

Confluence

People getting together to enhance Salt Creek



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Keith Olson Recognition

by Chris Oszak

I first met Keith Olson many years ago when we were both volunteer stewards with the Nature Conservancy. He was managing the prairie restoration along the Illinois Prairie Path in Elmhurst just east of the Salt Creek. Most of the prairie that Keith works on is owned by the Elmhurst Park District, the remainder on a DuPage County right of way along the Prairie Path. The prairie is anchored at one end by Salt Creek. As the ultimate rain garden, the prairie soaks up water. Keith comments that the deep roots of the prairie plants also anchor the stream bank against erosion, a method that should have success elsewhere.

Over the years Keith has been involved with several conservation organizations, including the Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club, DuPage Environmental Commission and The Conservation Foundation. About 10 years ago he heard that an organization was forming to bring people together for the benefit of the Salt Creek. Working on behalf of the Salt Creek was a natural extension of his work on the prairie and he became one of the founding Directors of the Salt Creek Watershed Network.

Now Keith has been officially recognized for all his work on behalf of conservation. This past fall he was awarded the 'Excellence in Conservation Award 2006' from Chicago Wilderness. Chicago Wilderness is a regional consortium of over 100 professional and volunteer organizations that work on behalf of natural areas conservation in north east Illinois.

Congratulations Keith!

Inside this issue:

Keith Olson recognition	1
Fishing the Salt Creek	2
Progress on Addison Creek	3
New Partners Welcomed in 2006	3
Contact and Membership information	4



Photos by Chris Oszak

Fishing the Salt Creek

By Andrew Ragas

I am out on the water nearly 150 days per year, fishing everywhere in Northern Wisconsin as well as Northern Illinois. Living in Westchester nearly my entire life, I had a fascination with the waterway that is less than two blocks from home, the Salt Creek.

The Salt Creek is a difficult fishery to master, especially for someone who is just beginning to fish the creek. First, my beloved creek is still in recovery mode from its days as a severely polluted stream. Second, it is an urban stream and is densely populated with people living around its banks. Finally, many people still regard it as a “sewer ditch”, polluted and devoid of any fish.

My history with the Salt Creek began roughly 4-years ago. I found out that one of my favorite fish, Smallmouth Bass was present in its waters. I received this information from a local Illinois fishing website, as well as the Illinois DNR. The IL-DNR stocking summaries mentioned that in 1996-97, 41,000 Smallmouth Bass fingerlings were planted downstream of Graue Mill in Hinsdale.

My first outings on the creek took place during the 2002-2004 fishing seasons. Like any new waters you fish, it takes time to adapt to what the water offers, and it takes skill and personal commitment to master. During this period, the most I would catch were very small Largemouth Bass, Bluegills, and Green Sunfish. Throughout my early struggles I would still be hearing rumors of Northern Pike, Walleye, and even some of those stocked Smallmouth Bass being caught. Somehow, my luck all began to change starting in early 2005.

I began to wade the creek at any areas that offered access and began catching fish. The secret to my success was thoroughly exploring the waters, fishing areas that seldom get fished by others, and keeping my baits and presentations simple. My fishing highlights from 2005 included three Smallmouth Bass; numerous Largemouth Bass; Crappies; a few 10-pound carp; six Walleyes with a career best fish at 25 inches; and a 34-inch Northern Pike. In 2005, I made 80-100 outings to the creek, many

of which were successful.

2006 has been interesting as I’ve been building on my success from last year. In November I was still fishing the creek. This year I’ve caught many Largemouth Bass in the 14-15 inch range; five Smallmouth Bass; ten Walleyes with the biggest at 25-inches, lbs.; lots of Crappies; Carp; two Channel Catfish; and finally, three Northern Pike with the largest coming in at 29-inches. This year I’ve made over 100 outings to the Salt Creek.

I hope to run into you while out on my beloved little backyard river. As long as I live here in N. Illinois, I’ll be fishing this little gem until the day I die.

Save a life - Practice catch & release.


