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Lt. Governor Simon joins Shedd in beach cleanup

Picks up trash at 12th Street Beach on It's Our River Day

CHICAGO – August 17, 2011. A champion for safe, clean and accessible rivers, Lt. Governor Sheila Simon joined the Shedd Aquarium's Great Lakes Conservation Team in a cleanup of 12th Street Beach today. The cleanup was part of It's Our River Day.

Established in 2004, It's Our River Day is an annual celebration of Illinois rivers and the defining role they play in communities across the state. It's Our River Day events include river cleanups, canoe and kayaking trips, education booths at festivals, fundraisers, and recycling days. This year more than 30 events were held throughout Illinois.

"Rivers and lakes shape our geography, economy and community identities," Simon said. "I am proud to join the Shedd Aquarium in its efforts to keep our environment clean and look forward to working with its members to solve the pressing issues facing our waterways."

Simon joined over 50 volunteers who combed the beach for three hours removing trash and recyclables. Last year, Shedd volunteers collected over 650 pounds of garbage and recycling during monthly clean ups, which included over 2,100 cigarette butts.

"It's an incredible honor to be working alongside Lt. Governor Simon, who is well known for her role as a champion for water conservation and a leader who shares Shedd's vision to protect our local waters," said Allen LaPointe, the Vice President of Environmental Quality at Shedd Aquarium, who was appointed to Simon's Science Advisory Committee this week. "Water is at the heart of Shedd Aquarium, so protecting this majestic resource that people and wildlife depend on goes beyond our aquarium walls. This Saturday, we put our messages of water conservation into action by picking up the 12th Street Beach to celebrate It's Our Rivers Day."

Simon serves as chair of the Illinois, Mississippi and Wabash and Ohio River Coordinating Councils. The councils are charged with reviewing state and federal programs that impact the watersheds and work with local communities to raise awareness of and address watershed issues.

The cleanup was also a part of International Coastal Cleanup Day hosted annually by the Ocean Conservancy and includes events across the globe. The Nature Conservancy tracks the trash collected to understand what manufactured items are impacting the health of humans and wildlife.

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