

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

Minutes of the 237th Virtual Meeting  
(Subject to approval at the 239th Meeting)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
One Natural Resources Way  
Springfield, IL 62702

January 26, 2021

237-1) **Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees**

Commissioner Covington called the meeting to order at 10:00am and Stacy Burkett read the roll call.

Commissioners Present: George Covington, Pen DauBach, Donnie Dann, Deborah Stone, William McClain, David Thomas, Abigail Derby Lewis, Jo-Elle Mogerma, Charles Ruffner

Commission Advisors Present: Colleen Callahan, Director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Joyce Hofmann, Endangered Species Protection Board (ESPB); Robert Appleman, Historic Preservation Division (IDNR); Jeffrey Stein, Prairie Research Institute

Commission Consultants Present: Fran Harty, The Nature Conservancy (TNC); Kerry Leigh, Natural Land Institute (NLI); Jim Herkert, Illinois Audubon Society (IAS); Randy Heidorn; Lauren Rosenthal; Joe Roth

Others Present: John Rogner, Assistant Director IDNR; Valerie Njapa, Kelly Neal, Stacy Burkett, John Griesbaum, Kim Roman, Angella Moorehouse, John Nelson, Debbie Newman, Byron Paulsen, Kevin Sierzega, Sami Childerson, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC); Chris Young, Director, Office of Resource Conservation (ORC); Ann Holtrop, Todd Strole, Jeannie Barnes, John Wilker, Leon Hinz, Jenny Skufca, Brad Semel, Samantha Scalice, Russ Blogg, Tyler Schartel, Melissa Grycan, Alexander Faulkner, Mark Alessi, Eric Smith, Steve Tillman, IDNR Division of Natural Heritage (DNH); Laura Verden, Dawn Cobb, Nathan Grider, Michael Bauling, IDNR Office of Realty and Capital Planning (ORCP); Marvin Williams, IDNR Legislative Office; Diane Tecic, IDNR Coastal Management Office; Tom Gargrave, IDNR Division of Forestry; Janice Coons, Endangered Species Protection Board (ESPB); Jim Anderson, Rebecca Hegner, Nick Huber, Lake County Forest Preserves District (LCFPD); Charles O'Leary, Rebecca Collings, Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC); Zach Grycan, Natural Land Institute (NLI); Cal Zehr, Dennis Zehr, Hungry World Farm (HWF); Jason Kosowski, Riley Rooney, Deanna Glosser, Land Conservation Foundation (LCF); Jim Johannsen, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation (JD CF); Francis Kane, Illinois Clean Energy; David Holman, Katie Kucera, Eriko Kojima,

237-2) **Adoption of Agenda**

It was moved by Commissioner Derby Lewis, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, and carried that the Agenda be adopted.

237-3) **Approval of Minutes for the 236th Meeting, September 15, 2021**

Commissioner Covington asked for a motion and approval of the 236th Meeting minutes.

It was moved by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, and carried that the minutes from the 236th Meeting be approved.

Commissioner Covington read the following:

At the 236th Meeting of the INPC, held on September 15, 2020, at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for 10 tracts of land totaling 1180 acres. Six of the 10 tracts are privately owned, and four are publicly owned. The individuals and organizations who own the private sites donated the value of the protection agreement to the public. Lands protected include the Bergman Slough Land and Water Reserve; Ballard Nature Center Land and Water Reserve; Townsend Glade Addition to Apple River Canyon Land and Water Reserve; Lily Cache Prairie Land and Water Reserve; Elizabeth Conkey Woods Nature Preserve; Guiding Star Savanna Nature Preserve; Addition to Gavin Bog and Prairie Nature Preserve; Sturm Woods Buffer Addition to Wright Woods Nature Preserve; John Husar Memorial Addition to Franklin Creek Nature Preserve; and Addition to Storment Hauss Nature Preserve.

Protection of these lands came about because the Commission had eight staff in the field working with private and public landowners. There are 404 dedicated nature preserves totaling 60,682 acres; and there are 199 registered land and water reserves totaling 54,767 acres.

237-4) **Next meeting dates and locations:**

238 <sup>th</sup> Meeting	May 11, 2021	WebEx Virtual Meeting
239 <sup>th</sup> Meeting	September 14, 2021	WebEx Virtual Meeting

237-5) **INPC Staff Report**

**APPENDIX I**

Valerie Njapa presented the INPC staff report.

237-6) **IDNR Staff Report**

**APPENDIX II**

Ann Holtrop, Chief, Division of Natural Heritage, presented the IDNR staff report.

237-7) **Endangered Species Protection Board Report**

**APPENDIX III**

Joyce Hofmann presented the ESPB staff report.

237-8) **Jackson Co. – Ralph Clover Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requested registration of 60 acres of natural land in perpetuity as the Ralph Clover Land and Water Reserve (LWR). Registration will protect approximately half of the 14.5-acre Toothless Cave Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Site (INAI #0599), which is recognized as a Category I due to the presence of a high-quality terrestrial cave community and as a Category II due to the presence of specific suitable habitat occupied by a state and federally listed bat species. The reserve is located near the southern edge of Jackson County within Pomona Township. It occurs at the southwestern edge of the Greater Shawnee Hills Section of the Shawnee Hills Natural Division. Natural communities include terrestrial cave (Grade B and C), dry-mesic upland forest (Grade C), mesic upland forest (Grade C), and a ~19-acre old field community (Grade D). The reserve will be open to the public, except for an area in the northwest corner containing the entrance to Toothless Cave, the sinkholes, and the entire extent of the INAI site within the proposed LWR boundary. The IDNR would like to thank Ralph Clover for his interest in conservation and support for the protection of this area.

Qualifying features include:

- 1) Permanent protection of ~7 acres of the INAI#0599 site;
- 2) Permanent protection of a bat hibernacula containing federally and state endangered Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*), gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*), and northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*);
- 3) A state-threatened reptile has been frequently documented in the vicinity and the reserve provides suitable habitat for this species;
- 4) At least 29 Species in Greatest Need of Conservation (SGNC) occur on the reserve, including 19 avian species, six mammals, three herptiles, and one invertebrate;
- 5) Over 20 avian species susceptible to forest fragmentation breed on the reserve; and
- 6) Support of the Forest and Woodlands Campaign and Invasive Species Campaign of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

Commissioner Dann asked what bouldering means.

Steve Tillman explained that bouldering is hand climbing or navigating a boulder, approximately a 10 - 15-foot route on a piece of rock. Bouldering is done without using ropes or permanent structures on the rock. Climbers use large crash pads that they carry onto the site to protect themselves.

Commissioner Ruffner commented that when Steve was going through the management treatments on his slides, removing mid-story canopy was included, and asked if this is a priority on this site. Steve Tillman said yes, removing mid-story is a priority not only for rattlesnakes, but literature states it can be helpful for bats as well.

