

The Department of Natural Resources has worked hard during 2011 to uphold the mission of this agency—to manage, conserve and protect Illinois' natural, recreational and cultural resources for present and future generations. Despite our sluggish economy, demanding budgetary pressures and painful cuts, DNR has still made good progress on many fronts this year, and we continue to be recognized as a model agency for others to follow nationwide.



Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, which dedicates a small tax on ammunition, firearms and archery equipment—money raised specifically for wildlife habitat—was a product of the Great Depression. Amazingly, sportsmen themselves petitioned for this tax on themselves, and the federal act they helped create has raised more than \$2 billion since

1937. Similarly, the Federal Duck Stamp, created in 1934 at the urging of waterfowlers, now generates millions of dollars annually for wetland habitat.

We do have the ability to achieve great things even during the darkest of days.

Consider this: When generations look back at what we have accomplished in our time, this moment will be seen as pivotal. The challenge to those of us engaged in conservation today is to step forward with bold ideas and plans and choose to lead and shape the conservation model for the future. Our only other option will be to

lose our natural resources institutions, lose a generation of conservation leaders and, ultimately, to lose precious elements of the natural world.

Moving forward often requires stepping back, and looking at something with a fresh set of eyes. DNR's focus on sound management will always continue. However, we have reached a point where we absolutely must plan and implement significant changes, and acknowledge the fact many of the previous ways of doing business simply cannot continue. To examine the agency with an open mind for the future, we have asked the Management Assistance Team from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to review DNR, and provide recommendations on how we can effectively move forward despite these trying economic times.

Effective change cannot take place without communication. For this reason, DNR will host a Conservation Congress—the citizen-led advisory group of conservation and natural resource individuals—early in 2012. And, throughout the year, interested parties will be engaged to help us find solutions for today's challenges through a series of statewide constituent forums and town halls.

We are lucky to have a wealth of dedicated natural resource professionals and a strong, diverse and supportive constituency. Our greatest strength is within these citizens, people who wholeheartedly believe in the mission to manage, protect and preserve the nature of Illinois. Your commitment to Illinois' natural and cultural resources will help us, as William Faulkner once wrote, not merely to endure—but to prevail.

“The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem it will avail us little to solve all others.”

—President Theodore Roosevelt

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Marc Miller', written in a cursive style.

Yours in conservation,
Marc Miller