

Commonfields

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT
-WINTER 2011-

“RESPECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT, GROWING OUR FUTURE”

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The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan

“OUR ROAD MAP FOR CONSERVATION”

Several years ago, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources was charged by Congress with developing a comprehensive document that would guide future conservation efforts throughout the State of Illinois. The resulting document, the Illinois Wildlife



Illinois Prairie Chicken (Rebecca Jackrel)

Action Plan, provides critical support to local, regional and statewide groups working towards land conservation and ecosystem restoration.

Initially, the document is broken into seven specific campaigns: streams, invasive species, land & water stewardship, farmland & prairie, forests, wetlands and green cities. Each campaign identifies specific goals and action steps such as clean water, soil conservation, human health and safety; economic diversity and sustainability.

Next, the document is further broken down into Conservation Opportunity Areas. Formerly known as “resource rich areas”, these 31 distinct regions identify specific goals and projects that, once completed, would provide long-term ecosystem sustainability. Southwestern Illinois contains three Conservation Opportunity Areas: “Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands”, “Hill Prairie Corridor – Southern Section” and “Sinkhole Plain”. The RC&D is working with local partners in each of these areas to develop and implement specific projects.

As more and more state, federal and private funding is being committed to projects that have been identified within the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, it is critical that Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development and our many project partners work diligently towards its implementation. Our diversity of programs and work products allow us the opportunity to address all seven campaigns, an achievement that is replicated by few other organizations within the state.

What's Inside...

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Illinois Natural Area Inventory Update

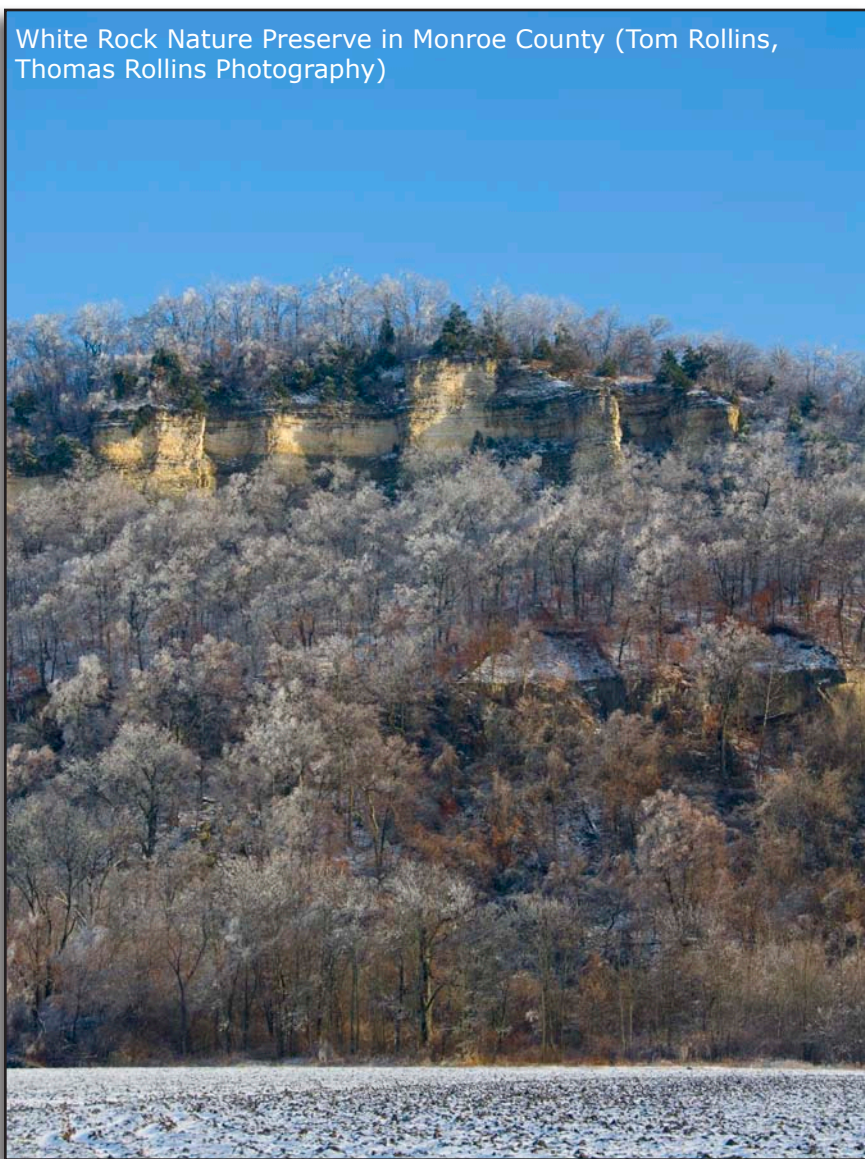
"Two hundred years ago Illinois was one immense natural area, dotted with islands of human development. Today, Illinois is an almost completely developed landscape with islands of natural habitat occurring across the landscape. It's as if a vast quilt of development has settled upon Illinois, but one with threadbare patches that allow remnants of the original landscape to show through. These natural areas are our biological heritage and show us what the landscape of Illinois once was. They act as reservoirs for much of the state's biodiversity and serve as templates for current and future restoration efforts

