

**ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION
TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-SECOND MEETING MINUTES**

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

February 3, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

In-person meeting with WebEx option

*Documentary Material Enclosed

IDNR Director Natalie Finnie provided opening remarks. She welcomed and thanked the Commission and staff for all that they do to protect our natural communities. She expressed gratitude for seeing familiar faces and saying hello to old friends. She commented on the tribal content of yesterday's meeting. Tribal relations are a top priority for the department and for the Governor's Office.

(252-1): Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees

Commission Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 10:07 am and read the roll call.

Commissioners Present: Michelle Parker, Radhika Miraglia, Adam Kessel, Tom Clay, Chris Evans, Marcella DeMauro-Roth, John Rogner, and Toni Oplt. (Chris Evans left at noon.)

Advisors Present: Praveen Kumar, Alleen Betzenhauser, and Philip Willink

Consultants Present: Amy Doll, Kim Erndt-Pitcher, Jo Fessett, Cynthia Kanner, Iza Redlinski, Deborah Stone, Jim Herkert, Bill McClain, Joe Roth, Michelle Uting, Daniel Suarez, Jeff Walk, Randy Hiedorn and Fran Harty.

Others Present: Todd Strole, Assistant Director of IDNR; Kelly Neal, Valerie Njapa, Brooke Thureau, John Nelson, Angella Moorehouse, Byron Paulsen, Kaleb Baker, Nick Foster, Debbie Newman, Sami Childerson, Kevin Sierzega, John Griesbaum and Emily Taylor, INPC; Mark Alessi, Leon Hinz, Cory Anderson Michelle Bloomquist, Teya Broyles, Andrew Hulin, Joe Kath, Morgan Wood, Emma Launer, Nathan Davis, Marissa Jones, Alysha Davis, Heather Osborn, Ann Holtrop, Kayla Tatum, Kristen Ragusa, Natalia Maass,

John Nickleson, IDNR; Nina Struss, Prairie Rivers Network; Randy Locke, Illinois State Geological Survey; Jack Zinnen, University of Illinois; Peter Goodspeed and Katie Kucera, The Wetland Initiative; Phil Borsdorf, Champaign County Forest Preserve; Ryan London, Lake Forest Open Lands Association; Robin and Gary Coon, landowner; Mike Miller, Peoria Audubon; Shreya Mahajan, Illinois Environmental Council; Brad Hanzel, Prairie State Conservation Coalition; Tristan Morena, Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves; Thomas V. Lerczak, Clark Bullard and Liz Watts Malouchos, public.

(252-2): Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth made the motion to adopt the Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Clay, and carried that the Agenda for the 252nd Meeting be approved.

(252-3): Approval of Minutes for the 251st Meeting, held on September 9, 2025

It was moved by Commissioner Rogner, seconded by Commissioner Clay, and carried that the minutes for the 251st Meeting be approved.

The Commission Chair then read the Accomplishments Summary of the 251st Meeting:

At the 251st Meeting of the INPC, held on September 9, 2025, at Byron Forest Preserve in Byron, Illinois, legal protection was completed for six tracts of land totaling 125 acres. One of these tracts is privately owned, one is owned by a university, two are owned by a not-for-profit organization, and two are publicly owned. The owners of the private site donated the value of the protection agreement to the public. All tracts were dedicated as nature preserve or nature preserve buffer, including Addition and Buffer Addition to Barber Fen, Additions and Buffer Additions to Gensburg-Markham Prairie (with two owners/two tracts), Addition to Carl N. Becker Savanna, Addition to Forest Park South, and Indian Bluff Hill Prairie.

There are now 424 dedicated nature preserves with 65,368 acres and 216 registered land and water reserves with 60,041 acres. Altogether, there are 640 sites totaling 125,409 acres protected in the Illinois Nature Preserves System.

(252-4): Next Meeting Date and Location

253	May 19, 2026	Peoria Park District Peoria, Illinois
254	September 15, 2026	Lake Sara Community Building Effingham, Illinois

(252-5):* INPC Staff Report

REPORT

Todd Strole, Assistant Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The full INPC Report is provided in Appendix I. Todd Strole's remarks are provided in Attachment 5.

Commissioner Rogner thanked Strole for highlighting the stewardship needs that were addressed at the 251st meeting through Amy Doll's report. He noted the need to procure a comprehensive understanding of the scope and magnitude of the invasive species problem. Current data is portraying negative impacts, and Rogner asked how we can get a grasp on the issue.

Commissioner Rogner commented on the hard work and dedication of INPC and Heritage Staff in keeping the sites in excellent shape but noted that the problem exceeds our ability to cope. The acreage of protected land has increased, but the staff has not.

Commissioner Rogner noted the Commission's obligation to characterize the scope and magnitude of the problem. The Commission is required to do biennial reports by statute, and we are long overdue. He expressed the need to get the reports back on track and their usefulness as a framework to address stewardship issues. He discussed the challenges but reiterated the need for good information and actionable content.

Commissioner Rogner stated that George Fell saw the business of taking care of natural areas not solely as a government function, but as something that would take a village, including partners, volunteers, and NGOs, as part of the solution.

John Rogner encouraged IDNR to consider modernizing and streamlining past procedures for this report to make it less burdensome and to allow for the statutorily required biennial publication of the report in future years. In developing these procedures, the Commission urged IDNR to consider utilizing and engaging Commissioners, Commission staff, Department staff, Commission advisors and consultants, and external partner organizations, including volunteer and constituent groups, and contractual support in the development of procedures and in the collection and compilation of data, as necessary and prudent.