Nathan Grider added that the utility companies have been pretty good stewards regarding mowing at the site. He is sure they would be happy to have a conversation about any issues there.

It was moved by Commissioner Ruffner, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Ralph Clover as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 8 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2512)

237-9) **Jo Daviess Co. – Addition to Casper Bluff Land and Water Reserve. Registration**

Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation requested registration of a 19.68-acre addition to Casper Bluff Land and Water Reserve located in Northwest Jo Daviess County. The site lies within the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division of Illinois and contains significant archaeological features in the form of ceremonial and burial mounds including a thunderbird effigy mound. Located on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, the site is within the Upper Mississippi River Conservation Opportunity Area as well as the Wisconsin Driftless Forest and Apple River Canyon Conservation Opportunity Areas. A federal listed bee, *Bombus affinis* (rusty-patched bumble bee), has been documented utilizing the site along with at least six species of birds identified by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) as Species in Greatest Need of Conservation. Protection and management of this reserve will help meet the goals of multiple IWAP campaigns including: Farm and Grassland, Forest and Woodlands, Streams, Land and Water Stewardship, and Invasive Species.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented on the efforts of Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation (JDCF) and how their engagement with indigenous groups over the last 10 years has been really remarkable. JDCF has made great strides in engaging indigenous groups to bring together these shared interests of land stewardship and importantly to acknowledge and incorporate traditional ecological knowledge which includes cultural and spiritual and scientific knowledge that are born from these land-based communities into the management and outreach efforts that occur on these protected lands. In particular, Commissioner Derby Lewis wanted to call out the co- development of a center for tribal heritages on one of these sites. It is tribal driven, tribal centric, and has tribal historians that are interpreting their culture for non-indigenous communities. It is a really important model for how to create some strategies to promote inclusive conservation which is on many of our minds. We can really learn a lot from this effort and consider how we might be able to scale elements of this engagement process to other INPC sites in a way that encourages community voices and to become more of a visible and valued part of our Illinois natural areas. Especially for those who have

felt very disconnected from the region's natural landscapes, or maybe haven't been seen as part of our conservation community in the past, this is very important. Commissioner Derby Lewis appreciated the opportunity to connect that piece of the story and thank JDCF for all of the great work they have been doing.

Commissioner McClain asked a question regarding the restoration. Based on the number of community types that are there, what is known historically about the location? Does this tie in with that or is this a rather good sounding plan that someone has developed?

Jim Johannsen with JDCF said based on everything he has read, at least in the driftless region of Illinois, most of the Mississippi bluffs on the Illinois side of the river were historically an oak savanna cover. Then with the suppression of wildfire, after euro-American settlement, they succeeded through savanna and to more of the forest types that we associate with that region today. When JDCF got the site, the savanna canopy structure was largely already in place. It was used as a cattle pasture with pasture grasses in the herbaceous layer. So, what we have done is just convert the herbaceous layer away from pasture grasses into the savanna planting that you see today.

It was moved by Commissioner Derby Lewis, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the Addition to Casper Bluff as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 9 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2513)

237-10) **Cook Co. – Somme Prairie Grove Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) proposed to dedicate 85 acres of the Somme Forest Preserve as the Somme Prairie Grove Nature Preserve. The proposed Somme Prairie Grove Nature Preserve is part of a larger complex of preserves (approximately 730 acres) found along the west fork of the North Branch of the Chicago River near Northbrook, IL. The proposed nature preserve includes a small amount of remnant prairie and savanna, along with one of the oldest and most comprehensive savanna and woodland restorations in the Midwest, portions of which have been graded B by the Illinois Natural History Survey.

Somme Prairie Grove is included within the Somme Prairie Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI #0245) site, lying within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois. The western 70 acres of the Somme Prairie INAI site was dedicated as Somme Prairie Nature Preserve in September 1981 for Grade A and B dry-mesic, mesic, and wet-mesic prairie. This is one of the finest examples of a mesic prairie in Illinois. The original Somme Prairie INAI site was first evaluated in July 1976. It was then described as an 81-acre natural area with 12 acres of Grade A and B mesic prairie. Mesic prairie is the rarest prairie community type in Illinois. The site was expanded to its current size (408.5 total acres) in 2000 to include Somme Prairie Grove and suitable habitat supporting three state-endangered plants. While the current INAI does not list the presence of high-quality plant communities within the proposed Somme Prairie Grove Nature Preserve, surveys by the Illinois Natural History Survey in 2015-2016 determined the site now supports high-

quality (Grade B) mesic savanna and dry-mesic woodland. At the time of survey, 8.25 acres of mesic savanna and 9.35 acres of dry-mesic woodland were graded B. Another 63.79 acres of mesic savanna was graded C+, a descriptor used for an area with high potential to be restored to Grade B. Another 0.8 acres of C+ sedge meadow also occurs within the proposed nature preserve.

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff and staff of the Forest Preserves of Cook County recommended preliminary dedication of 85 acres as the Somme Prairie Grove Nature Preserve.

Commissioner McClain asked if among the communities, there is baseline data on the composition of the prairies and savannas.

Rebecca Collings stated that they have data dating back to early registrations. Stephen Packard and other volunteers have annual or semi-annual transect data for portions of this site which were recently published in a paper and she will share with the Commission. The data shows how different ecological metrics have improved over time.

Commissioner McClain stated there are a number of rare plants at this site and one of them is Oval Milkweed. What is the proximity of the plants and did they occur naturally in that area?

Rebecca Collings said yes, the listed species on site were introduced through seed and known from the region prior to introduction. The Oval Milkweed was an original population that occurred at the adjacent parcel of Somme Prairie and the original population was no longer setting seed. It was crossed with the population from Iowa and that cross population was introduced. The original population is gone, and we now have this introduced population that includes a mix of genetics.

Commissioner Ruffner stated he was struck by a comment in the report that he felt was very important. He said he and Bill McClain spent years of their lives reading old deeds and old survey reports, but he was struck by this comment because he thought it was from the 1800's. The comment says, "there was as much grass and trees as is out in the open." Reference was made to Stephen Packard's personal communication from 1980, and it felt like reading a description of this savanna from the 1800's. Commissioner Ruffner said it is very important for all of us land managers to include those little anecdotal descriptions, because in 500 years, when people are reading through our records, they are going to find descriptions of the landscape that are just as poetic now as they may have been from the 1800's. Kudos to all involved, it was great to read and thanks for including it.

Commissioner Covington asked in an area where every acre was farmed, developed or not developable, how did this get preserved in the way that it did.

