

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

Minutes of the 246th Meeting
(Subject to approval at the 247th Meeting)

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

January 23, 2024, 10:00 AM

246-1) **Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees**

Commission Chair Derby Lewis called the meeting to order at 10:09am and read the roll call.

Commissioners Present: Abigail Derby Lewis, Michelle Parker, Radhika Miraglia, George Covington, Toni Oplt, Tom Clay, Marcella DeMauro-Roth and Adam Kessel (Robert Szafoni is present on WebEx)

Consultants Present: Amy Doll, Joe Roth, Kerry Leigh, Cynthia Kanner, Jo Fessett, Bill McClain, Kim Erndt-Pitcher, Deborah Stone

Others Present: Todd Strole, Kim Roman, Sami Childerson, Heather McLean, John Nelson, Claire Gregory, Kevin Sierzega, Kelly Neal, John Griesbaum, Debbie S. Newman, Valerie Njapa, Emily Taylor, Angella Moorehouse Kaleb Baker, Lorraine Foelske and Byron Paulsen, INPC; Heather Osborn, Brian Navarrete, John Wilker, Andrew Hulin, Joe Kath, Natalia Maass, Chris Young, Kenneth Jolly, Dawn Cobb IDNR; Roger Beadles, Landowner; Sarah Livesay, Grand Prairie Friends; Andy Martin, Mandi Martin, Mike Fricke, Joann Fricke, Clifftop;

246-2) **Adoption of Agenda**

The Commission Chair asked for all those in favor, no one opposed and carried that the agenda for the 246th Meeting be adopted.

246-3) **Approval of Minutes for the 244-A Meeting on August 28, 2023 and the 245th Meeting on September 12, 2023**

It was moved by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, seconded by Commissioner Clay, and carried that the minutes for the 244-A and 245th Meeting be approved.

The Commission Chair then read the Accomplishments Summary of the 244-A and 245th Meeting:

At the 244A Special Meeting of the INPC, held on August 28, 2023, at the Illinois Beach Hotel and Conference Center in Zion, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for one tract of land totaling 186.42 acres. This tract of land is the Addition to Illinois Beach Nature Preserve, which is publicly owned.

At the 245th Meeting of the INPC, held on September 12, 2023, at the Monroe County Annex Building in Waterloo, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for six tracts of land totaling 469.99 acres. Three of the six tracts are privately owned, and the other three are publicly owned. The owners of the private sites donated the value of the protection agreements to the public. Lands protected include the Addition to Warbler Bottoms North Land and Water Reserve, Beaver Dam Glacial Drift Hill Prairie Land and Water Reserve, North Addition to Grisley Woods Land and Water Reserve, Gowin-Boldrey Addition to Robert Ridgway Grasslands Nature Preserve, Addition to Gladstone Fen Nature Preserve, and Gibbons Creek Barrens Nature Preserve.

Currently, there are 417 dedicated nature preserves with 63,239 acres and 207 registered land and water reserves with 58,949 acres. Altogether, there are 624 sites with 122,188 acres protected in the Illinois Nature Preserves System.

A resolution was read for recently retired IDNR Director John Rogner (Resolution 2615).

246-4) **Next Meeting Dates and Locations**

247	May 14, 2024	Putnam County Conservation District, Hennepin, Illinois
248	September 10, 2024	Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Visitor's Center Marion, Illinois

It was moved by Commissioner Covington, seconded by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, and carried that the future meeting dates of 2024 be approved.

246-5) **INPC Staff Report**

REPORT
 Todd Strole, Executive Director
 Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

The full INPC Report is provided in Appendix I.

246-6) **IDNR Staff Report**

REPORT
 Ann Marie Holtrop, Chief
 Division of Natural Heritage

Andrew Hulin, GIS Specialist, delivered the IDNR Staff Report in place of Ann Holtrop. The full IDNR Report is attached as Appendix II.

246-7) **Endangered Species Protection Board Report**

REPORT
Joyce Hofmann, Director
Endangered Species Protection Board

Joyce Hoffman delivered the report through WebEx. The full ESPB Report is attached as Appendix III.

246-8) **Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Report**

REPORT
Amy Doll, Director
Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

The full report is attached as Appendix IV.

246-9) **Revise the list of INPC Advisors and Consultants**

Commissioner Szafoni presented remotely the revisions to the list of INPC Advisors and Consultants outlined below.

Commissioner Parker asked if Dr. Jeff Walk is meant to be a permanent consultant or interim as a representative for The Nature Conservancy.

Commissioner Szafoni clarified that it was his understanding the Dr. Jeff Walk would be a permanent consultant.

One revision for changes to the INPC Advisor list are proposed:

1. The replacement of Dr. Eric M. Schauber with IHNS Interim Director Dr. Brenda Molano-Flores, as statutory advisor.

This requires no action by the commission, as it is a statutory position.