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

The Commission requests the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to lead the development of the next biennial nature preserves condition report, to be provided to the Commission for approval, publication, and dissemination by May 1, 2027.

(Resolution 2701)

Consultant Cynthia Kanner noted the available resources with I-view and sharing layers as a location to collect information and share.

Consultant Jim Herkert commented on the allocation of resources to complete this project.

Randy Locke commented on transitioning old school paper-based surveys to geospatially distributed data gathering. This transition occurred for the evaluation of groundwater vulnerability for nature preserves over the last five years. He relayed his willingness to share that process with the Commission. He noted the need to integrate the survey with current internal processes for it to be sustainable.

Consultant Daniel Suarez added that part of the effort is to get a sense of the scale of the invasive species issue and noted the use of Lidar as a great tool that is already being used by some landowners.

Consultant Joe Roth commented on Randy Locke's offer to share their groundwater evaluation process and expressed hope that it could be integrated into the biennial report.

Commission Chair Parker flagged the opportunity for INPC staff to lean on the natural areas community, who have all stepped forward to support Commission staff. She noted the vast community, both inside the room and beyond, who believe in and support INPC's work. She also noted the excitement around modernizing data collection to better understand the scope of the challenges facing the nature preserve system.. She expressed hope that Commission Staff will reach out to partners who are able to help in meaningful ways.

Consultant Jo Fessett noted the cost of maintaining the property that Audubon owns and was eager to see the assessment tools other landowners may be using.

Commission Chair Parker echoed Fessett, Audubon owns a lot of land and would find newly aggregated data very useful.

Commissioner Evans added that the process could be set up so that landowners, non-profits, and other organizations' staff would be doing most of the assessment rather than INPC staff.

Strole thanked Rogner, noting the diversity of people in the room who care about natural areas and whom Commission staff can lean on.

(252-6):* IDNR Staff Report

REPORT

Ann Marie Holtrop, Chief
Division of Natural Heritage

The full IDNR Report is attached as Appendix II.

Holtrop noted the need to build a culture of “notice and do,” and to listen to the stories of yesterday to train and tune the eye of staff today.

Holtrop commented on the Division of Natural Heritage’s previous review of natural community features and the ongoing process of collecting meaningful data. She noted Heritage’s upcoming 40th anniversary and the fact that the core mission since then has not changed, although the scope has.

(252-7):* Endangered Species Protection Board Report

REPORT

Dr. Philip Willink, Chair

Endangered Species Protection Board

The full ESPB Report is attached as Appendix III.

Commissioner Evans asked about data collection for the next five years and whether there are any intern opportunities. There is limited information on these species, and such work could be useful in academia for targeted species.

Advisor Willink responded that the board emphasizes data-driven decisions using the most current data possible. Some species have more data than others for various reasons, but they are constantly looking for new data sources and regularly discuss data quality. He expressed interest in discussing intern opportunities with Commission Evans after the meeting.

(252-8):* Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Report

REPORT

Amy Doll, Director

Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

The full report is attached as Appendix IV.

Doll discussed the newly passed resolution 2701 and asked what stewardship will look like in the future. She noted that government resources and programs ebb and flow, and that we cannot place all our hopes in a single organization or government entity to maintain Illinois’ biodiversity. The report is a waste if it does not inspire. George Fell knew that conservation was bigger than government. How do we get more people to be a part of the conservation movement?

Doll noted the next generation in Illinois. Illinois has a magical biodiversity and has led the way with INPC, INAI, and the VSN. The passionate people are still here, and the potential the biennial report provides will be groundbreaking.

Doll reminded the Commission of resolutions 2630 and 2631 passed at the special meeting in 2024 regarding herbicide drift. She discussed the Good Neighbor Legislation, which would require herbicide applicants to notify schools when they plan to spray. She commented that this will not fix the issue, but it is a step in the

right direction. The solution will require legislation, lawsuits, public information, new products, better tools, and a cultural change.

Commissioner Rogner noted it will take a village to complete the biennial report. He asked if there had been any update on herbicide drift. He noted the letter sent to the governor by the previous Commission Chair in 2024 and asked if the Governor's Office provided any reaction or response.

Strole replied that there has been no direct response. The letter opened the door for discussion with the Governor's Office staff, but IDNR is not the regulatory agency for this problem. The expectation is to continue to work with the inter-agency pesticide committee.

Commissioner Rogner noted that the herbicide drift problem is a monolith, as we are all embedded in the infrastructure of modern agriculture.

Strole commented that the issue is still getting the attention it deserves, but it is difficult to challenge.

Consultant Herkert acknowledged that IDNR is not the regulatory agency, but it is the agency where Illinois residents experience the most nature. He noted the public education opportunity in helping the public identify herbicide drift in their own backyards.

Commissioner Kessel asked about Good Neighbor Legislation. Are there more details about the house bill number or who is introducing the legislation?

Consultant Kim Erndt-Pitcher replied that it is HB1596 and sponsored by Diaz. It would require applications of five acres or more to provide advanced notification to schools and daycares nearby within 24-72 hours. This will not solve the issue but will help better protect children. This bill will build awareness and increase communication between applicators and the community.

Commissioner Rogner noted that the Natural Areas Preservation Act allows the Commission to advise other entities on issues regarding natural areas, which he presumed would include the General Assembly. He asked if it would be appropriate for the Commission to weigh in.

