ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION AGENDA
TWO HUNDRED FIFTY FOURTH MEETING

Lake Sara Community Building
9282 E Park Ave
Effingham IL 62401

September 15, 2026, 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 253rd Meeting, held on May 19, 2026

Note: Share Accomplishments Summary of the 253rd INPC Meeting

At the 253rd Meeting of the INPC, held on May 19, 2026, at the Peoria Park District's Noble Center, legal protection was completed for three tracts of land totaling 374 acres. One of these tracts is publicly owned and the other two are privately-owned by not-for-profit organizations. The owners of the private sites donated the value of the protection agreements to the public. One tract was registered as the Bowers Trust Addition to Cuba Marsh Land and Water Reserve and two tracts were dedicated including Trout Hollow Hill Prairie Nature Preserve and Sandy Hollow Buffer Addition to Thomas W. and Elizabeth Moews Dore Seep Nature Preserve.

There are now 426 dedicated nature preserves with 65,755 acres and 218 registered land and water reserves with 60,580 acres, bringing the total to 644 sites in the Illinois Nature Preserves System comprised of 126,335 acres.

Item 4: Next Meeting Date and Location

255	February 2nd, 2027	Illinois Department of Natural Resources Joel Brunsvold Building, Springfield, Illinois
256	May 18th, 2027	Okan Community Center Hopkins Park, IL
257	September 14th, 2027	Blackhawk State Historic Site Rock Island, IL

Item 5:* INPC Staff Report

REPORT
Todd Strole, Assistant Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Item 6:* **IDNR Staff Report**

REPORT
Ann Marie Holtrop, Chief
Division of Natural Heritage

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

REPORT
Dr. Philip Willink, Chair
Endangered Species Protection Board

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

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

Proposed Slate of Advisors:

Jim Montgomery 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. Philip Willink 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

Proposed Slate of Consultants:

Gerald Adelmann	Jill Allread	Alan Branhagen
Michelle Carr	George Covington	Amy Doll
Harry Drucker	Kim Erndt-Pitcher	Jo Fessett
Jordan Gurneau	Fran Harty	Randy Heidorn
Jon Henn	Dr. Jim Herkert	Cynthia Kanner
Kerry Leigh	Bill McClain	Izabella Redlinski
Jill Riddell	Lauren Rosenthal	Bruce Ross-Shannon
Joseph Roth	Dr. Charles Ruffner	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: Vacant

Item 10:* **Clark County –Oak Ridge Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

The proposed Oak Ridge Land and Water Reserve (LWR) is a 125.03-acre tract within Lincoln Trail State Park in Clark County, Illinois. The site is currently owned and managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The IDNR seeks to register 119.79 acres as the Oak Ridge LWR. The proposed reserve is located entirely within American Beech Woods Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) site #0047 (Category I, II, III) and is in the Southern Upland Section of the Wabash River Border Natural Division. The site's Category I qualifying feature includes 20 acres of Grade B and Grade C Best-of-Kind dry-mesic woodland. The remainder of the reserve primarily consists of additional dry-mesic and mesic woodland natural communities.

Registration of the proposed Oak Ridge LWR will permanently protect the only currently recognized INAI qualifying example of a dry-mesic woodland within the Southern Uplands Section of the Wabash River Border Natural Division. Registration helps to work toward each of the three main goals outlined in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) by increasing the extent and quality of shared lands, maintaining native wildlife and plant species populations, and increasing the connection and appreciation by the public of native species and their habitats. Specific Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) that may benefit directly from this reserve and the increased habitat management within the associated management plan include the state endangered Jefferson salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*) and the troublesome sedge (*Carex molesta*).

The owner reserves the following rights:

1. Creation of vernal ponds to support the state-endangered Jefferson salamander.
2. Existing squirrel, raccoon, turkey, archery deer hunting, and furbearer trapping will be allowed within Oak Ridge LWR. Modification of existing hunting and trapping or the addition of new compatible opportunities may be allowed if they are approved through the Site Plan of Work process.
3. Passive nature-based uses such as hiking, birdwatching, nature observation, scientific research, and photography will also continue to be allowed on the proposed LWR.
4. Maintenance of existing roadways, picnic areas, and currently established structures.

