

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

Minutes of the 221st Meeting
(Subject to approval at the 222nd Meeting)

Black Hawk State Historic Site
The Watchtower Lodge
1510 46th Avenue
Rock Island, IL 61201

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

221-1) Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees

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

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

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

Others present: Randy Heidorn, Marni English, Kelly Neal, Sree Vidya Guntaka, Valerie Njapa, Tom Lerczak, John Nelson, Will Overbeck, Debbie Newman, Steven Byers, Angella Moorehouse, Brooke Bryant, Samantha McCarrel, Kim Roman, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) Staff; Russell Blogg, Jenny Skufca, Ann Holtrop, Dave Horvath, Bob Szafoni, Dawn Cobb, Hal Hassen, Alex Faulkner, Brett Burkart, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR); Jeannie Barnes, Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS), John Rogner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Drew Ullberg, Forest Preserve District of Kane County; Deb Carey, Bill Rogers, John McKee and Cindy McKee, Illinois Audubon Society (IAS); Jill Kennay, Natural Land Institute (NLI); Jason Koontz and Bohdan Dziadyk, Augustana College; Maury Brucker and Emiko Yang, landowners; Eric S. Anderson, River Bend Wildland Trust.

Commissioner Thomas, with their upcoming retirement, recognized and thanked Mary Kay Solecki and Randy Heidorn for their contributions to the INPC and the State of Illinois.

He thanked Angella Moorehouse, her interns Samantha McCarrel and Brooke Bryant, for clearing the trails for the field trip; and Professor Bohdan Dziadyk of Augustana College for leading the tour of Josua Lindahl Hill Prairie Nature Preserve.

221-2) Adoption of Agenda

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

221-3) Approval of Minutes for the Special Meeting, January 26, 2015 and the 219th Meeting, January 27, 2015 and 220th Meeting, May 5, 2015

It was moved by Commissioner Ruffner, seconded by Commissioner Dann, and carried that the minutes from the Special Meeting, January 26, 2015; the 219th Meeting, January 27, 2015; and the 220th Meeting, May 5, 2015, be approved.

At the 220th Meeting of the INPC, held on May 5, 2015, at the Winthrop Harbor Yacht Club, North Point Marina, Illinois Beach State Park, Winthrop Harbor, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for three tracts of land totaling 740.87 acres. One of these areas is privately owned by a homeowners association 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 \$29,000 based on conservative estimates of the fair market value of the land. Lands protected include an addition to Hybernia Nature Preserve in Lake county.

Protection of these lands came about because the Commission has eight staff in the field working with private and public landowners. There are now 383 dedicated nature preserves totaling 57,856.571 acres and 179 land and water reserves in 67 counties totaling 50,486.538 acres.

221-4) Next meeting date and location

January 26, 2016	Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield, IL
May 3, 2016	University of Illinois Extension Office, Waterloo, IL
September 13, 2016	Danada House, Wheaton, IL

It was moved by Commissioner Daubach, seconded by Commissioner Mogerman, and carried that the 2016 meeting dates and locations, be approved.

221-5) Committee of the Whole Meeting to propose nominations for Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Advisors, Consultants and Officers. (Committee Chair: George M. Covington)

Commissioner McClain read the following:

A. Nomination of Advisors

Current Advisors:

Wayne A. Rosenthal IL Department of Natural Resources (Statutory Advisor)	Dr. Brian Anderson IL Natural History Survey (Statutory Advisor)	Dr. Bonnie Styles IL State Museum (Statutory Advisor)
Dr. Misganaw Demissie IL State Water Survey	Dr. Thomas E. Emerson IL State Archaeological Survey	Alyson Grady IL Historic Preservation Agency
Dr. E. Donald McKay, III IL State Geological Survey	Dr. Gary Miller Prairie Research Institute	Dr. William W. Shilts Prairie Research Institute
Anne Mankowski IL Endangered Species Protection Board	Marc Miller IL Department of Natural Resources	

Commissioner McClain asked for nominations of advisors.

Director Heidorn indicated that Dr. Donald McKay, Dr. William Shilts, Dr. Gary Miller no longer wish to continue as advisors. Marc Miller has left the state and will no longer be an advisor. Richard Burg, Chief of the Geological Survey; Dr. Kevin O'Brien, Illinois Sustainable Technology Center; Dr. Mark Ryan, future Director of Prairie Research Institute at U of I, have indicated a willingness to serve as advisors.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, and carried that the nomination of advisors to be approved.

B. Nomination of Consultants

Current Consultants:

Gerald Adelman	Jill Allread	Michelle Carr
Tom Clay	Harry Drucker	Kenneth Fiske
Dr. Ronald Flemal	Fran Harty	Kerry Leigh
James Mann	Jerry Paulson	Jill Riddell
Lauren Rosenthal	Bruce Ross-Shannon	Joseph Roth
John Schwegman	Valerie Spale	John White

Commissioner McClain asked for nominations for consultants.

Director Heidorn indicated all current consultants had been contacted except for Dr. Flemal, who he has not been able to get ahold of for over a year. James Mann and Jerry Paulson do not wish to remain as consultants but are willing to give advice to the Commission at any time.

Commissioner Thomas nominated Director Heidorn as a consultant after his retirement.

It was moved by Commissioner Covington, seconded by Commissioner Mogergerman, and carried for the nomination of consultants to be approved.

