

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION AGENDA
TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-SECOND MEETING

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

January 26, 2016, 10:00 a.m.

*Documentary Material Enclosed

Item 1: Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees

Item 2:* Adoption of Agenda

Item 3:* Approval of Minutes for the 221st Meeting, September 15, 2015

Item 4: Next meeting date and location

May 3, 2016, 10:00 a.m. University of Illinois Extension, Waterloo, IL
September 13, 2016, 10:00 a.m. Danada House, Wheaton, IL

Item 5:* INPC Staff Report

REPORT
Tom Lerczak
Nature Preserves Commission

Item 6: IDNR Staff Report

REPORT
Ann Holtrop
Department of Natural Resources

Item 7: Endangered Species Protection Board Report

REPORT
Joyce Hoffman
Endangered Species Protection Board

Item 8:* Jackson and Randolph Counties – Degognia Canyon Land and Water Reserve, Re-Registration

Degognia Canyon Land and Water Reserve was 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 landowner, Russell Clendenin, would like to re-register the site for 10 years with automatic renewal. 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 include 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 contains 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.

REPORT
Debbie Scott Newman
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Re-Registration Approval

Item 9:* Williamson Co. – Otey-Grisley Forest Nature Preserve, Dedication

William Grisley seeks 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.

REPORT
Bob Edgin
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 10:* McHenry County – Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve Addition and Buffer, Dedication

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County seeks 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.

REPORT
John C. Nelson
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Final Approval for Dedication

Item 11:* Cook Co. – Tree Thinning - Woodland Restoration at Four Nature Preserves Owned by Forest Preserves of Cook County

Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) recently completed a 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.

REPORT
Charles O'Leary
Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Kelly Neal
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Approval of native tree thinning

Item 12:* Will County – Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve, Legal Description Correction

The Forest Preserve District of Will County received final approval for dedication of 46.52 buffer acres as an addition to Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve 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. The landowner has requested that the Commission approve and record the corrections to the legal description.

REPORT
Valerie Njapa
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Approval of Legal Description Correction

Item 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.

REPORT
Randy Heidorn
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Delegation of signature authority

Item 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.

REPORT
Randy Heidorn
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Approval of IPBMCB Representative

Item 15: Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)

Item 16: Other Business

Items may be discussed, but no final action may occur for items not previously included on the agenda.

Item 17: Adjournment