

USRC Showcase Returns

Feature Partnership Organization - ECIMN

Adopt-a-Highway Spring Cleaning

River Runners Ready for Spring

USRC RiverWatch Training Workshop

Mussel Project Wins Grant for Short Film



Recreation * Stewardship * Citizen Science

USRC Newsletter



Breaking News >>>

A Year's Worth of Trash in 3 Weeks!?

USRC Adopt-a-Highway Team Hits Road Running

The USRC Adopt-a-Highway team wasted no time in catching-up with the winters accumulation of roadside trash along their 2 mile stretch of highway. "The first highway clean-up of the season always yields the most trash," says USRC Adopt-a-Highway coordinator Joe Niernberger. "In the first 3 weeks of March the Rt 47/I-72 interchange and the 2 miles north on Rt 47 were cleaned. Volunteers worked a total of 50 hours collecting 45 bags of trash; more than we collected in all of the 2021 cleanups!" USRC would like to thank all of the volunteers for their hard work as well as those who make the extra effort to responsibly dispose of their refuse. If you would like to be a part of this dedicated group, please contact Joe Niernberger at adoptahighway@sangamonriver.org.



Sangamon River Runners Look Forward to Float Season Currently 35 Members Strong

USRC is a proud organization member of the Illinois Paddling Council

In 2021 the USRC created the Sangamon River Runners, a new group for those interested in getting out on the river with other like-minded paddling enthusiasts. Initially consisting of those who have participated in previous USRC float trips, the group is currently 35 members strong as of the end of 2021. "The purpose of the group," says Scott Hays, "is to be sure float trip participants have basic skills in handling paddlecraft. The Sangamon River Runners will host periodic floats down the river and also coordinate the Annual Sangamon River Cleanup events. Membership in the group is open to paddlers who can successfully steer and navigate a canoe or kayak on moving water; preferably those who have at least beginning paddlecraft training. Equipment, including our canoe/kayak transport trailer and USRC canoes and kayaks, is available free of charge to members of the Sangamon River Runners. We will coordinate shuttling participants between beginning and end points for all river trips." For more



information about membership in the Sangamon River Runners, contact Scott Hays at riverrunners@sangamonriver.org.

In addition to being USRC's River Runner Coordinator, Scott is president of the Illinois Paddling Council (IPC). The Illinois Paddling Council is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting and advocating for all aspects of paddle-sports in Illinois through a variety of projects, programs, and activities. The IPC works with local, state and federal governmental bodies to address issues important to Paddlers, to promote paddle-sport safety and education, to develop and advocate for access and water trails throughout the state, and to promote stewardship of Illinois waterways. The USRC is a proud organization member of the IPC.

East Central Illinois Master Naturalist

"...science-based educational opportunities that connect people with nature and help them become engaged environmental stewards."

The East Central Illinois Master Naturalist (ECIMN) program and the volunteer base that it produces has been the major source of volunteers to USRC events since its inception. The ECIMN program that began in 2005 has graduated nearly 400 residents. These graduates have volunteered over 98,000 hours during that time. USRC and many other organizations have been the beneficiaries of these well trained and enthusiastic volunteers over the years. In 2021 alone, 141 dedicated volunteers contributed a remarkable 10,920 volunteer hours in service to various organizations including the USRC, and the community at large. This achievement converts into roughly \$273,000 worth of volunteer labor. Master Naturalists volunteer in areas such as stewardship, leadership, outreach, citizen science, and continuing education. In addition to the many contributions that ECIMN

makes in the field, the USRC is fortunate to have Master Naturalists who sit on our board, take-on coordination roles for the group, and provide valuable leadership and inputs into decision making that are in part the product of their unique training and experience they receive in the Master Naturalist program.

If you think that you would like to enhance your knowledge of the natural world around you and are wondering if the Master Naturalist Program is right for you, here are a few things to consider. Anyone can become a Master Naturalist - it does not require a degree or years of experience. You do, however, need to:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Have a desire to learn and share natural resource information within your community
- Be willing to devote time to volunteering and continuing education
- Complete 40 hours of volunteer training

Illinois Master Naturalist



By becoming more informed about the world around you can increase your appreciation and enrich your understanding of it. You can have an opportunity to play an important role in sharing knowledge with others in your community. Community representation is an important element in creating advocates for the natural world. So if you think that the ECIMN might be right for you or if you would like more information, go to the Master Naturalist website at <https://go.illinois.edu/ECIMN>.

Breaking News >>>

Amanda Christenson Announces New Hybrid MN Program



Amanda Christenson, Master Naturalist Program Director serving Champaign, Ford, Iroquois and Vermillion Counties says, "We are excited to roll out a new hybrid version of Master Naturalist volunteer training that aims to enrich folks with hikes in nature, discussions with experts, and at-home study. We empower volunteers to learn about the natural world and then go out to share their knowledge through community outreach and stewardship with our partnering organizations. We also offer many opportunities to learn about the environment through our seminars and services without the volunteer commitment." Find out more at <https://go.illinois.edu/ECIMN>.