C. Nomination of Officers

Current Officers:

Chair: Dr. David Thomas
Vice Chair: Donald Dann
Secretary: George Covington

Commissioner McClain asked for nominations of officers.

Commissioner Thomas nominated the following officers for next year:

Chair: Donald Dann
Vice Chair: George Covington
Secretary: Abigail Derby-Lewis

It was moved by Commissioner Mogergerman, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, and carried for the slate of officers nominated to be approved.

221-6) INPC Staff Report

(Appendix I)

Director Heidorn announced Dave Horvath will be joining the Commission on October 1, 2015 as the Natural Areas Program Manager, supervising the Springfield project staff. Dave comes to the Commission from the Mason State Tree Nursery which will be closing September 30, 2015. Director Heidorn welcomed and thanked Dave for joining the INPC.

The Area 9 Natural Areas Preservation Specialist, Judy Faulkner's old position, is still open. Central Management Services (CMS) is in the process of reviewing grades and has sent out supplemental applications to applicants who applied in October. The second middle management position is active and will move forward after the budget impasse is completed. For Mary Kay Solecki's (INPC Area 6) position, which will become vacant, the process has begun to fill this position and all the paperwork has been submitted. This position will be located in Champaign at the Illinois Natural History Survey. The paperwork has been submitted to hire an additional equivalent for Director Heidorn's position, which would have the same job title and he would work with until his retirement. He has been asked if he would be willing to take a sixty-day contract. He indicated he would for a short period of time if necessary.

Director Heidorn recognized interns Brooke Bryant, Samantha McCarrel and Will Overbeck for all their work since this would be their last meeting.

Director Heidorn explained an ongoing legal case with McDonough Electric and Spoon River Electric for a violation at Short Fork Seep Nature Preserve has been resolved. The agreement includes a total of \$17,000 for restoration or fines from the two organizations, and the conditions

that they will not spray in areas protected under the Nature Preserves and the requirement to know where the Nature Preserves are in their service area.

Commissioner Covington asked how many enforcement actions are pending that have gone to litigation.

Director Heidorn answered we have not gotten to court rooms but complaints have been filed. He knew of three that were active. We have had a very responsive Attorney General's Office and IDNR Legal to move things through the system which has helped us and given us creditability when we go in. Many times things get resolved outside of the courtroom rather than getting into formal litigation.

Director Heidorn thanked the Commissioners and all in attendance for a great career. He complimented the Commissioners for making conservation of natural areas a priority within the State and their willingness to do things. He could not think of a better group to work with than the INPC staff. INPC and IDNR Natural Heritage staff are a great group of people who put natural areas and conservation at the top of their list. It is a great partnership we have with the Commissioners. He also thanked landowners for their willingness to preserve their land for the people of the future. Thank you.

221-7) IDNR Staff Report

Natural Heritage Division Chief Holtrop read the following:

“When I joined you in January, I shared with you our Division's priorities: become more proactive, embrace science, and document and share what we learn. I want to share a few examples of what we've been doing in the Division to implement these priorities.

This year, IDNR took a more proactive approach to monitoring for Illinois chorus frogs and barn owls. These efforts include staff from Heritage, Wildlife, and Nature Preserves Commission. The sampling design and numbers of sites sampled for these two species represents some of the most comprehensive surveys I have seen by IDNR staff. We are really trying to get on top of our monitoring needs and develop some more coordinated and systematic ways of sampling species. This level of assessment should allow us to document trends in distribution and population levels over time that can feed into our land acquisition and land protection needs in the future.

Another example is DNR's participation in monarch butterfly conservation. Illinois partnered with Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Pheasants Forever, and other state DNRs on a grant proposal for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). If funded, this effort will support a series of state summits directed at pollinator conservation planning at the state level. This is very exciting for us and we really wouldn't have the capacity to do it without this additional funding and resources from adjacent states. In addition, IDNR is participating in a regional team that is convening in October to initiate a flyway-wide monarch butterfly conservation strategy. Much of the stewardship work we do in Heritage benefits pollinators. However, these statewide and regional planning efforts will allow us to be more strategic in targeting conservation efforts for pollinators.

In terms of embracing science, I wanted to share with you, kind of our experience with growing season and summer burns have become increasingly popular with staff and we saw a record number of burn requests in Illinois this year. Typically this burn technique is used on grasslands with invasive species (*Sericea lespedeza*), invasive woody species and dense stands of grass. Post burn monitoring is showing that forb diversity increased in most burn units, *Sericea* populations were significantly reduced, and grass densities were reduced. For *Sericea lespedeza* specifically, this technique does not eliminate the species, but seems to eliminate seed production for the burn year and it impacts first year seedlings. Growing season burns also reduced the overall height of mature woody species, eliminated seed production on exotics, and removed small seedlings. The growing season burns prevent woody species from putting energy back into the root systems and seem to really reduce vigor the next growing season. Some of these results will be presented at the 2015 Natural Areas Conference. We are very excited to see some of our interns and other staff that have been engaged in this practice, presenting at these meetings.

Staff monitoring also documented an increase in flowering royal catchfly (state endangered) in a prairie restoration at Wildcat Hollow SHA, which was burned last August. Typically there are about 20 or so flowering royal catchfly plants at this site; summer of 2015 monitoring identified 55 flowering plants. This is the highest number of flowering plants observed at the site. While our monitoring was not designed to specifically test the impact of growing season burns on flower densities, the anecdotal evidence is that staff observe flowering in higher densities one year post burn. That is something we can continue to test and make a more conscious effort to test that effectiveness.

