



*Protecting Land For Future Generations*



# Newsletter

Volume 4  
Fall 2005

## *Impacts of Unplanned Urban Growth*

### **Southwestern Illinois RC&D Council**

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### **Stewardship Committee**

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Mike Fruth    Philip J. Harris  
Glen Schuetz    Barb Taylor  
David Tiedemann  
Steve Black, Coordinator  
Linda Wegrzyn, Marketing Mngr.

According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, between 1954 and 1997, urbanized land area almost quadrupled from 18 million acres to about 64 million acres in the contiguous 48 states. In addition, the Natural Resources Inventory of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service states that between 1982 and 1997, developed land grew by over 25 million acres—roughly the size of Ohio. The Metro-East area is currently experiencing this same type of urban development trend. *At current rates another 125,000 acres of farm, forest, and open land in this region will be converted to urban uses by the year 2030.*

The consequences of this land consumption include habitat loss and fragmentation for wildlife and native plants, wetland destruction, degradation of water quality, loss of working farms, and destruction of forests and scenic areas. As more land is urbanized, more surface area becomes impervious – increasing the volume and rate of water runoff that can cause flooding. Impervious surfaces also affect ground water recharge areas.



Terry Allen

**In July the State of Connecticut created a preservation fund to conserve the state's farmland and open space. Connecticut lost 12% of farmland between 1997 & 2002. A \$30 fee will be placed on documents that record real estate transactions.**

There are many tools to help local governments provide for needed urban expansion and also preserve the farms, forests, and natural areas that add to the quality of life in our communities. Conservation easements are one of those tools that can ensure long-term protection and keep lands in private ownership. They can also sustain the continued operation of working farms and forest areas while offering protection against urban development. Visit some of the web sites mentioned in this newsletter to get further information on smart growth initiatives and programs to help communities protect natural lands.

## *Thanks to TLC Supporters*

A special thanks to new members Mary Biernot, Nancy Larson, Stephen Mudge, and Ray and Mitze Nitzsche.

## Madison County Easement Provides Many Benefits

Flooding will be reduced and wildlife habitat enhanced from the 40 acres near Edwardsville purchased by Madison County in 2004. This land was acquired with Illinois DNR C2000 and county funds to help provide for storm water management and to serve as wildlife habitat. The area contains land in the footprint of the East St. Louis Interior Ecological Restoration project of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) and is also habitat for the Illinois chorus frog, an Illinois listed threatened species.

The Illinois chorus frog is a small frog with a toadlike body and a dark masklike stripe from snout to shoulder. Its primary habitat is sand prairies and remnants such as sandy agricultural fields; and it eats small insects. This frog is unusual because it digs forward with its stout front legs rather than backwards. It burrows in the sand and emerges after heavy spring rains to breed in nearby flooded fields, ditches, and other vernal ponds. Threats include drainage and cultivation of breeding ponds and adult habitat.



Mike Fruth, Stormwater Coordinator for Madison County points out the area that will be converted to wildlife habitat.

The Land Conservancy holds the perpetual conservation easement on the property with restricts future urban development and provides for the maintenance of flood control and wildlife habitat purposes.

The current cropland on the area will be converted to native trees, shrubs, and prairie grasses by 2010 to provide wildlife habitat for a number of species. An overall plan for the property has been developed in conjunction with the COE's restoration plan for the region. The progress on development of the wildlife areas will depend on federal funding from the COE, although 2006 will be the last year of agricultural crops on the site. "This was an ideal match

to acquire this property for flood control and wildlife habitat since it is intersected by a bike trail that provides access to the site", stated Mike Fruth, Madison County Storm Water Coordinator. "Eventually, we will construct walking trails into parts of the area to allow people to view the natural areas, wetlands, and woodlands."

Phase II of the project will add an additional 20 acres for flood control and wildlife habitat. This acquisition will also be dependent on availability of funding from state or federal sources. "It is good that the county is looking forward in addressing flood control and maintenance of wildlife habitat and open space", said Fruth. "Protecting these areas provides multiple benefits to the citizens of the county and helps maintain open areas and aesthetic landscapes" he added.