Doll noted the legislation will come before the General Assembly before the next INPC meeting. Does there need to be a resolution to allow the Commission to submit a witness slip?

Commissioner Chair Parker asked Strole what the procedure was.

Strole noted that a resolution would provide guidance and support for any action, such as submitting a witness slip to the General Assembly.

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

The Commission grants approval that Commission Chair Parker may enter a witness slip on behalf of the Commission in support of HB1596.

(Resolution 2702)

Commissioner Chair Parker noted the opportunity for Illinois to model action and motivate other states to join.

Consultant Erndt-Pitcher commented on the strength of the legislation and its potential to make Illinois a leader in this issue.

Commissioner Miraglia asked if there are partners in children's public health who are advocating or co-sponsoring this bill. She noted the opportunity to widen our community.

Consultant Erndt-Pitcher said yes, we are increasing collaboration with health departments and bringing them into the conversation.

(252-9): Champaign County – Salt Fork River Land and Water Reserve, Registration

Phil Borsdorf and John Griesbaum presented this item.

Homer Lake Forest Preserve is a 752-acre natural area in Champaign County that is owned and managed by the Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD). CCFPD requested to register 246.41 acres, more or less, as the Salt Fork River Land and Water Reserve (LWR). The proposed reserve includes five separate parcels along the Salt Fork of the Vermilion River, which are adjacent to a portion of the Salt Fork Vermilion River Segment Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (INAI #1427). This section of the river is on the INAI as a Category II for the state threatened purple wartyback (*Cyclonaias tuberculata*), state endangered wavy-rayed lampmussel (*Lampsilis fasciola*) and state threatened bluebreast darter (*Nothonotus camurus*); and as a Category VI for unusual concentration of invertebrates (mussels) and unusual concentration of fishes.

Protections for the Salt Fork River corridor will be extended and enhanced through registration. The Salt Fork River provides habitat for 14 aquatic species listed as threatened or endangered and two mussel Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Species include eastern sand darter (*Ammocrypta pellucida*), river redhorse (*Moxostoma carinatum*), bigeye chub (*Hybopsis amblops*), northern riffleshell (*Epioblasma rangiana*), monkeyface (*Quadrula metanevra*), clubshell (*Pleurobema clava*), purple lilliput (*Toxolasma lividum*), rainbow mussel (*Villosa iris*), spike (*Eurynia dilatata*), bigclaw crayfish *Faxonius placidus*, mudpuppy (*Necturus maculosus*), elktoe (*Alasmidonta marginata*), and pistolgrip (*Tritogonia verrucosa*).

The CCFPD reserved the following rights:

- 1) Erect informational trail signs and kiosks.

- 2) Maintain an existing 6-10 feet wide primitive hiking trail for visitors which can also serve as ATV/UTV access (for management or emergency response purposes only) and skid steer access (for management purposes only per the approved INPC management plan and schedule).
- 3) Allow for the future development of parking lot and canoe access area on the west bank of the Salt Fork Vermilion River, and north side of the bridge at County Road 1200 North if deemed necessary by CCFPD.
- 4) Control damage to natural features caused by nuisance wildlife (e.g. beaver or deer) using trapping or recreational hunters.
- 5) Allow for the future implementation of recreational hunting programs for deer or small game as needed for deer population control and/or to meet public demand.
- 6) Allow volunteer stewardship activities in accordance with INPC Management Plan and Activities Schedule.

CCFPD seeks registration in perpetuity of the 246.41-acres. Registration of these parcels will protect these, and other, natural resources by preserving the unique natural heritage of the Vermilion River Section of the Wabash Border Natural Division in East Central Illinois.

Commissioner Miraglia requested elaboration on the superintendents' concerns regarding the registration of the property.

Borsdorf stated there were concerns about how to maintain the property as a registered Land and Water Reserve. Once the superintendent was provided with more information, concerns were addressed.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Salt Fork River Land and Water Reserve, owned by Champaign County Forest Preserve District, as described in the proposal presented under Item 9 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2703)

(252-10): Fulton County – Addition to Kedzior Woodlands Land and Water Reserve, Registration

Angella Moorehouse presented this item.

Dawn Trulson-Mustread (formerly Dawn Kedzior), as Trustee under the Dawn Kedzior Trust, requested approval for the registration of three tracts totaling 150.432 acres as an addition to Kedzior Woodlands LWR. The original registration of 120 acres was approved on February 17, 2004, as the 102nd Land and Water Reserve at the 181st meeting of the INPC, Resolution 1751. On August 16, 2006, a 33.661-acre addition was approved at the 191st INPC meeting, Resolution 1894. The first addition was disjunct from the original reserve located 600 feet to the west and adjacent to the southeast corner of the 37.27-acre Harper-Rector Woods Nature Preserve (INAI #0125) owned by IDNR. The addition will connect the two tracts of the current reserve and will also connect and

provide access to Harper-Rector Woods NP. The addition also serves to protect a significant portion of Seville Savanna, recognized on the INAI (#1723) as a Category I site for 2.2 acres of Grade C best-of-kind mesic savanna.

Kedzior Woodlands is in the Galesburg Section of the Western Forest-Prairie Natural Division. The site provides habitat for forest sensitive breeding birds by protecting a more than 300-acre block of forest located within the uplands east of the Spoon River. The site provides habitat for 23 wildlife SGCN and supports the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan campaigns for Forest and Woodland and Farmland and Prairie.

