



FRIENDS OF THE SANGAMON VALLEY

Summer 2011

Volume 12, Issue 3

Friends Move to the Next Level with Executive Director

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley was established in 1998. Since that time, and mostly just within the last seven years, we have conducted a comprehensive inventory of the natural resources in Sangamon County, received donations of land, secured capacity-building and land acquisition grants, raised several thousand dollars to purchase land, gained responsibility for two easements, conducted stewardship programs and workshops, produced videos of projects, survived an IRS audit, and initiated a legacy program, all with a volunteer staff.

Every board member brings their own talents and expertise to the organization and we have a dedicated core of volunteers that we can count on for grunt work whenever we need it. But, at the Board's March retreat, significant discussion occurred about the future of the organization and questions were raised about how we would continue to get the work done on an increasing number of acres and how to manage our significant assets with an all-volunteer force. Up until this point, we had one person performing the duties of board president and executive director without compensation. And that meant some things got done whenever they got done.

At the Board's March retreat, it was decided that in order to be effective and efficient at what we do, the Friends needs an Executive Director who would be responsible for the day to day workings of the organization. This would then free the president to concentrate on providing leadership for the board and coordinating strategic planning for the organization.

With an influx of new board members in the

last couple of years, there is a new energy and the potential for sharing responsibilities among the board members, such as fundraising and training, for example. With a paid Executive Director, the Friends can now expect certain tasks and duties to be accomplished on a regular basis rather than when the appropriate volunteer forces could be mustered. Of course, volunteer forces continue to be paramount for the mission and proper functioning of the Friends. This restructuring will allow the Friends to get more things done more quickly and help us mature into a more sophisticated organization.

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley is pleased to announce Bill Crook as our new President and Vern LaGesse as our new Executive Director. Vern has been acting as the Executive Director since June 1. Bill has been Vice President, and will serve as President until the next President comes along.



Vern LaGesse is now the Friends Executive Director.

Project and Preserve Update

By Vern LaGesse

It was the worst of times for 13 acres of property connected to the South Fork, a little more than five years ago. It's turned into the best of times for the first two county parks in Sangamon County. With a little attention from the Friends, these two parks are turning into far better natural areas than they were.

The South Fork Nature Reserve and Carver Yocum Homestead Site are two properties the county acquired in 2004. The Friends hold conservation easements on the two properties, in cooperation with Sangamon County. The easement gives the Friends responsibility for oversight of each property, and a Memorandum of Agreement gives the Friends authority to conduct ecological management. A conservation easement is a legal document between a landowner and a land trust organization that permanently limits the uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. The property can be used, even sold or passed on to the landowner's heirs. The conservation easement is recorded with the deed for that tract so if the property is ever sold, the restrictions remain in place.

As part of our agreement with the County, the Friends conducts annual inspections of each park, noting any changes in park conditions, including changes in the plant community or other ecological aspects, any damage or vandalism, or any unsafe conditions. A report, including park photographs, is filed every year with the County to document our inspections. The Friends conducts stewardship activities a few times a year at each park.

Upon visiting the South Fork Nature Reserve this year for its annual inspection, I found the bur oaks that we planted in 2005 to be over my head, and most were eight feet tall. Some have produced acorns and there were small bur oaks, about 18-inches tall which seemed to have germinated and grown from seed. It was very satisfying for me to see the progress of these oaks. To all our members and volunteers that assisted on that day so long ago, you can be certain that our work has made a difference for the reserve.

My next inspection was at Carver Yocum Homestead Site. As I was driving out, I was wondering what it would look like. I thought about the past couple years of floods, and how most of the plants we planted were not there anymore. The flooding had brought back teasel and some other exotic species that were at manageable levels due to our past efforts.

I wasn't certain of what natural community we should try to restore here.

Historically, it was a floodplain forest but this large open area could present some other options. Last year, we recommended that the Township mow the bottom to keep weed seed from establishing. They did as we asked.

