

River

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Referring to nearly \$2 million in project work KRLPC has recommended, Comerio told Black, "you're not getting everything but you will see significant funds."

Comerio says C2000 has roughly \$3.5 million to spend and over 55 project requests statewide. "Your projects will compete very well when the final cuts are made next month," he said.

Aides to Illinois Congressman Jerry Weller and Tom Ewing and Indiana Congressman Steve Boyer took notes as did state Senators Larry Walsh and Patrick Welch and Rep. Mary Kay O'Brien. From the Indiana Kankakee River Basin Commission, a major partner in the Corps' now completed reconnaissance study of the river, came Executive Director Jodi

Melton and newly elected president Jack Nelson.

But Kustra also noted the audience of "river rats" and locals who have watched with frustration the river's long, slow demise. "You've demonstrated by turning out today that you're awfully serious about this river."

"What I wanted today was to get a good look at the headwaters of the Illinois River," Kustra said of his first visit after two abortive attempts earlier.

"What was most impressive was the beauty and wilderness of the river," he said. "For a river that sits on the edge of one of the great urban areas of this country... its a beautiful setting."

However some skeptical eyebrows

raised as Kustra, who will be leaving public office next year, pledged "we're going to be there for you; we're going to stand along beside you; we're going to make sure funding will be there.

from federal and state sources and that when the tough calls have to be made we'll stand for you."

Clarifying himself later, Kustra said, "one of the most important recommendations of the Illinois River Project was the creation of the Illinois River Coordinating Council which is a permanent group which

will always be chaired by the Lt. Gov. no matter who he or she is. "What I feel good about is — even though I will be leaving office — the new Lieutenant Governor will be given a perfect forum as the new chair of the river coordinating council.

"That council will be, I think, the driving force in the future to making rivers cleaner and to work on getting federal and state funding working together. It will assure future administrations remain focused on the problems of our rivers."

Action cannot come too soon for

Momence river men like Milt Weybright of the Kankakee River Conservancy District.

As he guided a boatload of visitors downstream, he pointed here and there to pieces of Paradise lost.

"We've lost 24 feet of shoreline here since 1924," Weybright said just downstream from the state line. Skimming

sandbars and weaving through a watery gauntlet of logs and logjams, he brought visitors face to face with the river's woes.

Near State Line Bridge, Weybright worked his way up an old river channel now blockaded by tons of logs and sediment forcing the river to cut a new channel to the south. "There are two bodies still under there," he said pointing to the decades-old logjam that still poses risks for unwary boaters or canoeists. "We need to do something quickly for this river."