

Illinois-Michigan Canal Restoration Under Way



Historic view of Lock 11 on the I. & M. Canal at Marseilles, a few miles above the area now being restored.

steamboat basin in Peru-LaSalle to Joliet. A part of the canal which the plan approved for containing water was the La Salle-Utica section, and among the recommendations were the restorations of Lock 14 and of the aqueduct over the Vermilion River at LaSalle. In August \$10,000 was allocated to the city of LaSalle for canal restoration in that area.

On August 19 came the first formal offer of professional help when John Terselie, a heavy-duty equipment operator offered his services. On the first working weekend, 25-26 August, members of Operating Engineers Local 150, Terselie and other volunteers raked up five piles of brush over a 1/4 mile area, a major start had been made. The Operating Engineers Apprentice Program donated the use of a D-7 bulldozer crawler tractor and Zellmer Trucking of Granville offered the use of their D-8 bulldozer.

Heading into the Labor Day weekend, canal workers welcomed a visit from Ralph Fisher, chairman of the Task Force committee for the canal and Bob Thornberry of the Illinois Department of Conservation. Armed with plans and suggestions, the pair, accompanied by several staff members, conferred with volunteers to determine the best course of action. Fisher stayed to work alongside the volunteers and was joined on Sunday by State

“We were tired of talks for 20 years. We wanted a period. Rotarians Kurkowski and Robert F. Whalen (ACS member) led the club’s canal committee. Initial forages into the dense foliage which covered the canal bottom were made with hand tools such as axes and pruning shears. “Needless to say, we didn’t get very far,” Kurkowski said.

1 volunteers, reflect the attitudes of many others who have donated work, materials and time to the restoration project now underway. With tools ranging from pruning shears to heavy earth moving equipment, weekend workers have sawed and scooped the canal free of trees to Split Rock, a point halfway between LaSalle and Utica on the 7-mile section of canal being restored

This attempt to turn the now defunct I-M Canal site into a recreation spot for the people of LaSalle County began more than a year ago when the LaSalle Rotary Club voted to do volunteer work on the canal over a 10-year

They then learned that there was a possibility of obtaining state funds for help in the canal restoration. The Illinois Task Force Committee for the Illinois and Michigan Canal had been appointed on 12 September 1972, “to review the entire canal problem, conduct a cooperative in-depth study and recommend a comprehensive development and management plan.” At a public hearing held by the committee, Rotarians heard of plans calling for eventual construction of a 62-mile linear parkway from the

Rep. John Kriegsman from Pekin.

House Bill 670, passed and signed by Governor Dan Walker, transfers the stewardship of the Canal from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Conservation, to be

incorporated into the State Park System. This became effective Jan. 1, 1974. The state has finished a comprehensive study done by a planning firm, but not yet released to the public. The

Department of Conservation has applied