

2010 Project Managers Report

Greenway Network's mission is to conserve natural resources, encourage sound management of the area's watersheds and protect the quality of life for all citizens. As partial fulfillment of this mission the Project Director, currently Ralph W. Rollins, works to develop strategic collaborations and affiliations with various agencies, other nonprofit organizations, and citizen groups to implement planning and development projects on both a local and regional basis.

A brief description of a few representative planning projects are provided below:

- The Confluence Project – Since its beginning in 1998 Greenway Network has been actively participating as a member of a collaborative team (along with Grace Hill Neighborhood Services, Trailnet, the Southwestern Illinois RC&D (SWIRCD), and the Trust for Public Land) managing the The Confluence Project. The Project's overarching goal is to reconnect people to our great rivers, the Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois, which converge near St. Louis through conservation, recreation and heritage. The project includes planning, development, and programming within the designated 200 square mile project area that includes five counties in both Illinois and Missouri. Planning efforts have included the preparation of a master plan, a feasibility study for a National Heritage Area designation, and a 2010 Strategic Plan update. Greenway Network's Project Director Ralph Rollins has been involved in the preparation of each of these documents as a member of the Confluence management Team.
- American Bottom River Corridor Resource Inventory – “The Inventory was the result of public, government, and conservation organizations' concerns regarding the impact of years of development and neglect on the quantity and quality of the natural resources in the American Bottom.” The American Bottom is the remnant floodplain formed after the last ice age immediately south of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers confluence and lies on the Illinois side of the Mississippi. Rollins lead a team of scientists and GIS specialists from Greenway Network and the SWIRCD in inventorying, analyzing, and developing recommendations on the quantity and quality of the natural resources remaining in the Bottom. This subsequent report has been used for planning, funding, and land acquisition purposes.
- Riverfront Habitat Restoration Master Plan – This project, completed in 2009, involved the development of a long-range plan to restore critical wildlife habitat along the Riverfront Trail in St. Louis. The project area involved an 11-mile corridor and approximately 650 acres of open space which could be converted to native plants and provide valuable habitat especially for migratory birds. Project Director Ralph Rollins, a licensed landscape architect specializing in environmental issues, prepared the master plan and is overseeing its implementation.
- Mounds Heritage Trail Master Plan – A current project, the Mounds Heritage Trail Master Plan, is an effort to prepare a document and plan to guide the development of a bikeway and auto tour that will connect Cahokia Mounds (a World Heritage site) to downtown St. Louis (the former site of some 35 prehistoric mounds) south to Sugarloaf Mound (the last remaining mound existing in St. Louis). The document is currently being prepared by our Project Director in collaboration with the SWIRCD and will be used to build support and solicit funding for development of the trail.

In addition to planning our Project Director has been involved in the following Greenway Network development projects:

- Portage des Sioux Nature Area – After the 1993 flood the City of Portage des Sioux (population 351) asked for Greenway's assistance in identifying how forty acres of City-owned property (25 acres acquired through buyout with FEMA funding) could be used to the City's benefit. Federal requirements precluded the land from being redeveloped. Greenway Network assisted by partnering with the National Park Service Rivers, Trail, and Conservation Assistance program to facilitate a series of community meetings to develop ideas. The City selected the concept of a Nature Area to be used for passive recreation. Project Director Ralph Rollins used concepts and ideas from the community meetings to develop a master plan and construction documents. Using these plans Rollins built support for development culminating in the application and successful award of \$250,000 in funds to develop the Nature Area. Since it first opened in 2003, Rollins and Greenway Network have sponsored and coordinated annual work days to assist community volunteers to conduct clean-ups and site improvements. In 2008 additional funding was acquired through the Missouri Recreational Trail Program to upgrade the Nature Area's trail, install new environmental education signage, construct a restroom, and conduct a feasibility study for a connector trail from the

Nature Area to the KATY Trail.

- Habitat Restoration – Through the Missouri Department of Conservation Community Stewardship Program and other opportunities, grant funds have been received to complete the restoration of native plant communities in several locations throughout St. Charles County. Ralph Rollins' involvement has included writing the grant applications, developing project plans, and coordinating as well as supervising the many volunteers needed to complete these projects. Examples of this type project are the creation of a riparian buffer in St. Charles County's Brommelsiek Park where 111 volunteers planted 975 trees, Towne Park where 36 volunteers planted 400 trees over two mornings, and at the Portage Nature Area where 61 volunteers planted 5307 "plugs" in three hours.

- American Bottom Wetland Interpretive Site – Commonly referred to as Arlington Wetland, this site is a collaborative effort of Madison County, IL, the Collinsville Area Recreation District, and the SWIRCD. The project is funded by an EPA 319 grant. Greenway Network is assisting by providing our Project Director to conduct a site analysis and prepare a site and management plan. These plans will be used to develop construction documents and complete Phase I construction. When completed the Interpretive Site will be used by the Recreation District as an environmental education center and passive recreation area.

In addition to his other duties Ralph Rollins is an artist. In 2007 he conceived of and first promoted the Stream Trash ART™ (S.T.ART™) program. He envisioned the program as a means of educating the public and environmental volunteers regarding both the volume and types of waste discarded into community streams. He also wanted to show that this waste could be reborn as interesting and aesthetically pleasing, even beautiful, works of art. Sponsored by Greenway Network, the S.T.ART™ events are held in conjunction with stream clean-up events in local communities and conservation organizations. In 2009 START expanded to include Trailnet's Trash Bash, Swansea, IL's first ever clean-up event, and the New City School clean-up event.