We continue to look for opportunities to document and share our work. In August, a new version of *Bats of Illinois* was released. At this point, I do not have an electronic copy that can be shared with all but we do have some hard copies that were printed. We will be sending those out to INPC field staff, and if there is anyone else that you would like to get that let me know and we will get those out. Also, we were recently contacted by The Wildlife Society regarding a special publication that will highlight state examples of Wildlife Action Plan implementation. We submitted two ideas for Illinois, and are waiting to see if we're selected.

I'd like to share two additional items with you. First, next week (Sept 21-24) IDNR will host endangered species staff from eight Mid-western states in USFWS Region 3 and their federal counterparts. We are expecting 30-50 people from the Midwest region to talk about endangered species. Illinois last hosted this meeting about ten years ago, so this is a big deal for us. On Wednesday afternoon, we will host a field trip that includes stops at Revis Spring Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Rollo Prairie Addition of Sparks Pond and Sparks Pond Land and Water Reserve; other Illinois chorus frog sites; and finish our tour at Emiquon. We have several staff members included in the field trip preparation who are testing the route today.

Finally, the Department continues to make progress on reviewing and revising the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. A revised Plan must 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 heard yesterday on the field trip about how those funds have been used to support stewardship at nature preserves throughout the state. Our approach with the Plan update is to create an "implementation guide" rather than Action Plan version 2.0. The intent is to take a subset of actions from the original plan and develop them more fully in the update. Until September 18, draft chapters for each of the campaign sections are available for public comment

on the Department website. If you want any of those in a more detailed format of Word, let me know. A draft species list will be available for public review later this week.

I want to make you aware that the Plan we submit to USFWS on September 30 will continue to be refined. Contractual work on the Invasive Species Campaign, Conservation Opportunity Areas, and communications strategy, have been suspended due to the lack of a state budget. Those are big holes for us and we are trying to fill those as best we can with existing staff, but by the time we got word of the suspended contract there was not a lot of staff resources to plug those holes. It is something we are going to do the best we can right now and continue to refine it even after the submittal date.”

221-8) Endangered Species Protection Board Staff Report

Commissioner Thomas asked if there was anyone present from the Endangered Species Protection Board.

There was no one present from the Board.

Commissioner Thomas reported that today, September 15, 2015, was the last day of funding for the Board’s staff, since it was eliminated due to the budget situation. He asked Director Heidorn to give more information on this from his discussions with IDNR’s administration.

Director Heidorn reported he had met with Director Rosenthal and Chief of Staff, Jason Heffley, last week. At that meeting, it was explained that the budget for the Board would be cut in the 2016 budget. Therefore, a termination notice had been sent to Anne Mankowski, Executive Director for the Board, since there was no money to pay staff. The Bureau of the Budget reviewed the numbers requested, and felt that the functions of the Board’s staff could be handled within the IDNR.

Commissioner Covington asked whether the Board will continue to exist and the members will continue to serve even though there is no staff support.

Director Heidorn answered that they would and that staff services would be provided through the IDNR.

Commissioner Dann asked if it were possible for the funding to be restored in a settlement budget.

Director Heidorn answered that it is a possibility. It had been indicated that there were portions of the budget that were likely to be restored and portions that were not likely to be restored and this was within the latter.

221-9) Champaign County – Edna Edwards Burnett Land and Water Reserve, Registration

Mary Kay Solecki, on behalf of Grand Prairie Friends, requested registration approval of the proposed Edna Edwards Burnett Land and Water Reserve. It is a 20.327-acre site located about

13 miles south of Urbana that is owned by Grand Prairie Friends. The site was donated to Grand Prairie Friends by Mr. Ralph Burnett in 2014 for conservation purposes in honor of Mr. Burnett's Mother, Edna Edwards Burnett. This site conserves an approximately 1250 foot (0.24 mile) portion of the Embarras River that is recognized by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI # 1808 Embarras River – Nanny Research Reach). It is within the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. Several land and water reserves and other protected areas conserve segments of the Embarras River downstream of the proposed Edna Edwards Burnett Land and Water Reserve with the nearest sites being the Nanney Research Area owned by the University of Illinois and Upper Embarras Woods Land and Water Reserve in Walnut Point State Park. The proposed reserve is within the Embarras Ecosystem Partnership. Protection of this site helps fulfill the goals of the Ecosystem Partnership as well as those of the Embarras River Watershed Resource Management Plan and supports action steps identified for the Forest Campaign and the Streams Campaign in the Wildlife Action Plan. Conservation of the river and its corridor at the proposed reserve supplies watershed protection to the river, maintains the riparian corridor for the benefit of wildlife, and conserves stream habitat for many aquatic species including at least one fish species in Greatest Need of Conservation as determined by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

Uses of the area will be recreational and educational activities such as hiking, nature observation, hunting of legal game species, fishing and scientific research. Grand Prairie Friends does reserve the right to develop, install and maintain a hiking trail. They would like to allow canoeing, kayaking and trapping if there is a management need; and create a canoe and kayak access area with a parking lot.

David Thomas commented that protecting some of the upstream areas can be very significant and protect water quality and increase mussel diversity downstream.

