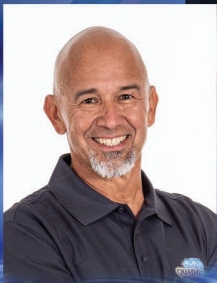


Connecting people to the river

# eddy

MAGAZINE

“...in ways that will  
pay off later.”





Kathy Wine

## ...in ways that will pay off later.

I think I'm like everyone liking instant gratification. One and done. I like Wordle for that. But at River Action we need to be long thinkers; much of our work will be realized in ways that pay off later. I'm not just talking about everything we do has consequences. I'm talking about investments.

When you think about it, every planning process is hard work that pays off later. Sometimes planning is looked on as a brake in economic development. But it is hard work that gets a better result and pays off later. Think River Vision, for example. In Moline, the big ideas for the I-74 corridor that are being addressed by Renew Moline and the Urban Land Institute is that kind of investment. They are the engine and the pay off will be economic growth.

Another good example of planning and investing is Ducks Unlimited, a national organization of 700,000 members. It is buying wetlands and riverine areas next to the Mississippi River to improve habitat for waterfowl and that will one day make room for the river when it floods alleviating risk and damage to populated areas.

Other leaders in long thinking are our local and national foundations. They are not poll watchers with their fingers to the wind, but consistently starting initiatives that are ahead of popular thinking. They make principled decisions in ways that pay off later. Examples include the work cited by Bob Sinkler in this magazine that several foundations are tackling climate action planning and investing in research for carbon sequestration. Locally, the QC Community Foundation invests in capacity building. Building the capacity of any entity is forward-thinking. The QCCF strengthens nonprofits at the organizational level through infrastructure (technology upgrades, communications, data management) and other areas that improve their ability to raise funds to expand their work. This includes strengthening leadership and boards through training or establishing a clear vision and strategy, enabling the nonprofit to more effectively pursue their mission.

The Regional Development Authority, Scott County Regional Authority, and other local foundations have funded multiple plans that address racial inequality and encourage the building of a more inclusive community.

During our Eddy Awards on April 22, the Joyce and Tony Singh Family Foundation awarded three Eddy Scholarships to students who have gone against the current to get things done during their school careers. They believe in investing in the development of career-focused, future environmental leaders.

When opportunity knocks, it's important to think about investments that will pay off later. ☻

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#### Our Mission:

River Action strives to foster the environmental, economic, and cultural vitality of the Mississippi River and its riverfront in the Quad City region.

# Investing in our QC Wild Places for a Safer Community

— by Virginia Smith



To explore other Wild Places visit

[QCWildPlaces.com](http://QCWildPlaces.com)



Enjoy some quality time in nature and with your family at the newest (67th) Wild Place. Crow Creek Wildlife Management Area is 56 acres of public land, managed by the Iowa DNR, that features a 17-acre lake for fishing and paddling. It was a former borrow pit for the nearby highway interchange. It offers excellent

Crow Creek WMA is already a popular nature area in the immediate QC area. There is no doubt that with some improvements, this will be one of the shining examples of a QC Wild Place! Plans for the site include a collaboration of River Action, Partners of Scott County Watersheds, and the Iowa DNR to improve public access and usability with a new boat ramp, trail improvements, and educational signage. The purpose of these added and improved amenities is to make the site safer and more sustainable for current and future use.

Like our other Wild Places, Crow Creek WMA is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Public parking is available at 21111 Scott Park Road, Davenport, Iowa. Take a



Visit QC Wild Place #67: Crow Creek Wildlife Management Area

walk on the wild side at QC Wild Place #67 and return regularly to spend quality time in nature and with your family as you observe the improvements. ☺

*"The Earth is what we all have in common."*

— Wendell Berry

fishing opportunity year-round, with bluegill, largemouth bass, channel catfish, and crappie. Hiking trails along the south and west sides of the lake offer opportunities to exercise and enjoy watching wildlife. Habitats include forest, prairie, wetland, and stream access to Crow Creek. The creek corridor features woodland habitat. A restored prairie on the north end of the area provides the opportunity to experience a tallgrass prairie and its associated wildlife. A few small wetlands allow visitors to get close to wetland plants and view aquatic wildlife.



