

INPC COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENTS

TOM CLAY (term expires 6/30/2026)

Galena, IL

Tom Clay has been involved in a variety of program development and organizational management. Tom brings a strong work history with him. His current position is Director of Special Projects, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation where he is responsible for fundraising for special projects as well as protecting land in perpetuity by conducting outreach to landowners whose properties have been identified as priorities for permanent protection for future generations to enjoy. Tom has held several leadership positions including: Executive Director, Door County Land Trust; Executive Director, Illinois Audubon Society - Illinois' oldest non-profit conservation organization that owns a statewide system of ecologically significant wildlife sanctuaries; and leadership positions in environmental education with Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and the Department of Natural Resources, including committee representation within the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Tom earned a B.A. in Political Science from Western Illinois University and is a skilled communicator, possessing a passion for vibrant and healthy lands.



MARCY DEMAURO-ROTH (term expires 6/30/2026)

Joliet, IL

Marcy DeMauro-Roth retired after a 35-year conservation career that began with an internship in the early 1980s with the Forest Preserve District of Will County. She was later hired by the



District as a Natural Resource Manager/Environmental Planner, where she was responsible, in part, for managing lands of ecological quality or restoration potential, including state nature preserves. Marcy was promoted to various administrative positions within District and appointed as the Executive Director for nearly nine years until her retirement. She earned a B.S., Biology from Northeastern Illinois University, and a M.S. in Biology from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She previously interned with the Morton Arboretum's Rare Plant Conservation Program and was a guest instructor for natural areas management at Northeastern Illinois University. She has published papers on rare plant species inventory, monitoring and management; authored reports to various agencies and organizations on natural areas restoration and management; and authored two federal recovery plans for federally listed plant species. Marcy currently serves on the Board of Directors for The Nature Foundation of Will County and is a volunteer and member of several conservation organizations.

DR. ABIGAIL DERBY LEWIS, Chair (term expires 6/30/2018)

Glenview, IL

Abigail Derby Lewis received her PhD in Biological Anthropology from Stony Brook University in 2008. Her background includes research on community and behavioral ecology, land use practices and resource management in the tropics. She has taught courses on a variety of subjects related to environmental studies, ecology, evolutionary biology, and the human-wildlife interface. Since 2009 Abigail has worked as a Conservation Ecologist in the Science Action Center at The Field Museum of Natural History. Abigail's work in the Science Action Center, a division dedicated to translating museum science into lasting results for conservation and cultural



understanding, focuses on climate change adaptation for urban natural areas in the Great Lakes region. She works closely with natural resource managers at the federal, state and local level to develop place-based adaptation strategies. Abigail is Co-Chair of the Chicago Wilderness Climate Change Task Force and editor of the Chicago Wilderness Climate Change Newsletter, a bi-monthly publication summarizing news and research pertaining to climate impacts to plants, animals, and natural systems.

CHRIS EVANS (term expires 6/30/2027)

Marion, IL

Chris Evans, Forestry Extension and Research Specialist with the University of Illinois, brings his knowledge and experience to the commission, providing information and hosting workshops



to guide landowners in management actions on their land. Over the years he has contributed significantly to land management activities through the Master Naturalist Program, Illinois Wildlife Action Plan Invasive Species Campaign, River to River Cooperative Weed Management Program, among other positions. Chris is active with the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, the Illinois Invasive Species Council and other regional and statewide boards and is a past recipient of the Carl N. Becker Stewardship Award from the Natural Areas Association. He has authored numerous technical publications and is a skilled presenter and facilitator. Chris

earned his M.S. in Forest Biology from Iowa State and a B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Murray State. His experience and contributions to natural areas stewardship and invasive species management will be a welcome addition to the Commission.

