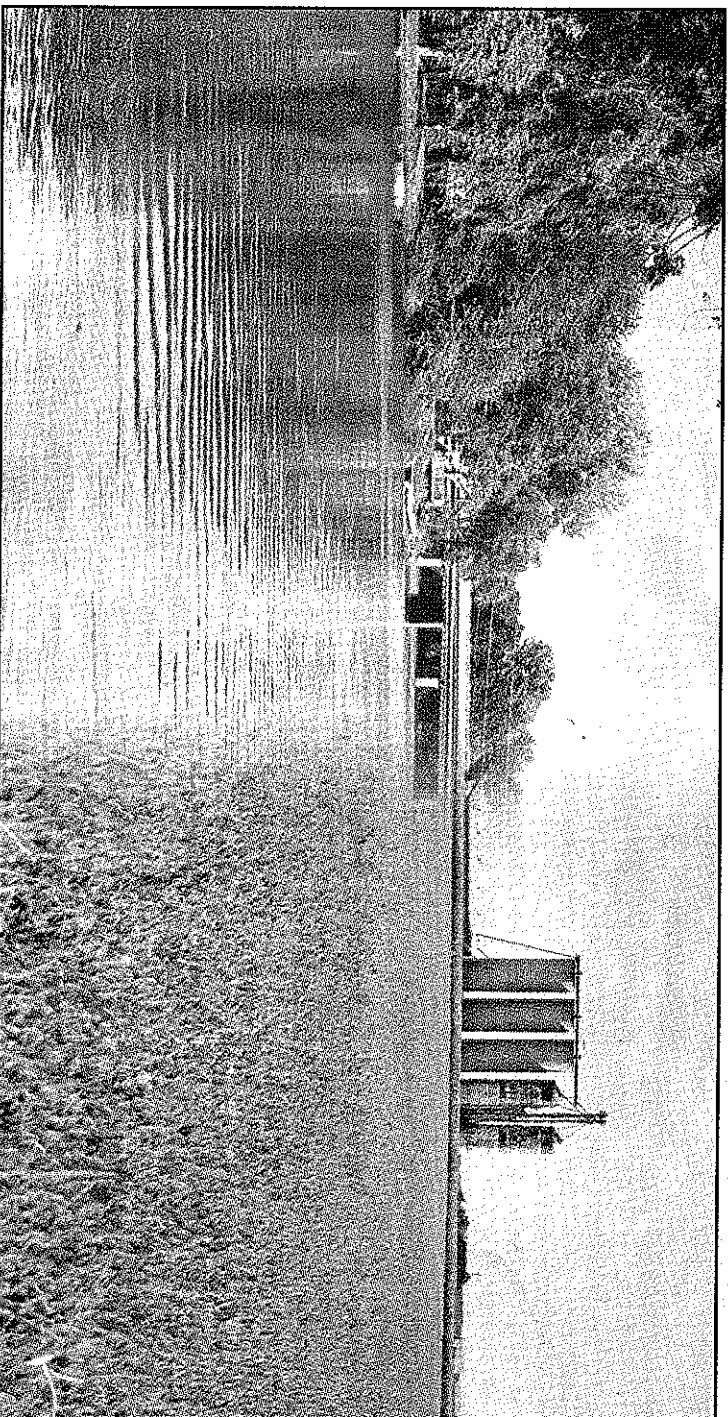


THE KANKAKEE

An abused resource

Today the river itself is a paradox: "The Kankakee Ditch" in Indiana; and a sand-plagued stream in Illinois that still supports one of the top smallmouth bass fisheries.



Composite by Nancy Burgan

A treasure often taken for granted, the Kankakee is an outdoors person's paradise, an aesthetic resource and the lifeblood of many farms along its banks.

Journal/Bill Byrns

You all live in my basin but know me not.

I am the spirit of the stream Kankakee although others have called me by many names in ages past.

Birthered by ice and cataclysmic flood, my basin shelters thousands, all seeking different rewards from the treasures I offer.

My heritage is the life of the earth. My nature is ever changing.

In elder days — before you altered Nature's design — my waters were a wildlife refuge, a paradise for creatures of fen, forest and field.

In these days, my waters embrace the crops of your field, bring life and power to your cities and offer a playground for all to enjoy.

A century ago, in the name of progress, you altered my flow and destroyed my grand marsh.

Today, in the name of conservation, you seek to restore part of that marsh, clear my sands and change again the bed of my waters.

Sand, you rightly say, kills my fish by blanketing the rocks where lies the food of the river.

But life and death is a balance and even sand is part of my ancient heritage.

