

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION
Minutes of the 222nd Meeting
(Subject to approval at the 223rd Meeting)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Lake Level Conference Rooms B and C
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

222-1) Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees

At 10:00 a.m. Commissioner Dann called the meeting to order and Director Emeritus Heidorn read roll call:

Commissioners present: George Covington, Donnie Dann, Pen Daubach, Abigail Derby Lewis, William McClain, Charles Ruffner, Deborah Stone, David Thomas

Commissioners absent: Jo-Elle Mogerman

Advisors to the Commission present: Thomas Emerson, Illinois State Archaeological Survey (ISAS)

Consultants to the Commission present: Fran Harty, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Tom Clay, Illinois Audubon Society (IAS)

Others present: Randy Heidorn, Marni English, Kelly Neal, Valerie Njapa, Tom Lerczak, John Nelson, Debbie Newman, Steven Byers, Kim Roman, Bob Edgin, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) Staff; James Herkert, Jenny Skufca, Ann Holtrop, Dave Horvath, Dawn Cobb, John Wilker, Keith Shank, Nancy Williamson, Michelle Simone, Tim Schweizer, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR); Jeannie Barnes, Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS), Charles "Chip" O'Leary and Troy Showerman, Forest Preserve District of Cook County; Susan Hargrove, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT); Russell Clendenin, landowner; George Rose, Don McFall.

Commissioner Thomas was recognized for his service as former chair to the Commission by Commission Chair Dann.

222-2) Adoption of Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Ruffner, seconded by Commissioner Daubach, and carried that the Agenda be adopted.

222-3) Approval of Minutes for the 221st Meeting, September 15, 2015

It was moved by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Derby Lewis, and carried that the minutes from the 221st Meeting, September 15, 2015, be approved.

Commissioner Dann read the following:

At the 221st Meeting of the INPC, held on September 15, 2015, at the Watchtower Lodge, Black Hawk State Historic Site, Rock Island, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for five tracts of land totaling 505.177 acres. Four of these areas are privately owned by individuals, corporations or not-for-profit groups who donated the value of the protection agreement to the public. This private land was permanently preserved without further acquisition of the land by the State. The dollar value of the tract of private land is 1.4 million dollars based on conservative estimates of the fair market value of the land. Lands protected include an addition to Edna Edwards Burnett Land and Water Reserve, Champaign County; Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve, Lee County; and Fern Ridge Nature Preserve, Marshall County.

Protection of these lands came about because the Commission had eight staff in the field working with private and public landowners. There are now 386 dedicated nature preserves totaling 58,265.921 acres and 186 land and water reserves totaling 50,582.365 acres.

222-4) Next meeting date and location

May 3, 2016	University of Illinois Extension Office, Waterloo, IL
September 13, 2016	Danada House, Wheaton, IL

222-5) INPC Staff Report

Tom Lerczak presented the following:

Looking at the staff report, a lot of accomplishments have been made and it looks like we're doing fine without a budget. However, staff continue to find it a challenging operating environment within the context of the state's budget impasse. There are still some stewardship planning going on in Area 9 where we have not had a field representative since 2010.

Vacant: INPC director, operations program manager, protection program manager (Dave Horvath still waiting in the wings). Tom has been filling the roll of being the interface between Springfield staff and field staff. For many years he's been doing many of the tasks of the operations manager, doing the statewide herbicide orders and sign orders. Mary Kary Solecki for many years had been doing the reviews of the nature preserve and land and water reserve proposals. Now that she has retired, he has taken on this task with Angella Moorehouse as backup.

Samantha McCarrel ended her internship earlier in 2015 to take a job as a Private Lands Wetland Easement Team Specialist in NW Iowa working for/with the Conservation Districts of Iowa, Iowa

DNR, and NRCS. January 15, 2016 was the last day of Brooke Bryant and Will Overbeck's internships. Brooke Bryant will interview for a position with the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Districts, which had previously been held by Ray Geroff who is now an IDNR Natural Heritage Biologist. Will Overbeck is investigating several PhD programs while working as a private natural areas contractor in northern Illinois and central Kentucky.

INPC staff are implementing the strategic plan and keeping track of their activities to be entered into the dashboard.