Rebecca Collings said she believes there was a lot of luck involved in the protection of the 12 acres at Somme Prairie. Also, due to the foresight of the folks who established the Forest Preserve District of Cook County early on, the site became protected in the 1920's. We were fortunate to escape urban development and have civic leaders and FPDCC who protected the site.

Commissioner Dann stated he is pleased with all the work Stephen Packard and the other volunteers did and that's what makes the site so special. It couldn't exist in a more densely

populated, heavily trafficked area. There are freeways, 4 lane highways on every side and railroad tracks. Commissioner Dann said he doesn't know that we have any other nature preserves that are quite like it. Well done!

Commissioner Stone recused herself from the vote to avoid the appearance of conflict.

It was moved by Commissioner Ruffner, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Somme Prairie Grove as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2514)

237-11) **Lake Co. – Schreiber Lake Bog Nature Preserve. Preliminary Dedication**

The Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD) proposed to dedicate 355.4 acres of the 2835.1-acre Lakewood Forest Preserve as the Schreiber Lake Bog Nature Preserve. Located in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois, the rolling kettle and moraine topography of the proposed nature preserve is a direct result of glacial influences, creating strong physical relief terrain. The site consists of a mosaic of upland oak/hickory woodlands, sedge meadow and wet prairie communities, cultural fields containing 30+year old reforestation plantings, successional fields, and prairie restoration plantings. A significant feature of this proposed dedication is the 5.36-acre glacial lake (Schreiber Lake) and its narrow fringe of floating sedge and willow hummocks that line portions of the lake's edge. These floating vegetative mats provide habitat for six state-listed northern relict bog plant species. Additionally, two state-listed aquatic emergent macrophytes occur in the regionally noted exceptionally clear waters of Schreiber Lake. Schreiber Lake and the downstream artificial impoundments of Owen and Davis Lakes encompass two Lake County Advanced Identification (ADID) wetlands (ADID #124 & #125) and Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Site (INAI #1502) Schreiber Lake Bog. The proposed nature preserve also provides habitat to 67 bird species, of which at least seven are state-endangered.

There are two existing nature preserves located within Lakewood Forest Preserve owned by the LCFPD: Wauconda Bog Nature Preserve and McLean Woods and Wetlands Nature Preserve. Additionally, Broberg Marsh Nature Preserve is also located within Lakewood Forest Preserve and was granted preliminary approval for dedication by the INPC on September 15, 2020. If approved at the 237<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting, it will add 362 acres. Together, these two dedications (Broberg Marsh and Schreiber Lake Bog) will increase the amount of State protected land within Lakewood Forest Preserve from 600 acres to 1,317 acres, a 119% increase.

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff and staff of the Lake County Forest Preserve District recommended dedication of 355.4 acres of the Lakewood Forest Preserve as the Schreiber Lake Bog Nature Preserve.

Commissioner DauBach asked how much of the Millennium trail is open for horseback riding?

Jim Anderson stated that the entire site is open for horseback riding. This is an existing use that they currently have, and they would like to maintain the right to have it.

Commissioner DauBach asked Kelly Neal or Valerie Njapa if this particular use needs to be specified for the Nature Preserve.

Kelly Neal stated it should be listed as a reserve right in the proposal and that makes it easier to continue to allow it in the management schedule. Other sites have included horseback riding trails within the nature preserve boundaries.

Commissioner DauBach asked how heavy equestrian use on the site is.

Jim Anderson said he does not have exact numbers. However, there is a strong contingent of horse riders but it's not a use that is overwhelming. We have had no issues of people going off the trail. There has been intense communication with the horse community and where they are allowed to go and what they need to do. This community is very good at self-policing themselves and other people who are using the trail system. Also, the people using the trails for biking, hiking and horseback riders know how special these trails are and have a deep understanding of that.

Commissioner DauBach stated that they are fortunate to have a well-behaved public.

Commissioner Thomas asked if there were any water quality issues with the horse use. He noticed one of the trails comes pretty close to a pond.

It was moved by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Schreiber Lake Bog as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2515)

237-12) **McHenry Co. – Irish Oaks Savanna Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County proposed to dedicate approximately 40 acres as the Irish Oaks Savanna Nature Preserve. The proposed nature preserve includes a portion of the Harvard Savanna Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (#1268) site. The qualifying feature is a Grade C dry-mesic savanna, best of kind within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. Presently, the Irish Oaks Savanna INAI site provides habitat for seven bird species listed as Species in Greatest Need of Conservation in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan and one bird species on the watch list. This list is likely to grow over the next few years since the property was acquired only a few years ago, and the savanna and associated wetlands are being restored. The Irish Oaks Savanna is unique today as it represents one of the best remaining examples of the oak savanna natural communities that once existed within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. While the site suffers from a proliferation of trees and other associated woody vegetation, its relatively limited land conversion history makes this preserve a remarkable opportunity for restoration that will benefit many species of wildlife. Volunteers and staff of The Land Conservancy



of McHenry County have already cleared woody vegetation on approximately half of the site. Once fully restored, Irish Oaks Savanna Nature Preserve will be a fine example of the oak savanna and associated wetlands that once dominated this landscape.

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff recommended preliminary approval for dedication of the Irish Oaks Savanna Nature Preserve.

It was moved by Commissioner DauBach, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Irish Oaks Savanna as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the Agenda for the 237<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2516)

237-13) **Winnebago Co. – Burr Oak Valley Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Natural Land Institute proposed to dedicate approximately 98.93 acres as the Burr Oak Valley Nature Preserve. This proposed nature preserve lies within the Winnebago Drift Section of the Eastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois. The qualifying features for dedication as a nature preserve are suitable habitat for four state-listed plant species and one federally listed insect. A Grade C dry dolomite prairie is also a significant feature. The dolomite prairie has been nominated for inclusion on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) as a Category I, best of its kind and as a Category II, for presence of state-listed species. Burr Oak Valley is also documented to provide habitat for 13 faunal species listed in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) as Species in Greatest Need of Conservation (SGNC), as well as three state-threatened plants. One state-endangered plant has been successfully re-introduced to the site. The state-endangered and federally endangered rusty-patched bumble bee was documented on-site in 2018. The site is used by a variety of bird species, 13 of which are listed in the IWAP as SGNC. Of these 13 species, nine are documented to actively breed on site. Formal surveys for butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies reveal a high diversity of insect fauna with some species being rare and habitat specific.

Staff of the NLI and INPC recommended dedication of 98.93 acres as the Burr Oak Valley Nature Preserve.

Commissioner McClain commented that the presentation was very thorough and thanked Zac Grycan for his efforts.

