

118 YEARS OF NATURAL RESOURCE SERVICE COMES TO A CLOSE

A visit to Hennepin Canal's Visitor Center will never be the same. Four of our friends and stewards of natural resources are retiring and moving on to other phases of their lives. They are Superintendent Dave Hahne, Assistant Tish Winehart, Safety Instructor Cynthia Brewer and District Fish Biologist Ken Clodfelter.

Dave Hahne came to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in 1979 and has worked his entire career "on the canal." Since taking over as Superintendent in July of 2010, he has faced Illinois' financial adversity with patience and fortitude. Working with worn-out equipment and a diminishing sized staff for fifteen years, he has managed to keep water in our canal and preserve our park. During all this time, Dave always gave the highest praise and credit to his colleagues and staff.

We asked him for his views of the canal's condition and future. After some thought, he stated, "millions could be spent," and, as Steve Moser did before him, he identified stabilization of levees as the highest priority in preserving the waterway.

Before departing, Dave said that Springfield has been notified of the park's needs. We say the ball is in the politicians' court. The Department knows the needs; it's up to the government to provide the resources to meet them.

When he announced his pending retirement, he expressed his gratitude to the good people he has met and worked with through the years, best said in his own words.

I wish to thank all of you for the support you've provided me and the staff in the years I've spent serving as the superintendent of the Hennepin Canal Parkway. The 37+ years spent working for the department, all at the Canal, have gone by quickly and in that period of time I've been blessed to have had the opportunity work with and get to know all of you, it has truly been a rewarding experience.

Once again, "Thank you" all for you've done and accomplished in making the Hennepin Canal Parkway a beautifully unique place to visit and utilize.

Dave Hahne, December 2015

Thank you for your years of caring service, Dave. Best wishes for a well-deserved happy retirement.

Tish Swinehart has been the first to greet and welcome folks to the canal Visitor Center since 1994. She has been the office manager for much of her tenure. And, with the State's downsizing of staff such as eliminating the Interpreter position in 2005, formerly held by Judy Jackson, we have found ourselves increasingly dependent upon Tish's skills and expertise.

Tish states that she has many good memories of her working with the canal people. Though it's "tough to pin down" the best memories, she definitely puts the Friends centennial celebration in 2007 among the best. (She puts that memory right up there with Ed's cream puffs. That's a kind of an inside joke.)

When asked to give some advice to the Friends as we face the tremulous future, she advises us, "Don't lose faith." For that, and for all you have done for us, Tish, thank you. We're going to miss you.

Ken Clodfelter is probably best known to people throughout the Mid-West as the fish expert. If you have caught fish in the canal, the guy to thank is Ken, the District Fish Biologist. He has been with the IDNR since 1988 and, at the time of his retirement, he was responsible for managing state waters and assisting with private waters in thirteen counties. Like the other DNR folks, he's been a busy man. Monitoring contaminants and vegetation in these waters, shocking, measuring, evaluating and stocking fish, endless record keeping, and, one of his favorite activities, being with thousands of young people in out-reach programs have been some of his duties.

Apparently Ken doesn't plan to veer too far from the water. He intends to continue being active with young people and offers help to the Friends when needed. Thank you, Ken. Hope to see you on the banks of the Hennepin.

Cynthia Brewer is well known to those involved with recreational vehicles and guns throughout Illinois. She came to the IDNR from Maryland and Pennsylvania in 1986 as an Interpreter at Goose Lake Prairie, near Morrison. She later transferred to the Safety Division of the Illinois Law Enforcement Dept. Her chief responsibilities were training volunteer instructors of snowmobiles, boating, hunting and trapping in up to 34 counties, including, for a while, Cook Co. Cynthia states that she has had the "best job" because of meeting great people, including the 402 volunteer instructors that she has trained. She is looking forward to doing some hunting and boating with her husband while staying in their Wisconsin cabin. Best wishes, Cynthia, and thank you for your 30 years of dedicated service.