-Michael Jeffords, 2003

ILLINOIS NATURAL AREA INVENTORY

The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI), which is maintained by the Illinois Natural History Survey, provides a set of information about high quality natural areas, habitats of endangered species, and other significant natural features. Information from the INAI is used to guide and support land acquisition and protection programs by all levels of government as well as by private landowners and conservation organizations.

White Rock Nature Preserve in Monroe County (Tom Rollins, Thomas Rollins Photography)



The original Illinois Natural Areas Inventory was carried out in 1975–78. Although the INAI has been updated to a certain extent, it no longer fully meets the needs of conservation-minded landowners, land managers, and regulatory agencies.

The new Illinois Natural Areas Inventory process will allow the entire state to be thoroughly and systematically screened in order to find, describe, evaluate, classify, and map natural areas. New technologies and criteria will potentially identify perhaps twice as many natural areas of statewide significance as are currently known.

The information contained within the INAI is critical to the efforts of Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development, and our many project partners, as we work to provide land conservation and habitat restoration services to the region. To find out more about the INAI, please visit: <http://www.inhs.illinois.edu/research/inai/index.html>.

2nd Annual Silent Auction Benefit for Open Space Conservation

On Saturday November 13th, we welcomed over 100 friends, donors and sponsors to The Falls Reception & Conference Center in Columbia, Illinois for our 2nd Annual Silent Auction to Benefit Open Space Conservation. The evening was enjoyed by all and a substantial sum was raised for the preservation of open spaces in southwestern Illinois.

The highlight of the evening was our guest speaker, Dr. Peter Raven, president emeritus of the Missouri Botanical Garden. His inspiring and heartfelt speech left us motivated and optimistic. As thanks for his tireless work in the conservation arena, Dr. Raven was presented with a beautiful framed photograph by photographer Tom Rollins (pictured).



