

OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR JULIANA STRATTON
Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council
2nd Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 27, 2023

A present majority of filled voting-member positions shall constitute a quorum: i.e. 8 members present				
Position	Name	Present	Phone	Absent
Ex-Officio (voting members)				
Chair (Lt. Governor)	Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton	x		
Dept. of Agriculture	Brian Rennecker			x
Dept. of Commerce & Economic Opportunity	Monica Bristow	x		
Environmental Protection Agency	Christine Davis	x		
Dept. of Natural Resources	Vacant			
Dept. of Transportation	BJ Murray	x		
Illinois Water Survey	Laura Keefer	x		
Historic Preservation Division of the Dept. of Natural Resources	Carey Mayer	x		
Army Corps of Engineers	Col. Jesse Curry		x	
National Great River Research and Education Center	Dr. John Sloan		x	
Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts	Vacant			
Community & Nonprofit Rep. (voting members)				
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Allen LaPointe			x
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Lindsay Keeney			x
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Rep. Kimberly du Buclet		x	
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Bradford Kasberg		x	
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Raelynn Parmely		x	
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Dr. Nicole Saulsberry			x
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Rachel Schick Siegel		x	
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Libby Reuter	x		
Community & Nonprofit Mem.	Brad Zimmerman	x		
Guests				
Guest, National Great Rivers Museum	Allison Rhanor	x		
Guest, National Great Rivers Research and Education Center	Dr. Danelle Haake	x		
Guest, Dept. of Transportation	Brian McCoy	x		
	Mathew Stafford		x	
	Paul Rohde		x	
	Anshu Singh		x	

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Lt. Governor's Staff Present:

- Charles Watkins, Chief of Staff
- Natashee Scott, General Counsel & Deputy Chief of Staff
- Dr. Susan Ogwal, Policy Director
- Paris McConnell, External Affairs Manager
- Eryn Jones, Legal Project Coordinator
- Lian Nicholson, Special Assistant
- Patrobas Wafula, Illini Science Policy Scholar
- Joanna Byrne, Digital Content Specialist
- Taylor Brown, Communications Manager
- Sarah Richman, Dunn Fellow

Minutes

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Approval of the Agenda for 6/27/23 and Minutes from 3/29/23
 - a. Agenda
 - i. Lt. Governor Stratton entertained a motion to approve the agenda for 03/29/23
 - ii. Motioned by BJ Murray
 - iii. Seconded by Monica Bristow
 - iv. All in favor
 - v. None opposed.
 - vi. No abstentions
 - b. Minutes
 - i. Lt. Governor Stratton entertained a motion to approve the minutes from 03/29/23.
 - ii. Motioned by Laura Keefer
 - iii. Seconded by Christine Davis
 - iv. All in favor
 - v. None opposed.
 - vi. No abstentions
- III. Chairperson's Remarks
 - a. Lt. Governor thanked everyone for attending the second quarterly meeting of the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council for 2023. She was grateful to individuals participating in person, as well as virtually.
 - b. Lt. Governor discussed the meeting location in East Alton, Illinois at the National Great Rivers Museum which sits on the Mississippi River. She indicated that the museum is dedicated to the storytelling of people, nature, and wildlife that have shaped the Mississippi River. The Museum is Congressionally funded – part of a collaboration with the United States Army Corp of Engineers and the meaning of the River's foundation.

