



*Protecting Land For Future Generations*



# Newsletter

Volume 3  
Summer 2005

## *The Gray and the Green*

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The infrastructure of a community is the substructure or underlying foundation on which the continuance and growth of a community depends. The gray infrastructure includes the transportation, communications, and utility systems that support the built environment. The green infrastructure is the natural life support and working lands (farms and forests) that maintain ecological processes and sustain natural resources and their function.

Both are needed and provide economic and social benefits by improving the quality of life. The green infrastructure, however, provides water quality and quantity, air quality, biological, and food and fiber production benefits. Both the gray and green infrastructures should be complimentary and be given equal priority in land use decision-making and be planned as components of a system.

Redevelopment of existing underutilized infrastructure is more cost-effective for taxpayers than adding new structures that must be maintained. Many green infrastructure tools such as replacing traditional curb and guttering with natural vegetative swales and retention areas are less expensive than the gray counterparts. Strategies for new development such as preserving existing trees, minimizing land disturbance, requiring developers to set aside footage at streambanks, etc., help reduce some of the impacts of development. Utilizing these types of tools costs us all less in the long run in terms of soil erosion, water quality, flood control, etc.

Smart Growth philosophies in a developing region would balance the gray and green infrastructure needs so as to maximize the environmental, economic, and social benefits to the citizens of the community. Maintaining open space and working farmlands needs to be emphasized in many developing areas in the Metro-East region so our green infrastructure is not overtaken by the gray. Conservation easements are one tool to help preserve the green infrastructure.

## *Thanks to TLC Supporters*

A special thanks to new members Ginger McCall and Carl and Penelope Daubach. TLC would also like to thank Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., and the ASC Foundation for their recent financial assistance.

**Between 1982 and 1987, developed land in the U.S. grew by over 25 million acres, roughly the size of Ohio.**

**Consequences of this land consumption include habitat loss, wetland destruction, soil erosion, and degradation of water quality.**

## Rockwood Island Habitat Restoration

In November 2004, The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation provided financial support to the RC&D to acquire land from willing sellers on Rockwood Island. With the assistance of the American Land Conservancy, a total of 722 acres were acquired, which will eventually be turned over to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for restoration and long-term management.



Rockwood Island is a 2,506-acre unprotected area containing a 300-acre forested island and a 2.5-mile active side channel of the Mississippi River at southern Randolph County. The forest contains hardwoods such as native oak, elm and cottonwood. The remaining portion consists of forested wetland and about 725-acres of frequently flooded cropland. Due to its natural features and its high potential for restoration and habitat enhancement, the tract is a very high priority acquisition for the USFWS, and is the proposed location for a headquarters and interpretive center for the recently established Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge (MMRNWR).

The valuable side-channel habitat adjacent to Rockwood Island is critical to native river fish such as the endangered pallid sturgeon, channel catfish, shovelnose sturgeon and paddlefish. The forested sections of the island are equally critical, providing much needed soil stability, wildlife cover, perches for birds of prey, and shading for the side-channel (which helps reduce water temperatures and oxygen depletion during hot summer months). Special status species including the federally threatened bald eagle and the endangered least tern use these areas for nesting and foraging areas.



Rockwood Island and Liberty Chute (the side channel running along the back of the island); offer the opportunity to re-establish hydraulic connectivity between the river and its historic floodplain, and to create semi-permanent wetlands. Currently, the side-channel is compromised by decades of habitat loss through natural processes of erosion, deposition and succession. Pending the acquisition of this critical area, USFWS will work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to devise engineering-based solutions to this problem. Unimpeded by levees or other man-made structures, the Rockwood Island side-channel is especially valuable because its floodplain can be

completely inundated. This inundation allows for greater habitat change benefiting a wider array of fish and animal species.

The farmland has been frequently inundated by the Mississippi River's spring rise, which destroys crops and washes sediment and fertilizer into the river. On a broader scale, this process degrades water quality for fish and wildlife, and the millions of people who depend on the Mississippi River for drinking water. Working with several potential restoration partners, we aim to re-establish wetland sand moist soil impoundments through constructed or manipulated means in order to reconnect the river to its natural floodplain. In some locations, removal of row crops, followed by one or two flood events will be all that is needed to restore the floodplain topography to a more natural ridge and swale condition, thereby allowing the river to redistribute sediments across the floodplain.

## Lands At Risk

The Southwestern Illinois RC&D 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. The goal of this project is to digitally map (GIS) areas of natural resource concern in order to assist activities of TLC, as well as other land protection agencies and organizations within the region. To accomplish this task, we are working with natural resource managers, conservation-minded stakeholders and other interested individuals (focus groups) to identify key areas of concern.



As of the end of June 2005, the GIS staff has conducted thirty-four interviews with regional stakeholders to identify specific natural resource locations. Through this series of individual interviews, over 200 sites have been captured in an electronic database. Each has been collected with corresponding information on the nature of the resource value, the current habitat and the perceived level of threat. Sites range from individual parcel level to broad habitats. In some cases, the resource in question is already under some form of protection, sometimes of a temporary nature. Other areas have received no special consideration and are perceived as severely threatened. This information has been presented to the three ecosystem partnerships in the region for validation. Staff is now beginning analysis that will categorize these areas and seek to present them in the most useful format.

## Join The Land Conservancy!

Join us in protecting land for future generations. Your membership dues will help us reach more people in the community about the tax advantages of conservation easements, preserve more land through donations, and provide a voice to policy makers about the importance of land conservation.

As a TLC member, you will receive a quarterly newsletter, invitations to exclusive outings to some of the most beautiful private land in this area, and numerous social opportunities.

*Yes! I want to become a friend of The Land Conservancy.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- Student/Retired \$25
- Friend of Open Spaces \$40
- Prairie Guardian \$75
- Wildlife Patron \$100
- Forest Benefactor \$500
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Mail to:

**The Land Conservancy**  
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*The Land Conservancy, a division of Southwestern Illinois RC&D, is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) land trust organization and all donations are tax deductible.*



### 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)



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## *Land Trusts Double Acres Protected*

Communities across America are grappling with how to deal with development sprawl that is eating up two million acres a year. Thousands of quiet success stories lie behind the 1,500 land trusts that are successfully conserving farmland, forests, coastal land and scenic vistas. Typically land trusts either buy land outright or work out private, voluntary land agreements that limit future development.

The National Land Trust Census, the nation's only tabulation of the achievements of the private, voluntary land conservation movement, describes how people in their own communities are helping to safeguard water quality, preserve working farms and ranches, and protect wildlife habitat and other natural areas. Local and regional land trusts have now protected 9,361,600 acres of natural areas, an area four times the size of Yellowstone National Park. This is double the 4.7 million acres protected as of 1998.



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

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