

**ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION AGENDA  
TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-FIRST MEETING**

Byron Forest Preserve  
Jarrett Prairie Center  
7993 North River Road,  
Byron, IL 61010

September 9, 2025, 10:00 a.m.  
In-person meeting with WebEx option

\*Documentary Material Enclosed

**Item 1:    Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees**

**Item 2:\*   Adoption of Agenda**

**Item 3:\*   Approval of Minutes for the 250<sup>th</sup> Meeting, held on May 13, 2025**

***Note: Share Accomplishments Summary of the 250th INPC Meeting***

*At the 250th Meeting of the INPC, held on May 13, 2025, at the Vermilion County Conservation District in Westville, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for seven tracts of land totaling 1,207 acres. One of these tracts is privately owned, two are publicly owned, and four are owned by not-for-profit organizations. The owners of the private site donated the value of the protection agreement to the public. Two sites with three tracts were protected as land and water reserves: one tract registered as Addition to Warbler Bottoms North and two tracts as Okàn Savanna. Four sites were dedicated as nature preserves: Addition and Buffer Addition to Busse Forest, Chautauqua Prairie, Addition and Buffer Addition to North Dunes, and Addition and Buffer Addition to Spivey's Valley Glade.*

*There are now 423 dedicated nature preserves with 65,243 acres and 216 registered land and water reserves with 60,041 acres. Altogether, there are 639 sites totaling 125,284 acres protected in the Illinois Nature Preserves System.*

***Note: Resolution for Commissioner Abigail Derby Lewis***

**Item 4:    Next Meeting Dates and Locations**

252	February 3, 2026	Illinois Department of Natural Resources Joel Brunsvold Building Springfield, Illinois
253	May 19, 2026	Peoria Park District Peoria, Illinois
254	September 15, 2026	Lake Sara Community Building Effingham, Illinois

**Item 5:\* INPC Staff Report**

Todd Strole, Assistant Director  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

**Item 6:\* IDNR Staff Report**

Ann Marie Holtrop, Chief  
Division of Natural Heritage

**Item 7:\* Endangered Species Protection Board Report**

Dr. Joyce Hofmann  
Endangered Species Protection Board

**Item 8:\* Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Report**

Amy Doll, Director  
Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

**Item 9: Committee of the Whole Meeting to Propose Nominations for Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Advisors, Consultants and Officers**

**Committee Chair:** Commissioner Clay

**A. Nomination of Advisors**

**Current Advisors:**

Natalie Finnie IL Dept. of Natural Resources (Statutory Advisor)	Dr. Michael Dreslik IL Natural History Survey (Statutory Advisor)	Dr. Jennifer Edginton IL State Museum (Statutory Advisor)
Dr. Joyce Hofmann IL Endangered Species Protection Board	Dr. Richard C. Berg IL State Geological Survey	Jeffery Nevins IL Dept. of Natural Resources Office of Historic Preservation
Alleen Betzenhauser IL State Archaeological Survey	Dr. Kevin O'Brien IL Sustainable Technology Center	Dr. Praveen Kumar Prairie Research Institute

**B. Nomination of Consultants**

**Current Consultants:**

Gerald Adelman	Jill Allread	Alan Branhagen
George Covington	Amy Doll	Harry Drucker
Kim Erndt-Pitcher	Jo Fessett	Jordan Gurneau
Fran Harty	Randy Heidorn	Dr. Jim Herkert
Cynthia Kanner	Kerry Leigh	Bill McClain
Gloria Orozco	Izabella Redlinski	Jill Riddell
Lauren Rosenthal	Bruce Ross-Shannon	Joseph Roth
John Schwegman	Deborah Stone	David Thomas
Michelle Uting	Jeff Walk	John White

