



Office of Water Management
Indiana Department of
Environmental Management

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Governor's Environment Conference to Join Earth Week

by Courtney Davis

This year's Earth Week brings more than festival to Indiana.

Friday, April 24, Governor Frank O'Bannon will host the 1998 Governor's Conference on the Environment at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. With Earth Day slated for April 22 and festivals planned statewide for April 25, the public ear will be tuned toward environmentalism—an ideal opportunity for the conference message to be heard.

"This will be a perfect time to build on the increasing environmental enthusiasm that comes with Earth Week celebrations and awareness around the state," said Leslie White, IDEM's Community Relations Director and organizer for the governor's conference and Earth Week. "The conference is an ideal forum for drawing our statewide partners together to exchange information and to focus on ways to work as communities to make Indiana a cleaner, healthier place to live."

The key topics of the conference will be: children and the environment; community-based environmental initiatives; our land ethic; economic development balanced with environmental protection; and wildlife and natural resources. The goal is to make Hoosiers aware of how their actions affect the environment and what they can do to make it better.

"Many citizens don't recognize that the environment is our own backyard—not just a distant problem for someone else to deal with," White said. "Our children's health is affected by how we take care of the Earth."

After opening words from Governor O'Bannon, IDEM Commissioner John Hamilton and DNR Director Larry Macklin will join a panel of representatives from environmental organizations, local governments, the legislature, education, and industry to discuss various environmental issues.

For more information, contact IDEM's Community Relations Director Leslie White at (800) 451-6027, ext. 3-6648.

El Nino Mildly Affecting Indiana Lakes

The northern Indiana natural lakes region is coming out of one of the mildest winters on record, but biologists say the unusual weather association with El Nino could have subtle effects this spring on lake ecology.

According to the Division of Fish and Wildlife, algae blooms have already appeared on several lakes. Other aquatic plants are beginning to grow sooner than normal and may reach nuisance levels faster in some lakes. "It's normal to get some early-season algae growth, especially cold-tolerant green algae," says Ed Braun, DFW fisheries biologist who specialized in aquatic plant management. "But algae usually don't begin to appear until late March. We're about a month early this year."

In many lakes, rooted aquatic plants such as coontail and milfoil are already bright green and growing. "During most winters, rooted plants die back and stop growing," says Braun. "This year they are coming out of winter in a much healthier condition."

However, Braun cautions lake residents not to worry that aquatic plants will overrun their lake this summer. Weather conditions this spring will have much more of an impact on how dense aquatic plants eventually grow. A cold and rainy spring could limit plant growth.

Likewise, Braun says the mild winter weather may have been less stressful to fish. "Fish are often stressed during the winter months," says Braun. "Food is scarce and many fish use up their fat reserves in order to survive. Once spring arrives, fish are weakened and more susceptible to diseases."

(Continued on next page)

(EL NINO . . .
continued from page 3)

According to Braun, fish were probably able to find more food this winter and should be stronger this spring. As a result, Braun doesn't expect to get as many calls in the coming months from fishermen and lake residents reporting fish kills or fish disease problems.

LaDon Swann, a fisheries researcher at Purdue University, agrees. Swann thinks fish should be healthier coming out of this winter compared to most years, but he says incidences of fish diseases will depend a lot on spring weather conditions. "Fluctuating spring weather is the worst problem for fish," says Swann. "The up and down changes cause more stress, so we'll probably get reports of fish diseases and fish kills if the weather is unstable."

Spawning also stresses fish in the spring. The mild winter could trigger northern pike and yellow perch to spawn earlier than normal. Both species usually spawn soon after ice-out. A quick change in the weather now could disrupt their spawning activity. (Indiana DNR Press Release)

IDEM Hires Coordinator for New Volunteer Program

The IDEM Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program was recently created to facilitate and enhance volunteer water monitoring efforts in Indiana. After extensive research and study into the existing volunteer monitoring programs in Indiana, IDEM determined that their volunteer efforts should focus on lake and wetlands monitoring and education. These surface waters were chosen because: (a) Hoosier RiverWatch, the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR's) volunteer river and stream monitoring program is successful in its efforts, (b) Indiana's Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program has also been quite successful, but its efforts have been limited in recent years by funding, and (c) a statewide wetlands volunteer monitoring does not yet exist in Indiana.

Goals of the IDEM Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program

- Educate citizens of all ages on lake and wetlands ecology and how to collect water quality data.
- Have volunteers collect data that will provide water quality trends and early warning signs of problems that may be occurring in a lake or wetland.
- Provide water quality data to IDEM which complements IDEM's professional water quality assessments.
- Contribute to the growing understanding and protection of Indiana's valuable lake and wetlands resources.

