

RIVERS OF ILLINOIS COORDINATING COUNCIL

Chaired by Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton

2025 Annual Report



JULIANA STRATTON
OFFICE OF LT. GOVERNOR

Letter from Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton

From agriculture to recreation, there is little doubt our waterways enrich the lives of all Illinoisans. With over 60 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline plus over 100,000 miles of rivers across our state, our natural water resources impact every Illinoisan, no matter where they live.

These waters are essential; they bring Illinoisans and the natural world together. Our water sources are home to hundreds of native species and provide feeding and resting areas for countless animals. As an agricultural and manufacturing powerhouse, Illinois' rivers are also a boon to our economy and provide straightforward shipping pathways across the country and around the world.

In addition to industry, our waterways are also home to water-based tourism up and down the state. Our rivers, lakes, and ponds give us the opportunity to gather together for kayaking, fishing, swimming and more. From drinking water to crops irrigation, our waterways allow Illinois to thrive.

At this moment, more than half of the rivers and streams in Illinois have been degraded in some form due to a variety of causes: pollution from manufacturing, farm runoff, climate change, dredging, the encroachment of invasive species—the list goes on. Our lakes and ponds face algal bloom, and pollutants that threaten the health and safety of dozens of communities and the destruction of whole ecosystems. Our ground water, while well protected, is always an area of concern. As the world warms and water resources become scarcer, it's important that we work together to protect and maintain the integrity and beauty of our waters.

Help is not coming from Washington. We've witnessed the dismantling of federal policy by the current administration. From canceled grants to revoking the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council and its work are more important than ever. The work of this Council, in collaboration with agencies and stakeholders, is focused on ensuring our water is protected and that we meet the challenges and needs of today so that future generations can continue enjoy these resources as we do.

I am very thankful to the members of the Council for their expertise and passion to our waterways. As we continue this important work, I urge all Illinoisians to step outside and discover the wonders in their backyard!

Respectfully,



Juliana Stratton

Illinois Lieutenant Governor | Chair, Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council

Executive Summary

This report from the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council details the Council’s recommendations for improving the health of Illinois’ bodies of water. These recommendations focus on the major challenges within the purview of the Council’s two issue-based committees: *Economic Development and Infrastructure*; and *Conservation and Environment*.

Council Overview and Activities

The Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council was created pursuant to [Executive Order 13-05](#) in 2013. This Executive Order consolidated three river-focused statewide councils previously established in accordance with statutes—the Illinois River Coordinating Council; the Mississippi River Coordinating Council; and the Wabash and Ohio River Coordinating Council. On January 1, 2023, the Council was codified as [Public Act 102-1008](#).

The Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council is charged with advancing statewide and federal policy and initiatives that improve the health of Illinois’ bodies of water. The Council executes its duties through a board comprised of representatives from government agencies and institutions, nonprofits, and impacted communities. Except in the case of ex-officio representatives, all other members are appointed by the Governor.

Report Structure

This report includes overviews of the Council’s quarterly meetings and updates on the subcommittees’ work for the Governor’s Office and the Assembly.

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Council Overview and Activities

Executive Mandate

Pursuant to Executive Order 13-05, the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council is a consolidation of the following councils:

- Illinois River Coordinating Council established pursuant to 20 ILCS 3967/15
- Mississippi River Coordinating Council established pursuant to 20 ILCS 4003/10
- Wabash and Ohio River Coordinating Council established pursuant to 20 ILCS 4060/10

Through this consolidation, the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council is to:

- Periodically review activities and programs administered by state and federal agencies that directly impact the Illinois River Watershed, the Mississippi River, the Wabash and Ohio Rivers, and other Illinois rivers.
- Work with local communities and organizations to encourage partnerships that enhance awareness and capabilities to address watershed and water resource concerns.
- Work with state and federal agencies to optimize the expenditure of funds affecting state rivers and the Illinois River Watershed.
- Advise and make recommendations to the Governor and state agencies on ways to better coordinate the expenditure of appropriated funds affecting the Illinois River Watershed and state rivers.
- Advise and make recommendations to the Governor on funds and the priority of river-related projects.
- Encourage local communities to develop watershed management plans to address stormwater, erosion, flooding, sedimentation, and pollution problems.
- Encourage projects for the natural conveyance and storage of floodwaters; the enhancement of wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities; the recovery, management, and conservation of state rivers; the preservation of farmland, prairies, and forests; and the use of measurable economic development efforts that are compatible with the ecological health of the state.
- Help identify possible sources of additional funding for rivers and watershed management projects in the state.

Council Composition

The following membership positions compose the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council, pursuant to Executive Order 13-05:

- One chairperson
 - Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton
- Six state agency members including the Directors, or their designees, for the following State of Illinois agencies:
 - Department of Agriculture;
 - Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity;
 - Environmental Protection Agency;
 - Department of Natural Resources;
 - Department of Transportation; and
 - Historic Preservation Agency.
- Three institutional members including the Directors, or their designees, for the following organizations:
 - Army Corp of Engineers;
 - National Great Rivers Research and Education Center; and
 - Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Nine community members appointed by the Governor of Illinois and representing local communities and nonprofit organizations working to protect rivers, business, agriculture, recreation, conservation, and the environment
- The Governor of Illinois may appoint additional non-voting members to the Council at the Governor's discretion

