

ILLINOIS STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN

Highlights Report
2020-2025



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the accomplishments presented in this *Highlights Report* are the result of the dedicated and professional work of the staff of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Forestry Division, working in collaboration with the many allied forestry and conservation organizations that serve on the Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC). Each IDNR Forestry Division staff member, and each IFDC member representative, has contributed significantly to advancing the goals of the State Forest Action Plan which are highlighted in this Report. All of these individuals are acknowledged, with gratitude, for the energy, expertise, and effort they have expended to improve and conserve the state's forest resources, and for the many accomplishments they have made possible highlighted in this Report.

In addition, none of these accomplishments could have been achieved without the support and guidance provided by the USDA Forest Service Program Specialists and Grants and Agreements Staff in the Eastern Region State, Private and Tribal Forestry Regional and Field Offices. In addition, the IDNR Forestry Division expresses its thanks to the multiple conservation organizations we have worked with on various forest conservation projects, the thousands of private woodland owners and community partners in the state that are managing their woodlands and community tree resources, for the contributions of forest industry that provides significant economic benefit to the state, and for the many fire departments and other federal, state and local government agencies and that work in concert with the Forestry Division to conserve and protect the states forest resources.

The Forestry Division is also very thankful for the support it receives from the IDNR Executive Team and from all the various other IDNR Offices and Divisions that we partner with to advance forest conservation in the state. Finally, we would like to recognize three individuals by name: Mike Brunk, Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager, who was primarily responsible for authoring the 2020-2030 State Forest Action Plan; Tom Gargrave, retired Forestry Division Chief, who was responsible for spearheading most of the accomplishments listed in this Report; and Jenny Lesko, District Forester, who served as the Forest Action Plan Liaison for the IDNR-Forestry Division in the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance (NMSFA) Planning Committee.



-- *Kenneth Jolly, Forestry Division Chief / Illinois State Forester*

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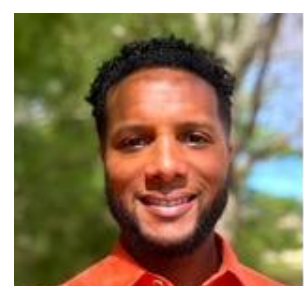
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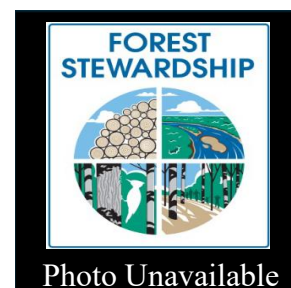


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Chris Whittom
Forest Stewardship

INTRODUCTION

The 2020-2030 Illinois State Forest Action Plan (IL SFAP) was developed within a national framework designed to address three USDA-Forest Service National Priorities for the nation's forests. To achieve each of the three National Priorities, specific State and Private Forestry (SPF) National Objectives have been developed. This national strategic forestry planning framework is shown below:

National Priority 1. Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses

- ❖ SPF Objective 1.1. Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes.
- ❖ SPF Objective 1.2. Actively and sustainably manage forests

National Priority 2. Protect Forests from Threats

- ❖ SPF Objective 2.1. Restore fire-adapted lands and reduce risk of wildfire impacts.
- ❖ SPF Objective 2.2. Identify, manage, and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health.

National Priority 3. Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

- ❖ SPF Objective 3.1. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
- ❖ SPF Objective 3.2. Improve air quality and conserve energy.
- ❖ SPF Objective 3.3. Assist communities in planning for and reducing forest health risks.
- ❖ SPF Objective 3.4. Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests.
- ❖ SPF Objective 3.5. Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.
- ❖ SPF Objective 3.6. Connect people to trees and forests; engage them in environmental stewardship activities.
- ❖ SPF Objective 3.7. Manage trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to global climate change.

The 2020-2030 Illinois State Forest Action Plan (IL SFAP), developed within the national strategic forestry planning framework of three National Priorities and eleven State and Private Forestry (SPF) Objectives, identified seven primary threats impacting Illinois forest resources, along with seven corresponding Forest Resource Strategies to address the identified threats. All seven IL SFAP Strategies listed below connect back directly to the National Priorities and SPF Objectives on the previous page.

IL SFAP Strategy 1. Assess, Plan and Prepare for Oak-Hickory and other Hardwood Forest Resiliency.

- ❖ Implemented via Actions A through R, Page 51, IL SFAP

IL SFAP Strategy 2. Save Existing and Create More Forest Blocks of 500 Acres or Greater.

- ❖ Implemented via Actions A through I, Page 51-52, IL SFAP

IL SFAP Strategy 3. Mitigate Forest Health threats.

- ❖ Implemented via Actions A through H, Page 52, IL SFAP

IL SFAP Strategy 4. Hire more Forestry Professionals.

- ❖ Implemented via Actions A through J, Page 52-53, IL SFAP

IL SFAP Strategy 5. Statewide Focus on Illinois Forest Industry.

- ❖ Implemented via Actions A through I, Page 53, IL SFAP

IL SFAP Strategy 6. Expand Urban and Community Forests and Forestry.

- ❖ Implemented via Actions A through I, Page 54, detailed in Exhibit A, Pages 59-67, IL SFAP

IL SFAP Strategy 7. Realize Other Unmet Critical Forest Resource Needs.

- ❖ Implemented via Actions A through H, Page 54, IL SFAP



The purpose of this Report is to highlight selected accomplishments over the past five years (2020-2025) that directly link to the seven IL SFAP Strategies listed above, and the multiple Actions developed to advance these Strategies that are listed in the 2020-2030 Illinois State Forest Action Plan (IL SFAP). The highlighted accomplishments are grouped by State and Private Cooperative Forestry Program Area for ease of presentation.

FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Forest Stewardship Highlight #1: *Continued growth of acres under active forest management, reaching a milestone of over 600,000 acres of private woodland under active Forest Management Plans. (Strategy 1, 2, 3).*

The Illinois Forest Stewardship program has continued to experience highly positive growth over the past five years. The number of private woodland owners participating in the Program increased by an additional 859 properties, and an additional 60,000 acres of new woodland was enrolled. This represents a 9% increase in enrollment participants and a 10% increase in acres enrolled. At the end of 2025, the Forest Stewardship program, known as the Forest Development Act (FDA) in Illinois, encompassed 10,481 woodland properties covering 602,552 acres. These well-managed woodland acres provide clean air, clean water, diverse wildlife habitat, refuge for threatened and endangered species, and sustainable forest products for the benefit of all citizens in the state.



