

BEFORE THE ILLINOIS POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
Pollution Control Board

IN THE MATTER OF:)
)
WATER QUALITY STANDARDS AND)
EFFLUENT LIMITATIONS FOR THE)
CHICAGO AREA WATERWAY SYSTEM)
AND THE LOWER DES PLAINES RIVER:)
PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO 35 Ill.)
Adm. Code Parts 301, 302, 303 and 304)

R08-09
(Rulemaking - Water)

PCH 182

To: John Therriault, Clerk
Marie Tipsord, Hearing Officer
James R. Thompson Center
Illinois Pollution Control Board
100 West Randolph St., Ste. 11-500
Chicago, Illinois 60601

SEE ATTACHED SERVICE LIST

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that I have filed today with the Illinois Pollution Control Board **Comments of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources on the proposed UAA for the Chicago Area Waterways**, a copy of which is herewith served upon you.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

By: *Stanley Yonkauski Jr.*
Stanley Yonkauski, Jr.
Legal Counsel

Dated: January 8, 2009
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62706
(217) 782-1809

IN THE MATTER OF:)	
)	
WATER QUALITY STANDARDS AND)	
EFFLUENT LIMITATIONS FOR THE)	R08-09
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**COMMENTS OF THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ON THE PROPOSED UAA FOR THE CHICAGO AREA WATERWAYS**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) supports the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed amendments to the water quality standards and effluent limitations concerning the Chicago Waterway System (CAWS) in the upper Illinois River basin. As active participants in the Stakeholders Process conducted by the IEPA during the last 10 years, IDNR staff have attended many meetings and provided verbal comments and IDNR fisheries data to IEPA as well as other stakeholder participants relative to the Chicago Waterways System (CAWS).

IDNR agrees with the UAA (Use Attainability Analysis) basic findings and conclusions, including the IEPA recommendations for the most optimal attainable use for each water body. Input and comment from our Fisheries staff particularly has been utilized by the IEPA and their consultants to complete the UAA documents.

Further, the Illinois DNR, Division of Fisheries believes the UAA’s identified “Strategic Plan” for the CAWS is generally consistent with the fisheries strategic plan for the rivers and streams of Illinois as described in the 1998 “Strategic Plan for Illinois Fisheries Resources”, Division of Fisheries, Illinois DNR. Within the CAWS area (corresponds to and contained within DNR Region II), the demand for fishing in rivers and streams far exceeds the available supply as documented in the fisheries strategic plan. Almost 30% of the total statewide demand for fishing in rivers and streams (9.7 million angling days statewide), comes from the CAWS area (DNR Region II) with only 6.7% of the available fishing supply found in the CAWS area (DNR Region II) due to low amounts of river and stream acreage, poor fisheries habitat, poor angling access, and lower general water quality. Thus, fisheries staff activities are guided by the general goals and strategies noted in the fisheries strategic plan, to maintain the supply of fishing opportunities and to conserve and protect the rivers and streams (includes restoration and enhancement of aquatic habitat and fish and other aquatic life resources).

These fisheries general goals and strategies are consistent with the CAWS Reach Use Designations, Strategic Plan Management Alternatives, address impairments that prevent the attainment of a proposed designated use in a given waterway reach. Implementation of aquatic habitat improvements and water quality enhancements by responsible federal,

state, local governments as well as private organizations must cooperatively continue and increase in the future, if attainment of CAWS Reach Use Designations will be realized.

After sampling below Brandon Lock this summer (2008), it looks like that system is improving, with shorthead redhorse, smallmouth bass, buffalo and other fishes that need higher water quality present. This “island of recovery” is an early indication of the potential for recovery that may be expected in other parts of the CAWS where habitat and water quality improvements occur.

