

## IDNR Ag Lease Information

It is the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) policy to use agricultural leases as a tool to support wildlife populations and recreational opportunities at sites owned or managed by IDNR. The leases developed under this program will promote ecologically-sound agricultural practices to improve soil health, minimize soil erosion, improve water quality, and reduce chemical impacts to benefit wildlife populations and their habitats. IDNR recognizes its responsibility to be a leader in conservation agriculture, and strives to develop an agricultural lease program to be used as models for producers throughout the state. Income generated from agricultural leases supports enhancement or establishment of wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

IDNR leases 35,000 acres statewide, with roughly 1,800 acres of pasture and 2,000 acres of hay.

- How to bid – The IDNR will hold pre-bid meetings in the fall prior to the start of a contract to discuss the bidding process and the contract requirements. Each lease will be a four-year lease.
- BidBuy - BidBuy is the electronic procurement system used by State agencies under the jurisdiction of the Chief Procurement Officer for General Services. Currently **all bidders must register** with BidBuy to be eligible to enter into a contract with the State. To register please go to the following link;

<https://www.bidbuy.illinois.gov/bsa/>

When asked you for a NIGP code enter 944-00 (farming and Ranching) and 944-48 (hay farming) (others are 944-34 Corn Farming, 944-76 soybean farming, 944-38 Crop farming NEC and Grain Farming NEC).

By registering you will receive information (Pre bid meeting dates etc....) via email concerning all the Ag Leases entered into the system open for bid. The advertisements are usually in the procurement system 14 days in advance of the meeting.

- The IDNR generates a cropping plan –The natural resource goals of the site will determine how the specific agriculture lease will be managed. Most sites will have a corn-bean rotation, while some will incorporate wheat, legume and hay.
- Cover Crops are encouraged and will be gradually added to most sites cropping plans over the next few years. The IDNR is partnering with the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), American Farmland Trust (FLT), The Conservation Fund, and our tenant farmers to promote the planting of cover crops on selected properties throughout the state. The IDNR is looking to move towards a cover crop/reduced tillage (Strip/Vertical) rotation to build soil health, reduce erosion, and improve water quality. We also will evaluate the use of different cover crop mixes not only to improve soil health but create suitable overwintering habitat for a variety of wildlife species.
- Many sites have a dove hunting program and will incorporate sunflowers in some designated fields rotation. Field preparation, planting and mowing of the sunflowers are often a requirement of the lessee.

- The lessee could also be required leave a portion of some fields crops left standing, mow or maintain field roads or levees and plant food plots.
- To help protect pollinator communities specifically ground-nesting species. Neonicotinoid treated soybean seed with Imidacloprid, Thiamethoxam, Clothianidin, Acetamiprid, Thiacloprid, Dinotefuran or Nitenpyram insecticides are not permitted on IDNR Ag Leases.
- The use of Dicamba is **not allowed**.
- Hay Leases have date restrictions to accommodate ground nesting wildlife
- The IDNR will perform required soil testing in the fall of the last lease year. Lessee may perform additional soil testing at other times during the term of the farm lease, solely at the Lessee's expense. Copies of all soil testing shall be sent to the Lessee and IDNR park/site The Lessee will be responsible to maintain the soil maintenance levels according to IDNR Ag Lease - Min Soil Test Levels for Ag Fields.
- Lessee will not perform any fall tillage (Moldboard, disking or chisel) unless specifically requested by the Site Superintendent and is consistent with the USDA Conservation Plan Standards. Except for strip tillage for fall fertilizer application, however, no nitrogen may be applied in the fall.
- Lessee shall be allowed to utilize vertical tillage ie; para plow (fall or spring) if there are any compaction problems on any of the crop fields. Vertical tillage must be consistent with USDA Conservation Plan Standards and must be pre-approved and in writing by the Agricultural Farm Lease Manager.
- Lessee agrees to document and log all chemical and fertilizer applications using. Log Forms shall be submitted to the IDNR park/site office by December 15.

For additional questions, please email: [DNR.Aglease@illinois.gov](mailto:DNR.Aglease@illinois.gov)