IDNR District Forester assisting a Private Woodland Owner

Forest Stewardship Highlight #2: IDNR Forestry Division re-starts state administered forestry Cost-Share Program for the first time in a decade. (Strategy 1E, 1F, 2, 3).

The accomplishment of this goal was specifically targeted in the IL SFAP (Strategies 1E and 1F), and was a major success directly linked to the Action Plan. Funding to support the accomplishment of this Strategic Goal came through a USDA-Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Forest Landowner Support Grant and state-generated revenue from the Timber Buyer Licensing Act. Known as the Forest Development Act (FDA) Cost-Share Program, the



Program had been dormant for a decade due to budget reductions. The Forestry Division invested two years of preparation to re-start the Program, completing a comprehensive update to the Administrative Rules that govern the Program, revising program parameters and cost-share base-cost levels, coordinating priority practices with the Illinois Forestry Development Council, and announcing the availability of cost-share funds through multiple forestry stakeholders. The rollout of the Program has been hugely successful, with over \$1.7 Million in cost-share funds allocated at the time of this Report.

Forest Stewardship Highlight #3: Technical forestry assistance provided to landowners through federal-state forest conservation program partnerships. (Strategy 1, 2, 3).

The IDNR Forestry Division continued to conduct an extremely large number of technical forestry assistance visits to landowners participating in forestry practices administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA). During the five-year period covered by this Report,

the IDNR Forestry Division assisted over 17,000 landowners participating in the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) through phone consultations, initial property visits, reviewing and writing forest management plans, and performing inspections for implemented forest practices on approximately 329,000 acres.



In addition, the IDNR Forestry Division provided technical forestry assistance to 4,500 landowners enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) administered by FSA during the 2020-2025 time period. Assistance was provided in connection to 15 distinctive CRP-approved practices on 63,500 acres. Services provided included determination of needs, plan development for each practice, supervising installation of the practice, certification of compliance as prerequisite for payment, furnishing technical assistance to applicant as needed, and checking on practice maintenance during its life span.

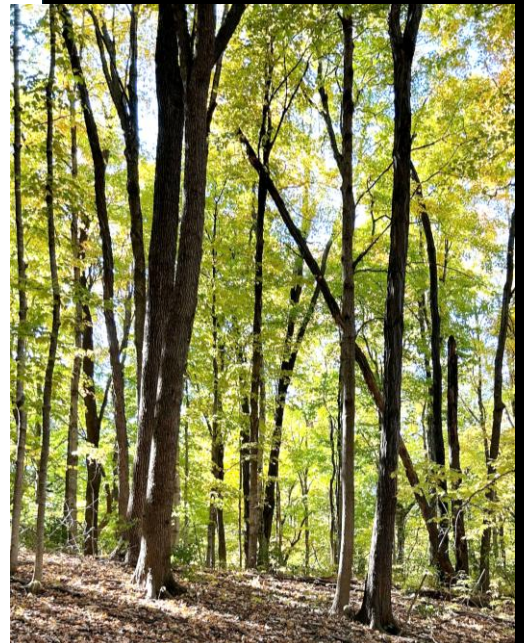
A significant component of this accomplishment was creating a 3-year Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) to employ six Forest Ecologists who assisted in promoting and implementing NRCS forestry programs. Primary activities included conservation planning, practice design, practice implementation and practice verification. Through this partnership, over 3,600 consultations with private

landowners were conducted, 2,425 practice certifications and inspections for CRP were conducted, 600 tree planting plans were developed, and over 300 Forestry Management Plans and Prescribed Burning Plans were developed.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
Prairie Research Institute

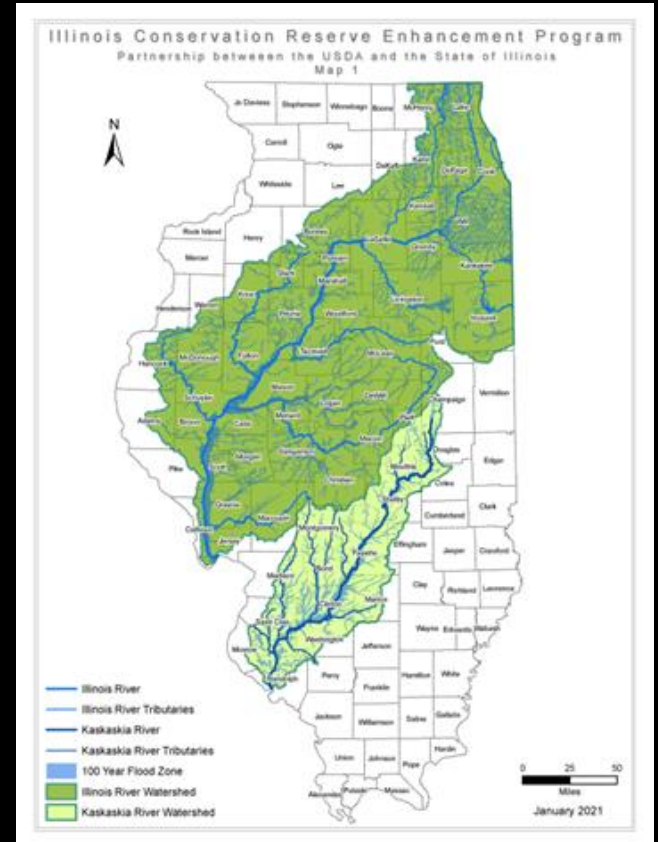
Illinois Natural History Survey



Forest Stewardship Highlight #4: Productive partnership with IDNR Private Lands Section to deliver forestry services to landowners participating in Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP). (Strategy 1M, 1N, 2C).

The IDNR Forestry Division works in concert with the IDNR Private Lands Section to implement the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) within the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Watersheds. This partnership has resulted in over 90,000 acres protected and conserved in the state, encompassing 20,000 acres of forests.

The IDNR Forestry Division also supports the IDNR Private Lands Section in delivery of the Illinois Recreational Access Program. This program leases 25,000-30,000 acres of privately-owned land annually to provide public recreational access and also implements a variety of forestry and habitat management activities such as prescribed burns, invasive species control, and tree planting projects.

