



### **“Strackeljahn Properties Acquisition”**

On August 31st, Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development acquired the 80 acre Strackeljahn Properties in Collinsville. The site contains a mixture of wetlands and cropland, which will be preserved in perpetuity for conservation purposes. Funding for this project was provided in part by ConocoPhillips, through an agreement with the Sierra Club Illinois and the American Bottom Conservancy. The balance of the funding was provided by the Grand Victoria Foundation's Vital Lands Illinois program.

The Strackeljahn Properties are the northern terminus of the Levee Lake Illinois Natural Area Inventory site. Levee Lake is so designated as it has been described as one of the best examples of shrub swamp/pond natural communities left within the American Bottoms. While much of this community type has been drained and filled over the past century, Levee Lake is representative of a community type that was once quite common within the northern extent of the American Bottom ecosystem.

Approximately 400 acres to the south of the Strackeljahn Properties is already protected in perpetuity through a variety of ownerships, including the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Madison County, Metro East Sanitary District and the Illinois Department of Transportation. Collectively these properties represent an extensive opportunity, identified by the US Army Corps of Engineers, for ecosystem restoration and interior flood damage reduction.

Acquisition of the Strackeljahn Properties also builds upon prior conservation efforts within the immediate area. Arlington Wetlands, an 83 acre ecological restoration and wetland interpretive effort, owned by the Collinsville Area Recreation District and Madison County, sits just to the north of the Strackeljahn Properties. The 3,000 acre Horseshoe Lake State Park sits just to the west of these properties.

Over the next few months Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development will be developing a restoration plan for the site. Once restoration activities are complete the area will be opened for hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities.