



State of Illinois

NEWS

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich
Lt. Governor Pat Quinn
Attorney General Lisa Madigan
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 19, 2007

CONTACTS:

Elizabeth Austin (LTG) 312-814-8760
Chris McCloud (IDNR) 217-558-1540
Robyn Ziegler (AG) 312-814-3118

Illinois River mud transforms Pekin landfill

*Mud to Parks project dredges silt clogging Peoria Lakes,
covers landfill site with clean, pollution-reducing topsoil*

PEKIN – In a massive recycling project, 10,000 tons of mud dredged from the Peoria Lakes are being spread across a Pekin landfill site, converting a former eyesore into new, healthy green space and helping to purify and protect groundwater.

Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, who chairs the Illinois River Coordinating Council, was joined by representatives from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Office of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Tazewell County in celebrating this latest success in the state of Illinois' nationally renowned Mud to Parks project at the Pekin Landfill Friday.

“Over the next two weeks, 10,000 tons of mud dredged up out of the Illinois River will be put to good use as final cover for this landfill site,” Quinn said. “Instead of clogging Peoria’s East Port Marina channel, this mud will be used to convert this former landfill into a safer site, benefiting everyone in the Peoria area.”

The Mud to Parks program won a 2006 national Innovations Award from the Council of State Governments, which hailed the program for its imaginative approach to solving the problem of topsoil erosion and resulting sediment build-up in river-fed reservoirs and backwaters – the single greatest environmental problem facing the Illinois River.

“This new phase of the 'Mud to Parks' project is further proof that we can help find a worthwhile solution to the serious problem of waterway sedimentation,” said Illinois Department of Natural Resources Deputy Director Leslie Sgro. “The ‘Mud to Parks’ concept is a useful means of boosting economic development and recreation opportunities, and we are proud to be a leader in this effort.”

Once one of the nation’s most important fisheries, the Illinois River and its connected backwater lakes are now filling with sediments from topsoil erosion. Many areas that were six to eight feet deep a century ago are now as shallow as 18 inches.

(more)

The mud in this installment of the program, which has been independently tested for pollutants and approved by the Illinois EPA, has been dredged from a section of the Peoria Lakes, creating a channel nine feet deep and 100 feet wide near the East Port Marina in Peoria. By clearing the channel, the project improves recreation opportunities for boaters while creating new deepwater habitats for native fish.

For the Pekin landfill project, which began on Oct. 18, mud is being excavated from the channel and placed on 10 deck barges – each holding a load of 1,000 tons of sediment – that will be unloaded at an ADM dock in Creve Coeur. From there, the mud is trucked 17 miles to the site.

The municipal waste landfill, known as the Pekin landfill, closed in 1998. It is undergoing remediation under the supervision of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the Tazewell County Public Health Department.

The Pekin landfill project is being funded through a 2005 settlement between Dynegy, Inc. and Attorney General Madigan's office, the U.S. Department of Justice and several environmental organizations. The settlement stemmed from a 1999 lawsuit to bring Dynegy's Baldwin Energy Complex and its other coal-fired power plants into full compliance with the federal Clean Air Act. As part of the settlement, Dynegy provided \$200,000 for this phase of the landfill project.

“This Supplemental Environmental Project not only makes possible the money for this project, it also makes possible the relocation of high quality sediment to the landfill site at a lower cost than locally-available topsoil,” Madigan said. “This area will benefit from seeing this important project completed in an economical and environmentally-friendly fashion.”

The Mud to Parks concept originated with Dr. John Marlin, a senior scientist with the Waste Management and Research Center, a division of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. In 2002, Marlin led a demonstration project in which sediment collected from the Illinois River near Peoria was shipped by barge to a Chicago-area landfill. That project demonstrated that silt could be successfully reconverted into clean, fertile topsoil

In February 2003, Quinn's office gave Marlin a grant of \$75,000, which was used as seed money to begin the first Mud to Parks project, shipping mud from Peoria Lake to create a new public park on Chicago's South Side. The Mud to Parks project has also provided topsoil for a strip-mined area of the Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area near Canton.

“John Marlin looked at Illinois River mud and saw an extraordinary natural resource,” Quinn said. “Thanks to his common sense and ingenuity, we have found a new and effective way to address some of the environmental issues that threaten Illinois waterways.”

IDNR's Waste Management and Research Center oversees the Mud to Parks project in cooperation with the Illinois Rivers Coordinating Council. Peoria-based American River Transportation Company (ARTCO) Fleeting Service, a subsidiary of Archer Daniels Midland Company, is the prime contractor on the project and is handling the barges. Midwest Foundation Corporation, a Tremont-based company that constructs and repairs bridges and dams, is loading the barges.

(more)

To make sure the mud dredged from the river meets environmental standards, the Illinois State Water Survey collected eight-foot sediment cores taken from the riverbed between Hennepin and Beardstown. Scientists from the University of Illinois, Loyola University, Southern Illinois University and the Illinois Scientific Surveys have published papers on the sediment's properties and handling characteristics.

“We hope to continue to find private and public partnerships that will expand this program,” Quinn said. “There’s enough silt in Peoria Lake to fill a football field more than 10 miles high. That incredible resource could be used to create new green spaces throughout the Land of Lincoln, and in other states as well.”

###