Ongoing NAAF projects are on hold. Contractors have been told to stop working. This has created a lot of difficulties, for example herbicide needs to be applied at certain times of the year to be effective, so critical times have been missed. Tree planting projects have been put on hold and it looks like Spring planting will occur.

FY16 NAAF projects that have been approved, bids that were sent out last Spring, have been accepted by contractors and they are waiting. Some of those bids it has been a year and may not be valid any longer. There is a huge question about planning for FY17.

A lot of what we do is funded INPC's petty cash fund which is dwindling. Staff have been fronting personal funds with the expectation of eventually being reimbursed.

Little or no ability to repair or purchase equipment, purchase consumable items, or travel overnight. Staff have been fronting personal funds with the expectation of eventual reimbursement or using personal equipment. For example: Debbie Newman is using her personal camera to photograph sites because her state camera is no longer working.

Bob Edgin had his internet shut off in August due to non-payment and his work site cannot buy additional propane, so extreme conservation measures have been instituted by keeping the heat set no higher than 60 degrees F. Certain companies are no longer willing to do business with the state due to non-payment of invoices.

(Appendix I)

Tom presented Steve Byers and John Nelson with a certificates, plaques and pins for 25 years of service.

Steve thanked the Commission and stated it has been an honor and pleasure to work with the Commissioners over the years. It's been a labor of love.

John said thank you and commented he had not been with IDNR 25 years but started at and worked with Commissioner Thomas at INHS.

Commissioner Dann complimented staff with what they are able to accomplish in the face of challenges that are so daunting.

Commissioner Stone asked about the four sites that are is discussion with the AG's office and wondered if regular relationship developing or if there is a point person assigned.

Valerie answered that when a violation occurs, typically the landowner would request legal assistance from IDNR and INPC. IDNR's legal counsel provides legal assistance to INPC. It goes into a SharePoint site and is assigned to an attorney within IDNR. INPC does not have a specific attorney that these cases get assigned to. We have three attorneys right now working on different legal enforcement cases. Herself, or anyone else with INPC or IDNR, and/or landowner, will have discussions with meet with IDNR legal counsel, gather documentation and that attorney would make a referral to the AG's office to make a case. We do not have a specific point of contact at the AG's office, it depends where the incident occurs, for instants if it occurs in the northern part of the state, it may be an AG from Chicago.

Commissioner Covington asked if there have been any incidents where the AG's office declined to take any action.

Valerie answered that she has not since she has been with the Commission. In looking at past cases, she had not come across one that they had not been willing to assist with. Sometimes it takes time to develop and determine what the appropriate course of action will be. She has not seen where they have declined to assist with any case that has been referred to them.

Commissioner Dann called on Commissioner Covington to recognize a meritorious service.

Commissioner Covington read the following:

Resolution in Recognition of Mary Kay Solecki

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission wishes to recognize the leadership of and contributions of Mary Kay Solecki during 26 years of service as Natural Areas Protection Specialist and Field Representative for the Commission upon her recent retirement. During her tenure Mary Kay was instrumental in the permanent protection of 35 nature preserves and 22 land and water reserves encompassing approximately 5,325 acres. Mary Kay's contributions to natural areas conservation are many and varied. In addition to working with landowners including protecting the first river nature preserve, she took the early lead in the development of the INPC's Vegetation Management Guidelines and helped draft the rules establishing the Register of Land and Water Reserves. In recent years, in the absence of a natural areas protection manager, Mary Kay Solecki provided feedback to staff on protection proposals serving as a trusted advisor to her colleagues, other staff and commissioners. Her moderate and clam demeanor while providing her thoughtful position on contentious issues is her hallmark. Mary Kay's continuing commitment to and advocacy for the Commission's Programs will be greatly appreciated while her legacy of land protection and stewardship will continue for generations.

It was moved by Commissioner Covington, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, and adopted.

(Resolution 2346)

222-6) IDNR Staff Report

Acting Chief Holtrop read the following:

“Good morning, Commissioners.

The Division of Natural Heritage is actively planning work activities for 2016. In December, the Program Leads and I initiated a statewide tour to meet with all of our district and regional field staff. We held five regional meetings across the state. During each meeting, we discussed Division priorities and held roundtables with individual staff and program leads. Since the regional meetings, each District Heritage Biologist has developed a plan of work for 2016. The plans have been evaluated at the regional level and are heading to Springfield for review and approval. We feel this plan of work process is essential to maximizing our limited staff and financial resources toward those issues that really need our attention.