Tampering with that balance has led to the burden I carry today.

Rivers do not mark time by the tick of a clock or by the pages of a calendar. Decades, centuries, even millennia have flown by as I con-

THE KANKAKEE RIVER:

Today The daily Journal begins a five-part series on the Kankakee River.

■ Monday, the river's history and its impact on both rural and urban environments.

■ Tuesday, what the latest studies are saying.

■ Wednesday, how the Kankakee River became our playground.

■ Thursday, what should be done to preserve the Kankakee River.

tinue to shape my course to the sea.

My marsh has faded as the surrounding landscape has changed. I, too, continue to change, my channel slowly cuts deeper into bedrock on its long, slow fall to join the stream called Illinois.

Look now into my eyes and see the faces of the Kankakee. Learn that my wild places share a place

River

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with your cities and homes. Behold the rich fields where crops rise across my basin. Learn the plans for my future and then consider the balance that all must share.

...

By Bill Byrns Journal writer

Today the Kankakee River valley is "a good example of a practical Illinois landscape," Department of Natural Resources biologists say in a recent report.

Nearly 90 percent of the basin in Illinois and Indiana is cropland. Urban areas occupy less than 5 percent with grasslands, woodlands and wetlands accounting for the remainder. In Illinois only 236 acres of presettlement wetlands survive.

With so much of the basin in cropland, agriculture becomes a tempting target for the problems of sedimentation and erosion.

But improved farming practices and regulations have curbed many of the abuses of the past.

And, farmers are not alone here.

Together the Kankakee and Iroquois rivers flow across 100 miles in Illinois but nearly 200,000 live in the watershed.

Cities, suburbs and industry all use the river's resources. Most of the problems of pollution begin in these urbanized areas. Here too are often found the greatest demand for more public lands and the most recreational use — and abuse — of the streams themselves.

Once ignored by state and federal agencies, the threat of urban sprawl has turned the river basin into a chessboard of competing conservation plans.

Those plans include a 30,000

acre federal wildlife refuge and the possibility of flood and sediment controls by the Corps of Engineers. The Corps is also planning an ecosystem restoration project near the state line that includes limited sand removal from the river.

State agencies in both Illinois and Indiana continue to pursue land acquisitions and easements for conservation and flood control and the Nature Conservancy is turning ag land back into wetlands on 7,209 acres in Newton County, Ind.

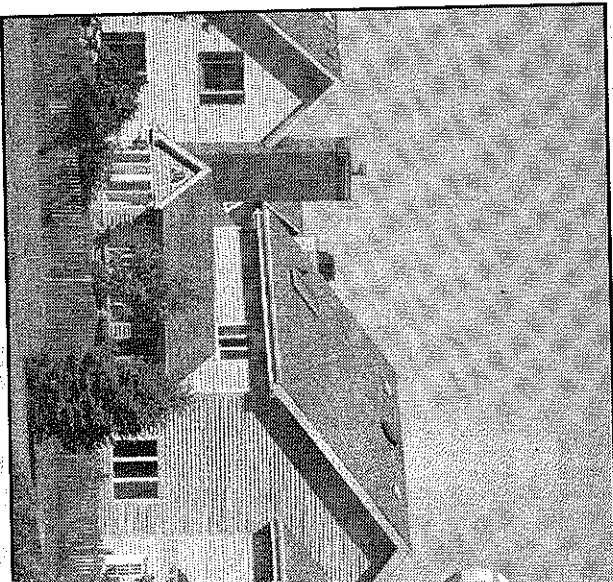
In addition, a number of local groups, the Kankakee River Basin Partnership in Illinois and the Kankakee River Basin Commission and Grand Marsh Restoration Project in Indiana each have their own plans for the river.

Over the next four days The Daily Journal will examine the different aspects of the Kankakee River, its past, present and promise.

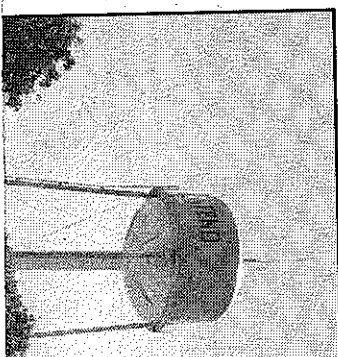
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But all is not perfect in paradise. Hebel said high taxes are drawing commuters, and the



NEW HOMES AND new streets new residents the commun



THE ALMANAC

Today is Sunday, Sept. 24, the 268th day of 2000. There are 98 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 24, 1789, Congress passed the First Judiciary Act, which provided for an attorney general and a Supreme Court.

On this date: