

# McLean County Greenways News

Summer 2013: Volume 1, Issue 2

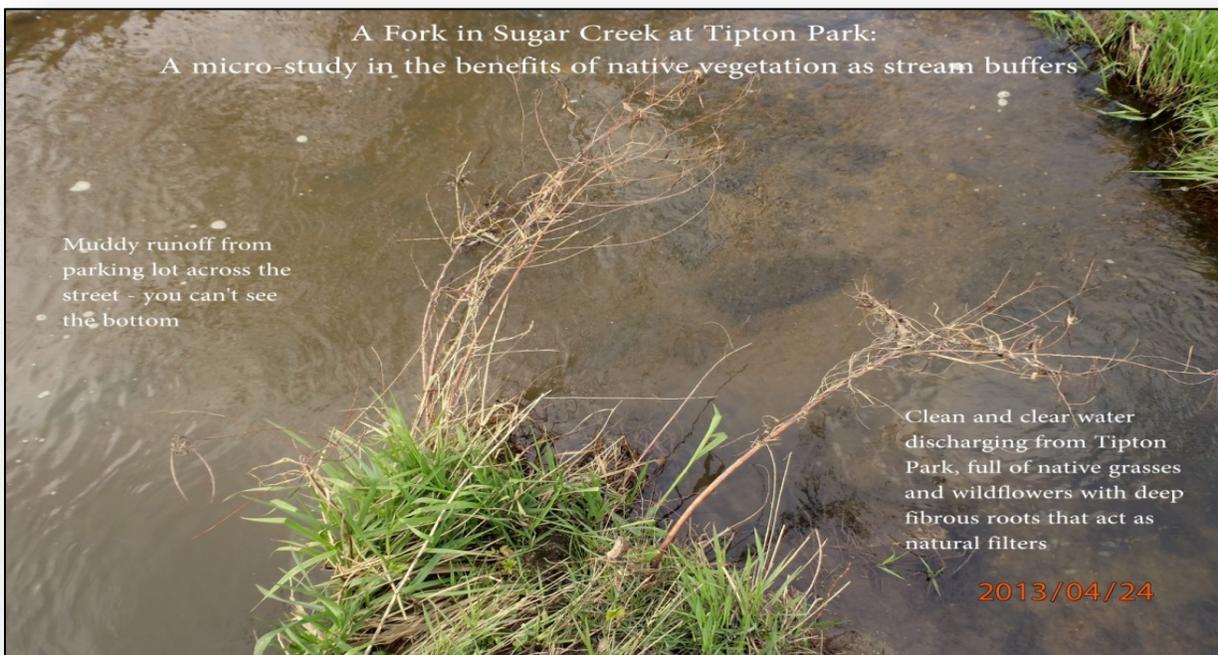
## From the Chair

Michael Brown, Ecology Action Center

One of the important benefits of greenways is watershed protection. Our water supplies, while something we often take for granted, are quite vulnerable and in fact, finite. Greenways help provide for important buffers of vegetation, especially along sensitive waterways.



Have you ever noticed how grasses along creeks and streams are allowed to grow tall? These vegetative buffers have multiple functions including slowing the velocity of storm water runoff, reducing or preventing erosion, water absorption, and filtration of harmful storm water runoff pollutants. The list of these pollutants is long, but can include everything from automotive fluids that drip from our cars, yard care chemicals that easily wash off during the first rainfall after application, to litter and silt.



The establishment and protection of greenways in our community allows for the restoration of these important natural processes that help protect our local water supplies. How can you help? Be an advocate and user of greenways in McLean County. Help us educate others about the benefits of greenways and buffer strips in particular.

## **Grand Valley Trail Bike Tour**

### **Marla Gursh, IDNR**

Approximately 160 bicyclists took part in the Grand Illinois Trail and Parks (GITAP) Bike Tour from June 9-14. This year's tour included overnight stays at the Kankakee River, Starved Rock and Illini state parks. One of the "loop" rides occurred on the Route 66 Trail near Odell.

The GITAP tour has been a popular tour ride for many Illinois cyclists and filled up quickly, having more repeat riders than ever before.

The League of Illinois Bicyclists (LIB) organizes and hosts the GITAP with support from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Next year's GITAP tour is also scheduled for June. You can access the LIB website for more information.

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## **Normal Hosts Illinois Bike Summit**

### **Mercy Davison, Town of Normal Planner**

The 2nd Annual Bicycle Summit was held on Wed., May 15, 2013 at the Marriott Hotel & Conference Center in Normal with approximately 180 attending.

Presentations included: "Bike Planning 101", "Future of Bicycling in Illinois", "Bikes Mean Business", "Overcoming Barriers to Bicycling (Parts I and II)", and "Becoming a Bike Friendly Community."

Pre-Conference "coffees" were also conducted. Topics discussed were: "How to Start a Women's Riding Group", "Starting a Bike Sharing System", "Safe Routes to Schools" and "Bicycling for Seniors." Participating agencies and sponsors included the Illinois Department of Transportation, Trails for Illinois, League of Illinois Bicyclists, Active Transportation Alliance and Foth Engineering.

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## **McLean County Parks News**

Archery deer hunting applications are available and will be received at the COMLARA Park offices until the end of business on July 31.

Only one application per hunt season is allowed. Applications must be received and accompanied by payment of a non-refundable \$5.00 application fee. If you are not selected for the hunt, there is no refund of the application fee. All fee proceeds go to the Deer Management Program. Deer hunting seasons are: Oct. 1-7, Oct. 8-14, Oct. 15-21, Oct. 22-28, Oct. 29-Nov. 4, and Nov. 5-11.

Many other activities are planned for July and August including the Evergreen Lake International Triathlon (July 13), Fisherman's 7K Trail Run (July 20), Take a Kid Fishing Tournament (July 27) and the Evergreen Lake 5K Run (August 10).

**National Trails Day  
Angela Funk, Sugar Grove Nature Center**

Despite cool and windy weather, approximately 200 people attended National Trails Day festivities at Sugar Grove Nature Center in Funks Grove on Sat., June 1. National Trails Day is celebrated nationwide with events in all fifty states. The day was organized with assistance from the Illinois Grand Prairie Master Naturalists.



**Despite overcast skies and windy weather, numerous families took advantage of the opportunity to walk the grounds and enjoy the natural trails at Sugar Grove Nature Center during National Trails Day.**

Activities included guided hikes throughout the preserve's over seven miles of trails. Several informational booths featuring conservation information and children's activities were also highlighted.



**A budding future naturalist appears to be surprised by something in the woods during his walk on National Trails Day at Sugar Grove Nature Center.**

The day was also a chance to introduce attendees to a new section of trail and show off newly-erected trail markers and newly-created trail maps.

The 2014 edition of National Trails Day will be June 7. Please plan to come out to Sugar Grove Nature Center to enjoy some of McLean County's best nature experiences.

## **ParkLands Announces Exhibition**

The ParkLands Foundation and the McLean County Arts Center will be co-sponsoring a juried watercolor exhibition at the MCAC Armstrong Gallery in Bloomington from Sept. 20 through Oct. 26.

The exhibition will celebrate the beauty of the Merwin and Lexington Nature Preserves. Professional and amateur artists 18 years and older are encouraged to submit up to three entries by Friday, Aug. 30, 2013. Submittals should be forwarded to the MCAC at [www.mcac.org](http://www.mcac.org).

All entries must be watercolor paintings depicting the ParkLand Foundation's nature preserves. The artwork should not be larger than 24" by 24", be framed and painted in the last year. A \$25.00 application fee is required.

Winning entries will receive a Juror's Choice Award of \$500 and two Merit Awards of \$200 each. Donald K. Lake, professor emeritus of Parkland College, Champaign and award-winning national exhibiting artist will judge the entries.

For further information, contact MCAC Curator Claire Hedden at [Claire@mcac.org](mailto:Claire@mcac.org).

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## **State Bike Plan Meetings Scheduled**

The Illinois Department of Transportation continues to develop the first statewide bicycle plan. The agency is seeking public input at meetings scheduled across the state. Everyone is urged to attend a public meeting and share your ideas on bicycling as a transportation option in Illinois.

The finalized plan will serve as a bike improvement policy and action plan with specific recommendations.

Topics in the Plan will include the following: bicycle-related planning and policy; safety, design and maintenance; regional bikeway network; implementation and prioritization guidelines; performance measures; education, outreach and performance; and funding.

Meetings in central Illinois are scheduled for 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for Peoria (July 16), Springfield (July 17) and Champaign-Urbana (July 18).

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## **ITEP Funds Vital For Continued Trails Rick Nolan, McLean County Regional Planning Commission**

It was never intended as a sole funding source for transportation projects, but the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Fund Program (ITEP) has made a difference in developing McLean County Trails. ITEP funding has figured prominently in trail development throughout the state. In McLean County alone, approximately \$3.6 million dollars of ITEP money has been used to develop trails within the county, particularly developing trails along the Route 66 Corridor.

The program is the result of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFTEA-LU) passed by Congress in August 2005. The act continued the requirement of states setting aside ten percent of their Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for projects that enhance the transportation system.

The goal of ITEP is to allocate resources to planned projects that provide support for alternate modes of transportation. As with any tax-funded transportation program, federal and state budget constraints have a bearing on the amount of money annually available.

The program provides reimbursement of up to fifty percent for right-of way and acquisition costs and up to eighty percent for preliminary engineering, utility relocations, construction engineering and actual construction costs.

The program should always be considered as an assistance program to help communities achieve their alternative transportation vision.

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### **Greenways Info**

If you are interested in becoming a member, or are interested in attending McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee Meetings, please contact Rick Nolan at [rnolan@mcplan.org](mailto:rnolan@mcplan.org) or (309) 828-4331 ext. 26.