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# EDDY Awards

— by Kathy Wine

The mind boggles at the possibilities of what can come next when you learn all that our 2022 Eddy Award winners have achieved. So many programs can trace a lineage to these award winners. The following impactful leaders were given recognition at the Earth Day Fish & Fire Dinner, April 22, for going against the current to get things done as in an eddy.

## River Activity: Christina McDonough



After only five years, **Christina McDonough** found her seat at the table; the Princeton City Council table, the Princeton Riverfront Trails Chair, the Bi-State QC Trails Chair, the Food Rescue Partnership President, the Hands-Only CPR Training Chair, and the Ride & Seek and Ride the River planning table.

This impressive leader has channeled her energy into outdoor recreation and as a county health department employee, cut her teeth in activism by becoming a trail advocate. Summoning the National Park Service and Iowa State University Landscape Design Department outreach

for designing the trail and then landing a large grant in the six figures for engineering the Princeton trail was definitely a David vs. Goliath feat.

She's an impressive leader—soft spoken yet charismatic, logical yet passionate, young yet wise. In the world of algorithms, hashtags, and followers, it is essential to recognize the true importance of human connection: Christina's networks exemplify that.



## Stewardship: Kraig McPeck & USFWS

Our nation just saw the largest relocation of mussels in history, and **Kraig McPeck**, Supervisor of the IL-IA Field Office for US Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island District, made it happen. Not a diver himself, for five years he oversaw the divers and met with the DOT, DNR, Coast Guard, and Federal Highway Administration. The uniqueness of the Higgins Eye Mussel, he explains, leveraged the funding for their removal and survival. A total of 140,694 mussels of 32 species were collected, marked, and relocated from direct impact areas in the new bridge corridor. Now underway, the demolition of the old I-74 bridge requires relocation of more mussels.

He's encountered plenty of skeptics who distrust the federal government, especially when it comes to easements. The "Habitat University" podcast hopes to counter that.

Kraig doesn't see himself as a coach, but as part of the team and does everything he asks his staff of 14 to do. The quality of his leadership, firm, measured, and agreeable helped put him in a place of respect nationally. His office assists with pollinator gar-

dens, bio-blitzes, research, landscape resiliency planning, conservation design, community awareness, and school curriculum. They have written action plans for saving the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, done research on damaged mussel beds, made site visits for the Corps of Engineers for wetland mitigation banking, and through the national private lands program started a 'neighborhood woodland wildlife cooperative in Western Jo Davies County. Climate mitigation now requires looking to corridors for migrations because they are changing. So many contributions made over time with the outstanding leadership of Kraig McPeck, Eddy Award winner for Stewardship. And an additional award to the USFWS for the Mussel Relocation.

## Education: **Chuck Wester**

A mentor and advocate at all levels of education, from elementary classrooms to the general public, **Chuck Wester's** hands-on approach to mentorship means that everyone taps into his or her potential. His enthusiasm for connecting students with science spills into every conversation. This approach can be translated into a teacher paving the way to stewardship in youth. When he saw how his four days in the woods helping Bettendorf Middle Schoolers with outdoor education could make a difference, he decided this was what he wanted to do. Opportunity came from AEA where he worked for 27 years. Then on weekends he taught the general public. In 2000, he became the naturalist at Black Hawk State Historic Site and worked there for 21 years overcoming the biggest challenge of making education interesting and fun for kids. He hoped to get them to the point where they are teaching themselves, not just with an explanation, but literally showing how a Native American uses a plant, for example. Not all students are eager in the beginning, he says, but at the finish, you want to hear "do we have to stop now?" One thing that made his classroom unique was his huge collection of taxidermy specimens which he has donated to Black Hawk State Historic Site for exhibits at Hauberg Museum. Chuck Western has shown how one teacher of environmental education can truly make a difference.



Awards, continued >



## Stewardship: **Melisa Jacobsen**

A study in true grit, **Melisa Jacobsen** has persuaded hundreds of people to take an entire weekend to pick up trash on the Wapsipinicon River. This power of convincing comes from the passion she has for what she is doing. She loves it so much, she is making it exciting to help. That help has come from Clinton County Conservation, Pheasants Forever, Mital Recycle, Clinton County Solid Waste, and AT Disposal. And 35-40 volunteers.

