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***MWHI 12th ANNUAL
WETLAND CONSERVATION BANQUET***



**March 31, 2012
at the K.C. Hall, Godfrey, IL**

For more information and reservations contact John Gineris at (618) 786-2596.

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618-978-8285

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, March 5, 2012

MWHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
at 2404 E. Broadway, Alton at 6:15 pm

Saturday, March 31, 2012

MWHI 12th ANNUAL
WETLAND CONSERVATION BANQUET
at K.C. Banquet Hall, Godfrey, IL

Monday, April 2, 2012

MWHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
at 2404 E. Broadway, Alton at 6:15 pm

Saturday, May 5, 2012

MWHI 3rd ANNUAL
TIM WATSON MEMORIAL SHOOT
at Otter Creek Hunting Club, Jerseyville, IL
for more information call Craig Sondker 618-593-8421

Monday, May 7, 2012

MWHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
at 2404 E. Broadway, Alton at 6:15 pm

Wednesday, June 20, 2012

MWHI GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
at Alton-Wood River Sportsmen Club
in Godfrey, IL at 7:00 pm

September 28, 29, 30, 2012

MWHI HUNTER SAFETY COURSE
at K.C. Hall, Alton

for more information or to register, contact
Craig Sondker 618-593-8421
see upcoming Sentry issues for more details

Visit us at our website:

mwhi.org

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Please Note:

The article, “2011: A Year Not to Remember” published in the February 2012 Sentry issue was submitted and written by Duane Hahnenkamp.

“2011” Duck Season in Review

Duane Hahnenkamp

Before last duck season, I overheard some local duck hunters quietly bitching about the earlier opening day we had. MWHI has always pushed for the earlier duck season because of all the data that our state has. The data has always shown that you kill more ducks during the last two weeks of October than the last two weeks of December. Plus, when you factor in the possibility of an earlier freeze up and total loss of hunting days, then you know why MWHI has always pushed for the earlier opener.

When this season started kind of slow and after a week of more warm weather instead of new ducks, I knew the bitching would get louder. Some even joked that our club president (Scotty) would probably be wanting a September opener next year so we can all get a good sun tan. Well, to make a long story (argument) short, Scotty and MWHI were vindicated again by the facts and figures after the season was over. It may have depended were you hunted if you had a good season or not.

The facts are, even if the season started a week or two later, it would not have made a difference. Most of the ducks had already gone on through and there wasn't that many left up north when the season closed. I was in the hunting areas the day before New Year's Day myself and didn't even see a duck. State and federal data shows that the bulk of the migration hit between November 12th and December 12th. With most of the corn fields already plowed under when the ducks got here, most just kept right on flying through our area. Like it or not, the season dates were not the problem this year. It was the lack of feed in our areas and empty farm fields in the bottoms that kept more ducks from staying around. As far as a later duck season, I don't think the Carlyle zone did any better and the southern zone did a lot worse than us.

Last month I talked about how I thought this season kind of sucked for being a record year. When that article came out, someone saw it and asked me why I was so negative about the season. Then an hour later another guy came up to me and said he agreed with me about the season being an off year. Guys, when I wrote the first article, I wasn't jealous of the areas that did good, but I was disappointed. It's hard to hear all the talk of the best duck season in 50 years and then look at empty skies for most of the season. Plus, I heard the same thing all up and down the flyway from hunters on the internet.

Since that first article came out, I have received a printout of the harvest data for all the areas. The water control and feed in Batchtown made a world of difference for them. I saw were one blind over there killed 400 ducks this season and the last 3 years it only killed 36 ducks total. It shows you how important feed is to an area and how big a deal feed is to a blind. When I got these papers, Kim Postlewait said, “Imagine how many ducks all our areas would have killed if we had the feed in all our areas and on all the refuges like the fall of 2000.” That year we killed 500 more ducks than this year, yet we had lost about three weeks of that season to early freeze up.

All I can say, it may have been a good year for duck hunting, but it sure wasn't the best.

###

IDNR News Bits 2/12/2012

IRAP Youth Turkey Hunting this Spring: IDNR is offering expanded youth hunting opportunities on private property this spring during the Spring Wild Turkey Season through the new federally-funded Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP). Interested youth turkey hunters can download an application for an IRAP Youth Turkey Hunting permit through the IDNR website at <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IRAP>. More than 6,000 acres on private property in at least 17 counties are available for kids under the age of 16 for the Spring Youth Wild Turkey Season and Turkey Seasons 3 and 4. Hunters will need to choose the county in which they wish to hunt and a random drawing may be held for each county/site. For more information on IRAP, contact Tammy Miller at tammy.miller@illinois.gov or go to IRAP website at <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IRAP>.