### C. Nominations of Officers

#### Current Officers:

Chair: Michelle Parker

Vice Chair: Radhika Miraglia

Secretary: Adam Kessel

#### Item 10:\* **Marshall County – Buffer Addition to Oak Bluff Savanna Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Peoria Audubon Society seeks preliminary approval for the dedication of 14.5 acres as a buffer addition to the existing Oak Bluff Savanna Nature Preserve (NP). The original 5-acre nature preserve was dedicated in 2002. This site is in Marshall County in a transition zone between the bluffs of the Illinois River and the state's expansive Grand Prairie, containing forest, savanna, and prairie habitats. Oak Bluff Savanna is currently owned by Peoria Audubon Society. The area is part of the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois. In 1999, Oak Bluff Savanna was recognized on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI #1559) for 0.61 acres of Grade B dry-mesic savanna. Although the site has since been removed from the INAI as Category I due to acreage minimums, Oak Bluff Savanna is an important natural area containing many conservative plant species including Hill's thistle (*Cirsium hillii*), Seneca snakeroot (*Polygala senega*), and rough false foxglove (*Agalinis aspera*). The existing NP site remains on the INAI list as Category III. Oak Bluff Savanna also provides critical bird habitat, especially for vulnerable species observed at the site including the state-threatened (ST) black-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) and two state-endangered (SE) birds – the northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*) and the American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*). The site contains a mowed trail and is accessible to the public. This proposed 14.5-acre buffer area is primarily forested with several prairie openings, a 0.5-acre human-made pond, and a three-acre restored prairie. With the proposed addition, the site will total 19.5 acres.

Within the proposed buffer to Oak Bluff Savanna Nature Preserve, Peoria Audubon Society requests to reserve the following rights:

1. Maintain pond, pond berm, and drainage infrastructure; and
2. Maintain existing trails and signage.

Staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission recommend preliminary dedication of 14.5 acres as nature preserve buffer addition to Oak Bluff Savanna Nature Preserve.

#### REPORT

Lorraine Foelske

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

#### ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Preliminary Approval for Dedication

#### Item 11:\* **Pope County – Spivey's Valley Glade East Buffer Addition to Spivey's Valley Glade Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Spivey family seeks preliminary dedication of 2.9 acres of nature preserve buffer as the Spivey's Valley Glade East Buffer Addition to the Spivey's Valley Glade NP in northeastern Pope County, Illinois. Spivey's Valley Glade NP (#274) first received final approval for dedication as an Illinois nature preserve at the 157<sup>th</sup> Illinois Nature Preserves Commission meeting in 1998; a later addition received final approval at the 250<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting in May 2025. The NP is in the Lesser Shawnee Hills Section of the Shawnee Hills Natural Division of Illinois. It protects 103.6 acres of habitat; 31.2 acres as NP and 72.4 acres as NP buffer.

Spivey's Valley Glade INAI site (#1526) is recognized for Category I, II, and III features and totals 516.13 acres. All of the Category I high quality natural community comprised of 31.6 acres is protected in the Nature Preserves System and includes Grade A limestone glade, Grades A and B dry-mesic woodland, and Grade B dry-woodland natural communities. The preserve resides within the East Shawnee Conservation Opportunity Area (COA). The 2.9-acre east buffer addition is contiguous with the existing east boundary of NP buffer. Natural communities in the addition are a combination old field and dry-mesic barrens. Mean coefficient of conservatism (c-value) is 4.3 for native species of plants. Native floristic quality index (FQI) is 46.7 and includes many highly conservative species including the spring ladies tresses (*Spiranthes vernalis*, ST) and squirting cucumber (*Melothria pendula*, ST). Dedication of the proposed east buffer addition should be considered for the following qualifying features and/or reasons:

1. Permanent protection of 2.9 acres of NP buffer habitat with high restoration potential;
2. Verified extant populations of four state-listed species: Chuck-wills-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*, ST), Eastern narrowmouth toad (*Gastrophryne carolinensis*, ST), spring ladies tresses, and squirting cucumber;
3. Historic populations of three state-listed species: Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*, SE), Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*, federally threatened, SE); and Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*, SE);
4. 103.6 acres of protected habitat for 37 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) including gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) and 28 avian species that are confirmed as breeding on or proximate to the preserve; and
5. Supports the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP), more specifically: the Forest and Woodlands, Farmland and Prairies, and Invasive Species Campaigns.

Within the proposed NP east buffer addition, the landowner reserves the rights to:

1. Maintain a cleared path along the east property boundary;
2. Manage the old field communities as grassland or early successional habitat, or allow to succeed into woodland;
3. Manage white-tailed deer per the most recent IDNR wildlife regulations; and
4. Remove downed-woody debris (e.g., cedar slash) off the preserve from woodland communities and to decrease fuel loads prior to prescribed burning.