Commissioner Ruffner thanked Steve, Melissa, Zac and others on the great work they are doing.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Mogergerman, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Burr Oak Valley as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the Agenda for the 237<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2517)

237-14) **Bureau Co. – Daisy Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

The proposed Daisy Hill Prairie Nature Preserve was granted preliminary approval for dedication at the 236<sup>th</sup> meeting of the INPC held on September 15, 2020 (Resolution 2498). The proposed preserve, lying within the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois, consists of a very small, but very rare glacial drift hill prairie natural community. This natural community was evaluated in 2010 and later added to the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI #1824) as a Category I site for presence of Grade B and C glacial drift hill prairie natural communities. This relict natural area is currently owned by two adjacent landowners: Hungry World Farm and the Uher family. This request now is for final approval of the Hungry World Farm portion of the nature preserve proposal. If approved, the Daisy Hill Prairie Nature Preserve will be 1.77 acres (0.563 nature preserve, and 1.211 nature preserve buffer). INPC staff will continue to work with the Uher family to secure protection of the remaining unprotected portion of the proposed nature preserve.

The staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and Illinois Department of Natural Resources recommended dedication of approximately 1.77 acres owned by Hungry World Farm as the Daisy Hill Prairie Nature Preserve. Dedication of this relict prairie will provide the best means available to ensure this INAI site is protected and survives long into the future.

Commissioner Ruffner asked if the fact that we are doing only one portion changes anything with the original preliminary approval from the 236<sup>th</sup> meeting.

John Nelson stated this was anticipated and if you look back at the proposal, it was for the portion owned by Hungry World Farms to be dedicated as the Daisy Hill Nature Preserve. If the southern portion was brought forward by Bill and his wife that would be an addition to Daisy Hill Prairie NP. Although they were in one proposal, they were considered separately.

Commissioner Covington asked given the small size of this property, was any consideration given to dedicating the whole thing as a nature preserve.

John Nelson stated absolutely, but we are dealing with two different landowners and will need more time to get the second landowner as these are privately owned.

Commissioner Covington explained he was referring to the property owned by Hungry World Farm. Part of it is being dedicated as a nature preserve buffer and part as a nature preserve. If it were a larger piece of land Commissioner Covington said he could see differentiating between the two if it were a larger property, but it seems almost an unnecessary complication to have two different classifications for such a small property.

John Nelson explained that the buffer allows for more use and it protects land that normally wouldn't qualify. John said he believes the buffer area to the North, outside of the INAI, is a good designation. John said he doesn't think buffer is used enough in the nature preserve system as exemplified in the last presentation.

Cal Zehr, President of Hungry World Farms, thanked the Commission for approving Daisy Hill Prairie Nature Preserve as they consider it a gem, although not huge, it is a gem. Mr. Zehr said they intend to show it off as people come to visit the farm and also work at upgrading it. Mr.

Zehr thanked Russ and John for their input and the Board for their work and approval.

Dennis Zehr thanked the Commission and said he looks forward to working to create a management plan in the future. Mr. Zehr also thanked John Nelson, as he thoroughly enjoyed working with him and is very appreciative of his help along the way. Mr. Zehr thanked everyone for the great work being done in the state of Illinois to preserve biodiversity in our many natural areas.

It was moved by Commissioner Derby-Lewis, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Daisy Hill Prairie as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 14 of the Agenda for the 237<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2518)

237-15) **Champaign Co. – Charlotte and Dan Brady Woods Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

The proposed Charlotte and Dan Brady Woods Nature Preserve (NP) is a ~20-acre property located along the Sangamon River about 4.5 miles southwest of the Village of Mahomet in Champaign County, lying within the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois. The proposed nature preserve was granted preliminary approval for dedication at the 236<sup>th</sup> meeting of the INPC held on September 15, 2020 (Resolution 2499). It protects a biologically diverse stretch of the Sangamon River and associated forest. In 2014, the land was gifted to the Land Conservation Foundation (LCF), a not-for-profit, charitable conservation organization and land trust, by Charlotte and Dan Brady of Seymour, Illinois for protection and conservation purposes. The property is adjacent to the Piatt County Forest Preserve District's 60-acre Sangamon River Park. These sites are part of a growing network of protected land along the Sangamon River corridor in Champaign and Piatt Counties. Charlotte and Dan Brady Woods qualifies as a nature preserve because it protects both sides of a ~900-foot reach of the Sangamon River. The Sangamon River, for the river's entire length in Piatt and Champaign counties, is recognized by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI #1449) for outstanding aquatic resources, especially fresh-water mussels. This stretch of the Sangamon River provides important habitat for a relatively high diversity of mussels and state listed species including the state threatened mussels slippershell (*Alasmidonta viridis*) and spike (*Elliptio dialata*) and state endangered salamander mussel (*Simpsonaias ambigua*). There are over a dozen species of mussels recorded from this stretch of river. This is noteworthy as freshwater mussels are considered to be the most endangered group of species in North America. This stretch of the Sangamon River also protects habitat for populations of the state threatened mudpuppy (*Necturus maculosus*), an aquatic salamander that occurs in the vicinity of the preserve. Charlotte and Dan Brady Woods also protects bottomland forest that contributes to the high natural quality of the river by buffering the channel and reducing runoff and sediments entering the river. It also supports a small great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*) rookery. This site is one of 19 protected natural areas that, when taken together, preserve over 17 miles of the Sangamon River and over 5075 acres of forest and other natural land along the Sangamon River corridor in Piatt and Champaign counties.

It was moved by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Charlotte and Dan Brady Woods as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 15 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2519)

237-16) **Lake Co. – Broberg Marsh Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

The Lake County Forest Preserve District proposed to dedicate 362 acres of the 2835.1-acre Lakewood Forest Preserve as the Broberg Marsh Nature Preserve. The proposed nature preserve, lying within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois, was granted preliminary approval for dedication at the 236<sup>th</sup> meeting of the INPC held on September 15, 2020 (Resolution 2500). There are two existing nature preserves located within Lakewood Forest Preserve: Wauconda Bog Nature Preserve, consisting of approximately 68 acres, dedicated in 1970; and McLean Woods and Wetlands Nature Preserve with approximately 532 acres of protected land, dedicated in 2012. The proposed Broberg Marsh Nature Preserve would increase the amount of State protected land within Lakewood Forest Preserve from 600 acres to 962 acres. Broberg Marsh is recognized on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory as part of the Wauconda Bog (INAI Site # 1002). It is listed on the INAI as a Category I, II, and III site. The proposed Broberg Marsh Nature Preserve includes a mosaic of Grade B/C freshwater marsh and community reconstructions of savanna, wetland, and prairie. Broberg Marsh and associated wetlands are known to support a large assemblage of native wetland birds, one of the largest in Lake County. Previous investigations have even led researchers to comment that Broberg Marsh is one of the highest quality wetland bird habitats in Northeastern Illinois.

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff and staff of the Lake County Forest Preserve District recommended dedication of 362 acres of the Lakewood Forest Preserve as the Broberg Marsh Nature Preserve.

