

Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Summary Information

4/30/2026

	Data Field	
1.	Awarding Agency Name:	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
2.	Agency Contact:	Susan Duke Grant Administrator One Natural Resources Way Springfield, IL 62702 Susan.duke@illinois.gov (217) 785-4416
3.	Announcement Type:	☒ Initial announcement ☐ Modification of a previous announcement
4.	Type of Assistance Instrument:	Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grants
5.	Funding Opportunity Number:	FY2026 Natural Areas Stewardship
6.	Funding Opportunity Title:	Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grant Program
7.	CSFA Number:	422-20-1713
8.	CSFA Popular Name:	NAAF Fund
9.	CFDA Number(s):	n/a
10.	Anticipated Number of Awards:	unknown
11.	Estimated Total Program Funding:	Est. \$700,000
12.	Award Range	\$20,000- \$100,000
13.	Source of Funding:	☐ Federal or Federal pass-through ☒ State ☐ Private / other funding
14.	Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement:	☒ Yes ☐ No 5% or a minimum of \$1,000, whichever is less
15.	Indirect Costs Allowed Restrictions on Indirect Costs	☒ Yes ☐ No NICRA or de minimus 10% ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, provide the citation governing the restriction:
16.	Posted Dates:	May 1, 2026 – June 12, 2026
17.	Closing Date for Applications:	June 12, 2026 5:00pm
18.	Technical Assistance Session:	Session Offered: ☐ Yes ☒ No Session Mandatory: ☐ Yes ☒ No Specify date and time Provide link to registration, if applicable

Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity

A. Program Description

The purpose of the Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grant Program is to increase stewardship on dedicated Illinois Nature Preserves and registered Land and Water Reserves through grants to Conservation Land Trusts, and to increase stewardship capacity within Conservation Land Trusts. All eligible projects will be considered for funding in 2026. Applicants are encouraged to address both purposes of the Act. A focus for funding will be given to projects that address the most urgent needs where the qualifying feature protected by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission is at risk of being lost.

Funding for this grant program is derived from a portion of the Illinois Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF); NAAF is a Department of Natural Resources fund that supports the acquisition, protection, and stewardship of natural areas, including habitats for endangered and threatened species (Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Act, 525 ILCS 35/14). Stewardship actions funded by this grant program must be included in current management schedules approved by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) and, if selected, the schedule must be current at minimum through the grant term. Eligible costs may include staff time related to the project, equipment, and materials necessary to complete stewardship projects such as tools, safety items, herbicide, construction materials, and indirect costs. Benefit costs are not eligible. Applicants are encouraged to consult with their [INPC Natural Areas Preservation Specialist or NAPS](#) for guidance.

Grant Program Administration: By Administrative Rule, maximum funding to one project is \$100,000. A suggested minimum project amount is \$20,000. There is a 5% or \$1000 matching fund requirement, whichever is less on each project.

Length of grant term will be no more than two (2) years and will be paid on a reimbursement basis at the end of the project unless other arrangements are provided in the grant agreement.

B. Funding Information

This Notice of Funding Opportunity is for grant awards that utilize only State-appropriated funds from the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund. Obligations of the State will cease immediately without penalty of further payment being required if in any fiscal year the Illinois General Assembly fails to appropriate or otherwise make available sufficient funds for this award. No federal funds are included in this grant program.

Funding is available for new projects as well as proposals that continue, supplement or expand existing projects. New projects and continuing projects are given equal consideration.

Available grant funding of \$700,000 depends on Annual Projected Revenues and Funding Level Appropriated by the Illinois General Assembly.

Disbursements: The disbursement of funds will be made after the final execution of the grant, and upon submission by the grantee of a written request for payment on the Request for Reimbursement Form provided by the Department. Reimbursements will be at the completion of the project, unless the Department, based upon a request from the grantee for good cause, determines to provide

reimbursement payments on an interim basis (not more than quarterly). All payments shall be based upon documentation of project expenditures as submitted by the grantee, as provided below:

C. **Eligibility Information**

Eligible recipients are Conservation Land Trusts exempt from taxation under Section 501 (c) (3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code and include in its purposes the restoration and stewardship of land for conservation purposes. Non-Governmental Organizations whose primary purpose is to fundraise for local government conservation agencies are not eligible.

Applicants must be registered in Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management (SAM). Each applicant is required to have a valid DUNS number and be registered in SAM before submission of their application.