#### **REPORT**

Kevin Sierzega  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

#### **ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Preliminary Approval for Dedication

#### **Item 12:\* Tazewell County – Coon Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The proposed 3.39-acre Coon Hill Prairie NP is owned by Gary and Robin Coon. The Coons originally enrolled the site in INPC's Natural Heritage Landmark Program (NHL #173) in November of 2000. Gary and Robin are seeking preliminary approval for dedication of the proposed NP. The proposed Coon Hill Prairie NP is in Tazewell County in the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. The site is recognized on the INAI (#129) for its Category I Grade B and C dry-mesic loess hill prairie. The proposed NP includes approximately 0.4 acres of dry-mesic loess hill prairie, 0.2 acres of reconstructed prairie, and 2.79 acres of dry-mesic upland forest located close to the Mackinaw River. The proposed NP supports several of the campaigns identified in the IWAP including the Farmland and Prairie, Forest and Woodland, Invasive Species, and the Streams Campaigns. Reserved rights include the ability to maintain existing trails, remove trees that fall on the trails and use as firewood, maintain 5 bluebird nest boxes, allow deer management on the

property (per the most recent IDNR wildlife regulations) and use of all-terrain vehicles for management purposes only.

**REPORT**

Byron Paulsen  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Preliminary Approval for Dedication

**Item 13:\* Cook County – Additions and Buffer Additions to Gensburg-Markham Prairie Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Gensburg-Markham Prairie Nature Preserve (NP) is in Markham, Illinois, and is owned by Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Illinois Chapter. The site supports a mosaic of high-quality prairie and wetland communities representative of the Chicago Lake Plain Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois. The prairie was subdivided into more than 1000 small residential parcels but was never developed. The original 95-acre nature preserve was dedicated in 1980, and the site has since grown to 181.7 acres in size with 14 subsequent nature preserve and buffer additions as new parcels were acquired over the decades. Gensburg-Markham Prairie is recognized on the INAI (#0400) for Category I Grade A and B dry-mesic sand prairie, mesic sand prairie, wet-mesic prairie, and mesic prairie, and Grade B sedge meadow. It is the largest and highest quality prairie of the five sites which comprise the Indian Boundary Prairies in the Markham area. Gensburg-Markham Prairie was designated in 1987 as a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service as the “largest and highest quality prairie in Illinois and large parts of adjacent states”. The proposed dedicated acreage for both landowners combined is 9.74 acres of nature preserve additions, and 8.0 acres of nature preserve buffer additions, totaling 17.74 acres. Collectively, these proposed additions include portions of INAI communities and help complete good preserve design for Gensburg-Markham Prairie Nature Preserve.

Northeastern Illinois University seeks final dedication for 5.58 acres as nature preserve addition and 5.43 acres as nature preserve buffer addition. Preliminary approval was granted at the 250<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting (Resolution 2674). NEIU’s acreage is parceled into small residential lots and vacated road rights-of-way within the preserve.

**REPORT**

Kim Roman  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Final Approval for Dedication

TNC seeks final dedication for 4.16 acres as nature preserve addition and 2.57 acres as nature preserve buffer addition. Preliminary approval was granted at the 250<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting (Resolution 2675). These proposed additions are similarly parceled into small residential lots and vacated street and alley rights-of-way throughout the site.

**REPORT**

Kim Roman  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Final Approval for Dedication

**Item 14:\* Kankakee County – Addition to Carl N. Becker Savanna Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Carl N. Becker Savanna Nature Preserve is owned and jointly managed by TNC, Illinois Chapter, and IDNR. The site is in the Kankakee Sand Area Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. It was originally dedicated in 2009, with subsequent additions dedicated

in 2010 and 2012. The proposed 2025 addition is approximately 60 acres in size and owned by TNC; preliminary approval was granted at the 250<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting (Resolution 2676). The previously dedicated acres owned by TNC and IDNR include the Leesville Savanna INAI site (#0638), with Category I and II features for high quality sand savanna communities and for providing habitat for 16 state-endangered or threatened species. The proposed 60-acre addition is partially included on the INAI, includes habitat for two state-endangered plant species, and two state-threatened animal species, all of which have been recently observed on site. The proposed nature preserve addition provides habitat for numerous other wildlife SGCN, buffers high quality INAI savanna communities, and contributes to good, defensible preserve design for the Carl N. Becker Savanna Nature Preserve. All uses and management activities are consistent with the Rules for Management and Public Use of Illinois Nature Preserves. The proposed 60-acre addition will increase the total acreage of this nature preserve to 215; protect a portion of the Leesville Savanna INAI site and habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species; contribute to good preserve design of this site; and promote contiguity of natural habitat on this important landscape.

