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2010 Kankakee River Fish Report

The NIA recently received the finalized 2010 Kankakee River Basin Fisheries Report authored by Stephen Pescitelli and Robert Rung of Region II Fisheries. The report is titled Fish Communities and Sport Fishery in the Kankakee River Basin: Current status and long term trends. This is the fourth evaluation of the watershed completed as a part of the IDNR/EPA statewide monitoring program. Previous reports were developed in 1994, 2000, and 2005 providing evaluation over a sixteen year period. This data, along with other historical data collected from fish surveys by the IDNR provides a wealth of information that is imperative to proper fish management. In 2010 a total of 15,239 fish were collected representing 76 species and 17 families. These individual fish were collected in 25 stations throughout the Kankakee River Basin. Thirteen of the stations were located on the mainstem of the Kankakee River and twelve stations were in tributary locations. The entire report can be seen at www.fishillinois.org. A few highlights of the report include the following basic statements extracted from the report: Three State Threatened species were found, including ironcolor shiner, river herring, and starhead topminnow. The round goby was the only new non-native species captured in 2010. No Asian carp have been collected in any of the surveys although a small number of records exist for the river. Species composition was very similar to previous surveys with the minnow, sucker and sunfish families composing the bulk of the catch. Smallmouth bass were the most numerous sport species collected in 2010. Based on fall surveys the regulated zone downstream of the Kankakee Dam (portion protected by slot 12" to 18") produced only slightly higher percent of larger fish, compared to the unregulated zone upstream of the dam. Channel catfish were found at all locations, but were generally more abundant at the higher gradient stations. Walleye catch has increased over the last two surveys. The IDNR Walleye Stocking Program initiated in 2000 has improved mainstem populations. Anglers have reported higher catch rates of walleye in recent years. Stream quality was measured by the Index of Biotic Integrity with a range of 0 to 60 with higher numbers representing higher quality. The mainstem results provided that all but one station produced a score of 41 or higher. Six of the stations had a score of 50 or more indicating high quality of biotic integrity. There has been much concern regarding sand movement into the Illinois portion of the Kankakee River from Indiana. IBI scores were lower in 2010 when compared to those measured in 2005, but no long term trends were identified. It should be noted that these surveys are not designed to detect local impacts from sand. This is only a sampling of this fine report that

provides a wealth of information concerning our fishery. The report is well written and offers great insight into the status of the Kankakee River Fishery. Our thanks to IDNR Region II Fisheries for their continued efforts in managing a great fishery in the Kankakee River System. This river system provides a wealth of recreational opportunity and fishing is at the top of the list.

Kankakee River Round Table Update

This is a general update of the progress of the Environmental and Agriculture Committee of the Kankakee River Round Table. Recently we had a group of committee members visit the Shaffer and Freeman Lakes Environmental Conservation Corporation of Indiana, and toured their dredging project. They provided our group with a great deal of information and advice concerning the development of dredging projects. Although their particular situation differs from the Kankakee River System's sand problems, a lot of their information will be helpful as we move forward with our own Pilot Project. They offered to continue to provide answers to questions that may arise during our planning process. We further have made contact with Dr. John Marlin concerning the possibility of serving as a coordinator for our proposed project. Currently he is working on moving 60 barge loads of sediment from the Illinois River System to Chicago under the Illinois River Restoration 20-20 Project. Dr. Marlin is well known for the "Mad to Parks" Program and successfully moved sediment from the Illinois River in the Peoria Lakes area to the brown fields of Chicago. He definitely is the most experienced person we know for leading these types of projects. He has a strong connection to the Kankakee River System and has many studies, tests, and samples that he has conducted in the system. He has agreed to give our request consideration with the understanding that he is currently fully committed to the present task of moving sediment out of the Illinois River. We have also made good progress on identifying additional sites for final off loading of extracted sediment. We are currently working with one of our supporters that may have an interest in using a portion of the material for land cover. Considering the size of the area and the potential depth of the covering, we could move numerous truck loads of material to that area. We have also made some inroads towards designating a legal agency to serve as the signature organization for handling required documents such as permits, contracts, and serving as the funding host. The committee is moving forward to identify an off load site for the dredged material. We have initially met with potential partners in this effort and further meetings will be required to finalize all of the necessary details prior to any announcement as to the site. The committee is now requesting information from at least two dredgers to provide the minimum amount required for them to be interested in our project and the amount of sediment that could be extracted for their minimum figure. As you can see, we are working hard towards attaining our goal of a Pilot Project as early as 2013.