



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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JB Pritzker, Governor
Colleen Callahan, Director

Illinois Thirty-by-Thirty Conservation Task Force First Meeting Minutes

Date: February 10th, 2022
Time: 11:45 A.M., CST
Location: Remote meeting via Webex
Subject: Initial Meeting of the Illinois Thirty-by-Thirty Conservation Task Force
Website: www2.illinois.gov/dnr/programs/30by30

Members Present: Rep. Robyn Gabel, Rep. Thomas Bennett, Sen. Dave Koehler, John Rogner, Brian Rennecker, Todd Rettig, Mike Vanderhoof, Dr. Austin Omer, KJ Johnson, George Czapar, Lindsay Keeney, Dr. Matt Montgomery, Jason Bleich, Jim Herkert, Ellicia Sanchez, Olivia Schickel, Ava Nollen, Emma O'Lone, Emilie Collins, Paul Ritter, Todd Katz

Members Absent: Kyle Rorah, Sen. Jason Barickman

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by Chair Rogner at 11:50 am
- Roll call was taken by Michael Lynch, DNR staff

Student Call to Action

- Emilie Collins and Keagan Hall, former students at Pontiac Township High School who led the effort to draft and pass the founding legislation for the task force, presented on some efforts they and their fellow students have been involved in.
 - P2D2: an internationally recognized prescription drug disposal program, benefiting both public and environmental health
 - Operation Endangered Species: a local student-led movement to reintroduce the Alligator Snapping Turtle, which has raised \$150,000 and released 500 turtles since it started in 2011
 - 30 by 30 Summit: a meeting of 125 students in January 2020 in support of Illinois contributing to the 30 by 30 movement
 - Peace by Youth: an international effort involving 140 teachers across 5 countries engaging their students in the 30 by 30 effort
- Olivia Schickel, Ava Nollen, and Emma O'Lone, current students at Pontiac Township High School presented a call to action on the environmental crisis.
 - We are in the middle of the 6th mass extinction, and the first to be caused by humans. About 150 species go extinct every day, nearly 1,000 times the rate it would be if not for humans invading every stretch of our planet.

- With only 3% of our state’s land and water conserved, more than 54,000 species are at risk. We have a long way to go. Humans created this issue and humans have the power to reverse it.
- What we are doing know is this is Illinois’ last chance to jump on the global 30 by 30 initiative and make a significant positive impact. We have the opportunity to lead the way to protect our country’s natural gifts for the future.
- Collaboration has to be at the core of everything we do. Each of you are here because your voice and perspective is valuable. It is easy to point fingers and place blame, but want to avoid seeing our obstacles as enemies because what we are facing is not one person or group but 100 years of apathy towards or planet.

Overview of the Thirty-by-Thirty Conservation Movement

- Chair Rogner provided background information on the 30 by 30 movement globally and in Illinois
 - The movement began in 2019 with a scientific paper calling for a “Global Deal for Nature.” In response to two global emergencies, biodiversity loss and climate change, the paper called for setting aside 30% of land and water by the year 2030, to provide habitat for species and mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration and natural infrastructure.
 - It notes that there is not evidence saying that 30% is enough, and more may be needed.
 - This 30% need not be evenly distributed across the planet. Some areas are more valuable as species habitat, others for agriculture for human use.
 - In 2020, President Biden issued an executive order adopting 30 by 30 as a goal for the nation, based on 8 principles:
 - Pursue a Collaborative and Inclusive Approach to Conservation
 - Conserve America’s Lands and Waters for the Benefit of All People
 - Support Locally Led and Locally Designed Conservation Efforts
 - Honor Tribal Sovereignty; Support Priorities of Tribal Nations
 - Pursue Conservation and Restoration Approaches that Create Jobs and Support Healthy Communities
 - Honor Private Property Rights; Support Voluntary Stewardship Efforts of Private Landowners and Fishers
 - Use Science as a Guide
 - Build on Existing Tools and Strategies with an Emphasis on Flexibility and Adaptive Approaches
 - The movement faced pushback in the United States initially from those who feared it would lead to a federal land grab, so the principles sought to make this a collaborative process, working with local governments, tribes, and landowners.
 - The principles also stressed that this is about more than just conservation, that the movement should consider how conservation can create jobs and increase access to nature, especially in underserved communities.
 - Our neighbors in the Corn Belt are looking to us to see how 30 by 30 is pursued in a state that is 96% privately owned and more than two-thirds agriculture.

IDNR Report on the State of Conservation in Illinois

- Todd Strole, Director of the Illinois Nature Preserves, provided some background on the current state of land conservation in Illinois and how close the state is to 30 by 30.
 - Overall, two-thirds of land in the state is used for crops, with another 5% on pasture, and some of the 13% of forest is also used for pasture, totaling roughly three-

quarters of all land in the state being used for agriculture in some way. Only 4% of the state is currently “protected.”

