

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

Minutes of the 244th Meeting

Lost Valley Visitor Center
Glacial Park
6316 Harts Road
Ringwood, Illinois 60072

May 9, 2023, at 10:00am

In-person meeting with WebEx option

McHenry County Conservation District's Executive Director, Elizabeth Kessler, welcomed everyone. Glacial Park is one of the Conservation District's gems and one of their macro sites. At the Lost Valley Visitor Center, they house Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) staff – currently John Nelson and Steve Byers before John. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff who work at the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge also have offices at this facility as well as the Conservation District's nonprofit organization, the McHenry County Conservation Foundation. The Conservation District was created in 1971 by the voters and it currently manages approximately 26,000 acres. Executive Director Kessler introduced her staff: Ed Collins, Director of Land Preservation and Natural Resources; Ed has been very instrumental as well as the natural resources team and board in protecting these wonderful places and also working in partnership with the Nature Preserves Commission to protect 17 dedicated sites as nature preserves. The Conservation District is proud of this and hopes to add more sites to the list in the next few years. Elizabeth is also Chair of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance, which covers four states and works to identify areas for land acquisition that need protected and to ensure these special places are not lost.

244-1) **Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees**

Commission Chair Derby Lewis called the meeting to order at 10:05am and INPC Executive Director read the roll call. In-person introductions were completed and those attending remotely introduced themselves through the Web-Ex chat feature.

Commissioners Present: George Covington, Dr. Pen DauBach, Radhika Miraglia, Dr. Jo-Elle Mogerman, Toni Oplt, Michelle Parker, Robert Szafoni, Dr. David Thomas, and Dr. Abigail Derby Lewis

Consultants Present: Joe Roth, Kerry Leigh, Dr. Jim Herkert, and Randy Heidorn

Others Present: John Rogner, Assistant Director, IDNR; Todd Strole, Valerie Njapa, John Nelson, Kelly Neal, Debbie Newman, Sami Childerson, Kevin Sierzega, Byron Paulsen, Kim Roman, Angella Moorehouse, and John Griesbaum, INPC; Chris Young, IDNR Office of Resource Conservation, Director; Ann Holtrop, Jenny Skufca, Kassie Wood, Christina Feng, Melissa Grycan, Chip O'Leary, Stephen Tillman, Mark Alessi, Brian Metzke, Michelle Bloomquist, Heather Osborn, Tara Kieninger, and Natalia Maass, IDNR Division of Natural Heritage; Damon

Cederberg and Jacob Shurpit, IDNR Office of Land Management; Dawn Cobb, IDNR Office of Realty and Capital Planning; Heather Miller and Brooke Morgan, IDNR Illinois State Museum; Brian Navarrete, IDNR Office of Legal Counsel; Elizabeth Kessler and Ed Collins, M CCD; Randy Schietzelt, Endangered Species Protection Board; Lorna Gladstone, Steve Byers, Nancy Williamson, Cynthia Kanner, Prairie State Conservation Coalition; Amy Doll, Katie Kucera, Hannah Walchak, and Jonathan Sabath, Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves; Jo Fessett and Kaleb Baker, Illinois Audubon Society; Brad McKay; Pete Jackson; Sergio Vargas; Shannon Andrews; David Holman; Jill Kennay, Natural Land Institute; Raphael Wahwassuck; and Don Parker.

244-2) **Adoption of Agenda**

It was moved by Commissioner Miraglia, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, and carried that the Agenda for the 244th Meeting be adopted.

244-3) **Approval of Minutes for the Special Meeting on January 23, 2023, and the 243rd Meeting on January 24, 2023**

With the approval of one change to Item 14 of the Minutes for the 243rd Meeting to reflect the motion being seconded by Commissioner Covington and not Commissioner Szafoni, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Szafoni, and carried that the minutes for the Special Meeting on January 23, 2023, and the minutes for the 243rd Meeting be approved.