To my amazement, I pulled into the park to find last year's mowing had released seed of several sedge (*Carex*) species. They dominated the bottom, in an 18-inch tall carpet of sedges. A sedge meadow was hiding there all along. Just a handful of teasel is present, but on a return trip, I was able to remove and treat them all. This is the only sedge meadow currently documented in Sangamon County.

The Friends will be collecting seed this fall to enhance the sedge meadow at Carver Yocum. Contact Vern at 525-1410 if you are interested in helping collect seed. Read our previous year's inspection reports for both parks on our web site.



These 13-year cicadas were out in force during our mid-June workday at the South Fork Nature Reserve.



Friends Assistant Naturalist, Buddy, saunters through the sedge meadow during July's inspection of the Carver Yocum Homestead Site.

WORKDAYS and EVENTS

July

30 Walden West Fence Installation & Hot Dog Cookout 8:00 am to noon

August

4 Friends Board Meeting at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary 6:45 pm

11 Vern LaGesse at INPS Meeting at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary 7:00 pm

13 Members-Only Event: Bellrose Property Tour

20 Sangamon River Canoe Float—Riverside Park 8:00 am

September

1 Friends Board Meeting at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary 6:45 pm

3 Sugar Creek Float—Bridgeview Park 8:00 am

11 Wolf Preserve for Honeysuckle Removal 1:00 pm

18 Knuppel Wildlife Sanctuary for Honeysuckle and Cottonwood Removal 1:00 pm

24 Tour of Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary with Master Naturalists 9:00 am to 11:00 am

Wolf Preserve

Assist volunteers with stewardship at the Friends preserve in Menard County. Carpool leaves a half hour earlier from the Har-dee's at Walnut & Jefferson in Springfield, OR meet us at the preserve at the time listed above. Wear sturdy boots, bring your own work gloves. Dates subject to change; please contact Vern LaGesse, 525-1410 to let him know you're coming.

Washington Park

Join George Rose in controlling exotic species in Springfield's Washington Park. George will be scheduling workdays throughout the spring and summer as he is available. Watch our web site for scheduled dates. Contact George at 787-1940 for more information.

Knuppel Wildlife Sanctuary

Join us for stewardship activities at the Knuppel Wildlife Sanctuary, in Old Salem Chautauqua, near Petersburg. Meet us in the parking lot of the Visitor's Center at New Salem State Historic Site at the time listed above. Bring gloves and a beverage. Call Vern LaGesse at 525-1410 for more information.

Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary

Vern LaGesse is providing a tour of this wildlife sanctuary and restoration near Loami for the Master Naturalists. Friends members are welcome. Call Vern LaGesse at 525-1410 for more information.

Walden West

Contact Vern LaGesse at 525-1410 for more information if you wish to help out on this privately owned preserve near Manito.



Visit our web site at www.fosv.org for latest updates.



Know Your Watershed

By Vern LaGesse

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley's mission is to preserve our natural heritage by acquiring, restoring, and protecting ecologically significant lands in the Sangamon River Watershed. Watersheds can cover large geographic areas and it may not always be obvious what's in the watershed and what's out. We focus on the lower Sangamon River watershed. It includes the lower 107 miles of the Sangamon River and its two major tributaries, Salt Creek and the South Fork. It encompasses approximately 4,575 square miles and extends from southern Tazewell County to northern Montgomery County north to south, and from Beardstown, east to Macon County.



The one thing all watersheds have in common is that a river runs through them. The Sangamon River/South Fork is something that we all need to learn more about, to protect, respect and admire. For us in Springfield, rivers and creeks feed Lake Springfield for our water supply.

The Friends conducts a lot of stewardship activities on the land. Our restoration projects provide critical habitat. They also assist in protecting and enhancing the water quality in our watershed.

But to really get a feel for the watershed, you have to start at ground zero, and that means the Sangamon River. Part of our fall fundraiser last year included a canoe tour, which people re-

Photo of the Sangamon River, north of Petersburg courtesy of Chris Young and the State Journal Register.

sponded to very favorably. And our annual river cleanup is also popular. This year we are combining tours and river cleanup and offering two outings for another opportunity to check out our watershed from its heart.