Abigail Derby Lewis asked if rather than mowing the right of way area, could it be maintained as a diverse pollinator habitat as part of the proposed site.

Mary Kay answered that it could be done. Part of the right of way is mowed but there is a part that is not mowed and has native milkweed and some that are non-native but provide pollinator habitat.

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

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Edna Edwards Burnett in Champaign County as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 9 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2333)

221-10) Coles County – Ambraw Woods Land and Water Reserve, Registration

Mary Kay Solecki requested registration approval for the proposed Ambraw Woods Land and Water Reserve which conserves an approximately 0.5-mile segment of the Embarras River that is recognized by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI # 1427). This privately owned 75.5-acre site is located about 0.6 miles south of Charleston and lies within the Grand Prairie Section

of the Grand Prairie Natural Division. Natural communities found at Ambraw Woods include Grade C mesic and dry-mesic upland forest, dry woodland, wet floodplain forest, and old field. A state-threatened sedge occurs in the forest here, and a state-threatened fish has been reported from the river along Ambraw Woods. An astonishing 72 species of fish have been recorded from this part of the Embarras River. Ambraw Woods provide habitat for at least 15 Species in Greatest Need of Conservation as identified in the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan including seven fish, a turtle, two types of mussels, and five bird species. This area is part of an extensive woodland corridor covering over eight miles of dissected hills that flank the Embarras River starting north of Charleston and continuing on south past Fox Ridge State Park. Ambraw Woods is an important link in this chain of conservation lands, providing habitat for forest-interior birds and additional watershed protection to the river. It is within the Embarras Ecosystem Partnership. In addition, the middle and lower part of the Embarras River watershed is recognized as a Resource Rich Area by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Conservation 2000 Ecosystem Program. Conservation of Ambraw Woods helps fulfill the goals of the Ecosystem Partnership as well as those of the Embarras River Watershed Resource Management Plan which recognizes the loss of natural character in the watershed as a problem and encourages protecting the natural integrity of the river system. Conservation of this important natural area is consistent with the goals of Illinois' Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy and supports action steps identified for the Forest Campaign and the Streams Campaign in the Plan.

David Thomas commented that he thought the harlequin darter once occurred there and thought there was discussion of reintroducing them.

Mary Kay answered that it could be possible that it may have been found during a past fish survey.

George Covington asked why it is an anonymous donation.

Mary Kay answered that the person who purchased the land for conservation purposes in 2012, is very artilly supporting long term corridor preservation along the Embarras River from Charleston to Fox Ridge. The beneficiary of the trust is hopeful of playing a role in the future of identifying and protecting other areas along the river corridor and does not want to compromise their ability to do so by artificially inflating land prices.

Commissioner Stone asked if there were any legal issues with an anonymous land trust.

Commissioner Covington stated the trust is the legal titled holder. The only issue might be a conflict of interest but he is not aware of anything preventing an anonymous donation.

Mary Kay commented she has walked the site several times with the beneficiary of the trust and has met the person and has full confidence in them, they just wish to remain anonymous.

Commissioner McClain commented that back when he was a student at Eastern Illinois University, he wished for the day when that land would be protected and preserved. It is wonderful to see it happening nearly 50 years later.

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

The Commission grants approval for registration of Ambraw Woods in Coles County as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2334)

Break for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

221-11) McHenry County – Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve Addition and Buffer, Dedication

John Nelson, on behalf of The Land Conservancy of McHenry County, requested preliminary dedication of approximately 25.3 acres as addition and 3.9 acres as buffer addition to Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve. 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 and lack of management, the area still supports significant relict natural communities and offers unique opportunities for restoration of some of Illinois' most rare natural communities – particularly, wet-mesic prairie and mesic oak savanna. 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 Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy. 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 Land Conservancy of McHenry County wants to reserve the right to farm lease the existing ag fields for ten seasons. This is a reasonable approach to allow them to focus their efforts on the relic natural communities and generate income to help those efforts. They also would like to reserve the right to construct a small parking area; and plan, construct and maintain a trail system.

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

The Commission grants preliminary approval for an Addition and Buffer Addition to Yonder Prairie Nature Preserve in McHenry County as an Illinois Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2335)

221-12) Kane County – Meissner-Corrn Prairie and Sedge Meadow Nature Preserve, Dedication

Steve Byers, on behalf of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, requested final approval for dedication of the Meissner-Corrn Prairie and Sedge Meadow as an Illinois Nature Preserve. The proposed 114.9-acre nature preserve encompasses the Russell Prairie INAI site (INAI # 1442) and is located in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division in Elgin, Illinois. The proposed nature preserve, consisting of 34.2 acres as nature preserve and 80.7 acres as nature preserve buffer, is located within the larger 229-acre Meissner-Corrn Forest Preserve owned by the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. The proposed nature preserve encompasses Grade A wet-mesic prairie, Grade C/D sedge meadow and a population of a state-threatened plant. The proposed nature preserve buffer was formerly farmland and is now being restored to prairie. Meissner-Corrn Prairie and Sedge Meadow received preliminary approval for dedication at the Commission's 198th Meeting in May 2008 (Resolution No. 1991). Dedication of the proposed nature preserve will protect a remnant of high-quality wet-mesic prairie (only 125 acres of this prairie community survive Satewide) and is consistent with the recommendations of the "*Biodiversity Recovery Plan for the Chicago Wilderness Region*" and elements of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy; specifically action steps to restore and manage high-quality wetland and prairie communities. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff recommends dedication of the 114.9-acre Meissner-Corrn Prairie and Sedge Meadow as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

Commissioner Stone asked why the final dedication was delayed so long.

