Habitat Conditions

Channel Alterations and Habitat Problems

Channelization not only includes straightening the stream, but also bank clearing, and widening of the channel. This results in a loss of total stream area and quality habitat, increased streambank and streambed erosion, and a homogenous habitat that supports far less aquatic life. The South Wyaconda River is the most heavily channelized river in the watershed, followed by the Wyaconda River and the North Wyaconda River (Appendix A). These measures have resulted in severe headcutting in the upper reaches. Even on reaches of stream not impacted by channelization, accelerated streambank erosion occurs where protective forested corridors have been removed. In such cases, vertical banks up to 15 feet high have developed. Maintaining diversity of water depth is difficult, if not impossible, in areas where streambanks are unstable.

Stream fish habitat in many tributaries has been severely degraded by grazing livestock that trample streambanks and streambeds, increasing turbidity and erosion and destroying instream cover. Problems stemming from instream sand and gravel removal are locally significant but minor compared with problems resulting from stream channelization and watershed wide erosion. All of the se factors limit the ability of the watershed to support quality aquatic life.

Unique Riparian Habitats

Even though all the streams in the basin have been degraded by agricultural encroachment, some still provide quality aquatic habitat. Anderson (1983) classified a stretch of the Wyaconda River from its mouth to about two miles upstream as a statewide significant aquatic area. The undisturbed cliffs along the river support many species of plants that are not commonly found in other areas of the basin.

Habitat Conservation Projects

Most of the stream-related projects in the Wyaconda watershed have been channelization projects not aimed at habitat conservation. We have no record of any habitat conservation projects on the Wyaconda River.

Corps of Engineers Jurisdiction

The Wyaconda River basin in under the jurisdiction of the Rock Island District of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE). Most activities involving the deposition or stockpiling of material in stream channels require a Section 404 permit from COE. As of December 20, 2004, applications for 404 permits should be sent to: Clock Tower Building, P.O. Box 2004, Rock Island, IL 61204-2004, attention NCROD-S. Phone (309)794-4200.