

**ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION
TWO HUNDRED FORTY-NINTH MEETING MINUTES**

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Lake Level Conference Room
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, Il 62702

January 28, 2025

In-person meeting with WebEx option

Todd Strole, Assistant Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, provided opening remarks and welcomed members of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin attending the meeting.

He shared, “If you are in this room, you are important because you are here in support of the work of the Nature Preserves Commission. However, we have a few special guests that I would like to acknowledge today. I would like to mention that we have a few members of the Ho-Chunk Nation in our presence. They are here to witness the dedication of Casper Bluffs Nature Preserve, a portion of which will be available for re-interment actions for Tribes. This is a first for us, making it both unique and historic. They will introduce themselves as we go around the room, but we have a past President, the current Traditional Chief, and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer here. This delegation of dignitaries from the Ho-Chunk Nation is also historic and it is an honor to have you with us today. I have listened to Chloris describe the forced removal of his relatives and the repeated efforts to return, compelled by an insatiable draw of the homeland. We cannot erase the pain from the past, but we hope the actions today prove to be a positive step in the healing journey. Thanks for traveling from Wisconsin to be with us today.”

(249-1): **Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees**

Commission Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 10:06am and read the roll call.

Commissioners Present: Michelle Parker, Radhika Miraglia, Toni Oplt, Tom Clay, Adam Kessel, Chris Evans, Dr. Abigail Derby Lewis and Marcella DeMauro-Roth

Advisors Present: Dr. Joyce Hofmann

Consultants Present: Amy Doll, Bill McClain, Joe Roth, Cynthia Kanner, Randy Heidorn, John Schwegman, Kim Erndt-Pitcher, Jo Fessett, Fran Harty, George Covington, and Deb Stone

Others Present: Todd Strole; Kaleb Baker, Sami Childerson, Lorraine Foelske, John Griesbaum, Angella Moorehouse, Byron Paulsen, John Nelson, Debbie Newman, Kevin Sierzega, Kim Roman, Kelly Neal, Valerie Njapa, and Emily Taylor, INPC; Christina Feng, Taryn Bieri, Natalia Maass, Dalton Sharrow, Dawn Cobb, Ann Holtrop, Brooke Morgan, Logan Pappenfort, Heather Osborn,

Andrew Hulin, Calvin Beckmann, Paula Martel, Eric Smith, Jeff Horn, Chip O’Leary, Meredith Mahoney, Michelle Simone, Leon Hinz, and Michelle Bloomquist, IDNR; Bill Quackenbush, Clayton Winneshiek, and Chloris Lowe Jr., Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin; Jim Johannsen, Steve Barg, Hillary Holt, Deb Kelly, and Jean Matthiessen, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation; John Rogner, former Assistant Director of IDNR; Hall Healy and Jamie Arntzen, Illinois Audubon Society; Jason Shoemaker and Angelo Capparella, ParkLands Foundation; Claire Gregory, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County; Rebecca Judd, Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; Andrea Olney Larson, CCNC; Ryan London, Lake Forest Open Lands; Becky Collings, Forest Preserves of Cook County; Karen Witter, former INPC Director and Commissioner; Jill Kennay, Natural Lands Institute; Kevin Rohling, Illinois Extension Forestry; Dylan Scantena and Sunshine Thomas-Beam.

(249-2): **Adoption of Agenda**

The table under item 9 was retitled from “Current Consultants” to “Consultants Prior to the Pause at the 248th Meeting.”

Item 16 was tabled due to staff illness.

Item 21 was presented after Item 9 to respect the time of the attending Ho-Chunk Nation delegation.

Commissioner Derby Lewis made the motion to adopt the Agenda with the above-referenced changes, seconded by Commissioner Clay, and carried that the Agenda for the 249th Meeting be approved.

(249-3): **Approval of Minutes for the 248th Meeting on September 10, 2024**

It was moved by Commissioner Clay, seconded by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, and carried that the minutes for the 248th Meeting be approved.

Commission Chair Parker then read the Accomplishments Summary for the 248th Meeting:

“At the 248th Meeting of the INPC, held on September 10, 2024, at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, in Marion, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for six tracts of land totaling 658.75 acres. Four of these tracts are privately owned, one is owned by IDNR and one owned by a not-for-profit organization. The owners of the private sites donated the value of the protection agreement to the public. Four sites were protected as Land and Water Reserves: Fountain Bluff, Guiding Star Savanna, Quiver Sand Prairies and Dunes, and Sherwood’s Forest Addition to Nachusa Grasslands Land and Water Reserve. Two nature preserves sites were dedicated: Heather’s Hollow and Sandra Miller Bellrose Nature Preserve Buffer Addition. There are now 420 dedicated nature preserves with 64,011 acres; and 213 registered land and water reserves totaling 59,653 acres.

Altogether, there are 633 sites with 123,664 acres protected in the Illinois Nature Preserves System.”

A Resolution for former Commissioner George Covington (Resolution 2655) was read. See Attachment 1 for full resolution.

(249-4): **Next Meeting Dates and Locations**

250	May 13, 2025	Vermilion County Conservation District 22296-A Henning Road Danville, IL 61834
251	September 9, 2025	Byron Forest Preserve 7993 N River Rd Byron, IL 61010

(249-5): **INPC Staff Report**

REPORT

Todd Strole, Assistant Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The full INPC Report is attached as Appendix I. Todd Strole’s oral remarks are provided in Attachment 1.

(249-6): **IDNR Staff Report**

REPORT

Ann Marie Holtrop, Chief
Division of Natural Heritage

The full IDNR Report is attached as Appendix II.

(249-7): **Endangered Species Protection Board Report**

REPORT

Joyce Hofmann
Endangered Species Protection Board

The full ESPB Report is attached as Appendix III.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked a question regarding the revised list. What kind of discussions are involved and what actions are the Board members taking regarding the listing of the Monarch Butterfly.

Joyce Hofmann replied that federal listings are automatically added to the State’s list of endangered and threatened species.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented this will be a game changer and put Illinois ahead of the curve in response to this listing.

Joyce Hofmann noted there are lots of implications and the Board is communicating with IDNR on this.

(249-8): **Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Report**

REPORT

Amy Doll, Director

Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

The full report is attached as Appendix IV.