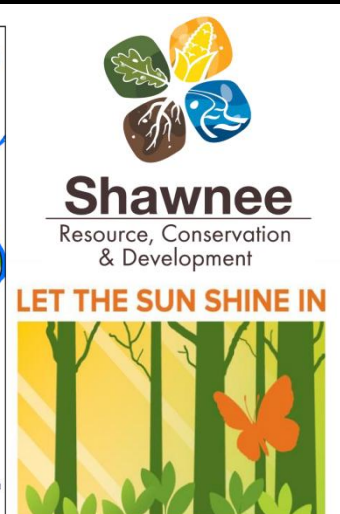
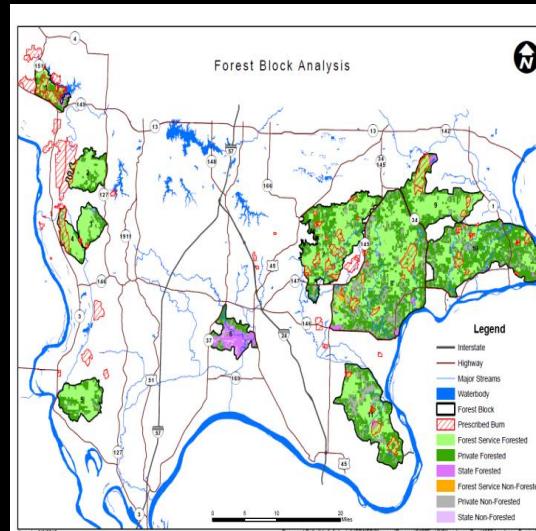


Forest Stewardship Highlight #5: Extensive support provided to Southern Illinois Oak Ecosystem Restoration Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). (Strategy 1A, 1M).

The IDNR Forestry Division provided extensive professional support in a multi-year partnership with NRCS, Shawnee Resource Conservation District, the “*Let the Sun Shine In*” organization, and multiple other partners to promote a suite of active forest management activities to improve oak regeneration in southern Illinois. Priority areas called “Forest Stewardship Clusters (FSC)” were identified

FSC Development

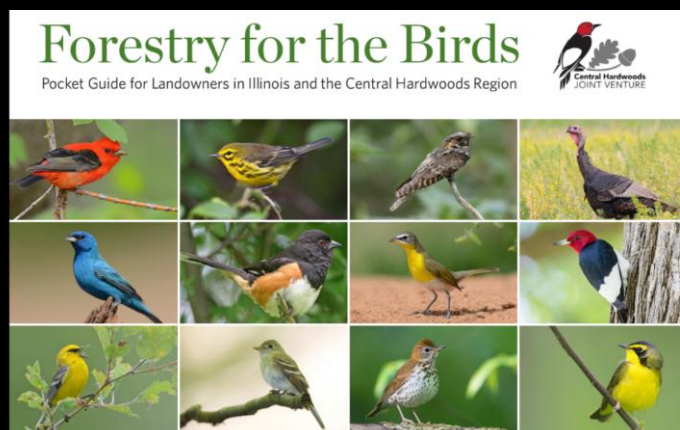
- At least 7,000 acres of contiguous forest
- Interface of private and public land
- Consist of high-quality biological resources
 - Rare, threatened and endangered plant/animal species
 - Illinois Natural Area Inventory sites
 - Biologically significant streams



and outreach efforts including published materials, holding local workshops, and establishing forest demonstration areas were conducted to raise awareness of declining oak ecosystems in the southern Illinois region. Financial and technical resources were made available to encourage landowners to engage in restoration projects, including \$770,000 for forest stand improvement and non-native invasive species control. Over 760 acres of these restoration projects were accomplished. Increased use of Prescribed Fire was also part of the project.



2,000 copies of “Forestry for the Birds” Pocket Guide printed and distributed to private landowners, conservation organizations, and educational institutions



Forest Stewardship Highlight #6: Multiple important forestry projects funded across the state through the Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC) Small-Grants Program, in partnership with IDNR Forestry Division. (Strategy 7B).

Each year, the Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC), in partnership with the IDNR Forestry Division, solicits Project Proposals for the IFDC's Small-Grants Program, and each year, 6 to 8 Projects are selected for funding. A requirement of the Project Proposals is that they must help achieve the goals of the IL SFAP. Accepted Projects cover a wide variety of program areas; however, most connect very closely to the Forest Stewardship Program. Projects that have been funded include tree planting initiatives, Field Day events for woodland owners, oak-savanna restoration, restorative forestry on post-mined lands, engaging forestry consultants for management plans, promotion of the Forest Stewardship Program by partner conservation organizations, and printing of various forest management publications on topics such as invasive plant control. This Program provides a unique opportunity to engage with a wide variety of conservation organizations across the state that implement multiple beneficial and creative Forest Stewardship projects each year to advance the goals of the IL SFAP.

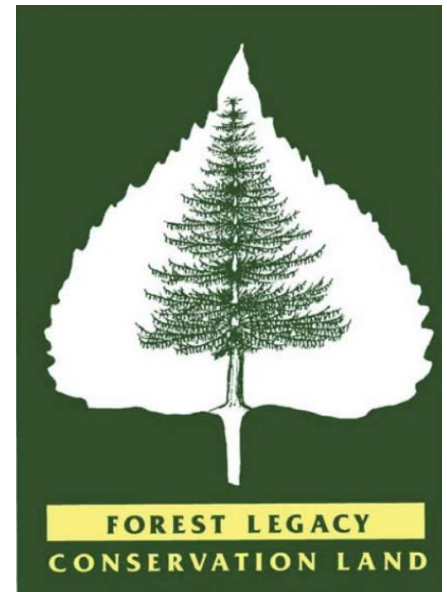


Tree Plantings conducted by the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Districts and Illinois 4-H funded via IFDC Small-Grants Program

FOREST LEGACY

Forest Legacy Highlight #1: Updated Forest Legacy Assessment of Need. (Strategy 2).

As part of the 5-year IL SFAP Review and Revision process, the IDNR Forestry Division updated the 2020 Forest Legacy Assessment of Need (AON) document (Exhibit B in the IL SFAP). No substantive or programmatic changes were made. Primary changes to the AON consisted of updating some of the underlying forest data, improving the aesthetics, and removing outdated contents in the appendices.



Forest Legacy Highlight #2: Continued successful monitoring of Forest Legacy conservation easements. (Strategy 2).