These goals were written closely to those of the Indiana Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program, which is coordinated by

the Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs (IU SPEA) with funds from an IDEM 319 Grant. The similar goals allowed for an easy transition into collaborative efforts. Together, the Indiana Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program and the Indiana Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program are...

encouraging "grassroots" involvement in lake water quality monitoring, fostering cooperation among citizens, organizations, and various units of government.

IDEM is focusing its partnership efforts on outreach, volunteer recognition, and educational training, while IU SPEA maintains the expertise for the analysis of volunteer samples, technical monitoring training, and data reports.

Since an Indiana volunteer wetlands monitoring program does not yet exist, IDEM will be setting an example for this volunteer effort. Start up of this program will be quite a challenge, because the state's professional scientists have yet to decide on Indiana specific monitoring criteria for wetlands. Considering this situation, IDEM will be working with local wetlands education programs to produce a pilot wetlands monitoring/education program that will teach monitoring technique, but focus on wetlands ecology and protection. The first pilot workshop will be held this summer in conjunction with a joint lake and river monitoring workshop.

Kathryn Clendenin has been hired to coordinate the new IDEM program. Clendenin is a 1997 graduate of Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or wish to learn more about this program, please contact:

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IDEM Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program
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Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6015

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Volunteer News

Secchi Disk Results for 1997

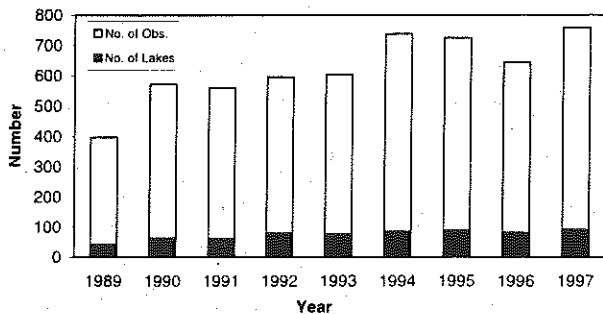
1997 was a banner year for the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program. A record number of lakes (91) were monitored and a record number of observations (668) were made during the year. The program has grown steadily since its inception in 1989 (Figure 1).

All of us at *Water Column* and at IDEM offer our heartfelt thanks to the dedicated volunteers who make these contributions year-in and year-out.

Indiana also recorded a record Secchi disk transparency depth for 1997. Dan Hoagland measured a Secchi disk depth of

39 feet on Clear Lake in Steuben County on May 18, 1997. Transparency is usually better on lakes in the spring because the algae have not yet begun their growth.

Figure 1. Growth of Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program Secchi Disk Measurements



A list of lakes with the highest average summertime transparency is shown in Table 1. Again, Clear Lake is at the top of this list. It is interesting to note that four of the top ten clearest lakes are actually reservoirs located in the southern part of the state.

Table 1. Lakes with the Highest Average Summertime Transparency in 1997

LAKE	COUNTY	MEAN SUMMERTIME TRANSPARENCY
Clear	Steuben	19.8 feet
Sweetwater ^a	Brown	19.2 feet
Saugany	LaPorte	19.0 feet
Cordry ^a	Brown	18.3 feet
Shriner	Whitley	15.5 feet
Yellowwood ^a	Brown	15.3 feet
Big Long	Lagrange	15.3 feet
Big Cedar	Whitley	14.9 feet
Crooked	Noble/Whitley	14.8 feet
Griffy ^a	Monroe	14.5 feet

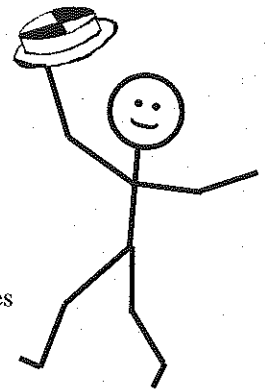
^areservoir

Retiring Volunteers

During 1997, several of our volunteers announced that they must retire from their "disk duties." In most cases, the retiring volunteers identified someone else to carry on with Secchi disk monitoring on their lake. So, while we say goodbye and thanks to these volunteers, we also welcome the new volunteers to the Program. New volunteers will be recognized in the next issue of *Water Column*.