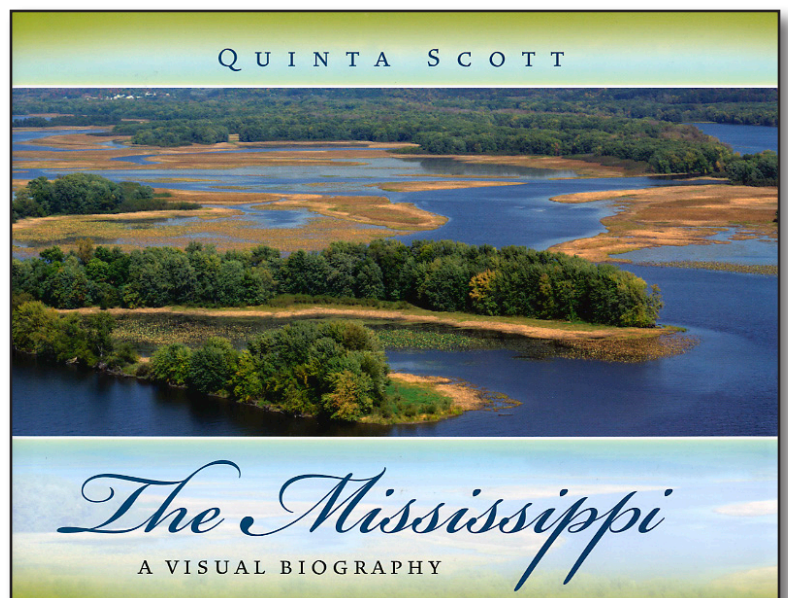
Guest speaker Dr. Peter Raven (right) and photographer Tom Rollins (William Freeman)

We'd also like to thank all of the donors and sponsors of the event (see page 4 for a full list) who made the evening possible. We'd especially like to thank Waste Management (a Sustainable Steward Sponsor), Regions Morgan Keegan Trust (a Patron Partner Sponsor) and Regions Bank and Environmental Operations (both Conserving Contributor Sponsors). We look forward to seeing you all at next year's event!

"The Mississippi - A Visual Biography" by Quinta Scott

We are so excited to feature a new publication by a friend of the organization, Quinta Scott. Her new photo biography entitled "The Mississippi" is a stunning visual experience of our region's most iconic geographic feature.

As a photographer, Ms. Scott has documented the progression of the Mississippi River from its source at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico, with hundreds of stopping points along the way. Scott explains how we have changed each site depicted, how we try to manage it, and the wildlife that occupies it. This majestic book shows that to understand the river and its floodplain today, we must understand the natural processes we have disrupted. Copies of Scott's book may be ordered through Amazon.com.



Conservation of Open Space - The Land Conservancy



STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Ralph Buettner, Mark Badasch, Carl Daubach, Penelope Daubach, Dave Eustis, Mike Fruth, Philip J. Harris, Lester Harnetiaux, Mitze Nitzsche, Ray Nitzsche, Ronda LaTina, George Obernagel, C. David Tiedemann, Chad Stafko, Scott Harding

White Rock Nature Preserve

The richly forested Mississippi River bluff land corridor in Monroe County constitutes one of the most unique, intact and healthy ecosystems in Illinois. Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources have designated the corridor an important resource-rich natural area, worthy of stewardship and preservation. In concert, Monroe County Comprehensive Planners recognize the corridor's natural heritage value and call for its concerted conservation. To these ends, we are pleased to announce a milestone in bluff lands preservation.