The landowner reserved the following rights:

1. Wildlife hunting in accordance with approved INPC management plan
2. Low-impact camping
3. Use of downed or standing dead wood for firewood or other purposes
4. Removal of trees for restoration management
5. Harvest of limited number of trees in accordance with forestry management plan.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Addition to Kedzior Woodlands Land and Water Reserve, owned by Dawn Trulson-Mustread, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2704)

(252-11): Jackson County – Resilience Ridge Land and Water Reserve, Registration

Kevin Sierzega presented this item.

Debbie Scott Newman requested registration of 119.72 acres as the Resilience Ridge LWR in northern Jackson County, Illinois. The proposed reserve is in the Mt. Vernon Hill Country Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division. It will protect the core of the currently unprotected 1427-acre Post Oak Glade INAI site (#1599) (Categories I, II, III, and VI) in perpetuity. This includes all of the Category I high-quality natural community acreage: 1.6 acres of Grade A and 2.85 acres of Grade B dry barrens, and 14.79 acres of Grade B dry-mesic woodland. Additional significant features of the proposed LWR include specific suitable habitat for four state threatened or endangered species and natural features critical for unusual concentrations of reptiles. Natural communities include dry barrens with dry sandstone cliff inclusion, dry-mesic barrens, dry-mesic woodland with dry woodland inclusions, mesic sandstone cliff, wet-mesic floodplain forest, low gradient medium stream, swamp, and old field. Over one mile of stream length along Rattlesnake Creek bisects the reserve. Across the site, botanical diversity is extremely high.

Within the proposed reserve, the landowner reserved the right to:

1. Construct two (2) small parking areas that hold up to five (5) vehicles, respectively, in pre-determined locations:
 - a. Along Route 4 and/or

- b. At the south end of the driveway.
2. Maintain gravel driveway via tractor grading or addition of rock.
3. Allow current and future owners of the five-acre homesite to maintain utilities along the gravel driveway including waterline, telephone line, and electrical line.
4. Allow current and future owners of the five-acre homesite to use the access gravel driveway, in perpetuity, via a legally described easement.
5. Allow current and future owners of the five-acre homesite to remove select branches or trees within 50 feet of the southern property boundary of the home site, with prior NAPS (INPC) consultation, for passive solar and protection of the home.
6. Maintain access lanes, UTV-accessible roads and trails, and the old railroad spur.
7. Build trails, with prior NAPS (INPC) consultation, in the following locations:
 - a. From the main ridgeline above the barrens community to the railroad spur and
 - b. Connection trails to existing logging roads.
8. Construct two ephemeral ponds in the old field community.
9. Create three small berms in floodplain forest community at the downstream end of existing wetland depressions to reverse unnatural drainage into Rattlesnake Creek.
10. Maintain the slough through management actions as needed to prevent Rattlesnake Creek from eroding the old railroad bed spur that created the wetland. Maintenance may include use of small heavy equipment (e.g., miniature bobcat) to replace culverts and/or place rip rap along the slough's entry to Rattlesnake Creek.
11. Construct a bridge across Rattlesnake Creek.
12. Construct a primitive campsite, for personal use and with prior consultation with the NAPS, in a predetermined location (i.e., along the ridgeline trail north of the dry barrens) that will minimally disturb natural features.
13. Harvest of white-tailed deer, Eastern cottontail rabbit, wild turkey, Eastern gray or fox squirrel, and removal of species considered invasive, specifically nine-banded armadillo. Harvest of species other than those listed is prohibited.
14. Allow deer stands except within the dry barrens community.
15. Selective harvest or salvage for single trees only, for personal use, without the use of heavy equipment or skid roads.

Registration of the proposed site as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve should be considered for the following qualifying features and/or reasons:

1. Permanent protection of 119.72 acres of INAI #1599,
2. Permanent protection of 19.24 acres of Category I high-quality natural communities,
3. Provides specific suitable habitat for verified extant populations of four state threatened or endangered species: Cerulean warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*, ST), Chuck-will's-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*, ST), Carolina whipgrass (*Scleria pauciflora*, SE), and timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*, ST),
4. Protects geological features critical to the survival of a state-listed herptile,
5. Provides habitat for 31 SGCN including 24 avian species that are confirmed as breeding on the proposed reserve, and
6. Supports various Illinois Wildlife Action Plan campaigns.

Commissioner Clay commented on his reservations about the reserved rights before he understood that the landowner was Debbie Newman. He thanked Newman for her hard work and for registering her property.

Debbie Newman confessed that this land has been eligible to be a land and water reserve for decades, and it has been an interesting case study for her to understand all the reasons a landowner might delay protecting their land. Though if she had dedicated it 15 years ago, there wouldn't have had nearly as many good things to say about it, considering the work that has been done over the years.

Newman noted the wonderful work Kevin Sierzega has done and stated she will be happy to retire someday and leave things in his hands. She noted he was phenomenal to work with through the registration process.

Newman commented on her deep relationship with her land and the joys and sorrows it has brought her. She noted how important this protection is to her, and while it may not protect from natural threats, it can be insulated from threats like pipelines and data centers.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Resilience Ridge Land and Water Reserve, owned by Debbie Scott Newman, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2705)

(252-12): Lake County – Jean and John Greene Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine, Preliminary Dedication

Ryan London and John Nelson presented this item.

