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Partnership will benefit from 2020 program

by Laura Bennett
Herald reporter

Illinois Lieutenant Governor Corinne Wood announced the cooperative work of state and federal officials in support of Illinois Rivers 2020 during a meeting held April 26, 2000 at the Mokena Anchor Club.

The day's events included an informational discussion on the 2020 program and a boat tour of the river.

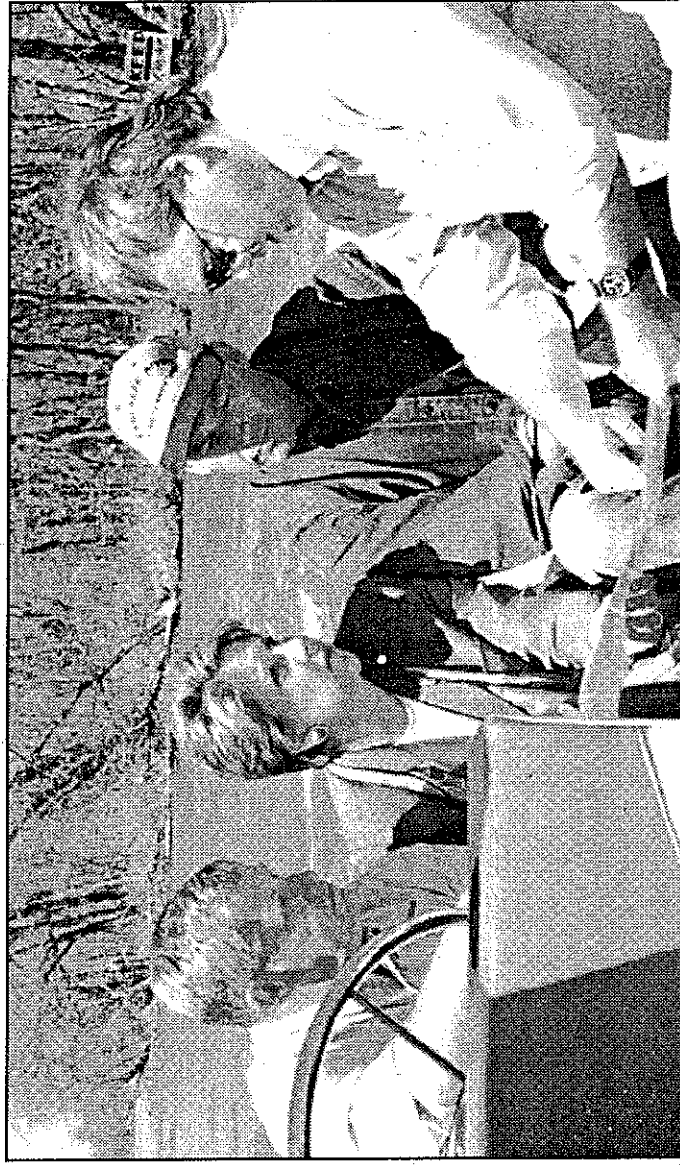
Illinois Rivers 2020 is an initiative which builds upon the success of the Illinois River Conservation Reserved Enhancement Program. It is a voluntary, incentive-based approach which is much broader and more inclusive for the entire Illinois River. It addresses all the threats to the economic and environmental sustainability of Illinois' vitally important waterways.

"Our goal is to enhance the

waterway as a vital transportation corridor, improve water quality, protect farmland and open space, provide for land treatment of storm water, restore and preserve habitat for plants and wildlife, and increase economic opportunity for agriculture and business communities," said Wood. "The plan would provide \$2.5 billion, over the 20-year federal-state initiative to restore the basin."

All 20 congressional delegates and both U.S. senators Richard Durbin and Peter Fitzgerald support 2020. The Illinois River and its watershed are a vital economic and environmental resource.