#### **REPORT**

Kim Roman  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

#### **ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Final Approval for Dedication

**Item 15:\* McHenry County – Addition and Buffer Addition to Barber Fen Nature Preserve as part of the Barber Farm and Fen Protection Plan, Final Dedication**

The objective of the Barber Farm and Fen Protection Plan is to preserve the natural and agricultural heritage of the Aavang family property and encourage effective stewardship of the land in perpetuity. This objective will be accomplished by dedicating additional lands into the existing Barber Fen NP administered by the INPC and by enrolling agricultural lands into a farmland preservation easement program administered by The Land Conservancy of McHenry County (TLC). The existing nature preserve was established in 1990 with the dedication of 17.2 acres by Rodney and Libbie Aavang. In 2013, the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) dedicated 49.2 acres as nature preserve addition and another 19.6 acres as a buffer addition to Barber Fen. These dedications provide legal protection to the existing 86-acre Barber Fen Nature Preserve, which includes portions of the Category I and II Barber Fen INAI site (#1267), with high quality sedge meadow and graminoid fen communities and the presence of two state-endangered plants; as well as a portion of the Nippersink Creek INAI site (#1506). The NP is in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. The farm has long been known locally as the Spring Hill Farm which was established in 1849. Protecting the agricultural heritage of this landscape is of equal importance to the protection of its natural features. Together, these land protection strategies favor the natural features within the nature preserve which are dependent on the groundwater resource of the area for their survival. Farmland preservation will prohibit land development and help protect the groundwater recharge system that sustains the natural communities found within the nature preserve.

The Aavang family seeks final dedication of 4.9 acres as nature preserve addition and 24.4 acres as nature preserve buffer addition. Preliminary approval was granted at the 250<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting (Resolution 2677). The resulting acreage protected as nature preserve by the Aavang family will be 46.5 and the total acreage of land under agricultural preservation will be 76.8. The combined land protected under this plan by the Aavang family will be 123.3 acres. The MCCD currently owns and manages 68.8 acres at Barber Fen Nature Preserve, which will bring the total land protection at this site to 192.1 acres.

**REPORT**

John C. Nelson  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Final Approval for Dedication

**Item 16:\* Peoria County – Addition to Forest Park South Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

The Pleasure Driveway and Park District of Peoria (Peoria Park District; PPD) requests final approval to dedicate 13.6 acres, surrounded on three sides by nature preserve, as an addition to Forest Park South NP. Preliminary approval was granted at the 250<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting (Resolution 2678). The tract was acquired by PPD in late 2023 for the purpose of protecting a key inholding within the current preserve. Forest Park South was dedicated in 1988 to preserve a large, forested block containing 90 acres of Grade B mesic upland forest located in the Illinois River Section of the Illinois River and Mississippi River Sand Areas Natural Division. Although the addition is not currently included in the 660-acre Forest Park INAI site (#0207), the condition of the forest community is much the same as the surrounding preserve and was likely omitted due to private ownership rather than biological quality. Dedication of the addition will increase the size of Forest Park South NP to 148.22 acres and together with Forest Park Nature Preserve (368.8 acres), situated immediately to the north, the two NPs will provide over 517 acres of contiguous forest habitat. The current preserve and addition are known to support at least 17 wildlife SGCN. The state-threatened species, black-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) and cerulean warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*), have been noted from the preserve, but breeding has not been confirmed. Management objectives for the addition will be the same as for the current nature preserve: to promote public awareness, appreciation and understanding of the natural world; to protect the natural environment and scenic beauty of Central Illinois; and to maintain the stability of the watershed.

**REPORT**

Angella Moorehouse  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Final Approval for Dedication

**Item 17:\* Rock Island County – Indian Bluff Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

The Rock Island County Forest Preserve District (RICFPD) seeks final approval for the dedication of 1.48 acres as nature preserve and 2.78 acres as nature preserve buffer, totaling 4.26 acres, on the property known as Indian Bluff Hill Prairie. Preliminary approval was granted at the 250<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting (Resolution 2679). The site is in Rock Island County within the Indian Bluff Golf Course property which is currently owned and managed by RICFPD. The area lies within the Mississippi River Section of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois River Bottomlands Natural Division. Because of its ecological significance, the site was added to the INAI (#0139) in 1977 as Category I for having 0.8 acres of Grade A (very high quality) loess hill prairie and as Category II for supporting a healthy population of the downy painted cup (*Castilleja sessiliflora*), a state-endangered plant. Sixty-seven quality loess hill prairies remain in the state of Illinois with only 30 of those in permanent protection. Loess hill prairies such as Indian Bluff Hill Prairie are limited to the Mississippi River and Illinois River Bluffs and host an assemblage of plants that thrive on deep loess. Forested acreage to the east of this hill prairie, categorized as dry-mesic upland forest, is included in the proposal as nature preserve buffer. The site is accessible to the public via a gravel loop drive and a mowed path on the top end of the hill prairie.