A big tip o' the Secchi disk goes out to the following retired volunteers:

- Don Anders—Myers Lake
- Ray Cacini—Indiana Lake
- Galen Darr—Skinner Lake
- Tony Detar—Shriner Lake
- Thom Dunlavy—Irish Lake
- Lee Eckart—Yellowwood Lake
- Robert Fuess—McClish Lake
- Robert Hampton—Lake Wawasee
- Robert Harper—Lake of the Woods
- Betty Hemlinger—Fish & Royer lakes
- Bill Lents—Dogwood Lake
- Gary Mullendor—Lake James



Cleaner Water—One Stroke at a Time

Golfers competing in last fall's Second Annual Water Quality Open held at Tiburon Golf Course in Omaha, Nebraska, played by an unusual set of rules. Hosted by the Wehrspann Lake Watershed Project, the tournament allowed players to move their balls closer to the holes depending on Secchi disk measurements in the lake. A Secchi disk reading of the lake was taken before the game began, and each team could then use that measurement (all at once or in increments) to sink a put and save a stroke during the day. In the process, golfers learned more about the effects their sport has on water quality, and about the measures that the Tiburon Golf Course is taking to protect Wehrspann Lake.

To emphasize the tournament's theme, stations throughout the course provided water quality information to the golfers as they moved from hole to hole. At the end of the tournament, players who had completed a water quality questionnaire were eligible for a special prize drawing. Last year, 64 percent of the players listed something new that they learned about water quality, while 88 percent could identify a source of NPS pollution and a means of prevention. *Nonpoint Source News-Notes*

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Conservation Buffers to be Established Nationwide—USDA and Agribusinesses Work Together

The USDA's unprecedented National Conservation Buffer Initiative is set to install conservation buffers along 2 million of the nation's 3.5 million riparian miles by 2002. Conservation buffers are strips of vegetation along the margins of farm fields, streams, creeks, and even lakes. The vegetated buffers intercept runoff water, nutrients, and pesticides before they can drain into waterways.

The initiative, which integrates and pulls together a wide variety of existing conservation incentive programs, has its own incentive: \$1 million pledged by the National Conservation Buffer Council, a group of agribusinesses committed to protecting sensitive riparian areas. The Council also provides leadership and business expertise to educate, encourage, and enable farmers to take advantage of programs like the Farm Service Agency's new continuous sign-up provision of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and other programs.

Under the CRP, the Farm Service Agency pays farmers rent in return for converting highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as native grasses, wildlife plantings, or trees. The payments are based on the soil's productivity and the comparable local rent. Conservation buffers are eligible for CRP payments.

According to Max Schnepf, National Conservation Buffer Initiative Coordinator, "Farmers have considerable flexibility in the size of the buffers they install." Filter strips, for example, can be up to 100 feet in width, on average, along their entire length. At their narrowest point, however, they may not be less than the minimum width specified by each state's regulations. The national minimum is 20 feet. This flexibility frees farmers from the constraint of making an all-or-nothing choice about putting their land in the CRP; they can crop the best farmland and buffer the rest. Schnepf says that "making narrower buffer strips eligible for federal compensation will encourage more farmers to create buffer areas on their farms."

The Farm Service Agency also provides incentive payments for specific types of buffers in addition to the annual rent payments under the continuous CRP sign-up. Farmers earn

20 percent of the annual rental payment by installing filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, or field wind breaks. An additional 10 percent is offered to those who install buffers in EPA-designated wellhead protection areas. The Farm Service Agency also provides a cost-sharing program that pays up to half the cost of buffer installation.

New Publications and Products

(CD-1) "The Living Landscape" is an interactive computer game that takes learners of all ages through various best management and conservation practices to turn a rundown farm and landscape into an environmental showplace! Point and click on various areas of the farm to answer related multiple choice questions. With each correct answer, the farmscape changes to show the improvement made (complete with sound effects!) Once you make it through the set of questions correctly, the farm is set in motion with animation . . . a learning tool that's downright fun! Developed for CTIC by CTIC and Zeneca Ag Products. \$8 for the first CD and \$5 for each additional CD with same order. Call CTIC (765) 494-9555.

Meetings

April 24, 1998. *Governor's Conference on the Environment.* Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, Indiana. Contact: Leslie White at (800) 451-6027, ext. 3-6648.

April 28-May 3, 1998. *Rivers: The Future Frontier.* The Hotel Captain Cook, Anchorage, Alaska. Sponsored by the River Management Society. Contact: Caroline Tan at (406) 549-0514 or e-mail to: rms@igc.apc.org

November 11-13, 1998. *18th International Symposium of the North American Lake Management Society.* Banff Springs Hotel, Banff, Alberta, Canada. Contact: Brian Kotak, tel: (403) 525-8431; e-mail: kotak@compusmart.ab.ca; Web Site <www.nalms.org/symposia/banff98.htm>

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