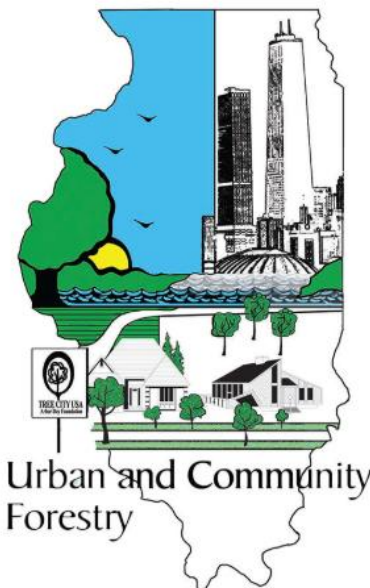
The Forest Legacy Program is a perpetual conservation easement program with conservation easements held by the USDA-Forest Service and enrolled properties being monitored and administered by the state. Illinois has 10 Forest Legacy properties covering 558 acres. The IDNR Forestry Division conducts the required annual easement monitoring and cooperates with the USDA-Forest Service on all programmatic actions necessary.



URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Urban and Community Forestry Highlight #1: Updated Urban Forest Strategic 5-Year Plan Agenda 2025-2030 (Exhibit A in Illinois State Forest Action Plan). (Strategy 6).

As part of the 5-year IL SFAP Review and Revision process, the IDNR Forestry Division updated its Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Strategic Plan (Exhibit A in the IL SFAP). The UCF Strategic Plan in the initial IL SFAP was a five-year plan (2020-2025), and the 2025-2030 UCF update was planned and scheduled as part of the overall IL SFAP 5-year Review Process. The revised plan encompasses ten updated Strategic Goals, purposely aligned with the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council Action Plan Goals, and places an emphasis on growing urban canopy and motivating communities to adopt sustainable forest practices such as planting more trees than the community removes in a rolling 5-year window.



Updated Urban Forest Strategic 5-Year Plan Agenda 2025-2030

Exhibit A

Urban Forest Strategic 5-Year Plan Agenda 2025-2030 Expanding Urban and Community Forests and Forestry

1.0 Improve and Expand Forest Composition and Health

1.1 Improve understanding and assessment of the Illinois Urban Forest—State and Local

1.1.1 Conduct state, regional, and local urban forest assessments through local inventory work, and canopy studies using geographic information systems (GIS), LIDAR, or other technology to understand tree health, species matrix, age classifications, locations, planting opportunities, and their changes over time. Make this information accessible to state, regional, and local forestry managers and individuals to develop a strategy for managing, planting, and protecting the urban forest at all scales. Incorporate and utilize cloud-based technology for information sharing.

1.1.2 Identify key areas in the state where canopy enhancement is needed. Prioritize support and assistance in underserved and or disadvantaged populations.

1.1.3 Work with local communities and landowners to complete/update tree inventories and seek to include such data as GIS locations, condition, species, size, tree maintenance needs and potential planting spaces.

1.1.7 Provide education and support for the eradication and management of exotic invasive species.

1.1.8 Encourage education focusing on the benefits of native species.

1.1.9 Support ongoing dissemination of information on the differences, benefits and drawbacks of planting and growing exotics, natives, cultivars, natives and invasives. And support the progression of understanding the positive and detrimental connections between trees and climate change to help enhance forest and community resilience.

1.2 Enhance the Urban Forest Canopy

1.2.1 Increase opportunities to integrate trees as part of green infrastructure and natural climate solutions in the replacement or augmentation of gray infrastructure to:

- Reduce fragmentation of forest canopy.
- Improve climate and environmental conditions.
- Provide habitat. Support on-the-ground removal of impervious surfaces and replacement with nature-based solutions – including trees.

1.2.2 Utilize tree inventories and other data to improve understanding and management of species diversity, age diversity, tree risks, and the value and importance of establishing regular maintenance, management, and planting strategies.

Urban and Community Forestry Highlight #2: Focused effort on growing the Tree City USA Program and expanding the impact of the Urban and Community Forestry Program across the state. (Strategy 6).

The IDNR Forestry Division has been a national leader in rapidly expanding the state's participation in the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program. Over the past five years the number of Tree City USA communities has grown from 170 to 214, the second highest participation in the nation. Even more impressive is involvement in the Tree City USA Growth Award. Illinois now leads the nation in Growth Award Communities, with 108 Communities having achieved this recognition, up from 24 five years ago. The UCF Program works with over 500 communities and directly impacts 10+ Million residents across the state every year.



Urban and Community Forestry Highlight #3: Created an all-volunteer Urban Forest Strike Team of Certified Arborist Professionals, able to respond to storm events or other urgent situations and perform rapid tree assessments for emergency and urgent maintenance needs. (Strategy 6).

Storm events can create catastrophic and widespread impacts to urban canopies, and the IDNR Forest Division, in partnership with the Illinois Arborist Association and other tree care industry leaders, have created an all-volunteer Strike Team of Certified Arborists that can quickly deploy to impacted communities and provide public works officials with easy-to-understand assessment reports that help to focus on immediate maintenance needs from take-downs to less drastic tree care steps. Deployments have averaged about one per year, and have also included targeted Park Assessments.

Priority Level	Description	Number of Trees
Priority 1	Mitigation = Remove and Risk = High or Extreme	70
Priority 2	Mitigation = Prune and Risk = High or Extreme	61
Priority 3	Mitigation = Remove and Risk = Low or Moderate	70
Priority 4	Mitigation = Prune and Risk = Low or Moderate	119
Priority 5	All Inspections	120
Priority 6	No Action Recommended / Monitor	35

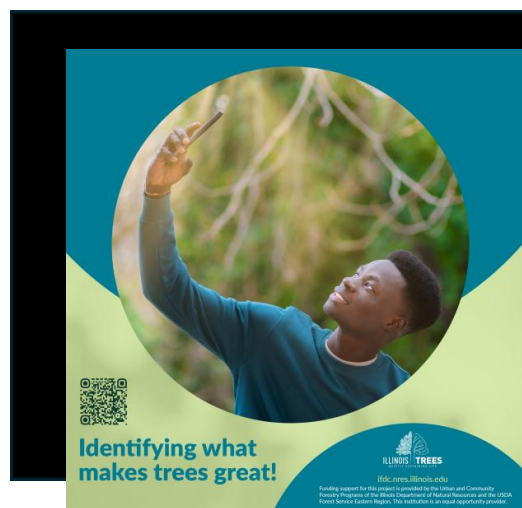


Urban and Community Forestry Highlight #4: Development of practical tools, including a Tree Protection Ordinance Builder and a Request for Proposals (RFP) Toolkit, for local government agencies to utilize to build and manage their local community forestry programs. (Strategy 6).