Three revisions for changes to the INPC Consultants list are proposed:

1. The removal of Michelle Carr
2. The addition of Dr. Jeff Walk

It was moved by Commissioner Parker, seconded by Commissioner Kessel, and carried that Dr. Jeff Walk will replace Michelle Carr as the consultant from the Nature Conservancy (Resolution 2616).

3. The addition of Dr. Charles Ruffner

It was moved by Commissioner DeMauro-Roth, seconded by Commissioner Clay, and carried that Dr. Charles Ruffner will be added as an INPC Consultant (Resolution 2617).

Current Advisors:

Natalie Finnie IL Dept. of Natural Resources <i>(Statutory Advisor)</i>	Dr. Brenda Molano-Flores IL Natural History Survey <i>(Statutory Advisor)</i>	Jennifer Edginton IL State Museum <i>(Statutory Advisor)</i>
Dr. Joyce Hofmann IL Endangered Species Protection Board	Dr. Richard C. Berg IL State Geological Survey	Mike Norris IL Dept. of Natural Resources Office of Historic Preservation
Dr. Timothy Pauketat IL State Archaeological Survey	Dr. Kevin O'Brien IL Sustainable Technology Center	Dr. Praveen Kumar Prairie Research Institute

Current Consultants:

Gerald Adelman	Jill Allread
Alan Branhagen	Michelle Carr
Amy Doll	Harry Drucker
Kim Erndt-Pitcher	Jo Fessett
Fran Harty	Randy Heidorn
Dr. Jim Herkert	Cynthia Kanner
Kerry Leigh*	
Bill McClain	Jill Riddell
Lauren Rosenthal	Bruce Ross-Shannon
Joseph Roth	John Schwegman
Deborah Stone	Dr. Davis Thomas
John White	

**Consultant was approved at the 245th Meeting on September 12, 2023 but inadvertently removed from the table presented at the 246th meeting.*

246-10) **Champaign County – Addition to Edna Edwards Burnett Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

John Griesbaum presented this agenda item.

Edna Edwards Burnett Land and Water Reserve (LWR) is a 20-acre natural area in Champaign County, owned and managed by Grand Prairie Friends. The site was registered at the 221st Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) meeting, Resolution #2333. Grand Prairie Friends wishes to register 60-acres as an addition to Edna Edwards Burnett LWR (Burnett LWR). Burnett LWR and the proposed addition occur near the northern extent of the high-quality reach of the Embarras River (Illinois Natural Areas Inventory [INAI] site #1808).

Burnett LWR and the proposed addition protect and buffer approximately 1250 ft. of the Embarras River and associated habitat.

Registration of the proposed addition to Burnett LWR increases the size of the reserve 3-fold, protects a headwater segment of the Embarras River and its riparian corridor and conserves stream habitat for a rich diversity of aquatic species. Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff recommend registration of an addition to Edna Edwards Burnett Land and Water Reserve.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the Addition to Edna Edwards Burnett as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2618)

246-11) **LaSalle County - Marseilles Hill Prairie Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Kim Roman presented this agenda item.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) proposes registration of the Marseilles Hill Prairie Land and Water Reserve. This 61.75-acre parcel is located within the Marseilles State Fish and Wildlife Area in LaSalle County and is recognized on the INAI (#1520) for its high-quality Glacial Drift Hill Prairies representative of the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois. The Marseilles State Fish and Wildlife Area is closed to the public except during hunting seasons as it is used by the Illinois National Guard as a training facility. The proposed Marseilles Hill Prairie Land and Water Reserve is primarily comprised of Glacial Drift Hill Prairie and Dry-mesic Upland Forest natural communities containing steep ravines and ephemeral streams. The registration of the site as a Land and Water Reserve will permanently protect 8% of Illinois' high quality Glacial Drift Hill Prairies and continue to provide opportunities for compatible military training and public hunting programs.

IDNR reserves the following rights:

- Continued use of the site for military training per the existing agreement with the ability to add other training activities compatible with the LWR registration.
- Addition of hunting programs in accordance with Administrative Rules and at the discretion of site managers via the intra-agency Plan of Work process.
- Control of unnatural erosion west and outside of the LWR boundary but potentially affecting additional highly erodible soils which could undermine the features which make the site significant. Stabilization could require work within the LWR. Erosion control work would be evaluated via the intra-agency Plan of Work process in coordination with INPC staff.

Currently allowed uses of the site include upland game, turkey, and deer hunting. It is recommended by staff of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois

Nature Preserves Commission that Marseilles Hill Prairie be permanently registered as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked Kim Roman to speak on the relationship with the National Guard. Is there coordination on when INPC staff will be on the property? Are they supportive of the area being approved as a Land and Water Reserve?

