

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION AGENDA
TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-THIRD MEETING

Item 223
Item 2

University of Illinois Extension Office
901 Illinois Avenue
Waterloo, Illinois 62298

May 3, 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 Special Meeting, January 25, 2016 and the 222nd Meeting, January 26, 2016

Item 4: Next meeting date and location

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
Jenny Skufca
Department of Natural Resources

Item 7:* Endangered Species Protection Board Report

REPORT
Joyce Hofmann
Endangered Species Protection Board

Item 8:* Kankakee Co. – Additions to Sweet Fern Savanna Land and Water Reserve, Registration

Sweet Fern Savanna, located in the Kankakee Sand Area Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division, was originally registered by Dr. Marianne Hahn as a Land and Water Reserve in 2001, and was 62 acres in size. Subsequent additions to the Land and Water Reserve, registered by both Dr. Hahn and the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy occurring from 2005 through 2014 (Resolution# 1823, 1895, 1958, 2000, 2056, 2199, 2304), have increased the size of the Land and Water Reserve to approximately 146.6 acres. Sweet Fern Savanna Land and Water Reserve is recognized on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI # 1581) for its high-quality dry-mesic sand savanna and for the habitat it provides for

15 state-threatened or endangered plants, and the state-threatened black-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), state-threatened reptile, and regal fritillary butterfly. Sweet Fern Savanna also provides habitat for an additional 23 insect species and 10 vertebrate Species in Greatest Need of Conservation. This proposal is for the registration of 4 individual lots totaling 13.3 acres comprised of Grade C dry-mesic sand savanna, sand flatwoods, and former agricultural fields succeeding to sand prairie, as additions to Sweet Fern Savanna. The registration of these additions will buffer habitat for many Species in Greatest Need of Conservation, protect known occurrences of the state-listed shore St. John's wort (*Hypericum adpressum*), bristly blackberry (*Rubus schneideri*), highbush cranberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), and primrose violet (*Viola primulifolia*), buffer high-quality natural communities, and promote more efficient management of the Land and Water Reserve. Registration of these tracts will bring the total registered acreage of this site to approximately 160 acres.

REPORT
Kim Roman
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Approval for Registration

Item 9:* Lake Co. – William Kurtis and Donna LaPietra Nature Preserve Buffer Addition to Grainger Woods Nature Preserve, Dedication

William Kurtis and Donna LaPietra seek preliminary approval for dedication of 8.08 acres as a Nature Preserve buffer addition to Grainger Woods Nature Preserve. Grainger Woods Nature Preserve was granted final approval for dedication at the Commission's 204th Meeting in January 2010 (Resolution# 2061). This proposal represents the second privately-owned addition to Grainger Woods Nature Preserve. Grainger Woods Nature Preserve (187.6 acres) and the proposed addition are located in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. The proposed addition includes Grade C dry-mesic upland forest that is located within the Grainger Flatwoods INAI site (INAI # 0667) and a cultural community that is being restored to prairie. William Kurtis conveyed a Grant of Conservation Right and Easement to Lake Forest Open Lands Association (LFOLA) in December 1995. The stated purpose of that easement is "...to assure that the Property will be retained forever predominantly in its natural, scenic, and open space condition and that any natural plant and animal communities located on the Property which are indigenous to northeastern Illinois will be preserved to the extent feasible." The rights conveyed to LFOLA and retained by William Kurtis are detailed in the Grant of Conservation Right and Easement provided in the proposal. Rights reserved by William Kurtis include all rights of ownership that are not expressly prohibited and that are not inconsistent with the above-referenced purpose of the easement. This Grant of Conservation Right and Easement also provides the right to grant easements (or construct improvements) for utilities for the benefit of an adjacent 37-acre tract of land. However, the Grant of Conservation Right and Easement was executed in 1995, well before Grainger Woods Nature Preserve was finalized. Now, the only viable option for William Kurtis to either grant an easement or construct improvements for the benefit of this tract of land is from the north and outside the boundary of the proposed Nature Preserve buffer addition. The proposal provides the landowner with the right to utilize an adaptive management approach, the right to maintain and use an existing mown trail with an ATV, the right to route and construct a foot path with amenities, and the right to place and maintain ten bee hives on the parcel with the permission of the Commission. Protection and stewardship of the proposed addition supports several elements of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife

Conservation Plan and Strategy; specifically the Forests Campaign and efforts to “...restore and manage high-quality examples of all forest communities.” Outstanding features of nearby Grainger Woods Nature Preserve are the wet-mesic upland forest and northern flatwoods communities that are sensitive to changes in surface hydrology. Protection of the proposed William Kurtis and Donna LaPietra Nature Preserve Buffer Addition will further protect the existing surface hydrology upon which Grainger Woods Nature Preserve is dependent and increase its size from 187.6 to 195.68 acres.

