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KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN AND PARTNERSHIP [speaker's notes]

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Kankakee River Basin Partnership

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KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN AND PARTNERSHIP

THE KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN:

- * 1 The Kankakee river rises out of a marsh in Indiana, previously known as Mud Lake which is about three miles southwest of South Bend. The Kankakee in Indiana originally wandered over a course of 240 miles containing some 2000 bends, numerous meanders, oxbows, and sloughs. This area was known as the Grand Kankakee Marsh which was one of the largest marsh-swamp basins in the nation. The Grand Marsh was more than 10 miles wide, and covered some 500,000 acres of which most was in the state of Indiana.

- * 2 Channelization in Indiana began as early as the 1850's when the federal government gave the land to the state. Early channelization was in the form of hand digging which changed to mechanical means in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The channelization shrank the Kankakee's original 240 mile river to a 90 mile channel or ditch supported by levees. The outcropping of bedrock near the City of Momence was lowered by 2 1/2 feet to increase the speed of the flow.

- * 3 These major changes drained a great portion of the Grand Marsh. With the drainage changes, agriculture claimed the marsh for production of row crops. A lot of these areas have been abandoned from farming in recent years. The environmental consequences resulting from the massive hydrological changes still plaque the river basin today.

- * 4 In Illinois, the Kankakee and Iroquois Rivers flow as naturally meandering streams. Tributaries to these rivers have been channelized to permit drainage and facilitate conversion of wetlands, woodlands and prairies to agriculture uses.

- * 5 Three man made run-of-the-river dams are present in the river system today. One at Momence, one at Kankakee and one in Wilmington. Prominent bedrock outcrops are also present at Momence in the Kankakee River and one in the Iroquois River near the Sugar Island Bridge close to the Village of Chebanse.

- * 6 The Kankakee River in Illinois drains approximately 2169 square miles flowing about 60 miles from the State Line to where it joins the Des Plaines River and the two rivers form the Illinois River. The Iroquois River is the largest tributary and joins the Kankakee River in the Village of Aroma Park.
- * 7 The Kankakee River Basin remains one of Illinois' finest systems with good water quality and high quality natural resource values. Even as one of Illinois' most treasured resources, the river basin is not without problems.
- * 8 Sand and silt deposition and nutrients are degrading the quality of the river basin's natural resources. Extreme fluctuations in high and low flow water levels during biologically critical times are causing adverse environmental damage and reductions in habitat.

KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP FORMATION:

- * 9 Four years ago under the Department of Natural Resources C-2000 Program, the Kankakee River Basin Partnership was formed as an offshoot of the Alliance to Restore the Kankakee. This group was born out of the Northern Illinois Anglers Association.
- * 10 The Partnership has developed into a well organized group which is supported by both state and federal legislators as well as the public and private groups in Will, Kankakee and Iroquois Counties.
- * 11 Our Partnership wants to restore, protect and enhance the Kankakee River Basin. To preserve high quality, naturally diverse and productive Kankakee River System sustained by ecological processes which encourage the preservation of aquatic and terrestrial habitat that are managed to allow for compatible social and economic issues.

KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP STEWARDSHIP PLAN:

- * 12 In 1998, the Partnership developed a basinwide stewardship plan for management and restoration of the areas natural resources. The Plan was based on three county plans developed as EQUIP plans for the NRCS Districts and the plan prepared by the Partnership.

County public meetings were held by the SWCD Districts and facilitated by the DNR to provide public input regarding problems and solutions. All information was merged into one plan which was termed the Kankakee River Basin Stewardship Plan. This Plan was adopted by the Partnership last Spring and has been signed on to by more than 60 local groups, businesses and governmental agencies.

The Stewardship Plan represents a common approach to solving problems of the Kankakee River Basin and to ensure the high quality natural resource values are restored, protected, and enhanced by private land owners, local, state and federal governments.

The main goals of the Stewardship Plan include:

1. Stabilize the water resources.
2. Stabilize the land resources.
3. Improve water quality.
4. Preserve the high quality natural resource values.
5. Restore or enhance native animals and degraded habitats.
6. Promote natural resource educational opportunities.
7. Protect prime farmlands.

KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN PROJECTS FUNDED IN 1998:

- * 14 In 1998, the Department of Natural Resources granted the Partnership under the C-2000 Program nearly \$ 1.0 million to complete several projects in the basin, including \$595,630 to the Kankakee River Conservancy District (a unit of county government) for acquisition of property interests in the Momence Wetlands and nearly \$189,000 to the Iroquois County Soil And Water Conservation District for acquisition of permanent conservation easements along Sugar Creek, a tributary to the Iroquois River.

- * 15 Another \$ 1.5 million from a special legislative appropriation was approved by then Governor Edgar and recently released to the DNR to be spent in the Kankakee River Basin for projects approved by the Partnership. These projects are focused on the acquisition of land interests in the Momence Wetlands and other riparian areas of the Kankakee and Iroquois Rivers.

WHY IS THE KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP SUCCESSFUL ?

- * 16 This is a partnership of local people. Members of the Partnership are locally based representing a broad constituency of people from all interests including agriculture, conservation, business, industry, government and labor. Everyone from the local area represented gets a fair and unbiased opportunity to speak and participate in the process. Regular monthly meetings of the 23 member Board of Directors are held.
- * 17 A broad based Partnership equals power. Rather than putting up fists, watershed groups are shaking hands with all stakeholders, including agriculture, to correct the identified problems and concerns. Common ground is always sought.
- * 18 We have a realistic and understandable watershed stewardship plan. The most effective plans are developed by the people of the watershed and have clear vision, goals and action items. The conservation of the Kankakee River Basin is based on sustainable use, that is responsible land management focusing on natural process sustainable over time. River system health, diversity, and productivity are largely products of land conditions. Pouring money and time into a degrading stream that is continuously being adversely impacted is not only futile, but raises false public expectations that aquatic conditions will be improving. High quality natural resources, both biological and prime farmland, are targeted for protection.

- * 19 Our framework is one of and for cooperation. The Partnership and it's Stewardship Plan provides State, Federal, and local governments as well as private organizations and land owners a framework to address natural resource concerns. The existing legal and regulatory systems create the social framework for restoration efforts. The Partnership recognizes multiple jurisdictions.

- * 20 Communication and marketing are a must. The Partnership effectively communicates progress to the public and decision makers to keep them informed about the success of the projects and the participation of landowners. A newsletter is prepared twice a year to highlight issues and describe projects underway or completed. News releases and Press Conferences are issued at appropriate times. Speakers take every advantage of opportunities to talk about Partnership activities to local groups, civic organizations, or other types of public forums.

- * 21 Maintain good public relations and long term perspective. Every effort is made by the Partnership to establish good relations with the general public and landowners within the Kankakee River Basin. All stakeholders are reminded that a long term perspective is necessary to have a meaningful positive impact on the sustainable use and conservation of the natural resources of the basin.

- * 22 Build on small successes. The Kankakee River Basin Partnership started out with several small projects which are nearing completion and have generated a lot of public interest. Building upon these successes, the Partnership expects to gain momentum and attain larger objectives outlined in the Stewardship Plan.

IN CLOSING, I CONGRATULATE YOU ALL FOR YOUR EFFORTS WITHIN YOUR OWN PARTNERSHIPS. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK TO PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THIS GREAT STATE.

I WILL FIELD QUESTIONS SHOULD THERE BE ANY AND I INVITE YOU TO STOP BY OUR BOOTH AND VIEW THE VIDEO OUR PARTNERSHIP HAS DEVELOPED. I DO HAVE A FEW MORE SLIDES THAT I WILL GO THROUGH BRIEFLY WHILE I ANSWER QUESTIONS. THESE SLIDES WILL COVER SOME OF OUR PROBLEMS, A FEW SENIC VIEWS, SOME RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON THE RIVER, THE USGS STUDY ON THE RIVER, SOME FARMING ACTIVITY IN THE BASIN AND THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS ANGLERS ANNUAL RIVER CLEAN UP. QUESTIONS PLEASE.