

CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBARRAS RIVER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

"Giving Nature a Helping Hand"

SUMMER

2003

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ERMA RECEIVES \$400,000 GRANT

A \$400,000 grant has been awarded to the Embarras River Management Association (ERMA) as part of the 2003 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. This grant, which will be administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), was made possible through the efforts of U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL).

The Embarras River Management Association (ERMA) is a "grass-roots", non-profit organization of citizens dedicated to the development and implementation of a comprehensive natural resource plan for the Embarras River Basin. The goal of ERMA is to promote conservation projects and practices that improve 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.

"The Embarras River runs an integral course through the lives of many in east-central Illinois," said Durbin, *"ERMA has a solid record on conservation efforts and will no doubt put these funds to good use in continuing its important work."*

The Board of Directors and supporters of ERMA are very appreciative of the hard work put forth by Senator Durbin and his staff in securing this legislation, and they commend the Senator for his continued dedication to conservation efforts. Over the years, ERMA has achieved numerous accomplishments for conservation through the combined efforts of many dedicated individuals. From development of the comprehensive Embarras River Basin Resource Management Plan to the establishment of the new Lincoln Heritage Resource Conservation and Development Area, ERMA has played an active role. Due to this grant, ERMA's commitment to benefit future conservation efforts in east-central Illinois remains as strong as ever.



U.S. Senator Durbin met with the ERMA Directors in Toledo in August of 2002. (L-R) Butch Fisher-Douglas Co.; Alan Alford-Coles Co.; Dan Meinhart-Jasper Co.; U.S. Senator Durbin; Stan Holsapple-Cumberland Co.; Rollie Spaniol-Coles Co.

ERMA'S 1ST RAINFALL SIMULATOR UNIT IS READY TO GO

As was reported in the Spring newsletter, ERMA's Rainfall Simulator Unit (RSU) project was selected for funding under the EPA Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Grant Program. 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 field days, tours, schools and other events. Utilizing the EPA grant along with private donations, ERMA is building six rainfall simulator units to be shared among the twelve NRCS/SWCD offices located in the Embarras Watershed.



ERMA's Rainfall Simulator Unit is enclosed in a trailer which acts as a traveling billboard for the project and its sponsors.

We are excited to report that ERMA's first Rainfall Simulator Unit has been completed and will be on display at the Illinois Department of Agriculture's Watershed Park during the Illinois State Fair in August. In addition, plans are underway to have the RSU at the Farm Progress Show in Vermilion County in September. With the other five units scheduled for completion over the next three weeks, Crawford and Jasper County SWCDs have already reserved a RSU for their conservation field days.

It has been very gratifying to see the interest and support the RSU has generated. As what usually happens with these types of projects, the RSU seems to have taken on a life of its own, requiring much more time, money, and effort than originally anticipated. Therefore, the support and teamwork on this project have been instrumental in its

successful development and production. We again want to thank our friends at the NRCS and SWCD offices for taking the time to attend the "brainstorming" meeting back in April, and for their continued support. The suggestions we received from that meeting on ways to improve each aspect of the project, from equipment design and operations to presentation materials, proved invaluable in the design process. We especially want to thank the IEPA for not only their financial support, but also for their patience and expertise in guiding us through this project. In addition, we want to thank the Monsanto Corporation for their generous donation to help us with our match for the grant.

We also want to recognize the contractors and suppliers who have been so great to work with on this project: Cheesman Trailer Sales of Westfield and Haulmark Trailers provided us with quality trailers within our budget; Rural King of Mattoon provided us with great service and a generous discount on parts and supplies; and Sign Creations Plus of Charleston have done a fantastic job on lettering the trailers and making the educational signage. A special thank you goes to Richard Miller of R&M Metals in Bourbon. Richard took a personal interest in this project and his dedication, ingenuity and craftsmanship have been instrumental in the successful design and development of the RSU.

