

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

Minutes of the 239th Virtual Meeting  
(Subject to approval at the 240th Meeting)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
One Natural Resources Way  
Springfield, IL 62702

September 14, 2021

239-1) **Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees**

Commissioner Covington called the meeting to order at 10:00am and Stacy Burkett read the roll call.

Commissioners Present: George Covington, Dr. Pen DauBach, Donnie Dann, Deborah Stone, William McClain, Dr. David Thomas, Dr. Abigail Derby Lewis, Charles Ruffner

Commissioners Absent: Dr. Jo-Elle Mogerman

Commission Advisors Present: Dr. Eric Schauber, Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS)

Commission Consultants Present: Fran Harty, The Nature Conservancy (TNC); Jim Herkert, Illinois Audubon Society (IAS); Randy Heidorn

Others Present: John Rogner, Assistant Director IDNR, Valerie Njapa, Kelly Neal, Stacy Burkett, John Griesbaum, Angella Moorehouse, Kim Roman, Sami Childerson, John Nelson, Debbie Newman, Byron Paulsen, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC); Ann Holtrop, Todd Strole, Roger Jansen, John Wilker, Leon Hinz, Jenny Skufca, Christina Feng, Michelle Simone, Mark Alessi, Melissa Grycan, Tara Kieninger, Samantha Scalice, IDNR Division of Natural Heritage (DNH); Dawn Cobb, IDNR Office of Realty and Capital Planning; Scott Meister, DuPage County Forest Preserve District; Amy Doll, Matt Evans, Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves; Jill Kennay, Natural Land Institute (NLI); Jim Johannsen, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation (JDCF); Frances Kane, Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF); Clint Wisslead, Troy Friday, MTC Communications; David Holman, Bob Weck

239-2) **Adoption of Agenda**

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, and carried that the Agenda be adopted.

239-3) **Approval of Minutes for the 237<sup>th</sup> Meeting January 26, 2021**

Commissioner Covington asked for a motion and approval of the 237th Meeting minutes.

It was moved by Commissioner DauBach, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, and carried that the minutes from the 237th Meeting be approved.

**Approval of Special Minutes for the 238<sup>th</sup> Meeting May 10, 2021**

Commissioner Covington asked for a motion and approval of the 238th Special Meeting minutes.

It was moved by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and carried that the minutes from the 238th Special Meeting be approved.

**Approval of Minutes for the 238<sup>th</sup> Meeting May 11, 2021**

Commissioner Covington asked for a motion and approval of the 238th Meeting minutes.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner DauBach, and carried that the minutes from the 238th Meeting be approved.

Commissioner Covington read the following:

At the 238th Meeting of the INPC, held on May 11, 2021, at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for six tracts of land totaling 819.32 acres. Four of the six tracts are privately owned, and two are publicly owned. The individuals and organizations who own the private sites donated the value of the protection agreement to the public. Lands protected include the Addition to Tallmadge Savanna Land and Water Reserve; Somme Prairie Grove Nature Preserve; Schreiber Lake Bog Nature Preserve; Irish Oaks Savanna Nature Preserve; Maher’s Woods Nature Preserve; and Burr Oak Valley Nature Preserve.

Protection of these lands came about because the Commission had eight staff in the field working with private and public landowners. There are 412 dedicated nature preserves totaling 61,662 acres; and there are 201 registered land and water reserves totaling 55,071 acres.

239-4) **Next meeting dates and locations**

239 <sup>th</sup> Meeting	January 25, 2022	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
241 <sup>st</sup> Meeting	May 10, 2022	Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center
242 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting	September 13, 2022	Olney Central College

239-5) **INPC Staff Report**

**APPENDIX I**

REPORT  
Dr. Leon Hinz, Director (Temporary Assignment)  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Commissioner Dann asked Leon Hinz if he had any idea when the INPC Director position may be filled.

John Rogner shared that by the time of the next INPC meeting in January 2022, a new Director will be in place.

Commissioner DauBach thanked Leon for his remarks and service as Director. She then asked that we refocus our attention to herbicide drift issues. In one of the first proposals for this meeting, the Heritage Biologists identified herbicide drift as a threat to the very large Cache River Land and Water Reserve. Commissioner DauBach explained that she went on a field trip, for herself, with Martin Kemper and asked him to show her a number of the sites that he has been monitoring for herbicide drift for over four years. What Commissioner DauBach saw, mostly with the aid of binoculars, was significant damage. She then asked for Commissions and Heritages consideration, a more comprehensive report regarding this issue and recommended that INPC partner with Prairie Rivers Network who have done extensive work on herbicide drift and have also done some work with Xerces Society. Commissioner DauBach would like a report that takes us through the status of current policies and procedures and the various concerns over this issue. She believes as a Commission, “it’s our duty to take a serious look at what seems to be a very serious threat to our overall preserve system.” Commissioner DauBach stated she is proposing to get a report done for the Commission and the Division of Heritage. She has already spoken to Leon Hinz and Valerie Njapa and is very interested in this issue and would like to volunteer to put time some time into this. Leon and Valerie agreed to assist with formulating an outline for such a report to determine what is best to include. Commissioner DauBach then asked what the Commission thinks regarding this subject.