During his strategic plan update yesterday, Director Emeritus Heidorn highlighted the INPC’s desire to have 90% of management plans and schedules current. The IDNR concurs that having current management schedules is very important. This is one item that our field staff have been asked to address in their 2016 work plans. Due to staff turn-over and insufficient tracking on our part, the Department has identified a problem with our knowledge of baseline. Presently the Department does not know when all of our management schedules expire. Over the next few weeks, we will be working with our staff to identify expiration dates for management plans and schedules and create a tracking system for our use. It is our intent to stay on top of the plans and schedules and to ensure that IDNR plans are current.

During the Commission’s special meeting yesterday, John Wilker addressed stewardship and mentioned several items that I’d like to expand upon. As a Division, we feel an active stewardship program is essential to fulfilling our mission and conserving Illinois’ rare and vulnerable natural resources and communities. To refresh and train our staff on current stewardship techniques, we are reinstituting Stewardship Summits. The first was to be held last week, but was postponed due to weather. It will be rescheduled for mid-February. INPC and Heritage field staff will be part of this and future summits. Hopefully, it will develop a forum where we can share stewardship successes and talk about techniques and continue to move stewardship forward. Additionally, John mentioned INAI community training. Bob Szafoni, the former Steward Program Manager, retired at the end of 2015. Bob will be returning on a 75-day contract and will spend the majority of his time developing the INAI natural community training materials and hosting the training.

The stewardship priorities that John shared with you yesterday were developed by Heritage’s Natural Areas Program. As we know, there are more stewardship needs than can be met with available funds and staff. Heritage has prioritized stewardship on high quality natural communities that IDNR owns, which are also dedicated under the INPC system. This ensures the longevity of our stewardship investment. As Steve Byers and Bill McClain mentioned, there are other considerations that could be made when prioritizing stewardship. I want to reiterate that natural community conservation and stewardship is a key component of our Division’s mission. Heritage is also charged with conserving vulnerable species including threatened and endangered species and species in greatest conservation need. We have recognized in Heritage that we have not evaluated

stewardship priorities for these vulnerable species with the same intensity as we have natural communities and we intend to do that. This does not mean that we'll be taking stewardship resources away from high quality natural communities. Rather, it means that other parts of our Division will be using the natural areas stewardship model to determine on the ground stewardship needs that will benefit vulnerable species. That's the part we have not done a good job in other parts of our Division. The sweet spot (to use John's term) is where these stewardship priorities overlap. In places where they don't overlap, we can use different funds and partners to implement sound conservation measures on the ground to support species conservation and recovery.

I'd like to leave you with a brief update on the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. At your last meeting, I mentioned that a revised Plan had to be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by September 30 in order for the Department to maintain its eligibility for State Wildlife Grant funds. We did get a draft of that Plan into the Service on time. That was a big accomplishment for us given that many of our contractual writers were out on suspended contracts. We continue to refine and tweak it. We expect the Service to review and approve Illinois' Action Plan later this spring. They are behind schedule on approving plans and expect it to be a couple more months before we hear anything about ours. I look forward to discussing this revised plan with you at your May meeting, and strategizing how we can work together to implement the revised Plan."

Commissioner Dann asked if Ann they had the same kinds of problems with contractors and the abatement of services that Tom Lerczak described with Commission staff.

Chief Holtrop answered they do.

Commissioner Dann asked that you're making due the best you can.

Chief Holtrop answered that they are moving forward with identifying stewardship priorities for the next year. Trying to get contracts in place as far as we can and getting those ideas in the hopper so when funds are released we can move forward. With the plan of work process we have had to give a lot of thought to, at least in the first quarter, how do we implement stewardship when we do not have contractors. As we go throughout the year, if we don't have contractors which one are we going to switch our staff to doing on the ground? Which ones can we do? Which ones can't we do? She suspected a lot of their plans would change through this fiscal year.

222-7) Endangered Species Protection Board Staff Report

No report.