Commissioner Dann asked Jim if they have had success with the yellow-headed blackbirds at Broberg.

Jim Anderson stated the yellow-headed blackbirds have been recorded at Broberg and they come and go. The most difficult problem right now is that LCFPD does not control the outlet of the marsh. Jim said they have been trying to negotiate with the landowner to see if they can get control of it. A lot of it depends on annual rainfall and whether we get a lot of flooding during the spring. The last three Mays there has been record rainfall, beating the preceding May. High water impacts the marsh and the habitat there. So, while the yellow-headed blackbird hasn't been seen recently, when the heavy marsh is back, they will come back also.

Commissioner DauBach commented that Broberg is a wonderful site with tremendous work being done. However, because of the snowmobile use, Commissioner DauBach would be thrilled to approve this as a land and water reserve where such usage would follow the Natural Areas Preservation Act. Snowmobiles or motorized vehicles are specifically excluded for recreational purposes on nature preserve and nature preserve buffers. Commissioner DauBach stated her objection to such uses, but agrees it is a wonderful site.

It was moved by Commissioner Ruffner, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Broberg Marsh as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 16 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2520)

23-17) **Lake Co. – Illinois Beach Rubble Ridge - Shoreline Protection Pilot Project**

Illinois Beach is a 3000-acre state park that supports the best remaining coastal wetlands, dune, prairie, and savanna habitats in Illinois. It is a critical habitat for threatened/endangered plants and animals including four federal, and 60 state-listed species. Coastal erosion at the park has been a long-standing issue due to a variety of factors. Erosion at the state park has accelerated greatly, especially in the northern portions over the last decade, resulting in a significant loss of nature preserve acreage that includes very high-quality coastal wetlands and other habitats. The current high lake levels are exacerbating the erosion rate and consequently, habitat loss. IDNR's Coastal Management Program is working to develop more sustainable strategies to manage shoreline erosion. The proposed project was designed as a pilot or demonstration project to test a different type of shoreline protection that is a lower-cost and lower-impact intervention than large onshore or offshore breakwaters. It is an opportunity to field test a lab-developed design that, if successful, will provide a lower cost, lower maintenance method of shoreline protection for other areas within and outside of Illinois Beach State Park. This project should not negatively affect terrestrial or aquatic habitats and instead is expected to be beneficial for both habitat types. The concept of this intervention is to create an environment that would slow but not stop erosion, sand movement, and wave energy. The field condition is less reliant on the exact calibration of one particular feature, like an emergent breakwater to stop wave energy, and instead gradually allows the wave energy to be dissipated over a longer distance. This creates a more robust feature that works at varying storm wave angles, and at differing water levels. This project, and projects like it, are needed to protect a high-quality, critically rare panne wetland and other shoreline habitat from rapid, ongoing erosion that will result in complete loss of these rare habitats without intervention. The IDNR Coastal Management Program is requesting approval to construct this pilot structure project within the historic boundary of the North Dunes Nature Preserve in an effort to protect nature preserve land and habitats.

Commissioner Stone asked if either project has done hydrological modeling of the interaction of both projects together at either the preferred or alternative location.

Diane Tecic stated she believes that would be the large shoreline stabilization project. Diane explained that they had been working on their pilot project first and thought that would get constructed before the breakwater. It was definitely included in the physical modeling, but Laura Verden can address that. Diane explained that the concern for her is if the project is able to go in a preferred location in June or July of this year, then they can start monitoring right away, which will be just under the pilot structure, which is great. But what is not known is if it's going to be another year or year and a half which will directly affect the project. That is why moving it further South is being considered.

Randy Heidorn explained that he is very familiar with this and shared that in the beginning there were portions of the bottom of Lake Michigan still within the preserve. The service water may not have been, but the bottom certainly was. Randy said it is very important that we consider what we

are looking at when we look at dynamic systems; there is always going to be a fluctuation of where the land changes to water or is adjacent to water surfaces and any body of water. Randy continued to say it is critical in terms of protection status to maintain those and always loop in the Commission to make those kinds of decisions.

Commissioner Dann pointed out that what is happening now is due to climate change and that is hardly a natural process, it is manmade, and he does not believe that will reverse as it's not the same thing.

Commissioner Thomas shared that he is in favor of this proposal for two reasons. First, it looks like a good strategy to help protect some of the natural vegetation and land that we have from further erosion; and second, it is actually going to provide some habitat for fish. The proposal will actually create some habitat along there as well as maintain some of the sediment that is always on the move.

Commissioner DauBach commented that it was a very well put together proposal. It seems to be a close mimicry of natural processes as we now understand them. She was also extremely impressed with the monitoring program that is designed into this as well as the partnerships. Commissioner DauBach also noted that included in the proposal are a number of emails for internal IDNR coordination and they all seem to say several years of monitoring will help develop what needs to be done. Commissioner DauBach continued to say she is disappointed that the monitoring is seemingly endangered, and she is very concerned because the results of the pilot program could be game changing for the entire coastline erosion problem.

Diane Tecic thanked Commissioner DauBach for her comments and said they are continuing to see erosion all around the lake and monitoring is critical. The project was meant to go in last year but was delayed due to COVID. Monitoring integrity is critical in this project and there is concern that the Great Lakes Restoration initiative would potentially pull funding for 5 years of monitoring.

Fran Harty made a point regarding the boundary. He explained that we should hold the opinion that the nature preserve boundary goes out into the water. The reason Mr. Harty says that is because our state boundaries have areas that cross rivers and lakes and we should hold that same opinion unless proven otherwise. Another example would be if we had a marsh and we allow water, climate change or not, and it changes it to a lake, we still own it. Mr. Harty feels that is something to look at seriously because at some point, as Dave Thomas pointed out, if the water recedes and we have a big sand trap that is full of endangered birds, we want to be the ones who decide what activities go on or not.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that she is very excited to see this kind of approach to climate adaption and agrees that the robust monitoring is key. We have to be able to do this to assess whether or not there are benefits to this kind of hybrid approach that can help to inform other efforts for shore protection. Commissioner Derby Lewis continued to say she doesn't feel it will be a one-off type of situation where we have things that dynamically move in and out of boundaries of our INPC sites. It is important to think it through as we are now because it is such a really visible project. It's such a well-known and well-loved site. This is a great opportunity for outreach and education both for local community but also for visitors, who come there to understand climate change, and I do think it is climate change that's exacerbating existing threats to this site in real time, and why it's so important to have these kind of interventions as was mentioned earlier. Changes like water levels throughout geological history. The frequency and the variability of these changes that are occurring

now is something that is predicted by and coming to bear in truth in real time with a change in our climate. Commissioner Derby Lewis asked if there was any kind of outreach or signage efforts whether in the construction phase or the kind of roll out phase of this work at this site.