Commissioner Thomas shared that he supports this effort and that herbicide drift has been an issue in our state for many years. Having an update on where things stand and which of our sites may be impacted by herbicide drift is an excellent idea. Commissioner Thomas thanked Commissioner DauBach for bringing attention to this issue.

Commissioner McClain agreed that this is a very good idea. He also shared that he has spoken to people and most say the vegetation has always been like this. Commissioner McClain found that very disturbing and supports the effort to look into this further.

Commissioner Dann shared that herbicide drift is worsening and asked Commissioner DauBach if she agrees. Commissioner DauBach agreed and explained that on many of Martin Kemper’s monitoring surveys, he has been including ten’s, which is the most serious possible damage which is large trees dying in mid to late summer.

Commissioner Ruffner asked if the trees are dying or actually dead.

Commissioner DauBach said the trees are dead. At one of the sites she noticed, through binoculars, that at the top of a not-so-old White Oak tree, that the leaves were so strapped from herbicide damage, they were about as wide as a Willow leaf. These trees had very little foliage and may be rated 10 on next year’s monitoring survey. Commissioner DauBach believes this is a serious threat that needs to be given a great deal more consideration and start looking at what’s happened and how we have been dealing with it and look at new ways we can deal with these threats. She said she is very worried but doesn’t know enough to ask the right questions, which is why she asked Leon, Valerie, and the Heritage Division to help in defining what we want the proposed report to cover. Commissioner DauBach asked the Commission if this is an appropriate thing to do.

Commissioner Dann said yes, it is an appropriate thing to do, but would this be best attacked by Federal or State agencies. He shared that EPA should be able to act nationwide.

Commissioner DauBach stated that it would interesting to see what other states are doing and to see if it is on the radar of Federal government agencies.

Commissioner Thomas stated that for a few years when he was the head of the Surveys, the Interagency Pesticide Committee, which is under the Department of Agriculture, was dealing with drift. Discussions need to occur with them to see where the State stands on this. This is a State issue at this point, and we should see what other agencies are doing.

Commissioner DauBach replied, saying bringing in other agencies is a good idea but initially, she would like to work with Leon, Valerie, and Heritage to develop a report so we can begin to understand the full scope of this and what has been done to date with monitoring.

Debbie Newman shared a comment for public record. What is being discussed here is vapor drift and not particle drift, because there is an important distinction between the two. Debbie wanted to make sure the correct verbiage is being used.

Commissioner Ruffner asked if anyone from DNR forestry is looking into this or is it just the Division of Heritage and Department of Agriculture. He feels the Division of Forestry should be looking at this also.

Commissioner DauBach stated that the reason she came up with this proposal is because there are questions she has and because it is the duty of the Commission and mission of Heritage to look at our preserves and keep them as healthy as we possibly can. Commissioner DauBach recommended a report that would cover all of what has been discussed and if there is any input from Forestry, it would be welcome.

Commissioner Covington stated since all seem to be on board, a preliminary report should be created and brought back to the Commission at the next meeting in January.

Commissioner DauBach thanked the Commission for their time and said she is very grateful that everyone agrees to move forward with creating a report on this subject.

Matt Evans, President  
Amy Doll, Director  
Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

**APPENDIX II**

239-6) **IDNR Staff Report**

**APPENDIX III**

REPORT  
Ann Holtrop, Chief  
Division of Natural Heritage

Commissioner Covington asked if DNR was aware of anything in any of the Federal stimulus bills that would increase Federal funds for land acquisition at the State level.

John Rogner shared that he does not know of anything in the stimulus bills but would default to Ann's comment about watching Recovering America's Wildlife Act very closely. That will have many possibilities if it does come to fruition.

Fran Harty asked Ann how many Natural Areas Stewardship Grant proposals she got and how many were awarded.

Ann Holtrop answered there were 15 proposals and eight were awarded.

Commissioner DauBach shared that she is delighted that this is up and running and she knows really good work is going to get done. In January, if it's possible, with all the grant agreements signed, will there be a listing of who got the grants, how many dollars, what sites, and the work to be done. Commissioner DauBach said Ann's report was full of good news and a huge wow on the large land acquisition.

Commissioner McClain stated that Rock Castle Creek contains highly significant cultural resources too. They will also be protected and that is a very worthy and significant thing.

- 239-7) **Endangered Species Protection Board Report**  
REPORT  
Dr. Joyce Hofmann  
Endangered Species Protection Board

**APPENDIX IV**

- 239-8) **Committee of the Whole Meeting to propose nominations for Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Advisors, Consultants and Officers** (Committee Chair: Dr. Dave Thomas)

Commissioner Thomas explained past protocol procedures for Statutory Advisors. They are the Director of the Department of Natural Resources, Director of the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) and Director of the Illinois State Museum (ISM). The Directors of the INHS and ISM then make recommendations to the Governor's office for new candidates to be on the Commission.

Commissioner Thomas, along with the Committee of the Whole, recommend the following nominations of Advisors, Consultants and Officers as listed below. No other nominations were announced.

**A. Nomination of Advisors**

**Current Advisors:**

Colleen Callahan IL Dept. of Natural Resources <i>(Statutory Advisor)</i>	Dr. Eric M. Schaubert IL Natural History Survey <i>(Statutory Advisor)</i>	Cinnamon Catlin-Lagutko 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. Jeff Stein Prairie Research Institute

**B. Nomination of Consultants**

**Current Consultants:**

Gerald Adelman	Jill Allread	Randy Heidorn
Harry Drucker	Fran Harty	Jill Riddell
Dr. Jim Herkert	Kerry Leigh	Joseph Roth
Lauren Rosenthal	Bruce Ross-Shannon	John White
John Schwegman	Michelle Carr	

**C. Nomination of Officers**

**Current Officers:**

Chair: George Covington  
 Vice Chair: Dr. Abigail Derby Lewis  
 Secretary: Dr. Pen DauBach

239-9) **Johnson and Pulaski Cos. – 11-Parcel Addition to Cache River Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources requested approval to register an 11-parcel, 1023.1-acre addition to the Cache River Land and Water Reserve located in the Bottomlands Section of the Coastal Plain Natural Division in southern Johnson and northern Pulaski counties. The Cache River Land and Water Reserve contains expansive cypress-tupelo swamps supporting rare and State-listed plants and animals, many of which are at the northern extent of their range, and an abundance of other high-quality natural communities. Registration will protect additional parcels within the Lower Cache River Swamp Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) site (#0610; Categories I, II, III). Other known qualifying features within the proposed addition parcels include: >120 acres of restored and remnant wetlands and >250 acres of forest, including Grade C dry-mesic upland forest, mesic floodplain forest, and wet-mesic floodplain forest. The proposed addition parcels harbor current occurrence records for five State-listed threatened and endangered species. Protection of this 11-

parcel addition will contribute to the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan by supporting the focal species of the Farmland and Prairie, Forest and Woodland, and Wetlands Campaigns and contributing to the goals and efforts to control the focal species of the Invasives Campaign. This protection will also fulfill the objectives for broad, watershed-level stewardship as practiced by the interagency Cache River Joint Venture Partnership. If approved, this addition will bring the total acreage of the Cache River Land and Water Reserve to 11,692.7 acres.

Commissioner Dann asked which NAPS Area does the Cache Additions belong to and who is the NAPS for that area involved.

Christina Feng said it falls under Area 9, which is Kevin Sierzega, and he is still involved but currently out on paternity leave.

Commissioner Thomas shared his appreciation for the requested additions to the Cache. He has followed the restoration of the Cache for the past 30+ years and is amazed at how fast some of the lands have returned to a semi-natural state. The Cache is a great area of the State and one Commissioner Thomas always looks forward to visiting and enjoying the huge variety of species found there.

Commissioner DauBach believes this is a fantastic effort and also a globally important area. She is delighted that we are moving forward with this work. She is also thankful for the decades of work that has been done at the Cache. Also, special appreciation for all that Mark Guetersloh has done in this area.

Commissioner McClain stated that many of the areas that Christina mentioned were described as Grade C or B, but the compelling message that Commissioner McClain hears is the importance of restoration, not just at the Cache, but throughout the nature preserves system. He believes this will become increasingly important in the future and is thankful to be able to observe it now at the Cache.

Commissioner Covington asked, as lands are retired from agriculture and are subject to natural area management, does DNR foresee an improvement in those hydrological conditions?

Commissioner Dann asked if DNR sees the possibility of a viable reconnection of the Upper and Lower Cache.

Christina Feng responded, saying that there are some large-scale alterations that are not feasibly reversable and that will always play a role in the nature of the Cache. However, there are a lot of opportunities to improve the hydrology, especially in the off-channel wetlands. A big part of acquiring more land is the improved ability to manage that hydrology.