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- c. Lt. Governor thanked Allison Rhanor and the team at the National Great Rivers Museum for hosting the event today. She mentioned that we will hear more about the work of the Museum in new business.
- d. Lt. Governor stated that at the end of the meeting, in person participants will receive a tour of the Melvin Price Locks and Dams to learn more about the commercial river traffic and how the Army Corps of Engineers work to maintain the navigation channel within the River.
- e. New Member Introductions
 - i. Lt. Governor introduced two new council members who are joining for the first time during the second quarterly council meeting. The first new member is Libby Reuter.
 - ii. Libby Reuter introduced herself. She said she is a retired university arts administrator and a visual artist. She passed around information about the Watershed Cairns.
 - iii. She explained cairns – changes that have happened due to erosion, pollution, or construction. She said Illinois is the guardian of America's fresh waters.
 - iv. Lt. Governor requested that Libby Reuter provide the website information for virtual participants who do not have the physical card.
 - v. Linked here is the work of Libby Reuter and the Watershed Cairns website information: [Watershed Cairns](#)
 - vi. Lt. Governor then introduced the second new council member, Brad Zimmerman.
 - vii. Brad Zimmerman is from Central Illinois and was asked to represent the Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts. He is also the director of his local water conservation district.
 - viii. Lt. Governor thanked the new council members for their participation.
- f. The Passage of FY24 Budget
 - i. Lt. Governor talked about the passing of Illinois Fifth Balanced Budget in a row and was proud to stand alongside Governor Pritzker.
 - ii. Lt. Governor stated that this budget includes investments towards environmental initiatives, along with capital in transportation initiatives. The budget allocates \$50 million in funding through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Water Resources for the Brandon Road Ecosystem Project – this will block invasive species from entering the Great Lake Ecosystem. The budget includes \$10 million for flooding resources.
- g. Subcommittees
 - i. Lt. Governor reminded the Council of the subcommittees: Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee, along with the Conservation and Environment Committee. Subcommittees are where the work of the councils take place. Lt. Governor encouraged the council members to join a subcommittee as it is a requirement for participation.
 - ii. Lt. Governor directed communications to Sarah Richman who oversees the work of the Council meetings and scheduling meetings.

OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR JULIANA STRATTON
Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council
2nd Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 27, 2023

IV. New Business

- a. Welcoming Remarks from the National Great Rivers Museum
- b. Lt. Governor introduced Allison Rhanor to discuss the work of the National Great Rivers Museum as the Director of the Museum. Rhanor is a National Resource Specialist at the US Army Corp of Engineers, St. Louis District. She is the Outreach Lead for the Rivers Project. Lt. Governor thanked Rhanor for hosting us.
- c. Allison Rhanor spoke about the purpose of the US Army Corp of Engineers. She stated their mission statement as the following: to protect people from water, to protect water from people, and to make water useful.
 - i. Rhanor went into greater depth about the Mississippi River Valley Division, they are currently six projects. Five of them are lake projects, i.e., flood control, recreation. She went into greater detail about the rivers Project: The Rivers project oversees 300 miles of the Mississippi River and the last 80 miles of the Illinois river.
 - ii. This mission is very navigation focused, but there are teams of people for different programs. Outreach works with local and state governments to engage the communities with their mission of education, environmental conservation, and stewardship.
 - iii. Rhanor went into greater detail about the Suez Canal Closure incident where it stopped global trade which has helped promote the resource as a global highway, as well as protect it.
 - iv. Rhanor listed the activities that the in-person group would participate in such as seeing the 24-hour Lock & Dam, as well as being joined by Andy Schimpf.
- d. Lt. Governor introduced Christine Davis from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to present on “Citizen Opportunities to Protect Illinois’ Water Resources.”
 - i. Christine Davis provided background information regarding the water resources available throughout the State of Illinois – there are 20,000 miles of river streams. Davis mentioned that the State struggles with garnering support for Illinois Rivers as residents are more inclined to go to states like Michigan, Minnesota, or Missouri for water activities.
 - ii. Davis outlined the responsibilities and jurisdiction of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency as they are unable to provide enforcement.
 - iii. Davis provided guides for citizens to get involved with the Regulatory Agency. By having citizens invested in the agency, it can help assess the challenges of the water resources by providing a different perspective. She referenced photos throughout her presentation that demonstrated citizen volunteers and the volume of volunteers they have had over the years.
 - iv. Lt. Governor interjected to offer her support for the work of Christine Davis, citizen volunteers, and other programs that seek to protect the environment.
 - v. Davis supplied the council with a multitude of organizations that have potential litters and citizen scientist opportunities where volunteers can

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Tuesday, June 27, 2023

reach out. Davis then concluded her presentation with questions for participants who are looking to get involved with watershed conservation.