Floods and waves had eroded the banks of the Wapsi covering them with a mantle of trash, but Melisa has seen stream cleanups inspire a lifelong stewardship of our environment. Having done volunteer work for 20 years, she launched the "Lower Wapsi River Cleanup Project" in 2006. It is now a yearly event. They set up camp on Friday, pick up water heaters, refrigerators, tires, metals, buoys, plastic and Styrofoam on Saturday. On Sunday they 'hit the sloughs' near the mouth of the Wapsi for more clean up before heading home. Clinton County Conservation provides all the canoes.

She sees improvement, yes, numbers are going down. Her daughter says she wants to inherit it. Melisa answers "I hope she doesn't have to."

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# EDDY Awards c o n t i n u e d

## Design: Heart of America — Mike and Kim Whalen



People find their inspiration in different places. **Mike and Kim Whalen** found theirs in a noontime walk on Moline's 5th Ave. Mike spied the art deco design of the 5th Ave Building and announced, "This must be saved." Built in 1929, the Whalens saw it as a cultural treasure. That started a five-year renovation that would become the Axis Hotel. They didn't take the slow approach on purpose. All the windows leaked and had to be replaced, many with expansive river views. The elevators were ancient, so they had to make new ones. Discoveries included a cool, old mail chute, carved ceilings, a lot of granite intact, and light fixtures. Those at the main entrance were restored and reused. In the basement they found the original drawings which helped them adhere to standards required of buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.

What is the spirit of the hotel? The spirit of Heart of America. It is rooted in lasting traditions, yet it's like a visit to your most interesting friend. All seventeen rooms are different. They drew upon knowledge of traditional architecture while adding modern touches. We see in the Axis Hotel the power of good design as an agent of positive transformation. Every part is restored, and their work will ensure it for another 100 years!

Most of us pay lip service to design. Mike and Kim Whalen are two who have proved how powerful it really is.





## Lifetime Achievement: **Bob Sinkler**

**Bob Sinkler** has played an organizing role in many things, yet takes his achievements lightly as he takes his work seriously.

A courageous, committed leader and a longtime champion of natural solutions, he amazingly incorporates a philanthropic side into all his initiatives, and then he scales it up!

In his 30 years at the Corps, where he developed and managed \$1.5 B in environmental programs, he earned respect for his integrity and professionalism in working with both science and policy, and he has enhanced that reputation in the private sector. He knows policies, understands issues, respects its stakeholders, and will consistently defend the principles of saving large water systems. Katrina was a reconning. For 36 months he engineered the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System in New Orleans. At The Nature Conservancy, he managed the Sustainable Rivers Program making water levels behind dams mimic the fluctuations of water. At the Pentagon, he served as Chair of the Synthetic Biology Committee for the Department of Defense.

Currently, as CEO of Riverside Global, a non-traditional water solutions company, he works on sustainable improvements to infrastructure. He recently launched the "Revolutionizing Midwestern Ports Initiative" creating new opportunities in inland shipping. For America's Watershed Initiative, he contributed to the first and second reports cards on the river's health. NOW, he just added managing government programs at Allonia, Engineering with Nature. Whew!

Believing innovation doesn't come from government; he's inspired by what foundations are doing capturing carbon and encouraging new tools. "Work should not be managed by states, but by watershed" he says. "Reduce nutrients, improve water quality, and SCALE IT UP! If we managed water better, there would be no need for flood fighting."

A force of nature, certainly. We're pretty confident he will be influencing people for generations to come.

## Special Recognition: **Joe Moreno**

**Joe Moreno** embodies so much of what makes the Quad Cities the Quad Cities. His life experience has imbued him with a passion to make a difference. He grew up overcoming a lot of bad influences on the street, but he had a mentor from the Youth Services Bureau who ran with him, fostering a love of track and cross-country. It is what made him return to school and graduate one year later. He never forgets his roots. And he never lets go of his dream for the QC Marathon and other events on the river. He has stood in the center of culture and commerce for 25 years. Working with so many entities and an equal number of moving parts, he manages the marathon of 5 races, 4 cities, over 3 bridges in two states and through one Island within the Mississippi River. With 6,000 participants from 40 states, the event unites the Quad Cities and makes an economic impact. Funding goes to kids running shoes, and waived fees for the marathon. Believing events unite the Quad Cities as well as improve the health of Quad Citians, he runs The Firecracker Run and Freedom Run on the river all the while mentoring students from UTHS, his alma mater.





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Learn how David Sears (holding a hoe made by John Deere while he waited) persuaded John Deere to relocate operations in Moline with historian Frank Ege.

