

Notes from Past Conservation Congresses/Partners in Conservation
Funding/Revenue Recommendations
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Pulling from the Updated Status Report from Dept. of Conservation, January 1994, a number of funding related recommendations were passed by the **Conservation Congress in 1993**. Page numbers are from that report.

Pg. 3	Create an Aquatic Resource Fund, no source for revenues to fund identified
Pg. 9	Create a conservation easements fund, no source of funding identified. The Department's response was creation of the Habitat Endowment Trust Fund, revenues from sales of habitat stamp and other sources, portion of funds to go for easements.
17	Fish Illinois--initiative funded by increase in fishing license. Done! Successfully passed General Assembly and accomplished the recommendations that included hiring additional district fisheries managers and technicians and required equipment and support; add a hatchery manager and other staff at LaSalle fish hatchery; add conservation education specialists (I believe 2 were hired), fully fund expansion of Jake Wolf fish hatchery, and rehab Spring Grove fish hatchery (isn't it now closed?).
21	1/8 of 1% increase in state sales tax. Analysis indicates advisory referendum; generate \$100 million annually; would likely be more successful if a legislative initiative.
22	User fee package. Response was Fish Illinois, HB 1990 and HB 1991 from 88th (?) General Assembly.
23	Video tape rentals--new tax of 5% and it would raise \$6.4 million.
24	Environmental license plate for state parks. Done!
25	Create Conservation Foundation. Done!
26	Investigate and increase private partnerships and funding sources.
27	Recycling tax to be used for forestry nursery programs.
35	Fee increase for controlled hunting on public lands
36	Funding for private lands work
38	Promote recreational liability and increase public access to private land
Pg. 30	Have member of Conservation Congress serve on Advisory Board.
46	Establish and celebrate an annual Natural Resource Month

1994 Conservation Congress (CC2)

Pulling from both the Recommendations background material and from the Analysis provided by the Department (Conservation) later. First page number listed is from background material, second page number listed is from Analysis. The funding committee looked at all recommendations and determined there were ~\$108 million worth of recommendations and the funding recommendations would generate ~\$158 million.

Pg. 18, 24	Conserve Illinois--the 1/8 of 1% increase in sales tax; portion would be bondable and portion to cover operations. 50% would be used for unaddressed critical needs (bondable) like land acquisition, development of sites, stewardship and easements, and retire bonds. 50% would go to a conservation trust fund to keep Dept on a sound fiscal basis, minimize need for new funding, ensure adequate staff/mgmt.
48, 25	Waterway fee on commercial goods, 10 cents on a ton and \$1 a head tax at loading or unloading docks on Illinois River and lake terminals. Estimated at more than \$30 million generated.
67, 26	Non-recycled paper tax would generate ~\$5 million annually and should be used for nursery plant production (\$1.25 mil) and \$1.87 mil to be put into the Habitat Endowment Trust Fund. No indication what the remainder was to be used for.
56, 27	5% tax on video tape rental and movie admission tickets to be used for conservation education. Estimated to generate ~\$15 mil to \$16 mil each year. (Now could be promoted as a way to fund No Child Left Inside!

In an update in December 1994, pg. 11, it was reported that Governor Edgar had nixed the idea of an increase in state sales tax. The Dept also indicated it did not support the non-recycled paper tax, given that recycling technology was increasing without a tax, therefore it would be a diminishing revenue source. In addition to the funding committee recommendations, another committee recommended an increase in the controlled pheasant hunt fees to \$25 by the year 2000.

I've lost count on which # this CC is, but the funding recommendations are all over the place and other than the long standing 1/8 of 1% sales tax, the only other new revenues that were mentioned, but no real analysis of what they might generate were a casino tax and an extraction tax. They also recommended a task force be created by the Governor to study and recommend a permanent funding source. They did call for a statewide referendum on the state sales tax at 1/10th of 1%. This must have been the year TNC did a poll that was less than overwhelming in its support for such a tax increase. IAPD and Openlands contributed to the cost of the poll, which was conducted at the request of then state representative Andrea Moore. Legislation was introduced by her but it did not pass.

There were no recommendations that I consider "real," in that they want more money for conservation, but they just didn't say this is what has to happen and we the constituents will make it happen. There also did not seem to be any kind of reality check for any of these recommendations, as though DNR was afraid to say stop, look, think.