Riverside Park to Route 29

On Aug 20th, we'll float from Riverside Park to Rt. 29. Meet at Riverside Park at 8:00 am. We'll shuttle vehicles to Rt. 29 and be on the water by 8:30 am. We will have to take a short portage at the water impoundment dam of the old city water works facility. We will also canoe around the dam at Spring Creek which has been breached.

This is a three to four hour float. Bring a snack or lunch and your own small cooler. We should get back to Riverside Park between 1:00 and 2:00 pm.

Sugar Creek Tour

On September 3rd, we'll canoe from the Covered Bridge to Glenwood Woods, ending at Bridgeview Park. Meet at Bridgeview Park at 8:00 am. We will shuttle to Covered Bridge park and be on the water by 8:30 am. We will have a couple of stops to see some of the natural features of city-owned Glenwood Woods. We'll take out at Bridgeview Park approximately noon-1:00.

A hot dog cookout lunch will follow. Grills will be available; feel free to bring your own meat or meat substitute.

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Canoeing can be a very fun way to travel. But you are canoeing at your own risk. The Friends of the Sangamon Valley assumes no responsibility for any accidents that could arise. Canoes can tip over, so don't bring anything that you can't afford to lose. All paddlers should have their own water, food and dry storage for themselves. Dress appropriately. You may get wet.

Reservations are required **ASAP** since there is limited space for these tours. We also need anyone who has a van or large vehicle and can help shuttle people. Please call Vern at 525-1410 to make a reservation, volunteer as a shuttle or for more information.

Lower Sangamon River Valley By the Numbers

Here are some amazing facts about the Lower Sangamon River Valley

Of the 300 birds found regularly in Illinois, all but one occur here

30 bird species are listed threatened or endangered species

3rd highest duck harvest in the state

29 reptile species occur here; 4 are threatened or endangered

16 amphibian species are found here

Illinois Chorus Frog is the only listed (threatened) amphibian in the watershed

100 species of fish occur here; 4 species are threatened or endangered

44 species of mussels occur here; 9 species are threatened or endangered, one is non-native

18 large crustacean species occur here

Of the 59 mammal species that occur in Illinois, 47 species occur here

Almost half of all plant species in Illinois occur here

28 plant species are threatened or endangered

337 non-native plant species occur here

Sparks, Ruth. 2003. Lower Sangamon River Valley: An Inventory of the Region's Resources. Illinois Department of Natural Resources. March. <http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/c2000>



The Lower Sangamon Valley watershed is highlighted in this map of Illinois. This watershed actually includes watersheds of Salt Creek, Sugar Creek, and the South Fork, making it one of the larger ecosystem partnerships.

Graphic courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The Woods Behind the School

By Vern LaGesse

What started for me as a way to park behind the school and start stewardship has led to one of the greatest community partnership projects that I been involved with in Springfield yet. In late April, the Friends had a workday creating a small trail through CWLP's Glenwood Woods. The first week of May every fourth grader (all 350 of them) in the Chatham School District was treated to a guided tour with leaders from Lincoln Memorial Gardens, Adams Wildlife Sanctuary, the Friends and some of the graduates from the Master Naturalist program with the Illinois Extension Service.

A large white oak that had fallen across the trail was cut to allow passage through it. I marked off rings on a cross section to correspond to milestone years in the age of the tree. The tree wasn't quite old enough to show the birth of Abraham Lincoln, but was old enough that I could point out when Lincoln was 10 years old, the same age as the kids.

Fourth grader, Jessica Rigby, said in a survey, "It was fun to learn about the plants. The tree with the rings was really cool. I got a kick out of seeing when Abe Lincoln was born and when I was born!"

Comments from the Teacher survey included: "Thank you for providing this experience for our kids!" "Our presenters or hike leaders were very interested and interacted really nice w/ our kiddos...thanks!" "Thank you soo much. The kids loved it and learned so much. So did I!"