# An Informed Citizenry for Positive Change

— by Virginia Smith

**E**nvironmental education programs inform and educate the public about conservation challenges, and some of the solutions to the problems. Ideally, this would directly translate to significant positive changes in environmental protection and biodiversity, informed policymaking, fostering public input and engagement, and promoting direct action. In reality, members of the public are not always motivated to address issues such as climate change, deforestation, or other environmental challenges, especially if the impacts are relatively distant from their day-to-day lives. But engaging people first-hand in local and global issues, and showing them the interconnectedness and potential consequences, stops an issue from being such an abstract concept, and motivates them to, at a minimum, care about the issue, and hopefully to act. Through education, people become more aware of the green and blue space around them, of conservation concerns, and possible solutions or mitigation.

River Action strives to play a part in creating an informed citizenry through its education programs, not only on environmental topics but on history and culture as well. A new Riverine Walk this year will traverse a planned trail from the Florencia neighborhood to Sylvan Island, exploring cultural and historical connections. "Florencia to Sylvan Island: Connecting Neighborhoods with Historic Sites" will be led by neighborhood leaders, Mary Chappell and Dr. Norm Moline. Sylvan Island in Moline demonstrates the successful rehabilitation of a former industrial site into a green space full of trails and natural flora and fauna. The island was once home to a limestone quarry and steel mill, with many of the workers living in the nearby predominantly Hispanic Florencia Neighborhood. This path has been long in the making with assistance from a variety of stakeholders. Most of us are familiar with anthropologist Margaret Mead's quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

From May 31 through September 1, we offer unique opportunities to explore the Mississippi River and the Quad City area, while learning about important historical, cultural, ecological, and geographical aspects of the region. These opportunities are a part of the Explore the River Series, which includes Channel Cat Talks and Riverine Walks. These are one-a-kind classes led by distinguished professionals from the Quad Cities. These classes cover many different topics from the music of the Mississippi River, to recycling, to plant biodiversity, supplying unique experiences for people of many different interests.

In 2022, River Action is offering 54 programs. There are several new and several "oldies but goodies" this year. Channel Cat talks are \$20 and meet at the dock at 2951 East River Dr. in Moline. Land-based Riverine Walks are \$10 or free with a River Action Membership ([riveraction.org/member](http://riveraction.org/member)). They meet at various sites around the QC area and each individual talk's location is available in our brochure and online at [riveraction.org/education](http://riveraction.org/education). Sign up for an educational adventure today at [riveraction.org/education](http://riveraction.org/education).

This series is made possible by: Humanities Iowa, MetroLINK, IHCMVU, Quad City Times, and Mancomm. ☺

*River Action  
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play a part  
in creating  
an informed  
citizenry...*

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# Eddy Scholarship Winners

— by Kathy Wine

**C**ongratulations to our three Eddy Scholarship winners! This Scholarship is sponsored by The Joyce & Tony Singh Family Foundation. Each recipient was awarded a scholarship of \$1,000 on April 22 during our Fish and Fire Friendsraiser at the Modern Woodmen Park.



**Noah Raso** is our high school scholarship winner from Bettendorf High School. Noah holds a 4.0 GPA and in his free time is currently on the Environment Committee and served as President of the

Community Conservation Club. He is also a conservationist at Prairie Oaks Reserve and has worked to restore habitat in Scott County to the rare Oak Savanna habitat. Next up for Noah, attending University

of Northern Iowa to study environmental resource management. His passion for conservation can be seen through his dedication to his school, job, community, and future plans.



**Jack Hughes** is our college winner. Jack is a student at Augusta College studying Geology and Environmental studies. He is involved in the Sierra Club, Augie Acres, and is the Sustainability Chair for

his Fraternity. Outside of school he was an intern for Upper Mississippi Center and organized a cleanup event through River Action's Adopt-A-Path. His plan is to explore environmental research through the Upper Mississippi Center as a research assistant this summer. His future career goal is to

research nutrient cycling and its impact on groundwater quality, which will combine his passion for geology and the environment.



**Emma Duncan** is the recipient of our graduate level scholarship. Emma is currently a senior at St. Ambrose University studying business economics, marketing, with a minor in environmental studies.