Steve answered they did not have an accurate legal description for a long time. The different configuration of nature preserve and nature preserve buffer reflects updated and easily accessible information on those parcels.

Drew Ullberg commented that it is an honor and pleasure to have this dedicated. It is another jewel in our crown for the District.

Commissioner Dann asked if the intervening years have only seen an improvement as a result of the management efforts in addition to getting precision on the legal description.

Steve answered yes, and the fact that the resurvey of this site conducted by the Illinois Natural History Survey found that the wet mesic prairie was still considered Grade A, reflects that as well.

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

The Commission grants final approval for Meissner-Corron Prairie and Sedge Meadow in Kane County as an Illinois Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 12 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2336)

221-13) Lee County – Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve, Dedication

John Nelson, on behalf of the Illinois Audubon Society, requested final approval for dedication of approximately 291.2 acres as the Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve. The INPC granted preliminary approval for this dedication at the 220th meeting. The proposed nature preserve is located within the Green River Lowland Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (#1621) site. This is a category II site that provides critical habitat for at least three state-listed reptiles. Presently, the Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary is also documented to provide habitat for 27 faunal species listed in the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy as being in Greatest Need of Conservation, as well as one state-threatened plant, pinweed (*Lechea intermedia*). The faunal species include thirteen birds (nine breeding), five reptiles, one mammal, and eight moths. An abundance of eolian sand dune deposits, located in close association with numerous wetlands, make this site an ideal breeding and nesting area for reptiles and amphibians. Historically, the Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary consisted of dry sand savanna, wet-mesic sand prairie, dry-mesic savanna, and wetland basins consisting of marsh, sedge meadow and wet-prairies. These communities still exist at Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, but in degraded condition due to invasive woody vegetation and lack of fire disturbance. The site is located in what was once the largest grove of timber in Lee County. This is the first property within the Green River Lowland INAI site (#1621) to be proposed for dedication. Thanks to the Illinois Audubon Society, its members and volunteers, this dedication likely represents only a “first-step” in protecting what will someday be an even larger nature preserve and an incredible example of ecological restoration.

Commissioner McClain commented that in the late 1800s there was a group of men and women working towards establishing a preserve in the Amboy area and now some one hundred thirty years later it is happening.

John answered he believed Commissioner McClain was speaking of the Great Inlet Swamp Refuge.

Commissioner Daubach thanked Deb Cary, Illinois Audubon Society, for her tenacity.

It was moved by Commissioner Daubach, seconded by Commissioner Mogerman, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants final approval for Amboy Marsh in Lee County as an Illinois Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2337)

221-14) Marshall Co. – Fern Ridge Nature Preserve, Dedication

Tom Lerczak, on behalf of Maury Brucker and Emiko Yang, requested final approval for dedication of 3.25 acres within Fern Ridge Natural Area (INAI# 1836) as the Fern Ridge Nature

Preserve. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission conferred preliminary approval for dedication of Fern Ridge at its 220th meeting (Resolution #2326) on May 5, 2015. Fern Ridge is located within the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division along the Illinois River bluffs. The significant feature of this site is a large population of the state-threatened fibrous-rooted sedge (*Carex communis* Bailey), in which flowering and fruiting individuals have been documented. This population of several hundred clumps is one of only 18 that have been documented throughout the state. Natural communities at Fern Ridge are Grade C and consist of dry-mesic upland forest, mesic upland forest, mesic floodplain forest, and an intermittent high-gradient small stream. Upland forests are dominated by species such as white oak (*Quercus alba*), red oak (*Q. rubra*), shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*). Floodplain forest species include bur oak (*Q. macrocarpa*), black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), and American basswood (*Tilia americana*). Notable plants at Fern Ridge include several fern species, including the conservative silvery spleenwort (*Athyrium thelypteroides*); blue beech (*Carpinus caroliniana*); smooth forked aster (*Aster schreberi*); and ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*). The primary threat to this site is invasion by non-native species, which the landowners have already addressed. 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.

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

The Commission grants final approval for Fern Ridge in Marshall County as an Illinois Nature Preserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 14 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2338)

Tom recognized Maury Brucker and Emiko Yang, landowners.

Maury Brucker thanked INPC staff; Michael Murphy and Lloyd Richard Phillipe, Illinois Natural History Survey; and Mike Miller, Peoria Park District, for doing plant surveys. The surveys found 20 species of sedges and 10 species of ferns which are documented with the INHS. He thanked the Commission for considering small areas.

221-15) Natural Areas Acquisition Fund Fiscal Year 2016 Stewardship Proposals

Bob Szafoni reported. (Appendix II)

The Natural Areas Stewardship project uses monies provided by the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund [NAAF] to support management activities on both state and non-state-owned nature preserves and land and water reserves. The FY16 NAAF Stewardship allocation is projected to be \$1,000,000. Additional funds may be available from unallocated monies from past FYs but the amount is unknown at this time. IDNR requests approval of the submitted FY16 NAAF Stewardship Proposal list in anticipation of available funding.