New Addition to Your National Wildlife Refuge System Clarksville Island

John Mabery, Manager, USFWS, Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge, January 26, 2012

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is pleased to announce the addition of Clarksville Island to the National Wildlife Refuge System. This 860-acre Mississippi River island lies in the very northwest corner of Calhoun County, Ill., and is situated immediately downstream of the Lock and Dam 25 at Clarksville, Mo. Under the Service's conservation mission the island's wildlife and plant resources are now protected for present and future generations of Americans. According to the Service's Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius, the incorporation of Clarksville Island into the refuge system is due in large part to The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a conservation organization that works around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people (www.nature.org). "The determined and coordinated effort between the Illinois Chapter of TNC and the Service, to preserve Clarksville Island, is another shining example of successful conservation made possible through shared goals of public and private sector organizations" said Melius.

Conservation and management activities on Clarksville Island will be administered by the staff at nearby Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. Most of the 9,360 acres of river floodplain that comprise Two Rivers Refuge lie near the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers in Calhoun and Jersey Counties. The Refuge's visitor information center is located in southern Calhoun County, near the Village of Brussels, and regular office hours are 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Two Rivers Refuge is one of more than 40 National Wildlife Refuges situated along the Mississippi River, from the river's headwaters in Minnesota to the mouth of the river in the Gulf of Mexico. According to Two Rivers Refuge Manager John Mabery, more than 250 species of songbirds, shorebirds, wading birds, waterfowl and raptors rely on these river refuges to provide food and sanctuary during their semiannual migration. "That's our primary objective on Two Rivers," said Mabery, "to conserve and manage high quality habitat for migratory birds, while helping sustain a healthy river ecosystem. We encourage people to visit the Refuge and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature." For more information about Two Rivers NWR, visit www.fws.gov/midwest/TwoRivers.

During the next several months the Two Rivers Refuge staff will evaluate public recreational uses to be allowed on Clarksville Island. This process will include gathering input and comments from stakeholders and the general public. In the interim, wildlife dependent recreational uses are allowed on the island in accordance with existing Two Rivers Refuge plans and regulations. Those uses include wildlife viewing, photography, environmental education and interpretation. Camping, trapping, and ATVs are not permitted on the Refuge. The Refuge is open during daylight hours only. For specific regulations pertaining to Two Rivers NWR call the Refuge office at 618-883-2524, or visit <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/TwoRivers/index.html>.

For more information on the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service visit <http://midwest.fws.gov>.
###

Gun Group Appeals Conceal Carry Ruling

Belleview News Democrat 2/7/12

A gun-rights group has appealed to the U. S. Supreme Court after a federal judge in Illinois rules against allowing people to carry firearms on the street.

The Second Amendment Foundation announced Monday it's appealing the decision by federal district Judge Sue Myerscough.

Currently only Illinois and the District of Columbia prohibit the concealed carrying of weapons. Gun owners said that infringes on their 2nd Amendment right to keep and bear arms.

Myerscough ruled Friday that the 2nd Amendment allows citizens to protect themselves with guns in their home but not on the street.

Second Amendment Foundation founder Alan Gottlieb said citizens "don't check our constitutional rights at the front door."

A similar Illinois-based lawsuit backed by the National Rifle Association remains in federal court.

###

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

NRA Update on Gun Bills **1-800-392-8683**

Federal Senate Office **1-202-224-3121**

Federal House Offices **1-202-225-3121**

Illinois State Rifle Association **1-815-635-3198** www.isra.org

Illinois Senate Information **1-217-782-4517**

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Rep. John Shimkus - 19th District

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Sen. Richard J. Durbin

Tel: 312-353-4952 E-mail: dick@durbin.senate.gov

Sen. Mark Kirk

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Legislation Update

John Popov

I hope you had a better duck season than I did. This was one of the worst seasons I have ever had. Mother Nature won this one.

I hope you have been following the news on operation Fast and Furious. The congressional hearings are bringing out more and more data. Remember, I told you last year this is a cover-up to make the gun dealers and law abiding citizens look bad. It didn't work! This was part of a plan by the antis to get more gun control through under the radar tactics promised by this administration.

Remember this slogan: "To fundamentally transform the United States of America." The president has issued executive orders against gun owners -- case in point, gun owner registration in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. He has no authority to register long sales at licensed dealers, but he is doing it anyway. Thanks NRA for making this known.