The Commission Chair then read the Accomplishments Summary of the 243rd Meeting:

At the 243rd Meeting of the INPC, held on January 24, 2023, at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for five tracts of land totaling 1,007 acres. Three of the five tracts are privately owned, and two are publicly owned. The owners of the private sites donated the value of the protection agreements to the public. Lands protected include Poplar Creek Land and Water Reserve, an Addition to Sweet Fern Savanna Land and Water Reserve, Brunt Land and Water Reserve, an Addition to Pilcher Park Nature Preserve, and an Addition to Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve.

Protection of these lands came about because the Commission had staff in the field working with public and private landowners. There are 416 dedicated nature preserves with 62,763 acres; and there are 206 registered land and water reserves totaling 58,729 acres. Altogether, there are 622 sites with 121,492 acres protected in the Illinois Nature Preserves System.

244-4) **Next Meeting Dates and Locations**

245	September 12, 2023	Monroe County Annex Building Waterloo, IL
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244-5) **INPC Staff Report**
REPORT

Todd Strole, Executive Director
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Remarks presented by Executive Director Todd Strole are provided in Attachment 1. The full INPC report is provided in Appendix I.

Commissioner Covington commented on the backlog of legal documents needing to be recorded. Usually it's not an issue, but for those dedications by private individuals where they are expecting to take a tax deduction, the IRS position is very hard and fast, which is that the effective date of donation is the date of recording. Every effort should be made to get the documents fully executed and recorded as soon as possible to prevent delays for landowners to receive the tax deduction.

Todd Strole acknowledged and thanked Commissioner Covington for his comments.

244-6) **IDNR Staff Report**
REPORT

Ann Holtrop, Chief
Division of Natural Heritage

The full IDNR report is attached as Appendix II.

Ann Holtrop provided some highlights from the full report.

Based on feedback from the last meeting, the report format will follow the themes of Identification, Protection, Stewardship, and Defense.

In terms of Identification, there are 1,516 Illinois Natural Areas Inventory sites. The Division of Natural Heritage is cleaning up the inventory list to make sure it captures the most important qualifying features and to make sure the footprints and acreages are right. Accuracy will improve as refinements are made. In February, the Department hosted the 86th Natural Areas Evaluation Committee meeting and added three new qualifying features to existing sites – Piney Creek added Category I, community addition for a high gradient stream; and Gibbons Creek Barrens and Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak had habitat for endangered species added to them.

The Natural Heritage Database Program continues to add information. There are over 1,700 threatened and endangered species occurrences that are within or partially within sites in the Nature Preserves System. This is a high proportion of these occurrences and reflects how inter-woven the work is between Heritage, the Endangered Species Protection Board, and INPC.

In this reporting period, five land acquisition transactions were reported. The Department acquired 125 acres valued at over \$1,000,000 and one more came in after the report was put together – an acquisition at Hanover Bluff from the Natural Land Institute.

In terms of Stewardship, 126 of the Department's 194 management plans are current up to date. Contractual projects were completed at 67 Commission sites. Prescribed fire was conducted on over 43 Commission properties, totaling 7,000 acres. A lot of staff time goes into Commission sites, including for this reporting period - 227 staff days for prescribed fire and 161 staff days for stewardship activities.

The Natural Areas Stewardship Grant Program was opened, and applications are due June 16th. These are grant opportunities for Conservation Land Trusts to do stewardship work at INPC sites. \$750,000 will be available, offering an increase in funding compared to last year.

For Defense, there were 3,636 projects submitted through the Department's Environmental Review process and of those, 44 were determined to be in the vicinity of Commission sites. These 44 were reviewed in more detail by INPC and other Department staff to provide recommendations to avoid potential impacts.

Revisions were made to the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan and approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to update the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need to reflect the 2020 threatened and endangered species listing. All endangered state-listed plants were also added.

Several State Wildlife Grants have been modified to include funding for stewardship on Commission properties.