Director Heidorn commented in terms of revenue and where we are at this meeting or by the end of the year, that typically in the last few years we have had between \$2 to \$3 million come in by this

point. Last year was a good year overall for NAAF, we had \$2.7 million brought in. If you look at expenses, we have been spending around \$1.5 million in revenues by this time and \$7 million in revenues by the end of the year. As Bob described, all of these projects are stopping due to the impasse. We have spent less than a million dollars this year which has all been salaries. \$2.53 million in revenues has come in through the Real Estate Transfer Tax as of September 11, 2015. We had crept up to \$13.7 million and were rewarded with that in FY15 to balance the budget. \$6 million, one of the largest sweeps we have ever had, was taken out of the NAAF and put in the General Revenue Fund. We are seeing NAAF go up because we have had a fairly good year and we are not spending very much. The problem is getting worse because of the impasse and the failure of State government pushing forward land acquisitions. We could lose the money by supporting the general revenue budget.

Donnie asked how much jeopardy are we in of losing the federal dollars that are matching if we do not move forward.

Bob Szafoni answered we certainly have the potential of losing it if we do not move forward. It is unlikely we will lose it on the issue of match the way most people would think of it. The match the Division and Commission staff are involved in for some of these projects is our time spent administering. There are some projects that require NAAF match or partial match. Most of this is being done with our time. Where there is need or opportunity, staff is still coding time to these projects to build up that match. It has curtailed somewhat compared to past years due to the budget impasse.

Commissioner McClain asked if the budget impasse has caused back outs of contracts or unwillingness to work.

Bob Szafoni answered he has not heard of any, but has had contractors come to staff and say that if this keeps up much longer, they would no longer bid. One contractor is laying off employees.

McClain commented that there is potential long term damage to the relations with the contractors.

Bob Szafoni answered that the Natural Areas Restoration Contractor base is small and losing two is a big deal. This is huge for the resources staff have identified, the Commission has protected and staff have tried to manage. None of those persist without stewardship.

Commissioner Thomas asked if there is any point where it would be too late to accomplish much for stewardship this year, even if they pass a budget.

Bob answered not from a technical stewardship perspective. Problems will be somewhat worse, we may have lost a season. We are making preparations internally on what to do when given the go. Many projects will be blanket extended. We will address the larger contracts on an individual basis so as not to allow them to expire while the impasse is in place.

Commissioner Stone asked if the funds will roll after the end of the fiscal year.

Szafoni answered Natural Areas Stewardship Funds are capital funds so they do roll. Most of these projects are from 2013, 2014 and 2015.

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

The Commission grants approval for the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund Fiscal Year 2016 Stewardship proposals, as described in the proposal presented under Item 15 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2339)

221-16) Illinois Nature Preserves Commission – Policy and Procedures for Translocation of Animal Species

Kelly Neal reported that the current procedure for review of requests for animal translocations into sites in the nature preserves system involves a staff level review in consultation with the IDNR and Endangered Species Protection Board (ESPB), with final review and approval by Commissioners at a Commission meeting. After a species or cohort of species have been reviewed and approved for translocation by Commissioners three times, it is considered that a precedent has been set and future requests for that species/cohort's translocation can be reviewed and approved at the staff level. For example, butterfly translocations have been reviewed more than three times and now can be reviewed at the staff level only. At the 214th Meeting of the Commission on May 7, 2013, Commissioners reviewed a request for retroactive approval of a mussel translocation into a land and water reserve that occurred in 2012 without prior approval by INPC. This translocation issue made apparent the conflict between the sometimes quick turnaround that may be needed in order to safely translocate animals to ensure their survival and the constraints of INPC's three times per year meeting time table. The Commissioners directed staff to work on an animal translocation policy that would allow for staff level review and potential approval of requests to translocate animals into INPC sites. Given this directive, staff believed that development of such a policy should be in coordination with IDNR and ESPB for a "joint" policy similar to the existing Joint Plant Translocation Policy. Throughout 2013 and early 2014 INPC, IDNR and ESPB staff met to work on this policy. The group determined that prior to approval of a joint policy it would be necessary to make changes to the administrative rules for possession of endangered or threatened species. Draft changes of these rules were begun, but limited staff capacity and other priorities have not allowed further progress by IDNR staff. Because this administrative rule does not directly involve INPC, staff decided to proceed with, and have developed an INPC animal translocation policy which would allow staff level review and potential approval of requests to translocate animal species. The proposed INPC policy will follow closely the policy previously discussed as a joint policy, using the 1989 "Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board Policy on Translocation of Endangered and Threatened Animal Species" as a framework for the criteria required to be included in proposals submitted to translocate animals at INPC sites. The proposed INPC policy continues to include coordination of review and consultation with both IDNR and ESPB.

Kelly Neal requested approval of the policies and procedures for translocation as well as approval at staff level rather than at Commission meetings due to timing.

Commissioner Thomas asked if there would be a report of actions taken and where, at Commission meetings.

Kelly Neal answered yes.

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

The Commission grants approval for the policy and procedures and staff level approval of the Animal Translocation Policy, as described in the proposal presented under Item 16 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2340)

221-17) Champaign and Vermilion Co. – Correction of Legal Description for Edgewood Farm Land and Water Reserve

Valerie Njapa reported that James and Eleanor Smith received final approval for dedication of 156.7 acres as Edgewood Farm Land and Water Reserve at the Commission's 169th meeting in October 2000 (Resolution 1555). The registration agreement was recorded in Champaign County on December 8, 2000 and in Vermilion County on December 6, 2000. Errors in the legal description have been found for two tracts in Vermilion County. The landowner has requested that the Commission record the corrected legal description.