Have you ever heard of the Global Poverty Act? This bill was introduced by the president when he was a senator in 2008. This bill is tied directly to the United Nations. This Act would give the U.N. 0.7% of the U.S. gross national product, \$845 billion – to be spent by U.N. bureaucrats. Mr. Bill Gates is resurrecting it. This Act has 12 principles. For example, principle #6 would require registration of all arms and the reduction of all national armies "as part of a multinational global security system" under the authority of the UN. To get all 12 principles, visit the DeWeese Report, January 2012, www.deweesereport.com Read the whole report – it will blow your socks off.

It is going to be long legislative year.

If it is to be, it is up to you and me!

**Support Your Club!
Sign Up a New Member!**

Duck and Goose Harvest by Flyway 2010-2011 Hunting Season

USFWS, Branch of Harvest Surveys

Duck Harvest by Flyway

Species	Atlantic	Mississippi	Central	Pacific	Alaska	U.S. Total
Mallard	394,700	2,228,600	604,900	904,600	32,500	4,165,400
Black Duck	92,200	27,100	300	0	0	119,600
Gadwall	53,400	1,098,700	369,100	211,700	2,300	1,735,200
American Wigeon	39,800	130,000	132,900	393,300	17,600	713,500
Green-winged Teal	148,500	1,052,800	262,700	539,000	8,900	2,011,900
Blue-wing/Cinnamon Teal	119,300	633,400	260,400	59,400	0	1,072,600
Shoveler	29,700	475,100	139,600	287,100	3,200	934,600
Pintail	23,500	196,200	116,100	358,600	10,100	704,500
Wood Duck	453,100	919,200	56,200	40,400	0	1,478,800
Lesser Scaup	67,400	157,300	39,600	23,400	600	287,900
Ring-necked Duck	94,300	268,400	67,900	59,700	800	491,100
Total Ducks	1,857,500	7,647,000	2,230,000	3,039,500	91,700	14,865,800

Goose Harvest by Flyway

Species	Atlantic	Mississippi	Central	Pacific	Alaska	U.S. Total
Snow Goose	18,300	82,900	153,800	65,000	0	320,000
Ross Goose	0	4,600	23,600	16,900	0	45,100
Gr. white fronted Goose	0	105,200	87,500	73,800	2,200	268,800
Canada Goose	794,200	938,400	529,400	261,000	10,200	2,533,200
Brant	18,100	0	0	800	2,100	20,900
Total Geese	830,800	1,131,400	794,300	417,700	14,500	3,188,700

The MRA Top Ten Blinds by Total Harvest 1966 -2011

Submitted by Kim Postlewait, IDNR Site Superintendent 2/15/2012

Rank	Area	Blind	Ducks
#1	Godar	423	11,228
#2	Batchtown	85	10,282
#3	Godar	430	9,771
#4	Batchtown	88	9,622
#5	Godar	421	9,454
#6	Stump	236	9,050
#7	Batchtown	87	8,991
#8	Godar	422	8,268
#9	Batchtown	29	7,856
#10	Godar	411	7,748

A few years back, one of our hunters painted the word "Heaven" and an arrow pointing to the boat path to Dixon pond. I guess I have agree that he could be right. However, a few years ago, I compared all of the areas and the number of people of who draw for each and came to the conclusion that your odds of drawing a blind that regularly harvests over 100 ducks per year were the highest at Godar – Diamond even though that area had by far the most people drawing per blind. The best place to draw is the place you enjoy hunting. Whether it is closer to home, you can get along with the other hunters in the area, or it's where you started hunting with your family and friends.

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MISSISSIPPI RIVER AREA 2011 WATERFOWL SEASON REPORT

Excerpts

(for a complete report, please contact Kim Postlewait or MWHI)
Submitted by IDNR Site Superintendent Kim Postlewait, 1/24/2012

HARVEST INFORMATION FOR THE COMBINED CHECK STATION AREAS

The opening day harvest was 1,228 birds, which represented 5.96 % of the total season harvest.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER AREA COMBINED AREAS				
	2009	2010	2011	1966-2011 AVE.
HOURS	42,291	60977	100,895.75	86,039.6
DUCKS	7,589	12240	22,010	14,316.5
HUNTERS	7,123	11240	17,734	14,958
D/H RATIO	1.07	1.09	1.24	.95
Hrs/DUCK	5.57	4.98	4.58	6.11