An applicant is exempt from DUNS/SAMS only if the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under [2 CFR § 25.110\(b\)](#) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under [2 CFR § 25.110\(d\)](#).

If an applicant is not registered in SAM, this link provides a connection for free SAM registration: <https://sam.gov/SAM/>

An applicant must always continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information while it has an active State award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal or State awarding agency. The State awarding agency may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the State awarding agency is ready to make an award, the State awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

If an applicant does not have a DUNS number, this link provides a connection for a free DUNS number: <https://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html>.

Applicants must be pre-qualified through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, www.grants.illinois.gov/portal/. During pre-qualification, Dun and Bradstreet verifications are performed including a check of Debarred and Suspended status and good standing with the Secretary of State. The pre-qualification process also includes a financial and administrative risk assessment utilizing an Internal Controls Questionnaire. If applicable, the entity will be notified that it is ineligible for award because of the prequalification process. The entity will be informed of corrective action needed to become eligible for a grant award.

Eligible Lands

- Land protected by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission as a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve, dedicated buffer, or registered as a Land and Water Reserve.

- Preserve/Reserve must have a current management schedule approved by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and, if selected, the schedule must be current at minimum through the grant term.
- Conservation Land Trusts can work on eligible land owned by another entity provided there is a properly executed agreement between the Conservation Land Trust and the landowner, and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission has been notified of this agreement at the time of application. The agreement must be in effect at minimum through the end of the grant term.
- Work on land owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources is discouraged unless the qualifying and/or significant feature receiving work crosses a Department boundary and inclusion of the Department's portion of the feature is critical for the success of the stewardship project. Other exceptions may be considered by the grant reviewers.
- Work on other tax-supported land is also discouraged unless the applicant can demonstrate a strong need for grant resources to increase capacity.

Eligible Project Expenses

Grant assistance may be obtained for the following activities:

- Stewardship activities. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, stewardship of land or water for the following:
 - Stewardship actions identified in a current, approved management schedule which are designed to maintain, preserve, or improve the condition of native natural communities, diversity of species, and ecological processes for which the preserve/reserve was designated,
 - control of exotic and invasive species,
 - prescribed burns, or
 - restoration/enhancement of native plant communities.
- Contractual services for any eligible project,
- Purchase and rental of supplies and equipment such as:
 - UTVs, trailers, sprayers, seed, herbicide),
 - personal protection items (except boots),
 - hand tools,
 - radios,
- Staff time (excluding benefits)
- Indirect Costs
 - To charge indirect costs to a grant, the applicant organization must have an annually negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). There are three types of NICRAs: a) Federally Negotiated Rate. Organizations that receive direct federal funding may have an indirect cost rate that was negotiated with the Federal Cognizant Agency.

Illinois will accept the federally negotiated rate. The organization must provide a copy of the federally NICRA. b) State Negotiated Rate. The organization must negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if they do not have a Federally Negotiated Rate or elect to use the De Minimis Rate. The indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted to the State of Illinois within 90 days of the notice of award. c) De Minimis Rate. An organization that does not have a Federally Negotiated Rate may elect a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct cost (MTDC). Once established, the de minimis rate may be used indefinitely. The State of Illinois must verify the calculation of the MTDC annually to accept the de minimis rate.

Cost Sharing or Matching is required for award of these grants. The required match is 5% or \$1,000, whichever is less.

Applicants may contact Susan Duke (susan.duke@illinois.gov) for an eligibility determination prior to submitting an application.

D. Application and Submission Information

Apply Online:

[Amplifund link goes here](#)

If you need any assistance with the application forms or the process, call or email Susan.Duke@illinois.gov 217-785-4416. If you need assistance with accessing or uploading grant forms in the Amplifund portal, go to: support@il-amplifund.zendesk.com

All materials are due by June 12, 2026 at 5:00pm

Supplemental Documents to be Submitted

The following are required.

1. **Uniform Application for State Grant Assistance** (you will complete this document online in the Amplifund portal)
2. **Project Narrative** (you will complete this document online in the Amplifund portal)

Project Summary

Provide a brief description of the proposed project and why the stewardship action(s) was/were chosen among the other actions identified in the Management Schedule(s).

Conservation Land Trust Summary

Provide a brief overview of the Conservation Land Trust applying for this grant, including how the organization's purpose aligns with the Conservation Land Trust definition in the Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Act.