Commission Chair Parker commented on a quote Amy Doll shared about the “1st generation being the last generation,” saying it resonated with her and connects well with the topics of the day, specifically the dedication of Casper Bluff Nature Preserve and Buffer.

(249-9): **Committee of the Whole Meeting to Propose Nominations for Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Consultants**

Committee of the Whole Chair Tom Clay presented this item.

Commission Chair Parker provided context to this agenda item by summarizing the discussion at the Special Meeting the day prior. She highlighted the Commission’s dedication to a new process that will better instill reciprocity and equity in the role of Consultants.

Commissioner Clay presented the slate of candidates with the addition of six nominations: Michelle Uting, Isabella Redlinski, George Covington, John Rogner, Jordan Gurneau, and Gloria Orozco.

Commissioner Clay explained the pause of Consultants at the 248th Meeting was to provide the Commission with the opportunity to further discuss the role and process of selecting Consultants. He confirmed that the suggestion to approve the current slate of Consultants presented today until the September elections has been approved by legal counsel.

Nomination List of Consultants Prior to the Pause at the 248th Meeting and the Six Additional Nominees:

Gerald Adelman	Jill Allread	Alan Branhagen
Amy Doll	Harry Drucker	Kim Erndt-Pitcher
Jo Fessett	Fran Harty	Randy Heidorn
Dr. Jim Herkert	Cynthia Kanner	Kerry Leigh
Bill McClain	Jill Riddell	Lauren Rosenthall

Bruce Ross-Shannon	Joseph Roth	Dr. Charles Ruffner
John Schwegman	Deborah Stone	Dr. David Thomas
Dr. Jeff Walk	John White	Michelle Uting
Isabella Redlinski	George Covington	John Rogner
Jordan Gurneau	Gloria Orozco	

It was moved by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, seconded by Commissioner Miraglia, and carried that the Consultant Nominations be accepted for consideration.

(249-10): **Adams County –Additions to Allendale Spring Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Angella Moorehouse presented this item.

Dr. Anna K. (Kay) Behrensmeyer requested the approval of a 9.2-acre addition to Allendale Spring Land and Water Reserve. The existing 20-acre Allendale Spring Land and Water Reserve (LWR) owned by Edward Behrensemeyer was registered at the Commission's 231st Meeting in January 2019 (Resolution #2442). The site lies on the border of the Western Forest-Prairie Division, Galesburg Section and the Middle Mississippi Border Division, Glaciated Section, and contains moderate quality dry mesic woods and a stream that contributes to Pigeon Creek. This site is within the Mississippi River Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) identified by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) and supports two listed species of bats - Indiana bat, (*Myotis sodalist*, state and federally endangered) and Northern long-eared bat, (*Myotis septentrionalis*, state and federally threatened), and at least five Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Protection and management of this reserve will help meet the goals of two IWAP campaigns: Forest and Woodlands, and Streams. This addition is located immediately west of the current reserve and includes additional forest, grassland, and pond habitat to support the two species of bats, both of which are known to use the area for breeding and wintering, respectively. The current reserve is recognized by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI #1967) for the LWR registration (Category III) and providing suitable habitat for the two federally listed species. While not currently on the INAI as a Category II site, it could potentially qualify for having habitat supporting the two listed bats. Protection of this and a second addition (17.2 acres; owned by Kay's brother Edward Behrensmeyer) will increase the size of the registered reserve to 46.2 acres.

Commissioner Evans asked if the bat habitat is for foraging or if they have found maternity in the population.

Ray Geoff replied surveys have found reproductive females in the population. The bat population here is very high at this site, some of the best he has ever seen.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth asked if the harvest for sugar maple syrup was for personal use.

Angella Moorehouse replied yes.

It was moved by Commissioner Clay, seconded by Commissioner Evans, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the Addition to Allendale Spring Land and Water Reserve, owned by Dr. Anna K. Behrensmeyer and as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2656)

Edward (Ned) Behrensmeyer requested the approval of a 17.2-acre addition to Allendale Spring LWR. This addition is located northeast and east of the current reserve and will connect the registered reserve to Allendale Spring Nature Preserve (7.42 acres). This addition is located immediately west of the current reserve and includes additional forest, grassland, and pond habitat to support two federally listed bats: both of which are known to use the area for breeding and wintering, respectively. Protection of this and Kay's addition (9.2 acres) will increase the size of the registered reserve to 46.2 acres.

Reserved rights for the addition include those approved with the current reserve: the maintenance of a UTV service lane, harvest of sugar maple syrup, primitive campsite, and deer and turkey hunting. The grassland portion of the addition includes a 6.4-acre hayfield which will continue to be harvested annually until ownership changes and/or the increasing cost of harvest is no longer cost effective for the tenant.

Edward Behrensmeyer thanked the Commission, noting his grandfather and mother would have been blown away by this dedication.

It was moved by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, seconded by Commissioner Clay, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the Addition to Allendale Spring Land and Water Reserve, owned by Edward Behrensmeyer and as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2657)

(249-11): **McHenry County – Barefoot Ridge Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

John Nelson and Claire Gregory presented this item.

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County (TLCMC) requested to permanently register 89.4 acres as Barefoot Ridge Land and Water Reserve. The proposed LWR will protect approximately 35 acres of dry-mesic upland forest, 3.3 acres of vernal pools, 35.7 acres of reconstructed prairie, and 15.4 acres of old field grassland. The site is not currently on the INAI, nor does it contain any known archaeological resources. The site contains a mosaic of natural communities that have been committed to a program of restoration management for over 20 years. The vernal pools in particular provide high-value habitat for several unique species of plants and animals. These vernal pools are unique in the region as most have been

excavated for ponds, filled, or drained for agriculture. The site is located at the top of the Marengo Moraine and is a headwater feature to the North Branch of the Kishwaukee River. The Kishwaukee River is listed on the INAI as a High-Value Aquatic Resource that supports high-diversity freshwater mussel populations. If approved for registration, TLCMC plans to increase restoration efforts at Barefoot Ridge and open the site to the public in the future. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission has authority to approve this registration under Administrative Rule Title 17, Chapter 5, Part 4010, Section 150 b “areas determined by the Commission and Department to be appropriate to register as land and water reserves.”