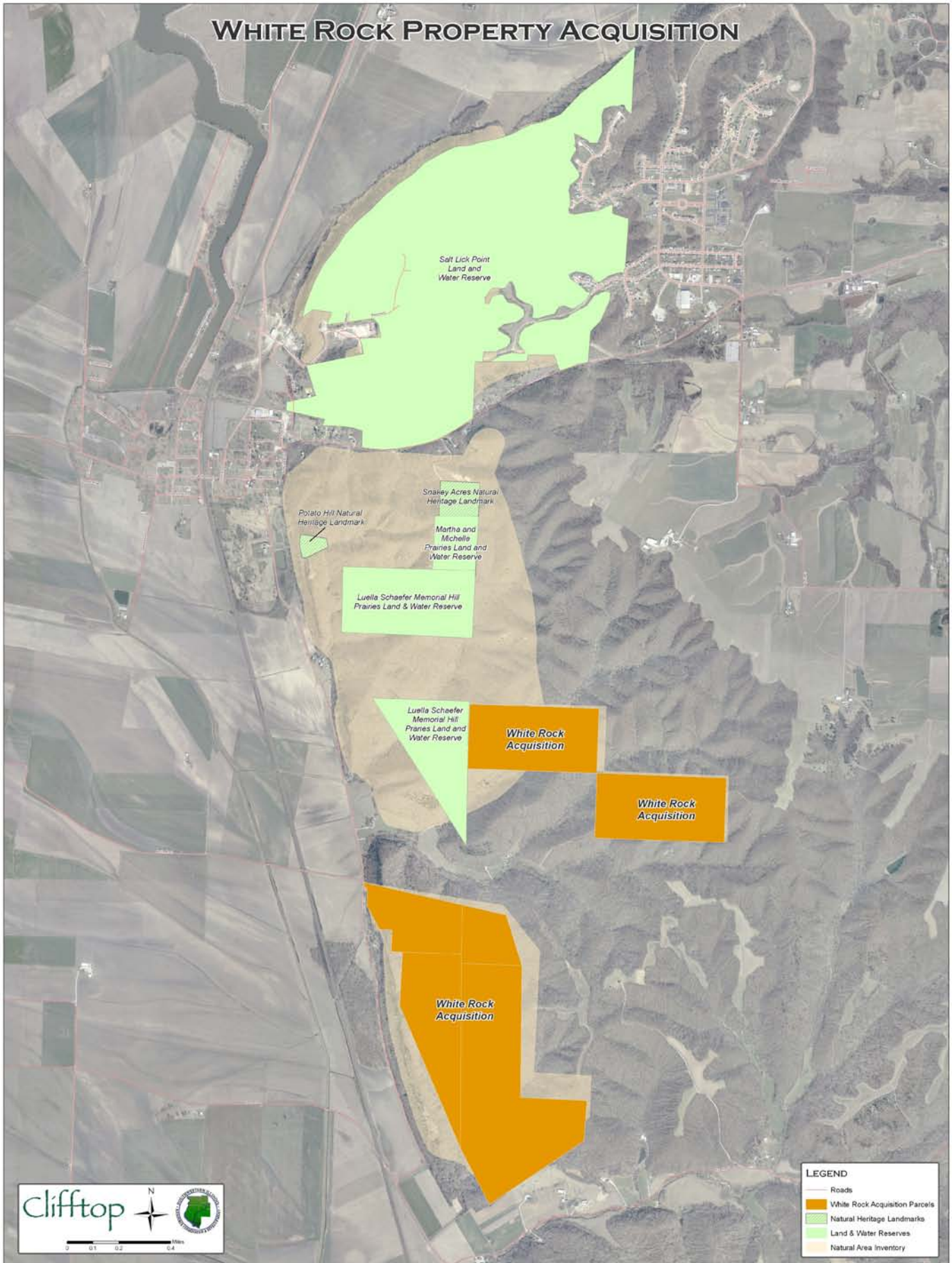
Clifftop and the Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation and Development are purchasing the 475-acre White Rock tract. The sale of the property allows the land to be preserved as a natural area in perpetuity. The White Rock tract, just south of Valmeyer along Bluff Road (see map at right), contains a mosaic of hill prairies and limestone glades, a large swathe of upland forest, and is home to several threatened or endangered species. The tract is a designated Illinois Natural Area Inventory site.

Several "first-ever-in Illinois" innovations in land conservation led to the acquisition of this site. Clifftop and the RC&D, both local conservation nonprofits, framed a joint venture agreement to purchase, jointly own, hold and steward the tract. They also received funding through the State Wildlife Grant, a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service program administered through IDNR. Additionally, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and Grand Victoria Foundation's Vital Lands Illinois program awarded generous grants allowing completion of the acquisition.