ADAM KESSEL (term expired 6/30/2026)

River Forest, IL

Adam Kessel has been involved in environmental and outdoor education throughout his career. His current position with Forest Preserves of Cook County, is the Nature Center Director at the Trailside Museum of Natural History, River Forest, IL which includes land management on the 750+ acres of Forest Preserve surrounding the nature center. He gained his passion and knowledge of the fauna and flora of the region through his many years of teaching and learning in the Native American Community of Chicago. As a community member, he has helped to develop culturally based science curricula that revolved around storytelling and traditional uses of plants by Tribes of the Great Lakes Region. He continues to work as an advocate for Native American rights in the Chicago-land area. Adam also serves on the Community Advisory Board for the Chicago Botanic Gardens and the Native American Community Advisory Board for Urban Indian Housing. Adam is involved in a number of groups and organizations in environmental education and has authored books, curricula, teacher guides, and been a guest teacher and speaker in many settings. He received his Master of Arts in Teaching from National-Louis University of Chicago. He holds a teaching certificate with the State of Illinois, an arborist certificate through the International Society of Arboriculture, and an Interpretive Guide certificate through National Association for Interpretation.



RADHIKA MIRAGLIA (term expires 6/30/2023)

Chicago, IL

Radhika Miraglia received her Master of Science degree in Conservation Biology from the Durrell Institute for Conservation and Ecology in Kent, England. She has since dedicated her career to integrating the social and ecological sciences, as well as other disciplines, in order to affect long term and inclusive conservation strategies. Radhika has worked at various



organizations in the Chicagoland area, including the John G. Shedd Aquarium, Alliance for the Great Lakes, Loyola University, the Forest Preserve Foundation, and Friends of the Forest Preserves. She now serves as the Program Director at Friends of the Forest Preserves, developing and overseeing programs that engage a variety of stakeholders in enhancing ecological health of the forest preserves in Cook County and expanding the number of people who benefit from these public lands. These programs emphasize goals for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation. She also serves on several collaborative initiatives in the region, including as co-chair of Chicago Wilderness's Increasing Equitable Access to Nature Goal Group.

TONI OPLT (term expires 6/30/2025)

Edwardsville, IL

Toni Oplt received her master's degree in English Language and Literature from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. She is a lifelong Illinoian, spending her childhood and teenage years in St. Clair County and moved to Madison County in the early 1980s. She and her husband Don have lived in the Edwardsville area for over 40 years. After retiring from her professional career in higher education at the University of Illinois and then at St. Louis Community College, she increased her volunteer obligations in environmental and social justice activism. She writes the blog Green Gal of the Midwest, focused on local, seasonal eating, supporting organic and regenerative small farms, and following a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity. In addition, she serves on the Executive Committee of Piasa Palisades Group of the Illinois Sierra Club, chairing its subcommittee Metro East Green Alliance. Toni is a member of the Illinois Environmental Council and the Confluence Climate Collaborative. Her passions are cooking, art and creative writing. She enjoys hiking, swimming, biking and running, as well as reading, especially poetry and personal essay.



MICHELLE PARKER, Secretary (term expires 6/30/2025)

Brookfield, IL

Michelle Parker received a Bachelor of Science degree from University of Wisconsin and a Master of Arts from Miami University of Ohio in Zoology. She has worked in a variety of positions with National Audubon Society, Crown Family Philanthropies, Shedd Aquarium, and Earthwatch Institute and currently serves as Vice President and Executive Director of Audubon



Great Lakes, serving 5 states and over 200,000 members. She directs the conservation strategy, budget, and policy including Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion efforts to align the Board to be representative of the region's demographics. This work has found her engaged with numerous related efforts such as the Great Lakes Commission, Calumet Collaborative, Global Alliance for the Future of Food, Great Lake Funder Collaborative, National Forest Foundation, Great Lakes Network, Freshwater Future, Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and more.

ROBERT SZAFONI (term expires 6/30/2025)

Sadorus, IL

Robert Szafoni received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Biology from the University of Illinois. He has worked as a Research Biologist at the Illinois Natural History Survey, a Natural Heritage Biologist, and the Natural Areas Project Manager for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. He currently practices as a natural areas identification and stewardship consultant for his small business, Okaw Grove Ecological in Sadorus, IL. He has developed and revised natural area identification and evaluation program as well as developed a natural areas training program for IL DNR. He has published on invasive species, threatened and endangered animals, old growth trees, amphibians, and freshwater mussels. Bob has served on the Board of Directors for several environmental organizations and is a volunteer income tax preparer for the elderly and low income through the IRS-VITA / AARP Tax-Aide Program.



*Commissioners serve until they are reappointed or replaced.