Educational Opportunity >>>

USRC Volunteers Reflect on ECIMN Program

"The Master Naturalist Program provides us with so many organized, meaningful opportunities to do constructive work in aid of our environment and to enrich our personal understanding of the natural world. I can't wait for the next volunteer activity."

-Walt Hurley, Professor Emeritus, UI Animal Science – USRC Volunteer – Master Naturalist graduate



"The Master Naturalist program is such a great opportunity to develop a corp of knowledgeable volunteers to help promote conservation and management of natural resources. There are opportunities to provide outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural areas in our communities. It is a science-based education program that connects people with nature and allows them to become engaged as an environmental steward, educating, and preserving natural areas in our community."

-Mary Stech, Nurse Practitioner, Prospero Health – USRC Volunteer, Board Member & Volunteer Coordinator – Master Naturalist graduate



"I took the Master Naturalist course after rediscovering hiking and East Central Illinois' natural areas that first spring/summer of COVID 2020. I met like-minded and service-driven friends, joined a great organization in Upper Sangamon River Conservancy, all while being able to give back to my community. Not only learning about the natural world, but beginning to understand it has been the most rewarding part. It's been one of the best decisions I've made; you won't regret it!"

-Joey Anthony, Associate Engineer, Ameren Illinois - USRC Volunteer & Board Member – Master Naturalist graduate



USRC Sangamon River Showcase Returns to Izaak Walton Cabin May 7th

The USRC's Sangamon River Showcase has been a casualty of COVID for the last two years. We are happy to announce that it will return bigger and better than ever on May 7th. "It's a great time of the year to venture out to the Sangamon River at Lake of the Woods – abundant wildflowers are in bloom, and spring is in the air," says USRC President and Showcase coordinator Mike Daab.

When asked about what the Showcase has to offer this year Mike explains, "We have an assortment of displays and activities of interest for all ages. Kids can practice casting for prizes, look through microscopes at life from the river, and learn about floodplains with interactive water features. Adults can appreciate the showing of our conservation activities, and hopefully volunteer to join us in the future. Trying out various kayaks and canoes on the river is a hit for anyone considering the increasingly popular paddle sports."

The Showcase is open from 10am to 2pm



and you can drop-in any time. As Mike describes, "The event is designed so that you can stop by and take in as much as you'd like, from interacting with all the displays and getting out on the water to just grabbing some popcorn and checking out the live fish from the river." However you would like to enjoy the event, "Just make sure to include us in your Saturday plans."

When asked what he hopes visitors will take away from this event Mike says, "We hope that visitors leave with a greater appreciation of the Sangamon River that will possibly lead to them joining us in volunteering to help conserve the resource. We appreciate the support of the community in ways that range from getting in the river to search for mussels to cheering on our efforts to keep the river and watershed free from litter. When the community supports river conservation it is less likely the river will suffer from mistreatment." We hope to see you there.



The Upper Sangamon River Conservancy Presents:

SANGAMON RIVER SHOWCASE 2022

Learn about opportunities to enjoy and protect our river through family-friendly, interactive exhibits, including:

**LIVE FISH, FISHING DEMONSTRATIONS, MUSSELS,
RIVERWATCH, WATER TABLES, RIVER CLEANUPS,
HIGHWAY CLEANUPS, AND MORE!!**

Try a canoe or kayak on the Sangamon River! All FREE!

DATE: Saturday, May 7th 10:00am - 2:00pm
LOCATION: Izaak Walton Cabin @ Lake of the Woods
679 Senna Dr., Mahomet

www.sangamonriver.org



Become a Volunteer

To learn more about the many volunteer opportunities available at the USRC contact Mary Stech at volunteer@sangamonriver.org or visit our website at sangamonriver.org.

USRC Contacts

Mike Daab, President
president@sangamonriver.org

Mary Stech, Vice President
vicepresident@sangamonriver.org

Joe Niernberger, Secretary
secretary@sangamonriver.org

Bart Duesdieker, Treasurer
treasurer@sangamonriver.org

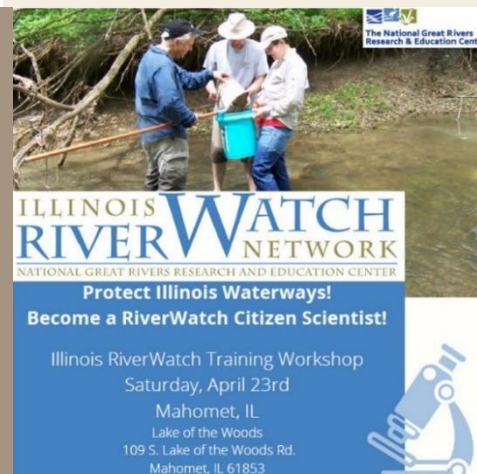
Scott Hays, River Runner Coordinator
riverrunners@sangamonriver.org