White Rock tract will become a registered Nature Preserve with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. In about a year, White Rock Nature Preserve will be opened to the public for foot-traffic only. The White Rock acquisition brings a significant economic success story to the local area as well. In addition to the \$1.3 million real estate transfer, several hundred thousands of dollars will be spent for infrastructure development, habitat restoration and forest stand improvements over the next several years. White Rock will do its part for the budding ecotourism industry in the county, adding its public trails to those of Valmeyer's Salt Lick Point Reserve and IDNR's Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, which see about 3,000 hiking visitors each year.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS, CONTRIBUTORS & VOLUNTEERS:

AB Gold, Arlington Greens - Collinsville Area Recreation District, Mark & Ann Badasch, Linda Beacham, Bee Hollow Market, Belleville Shoe Company, The Bike Surgeon, Blue Sky Vineyard, David & Marcia Braswell, Cotton Babies, Carl & Pen Daubach, Environmental Operations, Dave & Tamara Eustis, Christine Favilla, Dennis Fitzwilliam, William Freeman, The Gathering Place, Steve Gonzalez, Scott & Monica Harding, Lester Harnetiaux, Jennifer Howland, Gary Karasek, Ted Krauskopf, Ronda LaTina, Jim Law, McArthur's Bakery, John McLean, Charlie Meier, Memory Lane Floral & Gifts, Missouri Botanical Garden, Mist Day Spa, Jeff Moody - Williams Creek Consulting, Ray & Mitze Nitzsche, Dr. Peter Raven, Regions Morgan Keegan Trust, Regions Bank, Brad & Megan Riechmann, Haley & Dave Riechmann, Perry & JoAnn Riechmann, Tom & Marian Rollins - Thomas Rollins Photography, Agnes Ross, Schaeffer Farms Nursery, Quinta Scott, Shadycreek Nursery, Ned Siegel, U.S. Representative John Shimkus, Silver Creek Mill/Trinity Services, Betty Sommer, Dave & Lisa Tiedemann, Tastefully Simple Consultant Chris Toenjes, Topcats Mobile Music & Entertainment, Gary Twesten, Waste Management, Pat Watkins, Ann Webster, Kathi & Ed Weilbacher



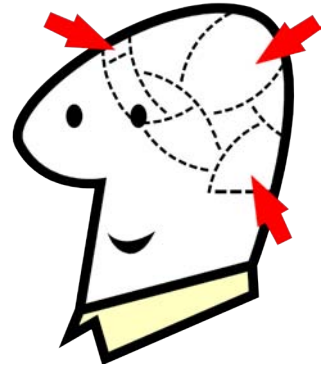
2nd Annual Trivia Night for Open Space Conservation

SATURDAY JANUARY 29TH, 2011

Please join us at the Caseyville Community Center at 909 South Main Street, Caseyville, Illinois 62232 for the RC&D's 2nd Annual Trivia Night! Tables are \$100/table of 8 or \$15/person. Doors open at 6:00 pm and questions begin at 7:00 pm (10 rounds of questions). Prizes will be given to the winning table and to the best decorated table. This year's table decoration theme is "Water". There will be raffle prizes, door prizes, 50/50, and mulligans!

Players are welcome to bring their own refreshments and table snacks **But leave room for dessert!** A dessert auction (silent) will feature goodies from local bakeries and the kitchens of our very own board and staff members!

Contact Megan Riechmann at (618) 566-4451 x25 or megan.riechmann@swircd.org to reserve your table! All proceeds benefit Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development in our efforts to conserve open space!



Eagle Trek: Saturday, February 5th

4 EAGLES AND A NEST NOW! MORE ON THE WAY!

The Eagle Trek on Feb. 5th will be a great opportunity to see eagles up close and to view an eagle's nest! The planning committee recently met at the Lock & Dam and were impressed by the number of eagles and how close they are to the viewing areas. Spotting scopes will be set up at the north boat ramp, pavilion, and at the confluence of the Kaskaskia and Mississippi Rivers. There will be a warming tent at the confluence along with agency interpreters. The World Bird Sanctuary will be presenting a program on eagles and tours of the Lock & Dam will also be given. The Eagle Trek is being supported by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the US FWS.

The trek is 9am - noon on February 5. Refreshments will be available for a small donation. Please contact Ed Weilbacher at ed.weilbacher@il.usda.gov or (618) 566-4451 ext. 11 if you plan on attending. Hope to see you there!



