

M·N·R·G



Midwest Natural  
Resources Group



## Background

The Illinois River begins at the confluence of the Des Plaines and Kankakee rivers near Chicago and flows 237 miles to the Mississippi River at Grafton, Ill. The natural resources of the river supported the lives and culture of Native Americans into the early 1800s. Early explorers and settlers depended on the river for fish, waterfowl, and fur to meet their needs.

Although the river still provides important habitat for aquatic communities and migratory birds, the pristine nature and biological diversity of the Illinois River and its 28,000 square mile watershed have undergone dramatic changes. Streams were channelized, dammed, dredged and leveed. Nearly all tallgrass prairie and savanna, and 90 percent of wetlands, were converted to other uses to support an exploding human population. Important natural resources were exploited and badly depleted without regard for the needs of future generations. Pollutants and sediments choked the life out of the river and associated backwaters.

Presently, interest and opportunities abound for combined, coordinated, and sustained actions by river proponents to protect, restore, and enhance the natural riverine processes for fish, wildlife, and plant communities and for the use and enjoyment of the American people.

## Activities

The Illinois River Focus Area Team will identify funding sources and programs for use by the work group of the Marshall-Putman Soil and Water Conservation District in developing and implementing the Crow Creek Watershed Conservation Plan. Use of Best Management Practices, stream bank stabilization, sediment basins, and water control structures will reduce the amount of sediments reaching back water lakes. A combination of water control structures, dredging, and reestablishment of vegetation will be used to restore habitat in both lakes.

## Partners

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Ducks Unlimited, and the Marshall-Putman Soil and Water Conservation District.

## For More Information

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## On-The-Ground Project

The Team has identified the Crow Creek Watershed, including Weis Lake (Cameron Division of the Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge) and Goose Lake (Sparland Unit of the Marshall County Fish and Wildlife Area), as their site-specific habitat restoration project. More than 70 percent of the 54,000 acre Crow Creek watershed is in agriculture production. Elevations range from 470 to 900 feet above sea level with slopes up to 18 percent in the upper watershed. Soil erosion from agricultural production and stream banks has filled in bottomland lakes, reducing the volume of Goose and Weis Lakes by as much as 85 percent. Degradation of these lakes has resulted in substantial decline in fish and waterfowl use and hunting and fishing opportunities.