Lake Forest Open Lands Association (LFOLA), Lake Forest Land Foundation, and the City of Lake Forest requested the preliminary approval of the dedication of 46.4 acres as nature preserve and 2.3 acres as nature preserve buffer. Together, these 48.7 acres will be known as the Jean and John Greene Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine. This ravine system is in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. The site consists of five natural communities associated with ravines that flow into Lake Michigan. The proposed nature preserve is within the McCormick Ravine Category I INAI site (#1008), which was originally recognized in 1976 for its Grade A and B dry-mesic and mesic upland forest communities, Grade A seeps, and several state threatened and endangered plant species. McCormick Ravine is likely the most intact example of the Lake Michigan ravine system, most of which has been highly altered by development.

Easements and Reserved Rights:

There is an existing 25-foot-wide sanitary sewer line easement that runs through a portion of the proposed nature preserve. The City also holds an access easement on a portion of the proposed nature preserve for day use of existing trails within the proposed nature preserve.

LFOLA will continue to maintain its existing trail infrastructure, including bridges, stairways, and boardwalks and to collaborate with neighbors along the northern boundary to stabilize the ravine, control erosion, and accommodate stormwater according to best management practices. LFOLA will also continue to maintain the nature-based erosion control infrastructure installed during the Great Lakes Fisheries Ecosystem Restoration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration projects. In addition to these structures, LFOLA reserves the right to implement slope stabilization measures, particularly in collaboration with neighboring landowners to the north.

INPC staff recommended preliminary approval of the Jean and John Greene Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Jean and John Greene Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine, owned by the Lake Forest Open Lands Association, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2706)

(252-13): Monroe County – Trout Hollow Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication

Debbie Scott Newman presented this item.

The proposed Trout Hollow Hill Prairie Nature Preserve is a 14-acre site located in the bluff corridor north of Valmeyer, Illinois, in Monroe County. The proposed preserve is in the Northern Section of the Ozark Natural Division. Dedication of the property will protect the Category II Trout Hollow Hill Prairie INAI site (#1997). The proposed preserve contains loess hill prairie, limestone glade, dry upland woodland, dry-mesic upland forest and one state-listed species, the crested coralroot orchid (*Hexalectris spicata*). This site contains the northernmost population of this orchid. The proposed preserve also contains significant cultural resources. The site fits into a larger forested bluff corridor that also provides important migration stopover habitat for birds in the Mississippi River Flyway.

Dedication of Trout Hollow Hill Prairie supports several campaigns of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan including the Forest and Woodland, Invasive Species, and Land and Water Stewardship Campaigns. Action items in the Forest Campaign supported by this dedication include maintaining and enhancing the composition of Illinois forests, ecological connectivity and reducing fragmentation. Action items of the Invasive Species Campaign supported by the proposed Trout Hollow Hill Prairie preserve include removing invasive species from important natural areas and educating the public about controlling exotics. Action items in the Land and Water Stewardship Campaign supported by this site include improving the stewardship of private land resources.

Additionally, the site is located within the Bluff Corridor/Karst Conservation Opportunity Area.

The proposed preserve is owned by Heartlands Conservancy. Dedicating this site is the culmination of a major collaborative effort to raise funds to save it from development. Heartlands Conservancy staff managed to raise the money needed in 65 days, with 841 donors coming from 42 states, and 4 countries.

The landowner reserved the following rights:

1. Install a small parking area for visitors along Trout Hollow Road, utilizing the already disturbed area around the powerline corridor.
2. Install a bridge over the creek if needed for the parking area.
3. Install one trail, either loop or in-and-out, in the preserve.
4. Install a viewing platform near the prairie to protect the prairie and the cultural resources from visitor entry and trampling.
5. Install sitting benches along the trail or near the prairie, and interpretive signs or kiosk.
6. Use cut cedars from the restoration efforts for visitor benches, a kiosk, or signposts. INPC and HC staff would prefer to have cedars removed, when possible, to reduce fire fuel loads during prescribed burns. This reserved right will complement restoration efforts. In addition to the removal of cedars, the owners reserve the right to remove any wood along designated firebreaks to reduce fuel loads, including if needed for firewood for HC events.
7. Heartlands Conservancy will work with INPC staff for approval on placement of above structures.

The preservation of this site accomplishes important conservation goals for the area. INPC and many partners have been working tirelessly to protect as many of the rapidly disappearing loess hill prairies and limestone glades and their associated species along the 30-mile bluff corridor in Monroe and Randolph Counties. Several units of government, non-profits, and private landowners have permanently protected their hill prairie properties. The Trout Hollow Hill Prairie parcel will provide protection for another hill prairie. The proposed preserve is also an important habitat bridge between Eagle Cliff Prairie NP 1.5 miles to the north and Salt Lick Point LWR 1 mile to the south.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Trout Hollow Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, owned by Heartlands Conservancy, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2707)

(252-14): Peoria County – Mary Taylor's Mossville Road Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication

Angella Moorehouse presented this item.

Bernard and Mary Taylor, owners of Mossville Road Hill Prairie, requested preliminary approval for approximately 3.06 acres to be dedicated as Mary Taylor's Mossville Road Hill Prairie NP. The site has approximately 1.2 acres of glacial drift hill prairie bordered by dry-mesic and mesic woodland. The site contains most of the Mossville Road Hill Prairie INAI site (0143) currently recognized as a Category I site containing 1.2 acres of Grade A glacial drift hill prairie. The hill prairie is located within the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. The site lies immediately north of land owned by the Peoria Park District and 0.1 miles north of Robinson Park Hill Prairie Nature Preserve. The federally listed rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) has been observed within 0.4 miles from the site. Mossville Road Hill Prairie supports at least seven wildlife SGCN and supports the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan campaigns for Green Cities, Forest and Woodland, and Farmland and Prairie. The site is located within the center of the Peoria Bluff Legacy area, critically important as a large forest block supporting forest sensitive breeding birds as well as at least eight acres of high-quality remnant glacial drift hill prairie.