In regard to the reconnection of the Upper and Lower Cache, that is something that is always going to be desirable and a goal that Heritage wants to maintain for this site.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the 11-Parcel Addition to the Cache River as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 9 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>h</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2534)

239-10) **DuPage Co. – Buffer Addition to Brewster Creek Marsh Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC) requested preliminary approval to dedicate 8.9 acres of natural area as an Illinois nature preserve buffer. The proposed buffer lies within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois and is adjacent to the Brewster Creek Marsh Nature Preserve (BCMNP) and part of the Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve, owned and managed by the FPDDC. Dedicated in 2013, the BCMNP consists of 190.6 acres of nature preserve and 66.2 acres of nature preserve buffer. The proposed buffer addition was acquired by the FPDDC in 2020 and contains approximately 910 linear feet of Brewster Creek, associated floodplain, second-growth woodland, and old field.

BCMNP is currently 256.8 acres (nature preserve and buffer). With approval of this buffer addition (8.9 acres), the nature preserve will increase to 265.7 acres. BCMNP was established to protect unique habitats that support wetland and grassland birds, as well State-listed plant and animal species. Management objectives are to maintain suitable habitat structure for these species and improve native species richness and quality of the natural communities within the preserve.

It was moved by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Dann, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Buffer Addition to Brewster Creek Marsh Nature Preserve as an Illinois nature preserve buffer, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2535)

239-11) **Jo Daviess Co. – Rutherford Refuge at Twin Bridges Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation requested preliminary approval for the dedication of Rutherford Refuge at Twin Bridges Nature Preserve. Rutherford Refuge at Twin Bridges is located on the eastern edge of the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division of Illinois in northwestern Jo Daviess County, approximately 2 miles north-northeast of Apple River Canyon State Park/Nature Preserve/Land and Water Reserve. The site consists of 21.86 acres of proposed nature preserve and 2.18 acres of proposed nature preserve buffer. It has been recognized by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) as a Category I for Best-of-Kind Grade C sedge meadow and wet-mesic prairie communities (Rutherford Wetland INAI#1970). Rutherford Refuge contains habitat supporting at least 13 Species of Greatest Conservation Need as defined by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP). Protection and management of the site will serve to help fulfill goals within the Wetlands, Streams, Forest and Woodlands, and Farmland and Prairie IWAP campaigns.

It was moved by Commissioner DauBach, seconded by Commissioner McClain, that the following resolution be approved:



The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Rutherford Refuge at Twin Bridges as an Illinois nature preserve and nature preserve buffer, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2536)

239-12) **Lake Co. – Chandler Bluff Addition to Skokie River Addition Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

Lake Forest Open Lands Association (LFOLA) requested preliminary dedication for approximately 1.5 acres as the Chandler Buffer Addition to Skokie River Nature Preserve. The proposed buffer addition, located in the Morainal Section of the Northern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois, will increase the size of Skokie River Nature Preserve to 140.31 acres.

Skokie River Nature Preserve encompasses a mosaic of wetlands, mesic prairies, and dry-mesic forest within the Skokie River Valley in Lake County, Illinois. Skokie River Nature Preserve is 138.8 acres in size and includes the McLaughlin Prairie and Shaw Prairie, two high-quality mesic prairies. Each of these prairie relicts are recognized on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) for Grade A and Grade B mesic prairies. With a boundary update approved in 2002, the INAI now recognizes both prairies as the Skokie River INAI site (INAI#0658).

Skokie River Nature Preserve consists of land originally dedicated by The Nature Conservancy and subsequently conveyed to LFOLA, other lands owned by LFOLA, and six privately owned parcels of land dedicated as buffer additions. It is an outstanding example of land protection within the urban landscape via citizen driven conservation. INPC staff recommended preliminary approval for dedication.

Commissioner Dann shared that he birds there in the spring and it is a terrific hot spot.

Commissioner Covington extended his thanks to the Chandler family for what they have done and also for this recent donation of 1.5 acres.

Commissioner Covington recused himself as he is on the board of Lake Forest Open Lands Association.

It was moved by Commissioner Dann, seconded by Commissioner Stone, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Chandler Buffer Addition to Skokie River Nature Preserve as an Illinois nature preserve buffer, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2537)

Lunch Break 12:15

239-13) **Lee Co. – Gremel Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Illinois Audubon Society (IAS) requested preliminary dedication for 392.4 acres as the Gremel Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve. This preserve, located in the Green River Lowland Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois, will include 19.1-acres of dedicated nature preserve and 373.3-acres of dedicated nature preserve buffer. The proposed nature preserve includes the Augustana Sedge Meadow, Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) site (#1828). This natural community was added to the INAI in 2012 as a Category I site for presence of a 1-acre, Grade B sedge meadow. The entire INAI site is 6.56 acres. The larger property surrounding the INAI site has significant ecological value, providing habitat for a wide variety of native plants and animals and offers opportunities for restoration of natural communities that were once widespread in the Green River Lowlands, but are rare today.

