

## **Rivers Coordinating Council Meeting**

### **Locations**

#### **Illinois State Office Building**

**555 W Monroe Street, Fourth Floor**

**Peoria Room**

**Chicago, IL 60661**

#### **Illinois State Capitol**

**Office of the Lieutenant Governor Stratton**

**401 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Room 214**

**Springfield, IL 62706**

### **Minutes July 24, 2024**

**1. Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.**

**2. Roll Call Member Agencies Physically Present:**

Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton

Illinois Dept. of Agriculture, Brian Rennecker

Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Monica Bristow

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Christine Davis

Dept. of Transportation, William J Murray (BJ Murray)

Illinois Water Survey, Laura Keefer

Historic Preservation Division of the Dept. of Natural Resources, Carey Mayer

Army Corps. Of Engineers, COL. Aaron Williams

Shedd, Aquarium, Allen LaPointe

Illinois House Representative, Kimberly Neely Du Buclet

Sierra Club, Dr. Nicole Saulsberry

Rachel Schick Siegel

**Lt. Governor's Office Staff Members Present:**

Nikki Giancola-Shanks, Policy Director

Quenjana Adams, Press Secretary

Deborah Baker, General Counsel and Deputy Chief of Staff

Charles Watkins, Chief of Staff

Eryn Jones, Legal Project Manager

Maria Peterson, Dunn Fellow

Alex Sprinkle, ISPP Scholar

**3. Quorum Determined**

Quorum met.

**4. Approval of Minutes from July 24, 2024**

Minutes approved for April 3<sup>rd</sup> after an amendment minutes document was sent by Christine Davis, the previous day to the council.

**5. Lt. Governor Stratton Remarks**

**Opening**

Lt. Governor welcomed everyone to the third quarterly meeting for the Rivers Coordinating Council of 2024. She thanked Allen LaPointe for the presentation he gave in the second quarterly meeting and their work towards making Shedd Aquarium a more inclusive and disability friendly space. She thanked the council for their continued dedication and the work ahead. She then introduced Maria Peterson. Maria is the new Dunn Fellow, who will be with the office for the next 12 months. The Lt. Governor also, welcomed COL. Aaron Williams, the Commander and District Engineer of the U.S. Army Corps. Of Engineers, Rock Island District to the council. The COL. Introduced himself and discussed his history in the military, and his excitement for being a part of the council. Then Lt. Governor discussed an award she had received from the Soil and Water Conservation District, the week before, and how wonderful it was to get the chance to highlight the amazing work they are doing for the state of Illinois.

**General Updates**

Illinois finalized the fiscal year 2025 budget, then noted some highlights that are of importance to. This is the sixth consecutive balanced budget. \$960,000 for crop insurance reimbursement, cover crop spot checks performed by the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District, and for IDOA to administer the Crop Insurance Rebate program. \$54 million for the continued operation of key programs including the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Grants. And \$2.5 million for the Youth and Young Adult Conservation and Education Pilot Program, which will create opportunities for underserved and underrepresented youth to receive education for future jobs in environmental conservation.

**6. New Business**

The Lt. Governor announced that the presentation would be from Dan Breidenstein who serves as the Vice-President of Living Lands and Waters. Their mission is to aid in the protection, preservation, and restoration of the nation's major rivers and their watersheds.

Dan discussed their beginnings starting with their founder Chad's goal to cleanup his backyard in the Mississippi. Then moving towards their cleanup efforts across the entire delta. He discussed how they work to sort and recycle as much garbage as possible from the riverways, and the funding and volunteers who work to help them achieve that goal. Finally, he talked about their education barge, a 40-student classroom, currently sitting in Alton, Illinois, that works to build an understanding of conservation, how we students can work in conservation and with our water systems, and what we can do as individuals to mitigate garbage going into our waterways.

## **Questions**

LG: I love Alton and would love to come and visit. Career-wise and educationally, sometimes it just takes one person to make a change.

What could you see the state or council doing to help your work? Your mission aligns with this council.

Dan: Spreading the word, we try to be unbiased and encourage everyone to come together. We do our job of educating and do our best to not spread out so much. Partner with people when you can, that's the one thing I've learned, don't make assumptions and find connections.

LG: I agree, some connect constantly, others don't. Even myself, how does all this get into the river? I don't think this information is shared or known enough.

Can you think of any way to show how we are connected to our lands and waterways, and differences we can make?

Dan: Small changes make life easier for everyone, do what makes your life still you.

Christine Davis: We had the good fortune of working together, are you [Living Lands and Water] still doing work with teacher education?

Dan: Not as many workshops, but if there is the desire 100%.

Christine: Still traveling up to Morris?

Dan: Yes, still part of what we do. Illinois tends to be more maintained, and less gets in the water ways when you do a big cleanup.

Chistine: As a committee we could work to create a credit for those accepting the cleanup to encourage entities to accept recyclables.

LG: Nikki will look into that.

Brian Rennecker: Potential waterway restoration credit.

BJ: We're running out of space to put dredging materials; credit could help ease the burden/ incentivize.

LG: Rep Du Clet, would you be interested in making connections.

Rep: Yes.

Christine: We can talk about organizing a day of cleanup with Living Lands and Waters.

BJ: Landfills at capacity, thinking about new ways to reuse materials would be good. Just did beneficial materials from dredging test, to see what could be used.

Christine: Instead of spending money on dredging they could spend it on conservation efforts.

Brian: Do you work with volunteers?

Dan: We do one community event per month, because we've burned too many times to do more.

Brian: Senior high school students are required to have community service through FFA, that might be an avenue for volunteering or cleaning up.

Dan: We have Adopt a River Mile, that send gloves, bags, to volunteers, and helps assist others with cleaning out water.

Nikki: Please send any ideas to me, this work would be great for the council.

## **7. Committee Updates and Reports**

Updates

Economic Infrastructure Committee (No Chair but Nicole spoke): No updates of note.

## Reports

BJ: Attending great lakes report, IDOT planning conference.

Brian: working on providing one stop updated data for IDOT resource directory. Hope to be published in 2025 but may take till 2026.

Brian Rennecker: Monday we were notified that Illinois received a grant of 430 111 million for ag, 40- million for no strip till strip. Effective likely 2026.

## 8. Public Comments

Huge sums of money are coming to state, this work is done with ag, but it's dependent on the Soil and Water Conservation soil and water. Soil and water, have no consistent long-term funding, and a minuscule budget for what is needed, we need to bring more money for operating funds. Could keep 6-10 staff with the work needed. Soil and water need consistent funding.

## 9. Closing

The Lt. Governor announced the next quarterly meeting is set for October 2, 2024. The meeting will start at 10:00am and run to 11:30am. She thanked everyone for their continued contributions to the Rivers Coordinating Council. She then adjourned the council because quorum had been met at 10:04 a.m.