

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2009

Illinois Department of Natural Resources Honors Volunteers in Ceremony at Illinois State Fair

SPRINGFIELD, IL - The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is honoring five individuals and six groups as Outstanding Volunteers of the Year during a ceremony in Conservation World at the Illinois State Fair.

"Our volunteers are doing great work by helping at state parks, and with our other programs such as nature preserve restoration, the urban fishing program, and safety education just to name a few. This recognition program is one way we can thank them for the valuable service and expertise they provide to us and to the people of the State of Illinois," said IDNR Director Marc Miller.

The volunteer recognition awards ceremony begins at 11 a.m. on Saturday, August 22 at the Illinois Green Industry Association Amphitheater in Conservation World on the Illinois State Fairgrounds. This year's honorees are:

FRANK AND KRISTINE BORKOWSKY, Ottawa

Frank and Kristine Borkowsky are long time volunteers at the Starved Rock State Park Visitor Center. Frank and Kristine stepped up and took the job as volunteer coordinators who make sure there are volunteers available to staff the LeRocher Book Store and Information Desk. With Frank and Kristine's dedication and devotion, volunteers are always available to assist visitors. They coordinate the volunteer sign up sheets and contact volunteers when someone is needed for either position - and they spend hundreds of hours volunteering themselves. The Borkowskys also order brochures and keep them stocked at the Visitor Center. While this may not be a very time consuming job, it is a necessary one. The IDNR and the site staff at Starved Rock State Park appreciate the efforts of Frank and Kristine Borkowsky.

ED HARRIGAN, Joliet

Ed Harrigan has been a certified volunteer instructor for the Illinois Hunter Education Program for more than 26 years. He assumed the role as Master Instructor for his county in 1997. Ed has participated or taught in 155 classes and been part of certifying 5,505 students. Ed works hard at recruiting and developing teaching teams for the Chicago area. This allows the group to be able to offer more classes during the year over a larger geographical area. He lines up area sponsors to host hunter education classes and arranges for instructors to teach the classes. Ed is a certified NRA Firearm Instructor, National Bowhunter Education Foundation Instructor, and an IDNR Certified Treestand Safety Instructor. He has assisted program staff with treestand safety training courses for area instructors and instructs for the Clyde Howell NRA Youth Shooting Sports Camp. He also is a Lead Range Instructor for the public shooting range during the National Hunting and Fishing Days and recruits instructors to cover the safety talks for IDNR youth pheasant hunts. Ed is willing to do whatever is asked of him to promote hunter education for future generations. He makes the learning experience an enjoyable one for all individuals and has received a lot of positive feedback from parents and students. Ed is a dedicated individual to the program, his students and the future of hunting.

CINDY MCKEE, Ottawa

Cindy McKee is a life member of the Starved Rock Historical and Education Foundation. She has spent many years working in and around Buffalo Rock State Park and Starved Rock State Park, including running the successful LeRocher Book Store in the Starved Rock Visitor Center. She helps with purchasing all inventory, stocking and arranging shelves. Without her dedication, the bookstore would not be the success it is. Cindy is also an avid bird watcher and helped establish the bluebird trails at Starved Rock and Mitchell's Grove. She also spent many volunteer hours conducting annual bird and butterfly counts throughout Illinois. She not only is a regular volunteer at Starved Rock and Buffalo Rock, but she has also volunteered for the Illinois State Museum to start a four-county study of damselfly and dragonfly populations.

DON PHELPS, Peoria

Don Phelps became a certified Volunteer Urban Fishing Instructor on April 12, 2000. From that date until his recent retirement from the program, he has been a tireless worker for IDNR. He has worked with Peoria area communities to improve fishing access and safety. He has presented the Urban Fishing Program to hundreds of children and adults. He has worked with organizations to promote fishing opportunities for people with disabilities, and provided advice to many groups wanting to expand outdoor education opportunities. Don has traveled hundreds of miles, paying his own expenses, to help promote IDNR youth education programs and is a shining example of what volunteerism is all about.

