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Unity found in Kankakee River restoration plan

U.S. Representative Jerry Weller, R-Morris, joined representatives from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Kankakee River Basin Partnership and the local farm community to endorse the Partnership's Stewardship Plan offering a federal, state and local alliance to solve the problems of the Kankakee River.

"Restoration of the Kankakee River should receive the same priority of restoration as the Florida Everglades," said Weller.

"I believe we must think globally but act locally to address the siltation problem which is devastating

Illinois' cleanest river and requires a comprehensive solution resulting from a locally led partnership."

"A locally led, comprehensive plan is needed and I applaud the common-sense approach the Partnership has taken to solve the problems facing the Kankakee River Basin," said Weller.

In December of 1997, Weller pointed out several priorities which have been addressed by the stewardship plan:

- The plan focuses on the problem of sand and silt sedimentation.
- The plan presents a comprehensive solution involving community based input and locally led decision making.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recommendations, resulting from the congressionally-funded study currently underway, will be included in the final plan.

"A broad based local initiative like the Kankakee River Basin Partnership provides not only the leadership needed, but offers an inclusive community based solution," Weller said.

J.R. Black and several dozen community leaders from Kankakee, Iroquois and Will counties have been laboring over the last several years to come up with a common sense and comprehensive plan to fight the siltation problem and restore the Kankakee River. State and

federal officials should pay close attention to the Partnership's recommendations."

Over the past year, Weller has been working with local community leaders, conservation organizations and property owners to solve the problems of the Kankakee River.

In addition, Weller has worked closely with Congressman Tom Ewing, R-Pontiac, and Congressman Steve Buyer, R-Indiana, to secure \$450,000 in federal funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers studies now underway.

Weller is now seeking an additional \$900,000 to finance the completion of the study.