The landowners reserved the right to approve all management decisions including prescribed fire operations, tree clearing, and the use of herbicide to control unwanted vegetation. While the house, driveway, and land immediately surrounding the home are excluded from the dedication, the owners reserve the right to maintain the house and associated utilities including power, water, sewer, and any other necessary utilities.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Mary Taylor's Mossville Road Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, owned by Bernard and Mary Taylor, as described in the proposal presented under Item 14 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2708)

(252-15): Putnam County – Thomas W. and Elizabeth Moews Dore Seep Nature Preserve Buffer Addition (Sandy Hollow), Preliminary Dedication

Peter Goodspeed and Katie Kucera presented this item.

The Wetlands Initiative (TWI) requested approval for the dedication of 352.14 acres as a nature preserve buffer addition on a property known as Sandy Hollow, which borders the Thomas W. and Elizabeth Moews Dore Seep Nature Preserve. The site is in Putnam County and is part of the Sue and Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refuge, which is managed by TWI. The area straddles the border of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois River Bottomlands Natural Division and the Illinois River and Mississippi River Sand Areas Natural Division. Sandy Hollow contains native ecosystems, including restored sand prairie, restored sand savanna, restored mesic prairie, oak-hickory woodland, and floodplain forest. Sandy Hollow is bordered to the west by Hennepin Hopper Lakes INAI site (#0825). This site is on the INAI as Category I for having a Grade B seep, Category II for providing suitable habitat for the king rail (*Rallus elegans*), yellow-headed blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*), and least bittern (*Ixobrychus*

exilis), and Category VI for having an unusual concentration of herptile species with 25 species documented. The proposed buffer addition shares a border with the Dore Seep Nature Preserve, protecting much of the upland recharge zone for the seep features found within the nature preserve. Furthermore, Sandy Hollow contains several state-listed plant species that have been introduced to the site through restoration efforts. The site is accessible to the public via a gravel driveway, gravel parking lot, and a network of mowed trails that wind throughout the diverse habitats.

Within the proposed Thomas W. and Elizabeth Moews Dore Seep Nature Preserve Buffer Addition (Sandy Hollow), TWI requests to reserve the following listed rights, related to the management and future low-impact development of the site to maintain this high-quality restoration and facilitate public access well into the future.

Reserved Rights:

1. Introduce native plant material (i.e., trees, shrubs, plugs, and seed) to the site to meet ongoing ecological restoration goals.
2. Maintain or improve the 1,250-foot gravel driveway from IL Route 26 to the parking lot with the same material or a low-impact paving alternative.
3. Maintain or improve the 5,100-square-foot gravel parking lot using the same material or a low-impact paving alternative.
4. Expand the existing gravel parking area by up to three times its current footprint.
5. Install a picnic pavilion at the parking lot.
6. Install a vault toilet structure at the parking lot.
7. Maintain or improve existing trails (totaling approximately 4.4 miles) with current surfaces (turfgrass, gravel, sand, cobble) or resurface with low-impact paving material.
8. Install additional spur trails to connect the existing trail network to trails on adjacent parcels that may be acquired and restored in the future.
9. Maintain, improve, or replace two concrete vehicle/equipment fords across the intermittent stream (tributary of the Illinois River), using the same or a lower-impact surface material.
10. Maintain, improve, or replace the existing small wooden pedestrian bridge over the intermittent stream (a tributary of the Illinois River).
11. Improve and maintain the informal pedestrian ford on the north side of the property, using concrete, riprap, pavers, or a low-impact pedestrian bridge.
12. Maintain, improve, or replace the Pyott Pavilion shelter.
13. Maintain, improve, or replace existing benches or low-impact bench platforms.
14. Install additional benches, low-impact bench platforms, or seating areas where appropriate.
15. Maintain, improve, replace, or install picnic tables where appropriate.
16. Maintain, improve, replace, or install signage for interpretation, donor recognition, wayfinding, rules and regulations, and visitor information. This includes maintenance of surrounding areas using mulch, gravel, herbicide, or other weed suppression methods.
17. Install and maintain low-impact wildlife observation platforms and/or towers.
18. Maintain, improve, replace, or install artificial wildlife structures, including bird boxes, bat boxes, bird nesting platforms, and herptile hibernacula.
19. Permit visitors to walk dogs on leashes not exceeding 10 feet.

20. Allow construction of a future multi-use bridge and/or multi-use recreational trail in the southwest section of the preserve buffer to connect a potential future levee-top trail at the Sue and Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refuge to a trail on an adjacent parcel south of Sandy Hollow. While no such access currently exists, this right would preserve long-term regional trail connectivity options.
21. Allow permitted hunting, fishing, and trapping solely for the management of nuisance wildlife species that cause ecological harm within the nature preserve buffer.

