

OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR JULIANA STRATTON  
Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council  
1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 29, 2023

A present majority of filled voting-member positions shall constitute a quorum: i.e. 9 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	Director Natalie Phelps Finnie		x	
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.	Kimberly Neely 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	
Guests				
Guest	Matthew Stafford		x	
Guest	Bryan Hopkins		x	
Guest	Mindy Barnett		x	
Guest	Steve Altman		x	
Guest	Michael Woods		x	
Guest	Paul Rohde		x	
Guest	Brian Schoenung		x	
Guest	Kevin Irons		x	
Guest	Anshu Singh		x	
Guest	Brian McCoy		x	

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

- Charles Watkins, Chief of Staff
- Natashee Scott, General Counsel and Deputy Chief of Staff
- Janelle Gurnsey, Deputy Chief of Staff for External Affairs and Communication
- Dr. Susan Ogwal, Policy Director
- Rob Baren, Senior Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor
- 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 3/29/23 and Minutes from 12/5/22
  - a. Minutes from 12/5/23
    - i. Lt. Governor Stratton entertained a motion to approve the minutes from 12/5/22
    - ii. Motioned by Christine Davis
    - iii. Seconded by Monica Bristow
    - iv. All in favor
    - v. None opposed
    - vi. No abstention
  - b. Agenda for 3/29/23
    - i. Lt. Governor Stratton entertained a motion to approve the agenda for 3/29/23
    - ii. Motioned by Christine Davis
    - iii. Seconded by Steve Altman
    - iv. All in favor
    - v. None opposed
    - vi. No abstention
- III. Chairperson's Remarks
  - a. Lt. Governor Stratton thanked everyone for attending the first quarterly meeting of the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council for 2023. She reported that since the last meeting, ten new members had joined the council. She said that today's meeting would be virtual, and she looked forward to having future meetings in-person.
  - b. Lt. Governor Stratton discussed location recommendations that council members had provided, such as the Dixon Mounds Museum, Starved Rock State Park, and the Shedd Aquarium. She said her team would reach out to coordinate hosting future meetings and site visits at these locations.
  - c. Lt. Governor Stratton reminded council members that they are required to serve on at least one committee. She said the three committees are the Conservation and Environment Committee, the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee, and the Invasive Species Committee. She said that committee meetings are where the critical work happens, and each committee would need someone to serve as a committee chair. She said last week, all council members should have received a committee selection form from Sarah Richman, and she asked that all council members fill out that form by Friday, March 31. Lt. Governor Stratton said that even if members already served on a committee, she asked

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that they fill out this form so the council can have updated membership information. She also reminded the council that anyone can join committees, even if that individual is not a voting member of the Rivers of Illinois Coordinating Council.

IV. New Business

a. New Member Introductions

- i. Lt. Governor Stratton called on new council members to introduce themselves. She asked members to keep their introductions under one minute. Each new member provided an introduction.
- ii. Monica Bristow – Deputy Director of Local Governments at the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- iii. Carey Mayer – Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer at the Department of Natural Resources; Director of the Office of Realty and Capital Planning
- iv. Col. Jesse T. Curry – Commander, Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District
- v. Dr. John Sloan – Watershed Scientist with the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center
- vi. Raelynn Parmely – Environmental Program Manager for the Government Affairs and Commodities Division of the Illinois Farm Bureau
- vii. Kimberly Du Buclet – Commissioner at Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
- viii. Dr. Nicole Saulsberry – State Government Representative for the Sierra Club Illinois Chapter
- ix. Rachel Schick Siegel – Founder and President of Illinois Beaver Alliance
- x. Laura Keefer – Illinois State Hydrologist at the Illinois State Water Survey

b. Illinois Department of Natural Resources Update from Director Natalie Phelps Finnie

- i. Director Natalie Phelps Finnie provided an update on the Illinois State Water Plan and the work of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). She introduced herself and discussed how for the fiscal year 2024 budget, IDNR has asked the Governor and the General Assembly to allocate \$50 million for the next phase of the Brandon Road Project and \$10 million for the Flood Mitigation Buyout Program, which are both overseen by IDNR's Office of Water Resources. Director Phelps Finnie discussed her personal connection to rivers and waterways in Illinois, and what inspires her to do this work. She said that there are still some communities in Illinois, such as Old Shawneetown, that do not have a water source, and this needs to be changed.
- ii. Director Phelps Finnie passed the meeting over to Steve Altman to present on the Illinois State Water Plan.
- iii. Steve Altman presented on the State Water Plan. He discussed partners in the State Water Plan Task Force. He said this plan is being put forth to implement water-related legislation and other improvements, and the audience of the plan is the General Assembly. He said this plan can make an impact in many ways, such as by educating residents and providing information for regional watershed planning.
- iv. Steve provided an overview on the State Water Plan Report. He discussed how the plan addresses social and environmental justice. He highlighted 13 critical issues that the report highlights. Overall, there were 147 recommendations. He then presented a graph that showed the distribution of funding needs, and then a graph that showed distribution of action needed. He said there were 80 recommendations for IDNR. He then shared the State Water Plan Task Force website, so that council members could stay informed of current efforts and future opportunities.