Roman said yes, Russ is our field contact and anytime he wants access he just calls, checks in and makes sure there are no active drills. Adding this property to the Nature Preserve System has been discussed for the past 10 years and this was a surprisingly smooth process.

Commissioner Miraglia asked about the decision to limit public access to the property for hunting.

Roman replied that the site was purchased by the National Guard for their exclusive use, which takes up most of the year. In essence, it seems like a safety issue.

Commissioner Miraglia inquired further about how this decision was made. It seems like an inequity issue when certain members of the public are allowed on the land, such as hunters, and not others.

Roman does not know how these decisions are made. A staff member from land management or wildlife may be better suited to answer.

Commissioner Miraglia asked who the decision maker is in this instance is.

Todd Strole stated that the landowner is the decision maker.

Commissioner Clay added this could be a management issue for deer and turkey.

Strole stated there is an annual meeting on land acquisitions where these decisions are made.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth followed up that access decisions were likely made years ago when the land was first acquired and made in line with the purpose of the purchase. They limited it right at the outset as the land is used for active National Guard training and access is a public safety issue.

Roman added she may have misspoken, she does not know if they exclude anyone, just that the site is open during hunting season.

Commissioner Miraglia stated this would still be a public safety issue, as the public cannot be on the land if someone is actively hunting.

Consultant Joe Roth asked if the site is open for the full suite of hunting season or is it more specific?

Roman said she didn't know. This information would be in the management plan.

Roth continued to say that the coordination of what hunting activities are allowed and when would be dependent on the National Guard's own schedule. Are these narrow margins?

Roman said she can find out.

Commissioner Parker asked about the chunk of land that is INAI but not included in the LWR.

Roman said first, it took them awhile to work out the specific boundary lines of the original INAI, which was not precise. Secondly, she was not comfortable recognizing a piece of land that is sliding off due to erosion. It may require an engineered approach to salvage the land which is out of the scope of INPCs capability.

Commissioner Parker asked if the boundary line is identified by an aforementioned water body.

Roman replied correct. It is an impounded stream that was originally mined but has been shut down for decades.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Marseilles Hill Prairie as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2619)

246-12) **Will County - Vesely Prairie Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Kim Roman presented this agenda item.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) proposes registration of the Vesely Prairie Land and Water Reserve. The site is managed as a satellite to Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area. Vesely Prairie is part of a large complex of publicly owned natural areas protected within the Illinois Nature Preserves System. It is located in southwestern Will County and lies within the Kankakee Sand Area Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois. The proposed Vesely Prairie Land and Water Reserve is 196 acres in size, and nearly all of it was used for agricultural production and included a former homesite/farmstead. Most of this site has been retired from agricultural production and seeded with prairie species, however approximately 48 acres remain in row crop production. Vesely Prairie's most significant attribute supporting registration as a Land and Water Reserve is its location. The site immediately abuts the IDNR-owned Wilmington Shrub Prairie Nature Preserve and the Forest Preserve District of Will County (FPDWC)-owned Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve. Both of these INPC sites harbor high-quality natural communities and listed species. As Vesely Prairie's plantings become established, they are expanding plant and wildlife habitat for the area's biota while also providing important buffer and habitat connectivity for the adjacent nature preserves.

IDNR reserves the following rights:

- To continue to farm under agricultural lease until sufficient resources are available to properly prepare, seed, and manage the fields to help ensure a successful transition to prairie. The lease retirement is anticipated for 2028.
- To add hunting programs in accordance with Administrative Rules and at the discretion of site managers via the intra-agency Plan of Work process.
- To adjust the existing drain tile valves to restore natural hydrology without impact to neighboring properties.
- To honor the preexisting pipeline easements within the proposed Land and Water Reserve.

Currently allowed uses of the site include deer and turkey hunting. Other Allowable Uses in the future may include minimally developed user amenities such as expanded public parking, picnic tables, interpretive signs, and a kiosk. It is recommended by staff of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission that Vesely Prairie be permanently registered as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked why the portion next to the river is not included.

Roman stated that the land proposed is already a lot to handle. We are currently struggling to manage the property, which is why this portion is still in agricultural production. The funding and staffing are not available.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth commented that she spent the majority of her career working in this area, and seeing plans that were set 30-40 years ago come to life is amazing to see. She would like to congratulate everyone involved and commends the cooperation seen between agencies. The area will respond very rapidly to restoration because you are not dealing with organic soil and weed problems.

Roman agreed and stated that “sand is magic.” Floyd Catchpole and Julie Mason FPDWC staff are the go-tos for working in this area and this is a great project.

Commissioner Covington asked why we are going the LWR route, rather than a NP buffer given that it is adjacent to an already established NP.

Roman said this has to do with hunting. The site is open for deer and turkey hunting.

Commissioner Covington asked if there is a higher protection for NP Buffers over LWR?

