



Lt. Gov. Simon Re-launches Science Advisory Committee

September 16 2011 2:15 PM

Lt. Gov. Simon Re-launches Science Advisory Committee Water experts, Simon will work to reduce flood damages, other potential threats East Alton, Ill. – Lt. Governor Sheila Simon announced Wednesday the re-launch of the Science Advisory Committee, an expert panel to assist efforts in protecting Illinois' rivers from potential threats and reducing flood damages.

The committee's volunteer membership brings together experts working in academia and the private sector from across the state, at no cost to the taxpayer. The seven-member panel includes a chair, four members appointed by Simon and two from the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center – Lyle Guyon, expert in terrestrial ecology, and John Chick, field station director.

The announcement was made at the Jerry F. Costello Confluence Field Station along the banks of the Mississippi River in Alton, home of NGRREC, which will house the committee. Additional support will be provided by the Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois.

“I am excited to begin working with the best and brightest minds in river research,” Simon said. “The Science Advisory Committee will be a wonderful asset in the fight to reduce flood damages, protect river ecosystems, and keep our water safe for the citizens who live, work and play along our rivers.”

First established in 1999, the Science Advisory Committee serves as the scientific arm of the Illinois, Mississippi and Ohio/Wabash River Coordinating Councils chaired by Simon. The committee will work with Simon to advance scientific research that will

guide policies impacting river use and development such as reducing flood damages. This spring, Simon worked with state and federal emergency response personnel to coordinate response efforts to devastating flooding along the Mississippi.

The committee previously published research illustrating the importance of preventing Asian carp and other invasive species from moving between the Great Lakes and Illinois River. The work helped secure full federal funding for two electric barriers in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, which serve as a barricade between the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan.

The committee's location at the field station will provide Lewis and Clark students and faculty the opportunity to work with experts from various universities and organizations, and will provide the state with scientific research that will inform policy and save tax dollars. NGRREC will also assist the committee in its efforts to advance research on large river ecosystems.

"The combined efforts of NGRREC and the Science Advisory Committee will increase grant opportunities for research, and serve as another example of the significant role NGRREC continues to play as an authority on river research," said Dale Chapman, L&C president and NGRREC chairman. "We are pleased to have been selected to house the Science Advisory Committee and look forward to working with its membership and Lt. Governor Simon to provide sustainable solutions for Illinois' rivers."

University of Illinois scientist emeritus Nani Bhowmik serves as chair of the Science Advisory Committee and joins Guyon and Chick, as well as Simon appointees George Czapar of Champaign, Steven Kraft of Carbondale, Allen LaPointe of Chicago and Darren Olson of Rosemont.

"I look forward to working with the appointed members and integrating my longstanding history and expertise with the broad array of scientists at the NGRREC to focus on Illinois' rivers," Bhowmik said.

NGRREC Members

Dr. Chick is an aquatic ecologist with NGRREC, field station director for the Illinois Natural History Survey and an adjunct professor at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He possesses a Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of Georgia and a M.S. in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences from the University of Florida. Dr. Chick's main research activities focus on the ecology of large rivers, particularly the Mississippi and Illinois rivers; population dynamics and community level interactions of freshwater

fishes, early life history stages of fishes, general aquatic ecology; and questions related to how spatial variability in aquatic ecosystems affects population, community and ecosystem dynamics.

Dr. Guyon specializes in forest ecology, and obtained a Ph.D. in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences and a M.S. in Forestry from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His prior research experiences include studying vegetation diversity and tree regeneration dynamics in old-growth and mid-successional southern Appalachian forests and assessing the status of sustainable forest management in Illinois. In addition to developing a terrestrial ecology research program for NGRREC, Dr. Guyon also teaches courses at Lewis and Clark Community College related to natural resources and environmental issues.

Simon Appointees

Dr. George Czapar, of Champaign, is the director of the Center for Watershed Science at the Illinois State Water Survey and is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois. Czapar teaches in the campus honors program and his research focuses on reducing the impacts of agriculture on water quality.

Dr Steven Kraft, of Carbondale, is a visiting professor at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and the director of the Professional Science Masters in Advanced Energy and Fuels Management at SIUC. Kraft specializes in farm management, natural resources policy, watershed management and planning, farm policy and ecosystem services.

Allen LaPointe, of Chicago, is the Vice President of Environmental Quality at the Shedd Aquarium, where he has worked for over 14 years. LaPointe has conducted various water quality seminars and trainings for zoological organizations, has taught various courses in water chemistry, and teaches a five day seminar on aquarium environmental quality at the Shedd.

Darren Olson, of Rosemont, is a section head in the Water Resources Department at Christopher B. Burke Engineering with over 15 years of experience in civil and water resources engineering. Olsen also serves as the president of the Illinois Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers.