

## **ALERT! SAVE THE ILLINOIS ECOWATCH NETWORK !**

Governor Blagojevich and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) are in the process of eliminating the Illinois EcoWatch Network as part of the new fiscal budget. Program staff are receiving layoff notices daily. The program is being targeted because it is a fairly new IDNR program (only 10 years old) and as a consequence of the protests earlier this year which saved other natural resource programs within the agency. The program is quietly being cut to avoid another large public outcry.

**EcoWatch needs an overwhelming and immediate response from its constituents.** It is urgent that you contact your Illinois State Senator and State Representative and urge them **TODAY** to call IDNR Director Brunsvold to argue for the retention of EcoWatch and its staff. Contact information is below. Don't know your state legislators? Go to the following website:

<http://www.elections.state.il.us/dls/pages/DLSAddresscrit.asp>

Please provide these numbers to your legislators: Governor Blagojevich: (217) 782-6830; Director Brunsvold: (217) 785-0075

### **BACKGROUND**

This innovative and nationally recognized program was initiated in 1995 in response to the findings of the first report of the Critical Trends Assessment Program (CTAP) and the expressed interest of proactive individuals and organizations. EcoWatch's primary mandate is to collect scientifically valid data on statewide and regional ecosystem conditions, using trained volunteers. Its secondary goals are to educate and provide stewardship opportunities to people of all ages. At a very low cost to the state, EcoWatch volunteers have collected high quality data at over 1,000 river, prairie and forest sites that encompass over 3,000 individual data sets. Dedicated and hard working volunteers have contributed over 52,500 hours of their own time to protect our environment through EcoWatch; the equivalent of \$630,000 in free services for the agency. The approximate hourly rate of professional field biologists for the same amount of hours would have been six times greater at \$3.78 million.

### **ECOWATCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TALKING POINTS**

- ★ If you are an EcoWatch volunteer make sure to personalize what the program has meant to you and the amount of time and effort you have spent monitoring.
- ★ Volunteer monitoring of a site costs the state approximately 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the cost of using professional scientists. Thus, utilization of volunteer monitors is a cost-effective and taxpayer-friendly way for the IDNR to collect valuable, much needed data.
- ★ The program is already well established and fairly self-sustaining. Over 10 years of hard work and the investment of over 52,500 volunteer monitoring hours would be wasted by the cuts.
- ★ EcoWatch has over 10 years worth of monitoring data encompassing over 1,000 monitoring sites using over 2,100 volunteers. The amount of vital information collected on our ecosystems statewide would simply not be possible without EcoWatch and its volunteers.
- ★ EcoWatch network has provided environmental educational services to over 20,000 adults and high school students beyond actual monitoring.
- ★ EcoWatch continues to receive numerous requests for assistance from local citizens groups and organizations interested in using the EcoWatch procedures to track trends in local ecosystem conditions.
- ★ EcoWatch is a national leader in volunteer environmental monitoring. Illinois is the only state with a multi-ecosystem program encompassing streams, forests and prairies. The program receives dozens of calls each year by other states wishing to adapt its materials and monitoring protocols.
- ★ EcoWatch has been highlighted in peer-reviewed national publications including *The Volunteer Monitor*, *Natural Areas Journal* and *Conservation Biology in Practice*
- ★ Three of many notable contributions EcoWatch volunteers have made to natural resource protection include: 1) data were used to establish an Illinois Nature Preserve, 2) locating populations of Illinois threatened and endangered species previously unknown, and 3) detection of an oil spill on Prairie Creek (Will County) that was cleaned up before it was allowed to enter the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in the summer of 2004.
- ★ EcoWatch has many partnerships with key environmental agencies and organizations. A partial list of primary program partners follows:
  - Chicago Wilderness, The Nature Conservancy, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Champaign County Forest Preserve District, Open Lands Project, Shedd Aquarium, Conservation Foundation, Friends of the Fox River, Cache River Joint Venture, U.S. Forest Service, DuPage River CARE, The Field Museum, Friends of the Chicago River, Forest Preserve District of McHenry County, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Friends of the Fox River, Vermillion Watershed Ecosystem Task Force Ecosystem Partnership, and LaMoine River Ecosystem Partnership.

Thank you for your support!



### Scenic Eleven Point River Canoe Outing Highlights

From deep caves and surface springs flow crystal clear streams that feed the Eleven Point River and contribute to the many picturesque Ozark waterways of Missouri.

Recently, some Shawnee Group members spent a weekend exploring its many wonders, including the historical, industrial architecture of early settlers like Lucas Boze whose construction of the Boze Mill Spring grist mill contributed to the western expansion of the nation. These pictures document both the beauty of the waterway and the pioneering efforts of men and women to build community in the heartland.

Despite their hamster-like efforts on the historic Boze Mill Springs' 1880's overshot turbine wheel, these adventuresome canoeists were unable to duplicate the power provided by the 12 million gallons of water per day that flow from the sparkling blue spring pool.

Sierra Club outings are for everyone.

You too can participate in club outings. Sign-up to day for a new adventure & outlook on life.