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth noted this site is a perfect example of why a site should qualify as a land and water reserve. Anyone who has been in the position of managing a wetland when you do not control the headwaters, knowing those areas are unprotected, must deal with offsite issues that come onto their site. Here we have an example of being able to protect that exact feature.

It was moved by Commissioner Kessel, seconded by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Barefoot Ridge Land and Water Reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2658)

(249-12): **McLean County – Lexington Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Byron Paulsen presented this item.

The proposed 165.06-acre Lexington Land and Water Reserve is owned by Parklands Foundation. Parklands Foundation requested approval for registration of the proposed LWR as a perpetual easement. The proposed Lexington LWR is located in McLean County in the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. The site includes a 1.9 mile stretch of the Mackinaw River which is located within the Mackinaw River INAI (#0788). This stretch of the Mackinaw River was listed on the INAI as a medium-gradient river, a high-quality natural area due to the unusual concentration of mussels. Suitable habitat for and occurrences of the state- threatened mudpuppy were documented in 2013. The proposed LWR includes approximately 59.2 acres of forest, 56.9 acres of reforestation, 16.4 acres of reconstructed mesic prairie and 18.6 acres of old field. Reserved rights include the ability to maintain existing trails and allow deer hunting on the property.

Jason Shoemaker offered thanks to the Commission and commended the work of volunteers at this site.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth asked about a tree memorial park referenced in the proposal. Is this on the site or adjacent to it?

Byron Paulsen replied it is within the site. It is an area designated by the planning volunteers to honor loved ones.

Commissioner Oplt asked about the level of maintenance for adjacent gas infrastructure. Is there a plan of action if something were to go wrong with the Nicor Gas pipelines?

Byron Paulsen replied that all pipelines are within the right-of-way easement, which was excluded from the land and water reserve. There is no contingency plan but so far there have been no incidents.

It was moved by Commissioner Clay, seconded by Commissioner Evans, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Lexington Land and Water Reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2659)

(249-13): **Union County – Addition to Cedar-Draper’s Bluff Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Dalton Sharrow presented this item.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requested permanent registration of the 40.0-acre Sonnenschein parcel as an addition to the 741.1-acre Cedar/Draper’s Bluff LWR. The parcel is contained within the Draper’s Bluff INAI (#0967) and completes protection of a Category IV, 0.6-mile bluff exposure of a Pennsylvanian sandstone escarpment at the boundary of the Greater and Lesser Shawnee Hills Sections of the Shawnee Hills Natural Division. Protection of the proposed addition will also facilitate management of a continuous corridor of sandstone glade, dry barrens, dry woodland, and dry sandstone cliff communities of good to excellent quality. Additionally, the parcel contains suitable habitat for three state-listed species found on the broader site and multiple SGCN.

Allowable uses for the proposed addition will be consistent with those of Cedar/Draper’s Bluff LWR. IDNR additionally reserves the right to maintain an existing old field, to convert a portion of this currently landlocked area to a parking lot if a public access route is ever acquired and to install a primitive foot trail connecting the lot to established trails.

IDNR and INPC recommended permanent protection of the proposed Sonnenschein Addition, which will expand the Cedar/Draper’s Bluff Land and Water Reserve to 781.1 acres.

Commissioner Evans asked if there were plans to install trails along the bluff line.

Dalton Sharrow replied there is an existing network of trails to tie into.

Christina Feng clarified that it would be subject to a plan of work process to mitigate any potential issues with listed species.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the Addition to Cedar-Draper's Bluff Land and Water Reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2660)

(249-14): **Cook County – Addition and Buffer Addition to Busse Forest Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Rebecca Collings presented this item.

The Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) proposed to expand their existing 454-acre Busse Forest Nature Preserve (BFNP) by dedicating 493 acres as nature preserve addition and 274 acres as nature preserve buffer addition. This will expand Busse Forest Nature Preserve to 1,221 acres. Busse Forest NP and the proposed additions are part of a 3,542-acre block of land owned by the FPCC along Salt Creek in the northern part of Cook County, in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. Busse Forest NP was the third dedicated nature preserve in 1965 along with 10 other FPCC sites. These FPCC nature preserve dedications represent the beginning of the Illinois Nature Preserve System in Illinois, with the passage of the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act occurring less than two years prior in 1963. Today, the Illinois Nature Preserve System consists of over 420 nature preserves covering over 64,000 acres. If approved, Busse Forest Nature Preserve would be the 7th largest nature preserve out of the 420 in the Illinois Nature Preserves System. The proposed 493-acre nature preserve addition is located, in part, within the Busse Forest INAI site (#0031) and protects Grade A and B northern flatwoods, Grade B dry-mesic upland forest surrounded by mesic upland forest, dry-mesic woodland, shrub swamp, and former agricultural lands. The proposed 274-acre nature preserve buffer addition contains remnant Grade C mesic upland forest, dry-mesic woodland, shrub swamp, sedge meadow, and old field communities that are part of the same remnant natural community complex. The proposed buffer would also protect populations of state-listed plants: Tuckerman's sedge (*Carex tuckermanii*), downy false Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum pubescens*), purple-fringed orchid (*Platanthera psychodes*), dwarf raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*), and marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*).

FPCC maintains a paved bike trail that bisects the proposed nature preserve addition. This trail is open to hikers, bikers, dogs on leash, and cross-country skiers. FPCC reserves the right for these uses to continue and to maintain and realign a portion of this bike and pedestrian trail. Maintenance activities may include patching or repaving the trail, removal of hazardous trees along the trail corridor, and maintaining sight lines for user safety. There are currently two bends in the trail that the FPCC is looking to realign in 2025 or 2026 for improved user safety. Horses are not allowed. Additionally, management techniques that may be used include tree thinning, measures to restore or maintain the surface hydrology (both quantity and quality) and a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) control program,

following adaptive management strategies. The FPCC will also monitor plants and animals within the proposed additions to Busse Forest Nature Preserve.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented on the excellent conservation design and asked if there are any other nuisance wildlife besides deer.

Rebecca Collings answered that there are raccoons but to her knowledge no currently active control program. Anything that arises in the future would be subject to IDNR permitting.