The IDNR seeks registration in perpetuity of this 119.79-acre portion of Lincoln Trail State Park referred to as Oak Ridge Land and Water Reserve. Registration of Oak Ridge LWR will permanently recognize and protect the reserve's ecological, recreational, educational, scenic, and cultural resources while ensuring the continued stewardship of the only example of a currently INAI qualifying dry-mesic woodland natural community in the Southern Upland Section of the Wabash River Border Natural Division.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Morgan Wood Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Registration Approval

Item 11:* **Effingham County – Blue Point Woods Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Effingham Water Authority wishes to register approximately 31.5 acres as the Blue Point Woods Land and Water Reserve (LWR) under the Illinois Land and Water Reserve Program for a 25-year term. The property contains INAI site #1956, a high-quality Grade B dry-mesic upland forest within the Effingham Plain Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division. Registration will protect one of the few remaining quality upland forest remnants in the Lake Sara conservation landscape while promoting long-term stewardship and habitat restoration.

Compatible uses of the property, including passive recreation, hunting, scientific research, environmental education, invasive species control, prescribed fire, ecological restoration, and other approved management activities, will continue under the terms of the Land and Water Reserve Agreement. Selective timber management may also be conducted when consistent with ecological restoration objectives and developed in consultation with IDNR and INPC staff. Maintenance of existing access routes and boundary features necessary for property management and emergency response may also continue, provided such activities are carried out in a manner that minimizes impacts to the protected natural communities.

Protection of Blue Point Woods will complement the adjacent Lake Sara Flatwoods Nature Preserve and Lake Sara Woodland Land and Water Reserve, further expanding this forest complex. Conserving these interconnected natural areas strengthens landscape connectivity, protects the ecological functions of the Lake Sara watershed, and provides resilient habitat for native plants and wildlife. Registration as a 25-year Illinois Land and Water Reserve reflects the landowner's commitment to conservation and will ensure that this exceptional forest continues to be actively managed and protected, preserving an important component of Illinois' natural heritage for future generations. Staff recommends approval of the proposed Blue Point Woods Land and Water Reserve.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Sami Childerson Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Registration Approval

Item 12:* **Effingham County – Camp Walter Scott Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

The proposed Camp Walter Scott Land and Water Reserve is an approximately 180-acre property in Effingham County owned and managed by the Illinois Disciples of Christ. The owner wishes to register approximately 180 acres as the Camp Walter Scott Land and Water Reserve. The proposed reserve is located within the Effingham Plain Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division and includes more than 100 acres of contiguous oak-hickory forest, which serves as the qualifying feature for registration. The property also contains a lake, ephemeral drainageways, restored prairie and pollinator habitat, mature forest edge communities, and other natural features that contribute to wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and the ecological integrity of the surrounding landscape.

Protection of the Camp Walter Scott property will permanently conserve one of the largest privately managed contiguous forest tracts in southeastern Effingham County

while preserving opportunities for environmental education, outdoor recreation, scientific research, and natural resource stewardship. The property's mature woodlands provide habitat for a diversity of native wildlife, improve groundwater infiltration, reduce soil erosion, store carbon, and contribute to habitat connectivity within a predominantly agricultural landscape. Since 1962, the property has served as a regional center for youth camps, retreats, conservation education, and outdoor programming, fostering an appreciation for Illinois' natural and cultural heritage.

The owner reserves the following rights:

1. Maintain, repair, renovate, and replace existing camp infrastructure compatible with the purposes of the Land and Water Reserve.
2. Conduct youth camps, retreats, conferences, environmental education programs, outdoor recreation, and other activities consistent with the camp's mission.
3. Maintain existing roads, trails, utilities, parking areas, bridges, shoreline improvements, and other infrastructure necessary for property management and public safety.
4. Implement natural resource management activities including prescribed fire, invasive species control, selective forest management, native habitat restoration, wildlife habitat enhancement, shoreline stabilization, ecological monitoring, and conservation grazing
    - with the right to utilize its existing herd of approximately 10 to 15 goats as a targeted conservation grazing tool to suppress invasive woody vegetation and improve natural community health in accordance with an INPC approved grazing management plan.
5. Continue scientific research, volunteer stewardship projects, citizen science initiatives, and environmental interpretation.
6. Install and maintain interpretive signage, kiosks, overlooks, benches, and other visitor amenities compatible with the conservation objectives of the reserve.
7. Provide for designated cultural resource areas, including, where appropriate and in accordance with applicable laws and Tribal consultation, the respectful reinterment of Indigenous ancestral remains and associated funerary objects.
8. Conduct activities necessary to protect visitors' safety, public health, and natural resources, including hazard tree removal, emergency access, and nuisance wildlife management.

