B/BMPs).
- Restore and Naturalize Hydrologic Functions.
- Develop Educational Strategies Which Complement Ecosystem Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement Activities.
- Integrate Research and Monitoring into Partnerships and Program Work.
- Integrate the Ecosystems Program with Other Local, State, and Federal Programs and Initiatives.

If the Embarras Partnership is to remain a successful partner in the IDNR Ecosystems Program in the future, landowners must submit Project Applications that reflect the mission and goals of the IDNR. We hope that many landowners, educators and conservation groups within the watershed will take the time to apply for funds that will improve the management of our local natural resources. Dr. Vincent Gutowski is the primary contact for the Embarras Ecosystem Partnership; however you may contact your local SWCD for additional information. Dr. Gutowski may be reached at work (217) 581-3825, at home (217) 348-7702, or by E-mail, cfvpg@eiu.edu. On line information about the IDNR Conservation 2000 Program can be found at: <http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/c2000/FY05.htm>. Once there, interested parties can navigate to the Ecosystem Project Application page, where they can download applications, instructions, guidance and criteria for the projects, as well as the background and mission of the C2000 program. At this point in time, **all project applications must be completed on-line and submitted by February 27th, 2004.**

NO-TILL WORKSHOPS FOR FARMERS, LANDOWNERS & CCAs

A conservation workshop entitled, “No-Till for Your Farm - Improving Your Profits and Your Land” is being held at two locations in the Embarras Watershed. For persons living in the northern half of the watershed, the first workshop will be on Wednesday-February 18, 2004 at the Agrigold agronomy research farm located 4 miles east of Tuscola on Rte. 36. For persons living in the southern half of the watershed, the workshop is being held on Thursday-February 19, 2004 at the Sunrise Community Center (next to the USDA building) in Newton, IL. The workshop is being sponsored by the Conservation Technology Information Center, the Embarras River Management Association, the Douglas and Jasper Counties Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Lincoln Heritage and Post Oak Flats Resource Conservation and Development districts.

Pre-registration for the workshop is required. In order to have an accurate meal count, please register as soon as possible. The cost is \$10.00 per person, which covers registration and lunch. Certified Crop Advisers can obtain 5 hours of Continuing Education Credits in Soil & Water Conservation.

Depending on the meeting being attended, registration and payment should be sent to one of these offices:

- **Douglas Co. SWCD; 900 S. Washington St.; Tuscola, IL 61953; Phone: (217) 253-2022, Ext.3**
- **Jasper Co. SWCD; 1403 Clayton Ave.; Newton, IL 62448. Phone: (618) 783-2319, Ext. 3.**



Tentative Agenda

- 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. Registration
8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Opening Remarks: Dan Towery, Natural Resources Specialist, CTIC
9:00 – 9:45 a.m. Tillage Systems-A Comparison: Dave Schertz, Consultant, CTIC
9:45 – 10:15 a.m. Buffers & Filter Strips-Vital Tools for Conservation: Dave Schertz, CTIC
10:15 – 10:30 a.m. Break
10:30 – 11:45 a.m. Improving the Soil & Benefiting the Environment-No-Till Makes Sense: Roger Windhorn, Resource Soil Scientist, NRCS
11:45 – 12:45 p.m. Lunch
12:45 – 2:15 p.m. Learning the No-Till System to Increase Your Profits: Dick Lyons, NT Farmer, Springfield, IL/ Mike Plummer, University of Illinois Extension & NT Farmer
2:15 – 3:00 p.m. Incentives for No-Till & Buffers-Overview of Conservation Programs
- Federal Programs: Ray Coombes/Dennis Clancy, NRCS DC
 - Illinois Programs: Jane Wendte, Regional Representative, IDOA
 - Carbon Payments-Are They Around the Corner?: Dan Towery, CTIC
- 3:00 – 3:30 p.m. Question & Answer Session/Summary & Conclusion: Dan Towery, CTIC

Cut Out & Mail Registration...Pre-Registration is Necessary...Register Today

Name(s): _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

No. of Reservations: ____ at \$10 per person = \$ _____ Make check payable to Douglas or Jasper Co. SWCD



P.O. Box 278
Toledo, IL 62468

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ERMA Newsletter

ERMA...Lending Nature a Helping Hand

Are Your Dues Up To Date?

The area above your name on the mailing label has the year printed on it that your dues are paid through. We greatly appreciate your past support and encourage you to stay actively involved. The foundation of an organization is built upon dedicated people and its strength is in a strong, involved membership. Check to see if your dues need to be renewed, and if so, please complete and submit the form below along with your dues payment. This is an exciting time to be a part of ERMA, as together we are truly making a difference for conservation in our watershed.

JOIN 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 \$50.00 Three Year Membership

Name: _____

Make Checks Payable to:

Address: _____

ERMA

City/State/Zip: _____

P.O. Box 278

Phone and e-mail: _____

Toledo, IL 62468