



Protecting Land For Future Generations



Newsletter

Winter 2005

Southwestern Illinois RC&D Council

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Stewardship Committee

Sally Brown Ralph Buettner
Mark Badasch Dave Eustis
Mike Fruth Philip J. Harris
Glen Schuetz Barb Taylor
David Tiedemann
Steve Black, Coordinator
Linda Wegrzyn, Volunteer

How Will Your Property Be Used in the Future?

Driving down the roads of southern Illinois, we see more and more developments taking the place of farmland. How can landowners keep the rural character of this area that you know and love? The Land Conservancy, a division of Southwestern Illinois RC&D, offers a number of tools for landowners to keep property as farmland or forests permanently. One of these tools is a conservation easement.

A conservation easement is a set of formal restrictions that a landowner voluntarily places on his or her property in order to preserve it for the future. A conservation easement eliminates the risk of development pressure, but protects private property rights. Easements give landowners the opportunity to safeguard their property for future generations, regardless of future ownership. There are also many financial benefits of entering into a conservation easement:



Reduced income taxes. Landowners who donate a conservation easement may deduct the value of the easement as a charitable deduction on their income tax returns to the extent permitted by the IRS.

Reduced estate taxes. Since granting of the conservation easement reduces the value of the land because of restricted use, the fair market value of the land will be less. Estate taxes that your family must pay may, therefore, be reduced.

Reduced property taxes. Illinois law provides that any property subject to a perpetual conservation easement, as defined under the Illinois statutes, shall be eligible to have its assessed value reduced, for purposes of general real estate taxes. Farmland, agricultural fields and forests assessed as farmland which is already taxed based on agricultural productivity and not its market value, may not result in any property tax savings if placed in a conservation easement.

For more information about voluntary solutions for protecting farmlands and other natural resources in our area, contact Steve Black or Dave Eustis at (618) 566-4451 or steveblack@swircd.org. Additional information is also available on our website at www.swircd.org.

Conservation Easements

can be used to preserve all or a portion of your property. For example, the back acreage of your farm could be put into an easement to remain undeveloped, while your house and surrounding acreage is unaffected.



LOSS OF FARMLAND & OPEN SPACE

In Illinois

- We lose nearly 50,000 acres every year to urban sprawl and development
- This is equivalent to a loss of 140 acres per day

The Importance of Land Conservation

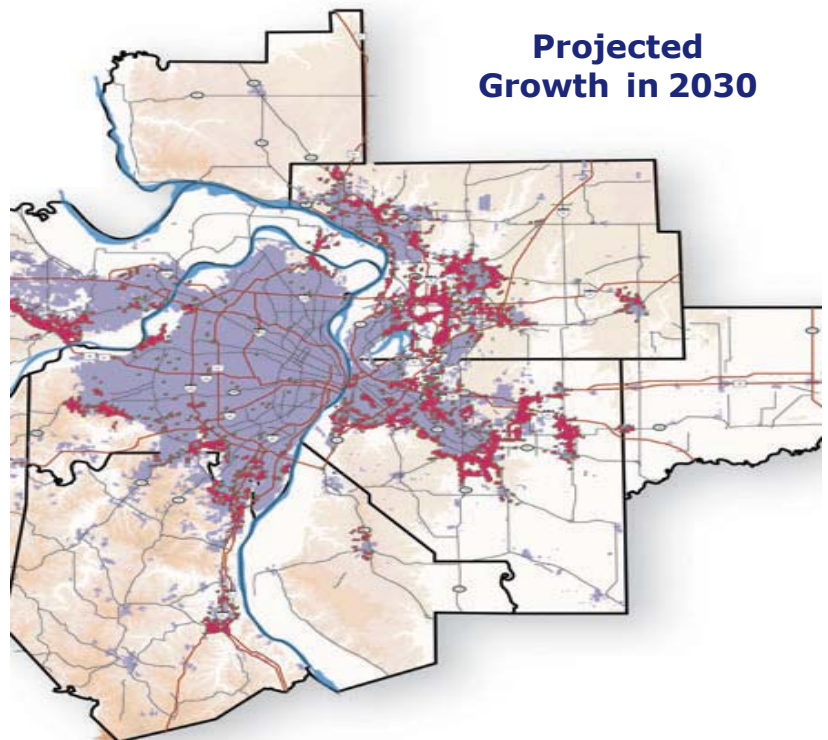
In the Metro-East area, thousands of acres of land are converted to urban uses each year, and the rate continues to increase. This growth has occurred while existing developments and infrastructure are often underutilized. Landowners who decide to conserve the natural beauty of their property also make a tremendous contribution to the community. Keeping land as farms, forests or open space:

- ◆ Provides wildlife habitat
- ◆ Keeps open space and rural character in our communities
- ◆ Reduces flooding & helps replenish groundwater supplies
- ◆ Produces safe and affordable food

New Regional Resource Planning Tool

The Southwestern Illinois Resource Plan is a cooperative initiative designed to engage local government officials in a regional resource protection planning process. This project, managed by the Southwestern Illinois RC&D, offers new tools for planners to coordinate local planning decisions with a regional perspective on cultural, natural, and agricultural resources. Comprehensive plans from communities in Madison, St. Clair, Monroe, and Randolph counties will be brought together in a Geographic Information System (GIS). Using GIS, the plans may easily be compared to each other and to resource data on a regional scale.