As important as water quality is to fisheries in our state, water quality is just as important to the development of water-based recreation in northern Illinois. The Department of Natural Resources co-sponsored the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Trails Workshop, “People on the Water” in 1996. The workshop revealed great interest in a system of water trails in the region. The Department then co-sponsored the preparation of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Trails Plan, adopted in 1999 by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. The Plan, updated in 2006, identifies a 480-mile non-motorized water trail system for the region, including the North Shore Channel, the North Branch of the Chicago River, and the South Branch of the Chicago River, the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal, the Calumet-Sag Channel, the Little Calumet River, and the Lower Des Plaines River. The Plan calls for 174 canoe launch sites, parking areas and coordinated signage and user information. About 80% of the system envisioned in the Plan is now in place. Since the Plan was adopted in 1999, more than 40 new launch sites have been added and more than 200 miles of water trail have been improved. The Department funded many of these improvements through its Boat Access Area Development grant program and financial assistance for water trail signage and maps. This substantial public investment in the region’s water trails has led to increased public use. According to Openlands, the number of people participating in canoeing and kayaking within the region has doubled since 1999.

In addition, the South Suburban Calumet Area Open Space Plan and the Calumet-Sag Trail Plan also call for new and/or improved non-motorized access and signage and cleaner water for recreational use.

Based upon these plans, the number of established or planned public access areas on the targeted waterways are: North Shore Channel (4), North Branch of the Chicago River including Skokie Lagoons (8), South Branch of Chicago River (3), Cal-Sag Channel (3), Little Calumet River including Lake Calumet (3), and the Des Plaines River from the I-55 Bridge to the confluence with the Cal-Sag/Ship Canal (2).

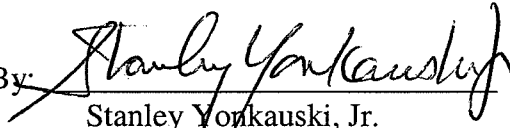
In 2005, Friends of the Chicago River conducted a Paddling Survey for 17 rivers and creeks within northeastern Illinois, including targeted waterways. Among the 17 waterways, the North Branch of the Chicago River ranked 4th in terms of total number of trips taken. Also from the survey, paddlers were asked what the most important qualities were when choosing a location for a paddling trip and water quality ranked as one of the most important.

Several major events in the region also demonstrate the interest in paddling such as the Des Plaines River Marathon which attracts about 1,000 paddlers annually, the Fox River Marathon which attracts 800 paddlers, the Chicago River Flat Water Classic which attracts 500 paddlers, and the Cal-Sag National Rowing event which attracts 350 scullers.

In summary, the Department has invested substantially in planning and improving water trails in northeastern Illinois. Public interest in and use of water trails has grown significantly in recent years. Improving the targeted waterways' water quality will only increase and enhance this growing recreational use. The Chicago Area Waterways and the Des Plaines River are important natural resources which provide countless hours of public fishing and recreational opportunities to the people of Illinois. Protection and conservation of the State's natural resource values found in the CAWS (upper Illinois River basin) builds a solid foundation for the long-term restoration and recovery of the overall Illinois River System which constitutes about one-half of Illinois.

Respectfully submitted

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

By: 
Stanley Yonkauski, Jr.
Legal Counsel

Dated: January 8, 2009
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702
(217) 782-1809

STATE OF ILLINOIS)
)
COUNTY OF SANGAMON) SS
)

PROOF OF SERVICE

I, the undersigned, on oath state that I have served the attached **Comments of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources on the proposed UAA for the Chicago Area Waterways** upon the person to whom it is directed by placing it in an envelope addressed to:

John Therriault, Clerk
Marie Tipsord, Hearing Officer
Illinois Pollution Control Board
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 11-500
Chicago, IL 60601

SEE ATTACHED SERVICE LIST

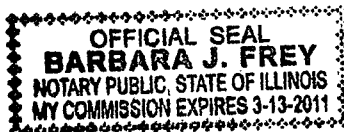
by enclosing the same in an envelope addressed as shown above and by depositing said envelopes in a U.S. Post Office Box in Springfield, Illinois on this 8th day of January, 2009.

Ronde Braun

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME

this 8th day of January, 2009

Barbara J. Frey
Notary Public



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