

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Winter/Spring 1995

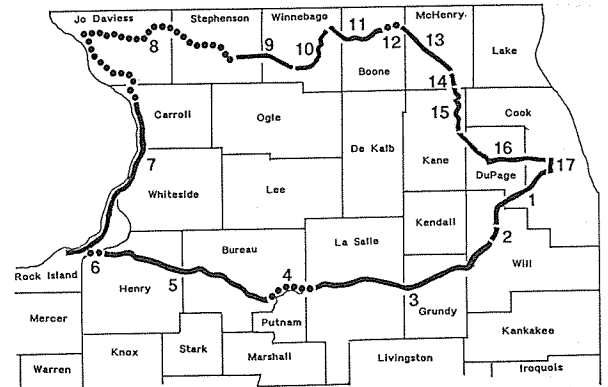
A Look to the Future: The Grand Illinois Trail

The name alone stirs the soul. As proposed by the Illinois Department of Conservation in its 1994 State Trails Plan, the Grand Illinois Trail will be the most ambitious trail in this state, a super circle 476 miles long, joining the Chicago area to the Mississippi.

The Illinois Prairie Path provides a vital 27.5-mile link in the trail, which will connect at least seventeen such individual segments and will cross the northern part of the state twice. (See map to right for names and locations of the segments.)

Most tantalizing is the southern leg, whose major components are the twenty-mile Centennial Trail now under construction, the 60.5-mile Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail (55 miles already improved for bicycling), and the 75-mile Hennepin Canal State Trail proposed for development. The main problem area still in the conceptual stage is the 15.5-mile section between La Salle, the western terminus of the I & M, and Bureau Junction, the eastern terminus of the Hennepin Canal. The I & M Canal Corridor Association is working right now with IDOC and the CSX Railroad Corporation on a linkage along this active railroad corridor to join the two great canal trails.

It can and will be done, folks. There's a Grand Trail coming to Illinois!



THE GRAND ILLINOIS TRAIL

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| <p>1 Centennial Trail; 2 Lockport Historical Trail, Joliet Heritage Trail and Local Streets; 3 Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail; 4 Conceptual Linkage; 5 Hennepin Canal State Trail (segment); 6 Conceptual Linkage; 7 Great River Trail; 8 Local Roads; 9 Pecatonica Trail; 10 Rockford Area Trails; 11 Stone Bridge Trail and Long Prairie Trail; 12 Conceptual Linkage; 13 Crystal Lake-Harvard Trail (segment); 14 Prairie Trail (segment); 15 Fox River Trail (segment); 16 Illinois Prairie Path (segment); 17 Des Plaines River Trail (segment)</p> |
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Components of The Grand Illinois Trail

from Illinois State Trails Plan

Of growing interest to trail enthusiasts is the long-distance interregional trail offering opportunities for multi-day trips. Many states are exploring the potential of linking state and local trails into interregional trails. In Illinois, the greatest potential for this type of trail is in northern Illinois where the majority of existing trails are found and where most trail users reside. As trail development proceeds in Illinois, other regions will evolve networks that can be linked to provide other interregional trail opportunities.

The proposed Grand Illinois Trail would provide a unique opportunity for the majority of the state's residents to ride or walk from their homes in the Chicago metropolitan area, access the trail, travel a southern or northern east-west route across northern Illinois to the Mississippi River corridor, and then return home on the other route.

The southern route of the trail starts at the Chicago Portage in Summit and follows the 20-mile Centennial Trail, the 2-mile Lockport Historic Trail, and the 4.5-mile Joliet Heritage Park Trail southwest to Joliet. Only the Lockport section exists; the other 24.5 miles are programmed for development.

The trail then proceeds 2.5 miles on city streets through Joliet and along the I&M Canal State Trail 60.5 miles southwestward to LaSalle. Most of the State Trail (55 miles) is improved for bicycling; the remainder is programmed.

The 15.5-mile section between LaSalle and Bureau Junction is conceptual, i.e., a means of accomplishing this segment has not yet been determined. It could potentially share an active railroad corridor with CSX, follow local roads or consist of a separate right of way.

The trail then follows the Hennepin Canal State Trail 75 miles westward to Green Rock, which is proposed for development. A 10-mile link between Green Rock and Milan is conceptual.

From Milan, the trail proceeds north 63 miles along the Mississippi River on the Great River Trail to Savanna. Several sections totaling 15 miles exist; 9 miles are programmed; 5 miles are proposed; and 34 miles will be routed on local roads.

The sections of the trail between Savanna, Galena and Freeport are dependent upon local roads, potentially totaling 88 miles, until other options are available. The feasibility study underway for U.S. 20 between Galena and Freeport by the Illinois Department of Transportation will address bicycle use and therefore facilitate an alternative route for the Trail between these communities.

Just east of Freeport, the trail follows the 18-mile Pecatonica Trail eastward to Rockford. This entire section requires improvement.

The trail then follows local roads, existing bike trails and trail initiatives for 20 miles through the Rockford metropolitan area north to Roscoe and the 4-mile Stone Bridge Trail programmed for improvement. At the Winnebago-Boone county line, the trail becomes the 14.5-mile Long Prairie Trail across Boone County; 6.5 miles are existing; 8 miles are programmed for improvement. The 4.5-mile connection between the Boone-McHenry county line and Harvard is conceptual.