CLIFFTOP (Conserving Lands in Farm, Forest, Talus or Prairie), Maestown

CLIFFTOP is a group of individual conservationists involved in a variety of volunteer conservation activities. Their work includes preparing for and assisting with prescribed burns; native plant seed collection and invasive plant control; wildlife surveys; plant and animal population censuses; landowner workshops and field trips; public education outreach; volunteer recruitment and training; and, coordination for the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan in southwest Illinois. Since 2006 when the group was founded, almost 10,000 hours have been donated. Their efforts focus on the resource rich Blufflands-Karst Corridor of southwest Illinois in Monroe and Randolph counties. They have put hundreds of hours into the planning and administration of the first annual "Festival of the Bluffs" event this year. The CLIFFTOP group's dedication and stewardship have been great assets to the IDNR Division of Natural Heritage and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

GOOSE LAKE PRAIRIE PARTNERS, Morris

Goose Lake Prairie Partners has been providing valuable services to Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area for 26 years. Their love and commitment for the natural and cultural resources of the prairie have never faltered. The care and determination members of the partners display year after year is a credit to their character and reveals their passion for the prairie. Their commitment is seen in all their projects and programming, providing an inspiring and educational experience for park visitors. Their accomplishments in the past year are impressive. Along with staffing the visitor center and gift shop so that it could remain open on weekends year round, they added a ring neck pheasant to the visitor center collection and started a library on site. They planned, organized and implemented a prairie planting program for the IDNR Earth Day in the Parks program. The group obtained a grant to cover the cost of the restoration and raising of a windmill which will provide ample water to the pond at the site for improved aquatic habitat and enhanced educational opportunities. The Goose Lake Prairie Partners are known for their re-enactment of the pioneer lifestyle of the 1830s at the Cabin Festival. They also sponsor a nature photography contest, a holiday open house to celebrate a pioneer Christmas, and Prairie Day during Illinois Prairie Week. The group's passion and commitment, together with their accomplishments, are worthy of the most sincere gratitude and appreciation.

PEORIA AREA MOUNTAIN BIKE ASSOCIATION, Trivoli

The members of the **Peoria Area Mountain Bike Association** are being saluted for their volunteer work at Jubilee College State Park. The association's lead trail care coordinators are Mike Howard and Betsy Silzer. They alone have logged hundreds of hours over the years in maintaining, monitoring, and improving the park's trails, especially the three-mile trail known as the "Plank Trail" at Jubilee College. This trail has become one of the premier trails for mountain bikers in the state of Illinois due to the efforts of the Peoria Area Mountain Bike Association.

ROCK ISLAND TRAIL DEPOT VOLUNTEERS, Wyoming

For the last four years, the **Rock Island Trail Depot Volunteers** have opened and operated the Chicago Burlington & Quincy Depot in Wyoming, Illinois. The depot serves as a visitor center and railroad museum and is a testimony to the hundreds of passengers that traveled along the railway 100 years ago. Having the depot open has been of great benefit to the IDNR and the town of Wyoming. The dedicated and hard working Rock Island Trail Depot Volunteers have spent hundred of hours welcoming visitors from all over the country.

THE FRIENDS OF THE WORLD SHOOTING AND RECREATIONAL COMPLEX, Sparta

The Friends of the WSRC is a group of dedicated individuals who have spent countless hours assisting at the IDNR World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta. They have helped to enhance and provide a safe and quality experience for activities and events at the complex. They educate constituents in the variety of shooting sports available, while facilitating range rules and safety policies. Their main focus has been to assist with many special events and shooting leagues, but they have also spent many hours providing public outreach and informational services about the WSRC through the development of a brochure and website. They have been ambassadors of the many shooting sports offered at the WSRC and are truly devoted to making the facility the best place shooting sports venue in America.

THE KASKASKIA COWBOYS, Sparta

The **Kaskaskia Cowboys** have spent many hours assisting the IDNR World Shooting and Recreational Complex by holding and hosting many events. They have provided manpower, referees, judges, and facilitated technical support for improvements on the grounds for the various shooting disciplines. Their main focus is to always keep safety in mind. They have sponsored events and banquets for the public and shooting constituents. Their programs and additional services to site visitors would not have been possible without their help.

For more information about volunteer opportunities at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, check the web site at www.dnr.state.il.us/volunteer.

###