The Illinois Disciples of Christ seeks registration in perpetuity of the approximately 180-acre property. Registration of the Camp Walter Scott Land and Water Reserve will permanently recognize and protect the property's ecological, educational, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources while ensuring the continued stewardship of one of Effingham County's most significant privately protected forest landscapes.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Sami Childerson Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Registration Approval

Item 13:* <u>Effingham County – Lake Sara Woodlands Land and Water Reserve, Registration</u>

The staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission recommends the permanent registration of approximately 26.8 acres owned by the Effingham Water Authority as the Lake Sara Woodlands Land and Water Reserve in Summit Township, Effingham

County. The proposed reserve is located within the Effingham Plain Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division and consists primarily of mature dry-mesic oak woodland immediately adjacent to the proposed Lake Sara Flatwoods Nature Preserve. Registration of the reserve will permanently protect a significant portion of the forested landscape surrounding the proposed Nature Preserve, providing an important ecological buffer while conserving watershed functions, mature woodland habitat, and landscape connectivity within the Lake Sara conservation complex.

Together with the proposed Lake Sara Flatwoods Nature Preserve, proposed Blue Point Woods Land and Water Reserve, and adjacent Natural Heritage Landmark (NHL) properties, the Reserve will contribute to the long-term protection of one of the largest remaining contiguous high-quality woodland and flatwoods complexes in Effingham County. The property also supports conservation priorities identified in the IWAP, including the Forest Campaign, Invasive Species Campaign, and habitat for numerous SGCN.

Reserved rights retained by the landowner include:

1. Continued use and maintenance of existing roads, trails, utility corridors, and water supply infrastructure.
2. Ability to fell and remove hazardous trees within the reserve. Hazardous trees located along the main trail may be felled and removed without prior notification to INPC staff. The felling and removal of all other hazardous trees shall be conducted in consultation and coordination with INPC staff.
3. Implementation of prescribed fire, invasive species control, forest management, ecological restoration, and other stewardship activities approved by INPC.
4. Scientific research and biological monitoring.
5. Construction and maintenance of conservation-related improvements.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Sami Childerson Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Registration Approval

Item 14:* <u>Vermilion County – A.J. Woods Land and Water Reserve, Registration</u>

Nohra Mateus-Pinilla and Kerry Helms seek registration of approximately 5.5 acres of their property as Land and Water Reserve. Their land is in the Vermilion River Section of the Wabash River Border Natural Division, of Vermilion County. The site is located along and within the Salt Fork of the Vermilion River INAI site #1427. The Salt Fork INAI includes Category II, III, and IV features, including: 14 extant endangered or threatened aquatic species, three land and water reserves, and unusual concentrations of invertebrates (mussels).

Registration of the property will:

1. Protect and buffer 406 ft. of the Salt Fork of Vermilion River INAI.
2. Protect habitat for 14 state and/or federally listed threatened and endangered species.
3. Protect one of only two populations of the rare leatherwood shrub (*Dirca palustris)* that occurs in the Vermilion River Section of the Wabash River Border Division.

Nohra Mateus-Pinilla and Kerry Helms seek registration in perpetuity for their 5.55 acres of land as the A.J. Woods Land and Water Reserve.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
John Griesbaum Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Registration Approval

Item 15:* <u>Vermilion County – River Bend Association Land and Water Reserve, Registration</u>

Larry and Janet Smarr seek registration of approximately 0.85 acres, of their property as Land and Water Reserve. Their land is in the Vermilion River Section of the Wabash River Border Natural Division, of Vermilion County. The site is located along and within the Salt Fork of the Vermilion River INAI site #1427. The Salt Fork INAI includes Category II, III, and IV features, including: 14 extant endangered or threatened aquatic species, three land and water reserves, and unusual concentrations of invertebrates (mussels).

Registration of these natural areas will:

1. Protect and buffer 248 ft. of the Salt Fork of Vermilion River INAI.
2. Protect habitat for 14 state and/or federally listed threatened and endangered species
3. Protect one of only two populations of the rare leatherwood shrub that occurs in the Vermilion River Section of the Wabash River Border Division

Larry and Janet Smarr seek registration in perpetuity of their 0.85 acres as a Land and Water Reserve.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
John Griesbaum Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Registration Approval

Item 16:* <u>Cook County – Addition and Buffer Addition to Foxglove Prairie Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication</u>

The Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) owns and manages Foxglove Prairie Nature Preserve, which was formerly dedicated as "Markham Prairie - East" NP. This site was originally dedicated as an Illinois nature preserve in 2012 to provide permanent protection of the Markham Prairie - East INAI site (#424). It is in the City of Markham in south Cook County. Its natural communities are representative of the Lake Plain Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois in which it is located. Approximately thirty-two acres of this site were dedicated, but dedication excluded road rights-of-way lying within the site and along the site's outer edges. The proposed nature preserve addition and nature preserve buffer addition include two undeveloped residential lots that were acquired by TNC after the site's 2012 dedication, and the former road rights-of-way that were recently vacated by the City of Markham. The proposed nature preserve addition includes mesic prairie and sedge meadow communities recognized on the INAI, the state-endangered blue-eyed mountain grass (*Sisyrhinchium montanum),* and totals 7.9 acres. The proposed 2-acre nature preserve buffer addition is located at the site's north end; it includes a large drainage ditch and an unimproved access lane for site managers. Dedication of undeveloped lots and vacated road rights-of-way within and abutting Foxglove Prairie Nature Preserve protects

additional acreage of remnant prairie and helps complete good preserve design by providing legal protection under the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Kim Roman Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 17:* <u>Monroe County – IAS-TCF Addition to White Rock Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication</u>

The proposed IAS-TCF Addition to White Rock Nature Preserve is a 965-acre site in the bluffs of southwestern Illinois, south of St. Louis. The site lies between and connects the following INPC sites: 306.5-acre White Rock NP, 97-acre Addition to White Rock NP, the 168-acre White Rock LWR, both the north and south units of the 154-acre Luella Schaefer Memorial Hill Prairie LWR, the 16-acre Maher's Woods NP, and the 4.5-acre Potato Hill NHL. The proposed preserve addition is also directly across the road from the 594-acre Salt Lick Point LWR and the 11-acre Heather's Hollow NP. The Conservation Foundation currently owns the proposed IAS-TCF Addition. When the funding for the project is complete, the land will be transferred to Clifftop NFP (Conserving Lands in Farm, Forest, Talus or Prairie, Not-For-Profit, aka Clifftop, Inc.).

The proposed IAS-TCF Addition to White Rock NP is located in the Northern Section of the Ozark Natural Division. The Addition qualifies for nature preserve dedication because it contains 16 remnant Grade A, B, and C loess hill prairies and limestone glades, 3000 feet of Grade A limestone cliff community, 6 threatened and endangered plants and animals (another 10 are likely found on the site), summer breeding habitat for state and federally listed species, and significant cultural resources. The site encompasses approximately 435 acres of the Potato Hill INAI site (#199), and a few acres on the north end of the Monroe City Hill Prairie INAI site (#200). Dedication of this property will bring the total protected acreage in the 740-acre Potato Hill INAI site to 692 acres, or 94% of the INAI.

The proposed IAS-TCF Addition to White Rock NP contains populations of the state-threatened Missouri coneflower (*Rudbeckia missouriensis*), the state-endangered woolly buckthorn (*Bumelia lanuginosa*), the state-endangered stickleaf (*Mentzelia oligosperma*), the state-endangered climbing milkweed (*Matelea decipiens*), the state-threatened timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), and the state-threatened cerulean warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*). It is currently the only known Monroe County location for the white trillium (*Trillium flexipes*).

The site contains large, unfragmented blocks of Grade C dry and dry-mesic upland forest. The proposed Addition is located in an area with at least 2715 acres of contiguous forest broken only by hill prairies and glades, a couple of small agricultural inholdings, and two homes. With inclusion of the nearby large habitat block across Highway 156, there is approximately 3400 acres of nearly unfragmented habitat in a 2-mile radius. With dedication of the proposed IAS-TCF Addition, the protected forestland with embedded glades and prairies will go from 778 acres to 1,743 on the south side of Highway 156. Combining this with the Salt Lick Point LWR complex across the road will bring the area of the protected land to almost 2,348 acres. Many forest birds need several hundred acres of contiguous habitat for successful breeding. Forests of 1,000

contiguous acres are becoming exceedingly rare in Illinois. While no formal breeding bird surveys have been conducted on the proposed IAS-TCF Addition, four bird species sensitive to fragmentation were documented singing in July during visits to the White Rock Nature Preserve near the boundary. These include hooded warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*), pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), worm-eating warbler (*Helmitheros vermiforma*), and Acadian flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*), the latter two are also SGCN. Formal breeding bird point-count studies across the road at Salt Lick Point LWR have documented numerous area-sensitive birds, including several SGCN; many of these are likely found on the proposed preserve addition. The entire area that includes the proposed Addition is located along the Mississippi River Flyway and provides critical large blocks of habitat for migrating birds.

The proposed IAS-TCF Addition to White Rock is located within the Bluff Corridor/Karst Conservation Opportunity Area (COA), and supports several campaigns identified in the IWAP, including the Forests Campaign, the Invasive Species Campaign, and the Land and Water Stewardship Campaign. 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 Addition 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.