You can read more about Andrew’s fishing adventures and techniques at http://www.luganfolkmedia.com/fishing_index.html



Unknown photographer

Progress Is Made on Addison Creek

By Mark Peterson



For those not familiar with the situation, in the summer of 2005, patches of oil could be seen floating down Salt Creek in the LaGrange Park, North Riverside area. We had reported on this previously in our newsletter. Investigation revealed the source of the oil to be a storm sewer pipe intended to discharge street storm water into Addison Creek in an industrial section of Broadview. Addison Creek is a tributary that flows into Salt Creek at a point a little south of Cermak Rd and a little west of 17th Ave.

The Illinois EPA and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) Industrial Waste Division were called in to investigate the problem. The source of the oil pollution proved to be elusive and a number of months passed until November of 2005 when a nearby factory was identified as having oil present in their parking lot storm sewer. This parking lot storm sewer empties into the main storm sewer system which then flows into Addison Creek.

Although how or why the oil had gotten into the factory's parking lot sewer was not confirmed, the company was asked to call in a remediation firm to clean out the drain so that no further oil would seep into the creek. We hoped that this would be the end of the problem.

Unfortunately, in the following months, patches of oil continued to be seen flowing down Addison Creek and into Salt Creek. There seemed to be more than just one source for the oil. The investigation continued and in February of 2006 a second factory in the area was identified as having oil in

their storm sewer system. Again, this oil was getting into the main storm sewer system and then flowing into Addison Creek.

Further investigation of the situation found the company to have several inside wastewater sewage drains, which were improperly connected into the storm water sewer system. This was allowing wastewater and oil from inside their factory to enter into the storm water sewer system and flow directly into the creek, causing the pollution. My understanding is that the factory was not aware of these improper sewer connections and once the problem was discovered and brought to their attention they took immediate measures to close off these connections and have their wastewater sewer lines connected properly.


Since then, I have not seen any oil on either Addison Creek or Salt Creek coming from this storm drain. MWRD continues to monitor the area to make sure no further violations occur.

Many thanks to the MWRD Industrial Waste Division, the Illinois EPA, the Mayor's office of the Village of Broadview, The Village of Broadview Public Works Department, the Broadview Fire Department, members of the Sierra Club, the Salt Creek Watershed Network, and all those who were involved in finding a resolution to this problem.



NEW PARTNERS WELCOMED IN 2006

By Ron Hursh




2006 was a good outreach year for Salt Creek Watershed Network. Corporate sponsors, municipality and individual donations, environmental alliances and funded work groups have all helped us sustain focus on SCWN concerns.

The annual spring and fall creek cleanups were substantially upgraded with help from Huff and Huff Incorporated, an Oak Brook based environmental engineering and consulting firm. Employees pitched in with cleanups and then served a corporate sponsored picnic lunch for everyone during the May LaGrange Park cleanup, and the September Fullersburg cleanup. During both cleanups Huff & Huff staff directed in-water removal of trees and debris. Huff & Huff biologists

also presented an aquatic life analysis demonstration illustrating how stunned fish species are taken from the creek and used to determine water quality.

In water cleanups will continue as SCWN members and forest preserve personnel work together to prepare Salt Creek for the rising interest in canoeing.

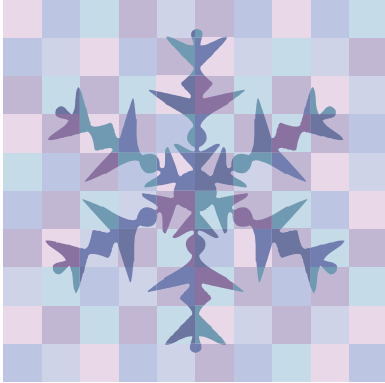
Thanks to volunteers, donors, and newspaper editors, SCWN is able to continue to expand the organization and enhance the Salt Creek as a quality waterway for the community to treasure and enjoy.



Confluence

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LaGrange Park, IL 60526

www.saltcreekwatershed.org



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Thank you for your support!

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