Roman answered that it depends. The NP buffers have a higher level of condemnation threshold than a LWR.

Strole answered that buffers have the exact same legal protection as NP but there are more allowable uses for the land. He agreed this is a higher level of protection than LWR.

Commissioner Kessel asked about the ag lease rights. Does this limit the use of pesticides and limit drift in the area?

Roman stated the application of dicamba is not allowed in IDNR leased properties. As far as more detailed method on agriculture leases, she would need to ask.

Commissioner Kessel elaborated the need for planning for the future, if they renew the agricultural lease in 2028, will there be parameters in place that limit the use of pesticides and application method that aggravate herbicide drift.

Roman answered the only thing she can speak to is the prohibition of dicamba on INDR leased property and that anything further would depend on how chemicals are applied to label.

Strole added there is no dicamba on INDR lands, period, and there are no neonicotinoid treated soybeans. It is almost impossible to find non-neonicotinoids treated corn, so at the moment that is allowed.

Commissioner Oplt was interested about the agricultural lease and how the production of that field might negatively affect the surrounding area. She now understands better and is glad about the limited use of dicamba. Commissioner Oplt asked about a reference to a pipeline in the LWR proposal regarding water tile. Is this the pipeline, or does it refer to something else?

Roman answered there is a pipeline easement that cuts across the LWR. They are recorded but she does not believe they are active.

Commissioner Oplt asked if we know what flowed through the pipeline.

Roman answered no, we do not.

Commissioner Oplt asked because there was a recent leak in Edwardsville, IL and she is concerned about how this might pose a threat to the land.

Consultant Joe Roth asked about a budget regarding the agriculture lease. He assumes a check is written by the farmer to INDR and asked where that money is allocated. Can that money be used on adjacent land or saved for when the lease is over to be used for management.

Roman stated that you will be happy to hear that money is earmarked to only be used on Vesely, namely the water tiles and other management needs. Today, as we speak, there are contractors out there cutting woody material. These 48 acres generate about \$14,000 a year so there ought to be a nice pot of money to use.

John Wilker, INDR Department of Land Management, added that from a Lands perspective we do not want to renew the agriculture lease in 2028. We would like to see the lease terminated in 2028.

Roman agreed, stating the management plan is written with that in mind and it's IDNRs intention but the option to renew is available in the event that cannot be pulled off.

Consultant Kerry Leigh added that a lot of work has been done on conservation easements and agriculture leases for IDNR to limit the use of pesticides and herbicides.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the Vesely Prairie as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2620)

246-13) **Logan County – Buffer Addition to Sandra Miller Bellrose Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Byron Paulsen presented this agenda item.

The Sandra Miller Bellrose Nature Preserve which is owned by Ron Bellrose and Sandra Miller Bellrose was dedicated on September 5, 2002 at the 176th meeting of the INPC. The Bellrose's are seeking preliminary approval for an approximate 306-acre Nature Preserve Buffer Addition which would bring the total acres dedicated to approximately 377 acres. The proposed Sandra Miller Bellrose Nature Preserve Buffer Addition is located in Logan County in the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. The existing Nature Preserve consists of a 0.8 mile segment of the Sugar Creek-Salt Creek Drainage Illinois Natural Area Inventory site (#1521) and adjacent woodlands. It was recognized for the high diversity of freshwater mussels which was the qualifying feature at the time of dedication. The proposed buffer addition consists of prairie plantings, wetland creations and woodlands which will provide additional buffer for this stretch of the Sugar Creek. The addition will provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. The buffer addition will include a larger block of forest cover as the tree plantings mature which will provide more habitat for area sensitive forest bird species.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Buffer Addition to Sandra Miller Bellrose Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the Agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2621)

246-14) **McHenry County – Dome Hill Buffer Addition to Lake in the Hills Fen Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Claire Gregory presented this agenda item.

The Village of Lake in the Hills proposes dedication of 4.1 acres as nature preserve buffer addition to Lake in the Hills Fen Nature Preserve. This nature preserve is part of the 540.8-acre Lake in the Hills Fen Conservation Area. The Village of Lake in the Hills, the McHenry County Conservation District, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources each own portions of the existing nature preserve which is currently 347.9-acres. The proposed 4.1-acre Dome

Hill buffer addition is adjacent to Lake in the Hills Fen Nature preserve and offers an impressive view of the entire preserve. The eastern boundary of the Lake in the Hills Fen INAI site (#1011) runs through the proposed buffer addition. The INAI site is recognized for its high-quality calcareous floating mat, calcareous seep, dry gravel prairie, graminoid fen, sedge meadow, and shrub fen. Also present are low-gradient creek, freshwater marsh, and mesic gravel prairie. The INAI site also supports populations of 14 plant species that are currently endangered or threatened. A subpopulation of one of these species occurs within the boundaries of the proposed addition. Formal dedication of Dome Hill as a buffer addition will increase the total size of the nature preserve to 352.09 acres.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Dome Hill Buffer Addition to Lake in the Hills Fen Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 14 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2622)

The Commission broke for lunch at 11:55 a.m. and returned at 12:35 a.m.