Protection of the proposed Addition also fulfills portions of the Southwestern Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (SWIWAP) Partnership Goals for the COA. These include preserving and stewarding additional acres of hill prairie, glade and forest and their associated species in the COA; addressing invasive species in the COA, encouraging landholders and policy makers to adopt sound land and wildlife management practices, and seeking resources and funding to implement goals of the SWIWAP.

The owners would like to reserve the following rights:

1. To conduct deer management as provided for in the site's management plan in an effort to control ecological imbalance that threatens the natural quality of the proposed Addition caused by an over-abundance of deer. The deer removal program will conform to INPC's Deer Management Guideline. The owners also reserve the right for hunters to use ATVs on designated trails during deer season for access and deer retrieval.
2. To remove downed wood along trails and firebreaks for firewood use as outlined in the management plan. This activity will assist the owners and INPC during prescribed burns by reducing heavy fuels near/on firebreaks when trees/tree limbs come down along these areas.
3. To remove eastern red cedars cut for stewardship purposes on hill prairies and glades, to make benches, trail steps, signposts, and for use by tribal partners. Because there are currently large quantities of cedars on the prairies and glades, the volume of material in initial phases of restoration can create hazards for prescribed burns and can smother the very prairie plants cutting and burning are intended to restore. Any removal for other uses will be beneficial to restoration efforts and safety during burns.

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff thanks The Conservation Fund and Clifftop for continuing to build upon the important protection efforts of this large conservation area and preserve a part of Illinois' natural heritage for future generations. The INPC also thanks the Illinois Audubon Society for their immense investment of time and extremely generous funding to make this project a reality. The INPC thanks the Prairie State Conservation Coalition for contributing funding for this project. Recognition and special thanks to Clifftop Board members and site stewards at the White Rock complex, Joann Fricke, Andy Martin and Mike Fricke (not on the board) for their tireless on-the-ground strategizing, stewardship, and immense efforts to make this acquisition a reality.

REPORT
Debbie Newman
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 18:*<u>Monroe County – Northwest Passage of Fogelpole Cave Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication</u>

The proposed Northwest Passage of Fogelpole NP is a 3.37-acre site that contains an entrance to Fogelpole Cave, cave passage and Grade C dry-mesic upland forest. An additional 3 acres of cave passage adjacent to the proposed 3.37-acre site is proposed for subterranean dedication only. The proposed surface and subterranean dedications, totaling more than 6 acres, are located in the Northern Section of the Ozark Natural Division in central Monroe County. The Fogelpole Cave system is Illinois' largest and most biologically diverse cave and is part of the 10,581-acre Renault Karst INAI site (#1597). The cave system contains Grade A, B, and C terrestrial cave communities, Grade B aquatic cave community, plus several state and federally listed species, including the Illinois cave amphipod (*Gammerus acherondytes*), the gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*), the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), and the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). Fogelpole Cave contains 19 globally rare species, the largest number of troglobytes (species that live only inside caves) of any Illinois cave at 14. The cave system also contains significant paleontological resources.

The property has been owned by James and Merrill Hill since 2011. Jim is a long-time Clifftop Board member and site steward for another Clifftop owned site, the Storment-Hauss Nature NP. Jim has hosted many conservation events and scientists at his property and puts a great deal of care and effort into this land that is being proposed for dedication.

Groundwater recharge contributing to the Renault Karst INAI defines the boundaries of this natural area designation which includes karst and cave features. The proposed nature preserve has a cave entrance, cave passage, and sinkholes; the site contains 3.37 acres of mature second-growth oak-hickory upland forest. The woods have not been evaluated for INAI status, and are currently considered Grade C. The woods contain a diversity of tree and herbaceous species. The forest has no evidence of logging, and none is known to have occurred for at least several decades.

The site is within the Bluff Corridor/Karst COA of the IWAP, and supports several campaigns identified in the IWAP, including the Forests Campaign, the Invasive Species Campaign, and the Land and Water Stewardship Campaign. Action items in the Forest Campaign supported by this dedication include maintaining and enhancing the

composition of Illinois forests. Action items of the Invasive Species Campaign supported by the proposed Addition include removing invasive species from important natural areas. Action items in the Land and Water Stewardship Campaign supported by this site include improving the stewardship of private land resources.

Protection of the proposed preserve also fulfills portions of the SWIWAP Partnership Goals for the COA. These include preserving and stewarding additional acres of forest and its associated species in the COA; addressing invasive species in the COA; encouraging landholders and policy makers to adopt sound land and wildlife management practices; and seeking resources and funding to implement goals of the SWIWAP.

Allowed uses for the proposed preserve include maintaining a trail that goes around the site and a foot trail to the cave entrance; allowing people to enter the cave, only with permission of the owners; hiking; and use of the site for educational activities with landowner permission.

