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November 2023

ANSWERS TO THE ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP BROCHURE QUESTIONNAIRE

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Kankakee River Basin Partnership

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Black, J.R., "ANSWERS TO THE ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP BROCHURE QUESTIONNAIRE" (2023). *J.R. Black Kankakee River Materials*. 84.

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ANSWERS TO THE ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP BROCHURE QUESTIONNAIRE:

ITEM 1:

The Kankakee River Basin Partnership was formed as a natural evolution over the years of various groups and agencies that have expressed concerns for the Watershed. These groups are representative of the major stakeholders of the Watershed and have assumed an active role in their particular concerns as they related to watershed management. The Northern Illinois Anglers Association is considered the parent group that spearheaded the movement to organize as an umbrella encompassing all interested parties to re-study the Kankakee River and Iroquois River for sediment and sand-bed load concerns. This organization was called the Alliance to Restore the Kankakee (ARK). The services of the United States Geological Survey was sought to complete a cooperative study to identify current problems and trends of sediment and sand-bed load in the Kankakee and it's tributaries. The Northern Illinois Anglers Association was an active participant in supporting the Conservation 2000 effort and encouraged the formation of the Kankakee River Basin Partnership with a core group from the active participants in ARK that represented various stakeholders. This core group was expanded to encompass input from all counties within the Watershed while focusing on a group that would be representative of the major stakeholders of the Watershed. Thus the formation of the Kankakee River Basin Partnership.

The Kankakee River Basin covers an area of about 5,200 square miles, including the states of Illinois, Indiana and a very small portion of Michigan. The basin covers all or portions of six counties in Illinois with primary coverage in Kankakee, Iroquois and Will counties. Ford, Grundy and Vermillion counties do have a minor impact on the Watershed. Approximately 2169 square miles of the Kankakee River Basin lies within Illinois. The Kankakee River's two principal tributaries are the Yellow River and the Iroquois River.

The Kankakee River Basin (marsh-swamp basin) covered some 500,000 acres prior to channelization in the late 1800,s and early 1900,s. Today less than 30,000 acres of wetland can be found within the basin. In Illinois, the drainage efforts began in the late 1800,s and to date approximately 40% of the acreage (550,000 of 1,210,000) has been drained.

ITEM 2:

Conservation efforts for the Kankakee Watershed have been on-going for years but these efforts have been conducted by individuals and splinter groups that focused on a particular issue rather than basin wide management. Agriculture groups had one agenda, business another and conservation groups still another. All of these groups certainly understood the many concerns of the total Watershed but tended to concentrate their efforts on those concerns that directly affected their organization. One of the first organized beginnings to address the entire watershed was launched by the Northern Illinois Anglers Association in the late 70's when they successfully sued the State of Indiana over proposed dredging, snagging and clearing operations. Their efforts continued to address the Watershed concerns but these efforts seemed to be useless in light of an earlier study of the Kankakee River which basically stated that the river was simply aging and would reach a point of equilibrium. A professional article written for the newsletter "Currents" and authored by one of the original producers of the afore mentioned study indicated that further study needed to be done on the Kankakee as the previous study was inconclusive. This opened the door for the Northern Illinois Anglers Association to provide for a follow-up study to determine the current level and future trends of both sediment and sand bed load which was the major concern for the river and its tributaries.

The Alliance to Restore the Kankakee was organized as a group to raise the funds to cost share the study which was conducted by the United States Geological Survey. The initial findings of this three phase study provided information to encourage the interest of local legislators to involve the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in their study process. While these important steps were being taken, Illinois was in the process of passing Conservation 2000 legislation which called for the next natural step in our growth to the formation of a basin wide partnership to deal with basin management. Our core of stakeholders was expanded to include all three major counties providing representatives to our Board of Control that was representative of the major stakeholders of the total Watershed.

ENCLOSED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FOR YOUR USE:

provide a general listing of constituents and partners.

provide a current Board of Directors.

provide a general list of our concerns which are being refined and prioritized now.

list our objectives.

provide our strategies and those of IDNR in which we had input.

provide mission statement.

provide date the partnership was formally formed.

provide current operating rules.