Commissioner Covington asked what has been done to correct our procedures to prevent these types of errors in the future.

Director Heidorn answered that we have shifted from using GPS points to create legal descriptions to using surveyors and actual surveys. With private landowners we get title work on those.

Commissioner Covington asked if we get professional surveys in all cases.

Director Heidorn answered yes, there has to be a professional survey for modifications.

Commissioner Covington asked if we get surveys for our files.

Valerie Njapa answered that part of the complication is that in the past, David Holman was able to provide better legal descriptions than were reported in the registration agreements or dedication instruments. There is some question about the legality/validity of legal descriptions if not produced by a professional licensed land surveyor. She indicated she would be presenting more of these in the future with similar issues as we are catching up on the backlog. Boundary surveys still need to be done. She will work with IDNR staff on IDNR owned lands. We have been able to allocate some of the defense budget to help cover the cost of surveys for some private landowners who are not able to put forth the resources for this. She hoped this would continue and would help get caught up on getting these descriptions.

Commissioner Covington asked if there have been any successor owners who have not wanted to correct the legal descriptions.

Director Heidorn answered there has only been one situation like that with two public landowners, IDNR and the Village of Lake in the Hills. Two surveyors surveyed the property and there was an overlap in the boundaries. The Village's property included a sewer area and changes couldn't be made due to the federal restrictions on their sewer treatment plant. It was buffer area for the nature preserve so there was a mutual agreement between the Commission and the Village to accept it and

agree to disagree. It was put in writing. He could not think of any situation where they've ever lost property or had issues come up. Considering the number of easements and dedications we have had, it is astounding. There is a threat but it is very tiny.

Valerie Njapa indicated if there is an acreage change, we may have to send letters for property tax purposes.

Mary Kay commented that we now have David Holman who looks over all the legal descriptions and reports back to the author of any problems, before the proposals are brought before the Commission.

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

The Commission grants approval for the correction of the legal description for Edgewood Farm Land and Water Reserve in Champaign and Vermilion Counties, as described in the proposal presented under Item 17 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

(Resolution 2341)

221-18) Kankakee and Iroquois Counties – Report on the Status of the Proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area

John Rogner reported that the Midwest Region of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is taking steps to establish the Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area (NWR&CA) within two focal areas in Illinois. A planning process that concluded with an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) authorized the Grand Kankakee Marsh National Wildlife Refuge in 1999 in both Illinois and Indiana. Due to lack of funding and other planning priorities, this project was put on hold until recently. Re-engaging in this effort now, acknowledges the Service's continued recognition of the biological importance of the Kankakee River Basin and ongoing commitment to conservation in the area. Since 1999 the Service has been supporting habitat restoration on private lands, encouraging conservation activities by partners, building relationships, and fostering support for conservation in this area. The new name – Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area – better reflects the partnership approach to this project. Establishment of the Kankakee NWR&CA will complement existing conservation efforts in the basin by restoring and conserving priority wetland, oak savanna, and grassland habitats.

The Service intends to formally establish the NWR&CA in Illinois by accepting a donation of land from the Friends of the Kankakee. The Friends group formed shortly after the Refuge was approved. Since then, they have been acquiring property for conservation with the intent of transferring it to the Service to establish the refuge at the appropriate time. The Friends of the Kankakee protected 70 acres on 11/14/2006 and 1.5 acres on 02/07/2008 as the Iroquois Sands Land and Water Reserve. The USFWS believes that this designation is compatible with the designation of the refuge.

Any future effort in Indiana would focus on a partnership-driven “conservation area” concept, following the State's lead. This concept incorporates future conservation land into existing land-use patterns to maintain a healthy balance of ecological, economic, and social needs.

(Appendix III)

Commissioner Dann asked why they did not expand farther west of the westerly boundary line, where much of The Nature Conservancy's highest quality land and largest parcels are west of your westerly boundary line.

John Rogner answered they should have extended farther west.

Commissioner Dann asked if it was fixable.

John Rogner answered it is but they would have to go through a new planning process with a new environmental assessment. He mentioned they have discussed revising their boundaries in Illinois. This is an artifact of their planning process fifteen years ago. In order to make this happen, we could not fill it with boundaries now, we had to accept a parcel to get it established.

Commissioner Covington asked about the Green Hooper Branch Savanna Nature Preserve, you would think you would have drawn your line in front of the northerly and western boundaries of that.

John Rogner answered he was not part of the planning process the first time around and could not explain how it was derived. One of the strategies was to connect existing parcels and it does that nicely between Willow Slough and Hooper Branch. We are discussing initial ideas with TNC and others about establishing connections that run from Kankakee Sands Preserve up to LaSalle Fish and Wildlife Area.

Commissioner Stone asked if there was any resident outreach in this second go-round and, if so, how it is going.

John answered he has been doing all of the outreach on the Illinois side. There are concerns from the Pembroke Township, which is an African-American community. They are a struggling community economically and their sole means of revenue is property taxes. So their concern is that if they should acquire lands, if they were lands not occupied by people, they would lose community, since community is made up of people. It is beyond property taxes, it is what makes up their society and we need to be sensitive to that. He would like to find a way to help keep them on their land and sustain their economy as we accomplish our conservation goals. There is some lingering resentment on the Indiana side. The project went awry and caused some hard feelings and people remember that. We have some fence mending to do and will work on that.