The INPC staff recommend preliminary dedication of the Northwest Passage of Fogelpole Cave as a nature preserve and thanks James and Merrill for their commitment to preserving a part of Illinois' natural heritage.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Debbie Newman Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 19:* **<u>Effingham County – Lake Sara Flatwoods Nature Preserve, Final Dedication</u>**

Effingham Water Authority, owners of Lake Sara Flatwoods (INAI #1434), seeks final approval for the dedication of 7.4 acres of Grade B southern flatwoods and 9.1 acres of Grade B dry-mesic woodlands as Lake Sara Flatwoods Nature Preserve. This property received preliminary approval for dedication at the 253rd INPC meeting (Resolution 2715). The proposed nature preserve is located in the Effingham Plain Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division in Effingham County. The proposed nature preserve will provide permanent protection of the post oak-dominated southern flatwood natural community and associated native species. The condition of the proposed Lake Sara Flatwoods Nature Preserve has been strongly shaped by a long history of active stewardship centered on prescribed fire, making it one of the best-studied and most intentionally managed flatwoods remnants in Illinois.

Together with the proposed Lake Sara Woodlands Land and Water Reserve, the proposed Blue Point Woods Land and Water Reserve, and the adjacent NHL properties, this nature preserve will contribute to the long-term protection of one of the largest remaining contiguous high-quality woodland and flatwoods complexes.

The property also supports conservation priorities identified in the IWAP, including the Forest Campaign, Invasive Species Campaign, and habitat for numerous SGCN.

Reserved rights and allowable uses retained by the landowner include:

1. Continued use and maintenance of existing roads, trails, utility corridors, and water supply infrastructure.
2. Felling and removal of hazardous trees within the preserve. Hazardous trees located along the main trail may be felled and removed without prior notification to INPC staff. The felling and removal of all other hazardous trees shall be conducted in consultation and coordination with INPC staff.
3. Implementation of prescribed fire, invasive species control, forest management, ecological restoration, and other stewardship activities approved by INPC.
4. Scientific research and biological monitoring.
5. Construction and maintenance of conservation-related improvements.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Sami Childerson Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Final Approval for Dedication

Item 20:* **Jackson County – Joan's Little Kinkaid Creek Nature Preserve and Nature Preserve Buffer, Final Dedication**

Joan E. Steele seeks final approval for dedication of 52 acres as nature preserve and 1.5 acres as NP buffer as Joan's Little Kinkaid Creek Nature Preserve in northern Jackson County, Illinois. This property received preliminary approval at the 253rd meeting (Resolution 2716). The proposed preserve is in the Mt. Vernon Hill Country Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division. It protects 53.5 acres of the currently unprotected 70.21-acre Little Kinkaid Creek INAI site #1996 (Category I and II) in perpetuity. This includes 9.56 acres of Grade B mesic woodland. Additional significant features of the proposed NP consist of specific suitable habitat for two state-threatened species: two large populations of Eastern featherbells (*Stenanthium gramineum*) and breeding habitat for cerulean warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*). Natural communities include mesic woodland, dry-mesic woodland, dry woodland, mesic upland forest, dry-mesic upland forest, mesic floodplain forest, wet-mesic floodplain forest, low-gradient medium stream, and cultural (i.e., old field and managed grassland). About 0.25 miles of Little Kinkaid Creek, a spring fed system with high biodiversity, is within the proposed preserve. Across the site, botanical diversity is extremely high with a 4.6 native mean coefficient of conservatism (c-value) and 82.3 native floristic quality index (FQI); especially in the mesic woodland natural community, with 4.4 native mean c-value and 67.5 native FQI.

Within the proposed nature preserve, the landowner reserves the right to:

1. Maintain access lanes, mowed trails, and tractor/UTV-accessible roads and trails for management purposes.
2. Construct ephemeral ponds in cultural or lower-quality floodplain forest communities.
3. Control streambank erosion of Little Kinkaid Creek as needed.
4. Collect and remove downed woody material for firewood to decrease fuel loads within the natural communities.

Within the proposed nature preserve buffer, the landowner reserves the right to:

1. Allow current and future owners to use the gravel access driveway.

2. Maintain the gravel driveway via tractor grading or addition of rock to ensure access to the excluded 0.5-acre trailer site.
3. Allow current and future owners to maintain utilities along the gravel driveway including water line, telephone line, and electrical line.
4. Allow current and future owners to remove select branches or trees within 50 feet of the boundary of the excluded trailer site for protection of the structure, with prior consultation from INPC Natural Areas Preservation Specialist (NAPS).
5. Maintain the barn within its existing footprint.
6. Create a small parking area for access, equipment storage, parking, and turn-around.