Commissioner Kessel recused himself due his affiliation with the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

It was moved by Commissioner Miraglia, seconded by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Addition and Buffer Addition to Busse Forest Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 14 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2661)

(249-15): **Jersey County – Chautauqua Prairie Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Debbie Newman presented this item.

The proposed Chautauqua Prairie Nature Preserve is a 42-acre area in two parcels located in the bluff corridor between Chautauqua and Grafton Illinois. The proposed NP is located in the Glaciated Section of the Middle Mississippi Border Natural Division. The site is within the boundaries of the Big Rivers Resource Rich Area. The property contains nearly all of the remaining unprotected portion of the former 109-acre Chautauqua Prairie INAI (#0964). Now currently known as the Principia Hill Prairies West-Chautauqua INAI site, which contains Grade A, B, and C loess hill prairie and at least four known state-listed species. The proposed Chautauqua Prairie NP contains approximately two acres of Grade A and B loess hill prairie and 40 acres dry and dry-mesic upland forest connected to a much larger block of several hundred acres of mature forest. The site also contains Grade A limestone cliff community that includes Outstanding Exposures of the Fern Glen Formation limestone. The two parcels comprising the proposed NP lie adjacent to the 430-acre Palisades Nature Preserve and other sites protected with conservation easements.

The properties are owned by the Great Rivers Land Trust, (GRLT), who has actively worked to protect the entire Chautauqua Prairie INAI site, including having previously negotiated the deal to purchase the Palisades site for preservation as well as surrounding lands. The GRLT also holds a conservation easement on the proposed nature preserve.

The preservation of this site accomplishes important conservation goals for the area. Within the large complex of protected lands, the Chautauqua Prairie parcel is a key piece in efforts

by GRLT, INPC and partners to preserve the ecologically important Mississippi River bluff corridor along Route 100.

Alley Ringhausen thanked the Commission and expressed the hope to add more property in the future along this river road.

Commissioner Clay asked about what made the Great River Land Trust go for the conservation easement first and the nature preserve easement second.

Alley Ringhausen responded that the property is comprised of two parcels. One of them does not have a conservation easement and the second one has a Forest Legacy easement. All other decisions preceded him as the land was purchased before his time with the Great River Land Trust.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth asked if there were any reserved rights associated with the property.

Debbie Newman noted the difference between allowed used and reserved rights. The landowner has asked for no reserved rights and there will be no public access in the foreseeable future.

Commissioner Evans commented he was impressed by the amount of protection for these hill prairies. They are such a gem for southern and southwestern Illinois, and he is impressed by the level of protection they have. He noted the goal of eventually connecting these hill prairies into one larger unit and asked if an allowable use would be heavy removal of tree species to meet those goals more easily.

Debbie Newman responded that tree removal is included in the management plan, although it is not defined as heavy.

Bill McClain was called upon to speak. He pointed out that we know very little about these communities and this provides an opportunity to preserve, enhance, and improve them.

It was moved by Commissioner Clay, seconded by Commissioner Kessel, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Chautauqua Prairie Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 15 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2662)

(249-16): **Kankakee County – Addition to Carl N. Becker Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

This item was tabled due to staff illness.

(249-17): **Lake County – Mello’s Preserve at Westfork Savanna Buffer Addition to Florsheim Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

John Nelson and Ryan London presented this item.

Lake Forest Open Lands Association (LFOLA) requested preliminary dedication of 99.3 acres known as Mello’s Preserve at Westfork Savanna Buffer Addition (Westfork Savanna) to Florsheim Park Nature Preserve. The existing nature preserve is 105.12 acres and is owned and managed by the Village of Lincolnshire. If approved, this buffer addition to Florsheim Park NP will bring the total area of the preserve to approximately 204.76 acres. The nature preserve, additions and proposed buffer addition are within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division and part of the Florsheim Park INAI (#1500) as a Category III for the nature preserve status and Category II for three state-listed and one federally listed plant species. Approximately 68.7 acres of the site are made up of a patchwork of northern flatwoods and wet-mesic upland forest communities. Vernal pools are characteristic of flatwoods communities, and wet-mesic upland forest communities occur in areas of poor drainage on level topography. The remainder of the site is cultural old-field (30.6-acres).

There is an existing mowed trail system at Westfork Savanna that is open to the public. LFOLA plans to work with the Village of Lincolnshire to eventually connect Westfork Savanna’s trails to Florsheim Park Nature Preserve’s trail system. In addition to public use, LFOLA plans to collaborate with tribal partners to allow and encourage certain cultural uses of the site. Management activities at Westfork Savanna Buffer Addition will focus on improving the quality of the site’s natural communities. Removal of European buckthorn in the forested areas is a top priority. This will encourage oak regeneration and a healthier understory. The old field areas will be gradually reforested as resources allow. Young oaks are already moving into these open areas from the forest edges, and they will likely transition gradually from open savanna communities into woodland and forest communities that resemble the rest of the site. Restoration work done by LFOLA staff and volunteers is ongoing.

The Westfork Savanna Buffer Addition boundary excludes a bike path that runs east-west along the southern edge of the property. There are two pre-existing easements associated with the adjacent interstate 94 that are within the proposed buffer addition. These originated in the 1950s and relate to slope and drainage during the construction of the interstate. A carbon credit easement, held by City Forest Credits, was also placed within the forested portions of the site in 2023. LFOLA reserves the right to maintain and improve the site’s trail system and potentially connect a pedestrian bridge over the interstate to the northernmost tip of the property in the future.

LFOLA also reserves the right to allow certain special uses at the site for its tribal partners. These uses may include but are not limited to overnight events, cultural ceremonies, temporary ceremonial structures, and traditional harvesting of native plants that are not state-listed species. A special use INPC permit will be obtained by the landowner prior to such events. Additionally, LFOLA reserves the right to reintroduce bison grazing to the site in the future for management purposes pending additional approval from INPC. There are not

currently any plans to do so, but if the opportunity arises in the future, the bison will graze the old field area in the southern portion of the site.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that she hopes we encourage the “unlikely probabilities” in the future. To hold a relationship with a tribal nation to repatriate a small bison herd would be very doable. Evidence-based information shows bison are one of the strongest strategies for grassland restoration, which is doable at this site.

