

McLean County Greenways News

Summer 2014: Volume II, Issue III

From the Chair

Michael Brown, Ecology Action Center

Now is good.

As I write this, it's hard not to notice that we are experiencing one of the mildest summers in recent memory, a stark contrast following the past two years of drought. The lakes are mostly full of water and the Mackinaw River is still passable in most areas by canoe or kayak—quite a unique situation for the second week of August. The days are warm but the evenings are cool. Again, somewhat unusual for this time of year.

The cause of this phenomenon? I'm no meteorologist, but the return of the polar vortex has been in the news as of late. In short, the cool arctic temperatures have been forced south into the lower latitudes due to irregular warming of ocean temperatures in the arctic. While this might seem harmless in itself, some are correlating this phenomenon with anthropogenic climate change, which does give some cause to worry. While some still refer to this as "global warming," a more accurate moniker as of late is often "global weirding."

How does this connect to greenways? It does. Simply put, "now is good."

As a child growing up in central Illinois, my siblings and I learned what was to become one of my mother's most oft-repeated truisms. We heard it when dallying instead of drying dishes after dinner. We heard it when procrastinating instead of doing our homework. We heard it when stalling instead of doing what we knew needed to be done. As adults it has become our rallying cry at family get-togethers. *Now is good.* Kind of our personal equivalent of "get'er done."

So in terms of our greenways, given this utterly benevolent August weather, *now is good*, as in this is a good time to:

- Volunteer at a restoration workday with local greenways partners such as the ParkLands Foundation or Sugar Grove Nature Center.
- Get out and explore our local streams and tributaries--on foot or in a small boat.
- Spontaneously organize your own neighborhood cleanup of the Constitution Trail or Sugar Creek
- Make a difference by giving your input to the City of Bloomington's Comprehensive Plan process through the BringItOnBloomington.com website – your input is especially needed as it relates to natural resource issues.

- Consider your local personal carbon footprint and what you can do to change it – check out the Ecology Action Center’s recently released report on the baseline inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions for Bloomington-Normal, available at ecologyactioncenter.org.
- Get out and take a hike. Enjoy the great outdoors. Come winter, you won’t regret your decision to spend more time outside while the weather is pleasant. **Now is good.**

City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan Update

The City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan update continues to move forward, and working group meetings have begun. McLean County Regional Planning staff will continue to meet with businesses, organizations, neighborhood associations and other interested groups to get feedback on future plan content.

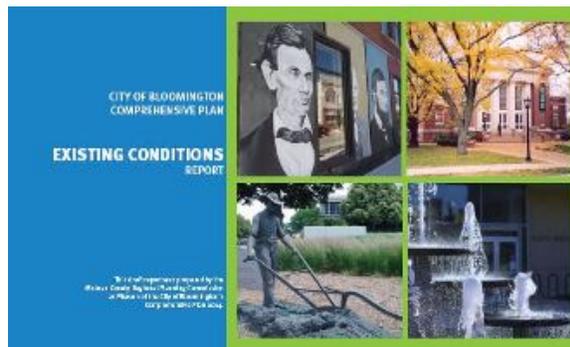


There will be many components of the plan including one on the natural environment and utilities/energy/water. Those interested in making comments can do by filling out a short community survey on project homepage at www.bringitonbloomington.com.

City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan Existing Conditions Report

The City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan Existing Conditions Report Draft is now available. In its draft format, this report will form the basis for conversations during the next phase of the planning process, the Community Visioning.

Identifying existing conditions helps to establish a reference point from which future decisions can be made.



By providing a context of facts and framing the key issues, the people involved in the planning process have an understanding of the City and its characteristics.

To view the full document, head to www.bringitonbloomington.com under the *Resources* tab.

Fleet Feet Sports/We Care Twin Cities Half-Marathon

Area runners are encouraged to participate in the annual Fleet Feet Sports/We Care Twin Cities Half Marathon co-sponsored by the Ecology Action Center (EAC). Runners can pre-register at the EAC website.



On Friday, Sept. 26, a kid's fun run and 5-K Race will be ran at G.E. Park in Bloomington. The fun run will start at 5:30 p.m. followed by the 5-K race at 6:00 p.m.