Aside from deer, control of over-abundant native animals has not yet been approved by INPC as a standard management practice at nature preserves. There are significant examples in scientific literature documenting that overpopulation of common, generalist animal species (such as mesopredators) can negatively impact conservative, rare, threatened, or endangered species. Anthropogenic influences and limited habitat availability exacerbate negative impacts to rare native species. Control of overabundant animals is becoming a standard practice by land managers of natural habitat throughout Illinois on non-INPC lands. In consideration that the acres proposed for dedication were formerly agriculture (not INAI quality) and will be buffer - INPC staff recommend that the control as described be allowed as a reserved right within the buffer with INPC staff level coordination and review prior to implementation.

Staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission recommended preliminary dedication of 352.14 acres of nature preserve buffer as the Thomas W. and Elizabeth Moews Dore Seep Nature Preserve Buffer Addition (Sandy Hollow).

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth asked if the recharge area to the east had been mapped.

Goodspeed replied no, but the samples show nitrate has been making it into the ground. There has been discussion on further studying the connection.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth noted the great start and said it would be interesting to know how much of the recharge area is included in the site. She asked about plant species and their inclusion despite being outside of their range.

Kucera noted it was her predecessor who made the plant species decisions. She stated her interest in introducing more historical species in the future.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth asked if an endangered species is considered restored if planted outside of its historical range.

Kucera noted the need to consult ESPB for the answer to that question.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Thomas W. and Elizabeth Moews Dore Seep Nature Preserve Buffer Addition (Sandy Hollow), owned by The Wetlands Initiative, as described in the proposal presented under Item 15 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2709)

(252-16): Marshall County – Buffer to Oak Bluff Savanna Nature Preserve, Preserve, Final Dedication

Mike Miller presented this item.

The Peoria Audubon Society requested final approval for the dedication of 14.5 acres as a buffer addition to the existing Oak Bluff Savanna Nature Preserve. Preliminary approval was granted at the 251st INPC meeting (Resolution 2687). 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 site is part of the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. In 1999, Oak Bluff Savanna was recognized on the 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 minimum requirements, 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 as Category III. Oak Bluff Savanna also provides critical bird habitat, especially for vulnerable species observed at the site including the state threatened black-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) and two state endangered birds – the northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*) and 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 reserved the following rights:

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

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Buffer to Oak Bluff Savanna Nature Preserve, owned by the Peoria Audubon Society, as described in the proposal presented under Item 16 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2710)

(252-17): Pope County – Buffer Addition to Spivey's Valley Glade Nature Preserve, Final Dedication

Kevin Sierzega presented this item.

The Spivey family requested final dedication of 2.9 acres of nature preserve buffer as Buffer Addition to Spivey's Valley Glade NP in northeastern Pope County, Illinois. Spivey's Valley Glade NP (#274) was dedicated as an Illinois nature preserve at the 157th INPC meeting in 1998; a later addition received final approval at the 250th INPC

meeting in May 2025. This east buffer addition received preliminary approval for dedication at the 251st INPC meeting in September 2025. The nature preserve lies within the Lesser Shawnee Hills Section of the Shawnee Hills Natural Division of Illinois. Spivey's Valley Glade INAI site (#1526) is recognized for Category I, II, and III features and totals 516.13 acres. The Category I high quality natural communities total 31.2 acres all of which are protected as nature preserve and include 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.

The 2.9-acre buffer addition is contiguous with the east boundary of the existing nature preserve buffer. Natural communities in the addition are a combination old field and dry-mesic barrens. The mean coefficient of conservatism (c-value) is 4.3 for native species of flora. The native floristic quality index (FQI) is 46.7 and includes many highly conservative species including the state threatened (ST) spring ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes vernalis*) and ST creeping cucumber (*Melothria pendula*). 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 (ST), Eastern narrowmouth toad (ST), spring ladies' tresses (ST), and squirting cucumber (ST);
3. Historic populations of three state-listed species: Loggerhead shrike (SE), Northern long-eared bat (FT, SE); and Bewick's wren (SE);
4. 103.6 acres of protected habitat for 37 SGCN including gray bat and 28 avian species that are confirmed as breeding on or proximate to the preserve; and
5. Supports the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, specifically the following campaigns: Forest and Woodland, Farmland and Prairie, and Invasive Species Campaigns.

Within the proposed NP buffer addition, the landowner reserved the right 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 INPC's Deer Management Guideline,
4. Remove downed-woody debris (e.g., cedar slash) from woodland communities off the preserve to decrease fuel loads prior to prescribed burning.

Commission Chair Parker commented on the horse residing on the property and inquired about its health.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Buffer Addition to Spivey's Valley Glade Nature Preserve, owned by The Spivey family, as described in the proposal presented under Item 17 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2711)

(252-18): Tazewell County – Coon Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Final Dedication

Byron Paulsen presented this item.

The proposed 3.39-acre Coon Hill Prairie NP is owned by Gary and Robin Coon. They enrolled the site in INPC's Natural Heritage Landmark Program (#173) in November of 2000. Gary and Robin received preliminary approval on September 9, 2025, at the 251st meeting of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (Resolution 2689) for the dedication of the proposed nature preserve. 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 (#0129) as Category I for 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 campaigns identified in the IWAP, including the Farmland and Prairie, Forest and Woodland, Invasive Species, and 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 hunting on the property, and use of all-terrain vehicles for management purposes only.

Gary Coon thanked the Commission for this unique opportunity and for the comfort that Nature Preserve protection after he is gone.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Coon Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, owned by Gary and Robin Coon, as described in the proposal presented under Item 18 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2712)

(252-19): INPC Guidance on Reinterment of Tribal Ancestral Remains and Artifacts

Kaleb Baker Presented this item.