Finally, thank you to Rollie Spaniol for keeping the finances in order, and a special thank you to Butch Fisher for his invaluable assistance on this project. Besides providing the inspiration and general design for the development of ERMA's RSU, Butch's personal dedication and the tremendous amount of time and effort he invested in this project has resulted in the success of this valuable new conservation education tool.



Greg's 4 year old grandson, Chase Nolan, loved to operate the on-off switch for the RSU while helping Greg and Butch practice set-up and operation. He also managed to help Butch "experience" the rainfall when he accidentally flipped the switch on while Butch was under the rain head unit.

LAWRENCE CO. SWCD & NRCS HOST MACHINE SHOP MEETINGS



Jim Moye gave a presentation on conservation program opportunities to local farmers. This meeting was in the machine shop at the Steffey farm, which lies east of Birds in the Embarras River Watershed.

The Lawrence County SWCD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service hosted four machine shop meetings for the farmers and landowners of Lawrence County in order to bring information about the 2002 Farm Bill to actual working farms. Jim Moye, NRCS District Conservationist, presented information about the various conservation programs contained in the 2002 Farm Bill and the opportunities they provide for landowners and farmers. Afterwards, refreshments were provided by the Lawrence County SWCD, while farmers had a chance to catch up on the latest crop conditions and river stages in the county. Meeting locations included the Aaron Ferguson farm south of Chauncey, and the Wendell and Doyle Steffey farm east of Birds. Both of these farms lie in the Embarras River Watershed. A third meeting was held at the Johnson Farms in Denison Township, and the final meeting was held at the Lukin Township Garage. The meetings were well-received with a total of sixty-one people attending the four meetings.

ERMA REPS MEET IDOA CHIEF

On July 18, Butch Fisher and Greg Sherwood had the opportunity to visit with and present an ERMA Conservation Notebook to IDOA Director Hartke and State Rep. Chapin Rose at a Farm Bureau sponsored meeting in Tuscola.

ERMA ON THE WEB

The Board of Directors decided at their last meeting to work in conjunction with Eastern Illinois University in Charleston to develop a web site for ERMA. On July 23, Vince, Rollie, and Greg met with John Stymac at EIU to begin the process. By utilizing EIU's services, ERMA can have their web site developed and maintained with less cost and work. Greg is collecting the information and data for the website and will deliver it to EIU for processing. The goal is to have the web site up sometime this Fall. A web site will present an excellent opportunity for people to learn about ERMA and to showcase our successes and goals for conservation in the watershed. If you have any suggestions for the site, please contact the ERMA office.

ERMA WORKING TO INCREASE CANOE ACCESS SITES ON THE EMBARRAS RIVER

Due to interest expressed by several ERMA directors and members, we checked with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) concerning developing canoe access sites on the Embarras River south of Greenup. We learned that eligible units of local government may apply for assistance under the IDNR Boat Access Area Development (BAAD) grant program. The grant funds are derived from the State Boating Act Fund, which includes marine motor fuel tax and state boating fees.

Under the grant program, local bodies of government that can statutorily acquire land, such as a city, township, county, etc., can apply for up to \$50,000 in reimbursement to purchase and develop a canoe access site. The grant will fund land acquisition up to 90% of the cost and site development up to 100%, but funding will not exceed \$50,000 for the total project. After a site is established, the local governmental body is responsible for maintaining the site for up to 12 years.

The Jasper, Crawford, and Lawrence County NRCS/SWCD offices were then contacted to see if there was interest in pursuing this project in their areas. At this time, ERMA is working with the Jasper Co. NRCS/SWCD office, the Newton Tourism Council, the City of Newton and Connor & Connor Engineering to develop a proposal and design for a canoe access site in the Newton City Park by the grant application deadline of September 1st. There was also interest expressed in developing canoe access sites in the other counties, but they will probably wait until next year to see how the Newton project goes.



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ERMA Newsletter

ERMA...Lending Nature a Helping Hand

Are Your Dues Up To Date?

If the area above your name on the mailing label has the year 2003 printed on it, then your dues are current. If the area is blank, then your dues need to be renewed.

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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