

10th Annual Conversations about Conservation with our Legislators

September 23, 2011

Historic Kendall County Court House, Yorkville

Twenty-one people gathered to hear Representative Kay Hatcher and Senator Sue Rezin remark on the state of affairs in Illinois and more specifically about environmental issues. The Legislators provided their thoughts and status updates on proposed bills and more importantly provided insight on how the legislative process works.

Representative Hatcher provided insight into several proposed bills that FREP had specifically asked her about before the event. HB3372 Promote Green Stormwater Infrastructure does not have a senate sponsor at this time therefore will not move forward until there is a sponsor. SB38 Rainwater Harvesting is sitting in the executive committee of the House and was passed unanimously in the Senate. SB1617 Perchloroethylene ban for drycleaners is in the House Rules Committee. HB6099 Phosphorous in Fertilizer was passed with a lot of debate and has become law. There are not any updates on if this law will be challenged or not.

Jack Darin, Executive Director of the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club, provided an update on the main issues the Sierra Club is actively working on: Clean Energy, Wild Illinois (habitat), and Clean Water. Jack suggested local agencies help educate everyone on the phosphorous fertilizer restrictions. The Department of Agriculture is responsible for education and enforcement of this law; however, they could use assistance with education and outreach.

Senator Rezin noted that fees collected for specific purposes are subject to sweeps to the general fund if the general fund needs more money. That is the reason why the legislators do not always support fees that should help a specific department (i.e. hunting license fee increase to help support IDNR budget) because there is no guarantee that these funds would be used for that purpose.

The day ended with great networking and everyone inspired to make sure their legislators know what is important when deciding how to vote on proposed bills.