Bruce Colravy, Citizen Science Coordinator
citizenscience@sangamonriver.org

Michael Lambert, Webmaster
webmaster@sangamonriver.org

Citizen Science Opportunity >>> RiverWatch Workshop Coming to Mahomet

The RiverWatch Training Workshop comes to the Izaak Walton Cabin at lake of the Woods on April 23rd beginning at 9am and ending at 4pm. The event will teach you how to collect information about macroinvertebrates, and how to determine stream quality based on what you collect. The Illinois RiverWatch Network is a statewide non-profit volunteer stream monitoring program. Volunteers are trained and certified as citizen scientists to monitor and protect local streams. The USRC has proudly participated since 2009. Upon



ILLINOIS RIVERWATCH NETWORK
NATIONAL GREAT RIVERS RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER
Protect Illinois Waterways!
Become a RiverWatch Citizen Scientist!

Illinois RiverWatch Training Workshop
Saturday, April 23rd
Mahomet, IL
Lake of the Woods
109 S. Lake of the Woods Rd.
Mahomet, IL 61853



completing training and becoming certified, volunteers adopt a stream site or help the USRC monitor 1 or more of our 8 stream sites. Sign-up at <http://www.ngrrec.org/Riverwatch/>.

RiverWatch/USRC Mussel Project to Be Subject of Short Film



On March 15th the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center's (NGRREC) Illinois RiverWatch Network was awarded a grant of \$7,500 to produce a short film focusing on freshwater science and education.

The RiverWatch film will tell a story of the volunteers who represent both the energy and diversity of people participating in a freshwater mussel community science program, and what a small group can accomplish when people work together to understand what is happening in their local environment.

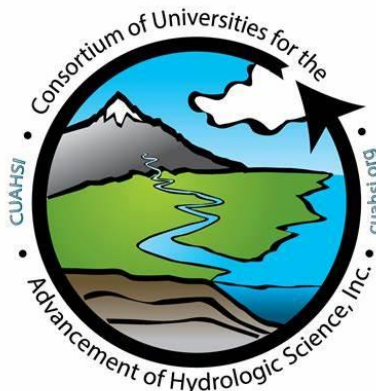
"We hope the film will encourage viewers to consider the importance of freshwater mussels and other animals living in their local streams" said Danelle Haake, RiverWatch Director and Stream Ecologist.

The film will also highlight the biodiversity and unique traits of freshwater mussels found in the Sangamon River and the importance of healthy water quality to protect these important animals.

Perceptive Visions, Inc. will produce the film, which will feature volunteers with the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy (USRC).

"Although we would love for everyone to have an opportunity to work with us in-person to experience the excitement of finding their first mussel, we know that just isn't possible," Haake said. "We hope this film will help us bring that joy to classrooms and computer screens across the region."

The film project is being funded by the



Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrologic Science, Inc. (CUAHSI) through their "Let's Talk About Water" grant program. It will be publicly available through NGRREC's YouTube channel, as well the center's social media channels. USRC will use the film for its outreach and promotional efforts. Additional funding for the mussel research program titled Freshwater Mussels of the Upper Sangamon River: Community Science in Action has come from the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center who provided \$5310 for mussel tags, Go-Pro cameras, and other necessary equipment. The Living Earth Collaborative provided \$26,978 in grants to cover the remaining costs that include morphometrics and genetics, and to cover costs related to the development of educational and outreach materials related to the study.



Upcoming Events >>>

2022 Spring Calendar

Adopt-a-Highway Clean-up
Museum of the Grand Prairie
May 22 – 9am – 11am

For Information Contact Joe Niernberger at
adoptahighway@sangamonriver.org

Invasive Species Removal
Mahomet Greenway Park
Thursday Workdays

9am – 11am
May 5, 12, 19, 26
June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Burn Days

10am – 1pm
May 15
June 26

For Information Contact Joe Niernberger at
naturalareas@sangamonriver.org

RiverWatch Monitoring
Small Streams

May 21 9am-12pm & 1pm-4pm
Sangamon River

June 4, 11 9am-12pm & 1pm-4pm
For Information Contact Bruce Colravy at
citizenscience@sangamonriver.org

USRC River Runners

Watch Website Events Calendar
Time and Place TBD

For more information contact Scott Hays at
riverrunners@sangamonriver.org

Upper Sangamon
River Conservancy

PO Box 765,
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newsletter@sangamonriver.org

www.sangamonriver.org