SEASON SUMMARY

The flooding conditions resulted in poor conditions throughout most of the area. Flooding on the Illinois River lasted until mid to late July, so areas that do not hold water well were dewatered in the attempt to grow moist soil plants. Areas that had high water too late into the season were held to limit the pumping costs. We drained the refuges at Crull, Batchtown and Godar. Crull and Batchtown were seeded to Japanese Millet and buckwheat with marginal success. Batchtown was planted to corn but was lost and planted to millet and buckwheat. The borrow area next to the refuge was planted to buckwheat, but germination was delayed by dry conditions and didn't really produce much more than green graze before the hard frosts. Godar river field was planted to buckwheat and millet but came up mostly in pigweed. This produced a lot of small grain seed in that impoundment. I decided to pump that area first since it had the most feed in an attempt to hold ducks. We then pumped the east side of the refuge, as it held the next best level of feed, and finally pumped the west side as there was very little feed but would provide some thermal roosting cover in the buckbrush and timber when the temperatures dropped.

This was the first year out of the last five that we did not flood or freeze out. High duck populations, and the ability to get to the blinds for the full season, enabled us to have our third best season indicated by our records that date to the mid fifties. Only Stump Lake failed to make it into the top ten years, and it just missed by a couple of hundred ducks. It was the third best year for the combined check station areas. Godar finished with its 7th best year, Batchtown with its 6th, Calhoun Point 6th, and the Glades with its best ever. The harvest peaked in mid November and started down in December, which is typical when looking at the long term records.

Our biggest success was the management at Batchtown. This was only possible because of the EMP project which allowed us to drop the water level and keep the water out until moist soil plants could establish. It was then possible to let water back into the area at a rate that allowed the moist soil plants to grow but not inundate them. All of this was possible without any expenditure for fuel for pumping.

###

MWHI Supports Wounded Warriors “Duck Hunt” Event

At the October 2011 MWHI Board meeting, Duane Hahnenkamp asked the Board to help with the Wounded Warriors Duck Hunt event held at the Grassy Lake Hunting Club near Ware, IL. Tom Goetz and Gary Adams of Clarksville, TN have organized the hunt for the last three years. The MWHI Board voted to donate up to \$1,300 for the purchase of two guns for the Wounded Warrior event.



Vets hunt ducks, heal at Wounded Warrior event

Eli Mileur | Daily Egyptian, January 16, 2012

Retired sergeant Mike Hulsey [above picture] said he was planning on killing himself when the phone rang.

When he answered, Ronnie Gullion was on the other end. He had an invitation for Hulsey to last year's Wounded Warrior duck hunt in Ware.

It was the call that may have saved Hulsey's life.

He decided to go, and the time he spent with fellow veterans on the hunt turned around his depression, he said.

He said he had been suffering since his forced retirement from the Army after wounds from a gunshot and a roadside bomb. They were scars he carried home with him after three tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. A cane helps him get around now, but it was the healing in the duck blind that helped with the emotional trauma, he said.

“I found myself. I felt healthy,” Hulsey said.

Similar stories weren't hard to find at the third annual Wounded Warrior duck hunt Saturday at the Grassy Lake Hunting Club in Ware.

Hulsey was one of 15 veterans who took part in the event, which brought together veterans, hunting guides, members of the public and old friends at the club's lodge and hunting grounds.

The event — hosted by the club and SIU in conjunction with Fort Campbell's Healing Outside of a Hospital program, or HOOAH — spanned two days. The wounded warriors were also given a reception at SIU's home basketball game Friday, where 10 World War II veterans joined them.

Saluki Athletics event organizer Steve Sowers said Friday's reception was a show of patriotic appreciation for the veterans' service.

“They're sacrificing their time and selves for everyone else,” he said.

But the atmosphere down in the duck blinds Saturday was markedly more laid back than the reception's. After gathering at the club's lodge, vets were driven in truckloads out to the repurposed fuel tanks buried in club owners Gereld and Collin Cain's cornfield. The tanks, about the size of baseball dugouts, provided a place for the veterans to try to keep warm in the chill January air, look out for ducks and, most importantly, spend time with each other.

“We just sit down here and talk. We don't care if we shoot a duck,” retired captain Matt Moser said.

Moser — along with his father Steve and Hulsey, Gullion, Perry Thorington, Adam Peacock, Sean Bennett and guide Duane “Dago” Smith — spent the afternoon in pit 18 of Grassy Lake’s grounds.

The men only had three ducks at the end of the day, but under the thatched cornstalk roof of the blind and in air thick with vapor breath and cigarette smoke, they had more luck with verbal sparring than with hunting.