Bill McClain was called upon to speak. He referenced a photo of a tree in one of the presentation slides and asked if there were any more photos.

John Nelson responded that there were not.

Bill McClain asked about the diameter of the tree.

John Nelson responded that it is probably 18-20 inches.

Bill McClain noted that the shape is unusual and could have possibly been a Native American marker tree.

John Nelson agreed that it could have been a trail marker tree.

Ryan London noted its location likely supports that.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth asked about infrastructure regarding a bison herd, including fencing and gates.

John Nelson responded that proper safety is especially important considering the adjacent roads and would be part of the approved management plan.

Commissioner Miraglia asked about current tribal partners.

Ryan London commented about a ceremony in 2021 and a group actively collecting resources.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Mello’s Preserve at Westfork Savanna Buffer Addition to Florsheim Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 17 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2663)

(249-18): **Lake County – Addition and Buffer Addition to North Dunes Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Melissa Grycan presented this item.

IDNR requested preliminary approval for dedication of a 91.4-acre addition and a 138.6-acre buffer addition to North Dunes Nature Preserve, 230 acres in total. The existing 816-acre nature preserve is owned and managed by IDNR. The proposed addition is located within the Lake Michigan Dunes Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division and is part of Illinois Dunes North INAI Site (#1066). This addition will provide protection to 14 INAI Category I high-quality Grades A and B natural communities, including beach, foredune, panne, mesic prairie, wet prairie, dry-mesic sand savanna, sedge meadow, freshwater marsh, graminoid fen, Great Lake, and dry-mesic, mesic, wet-mesic, and wet sand prairie. The Lake Michigan panne natural community is globally rare and has rare plant assemblages. The INAI is also designated as Category II due to the presence of numerous federally and state-listed species. Twelve state-listed species, one of which is also federally listed, have been recorded from within the boundaries of the proposed addition. Protection of this area will strengthen the resiliency of the existing nature preserve and the multitudes of additional rare species found there. The area is recognized as part of a Conservation Opportunity Area by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, is a critical region of the Lake Plain Coastal Restoration Partnership, contains wetlands recognized to be of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and is recognized in the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Kellogg/Dead Dog Creek Watershed Plan, the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Water Bird Conservation Plan, and the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan. The proposed addition will contribute significantly to national and regional biodiversity, preserve coastal wetland ecosystems, and provide critical habitat for declining plant and animal species. It also serves as a critical avian, mammalian (e.g., bats), and invertebrate (butterflies, dragonflies) migration corridor. Reserved rights include the right to maintain existing trails, allow pets in accordance with the park's pet policy, manage deer, wildlife diseases, and nuisance wildlife, and perform hydrological maintenance, restoration, or alteration. If approved, this Addition and Buffer Addition to North Dunes Nature Preserve will bring the total acreage of protected land at this site to 1046 acres.

Commissioner Kessel asked about existing infrastructure in reference to the grid map.

Melissa Grycan responded that trails, roads and waterlines are excluded from the proposal.

It was moved by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, seconded by Commissioner Evans, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Addition and Buffer Addition to North Dunes Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 18 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2664)

(249-19): **Adams County – Buffer Addition to Allendale Spring Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Angella Moorehouse presented this item.

Allendale Spring Nature Preserve is located in southern Adams County in the Galesburg Section of the Middle Mississippi Border Natural Division. The proposed nature preserve buffer received preliminary approval at the 248th INPC meeting (Resolution #2642). The buffer addition consists of approximately 5.155 acres and lies directly north of the existing preserve. The buffer addition and the preserve are owned by Edward Behrensmeyer. The site is listed on the INAI (#1967) as Category III for the dedicated nature preserve and providing suitable habitat for two federally listed species. While not currently on the INAI as a Category II site, it could potentially qualify for having habitat supporting the two listed bats species: Indiana bat which breeds within the vicinity of the proposed preserve, and northern long-eared bat, which is thought to overwinter on site. The site is also listed within the Illinois Inventory of Archaeological and Paleontological Sites and was used as a settlement by various prehistoric peoples of the Dalton, Hardin, Archaic, Sedalia, and late woodland cultures. Allendale Spring contains habitat supporting at least five SGCN as defined by the IWAP. Protection and management of the buffer addition will expand the size of the preserve to 7.42 acres and will serve to help fulfill goals within both the Forest and Woodland and Streams IWAP campaigns.

The landowner has reserved the right to:

1. Collect water from the spring that runs along the eastern edge of the preserve. This includes maintaining the water collection infrastructure. There are three places the spring exits the hillside; the existing water collection structure is set up on one of those openings and consists of a concrete and PVC pipe structure to deliver the water to the springhouse/weir. The springhouse and weir are located just outside the preserve. The landowner has not sold the water for many years but wants to reserve the right to do so in the future.
2. Graze a small number of goats on the nature preserve to keep the invasive exotic woody species from encroaching. This has been done for many years and has created no erosion issues.
3. Cut hay off the small portion of the hayfield that is in the preserve and contains some of the archaeological resources. This would help prevent woody encroachment/invasion of this area.

The control of invasive shrubs also reduces erosion by promoting more desirable soil-holding vegetation. Management of archaeological features typically involves some form of surface mowing to reduce vegetative height and reduce deep-rooted woody vegetation. Thus, both the haying and grazing would benefit the maintenance of the archaeological feature.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth asked for clarification on the collection of groundwater and if it is addressed in the management plan.

Angella Moorehouse responded that all infrastructure for groundwater collection has been removed. The only remaining pipes are what supplies the landowner's home with water.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth responded she was seeking clarification on whether it was added to the management plan per the conversation during the preliminary approval.

Angella Moorehouse replied yes, it has been updated in the reserved rights.

It was moved by Commissioner Clay, seconded by Commissioner Kessel, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Buffer Addition to Allendale Spring Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 19 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2665)

(249-20): **Jackson County – Fountain Bluff Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Kevin Sierzega presented this item.