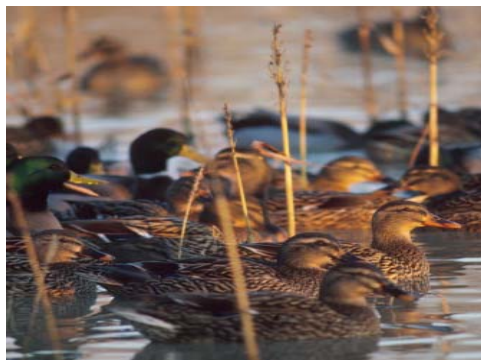
The Land-use Evolution and Impact Assessment Model (LEAM) developed by the University of Illinois will also be used to project possible outcomes of the plans over the next fifty years. The Southwestern Illinois Resource Plan brings together plans, resource data, and projected results of planning decisions to make a powerful new tool for planning and resource protection in the region.



Conservation Easement Signed in Madison County

In July the Madison County Board, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the RC& D signed a conservation easement to protect 39 acres in Madison County. The Land Conservancy will hold the conservation easement of this parcel of land to preserve, restore, and maintain natural features, wetland resources, and ecological values of the property to provide wildlife habitat, maintain water quality, and control water runoff.

"The Land Conservancy has been a very cooperative partner in assisting Madison County with this long-term conservation effort. The Land Conservancy's involvement will ensure that the land is conserved as open space for generations to come," stated Mike Fruth, Stormwater Coordinator for the County.



Significant Habitat Areas to be Identified

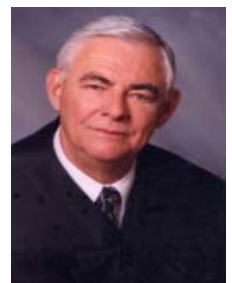
The Southwestern Illinois RC&D has recently received a grant through The McKnight Foundation to identify key natural resource areas within the seven-county Metro East region that are at risk of habitat loss. To identify threatened areas staff will meet with up to 50 individual natural resource managers within the region to gain their perspective on threatened areas, as well as areas that could

potentially be restored to a specific type of habitat. "Threatened" could be from a variety of impacts, however within this region it is generally defined as growth or urban sprawl.

The Southwestern Illinois GIS Resource Center, a division of Southwestern Illinois RC&D, will digitally map the areas defined by the stakeholders. Once the mapping process is completed, natural resource managers will come together to review and modify the information collected. The McKnight Foundation annually funds a number of environmental and greenway projects within the Mississippi River corridor. In 2002, the foundation funded the Southwestern Illinois RC&D to study the loss of forest habitat within the Kaskaskia River Watershed from Carlyle Lake south to Chester, Illinois.

RC & D Stewardship Committee Chair Dies

Retired Judge John L. DeLaurenti, 71, of Pocahontas, and Chairperson of the RC&D Stewardship Committee, passed away on August 28, 2004.



Judge DeLaurenti has been active with the RC&D program for the last several years and was instrumental in the establishment of The Land Conservancy division that was created in 2003. He had a deep interest in conservation programs and was dedicated to conserving our farms, forests, and open space in this region. He continued to emphasize the need to use smart growth policies and provide for land conservation along with meeting the needs for urban expansion. He was the first individual contributor to The Land Conservancy program. The RC&D and all those interested in conservation of our natural resources will miss his enthusiasm, dedication, and leadership.



**MISSION OF THE
LAND CONSERVANCY**

To work regionally to protect agricultural, forest, and other natural lands in order to provide for open space, landscape diversity, sustainable agriculture, wildlife habitat, and conservation benefits for present and future generations.

The Land Conservancy is a member of the national Land Trust Alliance www.lta.org



Protecting Land For Future Generations

Would you like your grandchildren to get to enjoy the rural character of your land the way it is today? Whether your property is a forested area or a working farm, you can make sure that the beauty and function of your property will always be around. The Land Conservancy offers property owners assistance in preserving the natural resources on your property for future generations.

The Land Conservancy, a division of Southwestern Illinois RC&D, is a not-for-profit 501c3 land trust organization. TLC holds conservation easements, purchases land, accepts land donations, promotes partnerships, and fosters innovative land conservation techniques. We're helping members of the community learn about the tax advantages of preserving property using conservation easements and other tools.



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The Land Conservancy

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Protecting land for future generations in Bond, Clinton, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair and Washington counties.

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