The IDNR-Forestry Division, in partnership with the Morton Arboretum and the Chicago Region Trees initiative, developed foundational “how to” online tools that can be utilized by local governments with small staffing levels and limited UCF knowledge to create and administer local Community Forestry Programs. Since a tree protection ordinance is an essential requirement for a community forestry program, an online tool entitled “21st Century Ordinance Builder for Tree Protection Entry-Level Components” was created to guide communities through this process, incorporating the three basic Ordinance requirements and providing information covering 18 Ordinance topic areas. In addition, another online tool entitled “How to Write a Request for Proposals for an Urban and Community Forestry Project” was created to communicate best practices and recommendations for procuring professional services for a community’s urban forestry needs. There are twelve sections in this online toolkit that provide an overview of common urban forestry services that communities may decide to hire a contractor to complete, along with key considerations for hiring and templates to use in the procurement process. Other helpful information, such as Community Tree Care Door hangers and Social Media Plans for UCF topics, have also been developed and posted online for local community use. Additionally, several Promotional items, such as brochures, videos and video clips have been developed to promote the Tree City USA program.

**21st Century Ordinance
Builder for Tree Protection
Entry-Level Components**

century ordinance for tree protection.



Urban and Community Forestry Highlight #5: Working in partnership with the IDNR Legislative Team, the Forestry Division successfully advanced and supported two important UCF Legislative items (Strategy 6).

The IDNR-Forestry Division, with the full support of IDNR Executive Leadership, worked closely with the IDNR Legislative Team to advance two important pieces of UCF Legislation. The first was an update to the 1996 Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Act, which made several important statutory updates to guide the UCF Program, and the second was the creation of a Legacy Tree Program Task Force. The Task Force is charged with making recommendations for the establishment of a statewide Legacy Tree Recognition Program to promote the identification, awareness, commemoration, and preservation of significant trees in the State. Staff support and leadership for the Task Force is being providing by the Forestry Division.



Illinois Big Tree Register, *Magnolia acuminata*,
Springfield, Illinois.

FOREST HEALTH

Forest Health Highlight #1: *Conduct Forest Health detection and monitoring surveys on 4.4 million acres of non-federal public lands and private lands for serious forest health insect pests and biotic and abiotic diseases. (Strategy 3).*

The Forest Health Program is implemented in partnership with the Morton Arboretum, and engages in on-going Forest Health Monitoring (FHM) data collection using nationally standardized procedures to identify regional and national forest health conditions in an unbiased and scientific manner. Methods include Aerial Detection Surveys, typically covering 2.5 million acres annually, that are conducted in late summer (August-September) to look for diseased, dying and dead trees resulting from insect pest and disease outbreaks. Follow-up ground-truthing surveys are then conducted where warranted. Survey data is prepared, summarized, and made available to the USDA-Forest Service as part of national and regional Forest Health Monitoring efforts.

Forest Health Highlight #2: *Conduct annual Exotic Bark Beetle and Wood-Boring Insect Surveys. (Strategy 3).*

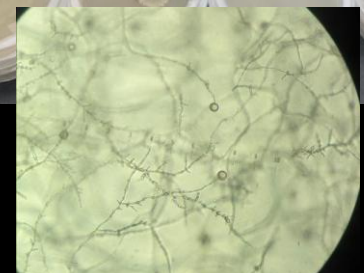
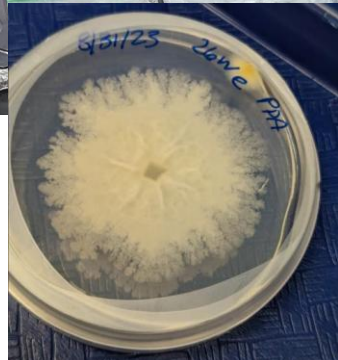
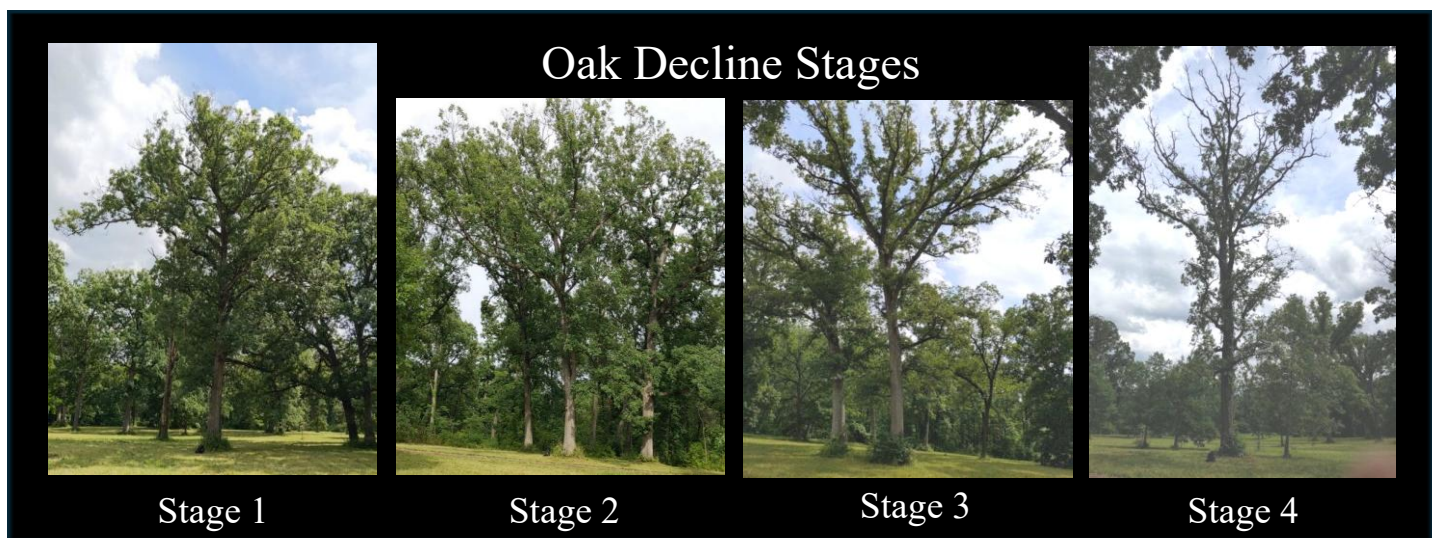
A primary target of this survey is the Walnut Twig Beetle (WTB), which is a vector of the fungal disease known as Thousand Cankers Disease (TCD) which kills black walnut. This pest is a major concern for Illinois due to the economic importance of black walnut. While the WTB has not yet been found in Illinois, a recent confirmation of TCD in east central Indiana has put heightened emphasis on monitoring for this insect pest and the deadly disease it carries for black walnut. This annual statewide monitoring effort is critical for early detection and rapid response management strategies in the event that WTB or TCD is detected in Illinois.