Pg. 9	List of all funding recommendations, including the restoration of the real estate transfer tax formula, which Gov. Ryan wanted to make permanent. That was a success, so Done!
Pg. 11	Develop dedicated funding--CC "strongly recommends" General Assembly develop dedicated source of funding, e.g., 1/8th of 1 percent of state sales tax.
Pg. 13	Provide adequate funding support to scientific surveys
Pg. 15	Provide permanent funding sources other than real estate property taxes. This was poorly written but was response to tax caps in suburban counties.
Pg. 16	Restore C2000 funding and increase that funding.
Pg. 17	Ensure continued funding for C2000 and CREP and similar conservation easements.
19	Identify existing or new special funds for incentive based and technical assistance programs to implement conservation and natural resources programs.
21	Need multi based funding sources to support DNR.
22, 24, 26	All of these seem to be the same. Restore real estate transfer tax and increase formula so OSLAD gets 50% and NAAF gets 25%.

- Same song different year! "Funding for the Department of Conservation has fluctuated dramatically in recent years."
- "The timely acquisition, development, protection, and mgmt of natural and recreational resources requires not only substantial funding, but stable, long-term funding--funding that reflects inflating costs and growing needs."
- "Stable, long-term funding is critical to protecting this sizable public investment."
- "a firmly established long-term funding mechanism for Department of Conservation programs and services is crucial to ensuring IL maintains and expands its appeal to both in-state and out-of-state tourists."
- "A stable, long-term funding mechanism for Department of Conservation programs and services will require substantial revenues. Generating all needed revenues solely through fees is not feasible."

Recommendations

- A balanced revenue enhancement program is recommended. The committee recommends coupling increases in existing fees and new fees with the creation of major new revenue sources, as identified in Table 3.
- The revenue sources proposed must be dedicated to the Department of Conservation to guarantee to constituents that additional revenues generated by fees would not be negated by decreases, or dramatic fluctuations, in GRF.
- Increases in existing fees, or new fees, would be based on the following objectives:
 - Develop a fee system that more equitably applies to all beneficiaries of Dept programs and services.
 - To ensure that fee revenues support Dept programs and services the fees are associated with.
 - Make provisions in the fee system to ensure that those IL citizens unable to pay fees can still be provided basic resource conservation and outdoor recreation services. Guidelines for "free" participation should be developed with public input.
 - Implement fees in a gradual and flexible manner to ensure public understanding and acceptance and to minimize administrative and enforcement costs.
 - Present any proposed fee system or revenue source changes to constituents for consideration in a comprehensive manner, rather than on a fee-by-fee basis.
 - The Dept and constituent leaders should meet periodically (every 3 - 5 years) to review Dept funding needs and jointly propose any necessary fee system or revenue source changes.

Q & A

Some interesting info pulled from a FAQ sheet:

- Won't any increase in existing fees, or new fees, simply decrease the Dept's share of GRF? Increases in existing fees and new fees must be coupled with a new, dedicated source of funding, which would greatly reduce the Dept's reliance on GRF. Constituent willingness to support increased and new fees will be necessary to generate the support needed to enact a dedicated revenue source for conservation and recreation.

- What type and magnitude of "dedicated revenue source" is being considered? MO dedicates a 1/8 of one percent state sales tax to the MDC. This dedicated revenue source generates about \$30 mil annually. If IL dedicated a 1/12 of one percent state sales tax to conservation, \$46 mil could be generated per year (1987 figures).
- What steps are necessary to do something about this issue? First, a fee/revenue package needs to be developed with constituent input. Second, administration approval must be obtained based on display of constituent support. Third, specific legislation, as well as information supporting the legislation, needs to be prepared. Fourth, the General Assembly's support must be obtained, again with constituent support. Finally, procedures must be developed to collect new revenues and channel them to resource protection and recreation provision. This process will take a considerable amount of time--fall, 1987, through summer, 1988 and required a close working relationship between the Dept and its constituents.
- What can we expect if efforts to increase funding of conservation and recreation in IL are not successful? Increased destruction of natural resources and habitat with resulting decreases in native fish and wildlife populations and related recreation opportunities. More conservation and recreation sites closed to the public. Increased difficulty in funding open space and recreation grant programs for local gov'ts. More tourism dollars being spent out-of-state with few dollars flowing into IL economy. A less attractive IL, in which to live, work, and recreate.