

# River Sweep Celebrating 20 YEARS OF CLEANER WATER

Can you believe it has been 20 years since the DuPage River Sweep got its start with The Conservation Foundation? It was 1991, but it feels like it was just yesterday...somewhat. "It was a June morning. About 40 people came together because they knew something had to be done," said Jim Kleinwachter, who initiated the early Sweep and is now The Conservation Foundation's Land Protection Specialist. On foot and in canoes, equipped with garbage bags, trash pokers, and thermoses of water, those first Sweepers worked in the communities of Warrenville, West Chicago and Naperville. "I worked in Warrenville and there we found a refrigerator, toilet, sink and several tires, and by the end of the day we had a half ton of trash collected."

Since then, **200 tons** of trash have been removed from the DuPage River

waterway system by thousands of volunteers. More recently, more than 6 acres of nearby shore area has been restored.

With the 20th anniversary of the River Sweep taking place May 21 (9 a.m. – noon) the Community Liaisons and Group Coordinators are setting plans to make the celebration one to remember. Their goal is to grow the fifteen communities that take on the challenge of the Sweep to 26. Imagine 80% of DuPage County getting out on a day in May to demonstrate that their water does matter!

All it takes is one friend grabbing another and saying "let's do this where we live." It's 3 hours out of 8,760 in the year, and everything you need to get the job done is provided! We'll even help you pick a spot in your community. Volunteering is so simple and the impact is so great.



*Volunteers at the 2001 DuPage River Sweep*

To get started go to [www.theconservationfoundation.org](http://www.theconservationfoundation.org) (search DuPage River Sweep). Join in the fun and help make this 20th anniversary one to remember.

*By: Sue George*

## Working for the Future of BLACKBERRY AND FERSON-OTTER WATERSHEDS

Clean rivers and streams are vital elements of any healthy ecosystem, which is why they are at the heart of The Conservation Foundation's mission. We are all part of a watershed, bound by a network of rivers and streams that flow through our communities. These rivers connect natural areas and urban environments, animals, plants and people.

The Conservation Foundation, in conjunction with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), is facilitating a watershed planning effort for the Ferson-Otter and Blackberry Creek watersheds, both of which are in the Fox River basin.

The watershed planning process is a collaborative exercise driven by local

stakeholders, who share information, better target limited financial resources and address common water-related challenges such as flood control, water quality, protection of groundwater resources and habitat conservation. We want the people that live, work and play in these watersheds to determine the actions needed for improving water quality in the area.

The Conservation Foundation is uniquely positioned to facilitate this project. For nearly twenty years, we have worked to clean up and restore the East and West Branches of the DuPage River, and have successfully facilitated watershed plans for the upper DuPage River, Aux Sable Creek, Lower DuPage River, Salt Creek, Big Rock Creek and Tyler Creek.

*If you would like to be involved in this process, contact Erin Tuttle at 630-428-4500, Ext. 41 or [erutt@theconservationfoundation.org](mailto:erutt@theconservationfoundation.org).*

*By: Erin Tuttle*



*Blackberry Creek stakeholders gather to walk the stream and share their concerns. Photo by Kane-DuPage Soil & Water Conservation District, October 2010*