222-8) Jackson and Randolph Counties – Degognia Canyon Land and Water Reserve, Re-Registration

On behalf of Russell Clendenin, Debbie Newman requested approval for re-registration of Degognia Canyon Land and Water Reserve for 10 years with automatic renewal. It had been approved for registration in February, 2006 at the 189th Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Meeting in

Springfield, IL for a period of 10 years (Resolution #1859). The Degognia Canyon Land and Water Reserve is a 124.1-acre site that is part of the Degognia Canyon INAI site (#1732). The reserve contains a variety of natural communities including sandstone glade, xeric, dry, dry-mesic, and mesic upland forest, and sandstone cliff community. The reserve also contains habitat for, and a population of a state-threatened reptile, and significant documented archeological resources. The reserve, part of the Central Section of the Ozark Natural Division, is located adjacent to Shawnee National Forest land, and is approximately 1 ½ and 2 ½ miles respectively from the 88-acre Swayne Hollow Nature Preserve and the 195-acre Piney Creek Ravine Nature Preserve.

Commissioner Covington asked if the landowner knows he cannot take a tax deduction because it is not a perpetual easement.

Debbie answered yes he is aware and that her and Randy decided to leave it in there because it is standard language.

Commissioner Covington asked if the landowner would consider making it a perpetual easement given his love and dedication to the property.

Debbie answered that he has considered it.

Russell Clendenin answered that he works very hard and needs the Commission's help.

Debbie answered that they have had discussions about the long term and Mr. Clendenin asked if the Commission could insert something that related to doing something permanent. However, our rules do not allow us to do that and have encouraged Mr. Clendenin to speak to an attorney to put that in an estate planning so that his long term wishes would be met.

Commissioner Daubach thanked Mr. Clendenin for making this an automatic renewal and that his actions are commendable.

Commissioner McClain commented that this is a site that the large flower rock pink could be introduced. He commented about the sandstone overhangs in which Native Americans and Europeans stayed in these and the term rock house developed from that. The cultural significance of these through the millennia is simply awesome. Looking at the timber harvest, due to the fact that this site has been used by people so long, there could be some culturally significant trees in the vicinity. He felt this was something that should be explored. He asked if anyone has tried to interpret or catalog the petroglyphs.

Debbie answered that Mark Wagner, Southern Illinois University, has cataloged some of them but has not confirmed the exact dates of all of them. There is a two page letter and five pages of addendums and stories written about this site. There have been stories written about this place in different magazines and the significance of the Underground Railroad and other features. Dawn Cobb and Hal Hassen have provided a full page of information. There is so much sandstone cliff that there probably is more.

Commissioner McClain commented seeing all the diversity, sites like this are soothing to the soul and he knows a lot of people who were froth with anger that need to be immersed in this. He wants to go there.

Debbie thanked Commissioner McClain for those comments and commented that they have discussed the rock pink.

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

The Commission grants approval for the re-registration of Degognia Canyon in Jackson and Randolph Counties as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 8 of the Agenda for the 222nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2347)

222-9) Williamson Co. – Otey-Grisley Forest Nature Preserve, Dedication

On behalf of William Grisley, Bob Edgin requested preliminary approval for dedication of 35.0 acres as Otey-Grisley Forest. Grisley Forest is located within the Mount Vernon Hill Country Section of the Southern Till Plain Natural Division. The significant feature of the site is 27.6 acres of Grade B dry-mesic upland forest (INAI #1870) with many of the larger trees likely exceeding 200 years in age. The preserve would also include 3.1 acres of Grade C dry-mesic upland forest. White oak (*Quercus alba*) is the dominant tree with black oak (*Quercus velutina*), hickories (*Carya* spp.), green ash (*Fraxinus lanceolata*) and sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) as lesser associates. The primary threat to the site is invasion by non-native species. The Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy would be supported by this dedication through the Forest, Land and Water Stewardship, and Invasive Species campaigns. Dedication would be subject to an existing 132-foot wide Ameren powerline easement that encompasses 4.3 acres.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked if there has there been or will there be conversation with Ameren and the landowner about lower structured grass and shrubs that could be planted through the powerline easement to create wildlife habitat.

Bob answered the conversation has not happened yet but it is something that could be considered.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that there are other partners, including herself, would be happy to help facilitate that because it would be greatly beneficial.

Bob answered we generally think of these as being a threat to our nature preserve. The powerline right-of-way acts as a buffer at this time but it could be improved. There are some native species already there and with some management we could do some good with it. He thanked Commissioner Derby Lewis for bringing this up.