Gullion said the spirit of camaraderie the wounded veterans build while on the hunt is much like that on the battlefield.

“This is now our foxhole and we’re fighting a different battle, and that battle is to feel normal again,” he said.

Gullion, a retired sergeant first class and founder of the HOOAH program, said events such as these, which he organizes as an outreach coordinator with the Wounded Warrior Project, are therapeutic for soldiers who find themselves back at home with physical and mental scars.

When Gullion came back home from Iraq with a combat-related illness, he’d spend his days in the house, not doing anything.

“I didn’t care if I lived or died,” he said.

That changed one day when he reluctantly went with some friends on a hunting trip.

After spending time with friends and opening up, he found himself wanting to live again and went back to work at Fort Campbell to do something for his brothers in arms at home if he couldn’t go back to Iraq.

It was there he founded HOOAH to help other veterans who were in the situation he found himself in when he returned home, he said.

He said while his illness has him feeling bad every day, his work with Wounded Warriors has given him a purpose.

“It’s totally encompassed my life,” he said.

And when he’s out on the hunt with other veterans, he can escape from the pain of his illness.

“Once the ducks start flying and we start shooting, I forget I’m sick,” he said.

He calls the process of vets opening up to each other and others and telling their stories on these hunting trips camouflage therapy because the soldiers heal while wearing their camo and without realizing it.

Sgt. 1st Class Perry Thorington said camouflage therapy works, and since attending the hunts he’s come to terms with his situation.

After an IED exploded five feet from his face and sent him flying 20 yards through the air, he was left with a spinal injury and a blinded left eye, he said. Shrapnel from the explosion still falls out of his nose sometimes, he said.

No matter how much he wanted to return to Iraq, his injuries disqualified him, which is what anguished him the most, he said.

“I was depressed, pissed off at the world,” he said.

He tried normal therapy, but his civilian therapist had no way of imagining what he’d been through, he said. But hunting with fellow soldiers gave him a chance to open up to others who’d seen what he’d seen, he said, and he was able to at least begin the healing process.

“You don’t really get over all of it, but it helps you deal with it a lot better,” he said.

Hulsey said Saturday’s hunt was the first event he’s told his story at.

Going on the trips has given him a new perspective on life and taught him to appreciate the important things in life, he said.

“If it weren’t for this program I would not be here today,” he said.

Isaac Smith contributed to this report.

###

**For Sale: Flambeau Standard Decoys with strings and weights. \$25 per dozen.
Call 618-530-8458**

Poachers Use Fake Identities More Dumb Poacher Awards American Hunter, NRA

This is without a doubt the first case of poaching I've seen reported that would make a quality storyline for an episode of CSI. On April, 21 the Southern Oregon newspaper *The Mail Tribune* reported that a ring of nine poachers were facing racketeering charges for allegedly stealing the identity of Oregonians to buy hunting licenses and tags and then illegally killing as many as 300 black-tailed deer over the past five years. The charges stemmed from a 15-month investigation and could result in fines up to \$375,000 and a Class A felony that could land these poachers in jail for 20 years.

From the Mailtribune.com:

Most of the alleged poaching occurred in 2009 and 2010 on federal Bureau of Land Management and private timberlands within the state's McKenzie Wildlife Management Unit. It focused largely on black-tailed deer, though also included elk, antelope and bear, according to the OSP.

Many of the animals were killed to fill tags for people who either did not hunt or had their identification stolen strictly to gain licenses and tags in their names.

The case broke open when one of the victims received an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife envelope requesting a tooth from a black bear killed during a hunt be sent to the agency as part of the study, police said. When the victim told ODFW he had no hunting license or bear tag, agency officials discovered a license and tag were bought illegally in the victim's name, police said.

This case involved years of lies, deceit and what can be summed up as organized crime. Oregon Police officials seized 18 hunting rifles, 108 sets of antlers, several hunting licenses and tags, keys to gates on private timberland, two whole poached cow elk and about 1,600 pounds of processed game meat after a search of the accused' homes. ###

URGENT ISRA ALERT:

CHICAGO MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL LAUNCHES NEW ATTACK ON YOUR RIGHTS

On Thursday, February 9th, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel called for the Illinois General Assembly to pass a \$65 per handgun fee to be levied against every law-abiding gun owner in Illinois – INCLUDING YOU. Of course, gang bangers, murderers, robbers and rapists are exempt from the fee.

