

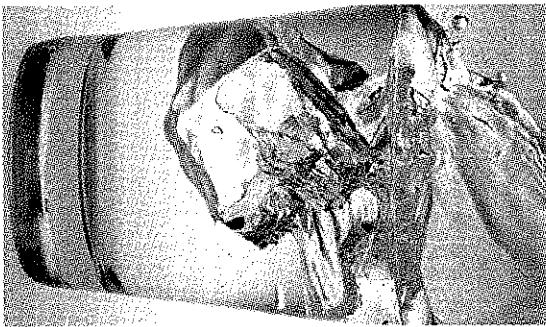
# The Kankakee's Water Wealth

River groundwater supply  
is our greatest resource

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## RIVER Heritage

LAST IN THE SERIES



Water, like the very air we breathe, is essential to all life on Earth. So simple, yet so vital, our abundant water resources in the Kankakee River Valley determine the fate of our economy and the growth of our cities.

The rivers and their tributary streams provide water for our cities and crops, endless recreational opportunities and shelter for a wide diversity of plant and animal species.

In the Kankakee area, Aqua Illinois draws drinking water from the river for over 16,000 customers. Countywide, the company provides water to 67,408 people according to the latest figures from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Another "river" of water lies hidden deep underground, a vast aquifer that yields up groundwater supplies for those living in Buckingham, Grant Park, Herscher, Manteno, Momence, Pen-

broke, Reddick, St. Anne, Sun River Terrace and the surrounding rural areas.

Not all our neighbors are so lucky.

Across Will County many communities have found their well water supplies are laced with naturally occurring radium that exceeds EPA's new public health limits. It means either installing costly technology or seeking water supplies elsewhere.

Aqua Illinois provides well water to 6,600 customers at University Park, where radium is a growing concern. University Park has looked into building a \$9 million pipeline to tap into water pumped from the Kankakee River to Manteno and is trying to attract cost-sharing by Peotone and Monroe.

Joliet, now planning a \$96.6 million water and sewer project to filter radium out of its well supply, has not completely abandoned plans to build a 13-mile-long pipeline to the Kankakee River. The city has set aside \$1 million to review its plan of drawing 20 million

gallons a day from the Kankakee near Wilmington and pumping it to the city's west side.

Ironically Joliet, like Kankakee, has a river running right through town.

Unlike the Kankakee however, the Des

Plaines River is so heavily polluted that treating its water would cost more than building a 13-mile-long pipeline.

For most of its 150 miles, the Kankakee flows through agricultural lands, the bountiful corn and soybean fields of northwestern Indiana and northeastern Illinois.

Water resources, from both surface streams and groundwater reserves, are an increasingly important part of farming in the eastern portion of Kankakee County where sandy soils are less able to retain water.

A total of 23,695 acres of the 347,161 acres of farmland in Kankakee County are irrigated according to figures from the Department of Agriculture. Iroquois, by comparison, with 678,918 acres of farmlands, irrigates just over 2,600 acres and Will irrigates a little more than 2,400 acres of its 265,490 acres of farmland.

Agriculture is still the economic heart of the area, accounting for nearly 90 percent of the entire river basin. Water resources are just as vital in the farmlands as they are to our cities, businesses and industries.

Sedimentation — not pollution — however, remains the greatest threat to the life of our local rivers and streams.