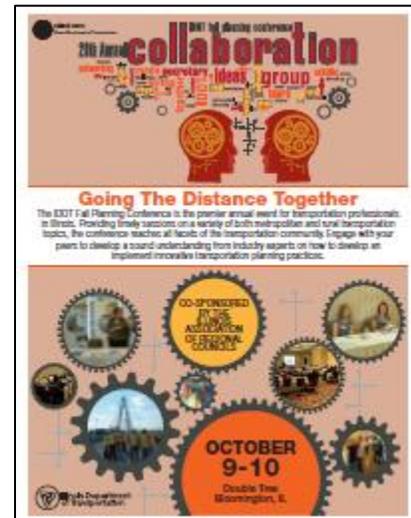
On Saturday, Sept. 27, the half-marathon will begin at 7:00 a.m. followed by the start of the 10-K race at 7:30 a.m. Both events will begin and end at Eastview Christian Church in Normal. The event raises funds to assist the EAC in some of its annual programming.

Bloomington-Normal to Host IDOT Planning Conference

Bloomington-Normal will host the 2014 Illinois Department of Transportation Fall Planning Conference on October 9-10 at the Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in Bloomington. This is the first-time the area has hosted the annual event for transportation planners from around the state.

This year's conference will feature break-out sessions on topics including non-motorized travel and intergovernmental cooperation. The event will also feature a bicycle ride for attendee's around Bloomington-Normal assisted by Bike BloNo.

Registration for the event is open through September 25th. For the full program, and registration details, visit www.idot.illinois.gov



“Light the Night” Is September 11

The Town of Normal will be co-sponsoring the annual “Light the Night” event along with WGLT-FM and Bike BloNo on Thursday, Sept. 11 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Additional lights are being ordered this year to compensate for the anticipated large crowd. Other vendors and information booths will be available to assist with bicycle maintenance and answer questions about non-motorized travel in general.

Trail and Bicycle Advocates Selected As “Citizens of the Year”

Dan and Kathy Steadman were selected as “2014 Citizens of the Year” by the Town of Normal at the July Mayor’s Reception. Dan is president of the Friends of Constitution Trail. His wife, Kathy, edits the organizations’ newsletter and assists on special projects of the “Friends.”

Both have been trail and bicycle advocates for years and can usually be found volunteering or contributing to several trail and bicycle-related activities and events throughout the year.

Local Hazardous Waste Collections Continue

McLean County residents will be able to plan for local household hazardous waste collection events in 2015 and 2017. Under a recently-approved multi-year agreement, the City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, and McLean County will provide the major portion of funding for HHW collection events in the fall of 2015 and fall 2017. Both events will be coordinated by the Ecology Action Center.

Bloomington Criterium

The Bloomington Criterium is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 23 in Downtown Bloomington. Money received from race registrations and contributions to the event benefit Bike BloNo programming. Volunteers are still needed for the event. Volunteers will receive a free t-shirt and free lunch compliments of Meatheads. For more information access the criterium website at <http://blmcrit.com/vol//> or contact Tom Keller at Bike BloNo.

National Trails Day

Thank you to the Illinois Grand Prairie Master Naturalists (IGPMN) for a fabulous National Trails Day (NTD) event! On June 7th, Sugar Grove Nature Center has hosted this nationally celebrated event. Over 40 Master Naturalist volunteers coordinated and presented a fabulous day of learning and exploring in Funks Grove through guided trail hikes, interpretive learning stations, children’s activities, and booths highlighting healthy living, nature photography, geocaching, and so much more!

The event is a project of the IGPMN, a special group of individuals that live in, volunteer in, and share their passion for nature throughout McLean, Livingston, & Woodford Counties. Mark your calendar for Saturday, June 6, 2015 and plan to join the Illinois Grand Prairie Master Naturalists for a special day highlighting the trails and natural areas of Funks Grove at our third annual National Trails Day!



Hummingbird Festival Is August 30

Sugar Grove Nature Center will be hosting the Hummingbird Festival and Pollination Celebration on Sat., August 30 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

All ages are encouraged to learn about pollination and pollinator migration from experts during seminars, classroom programs, guided hikes and garden tours. Activities for children will include puppet shows, crafts, and overcoming obstacles in a life-sized game of migration.

Vern Kleen, a licensed hummingbird bander from Springfield, will demonstrate trapping, banding and releasing hummingbirds. Participants will have an opportunity to “adopt” a bird and receive updates if it is recaptured.

Products will be available from Wild Birds Unlimited in Normal. There will also be a tour of the nature center’s Monarch Waystation.

Other special guests include Kirby and Cindy Pringle who created the documentary “Plight of the Monarch.” Multiple showings of the film will take place throughout the festival. For a complete listing of events visit the Sugar Grove Nature Center website at www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org.