Conservation assessments have been done for listed plants through a contract with the Natural History Survey, and this includes plant assemblages by natural community type. This work focuses on rarity trends and threats.

Commissioner Szafoni asked if the minutes from the Natural Areas Evaluation Committee meetings are available. Ann Holtrop responded that these meetings are internal where private lands are discussed, and the minutes are not shared publicly. Commissioner Szafoni also applauded all the efforts to find new and creative ways to fund stewardship work.

Commissioner Miraglia asked about the management plans and what they involve. Ann Holtrop responded that every 5 years (sometimes 3), management plans need to be updated, reviewed, and approved by the Commission. The Department is working to update management plans for all their sites. In some cases, there were plans that lapsed or had never been written. Land and water reserves must have management plans completed at the time of registration but the same is not true for nature preserves at the time of dedication.

244-7) **Endangered Species Protection Board Report**

REPORT
Randy Schietzelt
Endangered Species Protection Board

The full ESPB report is attached as Appendix III.

Randy Schietzelt reiterated the importance of nature preserves for threatened and endangered species, considering how many occur at nature preserve sites.

Introduced as Illinois Audubon Society and wearing that hat for a minute, Randy shared that seeing the Gowin-Boldrey property up for dedication is gratifying, especially since he was in the room when the decision was made to purchase this property. It's nice to see this come full cycle and there are many entities in the room who are hopefully keeping prairie chickens in the state.

Commissioner Parker asked if there are dates set for the next cycle that will focus on listing updates. May 30th is the date set for the work on birds to start. The dates for plants have not been set yet – this is a large group and is divided between the northern, central and southern parts of the state.

Commissioner Thomas asked about a species' removal from the list and whether there is a separate list of potentially extirpated species from the state. He is asking because some species may reappear, especially if there are populations in neighboring states or in the south that may be moving north. He's wondering if there is a way to keep track of them.

Randy answered that he is not aware of such a list but if any species is removed, and new evidence is discovered that it occurs in the state, a petition can be submitted by a taxonomic expert to get it added back to the list.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked what species of leafhopper is proposed for removal and Randy said he could get that information to her. Commissioner Derby Lewis also commented that she believes there is a lot of room to cast a wider net beyond taxonomic experts to be able to look broadly for species we haven't seen. Community scientists and hobbyists are a strong asset and resource to help look. There may be more creative ways to leverage public interest and engagement when it comes to looking for species.

Commissioner Szafoni asked about staffing efforts for the ESPB. Randy stated they are having ongoing conversations about that and IDNR staff have been assisting with website updates and generating data for each species. Ann Holtrop added that there have been internal meetings and discussions with John Rogner and Chris Young to review a Scope of Work the Board prepared. A meeting with Human Resources is planned to discuss the type of position this would be. Ann also said there is not currently a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and the Board; and, it would be helpful to have one to ensure the Board's needs are being met, in addition to what the potential staff position could offer.

244-8) **Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Report**

REPORT

Amy Doll, Director

Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

The full report is attached as Appendix IV.

Amy Doll reiterated the success of the Wild Things Conference in February and the excitement to be part of it. It brought together volunteers, land managers, and landowners, all working together to protect sites in the Nature Preserves System. The opening session was amazing and the video is available for those who missed the conference. John Rogner, Arnold Randall, and Tori Cunningham were there. Tori is a volunteer who told a charming, energetic, and passionate story of her love for an Illinois nature preserve that embodies the vision the Friends group has. Efforts will continue over the next several months to celebrate INPC's 60th anniversary to ensure the success of the next 60 years.

Commissioner Derby Lewis thanked Amy and talked about how great a job she did facilitating the Wild Things Conference.

244-9) **Jasper Co. – Gowin-Boldrey Addition to Robert Ridgway Grasslands Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Sami Childerson presented this agenda item.

