

**BEFORE THE ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
STATE OF ILLINOIS**

**AMEREN TRANSMISSION)
COMPANY OF ILLINOIS)**

**Petition for a Certificate of Public)
Convenience and Necessity, pursuant)
To Section 8-406.1 of the Illinois Public)
Utilities Act, and an Order pursuant to)
Section 8-503 of the Public Utilities Act,)
To Construct, Operate and Maintain a)
New High Voltage Electric Service Line)
And Related Facilities in the Counties)
of Adams, Brown, Cass, Champaign,)
Christian, Clark, Coles, Edgar, Fulton,)
Macon, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie)
Pike, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, and)
Shelby, Illinois)**

Docket No. 12-0598

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF JEFF WALK

TNC EXHIBIT 2.5



August 30, 2012

Mr. Robert Moseley
The Nature Conservancy in Illinois
8 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 900
Chicago, IL 60603

Mr. Moseley,

Thank you for providing us with your comments regarding the Illinois Rivers 345,000-volt transmission line that is being planned by Ameren Transmission Company of Illinois.

Your comments and those from landowners all across our 330-mile transmission project corridor are helping us develop the best possible primary and alternate routes for this important project.

Beginning the week of September 24, 2012, we will hold our third and final series of Public Open Houses. We hope you and your neighbors will be able to attend one of these Open Houses so we can show you our primary and alternate routes as well as explain the reasoning behind our choices. Naturally, we will want to hear your additional comments as well.

Invitations will be mailed to those landowners impacted by the proposed primary and alternate routes. In addition, we will advertise each open house in a series of three weekly newspaper advertisements and on flyers distributed in each county. We also will issue news releases and will list the complete Open House schedule on our website (www.ILRiversTransmission.com).

Again, thank you for taking the time to provide us with your thoughtful comments.

Sincerely,

Peggy Ladd
Manager, Transmission Business Development

July 19, 2012

Mr. Leigh Morris
Senior Communications Executive
Ameren Illinois
200 W. Washington St.
Springfield, IL 62701

Dear Mr. Morris:

For several decades many organizations, from government to private, have been focusing a great deal of attention on protecting and restoring our planet's large floodplain river resources. A 1992 report of the National Research Council identified the Illinois River as one of the few large floodplain river systems believed to retain sufficient ecological integrity to support large-scale restoration, primarily because it still possesses a flood pulse and a considerable amount of floodplain acreage. Many resource professionals and scientists have confirmed that restoring functioning floodplain wetland habitat is vital to the health of these river systems. Toward that end, The Nature Conservancy in Illinois purchased 1,193 acres of floodplain located in Brown County in 1997, starting the Spunky Bottoms project. We convened experts from the Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, academia, and non-governmental organizations to develop a restoration plan initiated in 1999. In 2003 the Illinois Department of Natural Resources purchased 833 acres adjacent to Conservancy property and became an on-the-ground partner in the Spunky Bottoms project.

Since 1999, The Nature Conservancy restored wetland habitats, prairie and bottomland hardwoods and has seen the associated organisms return in abundance at Spunky Bottoms. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service joined the partnership with the purchase of a Wetland Reserve Program easement over the bulk of the property in 2001. Many scientists representing organizations such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois-Springfield, Illinois Natural History Survey, US Geological Survey, Western Illinois University, Illinois College, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and many more have spent a great deal of time documenting the biological response to the wetland restoration. 238 bird species have been recorded using the site including 13 Illinois threatened or endangered species and 1 federally listed species. The site also has documented occurrences of one federally threatened plant *Boltonia decurrens*. State endangered common moorhen, least bittern, and king rail have been documented successfully nesting in the restored wetland vegetation. Ten Brown County record reptile and amphibian species have also been documented. It is because of all these rare occurrences that Spunky Bottoms was listed as an Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site and an Important Bird Area by National Audubon Society. The area has become a local focus for recreation activities from bird watchers, fishermen, and hunters for its abundance of high quality native flora and fauna.

[Recipient Name]

July 20, 2012

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The Nature Conservancy in Illinois and Ameren share a positive history of working together for the collective good of the environment. The Nature Conservancy in Illinois urges Ameren to consider the impact that its Illinois Rivers Project high-voltage transmission line would have on such an important wetland resource if the alternative to run through Versailles Township sections 13 and 14 would become a reality. The Conservancy realizes that society occasionally needs physical infrastructure improvements to remain viable but the recent history of wetland, freshwater, and associated habitat loss and degradation throughout the world implores us as a people to value and protect our dwindling natural resources.

The Nature Conservancy in Illinois wishes to continue to be involved in the integrated route development and stakeholder public process for The Illinois Rivers Project. Through our science-based ecoregional planning process Conservancy scientists have identified and prioritized sites such as Spunky Bottoms for protection. Our expertise may provide useful insights into route selection that reduces negative impacts on the natural resources of Illinois. It is our hope that Ameren reconsider the proposed transmission line route extending through Brown County and such route not be included in any petition filed for consideration by the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Sincerely,

Robert Moseley
Director of Conservation Programs
The Nature Conservancy in Illinois

Enclosure