INPC staff worked closely with the Illinois State Museum and other IDNR staff including the Tribal Relations Director, Curator of Anthropology, and Archaeologist, and representatives of several federally recognized Tribal Nations, to compile a guidance document titled, 'INPC Guidance on Reinterment of Tribal Ancestral Remains and Artifacts'. This document was compiled in response to Resolution 2632, approved by the Commission at its 249th Special Meeting, requesting that "INPC staff work with the Illinois State Museum to begin discussions around removing barriers and constraints to repatriating ancestral remains and make recommendations to the Commission." This guidance provides the framework and procedures for the reinterment of Native American remains and funerary objects at INPC-protected sites. With permanent protection at INPC sites, federally recognized Tribal Nations will have an established pathway to work with INPC, IDNR, and landowners, to reinter their ancestors in suitable

areas approved by all parties, where they will remain without fear of future disturbance. The guidance document includes the purpose, relevant definitions and statutory authorities, an outline for the reinterment process, and additional guidelines. Approval by the Commission and implementation of the reinterment process will cultivate and strengthen meaningful relationships with Indigenous people, who have stewarded and cared for these lands for thousands of years.

Commission Chair Parker clarified that these guidelines were co-created with tribes, and their approval for these overarching guidelines was sought and obtained. Record-keeping details will be better determined as the work begins. She stressed the primary goal of these guidelines was to bring reinterments from the public to the private sphere. The guidelines will apply the same to new and old properties and will be primarily initiated by landowners and tribes.

Baker agreed.

Commission Chair Parker commented that reinterment will be added to an approved list of uses that are present to landowners. Staff will be responsible for making sure landowners understand it is an option.

Commissioner Clay asked how we allow tribes to trace their connection to Illinois. He asked whether we should communicate the opportunity for reinterment on INPC land.

Baker commented that the tribes that were consulted, the Illinois State Museum staff, and other stakeholders are aware of the reinterments.

Commission Cunningham asked if the tribes would have to originate from the area to reinter on INPC sites.

Baker replied that there is no requirement.

Consultant Doll asked about FOIA and the Open Meetings Act. She asked how municipalities can close their meetings.

Strole responded that there are no specific exceptions. If an organization is unable to close the meeting, they may consider how much detailed information needs to be shared.

Consultant Cynthia Kanner asked if management plans must be approved in open meetings.

Neal replied that it depends on the organization. They might want to discuss it but could limit sensitive details.

Consultant Roth stated that approvals must be public for most entities.

Commissioner Chair Parker noted the need to work out details and consult legal experts.

Commissioner Kessel commented on the significance of removing barriers and reviewing our own management plan approval procedure.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth noted that new uses would need to be approved in a public meeting, but once they are approved, they will not need to come back.

Baker suggested asking for new uses but not including specific details, such as the exact location.

Consultant Kanner noted the use of guidelines as a model and thanked the Commission for testing it out.

Commission Chair Parker thanked everyone for their dedication and for sitting with the discomfort of working through these issues. She noted the Commission rose to the occasion and did not shy away from taking on the hard stuff.

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

The Commission grants approval of INPC Guidance on Reinterment of Tribal Ancestral Remains and Artifacts, as described in the proposal presented under Item 19 of the agenda for the 252nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2713)

(252-20): Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)

Strole read submitted comments from Consultant John White, as followed: A symposium titled "Spring & Natural History" at New Harmony will be held on April 26 to 28, 2026, at New Harmony, Indiana, just across the Wabash River from Illinois. The event will commemorate the arrival of the "Boatload of Knowledge" at New Harmony in April of 1826. Among the scientists on board was Thomas Say, the father of American entomology. The symposium will also review the accomplishments of the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory and will celebrate the lifetime achievements of its staff members. The meeting will feature field trips to nearby natural areas and a tour of the historic village of New Harmony. There will be presentations about local history, geology, flora, and fauna.

Consultant Iza Redlinski noted that the solution to the stewardship problem may lie in seed banking. As many native plant populations are facing declines, seed banking could provide a rapid response tool to conserve the genetic diversity of existing populations before they are reduced any further. Seed banking can safeguard against the loss of genetic diversity in remnant populations and allow for reintroduction when management improves conditions at Preserves. This safeguard allows managers to implement management techniques with reduced risk, knowing that genetically appropriate material is conserved and available in the event of setbacks.

Consultant Redlinski continued noting that seed banking allows for the short- or long-term conservation of seeds, with the potential to utilize them in the future for grow-outs and reintroductions. Seed collection protocols have been developed through the Center for Plant Conservation and the Seeds of Success Program. Similar protocols

could be deployed to make seed collections of critical species on Illinois Nature Preserves. Local biologists, staff, and volunteers could coordinate to collect critical species and send them to facilities like the Dixon National Tallgrass Prairie Seed Bank at the Chicago Botanic Garden for storage. In the near future, the seed could be retrieved, propagated, and reintroduced to the original areas, as the commission and its staff see fit.

Consultant Redlinski strongly encouraged the Commission, all members, and staff to consider this approach, noting that it should run parallel to and complement increased funding for preserving biodiversity in our preserves. She offered to discuss FPCC's approach and growing experience on seed banking and share the procedures, technology, and thought process that go into these decisions.

Jack Zinnen, a researcher with the University of Illinois, asked about access to digitized nature preserve proposals and dedications.

(252-21): Other Business

(252-22): Adjournment

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

The 252nd INPC Meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.