The proposed Gowin-Boldrey Addition to the Robert Ridgway Grasslands Nature Preserve will permanently protect 75 acres located within the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) boundary of the Prairie Ridge - Jasper County site (INAI #0754). The property is located in the Effingham Plain Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division of Illinois, and it provides additional habitat to at least 33 State endangered or threatened species known to occur at or near the Prairie Ridge State Natural Area (PRSNA) complex in Jasper County.

With approval for dedication, the Gowin-Boldrey Addition to Robert Ridgway Grasslands Nature Preserve will increase the amount of permanently protected property at the Jasper County complex of PRSNA to almost 3,000 acres.

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) staff and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) staff located at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area, on behalf of the landowner, Illinois Audubon Society, recommend final approval for dedication of 75 acres as the Gowin-Boldrey Addition to Robert Ridgway Grasslands Nature Preserve.

Commissioner Thomas asked how the prairie chickens are doing. Sami Childerson responded that they are not good and it's a sad story. There were nine males counted in the Marion County complex and at the Jasper County complex, there are 30-35 males. While it doesn't look good, the prairie chickens are holding on.

Commissioner Thomas commented that the introduction of prairie chickens from Kansas and perhaps elsewhere helped increase some of the genetic diversity and was working for a while. Sami said she is not sure exactly why we are seeing a decline now, but it is not for a lack of management.

Another question was asked about how much land it would take to genetically sustain a population of prairie chickens. Sami said there is a recovery plan but is not sure about an exact acreage – she would have to go back and look.

Sami commented that both Illinois Audubon Society and Bob Gillespie were very instrumental in acquiring this property and getting it protected.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Gowin-Boldrey Addition to Robert Ridgway Grasslands as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 9 of the Agenda for the 244th Meeting.
(Resolution 2589)

244-10) **Lake Co. – Addition to Illinois Beach Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Melissa Grycan presented this agenda item.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requested preliminary approval for dedication of a 186.42-acre Addition to Illinois Beach Nature Preserve. The existing 1080-acre nature preserve is owned and managed by IDNR. The proposed addition is located within the Lake Michigan Dunes Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois and is part of Illinois Beach INAI Site #1083. This addition will provide protection to 14 INAI Category I high-quality Grades A and B natural communities, including Beach; Dry, Dry-mesic, Mesic, Wet-mesic, and Wet Sand Prairie; Dry Sand Savanna; Foredune; Freshwater Marsh, Panne, Sedge Meadow, Seep, Pond, and Low-gradient Small Stream. The Lake Michigan Panne natural community is globally rare and has rare plant assemblages. The INAI is also designated as Category II due to the presence of 52 State endangered or threatened species, of which five are also federally listed. The area is recognized as part of a Conservation Opportunity Area by the State Wildlife Action Plan, is a critical region of the Lake Plain Coastal Restoration Partnership, contains wetlands recognized to be of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and is recognized in the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Kellogg/Dead Dog Creek Watershed Plan, the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Water Bird Conservation Plan, and the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan. The proposed addition will contribute significantly to national and regional biodiversity, preserve coastal wetland ecosystems, and provide critical habitat for declining plant and animal species. It also serves as a critical avian, mammalian (e.g., bats), and invertebrate (e.g., butterflies, dragonflies) migration corridor. Twenty-three State-listed species, of which two are also federally listed, have been recorded from within the boundaries of the proposed addition, and protection of this area will strengthen the resiliency of the existing nature preserve and the multitudes of additional rare species found there. If approved, this Addition to Illinois Beach Nature Preserve will bring the total acreage of protected land at this site to 1266.42 acres.

Commissioner Covington commented on lands adjacent to Illinois Beach Nature Preserve – Johns Manville to the south, which was an asbestos company and further north is the old shuttered Zion nuclear plant. What is the current prognosis for these two parcels? Johns

Manville being a Superfund site may be a good thing because there shouldn't be a lot of real estate development on it.

Melissa Grycan responded that in talking with USEPA, the project manager for the Johns Manville site doesn't think it could be turned into housing but there have been other things at Superfund sites like city parks or soccer fields. This property is currently serving as good grassland bird habitat after being planted with a shorter grass mix.