Nearly 900,000 people in Illinois rely on the Illinois water basin for drinking water. More than 60 million tons of commodities are transported on the river. Industries located in wa-



Chairman of the Kankakee River Basin Partnership, J.R. Black; Lt. Governor Corinne Wood; Congressman Jerry Weller; and from the Illinois Department of Natural Resource, Jim Mick; discuss elements of the Kankakee River during a tour on April 26 beginning at the Mokena Anchor Club.

terside counties along the Illinois River using barge transportation employ nearly 57,560 people and generate \$411 million in payroll taxes annually. It is also one of the few remain-

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terside counties along the Illinois River using barge transportation employ nearly 57,560 people and generate \$411 million in payroll taxes annually. It is also one of the few remaining rivers with a functioning ecosystem critical to a vast array of fish and wildlife.

"If nothing is done, there will be a heavy price for negligence. It's a price we can't afford," said Wood.

The 2020 program would further the conservation initiatives already enacted in the Kankakee River Basin, Wood stated. Wood and Illinois delegation members commended the Kankakee River Basin Partnership for their work.

"The Kankakee River Basin Partnership has already demonstrated a commitment to preserve this natural resource. Together we will bring more money and attention to improving rivers throughout Illinois," said Wood.

"Our partnership is successful because we have broadened our base to include all stakeholders including conservation, agriculture, government, business, labor, and citizens," said J.R. Black, chairman of the Kankakee River Basin Partnership.

"We should always be looking for innovative solutions to environmental problems," said Weller. "The Kankakee River will play a crucial role in the Illinois River 2020 program since it is the headwater for the Illinois River."

The partnership's concern is the sandbed load in the river.

"The sand and sedimentation is choking our river," said Black. "We take pride in being the headwaters that lead into the Illinois River. We need to clean and restore the river."

Jim Garner, deputy director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, stated the Kankakee River was a biologi-

cally diverse and biologically productive river.

"We have seen a decline in the past few decades, and we want to restore the river to what it once was," said Garner.

Additional dollars for other programs are also being sought for programs including:

- \$950 million for the Illinois River Basin through existing Farm Bill programs and the Clean Water Act. The federal dollars would be additional money.

- The Farm Bill includes the Conservation Reserve Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive, the Farmland Protection Program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

The Clean Water Act would address urban and rural non-point source problems, stream bank stabilization, assistance with in-stream management and habitat restoration, and watershed planning in education.

- Amend Water Resources Development Act to authorize the Illinois River Restoration Act to restore waterways and improve water quality. The federal share will be \$1.5 billion and the state share would be \$88 million over 20 years.

Through this, the act would provide removal, analysis, transport, and beneficial uses of sediment, long-term resource monitoring, and flood reduction, hydrological restoration and habitat restoration.

- Illinois could also receive \$55 million annually from the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) if the legislation is enacted. There are 300 members in the house signed up as co-sponsors of CARA, stated Weller. This legislation would provide federal assistance for open space preservation, park restoration, and wildlife and habitat preservation through matching federal funds to the states.

Corinne Wood, at a glance

Corinne Wood made Illinois history with her election to statewide office on Jan. 11, 1999. She is the first female Lieutenant Governor of Illinois.

Wood will play an important role in leading administration efforts on health care, child care, downtown economic development, rural affairs, seniors and the environment.

A breast cancer survivor, Wood is committed to women's health care. Governor George Ryan named her to lead the administrations' efforts to improve women's health issues. In her first months in office, Wood launched a statewide campaign to increase funding for the state's breast cancer research fund.

Wood also leads the state's efforts to preserve one of its most valuable natural resources, the Illinois River. As chair of the Illinois River Coordinating Council, Wood directs the state's strategy in protecting and restoring the Illinois River Watershed and its tributaries. During her first year in Springfield, she passed more bills signed into law than any other freshman state representative.

Corinne and her husband Paul have been married 21 years. They live in Lake County and have three children, Ashley, Brandon and Courtney.

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