Commissioner Thomas asked why there is such a low density of trees and undergrowth.

Bob answered that in most places inventoried in southeastern Illinois, hickory is prevalent but not in this area. Maybe it's soil, maybe the Otey family didn't stop burning immediately when they purchased this property in 1880, like often happened when settlers came in. This area around the nature preserve is referred to as a union squat because there were a lot of squatters that came in there and started occupying this area without purchasing land. Maybe distant past fire history has something to do with it. Bob was unsure.

Commissioner Ruffner commented that when he looks at the data, that Grisley Forest is a perfect oak woodland because it has much larger trees and not a lot of understory trees. It probably was managed through time by the Grisley's. It has low basal area, so cover is low. It has low, smaller diameter trees and lots of bigger trees. It has succeeded in over the last 50-60 years. He asked who is going to remove the smaller trees. You and the firedogs?

Bob answered once approved for dedication we have to develop the burn plan. He has talked to other heritage biologists and we can work with the firedogs and get fire in there.

Commissioner McClain commented that there are other sites in the Southern Till Plain that do not have a hickory component, they are comprised largely of white oaks. This is a phenomenon of some of the forest types in the Southern Till Plain of Illinois. It would be interesting and rewarding to know why this is the case but that he did not have an answer either.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for dedication of Otey-Grisley Forest in Williamson County as an Illinois Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 9 of the Agenda for the 222nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2348)

222-10) McHenry County – Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve Addition and Buffer, Dedication

On behalf of The Land Conservancy of McHenry County, John Nelson requested final approval for dedication of approximately 25.3 acres as addition and 3.9 acres as buffer addition to Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve. If approved, this dedication will protect another significant portion of the Westwood Prairie Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (INAI #1568) and provide important buffer to the high-quality natural communities therein. Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve is currently 103.9 acres in size and owned by the Land Conservancy of McHenry County and the City of Woodstock. The existing nature preserve and the proposed addition and buffer are part of a larger natural wetland complex covering approximately 260 acres and consisting of a mosaic of relict prairies, wetlands, and oak savannas. While the wetland complex as a whole suffers from invasive species, the area still supports significant relict natural communities and offers unique opportunities for restoration – particularly, wet-mesic prairie and mesic oak savanna natural communities. The entire natural area has a rich diversity of plant species and habitat that support local populations of wildlife, including one state-endangered reptile. The best quality natural community for which the INAI site was established is a Grade B wet-mesic prairie located within the boundary of the original nature preserve dedication. Since then, the Land Conservancy of McHenry County has implemented an

impressive restoration and management plan for the preserve. The results of those efforts are unfolding today as the entire site is restored to a prairie and savanna landscape through tree and brush clearing, exotics control, and reintroduction of fire. The proposed addition, located on the west side of the preserve, contains 14.5 acres of the West Woodstock Prairie INAI site. The proposed buffer addition, located on the east side of the preserve, consists of degraded wetlands and woodlands that border the existing nature preserve and a residential area. The dedication of the proposed addition and buffer addition to Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve will help protect a relict natural community included on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory and at least one state-listed animal. Restoration and management of this natural area will benefit area sensitive grassland dependent birds and other wildlife identified as in greatest need of conservation in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. To date, twelve animal species listed in the action plan have been observed at Yonder Prairie. If approved, the lands protected at Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve will increase from 103.9 acres to 133.1 acres. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission granted preliminary approval (Resolution #2335) for dedication at the 221st meeting, September, 2015.

Commissioner McClain thanked John Nelson and Steve Byers for all their work and preservation with prairies over the years.

Commissioner Dann asked if neighboring landowners are interested.

John answered that they are and a good group of people that come from around the county. They have a work day on Martin Luther King day and have had fifty show up for that.

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

The Commission grants final approval for a 25.3 acre addition and 3.9 acre buffer addition to Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve in McHenry County, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the Agenda for the 222nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2349)

Break for lunch from 11:30 to 12:15.