If IDNR were to ever acquire the decommissioned nuclear plant property, that would tie the north and south parts of Illinois Beach together.

Commissioner Covington asked about active recreational pursuits at the nature preserve and what is currently going on with them. Melissa responded that the worst damage is probably from people going off trail, especially in the sandy sections. She works with site staff to address erosion issues, including putting up signage to advise to stay on trail.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked about the shoreline stabilization efforts and how the design work is going for the submerged islands and reef structures to help guide and direct the movement of sand. Melissa answered that the breakwaters are currently being installed and so it's too early to tell exactly how it's going to work. She added that a lot of engineering work was done to design the diagonal direction of the breakwaters to catch the current and allow sand to deposit on the lakeshore like it used to before a lot of manmade structures built along the shoreline disrupted the natural processes.

A question was asked about the beaver population and Melissa stated the population is overabundant and the beavers can cause a lot of damage. It's a continual struggle to try to keep them from flooding out high-quality natural communities that are not suited to long-standing water.

Commissioner Oplt attended an environmental lobby day several weeks ago where there were bills debated on the Waukegan coal plant and it occurred to her that the coal plant may be near this nature preserve. The issue is over a legacy coal pond that is online and has been known to contaminate groundwater and leach into Lake Michigan and she's wondering if this is a threat to the valuable nature preserve property. Melissa said she is not sure but can look into it.

Consultant Randy Heidorn commented that seeing this property brought forward for dedication is a dream come true for him, having been the district heritage biologist for this region in the 1980s and he thanks IDNR and all involved to make this happen.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Addition to Illinois Beach as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the Agenda for the 244th Meeting.

(Resolution 2590)

244-11) **McHenry Co. – Addition to Gladstone Fen Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

John Nelson presented this agenda item.

Gladstone Fen was included on the INAI (Site #1265) in recognition of a relict high-quality Graminoid Fen Wetland. In 1991, Lee and Gertrude Gladstone dedicated 6.44 acres as Gladstone Fen Nature Preserve. Fourteen years later, in 2005, their children, Lorna and Evan dedicated an additional 5.34 acres to the preserve. Lorna and Evan are now proposing to dedicate approximately 1.4 acres as a nature preserve addition. This proposed addition will legally protect the remaining conservation land held by the Gladstone family at this site. It will better define the “footprint” of the existing home site and prevent potential encroachment into environmentally sensitive areas should the property change from the current ownership. Ultimately, Lorna and Evan Gladstone wish for the nature preserve to be owned and managed by a land trust or appropriate conservation entity to ensure the long-term health and vitality of their preserve. The nature preserve design herein proposed with this addition will allow the home site to be sold separately from the nature preserve should the Gladstone Family choose to do so. Upon approval of this addition, Gladstone Fen Nature Preserve will total 13.18 acres.

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff, on behalf of Lorna and Evan Gladstone, recommended preliminary approval for dedication of the proposed 1.4-acre Addition to Gladstone Fen Nature Preserve.

Commissioner Parker asked how long the property has been in Lorna’s family. Lorna’s parents bought the property in the early 1970s and were not sure then if they were going to build on it. Lorna’s mother was a birder and had interest in Illinois wildflowers and in looking through books, she could not find the flowers that she saw blooming in the lowlands/wetlands so started digging around to find someone who might know. Doug Taron and his partner were the first people to burn the land and it was first dedicated by Steve Byers in 1991 and then after Lorna’s parents died, she became very interested in spending as much time as she could in the original house they built. Lorna taught herself on herbicide use and what was safe to use where there seemed to be endless buckthorn. Gradually over time, she gained the ability to identify plants and started having huge parties of friends from Chicago who volunteered to work to remove junk trees, with the help of John and Brad. Lorna would bake while her good friend who was a professional chef cooked, and people would come work for the food. It’s been a long haul but every year after the stream restoration work, the fen has gotten healthier and healthier. The seed bed is well over 50 years because things have come back that wouldn’t be there without the restoration work.