The Thurmond family, owners of WPFT, LLC, requested final nature preserve dedication of 11.7 acres as the Fountain Bluff NP in southwestern Jackson County. The proposed preserve is in the Greater Shawnee Hills Section of the Shawnee Hills Natural Division. It protects 11.7 acres of the currently unprotected 3995-acre Fountain Bluff INAI site (#0589), including Categories II, IV, and VI, in perpetuity. Significant features of the NP include suitable habitat for numerous state-threatened and state-endangered species, unusual concentrations of vascular flora, presence of relict northern plant species, and unusual concentrations of reptiles and amphibians. Natural communities range from high-gradient small stream at the lowest topographical relief (420 feet), to dry sandstone cliff, sandstone glade, dry-woodland, dry-mesic woodland, and loess hill prairie at the highest topographic relief (620-640 feet). Across the site, botanical diversity is extremely high and average coefficient of conservatism is exceptional. The proposed preserve resides within the Western Shawnee Conservation Opportunity Area.

Dedication of the proposed site as an Illinois Nature Preserve should be considered for the following qualifying features and/or reasons:

1. Permanent protection of 11.7 acres of INAI site #0589,
2. Verified extant populations of five state-listed species: yellow honeysuckle (*Lonicera flava*, SE), crested coralroot orchid (*Hexalectris spicata*, SE), butternut (*Juglans cinerea*, SE), Skinner's false foxglove (*Agalinis skinneriana*), and timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*, ST),
3. Historic populations of two state-listed species: Allegheny barberry (*Berberis canadensis*, SE) and heartleaf nettle (*Urtica chamaedryoides*; ST),
4. Provides habitat for 31 SGCN including 19 avian species that are confirmed as breeding, and
5. Supports various Illinois Wildlife Action Plan campaigns.

Within the proposed preserve, the landowner reserves the right to maintain pre-existing foot trails and to manage white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*; INPC 2005) per the most recent Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) wildlife regulations.

It was moved by Commissioner Kessel, seconded by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Fountain Bluff Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 20 of the agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2666)

(249-21): **Jo Daviess County – Casper Bluff Nature Preserve and Buffer, Final Dedication**

This item was presented after Item 9.

Kaleb Baker, Jim Johannsen and Bill Quackenbush presented this item.

Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation (JDCF) requested approval for the dedication of 62.62 acres as nature preserve and 26.88 acres as nature preserve buffer, 89.5 acres total, on the property known as Casper Bluff located in Jo Daviess County and the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division. The same 89.50 acres are currently a registered Illinois Land and Water Reserve. Casper Bluff LWR was created in 2008 (69.82 acres) (INAI #1782, Category III) to protect a significant portion of the Aiken Mound Group, a series of Native American earthen mounds, including the only intact thunderbird effigy mound within the State of Illinois, which are significant cultural (archaeological) resources. The Addition to Casper Bluff LWR was registered in 2021 (19.68 acres) as an expansion. The federally endangered rusty patch bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*) is present at the site. Since 2008, much of the site has been restored or recreated to woodland, savanna, and prairie communities, including a small dolomite hill prairie remnant.

Upon dedication, the nature preserve buffer area will serve a dual purpose of (1) Protecting existing natural and cultural features, and (2) Facilitating the reinterment of prehistoric Native American human remains, grave artifacts, and funerary objects that were unearthed and removed from their original burial locations after Euro-American colonization of the region. Casper Bluff provides long-term protection for an important part of the Wisconsin Driftless Forest Conservation Opportunity Area as well as a significant Native American cultural/archaeological site. Dedication further increases protections for these unique cultural/archaeological features and the natural communities, which benefits current and future visitors, researchers, and residents of the Galena area by preserving unique natural and cultural heritage in northwestern Illinois.

Reserved rights will follow best management practices for conservation of both archaeological resources and for the conservation of a prairie, savanna, and woodland landscape/ecosystem. JDCF wishes to carry forward the following allowable uses from the registration as reserved rights on the proposed Casper Bluff Nature Preserve and Nature Preserve Buffer: hiking, bird watching, nature observation and study, scientific research, hunting, photography, picnicking, cross-country skiing, and off-road vehicles which will be allowed only for the purposes of site management or maintenance.

Furthermore, JDCF reserves the right to allow the following activities that are compatible with the objectives of the dedicated preserve and are consistent with the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act:

- Restoration, re-creation, and management of the biological communities on the property.
- Recreational Developments: JDCF reserves the right to develop and maintain a hiking trail system with kiosks, benches, interpretive signs, and footbridges spanning some of the ravines. JDCF reserves the right to maintain the existing parking lot and picnic shelter in their current locations.
- JDCF retains the right to harvest and sell a small number of trees, primarily black walnut and cherry, to provide additional funds for ecological restoration and management of the site.
- JDCF reserves the right to repair or reconstruct the Native American mounds for educational interpretation and historical preservation in accordance with the Illinois Human Remains Protection Act (HRPA) and with permission from affiliated tribes.
- Archaeological research (see preceding section for a detailed description of this reserved right).
- Archaeological researchers with an approved permit will be allowed to park vehicles, trailers and/or temporary structures on the preserve during periods of archaeological investigations.
- JDCF reserves the right to permit Indian tribes to rebury human remains, grave artifacts, and funerary objects within the Nature Preserve Buffer provided that such activities are conducted in compliance with the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and HRPA.
- JDCF reserves the right to permit Indigenous peoples to harvest traditional foods, medicines, and other natural resources used for Native American cultural purposes, provided that no harvesting activity harms any feature protected by the Nature Preserve and Nature Preserve Buffer.
- JDCF reserves the right to permit Indigenous peoples to access and utilize the preserve for ceremonial, religious, cultural, and educational purposes, provided that no such activity harms any feature protected by the Nature Preserve and Nature Preserve Buffer.

Staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Illinois State Museum, Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin, and Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation recommended permanent dedication of the 62.62 acres as nature preserve and 26.88 acres as nature preserve buffer.

Jim Johannsen noted that Casper Bluff was the first property to be registered for cultural features only around 17 years ago and is the site with the only remaining bird mound in Illinois.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that it is well past time for this to happen. She is glad it is happening now and emphasized the importance of this historic moment. This is precedent setting, and it is her greatest desire for this to be the first of many actions that this Commission takes to connect Indigenous peoples to their land. She commented on Logan Pappenfort's presentation at the Special Meeting the day before and how it illustrated how critical it is to build relationships. She called for INPC staff to begin the intentional work of that relationship building.