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- v. Steve presented on the future of the State Water Plan. He said they are looking to get the State Water Plan Task Force funded. He said there would be a quarterly and annual status report. He said IDNR would like to pass formal legislation to establish the Task Force.
- vi. Then, Steve discussed launching the Integrated Water Information Center, which would serve as a center for everything related to water in the state of Illinois. He then shared two contacts for the IDNR Office of Water Resources:
  - 1. Director Loren Wobig – [loren.wobig@illinois.gov](mailto:loren.wobig@illinois.gov)
  - 2. Terra McParland – [terra.mcparland@illinois.gov](mailto:terra.mcparland@illinois.gov)
- vii. Lt. Governor Stratton thanked Steve for his presentation. She opened the meeting to questions. She asked Steve to share his presentation with her staff, so they could share with the full council.
- viii. Nicole Saulsberry asked if there was a bill number for the legislation Steve mentioned. Steve said the legislation is HB 3046, and he believed it passed in the General Assembly. He said there has been activity and discussion relating to the bill, and there would be a meeting the next day to discuss the bill with other agencies.

V. Member Updates

- a. Christine Davis shared that there are 119,000 total miles of stream in the state of Illinois, and 911 of those are considered great rivers, including the Mississippi, Wabash, and Ohio Rivers. She said she sent a link in the chat which contained information (<https://epa.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/epa/topics/water-quality/watershed-management/nonpoint-sources/documents/nps-management-program.pdf>). She said rivers are used for many different things, such as drinking water, transportation, and recreation. She said IDNR, the Illinois State Water Survey, and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) work together to do significant monitoring. She said that rivers are impacted by both point-source pollution which is regulated by the IDNR and IEPA, and nonpoint source pollution which does not have the same regulatory background in terms of enforcement. She said 60% of rivers in Illinois are impacted by non-point-source pollution, and these sources include agriculture, construction, hydroelectric modification, mining, and urban runoff, among other sources. She said the IEPA is working on watershed-based planning.
- b. Lt. Governor Stratton asked Christine if the nonpoint source management report was being updated currently. Christine said that IEPA has been working to update this for 8 years now, and the US Environmental Protection Agency is providing updated guidelines. She said when working with water in Illinois, there are so many local, state, and federal groups responsible for different aspects. She suggested that the IEPA put together a presentation for the Rivers Council, to explain the different agencies and how their roles fit with rivers and water uses.
- c. Raelynn Parmely said that the Illinois Farm Bureau is planning its Field Days for the summer. She said these events are a great opportunity to engage with farmers, agricultural researchers, agency members, and other stakeholders in the agricultural and non-point-source space. She shared a link that had more information on dates for the Field Days: [www.ilfb.org/FieldDays](http://www.ilfb.org/FieldDays).
- d. Laura Keefer provided highlights on the Water Survey. The Water Survey is helping to bring funding to the proposed Water Information Center. She said the Water Survey is partnered with IDNR on regional water supply planning, as well as on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. She said that the Water Survey is helping IDNR see if they're meeting nutrient reduction goals for the state. She shared about the Health and

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Environmental Applications Laboratory (HEAL) which is a laboratory open to the public for people to test their water. They can test water to see if it's impacting someone's health, and if there is an issue with the pipes or water source.

- e. Allen LaPointe provided an update in the chat: "Shedd has been recognized as a Center for Species Survival: Freshwater by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) We will be working with scientists and communities to reverse trends of freshwater species loss. We are already doing work in Illinois rivers and Lake Michigan, but with this partnership, we will be starting to work on Mussels and fish in El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Guatemala."
- f. Kevin Irons shared an update on the Brandon Road Project. He said that IDNR is moving forward with this effort, and he thanked Col. Jesse Curry for his support of the project. Kevin said that the state of Michigan contributed money to this effort to protect the Great Lakes. Kevin said that since 2019, IDNR established enhanced contracts to remove carp from water, and he said those fish are now referred to as Copi. He said Copi fish are being sold around the country. He said removal efforts have taken over 25 million pounds of Copi fish out of rivers in Illinois.
- g. Lt. Governor Stratton asked for an update on Copi removal, and what's happening in Illinois and around the country, specifically in terms of workforce development.
- h. Lt. Governor Stratton encouraged members to look at the member updates in the chat.
- i. Michael Woods shared in the chat: "A special legislative briefing breakfast on the new State Water Plan at 7:30am on April 19th, 2023 at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. The Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts is pleased to assemble key state agency Water Plan leaders and officials to help you better understand what is included in the Water Plan and how best to use the Water Plan/website to inspire and advance meaningful water related actions for your constituents. Please RSVP by April 12: Teri.Fahey@aiswcd.org or (217) 744 -3414."
- j. Laura Keefer shared in the chat: "Illinois State Water Survey - Water and Atmospheric Resources Monitoring (WARM): <https://warm.isws.illinois.edu/warm/>" and "IDNR Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/CREP/Pages/default.aspx>"

VI. Public Comments

- a. No public comments

VII. Adjournment

- a. Lt. Governor Stratton said the next quarterly meeting would be on Tuesday, May 2nd. She reminded council members to fill out the committee selection form
- b. Lt. Governor Stratton entertained a motion to adjourn at 10:36am.
  - i. Motioned by Laura Keefer
  - ii. Seconded by Nicole Saulsberry
  - iii. None opposed
  - iv. No abstentions