- Nationally, 13% of land is protected, and much less is used for cropland.
- “Protected” here includes just land that is formally set aside for conservation purposes, so does not include a lot of other land that has conservation value.
- Currently, 4.2% of land in Illinois is protected, or 1.5 mil acres. To reach 30%, another 9 mil acres would have to be added.
 - Only 27,000 acres were added in the past five years.
- Regionally, the NE and S regions of the state have a greater share of protected land due to large public holdings like Shawnee National Forest, while Central Illinois is primarily devoted to agriculture.
- Protected land is largely publicly owned, with half a million acres federally owned alone, and is mostly directly owned rather than protected by easements.
 - Some is also protected as Nature Preserves, the highest level of protection the state can give, permanent and full.
 - There amounts can overlap if land is protected in different ways.
- There are also a number of programs that are not “protection” but do provide conservation value, such as the Conservation Reserve Program, Forestry Development Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and Illinois Recreational Access Program, which in total actually include more land than all protected areas.
 - Other programs include Partners for Conservation, Stream Bank Stabilization, and the Solar Pollinator Program
- John Rogner
 - I believe that we need to focus on a “conserve” definition over a “protect” definition. Due to the composition of land in the state, it will be hard to get anywhere if we do not include working with private landowners to improve the conservation value of their land.
- Sen. Koehler
 - That would not require any changes in language.
- Lindsay Keeney
 - I like that we are emphasizing a creative focus here, since there has been some concern from the agricultural community, fears of 30% of land being set aside for conservation and not agriculture.
- Sen. Bennett
 - Hopefully the broad array of task force members helps too, ensuring there are many perspectives.

Discussion of the Goals of the Task Force

- Chair Rogner discussed the duties of the task force laid out in the legislation and asked if members had any thoughts on them.
 - Focus areas
 - identify resources that the State has and how they are being utilized to protect land and water resources;
 - identify tools, resources, and incentives for landowners and the private sector to restore degraded natural areas and to manage their resources sustainably;
 - identify financial resources from the private sector, philanthropy, and public sources to expand protections and to help manage lands and waters for conservation;

- the ability of the State to manage more public lands for the benefit of future generations; and
 - strategies to conserve and protect 30% of Illinois' land and water by 2030.
 - The Task Force shall observe the sovereignty of tribal nations through meaningful consultation with indigenous tribal leaders, and shall help indigenous tribal communities fulfill their visions and priorities for the stewardship of natural, cultural, and historic resources.
- Todd Katz
 - I think we should also consider private landowner education, including how conservation can actually help improve profits.
- Lindsay Keeney
 - I think there is a space for us to focus on how to maximize the implementation of programs that already exist, fine tuning them and improving access, before focusing on creating new programs
- Ellicia Sanchez
 - Once we have a working definition of “conserved” we should think about how we want to track progress on it, what metrics we would use. This could potentially be helped by the work on the Federal Conservation Atlas.
- Dr. Matt Montgomery
 - Note that the first four focus areas all build to the last.
 - It may be helpful to get more background information.
- Emilie Collins
 - I want to be sure that we keep youth involved in the process throughout.
- John Rogner
 - On the report, believe that it would be most helpful if it included actionable policy recommendations, either for state agencies, private groups, or the legislature.
- Sen. Koehler
 - From our perspective, we need to know what is out there before we take any action, so a report that just focused on what we are already doing and what people are already wanting would be helpful.

Planning Listening Sessions

- Chair Rogner presented the plan for the listening sessions: breaking them down by topics (shown below), holding the first in three weeks and then the others at two week intervals.

Geography	Landscape	Topic	Stakeholder
Northern	Urban	Equity & Accessibility	Recreation
Central	Agricultural	Agriculture & Conservation	Agricultural
Southern	Natural	Protected Lands & Habitats	Conservation

- John Rogner
 - We are leaning towards the landscape approach.
- Sen. Bennett
 - Who would we reach out to for each category? And how is “natural” defined?
- John Rogner
 - We have contacts for each of them. Chicago Wilderness would be key for urban areas, our agricultural members for agricultural areas, and a broad array of contact lists for the natural areas, since that is the broadest. It would include all land that is not urban or agricultural, so protected land as well as unprotected forests and wetlands.
- Sen. Koehler

- Could we have an in-person session at some point, potentially on site? It is always helpful to be able to touch and feel the lands you are talking about.
- Lindsay Keeney
 - There is already a network of organizations discussing 30 by 30 outside of this task force, that has members engaged in each of these areas.
- Dr. Austin Omer
 - The agricultural sessions should be first since planting season starts soon.
- Sen. Bennett
 - Legislative session may make these times difficult, but I understand that we have to move quickly.
- Paul Ritter
 - 11:45 – 1:15 on Thursdays is our class time, but could still potentially meet after the school day.

Public Comment

- Kerry Leigh
 - I want to be sure that some time is spent in the listening session on discussing barriers. This is an important lens to look at these problems with. For example, how would we fund management of new protected lands? How can we help private landowners overcome barriers to conservation on their lands?
- Jim Anderson
 - There is overlap between all of these topics, so I just want to be sure that we think about that and don't keep them too siloed.