Bark Beetle Trap

Forest Health Highlight #3: *An Oak Decline Research Project has been initiated to better understand environmental and/or site variables that may contribute to oak decline, and to identify which oomycetes are pathogenic and associated with symptomatic trees. (Strategy 3).*

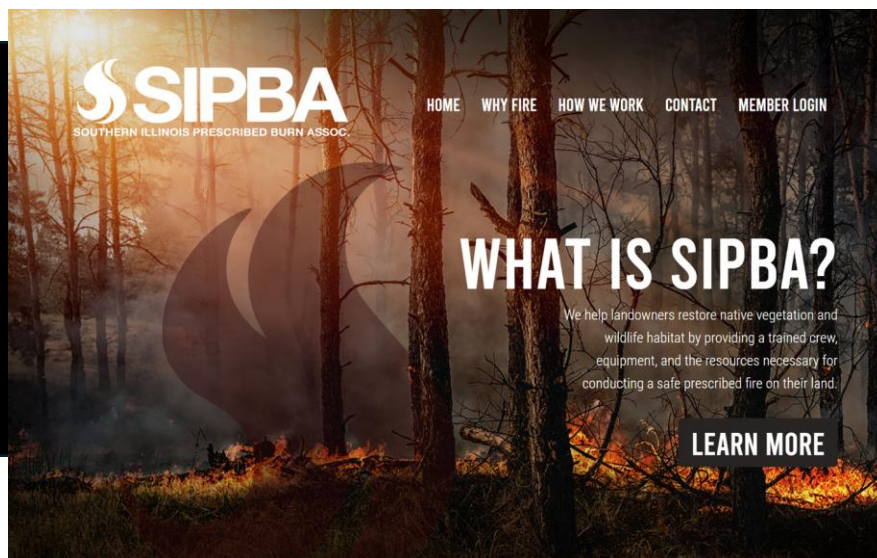
To date, over 400 white, northern red, bur, black, and swamp white oak tree samples have been taken at approximately 40 different sites statewide. Preliminary results have revealed that more than 80% of the root samples taken from declining oak species have tested positive for oomycete root infection. Currently DNA sequencing is in progress to determine genus and species of oomycetes infecting oak roots and to determine if they are contributing to oak decline or just saprophytic.



FIRE MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

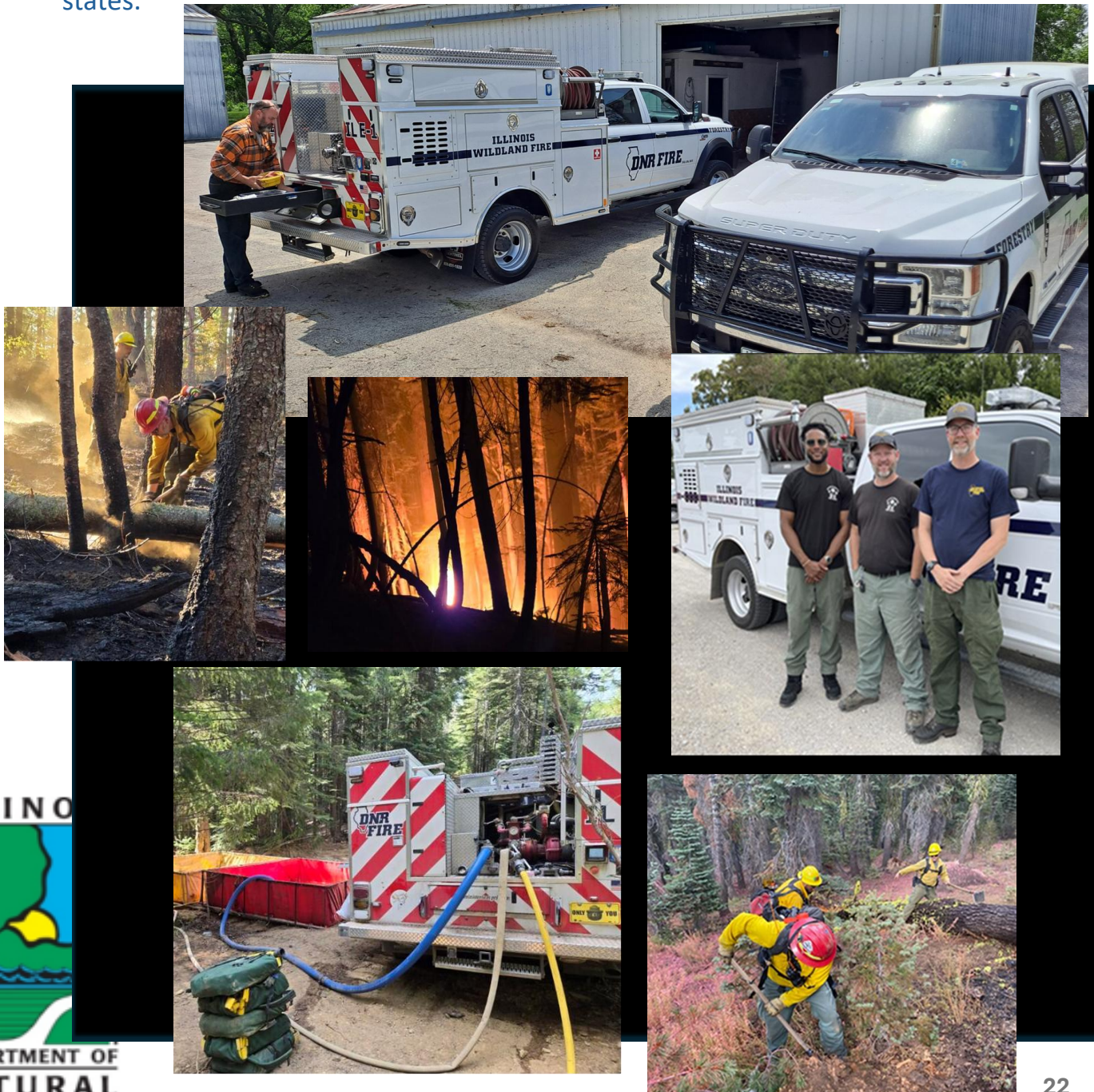
Fire Management and Protection Highlight #1: *Implemented approximately 25,000-30,000 acres of Prescribed Burns annually for habitat enhancement, to promote oak regeneration, and for hazard fuel reduction. (Strategy 1A, 1B, 1G).*

The IDNR Forestry Division, in coordination with the Wildlife and Natural Heritage Divisions and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, is responsible for administration and oversight of the IDNR's Prescribed Burn Management efforts, including execution of the Certified Burn Manager credential, Burn Plan review and approval, permitting, policy, safety and training, and leading burns. This program has grown to the point where approximately 30,000 acres of burns are implemented annually. The IDNR Forest Division has also supported increasing Prescribed Fire through allied conservation organizations such as the Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association, and through public-private cross-boundary burn coordination with the Shawnee National Forest, Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development, and other conservation organizations.