222-11) Cook Co. – Tree Thinning - Woodland Restoration at Four Nature Preserves Owned by Forest Preserves of Cook County

Chip O’Leary, presented information on the Forest Preserves of Cook County’s (FPCC) recently completed natural and cultural resources master plan in partnership with the Illinois Natural History Survey and Prairie Research Institute for FPCC lands. The plan sets an ambitious goal to restore FPCC natural areas to ecological health. Through that process fifteen landscape units were identified as priorities for restoration. These units were prioritized one through fifteen. The FPCC is beginning large-scale restoration work at the four top-ranked units as soon as the winter of 2016. The four areas are located within Cranberry Slough (INAI #0423), Thornton-Lansing Road (INAI #0504), Busse Forest (INAI #0534) and Deer Grove West Woodland and Wetland (INAI #1775) Nature Preserves. Each of these sites has suffered from the effects of fire suppression and invasive plants. Most of the planned restoration work for these sites consists of

standard restoration practices, such as invasive plant control, that can be approved in management plans under INPC's Rules for Management of Nature Preserves (17 Ill. Adm. Code, Part 4000). However, despite invasive species control and having re-instituted a fire management program, some of the ecological problems have grown beyond the ability for fire and small invasive control programs to rectify. In particular, some trees have established in heavy abundance and are shading out the understory plant communities. The result is an expansion of bare ground and the relegation of once pervasive plant communities to small light gaps. For example, Thornton-Lansing Road NP once contained an excellent example of the black oak savannas typical of the Chicago Lake Plain, but now due to fire suppression the preserve has on average over 150 trees per acre with very little light reaching the ground. Over 90% of the preserve's plant diversity lies in the ground layer but it is being pushed into small openings created and maintained through past restoration efforts. The FPCC proposes to thin overabundant mature native trees in targeted locations at these four preserves with the goal of increasing light levels to increase habitat and native plant diversity and abundance at the ground layer as well as restore woodland structure and function to the site. FPCC has provided detailed plans regarding the proposed tree thinning at the four nature preserve sites and requests Commission approval to proceed with these plant community restoration efforts.

Commissioner Ruffner asked if they were currently burning at Busse Woods.

Chip answered that they are when they can in places.

Commissioner Ruffner asked is it not enough heat to kill the mesophytic trees.

Chip answered that was correct and the mesophytic leaves are keeping them from burning it. We have run fires through parts of it which do look better. Part of this work is to bring the diversity up and also provide sedge cover that provides fire fuel.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked what the community engagement for dialogue about this project.

Chip answered they have had open houses and are working in partnership with Openlands and the Army Corps. We have put signage up and reached out to the neighborhood.

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked what the outreach has been.

Chip answered that Openlands has reached out and known some of the neighbors. Our volunteer group knows some of neighbors and invited them to the meeting, constituency groups that have shown up to our meeting. They have put it up on their website.

Commissioner McClain asked if they have done in quantitative work with the herbaceous plants to document changes with the pre- and post-thinning.

Chip answered that they have set up plots at all four locations so we will be documenting over time. They do have data from past attempts at a smaller scale at Busse Forest. At Thornton-Lansing they have a design set-up and have done the pre-monitoring.

Commissioner McClain encouraged Chip to share that data with the public.

Commissioner Dann asked if they were relying on the tree experts at the Morton Arboretum.

Chip answered they are not.

Commissioner Dann asked where you are removing, are you relying on natural evolution of understory plants or are you doing any planting of small tree and shrubs of which you would like to have there.

Chip answered we are going to do the removal and measure the response. He felt they have picked the best places to do this.

Commissioner Dann asked if you would describe this as experimental.

Chip answered, at Thornton-Lansing, it is only experimental in the sense that it is bigger than other patches they have done. We have experimented at Green Lakes Savanna, a non-nature preserve site, and a few other locations with that same habitat type. At Deer Grove, each technique will be measured, it has a hydrologic component they are hoping to get ground vegetation for its own value, improve fuel layer and get improved infiltration for less surface water runoff into wetlands in the depressions but get groundwater infiltration. We are hoping to improve ground layer conditions.

Commissioner Ruffner asked if they would have foresters do the work or contract it out. His concern was for them to have clear marking instructions so as not to remove trees that were not intended.

Chip answered that Troy Showerman is in charge of this and will ensure this.

Commissioner Thomas asked if anyone looks at the trees to be removed for nest holes for voles or other species that might make them worth keeping.

Chip answered the work is generally done in the winter so they have frozen ground conditions and in the non-breeding season.