246-15) **Will County – Buffer Addition to Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Kim Roman presented this agenda item.

Sand Ridge Savanna is a 625-acre nature preserve owned and managed by the Forest Preserve District of Will County (FPDWC), located in the Kankakee Sand Area Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois. The FPDWC wishes to dedicate in perpetuity an adjacent 157-acre tract of the District's Kankakee Sands Preserve as a buffer addition to Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve. Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve abuts Wilmington Shrub Prairie Nature Preserve and the proposed Vesely Prairie Land and Water Reserve; it is also within one mile of Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve. The proposed buffer addition includes approximately 23.5 acres of remnant natural communities, 127 acres of prairie plantings, and an approximate 6.5-acre zone designated as an access area which includes user facilities such as a parking lot, outhouse, and a picnic shelter. The proposed buffer addition lies west of the north unit of Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve and its prairie plantings support the state-threatened eryngium stem borer moth (*Papaipema eryngii*) and the state-threatened ornate box turtle (*Terrepene ornata*). The state endangered short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) and northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) have been observed using the proposed buffer addition during winter months. Conservative plant species such as winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), green fringed orchid (*Habenaria lacera*), and lady fern (*Athyrium filix femina*) are among the 314 species of native flora documented on site. An existing 2.5-mile limestone chip loop-trail leads from the access area within the proposed buffer addition to the north unit of Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve. Approximately 1.3 miles of trail and two bridges are within the proposed dedicated buffer addition; the trail and its mowed shoulders occupy approximately 4.5 acres. A 6.5-acre zone in and around the access area is designated by the Forest Preserve District for possible future development of user amenities consistent with the Rules for Management of Illinois Nature Preserves.

The dedication of this buffer addition helps to preserve the region's biota, complete good preserve design for Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve, and promote contiguity of the natural landscape of a large complex of sites within the Illinois Nature Preserves system.

Commissioner Parker asked what is going on the northwest of the property, referring to the map.

Roman answered that it is a strip mine. There are several in the area.

Commissioner DeMauro-Roth added they are private clubs now, but they were former strip mines.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Buffer Addition to Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 15 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2623)

246-16) **Cook County - Addition and Buffer Addition to Paintbrush Prairie Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Kim Roman presented this agenda item.

Paintbrush Prairie Nature Preserve (INAI #1563), owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), was originally dedicated in 1999 and was 68 acres in size. Subsequent additions of both nature preserve and nature preserve buffer have increased the total dedicated area of this site to 81.6 acres. Paintbrush Prairie is one of five nature preserves in south Cook County collectively and informally known as the Indian Boundary Prairies. At the time of its first dedication in 1999, the qualifying features for nature preserve status was 10 acres of high-quality remnant prairie with the presence of two state-listed plant species: eared false foxglove (*Tomanthera auriculata*) and early fen sedge (*Carex craweii*). These species are still found on site but have been de-listed by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board since the time of dedication. As management efforts increased and biological inventories were conducted, more than 200 native plant species, including the federally-threatened eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*) and state-endangered mountain blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*), have been documented. The proposed nature preserve addition occupies former road rights-of-way that were platted and graded, but never developed. The City of Markham has legally vacated 5.5 acres of road right-of-way within and adjacent to Paintbrush Prairie Nature Preserve, and TNC wishes to afford them the same level of legal protection as the rest of the site. The interior portions of former road right-of-way total 3.15 acres and are proposed nature preserve additions because they are similar in biological quality as the rest of the nature preserve. The more disturbed, exterior former road rights-of-way total 2.36 acres and are proposed as nature preserve buffer additions. Dedication of vacated road rights-of-way within and abutting Paintbrush Prairie Nature Preserve will protect additional acreage of remnant prairie and

help complete good preserve design by providing legal protection under the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act. Preliminary approval for these additions was granted at the 245th meeting of the INPC on September 12, 2023 (Resolution #2602). It is therefore recommended by field staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission the dedication of 3.15 acres as nature preserve addition, and 2.36 acres as nature preserve buffer addition.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Addition and Buffer Addition to Paintbrush Prairie Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 16 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2624)

246-17) **Cook County - Addition and Buffer Addition to Sundrop Prairie Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Kim Roman presented this agenda item.