Commissioner Thomas commented that the vision for what might be done in the Pembroke area is a window to some future place where conservation needs to go. How do you allow people to live sustainably and also enhance the environment they are living in?

John Rogner reflected on the old IDNR logo and motto, "Life and Land Together". He liked this and said this is what it should be about. Conservation shouldn't have winners and losers, everyone should benefit. Our challenge is to figure out how we can help those folks improve and strengthen their society.

Commissioner Thomas thanked John for coming.

221-19) Draft 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

Director Heidorn reported changes that were made since the last time Commissioners reviewed the strategic plan.

Commissioner Thomas asked whether the negative means we are slipping behind.

Director Heidorn explained that negative one on the scale is the beginning point and one means it has been completed.

Commissioner Derby-Lewis asked if there was any reason why the progress is not on a scale of 0-2 rather than one that includes a negative number.

Director Heidorn said it is how the scale he has been using works, but agreed that it could be changed.

Commissioner Thomas commented that you could use a green, yellow and red rather than the numbers which might be a simpler way to show if you're on track or falling behind. He suggested maybe Director Heidorn and staff could work on a way this can be presented more clearly to Commissioners.

Director Heidorn agreed it would be more clear.

Commissioner Derby-Lewis commented that the dashboard is great idea and thanked Director Heidorn for his work on that.

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

The Commission grants approval of the INPC Draft 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, as described in the proposal presented under Item 18 of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.
(Resolution 2342)

Commissioner Thomas thanked Director Heidorn and staff for all of their work on the Strategic Plan.

221-20) Election of Officers of the INPC

Commissioner McClain requested the approval for the slate of nominated officers described under Item 5C of the Agenda for the 221st Meeting.

It was moved by Commissioner Mogerma, seconded by Commissioner Daubach, that the following be elected as officers to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission: Donald Dann, Chair; George Covington, Vice-Chair; and Abigail Derby-Lewis, Secretary.

(Resolution 2343)

Commissioner Dann commented that he was honored and humbled. He has big shoes to fill, referring to Commissioner Thomas. He asked staff to stick by them and said that the Commission is behind them a thousand percent.

221-21) Election of Advisors and Consultants of the INPC

Commissioner McClain asked for a motion to elect the slate of advisors and consultants.

It was moved by Commissioner Dann, seconded by Commissioner Ruffner, that in addition to statutory advisors that Dr. Misganaw Demissie, Dr. Thomas Emerson, Allison Grady, Dr. Richard Burg, Dr. Kevin O'Brien and Dr. Mark Ryan be elected as Advisors; and that Gerald Adelman, Jill Allread, Michelle Carr, Tom Clay, Harry Drucker, Kenneth Fiske, Fran Harty, Kerry Leigh, Jill Riddell, Lauren Rosenthal, Bruce Ross-Shannon, Joseph Roth, John Schwegman, Valerie Spale, John White and Randy Heidorn be elected as Consultants to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

(Resolution 2344)

221-22) Review of Closed meeting minutes

Commissioner Dann read that the following closed meeting minutes from August 2, 2005; May 2, 2006; May 6, 2008; May 5, 2009; May 7, 2013; and September 10, 2013, have been reviewed by Commissioners and need to remain closed.

Director Heidorn read the following:

These meetings minutes were closed in accordance with the Open Meetings Act to discuss the purchase of real property. Section 2.06 of the Open Meetings Act provides that public bodies shall periodically, but no less than semi-annually, meet to review minutes of all closed sessions. At such meetings, a determination shall be made and reported in an open session that the need for confidentiality still exists as to all or portions of these minutes, or that the minutes or portions there of no longer require confidential treatment and are available for public inspection.

Director Heidorn spoke with OREP, there are still parcels in each of these minutes that are in the process of land acquisition and OREP has asked that they remained closed.

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

The Commission has reviewed the minutes of the Closed Meetings, held August 2, 2005; May 2, 2006; May 6, 2008; May 5, 2009; May 7, 2013; and September 10, 2013, and directed the minutes remain closed.

(Resolution 2345)

221-23) Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)

No Public Comments.

221-24) Other Business

Director Heidorn commented on the controversies of the University of Illinois Chancellor regarding private emails being used for discussions of public business. He indicated we have received communications from the Governor's office that there is concern that boards and commissions are not using a state email address. However, we told them that Commissioners do not have state email addresses. We were told as a good practice, any communications on email that relates to the Commission's activities should include at least one member of Commission staff, and Commissioners should copy them on these. This will make those emails available through FOIA. If we do not make this a regular practice, it is possible private emails could be made available through FOIA.

Commissioner Covington asked which Commission staff would be copied on these emails.

Director Heidorn recommended that he be copied on emails or the Director after his retirement.

Commissioner Dann asked if there are any guidelines for what kind of emails he needs to be copied on.

Director Heidorn commented that no guidelines have been provided at this point. As more information becomes available, he said he would let Commissioners know.

Commissioner Thomas commented emails should be business related.

Commissioner Dann commented everyone use email cautiously.

221-25) Adjournment

Commissioner Ruffner motioned to adjourn. It was seconded by Commissioner Daubach and approved. The 221st Meeting of the INPC adjourned at 2:06 PM.