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 53.5 acres of the Little Kinkaid Creek INAI site #1996.
2. Permanent protection of 9.56 acres of Category I high-quality natural communities.
3. Provides specific suitable habitat for verified extant populations of two state-threatened species: Eastern featherbells and cerulean warbler.
4. Provides habitat for 22 SGCN, including 17 avian species that are confirmed as breeding on the proposed preserve.
5. Supports various IWAP campaigns.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Kevin Sierzega Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Final Approval for Dedication

Item 21:* **<u>Lake County – Jean and John Green Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine with Addition and Buffer Addition, Final Dedication</u>**

Preliminary approval for the dedication of the Jean and John Greene Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine was granted at the 252nd meeting (Resolution 2706). The Lake Forest Open Lands Association, Lake Forest Land Foundation, and the City of Lake Forest request final dedications to legally protect 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. Located 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 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 systems. Most of these ravines have been highly altered by development. INPC staff recommends final approval for dedication.

This final dedication involves 3 separate instruments of dedication, one for each landowner:

INPC staff recommend dedication of the Jean and John Greene Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine, owned by the Lake Forest Openlands Association. This dedication includes 32.3 acres of nature preserve and 1.7 acres of buffer.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
John C. Nelson Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Final Approval for Dedication

INPC staff recommend dedication of 0.65 acres of Buffer to the Jean and John Green Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine, owned by the Lake Forest Land Foundation.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
John C. Nelson Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Final Approval for Dedication

INPC staff recommend dedication of 14.1 nature preserve acres to the Jean and John Green Nature Preserve at McCormick Ravine, owned by the City of Lake Forest.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
John C. Nelson Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Final Approval for Dedication

Item 22:* **Massac County – West Barrens Addition and Buffer Addition to Horsefly Ridge Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Robert Shapiro seeks final approval for dedication of 122.167 acres of nature preserve and 1.500 acres of NP buffer as the West Barrens addition and buffer addition to Horsefly Ridge NP in Massac County. This property received preliminary approval at the 252nd meeting (Resolution 2717 and 2718). The proposed addition is in the Cretaceous Hills Section of the Coastal Plain Natural Division. It adds to the 49-acre Horsefly Ridge NP (#343), which received final approval for dedication in October 2008 at the 200th INPC meeting (Resolution 2005). It was protected for, at the time, Grade C Best of its Kind (BoK) dry barrens and Grade C BoK dry-mesic barrens natural communities within the Horsefly Ridge INAI site (#1786) with Category I and III feature.

The INAI site is in the process of being updated from 56 to 260 acres and will include the proposed addition. A category I feature for mesic barrens (Grade B) and a feature change from BoK barrens communities to Grade B dry woodland will be added. These natural communities were graded and inventoried in summers 2025 and 2026. A Category II feature for specific suitable habitat for the state-endangered river cooter (*Pseudemys concinna*) will also be added. Additional state-listed species found in the proposed addition include a population of state-endangered spring ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes vernalis*) found in July 2026 and state-endangered black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) identified in late August 2025. This property likely serves as post-

breeding habitat for black rail. Historic breeding populations existed in Massac County.

The proposed addition protects 8.61 acres of Grade B mesic barrens. This natural community is one of the rarest on the Illinois landscape, with the only other notable location at Cretaceous Hills NP in Pope County, three miles east of Horsefly Ridge NP. The high-quality mesic barrens within the proposed addition are incredibly diverse botanically, containing 122 native species, a 4.9 native mean c-value, and 54.1 native FQI, considered exceptional for the natural community. There are four distinct high-quality mesic barrens remnants in the proposed addition. Each remnant is slightly different in plant composition. The largest of the four remnants is most like the historic Big Barrens natural community of western Kentucky.

Additional natural communities within the proposed addition include dry woodland, dry-mesic woodland, mesic woodland, low-gradient small stream, and cultural (i.e., managed grassland, old field, and artificial impoundment). Sections of the west fork of Seven Mile Creek and its tributaries are within the boundaries as well. Two hundred ninety-six (296) native plant species have been documented across the site and botanical diversity is very high (4.6 native mean c-value, 79 native FQI). Of these, 16.6% of these species are highly conservative and reliant on high-quality natural communities.