The site is located in what was once the largest prairie grove in Lee County. The eolian sand dunes, combined with glacial outwash deposits and basins that formed near the base of the Bloomington Moraine, made this landscape uniquely suited to the growth of trees in what was once a seemingly endless expanse of open prairie in the early 1800s. These same characteristics spared the site from the ravages of the plow that erased from existence the original prairies and “great swamps” of Lee County. Today, relicts of this former timbered grove remain at the proposed Gremel Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve. As restoration efforts unfold across the site, these natural communities will improve in structure and composition. The IAS and its volunteers are managing this site for the benefit all native species of plants and animals and for the benefit of the public who are welcome to visit the site and enjoy its beauty and tranquility.

This nature preserve is named in honor of the late Russ Gremel, who championed and generously funded the purchase of this unique natural area. Russ Gremel’s goal was to provide a sanctuary where young people could learn firsthand about native birds, and nature in general. At age 98, he attended, and was the featured speaker, for the IAS dedication of Gremel Wildlife Sanctuary.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of Gremel Wildlife Sanctuary as an Illinois nature preserve and nature preserve buffer, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2538)

239-14) **McHenry Co. – Buffer Addition to Boloria Fen and Sedge Meadow Nature Preserve, Preliminary Dedication**

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County (LCMC) requested preliminary dedication of approximately 4.25 acres as a buffer addition to Boloria Fen and Sedge Meadow Nature Preserve, located in the Morainal Section of the Northern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois. The original nature preserve, dedicated in 2005, is 36.4 acres in size and is now owned by the LCMC. In 2006, 6.4 acres were dedicated as buffer by the McAndrews Glen Homeowners Association and in 2010, another 1.5 acres was dedicated as buffer by a private landowner. If approved, this dedication will increase the amount of protected land at Boloria Fen and Sedge Meadow Nature Preserve from 44.3 acres to 48.55 acres. The proposed buffer addition is located along the southern boundary of the existing preserve. This buffer area includes a portion of relict sedge meadow that is contiguous with the high-quality sedge meadow found within the existing preserve. The buffer addition also

includes part of an artificial spring-fed pond and a drainage feature (cover picture, proposal document) that conveys water away from the preserve to the south through its historic drainage outlet. The buffer addition also includes upland dry-mesic oak woodland. Dedication of the proposed buffer addition will help protect the high-quality fen and sedge meadow found within the existing preserve and will allow for better land management and restoration activities within this preserve and prevent future development. This buffer addition also expands the visitor trail system.

Boloria Meadows was named in recognition of an abundance of silver-bordered fritillary (*Boloria selene*) butterflies observed inhabiting the fen and sedge meadow in the spring of 2003. The LCMC is a 501 c3 not-for-profit conservation land trust in McHenry County that owns and manages three dedicated nature preserves: Yonder Prairie, Irish Oaks, and Boloria Fen and Sedge Meadow.

Commissioner Covington asked if there is a Homeowners Association, and if so, how much are they responsible for.

John Nelson shared that the Homeowners Association owns 6.4 acres of buffer that they are responsible for. John also added that each member of the Homeowners Association contributes approximately \$100 per month or about \$3,000 per year that goes toward management of the nature preserve and a lot of good work has been done.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for the dedication of the Buffer Addition to Boloria Fen and Sedge Meadow Nature Preserve as an Illinois nature preserve buffer, as described in the proposal presented under Item 14 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2539)

239-15) **Lee and Ogle Cos. – Addition to Nachusa Grasslands Nature Preserve. Final Dedication**

The Nature Conservancy requested final approval for dedication of 124.49 acres as a nature preserve addition to the existing 987.76-acre Nachusa Grasslands Nature Preserve. The nature preserve is located in the Oregon Section of the Rock River Hill Country Natural Division of Illinois and was first dedicated in January 2013. Upon approval of this proposed addition, the total area of the nature preserve will increase to 1,112.25 acres. The Nachusa Grasslands Nature Preserve and proposed addition represent a “core area” of a much larger functionally restored prairie ecosystem that is managed by the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and its volunteers. This larger area currently encompasses 4,000 acres of restored prairies, oak savannas, woodlands, and wetlands. Together, these lands represent one of the largest prairie landscapes in Illinois. The land proposed as nature preserve addition herein is located within the Nachusa Grasslands Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (INAI #0685) which encompasses over 5000 acres of natural communities and agricultural lands. This INAI site is recognized for its numerous high-quality relict natural communities, extensive grassland habitat, and suitable habitat for several State-listed plants and animals. The site is especially important habitat for numerous grassland dependent bird species, which are in severe decline throughout much of Illinois and beyond. The

existing nature preserve and proposed addition contain a rich diversity of plant species found in several restored high-quality relict natural communities and also within outstanding examples of re-created prairies. The preserve owes much of its restoration success to the many volunteer stewards who donate thousands of hours of personal time every year to help manage and restore this impressive native prairie landscape.