REPORT
Steve Byers
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 10:* Monroe Co. – Addition to Brickey-Gonterman Memorial Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Dedication

The proposed addition to the Brickey-Gonterman Memorial Hill Prairie Nature Preserve (NP) is a 7-acre site owned by JW (Bill) and Barbara Gonterman. The site is comprised of approximately 5 acres of Grade C dry, dry-mesic, and mesic upland forest, ¼ acre of Grade C loess hill prairie, and Grade A limestone cliff community. Approximately 4 acres of the proposed preserve addition are part of the 232-acre Renault Herpetological Area Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (INAI# 761) located in the Northern Section of the Ozark Natural Division. The proposed preserve contains habitat for several threatened or endangered reptiles and amphibians and an invertebrate. The state-threatened bluehearts (*Buchnera americana*) occurs just a few hundred feet from the proposed addition. The addition also provides habitat for several species of Greatest Need of Conservation listed in the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy (ICWCPS). Besides protecting the loess hill prairie, limestone cliff, upland forests and habitat for listed species, the proposed addition supports several campaigns identified in the ICWCPS, including the Forests Campaign, the Invasive Species Campaign, and the Land & Water Stewardship Campaign. The site is located within ICWCPS’ Bluff Corridor Conservation Opportunity Area, and the Southwestern Illinois Wildlife Action Plan partnership. The proposed preserve addition is adjacent to the 19.5-acre Brickey-Gonterman Memorial Hill Prairie Nature Preserve and Buffer and the 42-acre Brickey-Gonterman at Renault Bluffs Land and Water Reserve, and the nearby 283-acre Angela’s Prairie Land & Water Reserve.

REPORT
Debbie S. Newman
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 11:* Winnebago Co. – Gorsegner Addition to Harlem Hills Nature Preserve, Dedication

Harlem Hills Nature Preserve, located in the Winnebago Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division, encompasses the largest, and perhaps the best, surviving example of a dry-mesic gravel prairie within the state (INAI# 918). David and Kimberly Gorsegner own the last remaining unprotected relict prairie to be found at Harlem Hills. It is their intent to legally protect this prairie parcel (1.5 acres) as the Gorsegner Addition to Harlem Hills Nature Preserve. The goal of legally protecting the gravel prairies at Harlem Hills, first envisioned by George B. Fell and his father in the early 1950s, will be complete with the approval of this dedication proposal. The preserve was established in 1973 with the

dedication (Resolution# 260) of 52.4 acres by the Illinois Department of Conservation (as the Illinois Department of Natural Resources was then known). Over the past 40 plus years, the preserve has grown as other parcels were dedicated as additions and buffer additions. While some of the gravel prairies that George B. Fell first saw in the early 1950s were lost to development over the same time period, most of the prairies were indeed preserved and survive today. The proposed Gorsegner Addition will bring the total acreage of land permanently protected at Harlem Hills Nature Preserve to 96.1 acres. It is fitting that private landowners are dedicating the last surviving prairie at this preserve, the legislation for which was also championed by George B. Fell and the Natural Land Institute. The dedication of this prairie is made in memory of Helen Hatfield and Marcia Gorsegner, mothers of Kimberly and David Gorsegner, respectively.

REPORT
John Nelson
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 12:* Winnebago Co. – Addition to Searls Park Prairie Nature Preserve, Dedication

The Rockford Park District (RPD) seeks preliminary approval for dedication of approximately 62.8 acres of land as buffer addition to Searls Park Prairie Nature Preserve. If approved, this dedication will help protect and expand a significant area of the Searls Park Prairie Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI #0920) site. Searls Park Prairie Nature Preserve, located in the Freeport Section of the Rock River Hill Country Natural Division, is currently 66.0 acres in size and is owned and maintained by the RPD. The existing nature preserve and proposed buffer addition are part of a larger area of open space land (161.0 acres) owned and managed by the RPD. These public lands are known locally as Searls Memorial Park and Northwest Community Park. Natural communities survive within these park lands and consist of floodplain forest, wet-mesic prairie, wet prairie, sedge meadow, marsh, pond, and oak savanna. The existing nature preserve protects high-quality wet-mesic prairie and wet prairie natural communities that were identified on the original INAI in 1977. A population of the rare white lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium candidum*), a calciphitic plant restricted to wet prairie and fen wetlands, also survives within the nature preserve. The natural communities found on the proposed buffer addition consist of riparian forest, degraded wet-mesic prairie and sedge meadow, and old fields. The proposed buffer suffers from invasive species, but the area has been undergoing large-scale restoration and management by RPD staff since 2011. The RPD has developed and implemented an impressive restoration effort, including the completion of a State Wildlife Grant (SWG) that removed 25 acres of invasive brush and trees to re-establish a 90-acre native prairie landscape. The SWG agreement requires the legal protection of the proposed buffer addition within 3 years of project completion (December 31, 2014).

REPORT
John Nelson
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 13:* Williamson Co. – Otey-Grisley Forest Nature Preserve, Dedication

William Grisley seeks final 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. The site received preliminary approval for dedication at the 222nd meeting of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (Resolution # 2347).

REPORT
Bob Edgin
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Final Approval for Dedication

Item 14:* McHenry Co. – Correction to Instrument of Dedication for Addition and Buffer to Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve, Approval

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County was granted final approval for dedication of addition and buffer addition to Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve at the 222nd meeting of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (Resolution# 2349). Prior to recording the fully executed instrument of dedication with the County of McHenry, staff was notified of a problem with the legal description. There was a mistake in the closing documents in which the property was acquired, and, contrary to the expectations at the time the legal description for this site was written, the landowner has not been able to correct the error and thus secure the parcel (the attorneys for the seller have demonstrated little interest in resolving the matter). The parcel is approximately 18 sq. feet in size. To resolve the matter, staff recommends approval and execution of a revised instrument of dedication.

REPORT
John Nelson/Valerie Njapa
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Approval for Legal Description Correction

Item 15: 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 still 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; and September 10, 2013.

REPORT

Randy Heidorn
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Determination if closed minutes
remain closed

Item 16: Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)

Item 17: Other Business

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

Item 18: Adjournment