## Calendar of Events

### **Fall Outing at Willoughby Heritage Farm**

Saturday, October 22, 11:00 am

Willoughby Heritage Farm & Conservation Reserve, Collinsville  
Learn about the history of Willoughby Farm and its flora and fauna. Join us for an easy hike to enjoy the fall colors. Bring a sack lunch to share by the old farm house. Please RSVP at (618) 566-4451 ext. 20 or [steveblack@swircd.org](mailto:steveblack@swircd.org).



### **CLIFFTOP Alliance outing to the Brinkey-Gonterman Memorial Hill Prairie Nature Preserve**

Saturday, November 5, 9:00 am

The CLIFFTOP Alliance — Conserving Lands in Farm, Forest, Talus or Prairie in the Monroe and Randolph Counties' Bluff Lands — is in its formative stages. The alliance will focus on protecting, preserving and conserving bluff lands by partnering landholders with conservation agencies. Members of the alliance's steering committee are hosting this outing to view and tour a loess hill prairie, an essential part of the bluff landscape.

Meet at the Brinkey-Gonterman Nature Preserve at 9 a.m. Directions from Waterloo: come south on Highway 3 to the intersection of Kaskaskia Road. Turn onto Kaskaskia Road and follow it approximately 12 miles to the intersection of Bluff Road. Turn left onto Bluff Road and follow it to the intersection of G Road. Turn onto G Road and park in the field just a few feet to the north from the intersection. After the field trip, lunch will be served at the home of Carl and Pen DauBach, which is a few miles from the Preserve. RSVP is required - please contact Steve Black at (618) 566-4451 ext. 20 or [steveblack@swircd.org](mailto:steveblack@swircd.org).

## Community Forestry Corner

Autumn is upon us once again! Our trees took quite a beating during this hot, dry summer. As a result, I'm sure that a few of your trees have started losing their leaves early or have experienced leaf browning along the edges, which is characteristic of leaf scorch. The good news is that there are a few simple steps you can take to put your trees back on track.

Your younger trees can really benefit from a nice 2-4 inch layer of organic mulch. I recommend shredded hardwood chips, conifer bark and needles, peat moss, hay, or straw, over a layer of mushroom and leaf compost. This will help retain soil moisture and recycle essential nutrients into your soil. Just be sure to give your tree a good watering after applying mulch, and be careful not to stack mulch against the trunk of the tree. Many of your mature trees might be dying back from the top-down or have pre-mature yellowing of leaves. There can be several causes for this, which can be hard to determine without a soil test and professional arborist assessment. If money is tight, try aerating and fertilizing the soil under the canopy of your tree, and follow it up with a nice layer of mulch. If your tree doesn't bounce back in the spring, you can locate certified professional arborist in your area at: [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com) .

Most of us are not looking forward to paying those high winter heating costs. Consider establishing a nice evergreen windbreak around the north and west boundary of your home. A properly-placed evergreen windbreak can reduce your winter heating costs from 20-50% (USDA Forest Service). Fall is generally the best time for planting evergreens. Some of my personal southern Illinois favorites are Norway spruce and Colorado blue spruce. Enjoy the fall color!  
*Paul Wierzbicki, Urban Forestry Technical Coordinator, Southwestern Illinois RC&D, Inc..*

# Protecting Nature on the Web



## 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](http://www.lta.org)

Potential sites for your favorites list:

[www.grownative.org](http://www.grownative.org)

*Great source of information on growing plants suited to this region including where to purchase them.*

[www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org)

*Information on the impacts of unplanned urban growth and the benefits of smart growth.*

[www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/index.htm)

*Listing of numerous articles relating to smart growth issues.*

[www.inhs.uiuc.edu](http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu)

*The Illinois Natural History Survey, the guardian of the biological resources of Illinois. Descriptions of native plants & animals.*

[www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/outreach/VMG/VMG.html](http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/outreach/VMG/VMG.html)

*Comprehensive information from the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission about management of invasive species including control recommendations, and failed or ineffective practices.*

If you'd like to receive this newsletter as a PDF via e-mail, please send a note to [linda.wegrzyn@rcdnet.net](mailto:linda.wegrzyn@rcdnet.net).

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## The Land Conservancy

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*Protecting land and water resources in Bond, Clinton, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair and Washington counties.*

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