The original dedication of the Nachusa Grasslands Nature Preserve was unique for the Illinois Nature Preserves System as it represented the first time bison grazing was approved as part of a nature preserve dedication. The land proposed herein as nature preserve addition will likewise be available to the Nachusa bison herd.

Preliminary approval for dedication was granted at INPC's 238<sup>th</sup> meeting (Resolution 2525). Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff recommended final approval for dedication of this addition to the Nachusa Grasslands Nature Preserve.

Fran Harty thanked the Commission and all the protections it provides. He also thanked John Nelson for all the time and effort he has put into this site. Fran concluded by saying they could not do this without the Commission and staff.

Commissioner Thomas recused himself do to the long-standing work he continues to do with The Nature Conservancy.

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of the Addition to Nachusa Grasslands as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 15 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2540)

239-16) **McHenry Co. – John C. Wilson Woods Addition to Elizabeth Lake Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requested final approval for dedication of the 52.5-acre John C. Wilson Woods Addition to Elizabeth Lake Nature Preserve located within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division of Illinois. The existing 213-acre nature preserve is owned and managed by the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD). The proposed addition contains 16 acres of Elizabeth Lake Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) site #1014; and provides protection to Grade C dry-mesic savanna and wetland communities on site, as well as provides buffer to adjacent protected wetlands. The Elizabeth Lake INAI site is recognized as Category I due to its large, diverse, high-quality wetland, pond, and lake natural communities; and Category II due to the presence of State-listed species. The MCCD will perform management and restoration activities for the addition under an INPC-approved management plan and Memorandum of Understanding between landowners. The proposed addition lies within the contribution area for the Elizabeth Lake Nature Preserve's Class III Special Resource Groundwater Area. If approved, this addition to Elizabeth Lake Nature Preserve will bring the total acreage of protected land at this site to 265.5 acres. Preliminary approval for dedication was granted at the INPC's 238<sup>th</sup> meeting (Resolution 2526).

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

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of the John C. Wilson Woods Addition to Elizabeth Lake as an Illinois nature preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 16 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2541)

239-17) **Hancock Co. – Fiber Optic Cable Installation Project at Cedar Glen Nature Preserve Buffer**

Western Illinois University (WIU) and MTC Communications requested approval to install a fiber optic cable through the Cedar Glen Nature Preserve Buffer (NPB), owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The purpose is to provide WIU's Alice L. Kibbe Life Science Station with broadband internet and voice services to aid in their research, which includes a focus on conservation and natural resource management. Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) staff have been working with IDNR staff, WIU, and MTC Communications to review options and determine a preferred route. The recommended route is located along an approximate 12-foot wide existing trail within the NPB, that is mowed and maintained. The installation can be completed without impacting the natural community or state-endangered Virginia bunchflower located in the NPB. In 2004, the Commission approved installation of a waterline to the Science Station along the same trail route. The fiber optic line will be plowed in at a depth of four feet and the work will all be contained within the 12-foot trail. The starting and finishing holes for the plow will be constructed outside the NPB boundaries, which will eliminate any unnecessary soil disturbance, and with a continuous inner duct through the entire property, any future replacement of the cable can be done with no additional disturbance to the NPB. If approved, IDNR will enter into a License Agreement with MTC Communications to allow for the fiber optic cable installation. INPC and IDNR staff are supportive of this project.

Jay Griswald, CEO, MTC Communications, explained that they have been working for several years to try to find a way to get reliable broadband internet and phone service connection to the Alice L. Kibbe Life Science Station in Hancock County. Due to the location of the station, it can be very expensive and cost prohibitive to get it there, but they do have a solution. They are currently building fiber to the town of Warsaw and they can come off of that fiber, go through some private right of ways, which would also require going through Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) property. Mr. Griswald said they reached out to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) to ask permission to take the fiber optic cable across IDNR property. He proposed they follow the 12-foot wide existing trail that goes through the IDNR property leading directly to the Kibbe Center. They would follow the same route the water department took with their waterline installation. This project is very important as the Kibbe Center has had a lot of problems over the last several years with their broadband connection. They also have an automatic dialer on their phone system that is very unreliable and, half the time, the phones don't work. This proposal is the only viable solution to get fiber to this facility.

Valerie Njapa addressed the group, explaining that she and Angella Moorehouse put together the staff recommendation. In 2004, the proposal for the waterline was brought to the Commission and it was approved as part of the Management Plan to be monitored and allowed to remain as long as

it didn't present any problems to the natural communities in the nature preserve. This proposal is for similar benefit to the Kibbe Station.

