

CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBARRAS RIVER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

"...Lending Nature a Helping Hand"

JANUARY - MARCH

2005

ERMA OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Champaign Co.

Dirk Rice, Vice-President

Coles Co.

Alan Alford

Vince Gutowski

Rollie Spaniol, Treasurer

Crawford Co.

Todd Thacker, President

Cumberland Co.

Stan Holsapple

Douglas Co.

Butch Fisher, Secretary

Max Lewis

Jasper Co.

Joe Bergbower

Dan Meinhart

Lawrence Co.

Reid Thacker

Richland Co.

Gary Zwilling

Coordinator

Greg Sherwood

ERMA

P.O. Box 278

Toledo, IL 62468

Ph: (217) 849-3762

E-mail: erma@rr1.net

ERMA 12th ANNUAL MEETING

As a locally led, "grass-roots", non-profit organization of citizens, ERMA is dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the natural resources of the Embarras River Watershed. To learn about what's being accomplished and the volunteer opportunities available, make plans to attend ERMA's 12th Annual Meeting and Dinner, which will be held on Tuesday, March 8, 2005 at the Greenup Municipal Building in Greenup, IL. Registration will start at 6:00 p.m. with a catered dinner served at 6:30 p.m. by Niemerg's Steak House of Effingham, IL. 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 conservation. Contact ERMA for reservations.

ERMA & NWTf PLAN EVENT

ERMA is working with the Women's Regional Coordinator of the National Wild Turkey Federation and representatives from the Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District and Farm Bureau along with local volunteers to plan a "Women in the Outdoors" event. This highly popular event, set for June 11, provides interactive educational outdoor activities for women ages 14 and older. Classes conducted include such topics as camping, outdoor cooking, archery, bird watching, fishing, outdoor photography, and hunting to name a few. Watch for further details on this upcoming event in a future newsletter and local newspapers.

ERMA GRANT SUCCESS

ERMA has successfully acquired several grants over the past few months. Last fall, a grant for \$3900 from the Region 5 office of the USEPA enabled Coordinator Sherwood to attend a watershed seminar in Denver, and a micro-grant from the Lumpkin Family Foundation in Mattoon paid the travel costs. ERMA has also been awarded a "Capacity Building Grant" of \$8400 from the Lumpkin Family Foundation for development of an organizational strategic plan. Finally, the Conservation Technology Information Center of West Lafayette, IN has given ERMA an Enviroscape watershed model, valued at approximately \$900, to be used for conservation education in the watershed.

ERMA WEB SITE

In cooperation with Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, ERMA now has a presence on the internet. The web site contains an archive for the newsletter Currents, information on the rainfall simulator project, a copy of the Embarras River Basin Resource Management Plan, a copy of the Conservation Education Notebook, the organizational by-laws, and contact information. Be sure to check it out at the following address:

<http://www.eiu.edu/~geoscience/erma/index.html>

WETLAND RESTORATION IN LAWRENCE COUNTY

Jim Moye, NRCS District Conservationist

Wetland impoundments have begun to be restored in the Embarras River basin below Lawrenceville. This is a project funded through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program under the Floodplain Easement Option administered by NRCS. Two impoundments have been completed for a total of over 150 acres of open shallow water areas. These impoundments will reduce flooding effects in the area as well as provide wetland habitat, trap sediment and filter out nutrients and other chemicals in runoff and flood water. More than one-third of the United States' threatened and endangered species live only in wetlands, and nearly half use wetlands at some point in their lives. Many other animals and plants depend on wetlands for survival. Bald Eagles have been spotted near Lawrenceville as a result of other newly restored wetlands.



Photo of earthwork being done to construct one of the berms on a 125 acre impoundment.



The right side of this photo shows part of the old Embarras River Channel that has been restored.

EQIP PROGRAM HUGE SUCCESS IN LAWRENCE COUNTY

Gary Zwilling, SWCD Resource Conservationist

The 2004 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) signup for conservation practices in Lawrence County was a huge success this past summer. Twenty-six out of 48 enrollees or 54% of the applications were approved for construction of conservation work. Conservation work will include the building of terraces, waterways, water and sediment control basins and grade stabilization structures. These types of conservation practices are designed to improve water quality and curb soil erosion and improve the natural resources on private lands. Over \$1.1 million dollars were allocated in funds to local landowners in Lawrence County that will improve the resources in the Embarras Watershed. In addition, to the landowner's dollars the Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District entered into a cooperative working agreement with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for \$48,745. The local SWCD district provides in kind services of staff, equipment and other supplies for the agreement. The SWCD staff then flags, surveys and designs the conservation practices. NRCS in return provides grant monies for work products (conservation practices) to the local SWCD. The Lawrence County SWCD was able to hire 3 additional people in September to flag, survey and assist with the plotting of the conservation practices.

FEE HUNTING WORKSHOP

A "Fee Hunting Workshop" was held in Greenup, IL, on Wednesday, January 26, 2005. The purpose of the workshop was to help landowners in the area learn more about the pros and cons of this type of operation. Topics included an overview of considerations in fee hunting operations including liability, licensing, marketing, wildlife habitat management, and conservation programs available to help landowners attract more wildlife to their land. While developing a fee hunting business will not work for or appeal to every rural landowner, interest in the subject is growing as many landowners across the State are finding success in packaging and marketing hunting experiences to sportsmen and outfitters. Workshop sponsors were ERMA, and the Heartland of Illinois, Lincoln Heritage, Post Oak Flats, and Wabash Valley RC&D Councils.

IT'S TIME FOR CONSERVATION 2000 PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATIONS

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 seven 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 area.

Ecosystem Projects sought for FY 06 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://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/c2000/index.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. ***Special Note: Hard copy project applications must be postmarked by midnight, January 31, 2005. There is more time for project applications completed on-line. On-line applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on February 28, 2005.**



P.O. Box 278
Toledo, IL 62468

Mailing
Address
Goes
Here

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 and month printed on it that your dues are paid through. 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. We greatly appreciate your support and encourage you to stay actively involved. An organization's foundation, strength and ultimate success rests solely on the works of a dedicated, active, and involved membership. This is an exciting time to belong to 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