This fee would be charged every 5 years on every handgun you own. Additionally, you would have to register with the government in the same manner as sex-offenders.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU

If Rahm Emanuel's gun tax passes, you will be required to pack up your handguns and take them to the local police station for examination and registration. If you have 10 handguns to bring in, you'll walk out paying \$650 in taxes. If you own 100 handguns, the government will lighten your wallet to the tune of \$6,500. And, you'll have to repeat this process every 5 years – unless Emanuel and his buddies in the legislature bump this up to an ANNUAL FEE.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE MONEY TO PAY THE TAX?

If you cannot pay the \$65 tax on EACH of your handguns, you will have to surrender your guns to the local police for destruction.

WHAT IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO PAY THE TAX?

If you decide not to pay the tax, the police will come to your house and take your guns away. They will also arrest you and charge you with a CLASS 2 FELONY.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP STOP THIS HANDGUN TAX IN ITS TRACKS?

Contact your State Senator and State Representative and politely tell them that you are a law-abiding Illinois firearm owner who does not want their rights taxed. Tell your Senator and Representative that you expect them to vote AGAINST Rahm Emanuel's gun tax should it come to the floor of the legislature. ###

URGENT ISRA ALERT: ILLINOIS AMMUNITION TAX MAY BE VOTED ON SOON

1. State Representative Kelly Cassidy (D-Chicago) has introduced a bill that would levy a 2% "Sin Tax" on retail ammunition sales in Illinois.
2. This bill, HB5167, also creates the "High Crime Trauma Center Grant Fund." All proceeds from the 2% Ammunition Sin Tax would go into this grant fund to pay for medical bills racked up by gang-bangers injured while trying to kill one another.
3. HB5167 is a slap to the face of all law-abiding gun owners as it places the blame for violent crime on you because you dare to wish to own firearms.

Tell your representative that you oppose HB5167 and that you expect them to vote against HB5167 should the bill come to the floor of the House. ###

Calhoun holds open houses on trail study

Tom Bott, The Alton Telegraph 2/3/2012

HARDIN - The Calhoun County Board approved the submission of invoices to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for the biking and hiking trail feasibility study.

The members of the Calhoun County Foundation and Trails Partnership - Dale Hagen, and Dean and Jean Barton - received authorization Thursday to draw down funds from a \$20,000 IDNR feasibility study grant. The board approved the payment of \$11,000 for project costs for the work completed by the Southwest Illinois Resource Conservation and Development team since last fall. Hagen also presented a report on the three open houses held at the end of November and early December in Kampsville, Hardin and Brussels.

"The study will be completed in early summer. We want to wrap it up before the September deadline. We feel it is important to have another open house when we complete the study," Hagen told the board. "Personally, I'm disappointed that more people didn't show up at the open houses. We'll have one more open house in Hardin." The summary of the three open houses showed 45 people attended, including 10 in Kampsville, 12 in Hardin and 23 in Brussels.

"Most of the people who attended were surprised to hear of the Mississippi River Trail designation and route that runs north/south through Calhoun County. It surprised me too," Hagen said. "Most were not aware of the IDOT bicycle map and classification of existing roads as bike routes."

"We spent nine hours at three meetings and had a total of 45 people. That's not showing much interest. For good or bad, we wanted people to voice their opinion," Dean Barton said. "If you feel strongly about something, you show up."

There were easels set up for public comment and comment forms to record people's thoughts. Barton said most comments were negative. Ideas written on the easel board included suggestions to increase overnight lodging in the county, connect McCully Heritage Project with Kampsville by trail, consider a mountain bike trail, look into equestrian trails, open the Winfield Ferry all year and put the bike trail along the state highway (Illinois Route 100).

"I went to the meeting in Brussels. I know (Calhoun County State's Attorney) Charlie (Burch) is pushing for the state to take over the highway (between Hardin and Brussels). Have there been any talk with IDOT or IDNR?" Commissioner Doug Wilschetz asked.

Hagen and Barton both answered no, but Barton pointed out there must be a trail plan in place, in case the state makes the decision to maintain the road.

County Engineer Barry Webster said he has not found any records that the highway ever was a state road, but it should be.

"We've resurfaced it since I've been here. Some people say the state maintained it, but I can't find any records. The state may have made improvements, then turned it over to us," Webster said. "The state is supposed to maintain highways that run through the county, and it also goes to another state. We have fewer miles of state highway than any other county in Illinois. The state has 30 miles, and we have over 300."

The County Board still plans to leave the trails question up to the voters once the feasibility study is completed.

"We'll have a better understanding of how the people feel when it goes on the ballot," Wilschetz said.

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