Within the proposed Indian Bluff Hill Prairie Nature Preserve and Nature Preserve Buffer, RICFPD requests to reserve the following rights:

1. Maintain the gravel loop driveway;

2. Continue to use the gravel loop driveway for access and overflow parking;
3. Continue to maintain the mowed areas around the gravel loop driveway, along the ridge above the hill prairie, and to the utility box north of the gravel loop driveway;
4. Allow utility updates which includes a new electrical box in the same location as the old one, a generator next to the electrical box, and a propane tank near the parking area;
5. Maintain the 60' x 102' gravel pad to use for parking and staging of equipment; and
6. Restore the gravel pad (remove dumped gravel/material, regrade, and vegetate with INPC-approved species) as resources are available.

Staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission recommend final dedication of 1.48 acres as nature preserve and 2.78 acres as nature preserve buffer collectively as the Indian Bluff Hill Prairie Nature Preserve.

#### **REPORT**

Lorraine Foelske  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

#### **ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Final Approval for Dedication

#### **Item 18: Signature Authority for INPC Springfield Program Staff**

The Commission has traditionally delegated signature authority for new staff or those who change roles within INPC. Most recently the Commission reviewed and approved signature authority in 2022 and in 2016 prior to that. Upon the 2015 retirement of INPC's former Executive Director, Randy Heidorn, signature authority was approved for Kelly Neal as the Stewardship Project Manager to sign documents associated with INPC's Stewardship Program including: permits; management plans; approvals for other routine stewardship or management actions; and memoranda representing INPC comments on IDNR Consultations (EcoCAT/Impact Assessment) and the Comprehensive Environmental Review Process (CERP). Management approvals for routine activities are defined as those activities approved by administrative rule that are consistent with INPC Guidelines or those activities that have been approved a minimum of three times by the Commission for specific management actions or at specific sites. Former Director Heidorn recommended the authority granted to the Stewardship Project Manager continue, while granting the same authority for the Nature Preserves Protection Program Manager position. The Commission granted approval for these authorities at the 222<sup>nd</sup> INPC Meeting held in January 2016 (Resolution #2352).

With the hiring of Todd Strole as INPC's Executive Director in 2022, signature authority for INPC staff was again addressed at its 241<sup>st</sup> meeting held on May 10, 2022. Authority was granted for Director Strole to sign documents that had been covered by the Commission Chair while the Executive Director position was vacant. Director Strole was also granted authority to sign documents as referenced above for the INPC Stewardship Program (Resolution #2562).

With the addition of two new staff to INPC's Stewardship Program in Springfield, it is recommended that Brooke Thureau and Nicholas Foster be granted signature authority for the following:

- Permits
- Management plans
- Approvals for other routine stewardship or management actions
- Memoranda representing INPC comments on IDNR's EcoCAT/Impact Assessment and CERP reviews.



To ensure consistency, continuity, and efficient workflow of INPC tasks, it is also recommended that signature authority be granted to INPC Defense Specialist, Valerie Njapa, to sign off on reviews and correspondence associated with the Defense Program, which is consistent with current practice, as well as for the above Stewardship Program tasks.

**REPORT**

Todd Strole  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Approval of Signatory Authority for  
Nicholas Foster, Valerie Njapa and Brooke  
Thurau

**Item 19: Election of INPC Officers**

**REPORT**

Commissioner Tom Clay  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Election of Officers

**Item 20: Election of INPC Advisors and Consultants**

**REPORT**

Commissioner Tom Clay  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Election of Advisors and Consultants

**Item 21: Review of Closed Meeting Minutes**

In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, Commissioners must review closed minutes at least twice a year to determine if they must remain closed. The following meetings had closed minutes and need to be reviewed: August 2, 2005; May 2, 2006; May 6, 2008; May 5, 2009; May 7, 2013; September 10, 2013; and September 10, 2019.

**REPORT**

Todd Strole  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

Determination if closed minutes  
should remain closed

**Item 22: Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)**

**Item 23: Other Business**

**Item 24: Adjournment**