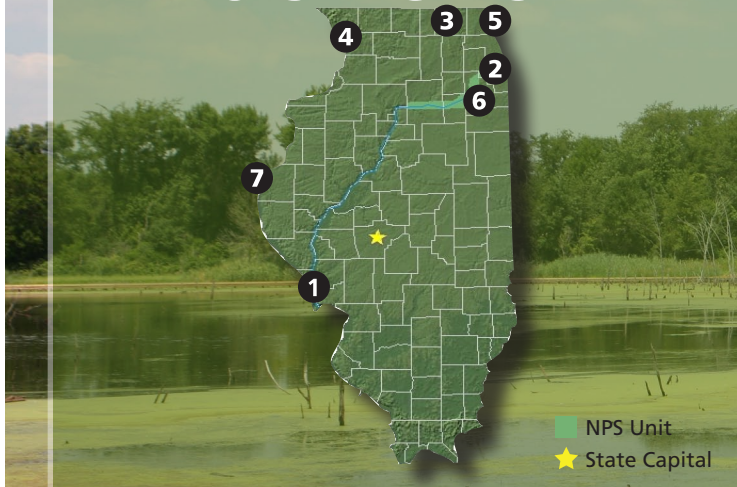




# Illinois News



Dedication Event at Crete Nature Park

## PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2012

### CURRENT PROJECTS

- 1. Calhoun County Trails**  
Calhoun County Trails Committee
- 2. Great Migration Corridor Development**  
Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Commission
- 3. Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge**  
McHenry County Conservation District
- 4. Jo Daviess County Trail System**  
Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation
- 5. Lake Michigan Water Trail Organizational Development**  
Illinois Paddling Council
- 6. Millennium Reserve**  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- 7. Mississippi River Trail & Collaborative Support**  
Mississippi River Trail, Inc.

### ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

## Recent Successes

### Crete Nature Park

It is a place that it is beautiful, ever-changing, and where wildlife is abundant. It is the location of Holland Co., LP Headquarters, and a 10 plus-acre restored wetland. The company's vision was to transform their unused property into an ecological reserve that employees, residents, and school children could enjoy and learn from. A big part of this vision was a trail that encircled the wetland. But a challenge stood in the way. How could they bridge large expanses of water on two sides of the property where there was no land to build a trail? Holland and partners tackled that challenge this past summer.

Land Resource Management Group, a local ecological consultation/restoration company designed a boardwalk for the trail. Another partner, Fuller Park Community Development, stepped up providing trained inner city youth with experience in building.

Materials were purchased at a local lumber company; Fuller Park supplied the skilled labor that worked with Holland's shop to build the boardwalk panels and posts. Over 30 employees volunteered on Fridays to do the "hard" labor of getting into the water with waders and setting the panels. Holland management provided lunch to the workers stating, "It is amazing what people will do for a free lunch!" The project took 2 months to complete, with a boardwalk dedication attended by employees, community leaders, and everyone else who helped build the boardwalk.

But that is just the start. The company plans to head up a team of employees, partners, and new interested parties to continually refine the vision for the wetlands, and to implement additional plans that will provide continued access to the wetlands with school programming and trail connections to the community.

# Current Projects

## 1. Calhoun County Trails

Project Partner: Calhoun County Trails Committee  
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta  
Location: Calhoun County, Illinois  
Congressional District: IL - 17

### Project Goal

To develop an approximately 20-mile multi-purpose trail system within Calhoun County, Illinois, that serves several rural communities.

### NPS Role

Work with Calhoun County Trail Partnership during trail plan development.

## 2. Great Migration Corridor Development

Project Partner: Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Commission  
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta  
Location: Chicago  
Congressional Districts: IL - 1

### Project Goal

Preserve a 5-mile trail/greenway and enhance public access along corridor defined by neighborhood needs: local park, greenspace, or garden with demonstration of green energy technologies along corridor.

### NPS Role

Help build partnership to vision bicycle routes and trail opportunities within the neighborhood, find funding, and implement actions that connect residents to a valuable local history.

## 3. Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge

Project Partner: McHenry County Conservation District  
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta  
Location: Bi-state region, Illinois/Wisconsin  
Congressional Districts: IL - 8, 16

### Project Goal

Preserve ecologically important lands totaling approximately 5,000 acres in Northeast Illinois and Southeast Wisconsin as a National Wildlife Refuge, with an established Friends Group which oversees the work process and partnership.

### NPS Role

Guide Friends of Hack-ma-tack through the process of defining the potential National Wildlife Refuge, defining acres to be protected, partnership building, and public involvement opportunities while building a sustainable non-profit organization.