Within the proposed West Barrens addition, the landowner reserves the right to:

1. Maintain access lanes, mowed trails, prescribed fire breaks, UTV accessible trails for management purposes, and creek crossings.
2. Create a foot-traffic-only trail system, that may include bench locations, with prior consultation and approval from INPC NAPS. Trail width will be for a single person.
3. Construct ephemeral ponds in cultural communities with mechanical methods to benefit the river cooter and wetland-dependent SGCN. Ephemeral ponds will be a maximum of two feet deep and excavated soil will be feathered along the edges. Historic cattle ponds in the proposed preserve indicate that permanent water retention is possible in this soil type.
4. Install barn owl (*Tyto alba*) nest boxes.
5. Control streambank erosion of the west fork of Seven Mile Creek and its tributaries using rip-rap or other measures as needed. Maintain artificial impoundments.
6. Collect and remove downed woody material for firewood to decrease fuel loads within the natural communities.
7. Continue enrollment in CRP programs until respective contract end dates. Work with local NRCS office to satisfy requirements.

Within the proposed West Barrens buffer addition, the landowner reserves the right to:

1. Construct a future parking area for up to eight vehicles, along Fritz Korte Road. This location may house a portable outhouse.

Dedication of the proposed West Barrens NP addition should be considered for the following qualifying features and/or reasons:

1. Permanent protection of 123.667 acres of the Horsefly Ridge INAI site #1786.
2. Permanent protection of 8.61 acres of Category I high-quality natural communities.
3. Provides specific suitable habitat for verified extant populations of three state-endangered species: River cooter, black rail, and spring ladies' tresses.
4. Provides habitat for 30 SGCN including 22 avian species that are confirmed as breeding on the proposed addition.
5. Supports various IWAP campaigns.

REPORT	**ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**
Kevin Sierzega Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Final Approval for Dedication

Item 23:* **Cass County – Cox Creek Hill Prairies Land and Water Reserve, Request to Rebuild Electric Line**

Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI) is seeking approval to rebuild an electric line that crosses 0.25 miles of Cox Creek Hill Prairies Land and Water Reserve. The LWR is located within the larger IDNR-owned site, Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area (SFWA). There is a pre-existing 50-foot-wide prescribed ROW with a 12kV electric line in need of replacement due to age and condition. PPI is proposing to replace the existing line with a new 69kV transmission line. The ROW width per industry standards for a 69kV line is typically 100 feet. PPI plans to reduce this width to 80 feet through the IDNR-owned site in recognition of the sensitive nature and conservation value of the LWR and the larger SFWA. Five taller metal replacement poles are planned for installation in the LWR. The total area of impact through the SWFA due to the planned width expansion from 50 to 80 feet is 23.4 acres, with 0.91 acres of impact to the LWR. Fifty-four trees are planned for removal from the LWR in the 30-foot expansion area. There is no expected impact on threatened or endangered species due to agreed-upon avoidance measures. Proposed compensation to offset impacts per acre is approximately three times greater for the LWR compared to the SFWA.

IDNR is supportive of PPI's proposed ROW expansion, including the portion that crosses the LWR. PPI evaluated three alternate routes for this project and ultimately rejected them based on the importance of geographic diversity, grid reliability, and avoidance of residential areas. INPC staff recognize the collaboration between PPI, IDNR, and INPC; the pre-existing easement rights; and the fact that IDNR supports this project. The compensation proposed to offset impacts to the LWR will go directly to the site for restoration and management purposes. After considering all factors, INPC staff have taken a neutral position and at the same time acknowledge

it will be more practical to maintain and manage the proposed electric transmission line if there is a uniform ROW width.

REPORT	ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Ryan Simmons Prairie Power, Inc.	Approval of the Electric Line Rebuild Project through Cox Creek Hill Prairies LWR
Valerie Njapa Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	
Michael Rhodes Illinois Department of Natural Resources	

Item 24: Williamson County – Request to Subdivide the North Addition to Grisley Woods Land and Water Reserve

The North Addition to Grisley Woods Land and Water Reserve was registered at the 245th INPC public meeting on September 12, 2023 (Resolution 2601) by landowner Mr. William Grisley. Mr. Grisley requests to subdivide the 135-acre addition into three distinct parcels for tax donation purposes as follows: 45 acres, 60 acres, and 30 acres. Each parcel contains its own legal description. Mr. Grisley's objective is to donate the properties to a land conservation trust. In 2025, he donated the 107.5-acre Grisley Woods LWR to HeartLands Conservancy.

REPORT	ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Kevin Sierzega Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Final Approval for Dedication

Item 25: Election of INPC Officers

REPORT	ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Commissioner Tom Clay Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Election of Officers

Item 26: Election of INPC Advisors and Consultants

REPORT	ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Commissioner Tom Clay Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Election of Advisors and Consultants

Item 27: 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	ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Emily Taylor Illinois Nature Preserves Commission	Determination if closed minutes should remain closed

Item 28: **Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)**

Item 29: **Other Business**

Item 30: **Adjournment**