Kaskaskia Bottoms Wildlife Habitat Workshop

SATURDAY JANUARY 22ND, 2011 - 1:00 PM TO 4:30 PM (FREE!)

Please join the RC&D in partnership with the Original Kaskaskia Area Wilderness organization at the Kaskaskia Bottoms Wildlife Habitat Workshop. Held at the Okawville Community Club (511 S. Hanover Street, Okawville, IL), the afternoon will have information for landowners and wildlife lovers on creating high quality wildlife habitat on your property AND benefiting your bottom line!

State and federal agency staff will be on hand to answer your questions about prairie and wetland habitat, forest restoration and management, USDA conservation programs and Illinois nature preserve programs. Reservations are required, but this event is free! Visit www.swircd.org to register, or call Dave Eustis at (618) 566-4451 x28.

Volunteer Opportunities

LAND STEWARD

Develop and implement invasive removal events on protected sites within southwestern Illinois. www.swircd.org/serve

MONITORING COORDINATOR

Annual inspection and report of conservation easements within southwestern Illinois www.swircd.org/serve

Upcoming Meetings & Events

DATE	TIME	EVENT	CONTACT
Jan 15-16	all day	Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge	www.trailnet.org
Jan 18	7:30 PM	SWI RC&D Board Meeting	www.swircd.org
Jan 22	1 - 4:30 PM	Kaskaskia Bottoms Wildlife Habitat Workshop	www.swircd.org
Jan 26	noon - 1:00 PM	LKSI Quarterly Meeting	ed.weilbacher@il.usda.gov
Jan 29	6:00 PM	2nd Annual Trivia Night for Open Space Conservation	www.swircd.org
Feb 4	1:00 PM	Mounds Heritage Trail Meeting	ed.weilbacher@il.usda.gov
Feb 5	9:00 AM - noon	Eagle Trek at the Kaskaskia Lock and Dam	www.swircd.org
March 1		Bikeways Grant Applications are Due to IDNR	www.idnr.gov
March 7	9 AM - 2:30 PM	Kaskaskia Watershed Summit	www.swircd.org
March 15	6:00 PM	SWI RC&D Annual Dinner - Our Lady of the Snows	www.swircd.org
March 26	9:00 AM	Confluence Trash Bash	www.trailnet.org

visit www.swircd.org for more information!

Support Our Efforts!

The Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development delivers environmental and conservation programs specific to the needs of this region - your investment stays where you live, work & play!

**YES! I want to become a friend of the
Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development**

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Amount to Donate:
 \$50
 \$100
 \$250
 \$500
 \$1,000
 other \$ _____

To pay by credit card, call with your credit card number, or fill in the information below:

Mastercard Visa Discover

Card# _____ Expiration Date _____

Card verification# (on back of your card, last 3 or 4 digit #) _____

Signature _____

Mail to:
 Southwestern Illinois
 Resource Conservation & Development
 406 East Main Street
 Mascoutah, IL 62258

Contact me regarding volunteer opportunities

The Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Tax Incentive Renewed Through 2011!

Congress has just renewed the enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations! President Obama signed H.R. 4853, making the incentive effective through December 31, 2011 and retroactive to January 1, 2010.

The law:

- Raises the maximum deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) in any year to 50%
- Allows qualified farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their AGI
- Increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 years to 16 years

These changes enable family farmers, ranchers, and other moderate-income landowners to get a significant tax benefit for donating a conservation easement on their land.

Under prior law, an agricultural landowner earning \$50,000 a year who donated a conservation easement worth \$1 million could take a total of no more than \$90,000 in tax deductions! Under the new law, that landowner can take as much as \$800,000 in tax deductions – still less than the full value of their donation, but a significant increase. To learn how this incentive could benefit you, please contact Preston Lacy at (618) 566-4451 x21.



President Obama signs H.R. 4853

Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development is an equal opportunity employer and provider.



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FEBRUARY 5TH
* EAGLE TREK
JANUARY 29TH
* TRIVIA NIGHT

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