

## ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

Special Meeting Minutes

January 23, 2023

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way

Springfield, IL 62702

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) held a Special Meeting on Monday, January 23, 2023, at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Lake Level Conference Rooms, in Springfield, Illinois.

INPC Executive Director Todd Strole explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the IDNR with a specific focus on the areas of most interest to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. He noted that Carey Mayer, Office Director for Realty and Capital Planning, was on the agenda but unable to attend.

The meeting was called to order at 2:20pm.

Commissioners Present: George Covington, Dr. Pen DauBach, Dr. Abigail Derby Lewis, Radhika Miraglia, Toni Oplt, Michelle Parker, Bob Szafoni, and Dr. Dave Thomas

Commissioners Absent: Dr. Jo-Elle Mogerman

Advisors Present: Dr. Praveen Kumar

Consultants Present: Fran Harty, Dr. Jim Herkert, Joe Roth, and Kerry Leigh

Others present: John Rogner, Assistant IDNR Director; Chris Young, IDNR Office of Resource Conservation Director; Todd Strole, INPC Executive Director; Kelly Neal, Valerie Njapa, Heather McLean, Angella Moorehouse, Byron Paulsen, Debbie Newman, John Nelson, Kim Roman, John Griesbaum, Sami Childerson, Kevin Sierzaga, INPC; Ann Holtrop, IDNR Division of Natural Heritage (DNH) Chief; Jenny Skufca, Brian Metzke, Heather Osborn, IDNR DNH; Paula Martel, IDNR Office of Land Management Director; Brad Hayes, Dawn Cobb, IDNR Office of Realty and Capital Planning; Amy Doll, Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Director; Cynthia Kanner, Prairie State Conservation Coalition Executive Director; Bill McClain; Jo Fessett; and Karen Witter.

**John Rogner, Assistant IDNR Director**, provided an overview of the IDNR structure and some ongoing activities using a PowerPoint presentation (attached).

Following his presentation:

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked about the difference between IDNR's Climate Action Plan and the 2020 State of Illinois Plan.

Chris Young responded that they are still editing IDNR's – but it is more focused on Department information and shows examples.

Commissioner Thomas asked about Climate Smart Resource Management.

Chris Young replied that the intent is to manage sites to be healthy and resilient, looking at the capacity of forested lands to store carbon, and regenerative agriculture focused on soil health.

**Paula Martel, Office Director for Land Management**, provided an overview of the Office of Land Management using a PowerPoint presentation (attached).

Following her presentation:

Commissioner Covington asked how conflicts on site management or activities are resolved.

Paula stated that the primary action is to abide by any Administrative Rules that apply.

Commissioner Szafoni asked about the Plan of Work process for IDNR sites.

Paula answered by indicating that all sites have a 3-year plan in place, and it is updated annually. There was period where this annual activity was halted, but it has resumed.

**Bradley Hayes, Division Manager of Ecosystems and Environment in the Office of Realty and Capital Planning**, presented an overview of the IDNR Consultation process using a PowerPoint presentation (attached).

Following his presentation:

Commissioner DauBach asked how they work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Brad explained that they work closely with the USFWS if federal species are involved but allow the federal process to be completed first.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked how either rewards or consequences are used to compel project proponents to comply with the recommendations from the Consultation process.

Commissioner DauBach indicated that a “heavy stick” is not available.

Brad confirmed that the results of the Consultation process are recommendations and cannot be enforced. However, they find that most recommendations are accepted and implemented.

John Nelson asked if other states have a similar Consultation process.

Brad indicated that many states have something similar to our Consultation process. He further indicated that accurate and current data is critical to this process.

Kerry Leigh (Consultant) suggested that more incentives should be used to encourage compliance with Consultation recommendations.

Brad indicated again that most recommendations are accepted.

Kerry Leigh asked about the status of the Administrative Rule (17-1075) governing Consultation and if incentives could be included within the rule.

Brad indicated that Administrative Rule 1075 governs the process and is not the place to incentivize the recommendations.

Commissioner Thomas stated that commercial wind projects like to note that they are in compliance with IDNR rules.

Brad agreed but said that compliance is not the same as endorsed or supported by IDNR.

Commissioner DauBach mentioned that legislation recently passed and is before the Governor that would severely limit a county's ability to regulate commercial wind projects.

Commissioner Szafoni asked if Drainage Districts are compliant with the requirement for projects to go through the consultation process.

Brad indicated that compliance by Drainage Districts is a mixed bag.

**Dawn Cobb, Cultural Resources Archeologist**, presented an overview of the work and project review process using a PowerPoint (attached).

Following her presentation:

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented on how interesting the presentation was.

Commissioner Covington asked if identification on the National Register confers anything to or requires anything of the state?

Dawn indicated that if a site is listed on the National Register, it requires additional study and/or survey work when reviewing projects and additional laws may apply to the process.

Jim Herkert (Consultant) asked Dawn how big her team is.

Dawn pointed to herself but noted that she works with Heather Miller and Logan Pappenfort as a tribal member at the Illinois State Museum on staff coordination with tribal relations. Heather is putting together a group to advise/consult proactively on these types of issues.

Cynthia Kanner (Prairie State Conservation Coalition) asked about Dawn's work with newly appointed Native American staff at the Illinois State Museum.

Dawn responded that they work closely and that the goal is always to preserve archeological features in place, but if that is not possible, then curated in the museum is the next best option.

**Jenny Skufca, Natural Areas Program Manager with the Division of Natural Heritage**, presented information on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory using a PowerPoint (attached).

Following her presentation:

With the need for an expanded vendor pool for stewardship work at INPC and INAI sites, Commissioner Derby Lewis asked about the potential of working with Tribal communities who may be interested in doing some of the work.

Jenny indicated an interest and willingness to do so, but it is not something that is currently being done.

Karen Witter noted that there are good intentions in protection of sites but there's a lack of staff capacity to address the needs of the INPC system.

Kerry Leigh asked about how we work with private landowners of INAI sites on stewardship needs.

Todd Strole pointed out that sites protected by INPC programs were eligible for contractual stewardship funding through IDNR and grants to eligible land trusts.

The final item on the agenda, Discussion of authorized uses and reserved rights for INPC protected lands: Distinction and presentation in proposals, was tabled for discussion later, but an informational handout was provided to Commissioners to familiarize themselves with the issue. Todd Strole offered to work with one or two Commissioners on the item in preparation for the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07pm.