ITEM 3:

Our partnership has served as an advisor to the U.S. Army Corps during the Recon Study on the Kankakee River Basin. We have worked closely with the project to provide support to their intended projects for solving the concerns of the Watershed. Their projects will be complimented by our efforts through Conservation 2000 funding. Many of these projects will serve as local cost sharing in their project. We have worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to include their "Grand Marsh" project as a component in the on-going Army Corps study to address the concerns in the Kankakee River Basin. We have cooperated with the Alliance to Restore the Kankakee in their effort to complete the U.S. Geological Survey study concerning sediment and sand bed loads in the Kankakee River Basin. We have targeted the Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District as our home base for the "hardgoods package" to be provided the partnerships. We have initiated efforts to produce a video on the Kankakee River Basin expressing historical background, resource benefits, resource concerns and plans of action to protect and enhance the basin. We have initiated efforts to develop a local brochure as a marketing and educational tool for the residents of the Kankakee River Watershed. Most importantly, we have acquired by contract, the services of the SWCD's of Kankakee, Iroquois and Will Counties to develop a "County Plan" for their county which will be facilitated into a "Master Plan" for the Watershed. These plans are required to include the input of all the stakeholders of the area and to receive sign offs once the plans are in place. We have submitted several proposals for potential Conservation 2000 funding that directly relate to our tentative "Master Plan".

The Kankakee River Basin Partnership is broad based with representation from all three of the counties that have a major impact on the Kankakee River Basin. We have sought and secured membership from many of the major stakeholders of the basin. The make-up of our Board of Control is evidence that we have attempted to provide representation to all major constituents. Each of our Board Meetings are organized to provide time for public input and the opportunity to join in the process. The requirements of the contracts issued to the three county S.W.C.D.'s for development of county plans, specifically address the need for each to seek the cooperation and input of the major stakeholders within their own county. This effort should generate additional partners.

Item 4:

The future of the Kankakee River Basin Partnership calls for expansion, refinement and prioritization of issues, long range planning and coordination of various efforts addressing the concerns of the Kankakee River Basin. The partnership has a full agenda in working with the various agencies which are providing their services to address our concerns. We plan to continue active participation in all efforts that are now being conducted as well as future efforts that will be implemented. Basically, our plan of action for the immediate future is the finalization of a "Master Plan" for the Illinois portion of the basin. Currently we are operating from what we will call a "Guidance Plan" developed by the partnership to address our concerns. We have taken the necessary steps to put a "Master Plan" in place by early 1998. Our organizational grant has offered the opportunity for us to contract the SWCD,s to develop county wide plans for the three respective counties. These plans will be merged through facilitation into one "Master Plan". Our concerns will be refined and prioritized in relation to how they meet the needs of the "Master Plan". The "Master Plan" will serve our needs in addressing the concerns of the basin in such a manner that respects the positions of all stakeholders. This plan will aid in coordination of the various sources of funding that can be used to address the concerns outlined. We want to use our plan to cooperate with the Army Corps study and to use available funding to compliment their plan when we have reached necessary agreements. Partnerships are of the utmost importance in our efforts to wisely use the funding available:
(the partnership will)

1. Encourage funding for the completion of the Army Corps study and project implementation.
2. Encourage funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife project as a component in the final action plan.
3. Continue to seek Conservation 2000 funding to address issues that compliment the total action plan.
4. Encourage agriculture funding such as EQUIP and CRP to address portions of the total action plan.
5. Encourage other sources of funding to be used as cost share or stand alone projects that directly support the total action plan. (IE. Local Government - Organizations - Corporations)
6. Encourage projects from national and statewide organizations that support the action plan. (IE. Nature Conservancy - Ducks Unlimited)
7. Continue to encourage the inclusion of the Kankakee River as the head waters of the Illinois River in the Illinois River initiative.
8. Encourage additional funding sources and projects that will have a positive impact on the Kankakee River Basin.

The Kankakee River Basin Partnership considers the public's perception of our partnership as a very positive move towards addressing the problems of the basin. As mentioned before our efforts locally have been on-going for years and the partnership is basically a logical step in the process. We have provided the opportunity for "splinter groups" to express their concerns and provide their support on a unified front. Certainly the partnership has created a great deal of focus on the concerns of the basin and the media has been very supportive to date. The only downside is the general perception that the river system has been studied to death and it is time for action. When one considers the years of work on behalf of many individuals and groups, this feeling is understandable. The partnership feels that once we begin on ground projects, this perception will fade and more support will be the end result.

The administrative difficulties center around the fact that we are working with various agencies and two states in the development of a coordinated and unified plan of action. Locally, our various stakeholders can sit at the table to address issues but we have at least two federal agencies and all the various groups within another state to deal with concerning the Kankakee Watershed management. The program is more complex than simply developing a plan for the Illinois section of the basin. Their plans and ours must compliment each other if we are to provide sound solutions to the concerns of the basin.

ITEM 5:

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ITEM 6: Photos - per Jim Mick - IDNR - Havana

GENERAL INFORMATION::

The assessment study for our area is in print at the IDNR at the present time.

The Army Corps RECON STUDY draft is available at the IDNR at the present time.

Should you desire additional information, please feel free to call at your convenience.