Fire Management and Protection Highlight #2: Increased participation in national interagency fire suppression mobilizations. (Strategy 2, 3, 7).

During the 2020-2025 period of this Report, the IDNR-Forestry Division was successful in purchasing its first Type 6 Engine to respond to in-state wildfire incidents. The Engine is also available to respond to out-of-state wildfire incidents. Illinois has always participated in national interagency fire mobilizations with standard 20-firefighter hand crews and Suppression Modules, but is now capable of Engine mobilizations as well. Over the past three years, the IDNR Forestry Division has supported the national wildfire suppression effort through approximately five mobilizations annually, primarily to the western U.S. and neighboring Great Lakes states.



Fire Management and Protection Highlight #3: Increased support to local Fire Departments through Volunteer Fire Capacity Grants and the Federal Excess Property Program. (Strategy 2, 3, 7).

During 2020-2025, the IDNR Forestry Division entered into 133 Memorandums of Understanding with fire departments across the state to provide over \$1 Million in Volunteer Fire Capacity (VFC) Grants. The small grants (\$10,000 or less) issued through this program with matching contributions have leveraged over \$2.1 million in local fire department projects. The critical equipment provided to rural fire departments through the VFC has included protective clothing, equipment such as skid/slip-on pumper units, portable tanks, pumps, hose, couplings, nozzles, generators, emergency lighting, groundcover tools, radios and communications equipment. Funds also have covered trainings and certain costs associated with starting up new fire departments. The IDNR Forestry Division also administers the Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP), which tracks over \$5 million worth of federal surplus equipment on loan to fire departments across the state.



FEPP Vehicles converted into Wildland Fire Suppression Units

Fire Management and Protection Highlight #4: On-going Fire Prevention activities with Smokey Bear. (Strategy 2, 3, 7).

The IDNR Forestry Division regularly conducts numerous Fire Prevention outreach efforts across the state. Most notable are Smokey Bear appearances at the State Fair with the Governor, a Smokey Bear 80th Birthday Celebration at the State Fair, and Smokey Bear appearances at Chicago White Sox professional baseball games.



Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker with Smokey Bear at the State Fair

Fire Management and Protection Highlight #5: *Provided extensive fire training to internal IDNR staff and external firefighters. (Strategy 2, 3, 7).*

During 2020-2025, the IDNR Forestry Division trained between 300 and 400 personnel annually in a wide variety of wildland fire skills. Trainings ranged from introductory S-130 and S-190 classes, annual safety refresher courses, and advanced level leadership position trainings. Trainings were conducted through 7 to 10 structured trainings and field days each year, held across the state. In addition, IDNR Forestry Division staff served as instructors at the Big Rivers Compact Wildfire Academy, which serves four Mid-Western states and is open to attendees from anywhere in the nation.

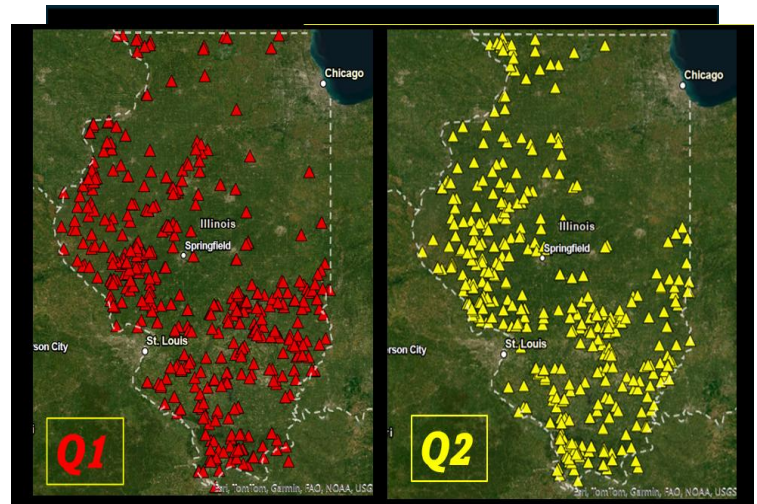


FOREST UTILIZATION

Forest Utilization Highlight #1: *Updated state laws overseeing forest utilization and Timber Buyer Licensing, created new online Timber Buyer License registration and harvest reporting and payment system. (Strategy 4, 5).*

The IDNR Forestry Division, working in partnership with the Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC), forest industry stakeholders, the IDNR Office of Legal Counsel and the Illinois Conservation Police, supported by IDNR Executive Leadership and the IDNR Legislative Team, expended a significant amount of effort to update and improve the Timber Buyers Licensing Act. The changes updated multiple aspects of the law, including licensing requirements and harvest reporting metrics for volume harvested by species, allowing the Forestry Division to better monitor this data. Concurrent with updating the law, the Forestry Division converted its existing Timber Buyer Licensing registration, reporting, and payment processes into an online system and created a new position in the Timber Buyer Program to administer the new online system. The new system is designed to make it much easier for Timber Buyers to report and pay their harvest fees. It also allows the IDNR Forestry Division to compile statewide harvest data (species, volume, and prices) much easier, better track harvest locations, and produce statewide maps of harvest locations each quarter. Per the reported data, there are between 220-255 active Timber Buyers across

the state, and approximately 2,400-2,700 forest harvests are conducted annually. Total harvesting is in the range of 50-55 Million Board Feet each year. The average reported harvest value is between \$20,000-\$25,000.



Quarterly Forest Harvest Maps



Forest Utilization Highlight #2: “Real-time” state industry price information published regularly and made available to all. (Strategy 5).

The IDNR Forestry Division receives wood pricing data on a regular basis and makes this information freely available online to both Timber Buyers and Timber Growers (woodland owners) through the publication “*Wooden Dollars Quarterly*.” This helps woodland owners understand current market prices for their timber. The Report shows low, high, and average prices paid for stumpage and delivered logs, regular sawtimber and veneer quality logs. Sawtimber values are provided for approximately 20 of the most common commercial timber species across the state. Veneer prices are shown for the three top veneer log species. In addition, this online publication provides short articles covering forest industry information, timber sale announcements, Key Price Indicators, and other timely forest marketing information.