During her time at St. Ambrose, she created a podcast called Sustainability Warriors, is the president of Green Life Sustainability Club, selected to be on the Sustainability Committee, led and coordinated the first Sustainability Fest, and was on the Earth Day Committee all while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Her leadership skills and passion for conservation lead her to win the Nahant Marsh Oberholtzer Award for future conservation leadership. Her plan after graduation is to attend the University of Iowa for the Sustainable Development master's program. ©

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ARCONIC

Test yourself at Taming of the Slough  
on September 18.

# River Action's Upcoming Events

— By Robert Dunn

## Ride the River

June 19

**R**iver Action is bringing back Ride the River, the beloved Father's Day family bicycle ride, on June 19th. Start your ride around the Quad Cities at the QC Times, load your bikes onto a barge then ferry yourself across the Mississippi on the Celebration Belle, or ride across the new I-74 bridge into Moline. Don't worry though, Ride and Seek is sticking around too, and this year we are shining a light on some of the more underrepresented communities that have been so important to the development of the Quad Cities. We will provide our participants with clues, in



limerick form, as they ride along our Quad City Riverfront Trails and search for answers that can only be found on our trails, all

throughout the month of June. This year's clues will bring riders to places of historical significance regarding the development of the Quad Cities, many of which are places of importance to our diverse communities as well. By bringing light to all the achievements of our communities, we can all appreciate and understand the impact that we have on each other. In keeping with the theme of this year's Ride events "Bridging Cultures: Building Communities" we encourage all participants to engage with and celebrate all of the amazing cultures and communities of the Quad Cities. ☺

## Floatzilla

August 20

**F**loatzilla returns on August 20th, 2022. Now that the I-74 bridge construction has ended, we are excited to announce that we will be able to launch from Empire Park in Hampton! This intermediate to advanced level launch site is an 11-mile paddle where each paddler will be able to portage around or paddle through Lock and Dam 15. Continuing this year is the free kayak fishing tournament in the Credit Island Slough. The tournament will take place on Friday, August 19th from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

New this year, River Action will be handing out mesh bags to all of Floatzilla's participants so that they will be motivated



to pick up plastic while paddling both during Floatzilla and later when paddling as well. The bags are reusable and won't get moldy when wet and are very versatile in

their uses; clean and hang-dry your produce in them, store a wet bathing suit, and of course, take it with you anytime you are on or by the river to pick up plastics. Our goal is to move away from single use plastic, and we encourage you to do the same. To go along with our mesh bag initiative, the Waste Commission of Scott County will have a table set up at Floatzilla where participants can learn which plastics are or are not recyclable and how to properly dispose of each type of plastic. This investment will grant Floatzilla paddlers the ability to become better stewards of our waterways for years to come.

Register now at [getmeregistered.com/Floatzilla](http://getmeregistered.com/Floatzilla). Don't miss out on the early bird prices! ☺

# Riverfront Golf Cart Tour

**R**iver Action's Senior Citizen Golf Cart Tours will take place on Thursday September 1st and Friday September 2nd with the Illinois tours all on Thursday and the Iowa tours on Friday. While experiencing the wonderful trails, learn about new riverfront and trail developments from city officials. The topics and information you will learn from the cities is sure to be new and exciting. If you would like to learn something new about any of the cities and their plans for the pedestrian paths and the



**September 1 – 2**

Participants of the Golf Cart Tour listen to their tour guide outside of the Hampton Heritage Center during the Illinois Tour #2 from East Moline to Hampton.

riverfront, consider signing up for one or two of our six tours (each tour runs three

times a day) at [riveraction.org/golfcarttour](http://riveraction.org/golfcarttour). Each two-person cart is \$30. ©

# Taming of the Slough

**September 18**

**M**ark your calendars, the 17th annual Adventure Triathlon, Taming of the Slough, returns on Sunday, September 18th at the Bass Street YMCA. Get your team ready to race, paddling through the Sylvan Slough and biking around Sylvan Island, finishing with a run up to the oculus of the new I-74 pedestrian path and back to Bass St Landing. This year, participants no longer have to worry about losing their momentum getting caught by pesky trains while crossing the track during



the run, as this year, the entire course will be on just one side of the railroad tracks in Moline. Want more practice on the course? This year's Tune-up for Taming dates are August 25th, September 1st, and September 8th from 5:30 – 7:00 pm at Bass Street YMCA. Packet Pick-up will be on Friday September 15th at Bent River Brewing Co. in Moline on the back patio. Don't miss out on reduced prices through September! Registration is available now at [getmeregistered.com/tamingoftheslough](http://getmeregistered.com/tamingoftheslough). ©



