

9th Annual Conversations about Conservation with our Legislators

September 15, 2010

Lake Front Park Center, Fox Lake

Co-sponsored by Fox Waterway Agency and FREP

Together our voice will be heard by our legislators in Springfield. The key is to provide a unified front of all interested stakeholders and to provide a clear message of what needs to be done and why this is important.

Twenty-five people gathered to hear Senator Pam Althoff and Senator Michael Bond remark on the state of affairs in Illinois and more specifically about environmental issues. The Senator's provided their thoughts and more importantly provided insight on how to best influence change and get their attention.

Due to the economic conditions facing the State of Illinois, all topics need to be based on financial and economic arguments. For example, in order to obtain funding for preserving, protecting and restoring the natural environment in our region, we need to show why this is valuable beyond natural ecosystem functions. Stakeholders ranging from boaters, fisherman, hotel owners, retailers, restaurants, environmentalists, and municipalities to name a few, need to show how they all benefit from the local pristine natural areas. The benefits include safe, clean drinking water, recreation, sales tax revenue, and more. Illinois has invested millions of dollars in the area over the years, why would the State now turn it's back on an economic engine?

The message needs to be clear and concise and brought in person to the legislators in Springfield.

The audience in attendance was fired up and motivated by the presentations. The need to be better informed of proposed legislation, to share the victories of passed bills, and to gather support to lobby for specific causes was discussed. FREP can share information through the Downstream newsletter and/or set up an email blast list for late breaking news. In order for this to be successful, everyone will have to tune in to the proposed legislation and share the concerns or highlights, and to form partnerships.