

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 14, 2011

Lt. Gov. Simon re-launches Science Advisory Committee

Water experts, Simon will work to reduce flood damages, other potential threats

EAST ALTON – Lt. Governor Sheila Simon announced the re-launch of the Science Advisory Committee today at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC) field station located along the banks of the Mississippi River. The expert panel will assist Simon in her efforts to protect Illinois' rivers from potential threats and reduce flood damages.

The Science Advisory Committee's volunteer membership brings together experts working in academia and the private sector from across the state, at no cost to the taxpayer. The seven-member panel includes a chair and four members appointed by Simon and two from the NGRREC, which will house the Science Advisory Committee and is part of Lewis and Clark Community College. Additional support will be provided by the Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois.

"I am excited to begin working with the best and brightest minds in river research," Simon said. "The Science Advisory Committee will be a wonderful asset in the fight to reduce flood damages, protect river ecosystems, and keep our water safe for the citizens who live, work and play along our rivers."

First established in 1999, the Science Advisory Committee serves as the scientific arm of the Illinois, Mississippi, and Ohio/Wabash River Coordinating Councils chaired by Simon. The committee will work with Simon to advance scientific research that will guide policies impacting river use and development such as reducing flood damages. This spring Simon worked with state and federal emergency response personnel to coordinate response efforts to devastating flooding along the Mississippi.

The committee previously published research illustrating the importance of preventing Asian carp and other invasive species from moving between the Great Lakes and Illinois River. The work helped secure full federal funding for two electric barriers in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, which serve as a barricade between the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan.

Housing the Science Advisory Committee at the NGRREC Jerry F. Costello Confluence Field Station will provide Lewis and Clark students and faculty the opportunity to work with experts from various universities and organizations, and will provide the state with scientific research that will inform policy and save tax dollars. The NGRREC will also assist the committee in its efforts to advance research on large river ecosystems.

"The combined efforts of NGRREC and the SAC will increase grant opportunities for research, and serve as another example of the significant role NGRREC continues to play as an authority of river research," Lewis and Clark President and NGRREC Chairman Dr. Dale Chapman said. "We are pleased to have been selected to house the SAC and look forward to working with its membership and Lt. Governor Simon to provide sustainable solutions for Illinois' rivers."

University of Illinois scientist emeritus Dr. Nani Bhowmik serves as chair of the Science Advisory Committee and joins Simon appointees Dr. George Czapar of Champaign, Dr. Steven Kraft of Carbondale, Allen LaPointe of Chicago and Darren Olson of Rosemont. The NGRREC members are Dr. John Chick, aquatic ecologist, and Dr. Lyle Guyon, terrestrial ecologist.

"I look forward to working with the appointed members and integrating my longstanding history and expertise with the broad array of scientists at the NGRREC to focus on Illinois' rivers," said Bhowmik.

Simon Appointees

Dr. George Czapar, of Champaign, is the director of the Center for Watershed Science at the Illinois State Water Survey and is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois. Czapar teaches in the campus honors program and his research focuses on reducing the impacts of agriculture on water quality.

Dr Steven Kraft, of Carbondale, is a visiting professor at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and the director of the Professional Science Masters in Advanced Energy and Fuels Management at SIUC. Kraft specializes in farm management, natural resources policy, watershed management and planning, farm policy and ecosystem services.

Allen LaPointe, of Chicago, is the Vice President of Environmental Quality at the Shedd Aquarium, where he has worked for over 14 years. LaPointe has conducted various water quality seminars and trainings for zoological organizations, has taught various courses in water chemistry, and teaches a five day seminar on aquarium environmental quality at the Shedd.

Darren Olson, of Rosemont, is a section head in the Water Resources Department at Christopher B. Burke Engineering with over 15 years of experience in civil and water resources engineering. Olsen also serves as the president of the Illinois Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

###