

## IV. Implementation Priorities

Prioritizing is essential to provide a solid foundation for development of a long-range Greenways and Trails Plan. Time and money are always scarce. Decisions must be made in advance as to the relative importance of projects at each stage of development. Regional coordination of the efforts of municipalities, park districts, local and county agencies is essential. This will help consolidate regional support for each project in a logical sequence and avoid competition between local projects for the limited resources. Some local projects, while very important in the overall plan, may have less regional significance and little chance of attracting public funding if they are approached piecemeal before critical major links have been set in place.

As with any visionary, long-range plan, new components and projects may be added over time; priorities must be reviewed and updated periodically.

### Action Recommendations

#### Local and County Government:

1. Each municipalities and park district in Ogle County should adopt the Regional Greenways & Trails Plan, coordinate planning, and integrate the objectives and priorities into its own comprehensive and land use planning.
  - a) Review zoning to ensure that ordinances support local and county-wide efforts to prepare and implement greenway conservation plans.
  - b) Review local subdivision ordinances to ensure that they both allow and encourage "Open Space Development," retain and treat stormwater on site, preserve natural resources, encourage restoration and management of native vegetation for rural character, habitat, water quality, and erosion control, and encourage development of dedicated trails within new subdivisions.
2. Cooperate with other jurisdictions and citizen groups to develop implementation plans for greenways and trails.
3. All jurisdictions responsible for preparing plans for managing nonpoint sources of water pollution should consider and recommend the implementation of greenway plans and objectives wherever feasible.
4. Create mechanisms to bring greenway planners and development planners together in order to devise mutually beneficial plans.
5. Encourage dedications of open space and granting of conservation easements within greenway areas and in development plans for sites within greenways.
6. Work with citizens and property owners to carry out the planning necessary to prevent conflicts between greenways and adjacent land uses.

#### Other Actions:

1. Develop partnerships between private landowners, public agencies, appointed commissions, and user groups to initiate, plan, design and implement priority regional and community projects.
2. Communicate with greenway and trail planners and leadership in neighboring counties to develop regional trail connections and greenways that straddle borders.
3. Encourage the City of Rochelle to manage proposed municipal stormwater area detention areas as natural areas and habitat with deep-rooted native emergent

- and wetland vegetation systems.
4. Coordinate greenway and trail implementation with the county and local historical organizations and encourage development of interpretive materials, such as self-guided tour brochures, to enhance public understanding and appreciation of cultural and historic resources.
  5. Develop interpretive and educational materials such as exhibits, slide presentations, and posters and a program for utilizing the materials to communicate greenway and trail values and benefits.

Implementation of a visionary plan requires the development of strategies that will engage agencies, private and non-profit organizations, and greenway and trail users over extended periods of time. Interest is maintained through ongoing interpretive activities. The role of interpretation should be to help explain the significance of the resource. An accurate and engaging interpretation of the landscape and history of the county and the contemporary lifestyles and economic activities of Ogle County residents will facilitate public acceptance of conservation and trails strategies and implementation. Interpretive themes will tie in with the Historic Galena Trail, Lincoln Highway National Scenic Byway, historical activities, and local points of interest. Among the potential themes are agriculture, immigration and early settlement, native Americans, natural sciences (ecology, birding, geology), historic homemaking, and historic travel and transportation. Diverse themes will give trail and greenway users of all ages a choice of topics from which to choose in a variety of formats.

### **New Approaches and Programs**

**Stormwater Management:** Existing and emerging programs in compliance with NPDES requirements for water quality and stormwater management offer potential for achieving greenway objectives.

**Open Space Development:** Because a large proportion of new subdivision development is proposed for lands that are greenspace or potential greenways, Ogle County's innovative Open Space Subdivision ordinance has potential to become mutually supportive with greenway objectives. It's objectives include preserving natural character and environmental features and quality with consequent reduction of lawn areas and intensive landscaping..

**Rock River Forest Legacy Program:** As forest is fragmented and disappears, so do many of the resource benefits that forest lands provide to the general public. The FLP is a USDA Forest Service program that supports state efforts to protect environmentally sensitive forest lands. It is an entirely voluntary program that encourages the protection of privately-owned forest lands. In Illinois the FLP supports acquisition of conservation easements, which restrict new development and require sustainable forestry. The funding is a 75% federal/25% private, state, or local match. Only lands in areas designated by the state are eligible. The designated Rock River FLP, indicated on the map in *Appendix C*, encompasses much of the potential greenway space on the *Plan*.

## Legal and Legislative Footnotes

### RE: Designation of Shared-Use Trails

A recent ruling had the undesirable and unintended effect of creating a disincentive for local governments to provide bicycle safety improvement including designation and signage for fear of increased liability. In stating that bicyclists were “permitted” users but not “intended” users of roadways, unless the road was signed or marked as a bike route, the Illinois Supreme Court granted total immunity to local governments for bicyclists injured as a result of negligence unless the road was a signed bike route. Legislation that has been proposed to remedy this situation, which is unique to Illinois of all states, seeks an “ordinary care” level of liability on roads without bike facility/signage and “willful and wanton” on roads with bike facilities/signage. The intention of proposed legislation is to present an incentive to provide on-road accommodations and the designation of shared-use trails, *but with no expectations of local agencies to incur great expense of retrofitting roads to a standard higher than they presently do.*

### RE: Land Owner Liability

The new Illinois Recreational Use of Land and Water Areas Act answers the question of landowner liability in regard to greenway and trail activities. Its purpose is to encourage owners to make their land and water areas available to the public for recreational or conservation purposes (such as canoeing) by limiting their liability toward persons entering their property for such purposes. The act states that an owner of land owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for entry or use by an person for such purposes or to give any warning of a natural or artificial dangerous condition, use, structure or activity on the premises. An owner who either directly or indirectly invites or permits “without charge” any person to use his property does not “extend assurance that the premises are safe for any purpose . . . nor assume responsibility for or incur liability for any injury to person or property.” The act does not relieve the *user* from any obligation “to exercise care in his use of such land . . . or from the legal consequences of failure to employ such care.”