*“RTCA staff provide a process for new organizations to follow to become a sustainable organization.”*

Dan Plath,  
Northwestern Indiana Paddling Association

## 4. Jo Daviess County Trail System

Project Partner: Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation  
RTCA Contact: Mary Hanson  
Location: Jo Daviess County in Northwest Illinois  
Congressional District: IL - 16

### Project Goal

Complete a comprehensive trail plan that links county's communities and greenspaces with trails. Create increased opportunities to enjoy the natural resources and scenic views of the county. Creation of a partnership between multiple agencies and non-profits to improve access to conserved lands.

### NPS Role

Provide information related to trail planning and natural resources protection. Facilitate meetings that bring together stakeholders and coordinate county, cities, and other landholders. Assist with creating partnerships for linking multiple land managing agencies and non-profits. Create volunteer advocacy groups to help maintain open spaces.

## 5. Lake Michigan Watertrail Organizational Development

Project Partner: Lake Michigan Water Trail Association  
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta  
Location: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin  
Congressional District: IL - 2



Lake Michigan Paddlers on their way to the National Trail Designation Event. NPS Photo

# Current Projects cont.

## Project Goal

Build a partnership organization to work on the Lake Michigan Water Trail which will provide access to Lake Michigan in four states through numerous landings and access points while marketing the trail for increased tourism and economic development opportunities.

## NPS Role

Convene quad state paddler organizations, local governments, and state governments to set a vision, mission, and goals/outcomes leading to the designation of the 200-mile Lake Michigan Water Trail as a National Recreational Trail.



Governor Quinn talks with his youngest supporter at the announcement of the Millennium Reserve.

## 6. Millennium Reserve

Project Partner: Illinois Department of Natural Resources

RTCA Contact: Diane Banta

Location: Chicago and Chicago Southland of the Calumet Region

Congressional District: IL - 1, 2, 7

## Project Goal

Increased land protection to an estimated 50 acres of valuable natural resource areas and promote trail connections and links to over 5 regional

trail systems, completing a minimum of 15 trail miles.

## NPS Role

To provide technical assistance to the State of Illinois, Department of Natural Resources for the State America's Great Outdoors-related projects. Will help form partnerships and identify projects and outcomes for this regional legacy project.

## 7. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/Mississippi River Trail

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc. (MRT)

RTCA Contact: Rory Robinson

Location: Mississippi River, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana

Congressional District: AR - 1, 4; IA - 1, 2, 4; IL - 12, 16, 17; KY - 1; LA - 3, 5, 6; MN; MO - 1, 2, 3, 8, 9; MS - 2, 3; TN - 8, 9; WI - 3, 7

## Project Goal

Outreach to local communities to encourage improvements to the MRT for improved recreation, tourism, and community development; continued technical assistance in the development of a organization strategic plan to support MOU objectives and increase long-term organizational viability; further development of the Mississippi River "blueway" portion of the trail system; technical support for identification as part of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative.

## NPS Role

To assist the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative with organizational development, outreach to other organizations, and agencies and development and implementation of their strategic and operations plans. Increase MRT's capacity to help develop water and land-based trail along the Mississippi River.



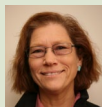
MRCC members "Take a Ride" on the old Chain of Rocks Bridge in St. Louis. NPS photo.

## We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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## 2011 Nationwide Partnership Success

- 1,991 Miles of Trail Developed
- 1,925 Miles of River Conserved
- 33,230 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected
- 94% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at  
[www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)



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# Current Successes cont.

## Millenium Reserve

As part of the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative to develop a 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda for America, two projects in Illinois were identified by the Department of the Interior, in consultation with Governor Quinn, to partner on a shared conservation and recreation agenda for the state.

RTCA will be involved with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and key partners in the Millennium Reserve project which connects Chicago to the Calumet region as well as into Indiana.

For many years communities and organizations have been working to preserve ecologically valuable lands, improve recreation opportunities, and save cultural treasures in the Calumet. Now with the leadership of DNR, an enhanced focus on finishing these connecting projects is like putting a big bow on the package of the Calumet!

Special emphasis will be placed on completing regional trail systems and restoring natural resource areas. Involving more youth and strategically working together to build on the works in progress while streamlining our goals for success will improve access to parks and open space throughout the Calumet region.

*"These projects represent what states believe are among the best investments in the nation to support a healthy, active population, conserve wildlife and working lands, and create travel, tourism and outdoor-recreation jobs across the nation."*

Ken Salazar  
Secretary of Interior



DOI Assistant Secretary, Will Shrafoth (center) viewing a section of the Millennium Reserve. NPS.photo.