Membership

Name (Last, First)	Appointed By	Position	Title	Member Since	Term Expires
Bristow, Monica J.	Governor	Ex-Officio	Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity Designee	N/A	N/A
Williams, Col. Aaron	Governor	Ex-Officio	Head of the Army Corp of Engineers	N/A	N/A
Davis, Christine	Governor	Ex-Officio	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Designee	N/A	N/A
Shelton, Jenna	Governor	Ex-Officio	Illinois State Water Survey Designee	N/A	N/A
Mayer, Carey L.	Governor	Ex-Officio	Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resource Designee	N/A	N/A
Murray III, William J.	Governor	Ex-Officio	Illinois Department of Transportation Designee	N/A	N/A
Rennecker, Brian	Governor	Ex-Officio	Dept. of Agriculture Designee	N/A	N/A
Vacant	Governor	Ex-Officio	National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC) Designee	N/A	N/A
Stratton, Lieutenant Governor Juliana	Statute	Ex-Officio, Chair		N/A	N/A
Phelps Finnie, Natalie	Governor	Ex-Officio	Director of the Department of Natural Resources	N/A	N/A
Clay, Eliot	Governor	Ex-Officio	Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD) Designee	N/A	N/A

Council membership continued on page 7

Community Members

Name	Appointed By	Position	Title	Member Since	Term Expires
Du Buclet, State Rep. Kimberly Neely	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – State Representative	2/24/2024	N/A
Doohaluk, Deanna	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – The Conservation Foundation	7/14/2025	1/1/2026
Keeney, Lindsay	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – Illinois Water Survey	6/6/2025	1/1/2027
LaPointe, Allen	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – Shedd Aquarium	4/12/2024	2/24/2026
London, Ryan	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – Lake Forest Open Lands Association	7/18/2025	2/17/2027
Frisbie, Margaret	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – Friends of the Chicago River	8/8/2025	8/8/2027
Siegel, Rachel Schick	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – Illinois Beaver Alliance	3/22/2024	2/24/2026
Reuter, Libby	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – Watershed Cairns	5/30/2025	5/19/2027
Leege, Andrea	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member	6/6/2026	2/24/2027
Stafford, Matthew	Governor	Member	Community & Nonprofit Member – City of Ottawa	6/20/2025	5/12/2027

Meeting Updates

Q1 Meeting

January 28, 2025

- The subcommittees discussed deliverables for 2025, analyzing and reestablishing new strategic goals, and the restructuring of subcommittees.
- The Asian Carp and Other Invasive Species subcommittee was removed, as Illinois has made tremendous progress lessening the role of invasive species in the state. The Council decided to focus on the remaining two subcommittees: Economic Development and Infrastructure and Environment and Conservation.
- They also developed new strategic goals:
 - Track policy developments at the federal level and raise awareness about the impacts on Illinois waterways and ecosystem.
 - Strengthen economic development in communities along bodies of water through increased tourism, with special attention paid to those on Route 66 for the 2026 centennial celebration and the 250th anniversary of America.

Q2 Meeting

June 11, 2025

Organization: *The Rock Island Arsenal*

- Council members attended the first in-community meeting of the year, hosted by the Rock Island Arsenal.
- The Council discussed:
 - Newly established subcommittees' strategic goals.
 - The Arsenal, the Lock and Dam system, and areas that required assistance or special attention from the state going forward.
- Following the meeting, the Council toured the lock and dam.

Q3 Meeting

July 10, 2025

Presenter: Jon Altenburg, *President and CEO*

Organization: *Great Lakes and St. Lawrence City Initiative*

- The Council discussed the equitable access and use of rivers, with a focus on river system communities.
- The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence City Initiative outlined their mission to transition waterways away from manufacturing and transit systems and towards multi-use recreational areas. The Initiative acknowledged that industry has played a large role in the economic prosperity of the areas, but recreational spaces are desired by the people while still helping to improve the economy.
- Members discussed expected federal budget cuts and what affects are already being seen by various agencies and organizational partners.

Q4 Meeting

October 7, 2025

Presenter: John Murray, *P.E.*

Organization: *Metropolitan Reclamation District of Greater Chicago*

- Council members attended the second and final in-community council meeting of the year, hosted by the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant.
- The Council met with Commissioner Brady-Davis and discussed the Reclamation District and the work done at Stickney and other Chicagoland facilities.
- After the meeting, Council members toured the water reclamation plant.

Council members tour the Rock Island Arsenal lock and dam during their second quarterly meeting, June 2025



Subcommittees

Conservation and Environment Committee

Chair: Brian Rennecker, Allen LaPointe

Members: Brian Rennecker, State Rep Kim du Buclet, Lindsay Keeney, Monica Bristow, Allen LaPointe, Rachel Siegel, Deanna Doohaluk, Matthew Stafford

Annual Project: *A Fall 2025 webinar series.*

The series provided an overview of the broad responsibilities of agencies and shared examples of past work. The presentations also outlined how the loss of funding, regulation, and manpower are not only harmful to waterway communities, but to the state as a whole.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee

Chair: Monica Bristow, Christine Davis

Members: Carey Mayer, BJ Murray, Brian McCoy, Christine Davis, State Rep. Kim du Buclet, Monica Bristow, Ryan London

Annual Project: *Working to strengthen economic development in the Channahon area, located in Grundy and Will counties.*

Channahon runs along an important historic water transport route and is located along Route 66. The subcommittee is creating an informational pamphlet with the new Rivers and Illinois 250th branding to inform the public about tourist opportunities in Channahon, particularly as it relates to the river.

References

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- Maritime Administration. (2025, July 25). *Port Infrastructure Development Program*. U.S. Department of Transportation. <https://www.maritime.dot.gov/PIDPgrants>
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- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2025, November 11). *Clean Ports Program*.
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