Bill Quackenbush, Ho-Chunk Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, expressed that he knows all the information presented today in the traditional language by heart. He was asked to present today alongside Jim Johannsen, to talk about the process of creating an area for the Ho-Chunk and other Tribes to be able to reclaim some of their ancestors who were taken

away from them. They don't have places to put them back under the state and local governments if the governments only utilize Tribal plans as they see fit. This leaves very little room for Tribes to reclaim their ancestors unless they are involved and there are appropriate places they can be put back in the ground so they can carry on in their journey.

Bill Quackenbush continued. He explained the process of creating the Historical Preservation Department of the Ho-Chunk Nation. He has worked to standardize processes and set precedents to perpetuate the Ho-Chunk people. He has taken responsibility for NAGPRA, created the Ho-Chunk Cemetery and has been working with institutions across a 10-state area to reclaim ancestral remains. Many of these institutions have yet to return these remains.

Bill Quackenbush shared that his mission is to take care of these remains and explained how much of them are scattered across the area due to the continual removal of his Tribe. The last removal was to Oklahoma, where a steamboat was taken, and when people in his Tribe passed, bodies were buried along the river. It is his responsibility to take care of all the Ho-Chunk Nation's cultural resources.

Bill Quackenbush spoke about the importance of cultural resource management plans. He discussed how many of us know where our ancestors are buried because their burial spots are marked. It is important to bury the Tribe's reclaimed remains in areas the Tribe has ties to. This makes Casper Bluff even more poignant, due to its location and with the last remaining thunderbird effigy in Illinois and many additional mounds at this site.

Bill Quackenbush spoke about reaching out to Tribes for insight and management practices. Tribes have been here for thousands of years, and their adaptation, management, and environmental expertise is often overlooked. There are clans who take care of the land and he encouraged the Commission to tap into the resources of the Tribes.

Clayton Winneshiek, Director of Ho-Chunk Heritage Preservation, addressed the Commission and expressed he was at a loss for words. In the time he has come to know Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and its staff, he has been overwhelmed by seeing all the work they are doing and by being recognized by the foundation as the Ho-Chunk Nation in their homeland. As mentioned before, the general area of their original homeland stretched from Green Bay to Minnesota, over to Chicago and all the way down to St. Louis. Even further than that, as the Ho-Chunk was a very large Tribe back in the day.

Clayton Winneshiek continued and said they were stewards of the land and have always been that way. They try and take care of the land, air and water. There is so much that was taken from them over the years with eight removals of the Ho-Chunk Tribe. Their tribe is spread out now from Oklahoma to Wisconsin to North Dakota.

Clayton Winneshiek stated the Ho-Chunk Nation has been through a lot in their time. Their cultures and traditions keep them here as a people, a strong people. He has walked many properties that JDCF is restoring and has thought, even as he drove here today, how many of his relatives are they walking or driving over? How many of his relatives have been pushed to the side while not realizing what was being destroyed?

Clayton Winneshiek shared that the University of Madison campus is built on a mound system. Some people care, but some don't. He continued, commenting that he is thankful they could be a part of this, and that the foundation recognizes the Ho-Chunk people.

Clayton Winneshiek described his thoughts when asked where he would like the reburial site to be. From that day to today, there was probably only a year in between. He did not think it would move this fast. He thanked Steve Barg, JDCF and the Commission, saying, "You do not know what you are doing for the Ho-Chunk people." The recognition of their homeland, NAGPRA and other laws in this process is so important. What is happening in the United States today threatens to take that all away. He thanked everyone for what is being done here today.

Chloris Lowe Jr., former Ho-Chunk President, commented on the good friends he sees in the room that he has encountered during this process. Bill Quackenbush, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and leader in the region and nation. Clayton Winneshiek, traditional chief, who has enabled his nation and all the resources they have to allow this project to move forward. He thanked the Commission and all the staff of all organizations whose resources were brought into play to bring this to the decision made today.

Chloris Lowe Jr. continued. This is a tremendous accomplishment for the Ho-Chunk Nation, for their people and for the people who preceded us, who will be brought to this land for their final resting place. For untold generations past, for people we don't know and for those who came before us. He thanked everyone for all their work, dedication and the specific responsibilities they have. As Clayton mentioned, their nation and others like theirs will become targets. The work everyone has done has helped them a great deal. He thanked everyone again for what they have done individually and together, particularly JDCF as the leader.

Commissioner Tom Clay recused himself from this vote due to his affiliation with Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Casper Bluff Nature Preserve and Buffer, as described in the proposal presented under Item 21 of the Agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2667)

Adam Kessel commented that at the Special Meeting on April 11, 2024, a motion was approved to grant the "Right of Way" access to Tribal Nations for repatriation efforts in the Illinois Nature Preserves System. This is because detailed location information regarding cultural and archaeological sites is protected by state law, and out of respect for Tribal Nations and their ancestors, in-depth discussions of the reinterment of relatives and funerary objects at an open, public meeting is inappropriate.

It was moved by Commissioner Kessel, seconded by Commissioner Miraglia, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

Illinois Nature Preserves staff will develop a set of policy guidelines authorizing INPC approval at the staff level for the respectful handling and reinterment of relatives' remains and funerary objects by working directly with Tribal Nations, SHPO, THPO, and landowners through a "Restorative Right of Access" policy. Guidelines should address the mechanism for INPC approval, note all pertinent statutes and rules, and include criteria for evaluation to ensure any proposed activity is fitting with the preservation of natural and cultural resources, uses, and management of any site within the Illinois Nature Preserves System.

(Resolution 2668)

(249-22): **Lee County – Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve, Mesopredator Control**

This item was presented by Jamie Arntzen.