Valerie continued to say that a couple of field representatives from Kibbe Station and Western Illinois University (WIU) are in attendance and are welcome to offer information. They do biological research of all kinds and educational programs are offered. Part of the focus is on conservation and natural resource management, so it fits nicely with the work of INPC.

Another point Valerie shared is that back when the original proposal was presented, there was careful attention given to excluding from the nature preserve proper any area that was previously cropped acres. The entirety of the 12-foot trail is within the buffer and that is where the proposed fiber optic cable is to be installed. Also noted are two sections out of the Rules of Management for Illinois Nature Preserves, which would allow for approving this in a manner similar to the way the waterline was approved in 2004.

Commissioner Covington asked about the term of the license agreement being for five years, why so short?

Valerie Njapa said five years is the standard, but it can be discussed if a longer term is requested. Also, typically there is a cost associated with a license agreement and Valerie believes the intent was to waive that cost.

Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that there is a huge digital divide in this country particularly between urban and rural regions. She feels it is very important that this happens, and she is very supportive of it. Based on what Valerie shared, there is already a precedent and the project can be done in a way that is not going to have any kind of detriment to the nature preserve.

Sean Jenkins, Director of the Field Station, said they have been trying to get this done for over 20 years. Having fiber optic cables will help with long term research and in field instrumentation, but more importantly, classes are offered every summer and they have been since 1966, so having this would greatly enhance the educational activities and opportunities, as well as outreach. Having this capability would enhance all activities at Kibbe Station. Sean thanked everyone for considering this project and greatly appreciates all the hard work that has been put into this.

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

The Commission grants approval for the Fiber Optic Cable Installation Project, as described in the proposal presented under Item 17 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2542)

239-18) **Monroe Co. – Storment Hauss Nature Preserve, Request for New Trailhead Parking Area**

Clifftop NFP, the owner of the 84.5-acre Storment Hauss Nature Preserve, requested approval from the INPC to construct a 5-6 vehicle, gravel public parking lot for accessing a new, primitive trail system in the preserve. The Storment Hauss Nature Preserve includes all of the Storment Hauss Woods Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (INAI #1617), with the original 64.5 acres dedicated in March 2002, and the 20-acre addition dedicated in October 2020. The site is listed on the INAI as a Category I for high-quality upland forest and Category VI for the presence of snake hibernacula.

In October 2020, Clifftop acquired the preserve from the estate of the late David Storment. The majority of the funds used to purchase the property came from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, which requires some public access to the site. Placement of a parking area within the preserve is the safest alternative to allow for public access to the site and fulfill funding requirements.

The site selected for the parking lot is located in the southwest corner of the preserve adjacent to Reed Road in an area previously impacted by David Storment. Reed is the only public road adjacent to the nature preserve. Parking vehicles along this narrow road is not a safe or secure alternative. The roadway is 16 feet wide (which includes ditches and narrow shoulders - when present) and hilly, with limited sight distance. Mr. Storment had a gated vehicle access area and small primitive cabin, which has since deteriorated and been removed. The parking area will be located between Reed Road and the old cabin site, which will serve as the trailhead with a kiosk (repurposing the concrete foundation of the old cabin). The project will require the removal of 10 trees, all less than 6" diameter (6 oak, 3 hickory, 1 basswood), and several eastern red cedar. No large trees will need to be removed. No rare plants or animals will be impacted in this area.

Commissioner Dann asked about what percentage of the entire nature preserve the parking lot takes up.

Jim Hill answered, 3200 square feet on 84.5 acres or less than 1%.

Commissioner Dann said you don't want to be accused of locking up nature. He believes it is valuable that people can access the preserves.

Commissioner Ruffner said he is not opposed to sensible infrastructure development for access, but he would defer to Debbie Newman or Kelly Neal to tell us what they think of this.

Kelly Neal said she visited the site with Jim and Bob Weck where the proposed parking lot would go, and it is a disturbed area that had been used by the former owner. The biggest issue they are dealing with is the succession of original landowners to next generation landowners. Kelly said we are going to be seeing that transition more often. The challenge is having first generation landowners dedicate property and then second generation landowners acquiring the already dedicated property without the ability to consider reserved rights prior to dedication. Clifftop acquired the property and part of the requirements in granting their funding source is that they provide access to the public. The road that is in front of the gate is a very narrow road and there is no safe place to park. The only way to allow safe access would be to put it at that location. In the staff opinion, there are several statements for Rules of Management and it indicates it is possible to place visitor facilities within nature preserve buffer areas and this is preferred, but because of this transition to a new landowner

and different requirements for public access, this is the only logical place for the parking lot to be. Kelly recommends that the Commission approve the lot.