Forest Utilization Highlight #3:
Updated statewide Sawmill Directory. (Strategy 5).

The IDNR Forestry Division, in partnership with the Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC), updated its statewide Sawmill Directory. The Directory lists active sawmills by

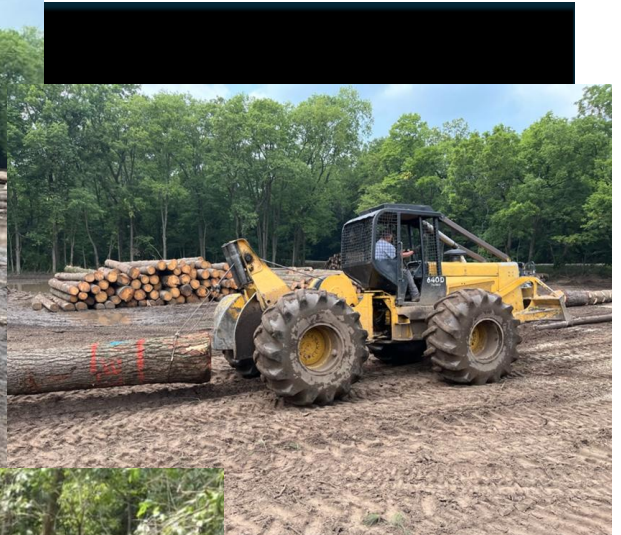
County, and provides information on the Company Name, Type of Sawmill, Primary Products, and Contact Information. While the Directory does not provide a comprehensive list, as some Sawmills could not be reached after multiple attempts, and some Sawmills elected not to be included, a majority of Sawmills in the state are included, and the Directory provides woodland owners with information on Sawmills close to their property.



STATE FORESTS

State Forest Highlight #1: Increased management activities on State Forests, and updating State Forest Management Plans. (Strategy 1J, 1O).

Over the 2020-2025 period, the IDNR Forestry Division has taken a much more active approach to State Forest management. Highlights include on-going active forest harvesting in aging and over-stocked conifer stands, completing large scale prescribed burns, and updating Forest Management Plans. Updated forest stand inventories have been initiated on all State Forests, and a habitat improvement project was initiated with a partner Conservation Organization on a State Forest.



Forest Harvest
at Sand Ridge
State Forest.

MASON TREE NURSERY

Mason Tree Nursery Highlight #1: *Provided just under 1 Million bareroot tree seedlings annually for reforestation, afforestation, and restoration projects across the state. (Strategy 2C, 2H, 2I).*

Over the 2020-2025 period, the Mason Tree Nursery has produced just under 1 million bareroot tree seedlings annually for multiple tree planting projects, including support for the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Trees Initiative.



Mason Tree Nursery Highlight #2: *Key contributor to Illinois Climate Action Plan (CAP) goals for native prairie grass and wildflower establishment. (Strategy 2C, 2H, 2I).*

Over the 2020-2025 period, the Mason Tree Nursery has produced approximately 2,000 pounds of wildflower mix and 450 pounds of native prairie grass seed, supporting prairie restoration projects and monarch butterfly and other pollinator plantings statewide.



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Conservation Education Highlight #1: *Participate in two major State Fairs reaching thousands of visitors annually, communicating themed forestry and fire prevention messaging. (Strategy 1K, 2F, 7D).*

Each year, IDNR Forestry Division Staff develop a “forestry theme of the year” for the Illinois State Fair in Springfield. The theme is communicated through custom-designed banners and other interactive activities. In addition, an “Ask a Forester” table is staffed with District Foresters from across the state and available to answer any forestry related questions visitors may have. Mason Tree Nursery staff are on hand to provide information about tree planting and prairie wildflowers to create pollinator habitat, and Morton Arboretum staff provide information related to invasive species and Forest Health topics.



A week or two following the Illinois State Fair in Springfield, the DuQuoin State Fair is held in Southern Illinois, and again the IDNR Forestry Division participates in a joint IDNR Tent featuring forestry, parks, wildlife, fisheries and other conservation-themed exhibits. 2025 was an especially big year, as IDNR was celebrating its 100th Year Anniversary with the theme of "100 Years of Conservation."



What is a Prairie?



A prairie is a type of grassland. Its name comes from the French word for "meadow." Prairies usually form level or smoothly rolling landscapes. Prairies are a mix of grasses and forbs. Most North American prairies are located in the central United States.

When left alone, prairie plants form a dense, spongy mat that holds water like a sponge. This helps the prairie survive drought. The three prairie plants shown in the photo are: Blackberry (Rubus cuneifolius), Prairie Dock (Rumex crispus), and Prairie Fireweed (Aster laevis).



This photo: Blackberry (Rubus cuneifolius) growing in a prairie in southern Illinois.

What is a Wetland?



Photo: View of the shallow, salt-cystine and sulfur-dominated wetland from the boardwalk at Wetland Nature Preserve.

Wetlands are areas of land that are saturated with water. They are home to many different types of plants and animals. Wetlands provide many benefits to humans and the environment.

What is a Forest?



Above: Eastern box turtle (Terrapene carolina) eating a mushroom. Below: Virginia bluebell (Mertensia virginica).

The potentially erosive effects of rains are lessened by trees. The canopy of vegetation slows the speed at which raindrops hit the forest floor. The network of plant roots holds forest soils and allows rain water to be slowly absorbed, decreasing the potential for severe flooding and helping springs, aquifers, rivers and ponds recharge. All of these factors decrease the amount of sediment that washes from forested areas into water bodies.

A forest is an area mainly dominated by trees and other woody vegetation. The structure and composition of a forest can vary widely depending on several factors such as the soil type, aspect, topography, hydrology and climate of the site. In Illinois, our forest falls within the Central Hardwoods region with temperate broadleaf forests.

The values of trees are immeasurable. Ecological benefits of trees include erosion control, wildlife habitat, oxygen production, reduction of air pollution, increased soil fertility and release of water to the atmosphere. Oxygen is a byproduct of the photosynthetic process that plants undergo to convert water, sunlight, carbon dioxide and minerals to food. Through transpiration and evaporation, plants return moisture to the air.



Photo of the forest at Metzer Flatwoods Land and Water Reserve