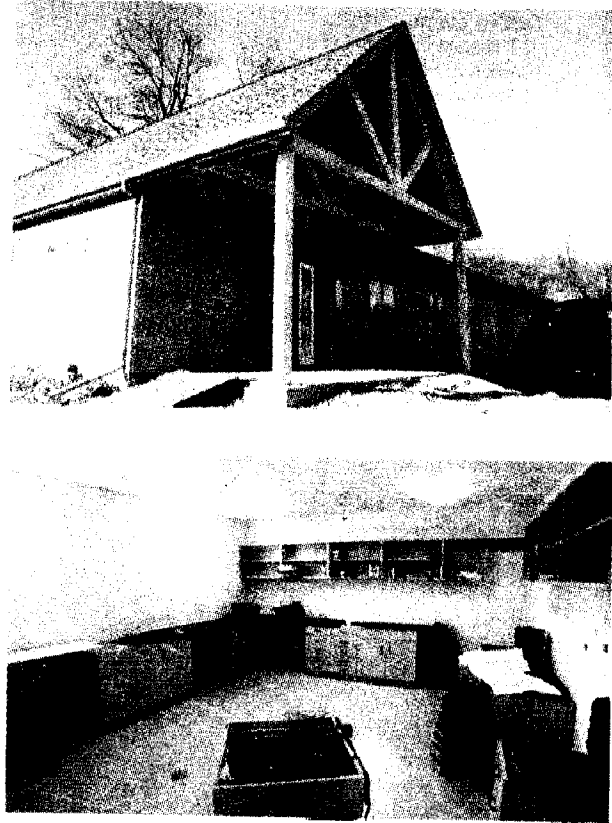


OUTDOORS

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A NEW DAY AT EMIQUON



Top: The new University of Illinois at Springfield Emiquon Field Station is nearing completion at The Nature Conservancy's Emiquon Preserve
Bottom: Cabinetry is being installed in work areas.

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The University of Illinois at Springfield plans to open its new Emiquon Field Station in Fulton County to the public in late April, but researchers may be using the new facility before then.

"We're working on an April 25 ribbon-cutting with the UIS chancellor and other dignitaries, and are planning for the 26th to be a more open and less-formal event," says

Mike Lemke, associate professor of biology at UIS and director of the station.

But Lemke and representatives of The Nature Conservancy, owner of the 7,100-acre Emiquon Preserve where the field station is located, won't wait for the official opening to make use of the facility.

A science symposium is being planned for sometime this spring at Dickson Mounds Museum to acquaint scientists, institutions and other stakeholders with the resources available. The meeting also is intended to allow networking between institutions, organizations and government agencies.

"We're hoping it will grow into an annual event,"

Lemke says.

A takeoff on the "bio-blitz" concept, in which scientists try to catalog as many organisms as possible, is being considered. This "molecular bio-blitz" could look at biodiversity down to the microscopic level.

"We thought we would take a new look at traditional biodiversity," he says.

Teacher workshops also are on the drawing board, but no concrete plans are available yet.

Adam Phillips, a graduate student at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, may use the field station as a base for research into the behavior of mute swans at Banner Marsh and Spring Lake if all the permissions can be worked out.

The field station is being developed in cooperation with the conservancy. The organization's Illinois River Project office sits near the new laboratory. The partnership allows for the conservancy, UIS and Dickson Mounds Museum to share resources and conduct education and research that would be difficult for each to do separately because of staffing and budget limitations.

The building itself is nearing completion.

The outside is mostly finished, and workers are installing cabinetry and floor coverings. Information technology specialists from UIS are wiring the "smart classrooms."

Lemke says lectures delivered at the field station could be viewed at UIS or over the Internet.

"If Alan Harn (an archaeologist at Dickson Mounds Museum) wants to give a lecture, he could give it here," Lemke says. "It cuts down on some of the problems that come with distance (from the home campus)."

Labs are being equipped, at least in part, thanks to a donation from the Prairie Education and Research Cooperative associated with St. John's Hospital.

"They were closing down one of their labs and did a property transfer to us," Lemke says.

The donation, valued at about \$30,000, includes benches, laboratory equipment, cabinetry and other materials.

"It really helped us out, because cabinetry is expensive, especially science cabinetry," he says. "Now I've got to get down to surplus to see if I can find some office furniture."

Kemper Construction Inc. of Canton is the general contractor. Quick Electric of Fairview is wiring the new facility, and Crawford's Home Furnishings of Canton is installing tile and carpet.

One of the new building's features is its reliance on

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"green technology" to make it exceptionally energy-efficient.

Dave Barrows, executive director of facilities and services at UIS, designed the new building, which cost about \$270,000.

It has up to seven offices, a conference room, smart classroom, dry and wet laboratories, a boat storage area, storerooms, a mechanical room and two restrooms plus a kitchenette within the 3,600-square-foot footprint.

The field station is built into a hillside and overlooks The Nature Conservancy's Emiquon Preserve to the east.

It features an insulated-concrete foundation that uses Styrofoam insulating material as a form with concrete poured through it.

"It has a much higher R value," Barrows says.

A geothermal heating and cooling system that draws heat

from deep underground also has been installed.

"I have a feeling they are not going to need that kind of capacity," Barrows says. With the building so well-insulated, workers kept it a comfortable 50 degrees inside using just a pair of electric heaters.

"It is a very efficient building, and it basically was built for \$83 a square foot," Barrows says.

Lemke says building near a wetland creates additional concerns for disposal of wastes.

"We went out on a limb and got composting toilets," he says. "When you are on a wetland, it is a little greener way to go."

"It's a really nice facility," Lemke says. "We've got a few projects going on already, and once we have the field station there as a home base, people are going to realize how to get involved at Emiquon, and they will know better what is going on and be aware of the resources they can use."

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