Capacity/Leveraging

How will this grant funding increase the capacity to do stewardship for this particular project and in the future? What other nonfinancial resources, such as personnel, volunteers, equipment, or supplies are available to support successful completion of the project?

Site Information

Site Name (Official Name from INPC documents), Landowner, if not the applicant, and Date of expiration for current management schedule.

Qualifying Features

For each site, provide a brief description of why the site was dedicated or registered by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. Applicants should summarize the qualifying and/or significant features present on each site.

Stewardship Action Summary

For each site, provide a list of stewardship actions proposed, the mechanism to complete each action, and the method of how that activity will be performed with grant funds. Mechanisms may include any eligible expenses, such as contractual services, staff time, equipment purchase, or other (if used, please describe). Methods must be approved in the site's Management Schedule. Provide a map for each site that identifies the location of each stewardship action listed.

Expected Outcomes and Benefits:

Briefly describe the anticipated outcome of the project at maintaining or improving the conditions of the qualifying and/or significant features at the site(s) proposed and the urgency of need.

Additional Benefits:

Briefly describe any additional project benefits to implementing the following:

- *Illinois Natural Areas Plan* by preventing unnatural disturbances and restoring ecological processes, and/or the
- *Illinois Sustainable Natural Areas Vision* by contributing to a sustainable, connected system of natural areas, and/or
- *Illinois Wildlife Action Plan* through stewardship support to habitats for Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including species listed as threatened or endangered in Illinois.

Statement of ability to complete work within the grant period

All applicants selected for funding are expected to complete the proposed project within two years of execution of the grant agreement. Provide a brief statement about

the Conservation Land Trust's ability to complete the proposed work within the timeframe and budget proposed.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Is the applicant aware of any potential conflict of interest between IDNR staff, the landowner, the applicant and/or its governance board and/or staff members?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, disclose the potential conflict of interest and action taken by the applicant to resolve the conflict.

Supplemental Document Checklist for Project Narrative:

- ☐ Copy of executed agreement between the applicant and the landowner (if applicable)
- ☐ Copy of notification of executed agreement to Commission (if applicable)
- ☐ Maps for each site that identify the location of proposed activities
- ☐ Copy of approved Management Schedule for each site included in the Project Narrative

3. **Uniform Budget Template and Budget Narrative** (you will complete this document online in the Amplifund portal)
4. **Programmatic Risk Assessment** (you will complete this document online in the Amplifund portal)
5. **Supplemental Documents to be Submitted** The following is required, you will upload them in the Amplifund portal.
 - a. **W-9:** All applicants must complete and provide the **latest W-9 version** as found at www.irs.gov. The Illinois Comptroller, who issues all State payments, will not accept earlier versions.
 - b. **IRS Determination Letter:** Not-for-profit applicants that have not done business with the State of Illinois in the last 3 years or have reorganized since last doing business with the State must provide a copy of their **IRS Determination Letter** that declares the entity's legal status as determined by the IRS (e.g., tax-exempt, governmental, partnership, type of corporation, or type of Limited Liability Company). This letter is not the FEIN assignment letter but is among the original legal/tax documents for an entity.
 - c. Two price quotes for equipment purchase with value of \$5,000 or more.
 - d. If the applicant's proposal includes land owned by another entity, a copy of the agreement with the landowner and documentation that the agreement was provided to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

Application Submission: The applicant must provide all information requested in the application package. Only one (1) original application with supporting documentation and legally authorizing

signature needs to be submitted per project. You may submit applications for more than one project.
The application deadline is 5:00 p.m. June 12, 2026.

Submitters of these documents must be authorized by their organization to enter into formal contracts. All communication, oral or written, **between** the applicant and DNR will be with the submitter, or their designee.

E. Application Review Information

Review and Selection Process: All applications received on time and containing the information required by the application packet will be reviewed by Department staff for completeness and organizational eligibility.

Organizational eligibility will be subject to the following:

- Verification of Duns and Bradstreet number
- Check status if on the Illinois Debarred and Suspended List
- Check Good Standing status with the Illinois Secretary of State

Based on any of the above checks, the applicant will be notified if they are ineligible for grant award. Applicants will be informed if corrective action is needed to become eligible for award.