Commissioner Szafoni asked if the designation of the Class III groundwater here depended on the presence of the nature preserve and not just the INAI site. John Nelson explained that the Class III groundwater here likely meets all three of the established criteria for the Special Resource Groundwater designation, including the dedicated nature preserve and being vital for a particularly sensitive ecological system. Commissioner Szafoni said it’s terrific to see that for these groundwater-fed systems, there is something the Commission makes them eligible for past approval for dedication. John added that McHenry County is a leader in Illinois in groundwater protection and that cannot be overstated.

Consultant Randy Heidorn commented that there is an additional process that needs to happen to designate a Class III groundwater area for a dedicated nature preserve. It involves mapping

the contribution area and filing a petition with the Illinois Pollution Control Board. Dedicating a site reliant on the groundwater resource as a nature preserve is really the first step in this process that can take a long time.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication the Addition to Gladstone Fen as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the Agenda for the 244th Meeting.

(Resolution 2591)

Lunch Break from 12:05pm to 12:55pm

244-12) **Pope Co. – Gibbons Creek Barrens Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Christina Feng presented this agenda item.

The IDNR requested preliminary approval for dedication of the existing 173.24-acre Gibbons Creek Barrens Land and Water Reserve located in the Greater and Lesser Sections of the Shawnee Hills Natural Division in Pope County as the Gibbons Creek Barrens Nature Preserve. The site was originally registered at INPC Meeting #215 on September 10, 2013, as LWR #172, but subsequent management and species surveys have elevated the quality and significance of the site. Dedication will enhance protection for Category I, II, and III qualifying features within the IDNR-owned portion of the Gibbons Creek Barrens INAI Site #0339, including Grades A and B Dry Barrens and Dry Woodland natural communities. The Grade A Dry Barrens was noted in the original INAI documents as being the best example of this community type in southern Illinois, containing over 100 plant species and the only known population of the State endangered Hale's *Corydalis* (*Corydalis halei*) in Illinois. The site also provides habitat for three other State-listed species: Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), Carolina Whipgrass (*Scleria pauciflora*), and Shortleaf Pine (*Pinus echinata*). Approximately 260 plant species have been recorded from the site as well as at least 13 Species of Greatest Conservation Need identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

Commissioner Thomas asked if Christina could summarize some of the things that will be looked at in terms of the aquatic system. Jenny Skufca stated that the revised version of the 'INAI Standards and Guidelines' document provides more detail. Essentially, three subsets of data from the aquatic locations will be looked at (if available, this is the best-case scenario), including fish, mussels and invertebrates. In this location, this data does not exist; however, if a fish survey could be conducted, the data collected could potentially be enough to bring this site to the Natural Areas Evaluation Committee for consideration of its aquatic resources.

Commissioner Covington commented that this is the first time he recalls a registered land and water reserve "graduating" to nature preserve status and he is delighted to see this. He added that while this may not be the first time, it's not common yet is something that should occur. The level of protection for nature preserves is stronger and we should all be thinking about this when the quality of a land and water reserve reaches the stage of management where it would qualify as a nature preserve.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Gibbons Creek Barrens as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the Agenda for the 244th Meeting.

(Resolution 2592)

244-13) **Mason Co. – Addition to Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Byron Paulsen presented this agenda item.