At Harvard, the trail follows the proposed Crystal Lake-Harvard Trail 19.5 miles southeastward to a connection with the Prairie Trail in Crystal Lake. The trail then proceeds 5.7 miles southward to the northern end of the Fox River Trail in Algonquin.

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING

President Paul Aeschleman called to order the 30th annual meeting of The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation on Sunday, October 30, 1994 at the Elmhurst Park District community center in Eldridge Park. (The meeting was held a week early to accommodate several board members who could not have attended on the first Sunday in November.)

Approximately eighty members and friends were present, including Elmhurst Park District Commissioners Ken Moss, Gene Pomerance, and Norm Smalley; DuPage County Board member Roger Kotecki; former IPP Vice President Bob Hargis and former Office Manager/Membership Chair Bonnie Hargis of Charleston, Illinois; and author Jim Hochgesang of Lake Forest, who is writing a book on trails in DuPage County.

President Aeschleman reported a year of steady progress for the corporation, especially in the areas of finance and membership, and a major improvement for the trail with the completion by the Illinois Department of Transportation of the handsome pedestrian bridge over Rte. 59 on the Elgin Branch. He announced publication of the first full-color IPP map, prepared under the direction of Paul Mooring with the assistance of staff and facilities at Northern Illinois University, and printed by ABS Graphics, Addison. Treasurer Steve Plumb announced that the IPP's net worth had increased over last year because Path income had exceeded expenditures for the first time since 1991 (see Treasurer's Report, p. 7). This good news is the result of the outstanding effort by Membership Chair David Tate, who reported a total of 1500 members (including VIPs), a gain of 536 new memberships. David gave an excellent

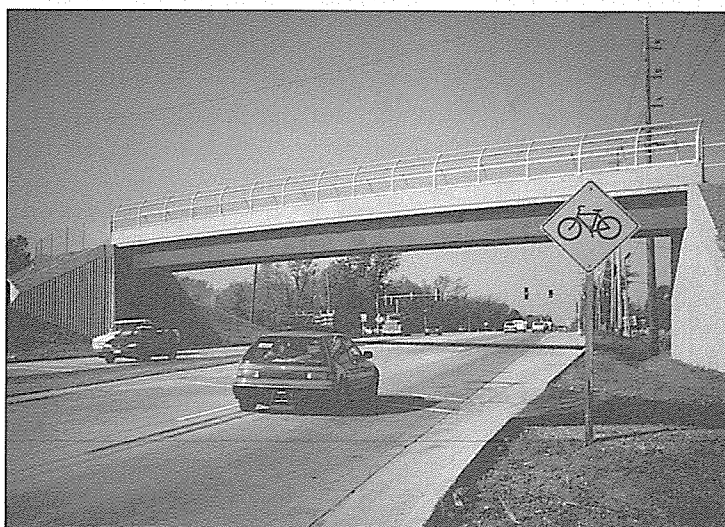
visual presentation showing all the services The Path provides which cost money and our various creative ways of promoting memberships. He thinks the free maps available at our display cases and at bike shops have been especially effective.

Two new members and three incumbents were elected to The IPP board of directors. The three incumbents are John Kacich of Berkeley, Jean Mooring of Glen Ellyn, and Bob Rawls of Warrenville. The new members are Tom Yule of West Chicago, replacing Chris Joyce of Wheaton who retired last year because of other commitments, and Tom May of Carol Stream, who replaces Joan Hamill of Wayne. Joan served with distinction on the board of directors beginning in 1966, longer than any other member, and will continue in her honorary position as chairman of the board.

Tom Yule is a physicist at Argonne National Laboratory. He has a B.S. in physics from John Carroll University in Cleveland and a Ph.D. in experimental nuclear physics from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Long interested in civic affairs and the environment, Tom is a former president of the Indian Knolls Homeowners Association and an original member of the West Chicago Environmental Concerns Committee, which is spearheading the effort to develop a We-Go bikeway network. An avid cyclist himself, Tom likes to point out that he bought his house because it backs up to the Illinois Prairie Path.

Tom May has a B.A. in finance from the University of Iowa and is currently working on his M.B.A. at Illinois Benedictine. Another enthusiastic cyclist, he has biked on all sections of the IPP. He was recruited for the board by Ken Moss and Joan Hamill when he stopped at our display table in Elmhurst last August. He wants to help out on work days and would like to get more people involved as IPP users and volunteers.

Following a question period, board member Ken Moss introduced the two principal speakers: George Bellovics, landscape architect with the Illinois Department of Conservation, who gave an overview of the Grand Illinois Trail; and Mike Ulm, who told of his work as executive director of the 5,000-member Illinois Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. He lobbies on trail-related bills in Springfield and supports the efforts of grass-roots trail groups around the state. He is also promoting the possible railtrail connection between the I & M Canal and the Hennepin Canal. Mike explained that this southern leg of the Grand Illinois will be an important link in the proposed American Discovery Trail, planned to cross the country from coast to coast. Bellovics stated in response to a question that the department of



Illinois Prairie Path bridge over Rte. 59, built by Illinois Department of Transportation, opened in fall, 1994.