All complete, eligible and timely applications will be forwarded to IDNR Division of Natural Heritage for evaluation according to the criteria detailed below. Natural Heritage will provide a recommendation to the DNR Director, who makes the final decision on awards. Each applicant will be notified by email of the Director's decision regarding their application.

Project Evaluation Criteria

Natural Areas Stewardship Grant Evaluation Criteria		
Narrative Sections	Maximum Points	Criteria
Project Summary	10	Scoring based on assessment of stewardship action improving conditions or addressing threats to the qualifying features for which the site was dedicated or registered.
Conservation Land Trust Summary	0	Not scored, used to determine eligibility
Capacity/Leveraging	10	Scoring based on assessment of the project's increase to stewardship and capacity than would otherwise occur.

Site Information	0	Not scored, used to determine eligibility
Qualifying Features	15	Scoring based on assessment of the relationship between the qualifying features and the stewardship action proposed.
Stewardship Action Summary	15	Scoring based on assessment of the appropriateness of the mechanism and method of the stewardship action.
Expected Outcomes and Benefits	40	Scoring based on assessment of whether project outcome maintains or improves the conditions of the qualifying and/or significant features and the urgency of need.
Additional Benefits	10	Scoring based on benefits to implementation of the statewide plans.
Ability to complete work	0	Not scored, used to determine eligibility
Conflict of Interest Disclosure	0	Not scored, used to determine eligibility

Intent to Award: Following a decision of intent to award, DNR is required to conduct a financial and administrative risk assessment of the applicant. Additional information may be required at that time from the successful applicant. For the applicant to remain eligible for the award, they must provide the requested information within 30 days after notification of intent to award.

Merit-based Review Appeals Process

In compliance with GATA, applicants have the right to appeal the evaluation process but not the evaluation score. More information is available at:

<http://ilga.gov/commission/JCAR/admincode/044/044070000D03500R.html>

F. Award Administration Information

After the Grant Agreement has been signed by the Director, expenses can be incurred for grant reimbursement. Any expenses incurred outside of the grant period (before or after) are at the applicant's risk and are not eligible either as match or for reimbursement related to the grant.

Performance Reporting: The grantee shall be required to provide reporting of its activities under this project. The DNR may withhold or suspend payment if the grantee fails to submit the required reports. The following reports are required under this Agreement:

- **Quarterly Progress Reports:** If the amount of grant funds awarded exceeds \$25,000.00, the grantee is required to provide to the DNR quarterly progress reports that describe the progress of the project and expenditures of funds according to the budget line items as detailed in the approved Uniform Application for State Grant Assistance. The Quarterly Progress Report will be due as follows:

<u>Period of Work</u>	<u>Quarterly Progress Report Due Before</u>
January 1 – March 31	April 30
April 1 – June 30	July 31
July 1 – September 30	October 31
October 1 – December 31	January 31

- **Annual or Final Report:** The grantee shall submit a written **Final Report** to the department no later than 30 days following the completion of the Project or the ending date of the grant agreement, whichever is earlier, in accordance with the applicable administrative rules. The Final Report shall include:
 - Grant Agreement Number
 - Grantee name, address and telephone number
 - Timeframe of the report
 - Name and telephone number or e-mail address of grantee representative completing the report
 - Project objective as described in the application and grant agreement
 - Completed Project description
 - Photos
 - Summary of the Project accomplishments (if applicable)
 - Total project expenditures, itemized and include the following: name and address of vendor, item description identifying details (if applicable), quantity purchased, date item purchased, and project expenditures paid by funds other than Natural Areas Acquisition Funds
 - An Equipment Use Report (if applicable)
 - Any other information requested by the Department

Equipment: Equipment purchased shall become the property and the responsibility of the grantee at the end of the grant term, unless specified otherwise in the Grant Agreement

G. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)

To contact DNR with questions related to this grant, please use the following means:

By US Mail: Department of Natural Resources
Office of Grant Management and Assistance
One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271

By e-mail: susan.duke@illinois.gov

By phone: Susan Duke 217-785-4416

By fax: (217) 785-2438

H. Other Information

The State of Illinois is not obligated to make any award of the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund as a result of this Notice of Funding Opportunity. Only the Director of the Department of Natural Resources makes the determination of what grants shall be awarded after considering the recommendations of IDNR Division of Natural Heritage. Grant applicants are not authorized to proceed on their projects until the Director has signed the Grant Agreement.