Kelly Neal presented the INPC staff recommendation, and it is attached as Appendix II.

Commissioner Ruffner asked Chip if this project would go on for 5 years or will it go into the future.

Chip answered that it can vary.

Commissioner Thomas asked if there were any listed species that could be impacted by these kind of activities.

Kelly answered than an in depth analysis was not done of the areas but it was one of the recommendations.

Commissioner McClain commented it is critical that this be done to help native plants flourish.

It was moved by Commissioner Covington, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for tree thinning and woodland restoration at Cranberry Slough Nature Preserve, Thornton-Lansing Road Nature Preserve, Busse Forest Nature Preserve and Deer Grove West Woodland Wetland Nature Preserve in Cook County, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the Agenda for the 222nd Meeting, subject to the stipulations outlined in the staff recommendation.

(Resolution 2350)

222-12) Will County – Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve, Legal Description Correction

On behalf of the Forest Preserve District of Will County, Valerie Njapa requested approval to record the corrections to the legal description for Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve. Final approval for dedication of 46.52 buffer acres as an addition to Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve was given at the Commission's 135th meeting in May 1992 (Resolution 1128). The dedication instrument was recorded in Will County on June 7, 1993. Of the five parcels that comprise the 46.52 acres, two parcels were found to have errors in the legal description.

Commissioner Covington asked if our policies require a survey when we do any dedication.

Valerie answered they do not but Dave Holman is working with the NAPS to make sure the legal description is accurate prior to proposals being presented to the Commission for approval. If it is a legal description not taken directly from the deed or does not have a legal description, it would need a boundary survey.

Randy Heidorn commented we do not do our own surveys anymore.

Commissioner Covington asked when we get a proposal for dedication from a public agency do we ask for a survey.

Randy Heidorn answered we like it to be something that was recently surveyed.

Commissioner Covington asked we check the validity by looking at the survey.

Randy Heidorn answered that was correct.

Commissioner Covington commented that for private landowners it might be a deal breaker to ask them to get a survey as their expense.

Randy Heidorn answered in those situations we ask for a title commitment.

It was moved by Commissioner Derby Lewis, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval to record the corrections to the legal Description for Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve in Will County, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the Agenda for the 222nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2351)

222-13) Commission Signature Authority

With Randy Heidorn's retirement the INPC no longer has a Director. Signature authority had previously been granted the INPC Director for agreements, NAAF land acquisition site approval, approval of permits and land management on behalf of the commission and other ministerial functions. Heidorn and previous directors had further delegated this authority to specific staff for management plans and permit approvals. It is suggested that signature authority be granted the Stewardship Project Manager and Nature Preserves Protection Program Manager (when filled) for approval of permits, routine stewardship activities and management plans containing routine activities. Routine activities are defined as those activities that are approved by administrative rule or consistent with INPC Guidelines or those activities that have been approved a minimum of three times by the INPC for specific sites. This is consistent with current practice. Further, it is suggested that until a new director is named Tom Lerczak be authorized to sign any required IRS documents on behalf of the INPC acknowledging the receipt of a donation in the form of dedications or easement.

Lastly, it is recommended that until a new director is named, the Chair of the INPC not delegate authority to sign mutual agreements on behalf of the commission.

Commissioner Stone asked if this action leave the ability to sign for NAAF land acquisitions with the Chairman.

Randy Heidorn answered yes.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for signature authority as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the Agenda for the 222nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2352)

222-14) Illinois Prescribed Burn Managers Certification Board Appointment

Randy Heidorn represented the INPC on the Illinois Prescribed Burn Manager Certification Board (IPBMCB). With his retirement a new representative is needed. Randy Heidorn recommends that Bob Edgin be appointed as INPC representative to the Board. Edgin has a long history of prescribed

burning and has participated in at least one meeting of the board. He has also helped in the certification of some residents as burn manager.

It was moved by Commissioner Ruffner, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval to appoint Bob Edgin as the INPC representative to the IPBMCB, as described in the proposal presented under Item 14 of the Agenda for the 222nd Meeting.

(Resolution 2353)

222-15) Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)

No public comments.

222-16) Other Business

No other business.

222-17) Adjournment

Commissioner Ruffner motioned to adjourn. It was seconded by Commissioner Stone and approved. The INPC adjourned at 12:56 PM.