

Friends of the Hennepin

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Press Release

Friends of the Hennepin Canal Propose Canal Restoration.

On May 19, 2009, The Friends of the Hennepin Canal presented to community leaders their proposal to restore a portion of the canal to its original working condition. The meeting took place at the Best Western Hotel in Annawan. About 40 people from communities near the canal attended. Friends President Gary Wagle and Director Cathy Foes shared their concept of restoring the Hennepin Canal so that boats could travel it's length through working locks, much like the canals of Europe.

Wagle presented slides that included a trip on the Schropshire Canal near Birmingham, England to demonstrate the popularity of "canal cruising" in Europe. Wagle said, "we have a treasure in our own back yard, unique to the entire U.S. We have a one hundred mile, fully watered, canal flowing through picturesque central Illinois. If locks were restored to working order, the tourism potential would be significant and we would save our canal for future generations." The proposal was met with enthusiastic support.

Wagle and Foes presented a plan with short and long-run phases. Plans are underway to organize the communities for Phase I, which has a mission statement: *"To transform the Hennepin Canal into a navigable waterway, with working locks, from the Guard Lock at Rock Falls through Lock 24 at Geneseo."*

The plan is called Renaissance Hennepin Canal. Phase I would result in 50-mile waterway connecting Rock Falls and Geneseo. "Phase I will require restoring only three locks, numbers 22, 23 and 24. The culverts that have replaced bridges on this section are 12 feet in diameter, easily wide enough for leisure boats," Wagle said.

The Friends of the Hennepin Canal are arranging for future meetings of the Renaissance Hennepin Canal (RHC) to organize and decide an action plan. Citizens interested in joining RHC should contact either Cathy Foes or Gary Wagle or visit the Friends of the Hennepin Canal website:
<http://fhcanal.home.mchsi.com/>

For Release Immediately

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