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# Prairie Restoration to Heal the Watershed

— by Virginia Smith

Last November, President Biden signed the \$1 trillion bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This Act includes funding for a lot of steel and concrete, but also funding for activities that improve the health of our rivers and streams. Roads, bridges, electric vehicles, broadband internet, transit and rail, airports, ports and waterways, and the electrical grid are, of course, all important. Also of importance, but receiving much less press, are initiatives stemming from the Infrastructure Bill that focus on conservation. These include those that impact natural areas, such as watersheds and pollinator habitats.

Funding through the Infrastructure Act will help make roadsides more pollinator

friendly. The act authorizes the U.S. Department of Transportation to make \$2 million in grants each year over the next five years for states, federal agencies, and Native American tribes to carry out activities benefitting pollinators and monarch butterflies along the roads and highways that they manage. This includes removing invasive vegetation and replacing with native plants, and adopting pollinator-friendly land management practices.

Now that the law has passed, the focus of all stakeholders, including federal, state, and local agencies, should be to implement these water and climate-relevant actions as rapidly and equitably as possible. In the Quad Cities region, plans are in place by the

**Native prairie plants filter runoff in the Lindsay Park bioswale, Davenport, IA.**

Rock Island County Forest Preserve District (RIFPD), River Action, and partners to restore native prairie on two sections of degraded, previously farmed land. A 15-acre and a 20-acre plot of a recently purchased 179 acres near the I-80 and Route 92 interchange is targeted for restoration to tall-grass prairie. The remaining 147 acres will be managed as forest habitat. While the primary goal is to increase the amount of high-quality habitat for pollinators and to increase biodiversity, the project has the potential to impact much more than that - soil, water, and air quality as well as to provide recreational opportunities for the public.

Known to be in the area are federally endangered or threatened species such as the Indiana bat, northern long eared bat, and rusty patched bumblebee. In addition, there are two key pollinator species of concern due to dramatically decreasing populations, the American bumblebee and the monarch butterfly. The main threats to pollinators are habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation. This prairie restoration project addresses all 3 areas through improving degraded land, restoring desirable habitat, and allowing for continuity of movement between nearby lands that are already under protection. Restoration begins with the removal of invasives and the sowing of high-quality prairie seeds. Deep-rooted (up to 15') prairie plants trap precipitation, decrease soil compaction and increase infiltration and purification which in turn improves soil health, decreases erosion and compaction, and improves water quality in the watershed.

Monocultural cropping, environmental toxins, and other agricultural practices result in compound stressors on the land. In general, degraded agricultural fields are

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overgrown with shallow-rooted invasive species. These soil quality threats reduce tree root penetration into the soil, can cause snowmelt and rainfall to flow over the ground instead of soaking into the soil, decrease nutrient uptake, and create entry points for disease and insect infestations. The most effective management techniques to maintain soil quality will prevent and minimize these soil disturbances. Tree canopies, leaf litter, and prairie offer the best protection against erosion while plant roots stabilize and strengthen the soil against erosion. Soil can act as a sink for air pollutants as it supports the growth of plants, which play a major role in the regulation of air quality. Soil quality impacts air quality at a global scale (greenhouse gases, ozone depletion) and a local scale (particulates, pathogen movement, odors). This site has steep side slopes and the long-rooted prairie plants will decrease erosion and increase water infiltration. Studies by the USDA and Iowa State University found that native grasses and forbs planted on former agricultural fields decrease the nitrate concentration in groundwater samples. The most dramatic decrease was closest to the restoration. Native grasslands take in carbon dioxide, give off oxygen, and trap carbon in their root systems, decreasing the amount in the air. Superfund sites have found that revegetation helps prevent soils contaminated with heavy metals from eroding into the rivers.