Sundrop Prairie Nature Preserve (INAI #1575) is owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and is located in south Cook County. It was first dedicated in 2000 and had three subsequent nature preserve additions to total 91.5 acres in size. Sundrop Prairie is one of 5 nature preserves in south Cook County collectively and informally known as the Indian Boundary Prairies. At the time of its first dedication in 2000, the qualifying feature for nature preserve status was the presence of the state-threatened early fen sedge (*Carex craweii*) in remnant prairie of the Chicago Lake Plain. This species is still found on site but has been delisted by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board since the time of dedication. As management efforts increased and biological inventories were conducted, more than 200 native plant species, including the state-endangered mountain blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*), have been documented. The proposed nature preserve additions include three small undeveloped lots and also former road rights-of-way that were platted, but never developed. The City of Markham has legally vacated its road rights-of-way within and adjacent to Sundrop Prairie Nature Preserve, and TNC wishes to afford them the same level of legal protection as the rest of the site. The interior portions of former road right-of-way and three small lots total 21.4 acres and are proposed nature preserve additions because they are similar in biological quality as the rest of the nature preserve. The ecologically disturbed former road rights-of-way total 3.3 acres and are proposed as nature preserve buffer additions. Dedication of undeveloped lots and vacated road rights-of-way within and abutting Sundrop Prairie Nature Preserve will protect additional acreage of remnant prairie and help complete good preserve design by providing legal protection under the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act. Preliminary approval for these additions was granted at the 245th meeting of the INPC on September 12, 2023 (Resolution #2603). It is therefore recommended by field staff of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission the dedication of 21.4 acres as nature preserve addition, and 3.3 acres as nature preserve buffer addition.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Addition and Buffer Addition to Sundrop Prairie Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 17 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2625)

246-18) **Edwards County – Birks Prairie Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Sami Childerson presented this agenda item.

Roger and Vivian Beadles, owners of Birks Prairie (INAI #1975), seek final dedication of 7.92 acres of reconstructed prairie as Birks Prairie Nature Preserve. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission granted preliminary approval for dedication at its 243rd meeting on January 24, 2023 (Resolution #2584). The proposed nature preserve is located in the Mt. Vernon Hill Country Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division of Illinois in Edwards County. The site contains a Grade C mesic prairie reconstruction and is the only prairie natural community listed on the INAI in this natural division and section. The reconstruction supports a thriving translocated population of the state-threatened grass-leaved lily (*Stenanthium gramineum*) and a naturally occurring population of state-endangered royal catchfly (*Silene regia*). The proposed Birks Prairie Nature Preserve is known to support at least seven Species of Greatest Conservation Need, as identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. It is one of only two INAI sites in Edwards County and is located less than one-half mile from Beadles Barrens Nature Preserve (INAI Site #1547). Dedication will provide permanent protection of habitat for two state-listed plants and one of only two INAI sites in Edwards County. It will be the first prairie natural community to be permanently protected in the Southern Till Plain Natural Division's Mt. Vernon Hill Country Section. On behalf of Roger and Vivian Beadles, staff recommends final approval for dedication of Birks Prairie as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Birks Prairie Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 18 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2626)

246-19) **Monroe County - Addition to White Rock Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Debbie Newman presented this agenda item.

The proposed addition to White Rock Nature Preserve is a 97.8-acre site in the bluffs of southwestern Illinois, south of St. Louis. The site lies in between and connects the 306.5-acre White Rock Nature Preserve and the 168-acre White Rock Land and Water Reserve, owned by Clifftop NFP (Conserving Lands in Farm, Forest, Talus Or Prairie, Not-For-Profit, also known as Clifftop, Inc.).

The White Rock Nature Preserve contains a mosaic of high-quality loess hill prairie, limestone glade, limestone cliffs and upland forest overlooking the Mississippi River floodplain and encompasses approximately 47 acres of the Monroe City Hill Prairie INAI site (#199). The White Rock Land and Water Reserve also contains high-quality limestone glade along with mature dry, dry-mesic and mesic upland forest. The LWR encompasses approximately 50 acres of the Potato Hill INAI site (#200). Both the preserve and reserve contain populations of the state-threatened Missouri coneflower (*Rudbeckia missouriensis*), the state-endangered woolly buckthorn (*Bumelia lanuginosa*), and a state-threatened reptile. In addition, the state-endangered crested coralroot orchid (*Hexalectris spicata*), American bluehearts (*Buchnera americana*), stickleaf (*Mentzelia oligosperma*), and climbing milkweed (*Matelea decipiens*) are found on the nature preserve.

The proposed White Rock Nature Preserve Addition was granted preliminary approval at the 245th meeting of the INPC on September 12, 2023 (Resolution #2604) is located just outside of the current boundaries of the Monroe City and Potato Hill INAI sites. The site qualifies for nature preserve addition because it contains a tiny remnant, Grade C glade that contain at least two listed species, the Missouri coneflower and the woolly buckthorn; provides habitat for a state-threatened reptile since it is within a one-mile radius of known hibernacula and rookeries, and most likely has hibernacula located within its boundaries, also. The site also provides additional acres of mature upland forest connected to a larger complex of protected forest lands (657 acres) and provides important continuity of the same habitat between White Rock Nature Preserve and White Rock Land and Water Reserve.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Addition to White Rock Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 19 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2627)

246-20) **Winnebago County - Lost Flora Fen on Raccoon Creek Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

John Nelson presented this agenda item.