Diane Tecic pointed out a small correction. She explained that the ridges are underwater and unless water levels drop dramatically you would not necessarily see that.

Commissioner Derby Lewis stated she was referring to the production of this design. There will be a lot there in the production of it. People will wonder what's going on and that's what she meant about the visibility because so many people go to this site.

Diane Tecic agreed and said this was discussed early on, but with COVID and the delays, they haven't gotten back to it.

Kelly Neal shared that the resolution should include the staff recommendations that were provided by staff. Also, on the last page, the staff recommendations should be included. The recommendations include that as plans are finalized, all IDNR and commission staff are involved and approve the final plans; best management practices to be followed; access should be from the water, unless all staff agree that it should be from land; construction activity should not occur during breeding bird season, etc.

Diane Tecic asked for a copy of the staff recommendations. Kelly Neal said she will make sure she gets a copy.

Commissioner DauBach stated that recommendations should have also included five years of follow-up monitoring. In this case, we need to add a caveat to that because the monitoring is essentially an endangered part of what would be considered an excellent proposal.

Commissioner Thomas suggested that they approve for the project to go ahead and part of that going ahead will be negotiating or being in discussion with IDNR to consider and implement various recommendations coming from the agency. Commissioner Thomas said he is not sure that all the details that probably need to go in there can be done in this motion. However, he does agree with Pen that monitoring for several years is an important part of that.

Commissioner DauBach agreed but was also concerned about putting in requirements that would be difficult to meet.

Commissioner Covington asked Commissioner DauBach to restate what she said in the form of a motion.

Commissioner DauBach moved for project approval with the INPC staff recommendations, but also recognition that a follow-on proposal and construction may cause the violation of some of our requirements. In other words, our own requirements may be violated by further IDNR coordinated activities.

Diane Tecic stated that the group has yet to hear the presentation for the large breakwater project. She suggested listening to that presentation and then make a determination on how to move forward.

Diane mentioned that Laura Verden may be able to share some options regarding the challenges with this project.

Commissioner Ruffner stated that in his opinion the item that is being discussed now pales in comparison to the scale of the issue around the Great Lakes. He shared that he sees the same type of erosion in Wisconsin, Michigan, and all over. When you design a pilot project, you have 4 or 5 sites and no matter where you pick the preliminary or the alternate site, it's going to be washed out by these larger breakwaters. Commissioner Ruffner explained that it's hard to believe that we have two counter proposals on the same agenda.

Commissioner Derby Lewis suggested the group move on to Item 18 since they are closely related and then come back and consider them both.

Commissioner DauBach moved for approval of Item 17 with an additional requirement that if monitoring is disturbed or impeded by the CBD Project, that the shoreline stabilization project take responsibility for that impediment.

It was moved by Commissioner DauBach, seconded by Commissioner McClain, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval of the Shoreline Protection Pilot Project, for Illinois Beach Rubble Ridge, as described in the proposal presented under Item 17 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2521)

237-18) **Lake Co. – Illinois Beach and North Dunes Nature Preserve - Shoreline Stabilization Project**

The Illinois Beach State Park (encompassing North Dunes NP and Illinois Beach NP) lakeshore has experienced unprecedented shoreline erosion, far exceeding rates that have occurred since Illinois Beach was dedicated as the state's first nature preserve in 1964. Shoreline losses have accelerated from 0.5 to 1.2 feet per year, to over 65 feet per year. The IDNR has at times utilized sand nourishment as a method to reduce the effects of lakeshore erosion. Those efforts are unsustainable. Historically high lake levels, together with reduced sand movement in the littoral zone due to armored shorelines further north, have affected the entirety of the Illinois Beach State Park lakeshore. Erosion has resulted in significant impacts to infrastructure (trails, roadways, utility services) and the loss of irreplaceable ecosystems. The over six-mile length of shoreline at Illinois Beach represents the only remnants of the beach ridge plain ecosystem. As the shoreline continues to recede, globally rare panne wetlands, foredunes, sand prairies, sedge meadows and other natural communities are lost, and with them the plants and animals they support. Not only are shorelines receding, but protective dunes have been over washed in storm surges, burying rare natural communities behind them beneath feet of sand.

The IDNR and the Illinois Capital Development Board are requesting INPC approval to construct and maintain a system of protective structures; offshore, submerged and emergent breakwaters; shore attached revetments; and beach nourishment areas. This construction is intended as a one-time effort. Proposed submerged/emergent and shore attached structures will be located within the boundaries of the North Dunes NP. The offshore revetments will be placed in locations that at the time of dedication, represented high quality natural communities and supported a wide diversity of



state-listed species. Since the time of dedication, however, over 112 acres of the nature preserve have been eroded into Lake Michigan and those natural features have been lost. Therefore, construction will be in locations that currently no longer represent the features of the preserve that had been recognized through dedication. The intended consequences of the project are to protect the remaining high-quality natural communities of the Illinois Dunes North INAI site and the North Dunes NP. The design of these structures is anticipated to not only protect existing shoreline and the Lake Plain ecosystem, but to hopefully allow for the accumulation of sand and the recovery of near shore natural features such as beach and foredune communities. Structures are not planned for construction within the dedicated Illinois Beach NP; however, proposed construction of nearshore and attached revetments will occur within the Illinois Beach INAI and immediately north of the NP. Consideration for impacts to the shoreline downdrift (south) are being evaluated in current modelling efforts. It is well known that erosion rates are accelerated south of hardened shoreline features. Modelling is evaluating the angle and length of the breakwater that is needed to ensure there will be no changes in erosional forces and subsequent impacts to Illinois Beach NP.

Commissioner Covington asked Laura if this was informational or are you asking for a decision of some kind.

Laura Verden and Kelly Neal both answered they are looking for approval of this project.

Commissioner Covington asked what the overall coordination of the two projects is. Is there a central command for both projects?

Laura Verden stated their project originated through their Capital Projects Group. Diane Tecic's project is through the Coastal Group. We are different divisions within IDNR.

Commissioner Covington asked if at some point the two groups will meet within the IDNR.

Laura Verden explained that they are funded differently. Laura's project is funded by the Capital Development Board and Diane Tecic's project is funded generally with Federal funding and grants, which is why there is the 5-year monitoring requirement.

Diane Tecic explained that the Coastal Program paid for some of the initial project work on the breakwater project. Through project team meetings, the Smith Group, with the breakwater project, connected with Diane's design team. So basically it is two projects, but they have been trying to coordinate between the two.

Laura Verden stated that the consultants finalized their work on December 18, 2020. The wave tank facility that they were at was in England and they were finally able to get back under COVID protocols, so we just heard back so this is very recent information that is included in this presentation.