Debbie Newman commented that they did look extensively to find the best location with the least ecological impact and because of the previous disturbance, Clifftop did a good job of determining how and where to do this. Debbie believes the impact will not be great. She continued by saying Clifftop has done a wonderful job of capturing and preserving under their ownership, all of the main different natural communities. Debbie is in favor of the public outreach portion of this preserve and she believes the impact will be very little to none ecologically on the site.

Commissioner Covington stated the report had a number of conditions subject to approval.

Commissioner DauBach made a motion with the inclusion of INPC staff recommendations, that this be approved. She also added her congratulations that Clifftop is going to be able to open this site to some public access which is something to look forward to.

It was moved by Commissioner DauBach, seconded by Commission Ruffner, that the request for a new trailhead parking area be approved.

The Commission grants approval for the New Trailhead Parking Area Project at Storment Hauss Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 18 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2543)

239-19) **Election of INPC Officers**

REPORT Dr. Dave Thomas Nature Preserves Commission	ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED Election of Officers
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Commissioner Thomas asked for a motion to approve the election of INPC Officers.

It was moved by Commissioner Dann, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, that the Election of INPC Officers be approved.

(Resolution 2544)

239-20) **Election of INPC Advisors and Consultants**

REPORT Dr. Dave Thomas Nature Preserves Commission	ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED Election of Advisors and Consultants
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Commissioner Thomas asked for a motion to approve the election of INPC Advisors and Consultants.

It was moved by Commissioner DauBach, seconded by Commissioner Stone, that the Election of INPC Advisors and Consultants be approved.

(Resolution 2545)

239-21) **Review of Closed Meeting Minutes**



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

Valerie Njapa stated that the list for potential land acquisitions in each set of minutes have not been exhausted. There are at least one or more sites on each and the request is that they remain closed at this time.

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

The Commission agrees that the closed meeting minutes from August 2, 2005; May 2, 2006; May 6, 2008; May 5, 2009; May 7, 2013; September 10, 2013; and September 10, 2019 remain closed, as described and in accordance with Item 21 of the Agenda for the 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

(Resolution 2546)

239-22) **Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)**

None

239-23) **Other Business**

- Valerie Njapa stated she is interested in sharing information to all the Commissioners to describe the legal enforcement process when violations occur to INPC sites.

Commissioner Covington asked how you differentiate between the really bad violations versus the minor infractions.

Valerie explained that most cases tend to go the civil route. In regard to the case that George referred to, there were conversations with the local State Attorney's Office, and they were not interested in taking the case and pursuing it, which leads back to trying to go the civil route. However, everything takes time to work through and the process for the Lovets Pond case took more time for various reasons. Valerie said they don't know if they will get a favorable response from the two individuals responsible for the violations. It was approached in a way to try and work amicably to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Regarding the case on the Storment Hauss Nature Preserve, the timeline to receive a favorable response to the settlement letter has expired. INPC staff will request from DNR's legal counsel, a referral to the Attorney General's Office. Valerie said every case she has worked on with the Attorney General's Office has had successful results. The process is lengthy, but they have been successful.

Commissioner DauBach asked Valerie if she could share the document she presented. She felt it was a great tool to hang on to and thanked Valerie for the information.

Valerie said she would share with the group.

- Commissioner Thomas asked if there were any names for new Commissioners that have been sent to the Governor's office and if this process still going on.

Commissioner Covington stated that most of the Commissioners are over their allotted two-year terms.

Dr. Eric Schaubert, INPC Advisor, shared that he spoke with Leon Hinz and is now in the process of gathering up a list of potential new names to recommend.

Valerie Njapa shared that the Director of the Illinois State Museum (ISM), Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, is also tasked with recommending new candidates.

Leon Hinz asked if any of the Commissioners have a recommendation to please send them to him. He currently has a list of eight names, but there are no plans to replace all of the Commissioners at the same time, but he would like to start phasing in new ones as we are able to do so.

Commissioner Thomas said there was a real push in the past to strive for more diversity and that not only included male, female, and consideration of race/ethnicity, but also to ensure we have representation from different areas around the State.

John Rogner is aware of the Commissioners' respective tenures and is aware of the fact that many have been serving for a very long time. John offered to serve as a liaison to the Governor's office. He will work with Eric and Cinnamon to develop a package of candidates and try to get those into the system for consideration of the Governor's office.

Commissioner McClain shared that it would be helpful to have representation throughout the State and someone who has knowledge of the natural history of the State to participate in the discussions on the dedications.

239-24) **Adjournment**

Moved by Commissioner Dann, seconded by Commissioner DauBach

The INPC 239<sup>th</sup> Meeting adjourned at 1:57pm