- vi. Lt. Governor directed Sarah Richman to review questions and comments in the chat from the online participants.
- vii. Lt. Governor asked Christine Davis to elaborate on her earlier point of citizens viewing Illinois Waterways as resources rather than destinations – she then directed the work of the subcommittee of Economic & Infrastructure Development. Davis clarified that the remark reflected her personal perception.
- viii. A gentleman in the room directed a question to Christine Davis asking if the pollution in the water streams a result of people from disadvantaged backgrounds are not having the proper resources to discard of trash. Davis reflected on her own community and how there are no available recycling options within her radius.
- ix. Lt. Governor affirmed the previous remark by the gentleman to acknowledge that multiple agencies can play a role in assisting with a better system.
- x. Another gentleman in the room responded about how agencies can support different projects to enable environment conservation such as watershed.
- xi. Christine Davis mentioned to the Council that they should revamp the Illinois River Management Plan as it is outdated.
- xii. Lt. Governor requested further inspection of the plan to ensure that the Council has reviewed it and whether progress has been made since creation of the plan.
- xiii. Lt. Governor concluded the presentation with the following notes: we need to encourage tourism throughout the State to support the Illinois Waterways, find ways to protect and honor the waterways, and the importance of venturing out all parts of the state.
- xiv. Sarah Richman read a comment in the chat from Rachel Siegel on the benefits of the great outdoors, the beauty of nature, and how it promotes better mental health.
- xv. Lt. Governor made comments about breaking barriers to the outdoors and moved the meeting forward to member updates.

V. Member Updates

- a. Lt. Governor opened the floor for member updates and encouraged Council members to send them in the chat or provide additional resources to Sarah Richman who could share with the entire Council.
 - i. Anshu Singh spoke first. She provided an update on behalf of Heart of Illinois Regional Board District. Singh discussed the unanimous passage of the Illinois Water Reports Commission which represents ten counties in Illinois. She shared the article [here](#):
 - ii. BJ Murray, a member of the Illinois Department of Transportation mentioned a master plan that is concentrated on tourism, referenced Rebuild Illinois, and awards they received.

OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR JULIANA STRATTON
Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council
2nd Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 27, 2023

- iii. Lt. Governor commented on this update with a collaboration project from the State of Illinois, along with Missouri, as part of Rebuild Illinois and the Canal Bridge/I-270.
- iv. Dr. Danielle Hake entered her updates on behalf of National Great Rivers Research & Education Center (NGRREC). NGRREC is the host of the Illinois River Watch Program, which teaches volunteers how to monitor water quality in the state. They run community science programming. They are doing plastic monitoring and wetland community science programming. The Center is cohosting a conference with the Environmental Defense Fund to protect the Mississippi River.
- v. Lt. Governor invited members to share public events with the Council.
- vi. Col. Curry provided an update on the Brandon Lock and Road Project that relayed planned closures to help prevent emergency closures.
 - 1. He said there are three planned closures. This is the last consolidated closure (120-day long closure) for the foreseeable future.
 - 2. He shared Updates for ongoing lock closures on the Illinois Waterway:
<https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Navigation-Status/>
 - 3. Lt. Governor asked questions about the maintenance schedule and how long the closures will last. Lt. Governor stated that the Lock & Dams are a sight to see.
- vii. Rachel Siegel shared her updates with the Council: The Illinois Beaver Alliance is co-hosting a virtual Midwest Beaver Summit on September 13 and 20, along with the Superior Bio-Conservancy, American Rivers, Friends of the Chicago River, the Beaver Institute, and other groups. Here is the link for more information: https://midwest_bever_summit.eventbrite.com

VI. Public Comments

- a. Lt. Governor opened the floor for public comments.
- b. No public comments were made.
- c. Lt. Governor provided the next RICC meeting date on Thursday, August 24, 2023, with details to follow.

VII. Adjournment

- a. Lt. Governor entertained a motion to adjourn.
- b. Motioned by Monica Bristow.
- c. Seconded by Christine Davis.
- d. None opposed.
- e. No abstentions.