Commissioner DauBach asked what the Corps of Engineers coordination has been with this project.

Laura Verden stated the Corps would be engaged through the CDB and the consultants. They had a sit-down meeting with the Chicago district and the Corps was at the kick off for this project. The Corps is definitely in support of the project as well as OWR and they would be part of the joint application that goes in. The permitting piece has not been sent in pending this final engineering design. So our regulatory folks have been a part of the process along the way.

Commissioner Covington asked if there is a system in place where there is periodic or regular coordination on an on-going basis or is it whatever happens happens.

Diane Tecic said she has been attending monthly meetings for the large breakwater project and receives updates and she gives them updates on their project.

Commissioner Ruffner shared that he really likes the scope and scale of the second project. He feels it is appropriate for how to anchor this system, which we aren't going to be able to do anyway as we all know about our control of nature. He also likes the monitoring of the first project. Commissioner Ruffner continued by saying he feels the projects should be sent back to IDNR and figure out a way to put the two scopes of work together so we can move forward on just one of these projects.

Commissioner Thomas stated he thought the whole issue was that the DNR project was dependent on the first one and the one in the models were based on what Diane presented. Commissioner Thomas feels both projects need approved with the contingency that they coordinate together. A lot of experts and work have gone into this and he doesn't see a judgement call being made on how we like this part, or we like that part of the projects.

Commissioner DauBach said if the pilot project and it's monitoring are done, it might obviate the need for at least the expansiveness, or portions of the CDB project in that the mimicry of natural processes, which seems to be a bigger part of the pilot project, that might allow for a better overall erosion control process a little bit further down the line.

Diane Tecic responded saying while they were planning their pilot project, they hoped to be gathering data to inform the larger project. It is truly amazing the speed with which they are moving forward, towards construction for such a large project and not forgetting the year long delay due to COVID. Diane feels there is really not going to be time to complete the pilot project and it's monitoring. She also added that cancelling one project and adding the monitoring would negate the commitment that she made with Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Diane continued saying they have been working on this for a number of years and my guess is that Laura would say the same. They have put a lot into this including \$40M dollars in capital money. She said they never thought that the projects would overlap, but this just came up within the last couple of weeks and there hasn't been enough time to disambiguate the two projects.

Randy Heidorn stated that both projects are huge opportunities and recommends to the Commission that they go ahead and approve the projects with the caveat of coordination together. Randy said this is a great opportunity to get something off the ground, but if we keep pushing it off in the distance, we won't have a lot of these areas left as they are going fast.

Commissioner Covington asked if there was a motion regarding both projects.

Commissioner Stone said that she thinks the projects have to be approved separately. She would like to see approval of both. Regarding the larger capital project, Commissioner Stone agreed that the scope and speed of the erosion is so great and the fact that DNR has been trying to get money for this project for decades, that she would make a motion to approve the capital project with a suggestion, that if possible, they go to GLRI for additional funds for monitoring. Commissioner

Stone feels there will be more federal funds available in the current administration for that type of thing. Also, this is a suggestion, not a condition. She then asked to move for approval.

Commissioner Covington asked if Commissioner Stone's motion includes the conditions that were attached to the first project, Item 17.

Commissioner Stone's suggestion would be that those conditions be followed to the greatest extent possible.

Kelly Neal pointed out that there are separate staff recommendations for this project with similar conditions, but a little bit more detail because it is a larger project.

Commissioner Stone moved approval of Item 18, the shoreline stabilization project, including INPC staff recommendations and the suggestion that additional funds be sought from GLRI or other sources to expand the monitoring that everyone liked in Item 17.

It was moved by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Derby Lewis, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval of the Large Capital Shoreline Stabilization Project at Illinois Beach and North Dunes Nature Preserves, as described in the proposal presented under Item 18 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

(Resolution 2522)

237-19) **LaSalle Co. – Matthiessen Dells Nature Preserve, Road and Trail Improvements, Update & Approval**

Matthiessen Dells NP is an 86-acre nature preserve, and part of the 160-acre Matthiessen Dells INAI site (INAI #0079). The nature preserve is located within Matthiessen State Park, a few miles away from companion site Starved Rock State Park, the busiest park in the state (and one of the busiest state parks in the nation). Annual attendance numbers of Starved Rock frequently exceed 2.5 million visitors per year. Matthiessen State Park has become a "spillover" site where visitors are directed when Starved Rock reaches capacity. Matthiessen State Park receives approximately 450,000 visitors per year. When the official visitor parking lot at Matthiessen is at capacity, a second, overflow parking area east of the nature preserve is used. This creates the need for visitors to access the site once their vehicles have been parked. For safety reasons, pedestrians have been guided to walk on a dirt trail alongside and south of the Dells Access Road, which is within the nature preserve. While the minimally developed foot trail has long been used by the public, it was never designed to carry the amount of foot traffic that it currently receives. The additional pedestrian use is creating maintenance issues within the nature preserve and is fragmenting the forest.

The Dells Access Road, which hasn't received significant maintenance in 35 years, is in extreme disrepair. Asphalt is deteriorating, and culverts need to be appropriately sized and positioned to minimize erosion. While it is possible to perform the necessary road improvements and route pedestrian traffic outside of the nature preserve boundaries (on the north side of the road), this option was dismissed early. The north side of the road, while not dedicated as a nature preserve, is also part of the INAI site. The north side of the road supports larger oaks, high quality understory vegetation, and has more challenging topography to work around. IDNR and INPC staff agreed it is more fitting to take a global approach to

protect the resources on site to accommodate safe public access by using natural resources (instead of strict nature preserve boundaries) to guide the necessary maintenance and construction. This proposal will align the pedestrian trail immediately adjacent to and south of the road, thus requiring additional area to be used within the nature preserve. It will avoid high-quality understory vegetation, avoid steep topography, and result in the abandonment of the deteriorating dirt path within the nature preserve. IDNR's approach to this situation is supported by INPC staff. While equipment access, minimal structural features, and vegetation maintenance is proposed to occur on the very northern edge of the nature preserve, it is deemed to be the best option for minimizing long-term impact to the natural resources within the greater Matthiessen Dells INAI site.

Donnie Dann stated that if he is understanding the proposal, the new road will occupy less of the nature preserve.

Michael Bauling responded no it won't because they are trying to protect the quality habitat and plant life on the opposite side of the nature preserve which is currently an INAI site. By moving the road to the South, we will be taking more of the nature preserve than it currently does now. However, the quality of plant life and species in this area is not good at all as it sustained a lot of damage from the storm. The better quality is on the other side and that is why we propose moving the road.