The 291-acre Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve owned by the Illinois Audubon Society is located in the approximately 1100-acre Green River Lowland INAI site (#1621). The site is within the Green River Lowland Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. The INAI was added in 2002 as a Category II for the state-endangered Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*). There are also historic records (greater than 10 years since last observed) for the state-threatened western hog-nosed snake (*Heterodon nasicus*) and ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata*). When the nature preserve was dedicated in 2015, 24 SGCN had been observed at the site, including slender glass lizard (*Ophisaurus attenuatus*) and smooth green snake (*Opheodrys vernalis* – proposed to be listed as threatened by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board in 2025). Many of these at-risk species have become progressively restricted in range and reduced in numbers as their essential habitats are lost or degraded due to anthropogenic changes. Conversely, highly adaptable mesopredators have been able to exploit these changes resulting in artificially high populations. Herpetofauna and ground-nesting avian species are especially vulnerable to nest predation by raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), and opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*). A growing body of literature indicates that predation on turtle eggs and hatchlings is very high and can limit population growth, decrease recruitment and lead to population declines. Results of studies on mesopredator management demonstrate that it can be an effective method for increasing nest success. This may be especially critical for Blanding's turtle, a long-lived, late maturing species with limited reproductive output whose populations are in decline throughout much of its range. Control of mesopredators is not currently considered a standard management practice at nature preserves, requiring review and approval by Commissioners. The Illinois Audubon Society requested approval to control mesopredators at Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve to reduce nest predation of herpetofauna and ground nesting birds.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked about monitoring plans. Will they be different from what the Illinois Audubon Society is already doing? She expressed her support of this and recommended more monitoring for more evidence-based information. There is excellent literature cited but there is not great information out there on this subject. One thing that comes to mind is to make this time bound. Approving it in perpetuity does not seem like the

correct course of action. She asked about annual surveys and suggested a three-to-five-year time limit on the approval, at which time the Commission would reassess.

Jamie Arntzen responded that annual surveys are conducted by contracted herpetologists for the course of one to two weeks. Monitoring is also conducted by volunteers.

Commissioner Derby Lewis followed up by asking if the monitoring was being done on only the Blanding's turtle or also mesopredators.

Jamie Arntzen responded both.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked if they would be open to having a timebound component to the approval or if this was intended to be open ended.

Jamie Arntzen responded they are very open to limiting the timeframe and evaluating the efficacy to make sure it was worth continuing.

Commissioner Evans asked how this request differs from a reserved right to control nuisance wildlife.

Kelly Neal answered that nuisance wildlife typically refers to deer and mesopredators are usually not included. For this reason, the removal of these species must be brought to the Commission in the form of a staff opinion.

Commissioner Miraglia asked about the population and presence of Blanding's turtles at Amboy Marsh.

Jamie Arntzen responded that they do not know the exact population size on this parcel because they are not finding them in surveys, but there have been photographs taken by volunteers showing their presence.

Commissioner Miraglia asked if there was data on the population size.

Jamie Arntzen responded no, but knows they are found on neighboring properties in the interconnected wetland complex.

Commissioner Clay asked if there were culverts between sites.

Jamie Arntzen responded that there is nothing that would connect them directly.

Commissioner Clay noted that the highway is likely a problem.

Hall Healy asked about what happens to the mesopredators that are captured live.

Jamie Arntzen responded they are caught in live traps to ensure only the desired species is being caught and euthanized. Any species caught accidentally is released.

Joe Roth expressed his opinion that having a minimum of five years would give the project (with monitoring) a reasonable chance to provide meaningful data. He also suggested reviewing data from nearby sites where there are similar projects, rather than assess this one in isolation.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that she would be happy with five years and had not intended it to be done in isolation and suggested it be done in collaboration with the surrounding area.

Commissioner Evans asked for clarification as to whether the approval would include a timebound element.

Todd Strole suggested the Commissioners modify the motion.

Commissioner Clay modified the motion to include a five-year time limit, after which the Illinois Audubon Society would report on their findings and progress.

Commission Chair Parker clarified that the approval includes the removal of mesopredators at Amboy Marsh for a five-year term, at which time they will report back on the efficacy of the removal and re-evaluate the Commission's approval.

It was moved by Commissioner Clay, seconded by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, and carried that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for Mesopredator Control at Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve for a five-year term, as described in the proposal presented under Item 22 of the Agenda for the 249th Meeting.

(Resolution 2669)

(249-23): **Election of INPC Consultants**

Commissioner/Committee of the Whole Chair Clay presented the slate of INPC Consultants nominated under Agenda Item 9.

Commission Chair Parker specified that this approval would be in effect until September 2025, at which time the new Consultant process would be ready to implement.

It was moved by Commissioner Clay, seconded by Commissioner Evans, and carried that the Election of INPC Consultants be approved.

(Resolution 2670)

(249-24): **Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)**

Hall Healy commented that he was impressed by the diverse actions taken today.

Cynthia Kanner noted it is an honor to be here. She reminded the audience that the Prairie State Conservation Coalition Conference will take place at Pere Marquette State Park, March 5-7, 2025.

(249-25): **Other Business**

Commission Chair Parker reflected upon the discussions from the Special Meeting and the 249th Meeting and asked as we move away and have some breathing room, that everyone take the time to reflect on all the progress made over the past two days. She encouraged everyone to get into the spirit of that “1st generation” and be together in an involved way. Times are tricky now and they will continue to be tricky. She noted she is leaving this room inspired.

Commissioner Kessel referred to the Fountain Bluff Nature Preserve presentation and asked about the adjacent federal land. He noted how things are moving very quickly at a national level and asked if there were any possibility to enroll adjacent lands to nature preserves into buffer to protect them from any federal decisions that might negatively impact these sites.

Todd Strole responded that the short answer is no, the federal government does not allow their land to be enrolled in the Nature Preserves System. He noted we do have a good relationship with federal partners, and they have their own levels of classifications for protection.

Todd Strole asked Kevin Sierzega if he knew what the federal classification for Fountain Bluff is.

Kevin Sierzega answered that it is technically not classified in the Federal Natural Areas Program, but they are in contact and discussing collaborative work.

Todd Strole asked for clarification.

Kevin Sierzega responded they have natural areas that are in conjunction with the original INAI, and broader terms based on a logical system.

Todd Strole commented it is important to note they took the INAI information into account to the extent possible. He suggested approaching our federal partners regarding Fountain Bluff to ensure it is properly classified.

(249-26): **Adjournment**

It was moved by Commissioner Kessel, seconded by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, and carried that the meeting be adjourned.

The 249th INPC Meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.