The Natural Land Institute requests final approval to dedicate 156.7 acres as the Lost Flora Fen on Raccoon Creek Nature Preserve. The proposed nature preserve includes a large portion of the Lost Flora Fen INAI site (#1972), which was recognized in 2021 as a Category I site. The qualifying feature is an 8.9-acre, Grade B Sedge Meadow and an associated 13-acre, Grade C Sedge Meadow. The entire INAI site is 62.9 acres in size and includes a portion of the surrounding landscape (41 acres) consisting of pasture, low-gradient stream, oxbow ponds, row crops, and unmanaged wetlands of lower quality but with good restoration potential. More than half of the INAI site (35.9 acres) is within the proposed nature preserve boundary. Lost Flora Fen was also included on the INAI as a Category II site for suitable habitat supporting two state endangered animals and one state endangered plant. Preliminary approval for dedication was granted at the 245 INPC meeting (Resolution #2606).

Dedication of the Lost Flora Fen on Raccoon Creek Nature Preserve will help protect and restore high-quality wetlands on a landscape level scale. This dedication is the first step in legally protecting this unique natural area and will undoubtedly be followed by other dedications in the future by the Natural Land Institute.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Lost Flora Fen on Raccoon Creek Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 20 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2628)

246-21) **McHenry County – Request to Approve Limited Spraying of Btk to Combat Spongy Moth Outbreaks at Amberin Ash Ridge Nature Preserve and Spring Hill Buffer Addition to Boone Creek Fen Nature Preserve**

John Nelson and Kelly Neal presented this agenda item.

Spongy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*): In the spring of 2023, it was reported to INPC staff that a severe outbreak of the invasive spongy moth had occurred at Amberin Ash Ridge Nature Preserve and the Spring Hill Buffer Addition to Boone Creek Fen Nature Preserve. These sites are adjacent to one another. The infestation was causing defoliation of mature oak trees and the landowners contracted for individual tree spraying (insecticide) to protect trees and quality of life. This insecticide spraying was not part of an approved management plan.

The control of spongy moth at INPC sites is not new and has been carefully permitted as part of the Slow the Spread Program administered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA). Under an approved INPC permit, the IDOA is required to use a species-specific mating disruptor and provide a minimum 300-foot buffer distance to nature preserves where spraying is not permitted. This has worked well in the past, but the Slow the Spread Program is no longer active in McHenry County and thus is not available to private landowners who now must carry the burden of costs when an outbreak occurs. A mating disruptor, such as SPLAT, would be the preferred alternative. Due to cost and availability treatment using SPLAT will likely be prohibitive.

In support of the two private landowners who are trying to prevent oak tree mortality due to spongy moth outbreaks, staff requests approval of the following as part of an approved management plan. The action, if approved, will be specific to these two sites:

- Spraying of Btk on a very limited basis, for a period not to exceed two consecutive years.
- A report of spraying activity to the INPC will be required. Report will include spray date(s) and any observations of caterpillar mortality, particularly of non-target species.

Commissioner Derby Lewis started the discussion by acknowledging the amount of energy and thought that has gone into addressing this situation. She stated we know this will impact native species. Monarch caterpillars are often here by the end of May and acknowledging that is

important. She also knows that spraying is the lesser of the two evils, as we cannot lose all the habitat. She poses the question if we can use this as an opportunity to learn more. We don't know the long to short term impact of Btk. Are there resources to monitor the spraying from partnerships to extend capacity?

Kelly Neal answered the landowners will likely not be able to financially manage multiple applications , so the sprays will likely not go late into the season.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked for clarification on the timeline.

John Nelson answered that the landowners have indicated they would likely only be able to afford one spray, earlier in the season. He then answered in regard to monitoring impact and explained that this can be measured by putting white sheets down on the forest floor and count the mortality.. He doesn't believe he could ask the landowners to do that.

Commissioner Derby Lewis agreed and invited the commission to speak on how they can support monitoring through connections and what help they can bring.

Kelly Neal added there has been discussion with volunteers to assist in observations.

Commissioner DeMauro Roth asked what insecticide was used in 2023 and what were the impacts observed? Was it successful?

John Nelson does not know what insecticide was used but he knows it was selectively sprayed and not broad based. He believes this was done to try and deal with the infestation immediately around the landowner homes. This was a last-ditch effort made by the landowners in 2023 and they did not spray until June, which is the worst time they could have picked since it would be killing everything. He added that early Btk spraying would be much better and is not a long-lasting chemical in the environment.