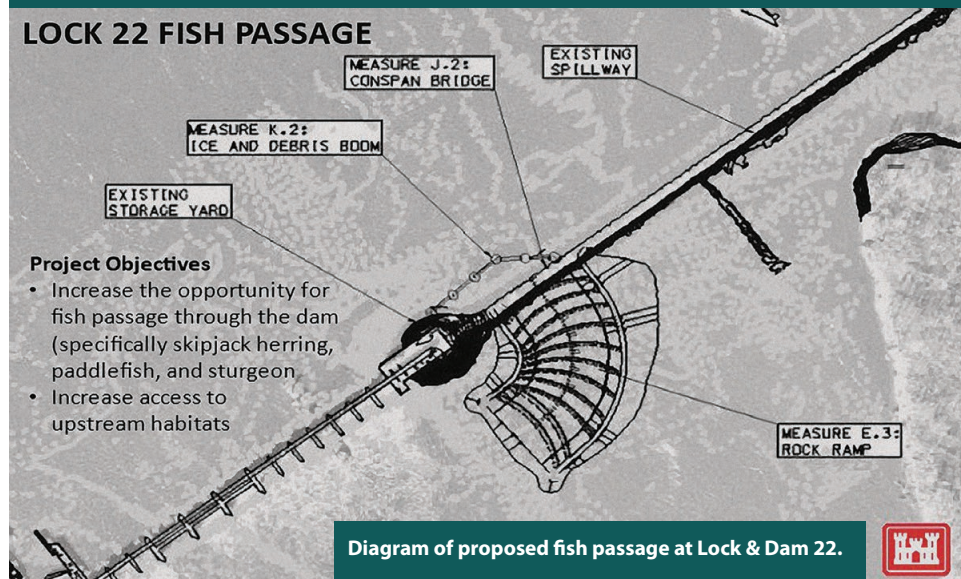
Equitable investment in healthy rivers and clean water is essential to solve the interrelated challenges of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and injustice. Restoration activities at the RIFPD sites will aid in achieving the stewardship goals of preservation of key pollinators, increasing biodiversity, and improving the health of the Rock River and Mississippi River watershed. Restoration activities have the added benefit of improving and expanding recreational

opportunities and access, and can partially mitigate the loss of habitat elsewhere by providing a more continuous wildlife corridor. The preservation of this land and the species that come with it will positively impact our community for generations to come, plus create a new recreational space for people of all ages to enjoy.

The conservation sections of the Infrastructure Bill could move the U.S. toward more equitable investment in healthy rivers and lands, essential to solve the interrelated challenges of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and injustice. Today, a restored prairie. Tomorrow, a healthier watershed and populace. ☺

## Corn Belt Ports Operations

### LOCK 22 FISH PASSAGE



— by Chris Smith, Corn Belt Ports Director of Operations

In 2020 and 2021, the Corn Belt Ports were federally recognized, and together, based on freight tonnage, are the equivalent of the largest inland port in the nation, and connect the Heart of the Corn Belt with global markets. These three port regions include 40 riverfront counties, 12 regional planning agencies, 11 city and

county ports, and over 635 navigable river miles in parts of three Upper Mississippi River Basin States (IL, MO and IA).

In 1986, Congress designated the Upper Mississippi River System (which consists of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers) as both a nationally significant ecosystem and

*Continued on next page >*

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a nationally significant navigation system. It is the only inland river system in the United States to have such a designation. A complex geography like that in the center of the Upper Mississippi River Basin where multiple users of water (navigation, aquatic ecosystems, water supply, flood risk reduction, hydropower, agriculture, recreation, etc.) are all competing for limited water resources, in an area facing some well-documented climatic fluctuations, requires the right person to lead, coordinate and integrate sustainability and conservation efforts.

Because of the uniqueness of the requirements, the Corn Belt Ports needed an experienced environmental scientist that had solid water quality credentials and a strong agriculture commodity exchange background because of the national significance of the region to the global supply chain. The Corn Belt Ports Executive Coordinating Team recruited local scientist Dr. Anshu Singh to assist in securing \$1.24

billion in investment throughout the region's waterways in the recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. "Twenty-five percent of the total investment will go directly toward innovative, technology-based ecosystem restoration and protection projects on the Illinois Waterway and the Upper Mississippi River," said Singh.

That investment included the start of the long-awaited Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) which included a nearly \$100M fish passage at Lock and Dam 22 (see drawing) as the first installment of \$1.717 billion for a 15-year effort to restore the river's ecological integrity and ability to support fish and wildlife. NESP will improve conditions for fish and wildlife through the construction of a fish passage, modified dam operations for the environment, 65 backwater and island enhancements, 29 side channel reconnections, and 92 modifications to channel structures. System ecological monitoring will document river health and allow river experts to assess the value of the restoration actions. 

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