Restoration will begin this fall. The Glenwood Intermediate and Middle Schools (covering 5th—8th grade) will be creating an Ecology Club at the school. It is possible the Club will help with the restoration project. Another fourth grade tour is in the planning stages already for the upcoming school year. Check out Chris Young's State Journal Register video from one day's tours <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UvGFG7mNHY=>



Vern LaGesse shares history through tree rings with 4th graders that toured Glenwood Woods in May. Photo courtesy of Viv Bennett.

New Video Shorts Available

The Friends have been associated with two projects that have recently been the subject of videos produced by the State Journal Register's Chris Young. Vern LaGesse created the walking trail and interpretive tour at Glenwood Woods, and the Friends have assisted Russ Baugher with stewardship at this Yellow Banks property. Enjoy.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UvGFG7mNHY=>
Glenwood Woods

http://youtu.be/_9O14R5rtJI
Yellow Banks



Teachers and 4th graders from Glenwood Middle School examine fungus on a downed tree during the May tours. Photo courtesy of Chris Young and the State Journal Register.

Be our Friend! We're now on Facebook.

We're also featured on two videos, both on YouTube. The Boyle Woods video is also accessible via our web page. The second video is the State Journal Register's Illinois Chorus Frog footage, and is also available at the SJ-R's web site, www.sj-r.com.

Thank You!

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley acknowledges donations, new members, and membership renewals received since April 7, 2011

Richard Abbott
Bob & Arlene Barewin
Richard Bjorklund
Chris Butler
Ann B. Charland
Patrick Coburn
David Cumpston
Dr. and Mrs. John Denby
Brad Dennis
Robert W. Dickerman
Dan & Carolyn Dungan
Stu & Judy Fliege
Karen Frailey & John Wallace
Al & Joan Gardner
Barbara Greening
Nancy Haines
Mike & Amy Jackson
Mike Klemens
John & Sharon Kwedar
Robert LaBonte
Vern & Bonnie LaGessee

Joanne Lake
Greg & Sibyl Lakebrink
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Karen & Randy Witter
Linda Zimmermann
Peoples Insurance Company



The Friends of the Sangamon Valley is a charitable membership organization dedicated to the preservation of our natural heritage by acquiring, restoring, and protecting ecologically significant lands in the Sangamon River Watershed.

Membership is available to individuals for \$25.00 and to families for \$40.00. Participation on various committees is open to members. We currently have openings on the following committees: membership, fundraising, and public relations.

Board and Officers

Vern LaGessee, President	525-1410	vlagesse@fosv.org
Bill Crook, Vice President	522-3372	
Kate Hawkes, Treasurer		
Charlene Falco, Secretary	525-1410	vlagesse@fosv.org
Bob Barewin		
Jim Kolba		
Catherine O'Connor		
Dick Poynter		
Sally Robinson		
George Rose		
Audrey Schwing		
George Sinclair		
Tih-Fen Ting		
Kevin Veara		

The Friends of the Sangamon Valley's monthly board meetings are held the first Thursday of every month at 6:45 pm at the Adams Wildlife Sanctuary.

Our web site provides updated information on volunteer opportunities and events, and may be accessed at www.fosv.org. This newsletter is published three times per year. Contributions are welcome.

Send checks for membership to PO Box 13352, Springfield, 62791 or use our web site. Please contact any board member regarding the newsletter, membership, participation on committees or other volunteer opportunities.

**You can help Friends of the Sangamon Valley
in one or more of the following ways:**

1. Become a member of Friends or make a tax-deductible cash donation.
2. Volunteer your time.
3. Donate property or other goods or tools.



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Sangamon Valley**

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Friends of the Sangamon Valley
1619 S. Pasfield
Springfield, IL 62704
217-525-1410
www.fosv.org
vlagesse@fosv.org

Yes, I would like to:

Be a member: \$25.00 (individual) \$40.00 (family)

Make a tax-deductible donation of \$ _____.

Donate my time. I am interested in:

Workdays _____

Fundraising Committee _____

Public Relations Committee _____

Stewardship Committee _____

Name _____

Address _____

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Email _____

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