Kim Roman stated that after meeting with Russ, it made sense to move the road closer into the nature preserve to minimize damage to the INAI site to the north, where there are mature quality oaks, but there is also trickier topography to work with. Kim continued saying it makes sense from a global perspective, looking at the whole picture, the whole site, to have the impacts in the degraded nature preserve area.

Donnie Dann asked if the INAI site to the north has the potential for nature preserve or land and water reserve protection in the future.

Kim Roman said yes, they are hoping to bring to the Commission within the next year a proposed nature preserve addition of the INAI site.

Donnie Dann said so the bottom line is an improvement to our overall system.

Kim Roman said yes. People need safe roads and safe places to walk and everyone is trying to do the right thing while taking everyone's needs in to account.

Michael Bauling shared that the road is not as wide as what IDOT would normally require. It is a park road and they have been able to reduce the width. Typically, IDOT has 12-foot roads, but we are looking at 10 or 11 feet, depending on IDOT's approval. If allowed, this will reduce the effect on the existing nature preserve site.

Kelly Neal shared that this should also have the requirements of the staff opinion included in the resolution and this was agreed to by all.

It was moved by Commissioner Ruffner, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval of Road and Trail Improvements at Matthiessen Dells Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 19 of the Agenda for the 237th Meeting.

**237-20 Herbicide Drift Monitoring and Reporting of Natural Areas in Illinois**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) developed an online tool in the spring of 2018 to provide locations of sensitive natural resources in Illinois to landowners, producers, and chemical applicators to help ensure compliance with herbicide application. In response to reports of herbicide drift and associated off-target injuries to natural areas, IDNR began working with the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) and other partner organizations on a monitoring and reporting program to assist IDOA with reports of suspected herbicide damage to trees and other plants. The IDNR continued monitoring and reporting efforts through the 2019 and 2020 growing seasons and is currently preparing for the 2021 growing season. Efforts have included training for staff, monitoring IDNR-owned or managed sites, reporting suspected injuries to trees and other plants using IDNR's online form, and submitting the reports to IDOA for further investigation. Many of the sites include dedicated nature preserves or registered land and water reserves where injuries have been documented year after year, raising concern for the long-term health of these protected high-quality natural areas.

Chris Young addressed the group regarding efforts to learn more about off-target herbicide damage surveillance. He shared that Debbie Newman has been a very passionate advocate for this issue and has worked diligently and pushed hard to address this. Chris then shared a PowerPoint, at Debbie's request, regarding background information of off-target herbicide injury.

Debbie Newman addressed the group and said the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission are collaborating together to try to improve and focus efforts in the area of off-target herbicide damage, and now there is a sub-group that is addressing some specific aspects of how to improve what is being done with this monitoring program. As Chris Young mentioned, they are looking at trying to up-grade and strengthen protocols. Also, possibly making some changes and tweaks to the form that is being submitted from the field. Debbie also said they are looking into the possibility of partnering with the University of Illinois, Illinois Natural History Survey or possibly another entity to help with protocols. They would love to find universities within the state that would be willing and interested in doing the research. There are thousands of research questions, which would help in determining potential outcomes of herbicide damage to trees in forest areas. Debbie said some staff have had a couple of trainings, both in the classroom, and in the field and other staff have not had much at all. They want to improve on that and get more people out in the field to attend trainings so that everyone is on the same page in terms of what they are looking for in the field. There are some meetings coming up with the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) to improve communication and a request has been made for IDOA to include more information in their letters when they respond to the findings reports that have been submitted. More targeted surveillance is being done for select dedicated and registered sites by ramping up monitoring in a smaller geographic area and by doing more intensive surveillance throughout the season by going out to sites multiple times and possibly doing leaf tissue sampling, but this will all depend on funding.

Commissioner DauBach shared that she lives in a farming community, has had herbicide operator licenses and is familiar with IDOA and their pesticide procedures. She feels we cannot define the problem we are currently dealing with as IDOA currently does. It is more like an apples to oranges scenario and IDOA has set up their entire pesticide program to look at what we would call particle drift and it ends up with, well the farmer made a mistake, or the weather turned, because there has actually been particles of pesticide that have fallen on plants either during or right after application. Commissioner DauBach continued by saying what seems to be going on with the tree damage we are seeing is vapor drift, which can occur days after application and miles away from the target site. Maybe we need partners, in addition to IDOA, to

help us grapple with what could be and probably will be not just this generations of chemicals, but all new generations of chemicals.

Commissioner McClain commented that he is happy to see this started, but if possible, he would like to see herbaceous plants included in this. He believes that herbicide drift over the last several decades has been the partial reason why so many wildflowers have disappeared from the roadsides and other places. So this is not just a forestry issue but much more than that. A broad leaf plant could get hit by an herbicide and die and be gone by the time someone might come to an area looking. If some herbaceous broad leaf plants could be identified to use as indicators, he would encourage the inclusion of those as he believes it would be quite meaningful. Commissioner McClain then thanked Chris Young and Debbie Newman for their efforts.

Chris Young shared that they just had this discussion yesterday. He explained that there are some prairie plants that have reacted to the pesticides, one of them being Rosinweed. Chris said Commissioner McClain is right about the loss of wildflowers and pollinator insects. The fact that many of the conservation programs, where the public is funding these efforts to set land aside and plant prairies or other land cover, it would behoove us to also look at those areas and protect them and Chris said he believes that is on the horizon for ORC. However, right now we are trying to get a handle on the problem on how to identify and confirm that this is the issue and the IDOA route is one aspect and one route we have to take.

Debbie Newman shared that Commissioner McClain made a very good point. Since we have seen damage, especially when you are talking about narrow railroad prairies and some of these cemetery prairies and others that have been bordered by cropfields. What has prompted efforts recently is that we have seen herbaceous species associated with these symptoms at some of our sites, but the predominant symptoms were seen on trees and shrubs. These were found sometimes 2-3 miles away from the nearest agricultural field which indicates potential vapor drift as described by the University of Missouri, University of Tennessee and other academic institutions that are studying this. Debbie said she agrees with Commissioner McClain and Chris Young that we need to be looking for all types of damage to all of our vegetation.

### **Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)**

David Monk shared that the Department of Transportation has been doing a good job with roadside management and he would like that to be encouraged. It has to do with some of the workforce being given other training and other jobs. He continued to say that between Rantoul and Paxton is super wide because of an old road and interurban trail. He shared that Stephanie Dobbs has been in charge and they have been mowing, but the trees are mostly Russian olives and Mr. Monk feels they could use some attention. He also encourages railroad lines that have trails, to have narrower trails so that there is soil and species on either side.

#### 237-22) **Other Business**

None

#### 237-23) **Adjournment**

Commissioner Thomas motioned to adjourn. It was seconded by Commissioner Stone and approved.

The INPC 237<sup>th</sup> Meeting adjourned at 3:58pm