Commissioner DeMauro Roth referenced the proposal documents and supporting documentation on these treatments. She noted the difference in treatment relies on the density of the spongy moth population found in the area. Is there any reference of what the threshold in population to use one treatment over the other? How will the landowners know what to use when the time comes?

John Nelson answered when the Department of Agriculture was involved, they had collected a large amount of data using traps and knew when and where to spray. We no longer have access to those kinds of monitoring resources, as the program has moved farther south. But traps were provided to the landowners by the Department of Agriculture. There will not be empirical data in this instance like there was in the past since we no longer have the overarching agency of Department of Agriculture leading. The landowners and INPC staff do not have the resources to conduct such a study. The treatment used will default more to cost rather than population. But based on the infestation last year, the one this year is expected to be large and therefore Btk will be more appropriate. He reiterates that targeted Btk spraying will have small and temporary impact.

Neal added that the Department of Agriculture has always intended to slow the spread of Spongy Moth, not eradicate. Spraying should reduce population size and minimize impact on trees. She also referenced the recommendation to observe egg masses after breeding season to give an indication of what the population is doing that year and infer what will happen next season.

Consultant Cynthia Kanner asked if one spray would even be sufficient.

Neal answered that two early sprays would be ideal, but she does not believe the landowners will be able to accommodate that.

Kanner followed up that if it is less effective, then spraying will be needed the following year.

Neal answered yes, if it's determined the spraying is not effective then it will be needed the following year.

Commissioner Szafoni commented through WebEx. It seems that this is something that has already been done dozens, if not thousands, of times farther north. Do we have any information on what happens in these areas after treatment is done?

Neal answered she provided a report of a 2017 spraying in LaSalle County in the staff opinion on IDNR owned Nature Preserves in that area. Otherwise, we are not provided with information from the department of Agriculture on the results of previous spraying. It goes beyond our capacity to keep track of that kind of data or be on the lookout. The data probably does exist, but we have not acquired it.

Commissioner Szafoni added he is very sympathetic to the lack of resources INPC faces. His questions stem from what information we can garner from the entire northeastern Midwest where the spongy moth has already spread through. He finds it hard to believe no one has investigated the impact and effectiveness of Btk.

Neal added there is a lot of information from eastern states she used when formulating the staff opinion but as far as anecdotal information or data, she does not currently have it but can get it and share it with the commission. We have been permitting spongy moth management for about 25 years now using mating disrupter, a species-specific pheromone that controls mating of adult spongy moth.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that there is an interest in case studies and reports to show a well-documented picture of the effectiveness of these treatments. She added that this information is difficult to find which is surprising given the scope of spongy moth spread. She invited anyone who finds it to share.

Valerie Njapa asked what the specific cost of these treatments are.

Nelson answered that in the past when there was a cost share with the department of agriculture, the landowners paid \$30 an acre. Now the cost will more likely be \$100s of an acre and they are unsure if they can even find a contractor who can do these aerial sprays. This is a very difficult situation they find themselves in. He added that based on the resources he has found, The Department of Agriculture has been the lead on spraying Btk and finds the impact of Btk to be short term, as it degrades quickly in the environment. He looks at it in the way we might look at herbicide spraying or prescribed burns where we see collateral damage. These are tough decisions, but we see the benefits in looking at the larger picture for the natural community.

Commissioner Derby Lewis agreed but points to the collective impact rather than individual sites as this is not an isolated incident. On a large scale it is having an impact and could be seen as

“death by a thousand cuts.” But weighing the collateral damage and spraying earlier in the season are ways we can reduce impact to our natural environment.

Randy Heidorn commented through WebEx. He added that pheromone disruptors do not typically work where there is high density population. He suggested bringing this topic up with the inter-agency committee on pesticides and find out what kind of information they might have. Situations like this will happen again and would be worthwhile in bringing up.

Strole agreed and stated he can do that.

Njapa added she was curious about the cost because if it is more effective to do two sprayings in one year rather than spreading it out over two years, we might want to investigate cost share resources.

Nelson said the Department of Agriculture is not doing cost share in this area. The outbreak we are seeing today was last seen here in this area 18 years ago, back when the Department of Ag was helping in McHenry County. So, it was effective for 18 years.

Kanner asked if there are any other protentional cost share partners to explore.

Neal answered not to their knowledge.

Nelson added the landowners asked the McHenry County Health Department for help but were denied.

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

The Commission grants approval for the Limited Spraying of Btk to Combat Spongy Moth Outbreaks at Amberin Ash Ridge Nature Preserve and Spring Hill Buffer Addition to Boone Creek Fen Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 21 of the agenda for the 246th Meeting.

(Resolution 2629)

246-22) **Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)**

No public comments were presented.

246-23) **Other Business**

No other business was presented.

246-24) **Adjournment**

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

The 245th INPC Meeting was adjourned at 2:05pm.