The IDNR requested final approval for dedication of 40 acres as an Addition to Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak Nature Preserve, located in the Illinois River Section of the Illinois River and Mississippi River Sand Areas Natural Division in Mason County. The first portion (920 acres) of Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak was dedicated on April 1, 1970 (Meeting #31, Resolution #115), one of only 64 nature preserves dedicated prior to the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI). Another 540-acre parcel was dedicated later that year on October 14, 1970 (Meeting #34, Resolution #145). Finally, 50 acres from two different parcels were dedicated as nature preserve buffer on May 23, 2011 (208th meeting, Resolution #2141). The proposed addition will connect the three previously mentioned dedicated areas. The nature preserve is adjacent to the privately-owned 86-acre Bob Spanski's Walden Too Land and Water Reserve. All these INPC-protected sites lie within the Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak INAI Site #0732. The Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak INAI Site is designated a Category I natural area due to the presence of Grade B high-quality remnant Dry Sand Prairie and Dry Sand Savanna. The site is Category II due to known specific suitable habitat supporting three State-listed plant species: State endangered Small Burhead (*Echinodorus tenellus*), and State threatened Hall's Bulrush (*Scheonoplectus hallii*) and Umbrella Sedge (*Cyperus grayoides*). Altogether, nine listed species have been found at the existing nature preserve. Management and use of the 40-acre addition will be consistent with the long-term conservation of Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak Nature Preserve as a whole and will promote the maintenance and management of the unique natural features for which the site was originally dedicated. The primary management objective for this addition is to maintain and restore natural communities, while providing habitat for the known State threatened Regal Fritillary. According to the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak Nature Preserve is within the Mason County Sands Conservation Opportunity Area, providing a platform for conservation projects and a priority for implementing action steps. The proposed Addition to Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak Nature Preserve protects additional habitat and buffers known habitat for 27 wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Preliminary approval was granted at the 243rd INPC Meeting on January 24, 2023 (Resolution 2585). With final approval by the Commission, the proposed Addition to Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak Nature Preserve will increase the size of this INPC-protected site to 1,550 acres.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of the Addition to Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the Agenda for the 244th Meeting.

(Resolution 2593)

244-14) Review of Closed Meeting Minutes

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

REPORT

Todd Strole
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Determination if closed minutes remain closed

While requesting now that these minutes remain closed, Todd Strole commented that INPC staff have requested a thorough review of these minutes with IDNR's Realty staff to see if some of them can be released.

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

The Commission agrees that the closed meeting minutes from August 2, 2005; May 2, 2006; May 6, 2008; May 5, 2009; May 7, 2013; September 10, 2013; and September 10, 2019, remain closed, as described and in accordance with Item 14 of the Agenda for the 244th Meeting.

(Resolution 2594)

244-15) Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)

Two individuals, Pete Jackson and Ed Collins, provided public comments and they are provided in Attachments 2 and 3, respectively.

Pete Jackson and Ed Collins shared tributes to their good friend, Wayne Schennum, who passed away a few years ago, and they recognized Wayne's contributions, achievements, and commitment to natural areas.

244-16) Other Business

Commissioner Miraglia shared prepared comments that are provided in Attachment 4. She is interested in seeing INPC staff and the Commissioners work with the experts at the Illinois State Museum and other partners to recommend a way forward so that when we work on land protection, we ensure a complete story is told, one that acknowledges this country's history and Native American expertise in caring for the land long before they were driven away.

Todd Strole agreed to begin exploratory conversations with INPC and IDNR staff, including the Illinois State Museum on this topic, and report back at the next meeting.

Commissioner Parker commented that she is curious to know what the Illinois State Museum is currently doing around tribal relations, and she encouraged everyone in the room to lean on organizations like Audubon who are already working in partnership with tribal nations for help as this work continues.

Heather Miller, Tribal Relations Director with the Illinois State Museum, shared that it would be her pleasure to begin some relationship work with the Commission and other partners. She is happy to have conversations about land acknowledgements, which can be a challenging topic, especially here in Illinois. In her personal opinion, land acknowledgements have become a trend so if we can think a little further about how we can change that conversation, she is ready to support it. There is a lot of work to do, and she looks forward to trying to see if we can change some ideas, particularly the way we think about the environment and our relationship with land.

244-17) **Adjournment**

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Covington, and carried that the meeting be adjourned.

The 244th INPC Meeting was adjourned at 1:51pm.