

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION AGENDA
TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-FIFTH MEETING

Illinois Department of Transportation
Auditorium
2300 S. Dirksen Parkway
Springfield, IL 62702

January 24, 2017, 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 224th Meeting, September 13, 2016

Item 4: Next meeting dates and locations

May 9, 2017

Byron Forest Preserve Dist., Jarrett Prairie Center, Byron, IL

September 12, 2017

Peoria Park District, Noble Center, Peoria, 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 Hofmann

Endangered Species Protection Board

Item 8:* Cook Co. – Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods Land and Water Reserve, Registration

The Forest Preserves of Cook County seeks to register 221.1 acres of the Jens Jensen Forest Preserve as the Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods Land and Water Reserve. Jens Jensen Forest Preserve and nearby Deer Grove Forest Preserve total 1,800 acres. Embedded within Deer Grove Forest Preserve is the 1,035.7-acre Deer Grove West Woodland and Wetland Nature Preserve (INAI #1775). Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods includes Grade B and Grade C mesic woodlands (74 acres), Grade C freshwater marsh and Grade C sedge meadow (42.7 acres), and a cultural community undergoing habitat restoration as prairie (103 acres). To date, 398 native plant species have been recorded from

the site. Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods meets two of the criteria for designation as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve: 1.) the site includes more than 80 acres of grasslands that supports habitat-restricted wildlife, and 2.) the site supports a population of the State-threatened marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*). Jens Jensen Grassland and Woods is located within the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division in south-central Cook County, Illinois. Restoration at Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods was initiated in 2009 and much of the support for restoration can be traced to designation of a 181-acre parcel (located almost entirely within Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods) as an O'Hare Modernization Mitigation Account (OMMA) site. Oversight for management of this OMMA site is provided by Openlands and their consultant, Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. with the permission of the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Protection of Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods supports elements of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan; specifically action steps identified in the Farmland and Prairie Campaign to "...establish or restore grasslands..."; the Forest Campaign to "restore and manage high-quality examples of all forest communities"; and the Wetland Campaign to "...restore hydrological function to wetland basins" In addition, at least 25 species of birds, and 1 mammal species, identified in the plan as Species in Greatest Need of Conservation have been reported from Jens Jensen Grassland and Woods. The Forest Preserves of Cook County reserve the right to extend the OMMA agreement with Openlands and to conduct monitoring and management activities that may be necessary for the site to meet performance standards established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Registration of Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve reaffirms the significance of the Deer Grove Forest Preserve/Jens Jensen Forest Preserve complex as the site of the first acquisition of land by the Forest Preserves of Cook County. And, in doing so, honors the foresight of many (including Jens Jensen) who sought establishment of the Cook County Forest Preserve District Act of 1913 that authorized the Forest Preserves to "... preserve, protect, and restore..." land in Cook County. Registration of Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods fulfills a requirement stipulated by Openlands that lands benefitting from the OMMA will be presented to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission for inclusion in the Illinois Nature Preserves System. Registration of Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods also honors the vision of the Forest Preserve of Cook County, as articulated in their "Next Century Conservation Plan" to preserve and manage their holdings. The Commission recognizes President Toni Preckwinkle and General Superintendent Arnold Randall for their leadership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County and their support for Registration of Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woods as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve and Joseph Roth and Linda Masters with Openlands. John McCabe, Chip O'Leary, and Rebecca Collings with the Forest Preserves of Cook County are also acknowledged.

REPORT

Steve Byers
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Registration Approval

Item 9:* Kane Co. – Buffer Addition to Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve, Dedication

Dundee Township seeks preliminary approval for dedication of a 94.4-acre nature preserve buffer addition to Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve (INAI #1625). The 56.5-acre Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve received final approval for dedication at the Commission's 179th meeting in May 2003 (Resolution # 1722). Dundee Township has requested that the original name (Dixie Fromm Briggs Prairie Nature Preserve) be changed to Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve because the requested name change more accurately reflects the landowners (Dixie Briggs Fromm Trust) interest in protecting the land. The proposed nature preserve buffer addition includes 18 acres of Grade C mesic upland forest and a 71.4-acre cultural community (formerly cropland) that is being restored to either prairie (66.4 acres) or forest (5 acres). Restoration of the prairie began in

2004. Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve and the proposed addition are located in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division in the northeast corner of Kane County, Illinois. Protection of the proposed addition supports elements of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan; specifically action steps identified in the Farmland and Prairie Campaign to "...establish or restore grasslands..." and the Forest Campaign to "Restore and manage high-quality examples of all forest communities." In addition, at least six species of birds identified in that plan as Species in Greatest Need of Conservation have been reported from the proposed addition. Dedication of the proposed nature preserve buffer addition will increase the size of Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve from 56.5 to 150.9 acres and honors a recommendation articulated in the first proposal that stated: "...the balance of the land (owned by Dundee Township) should be included as nature preserve buffer once the crop production is replaced with an active prairie restoration effort." The proposed nature preserve buffer addition will provide water quality benefits, will provide a large block of grasslands for a suite of grassland birds that have size requirements, and further protect Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve from incompatible land uses. The Commission acknowledges the long-term interest and support of Dundee Township in the protection and stewardship of Dixie Briggs Fromm Prairie Nature Preserve.

REPORT

Steve Byers

Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 10:* Lake Co. – Donnelley Buffer Addition to Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve, Dedication

Libertyville Township seeks preliminary approval for dedication of the 109-acre Donnelley Nature Preserve Buffer addition to Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve (INAI #1252). The 47-acre Liberty Prairie received final approval for dedication at the Commission's 129th meeting in November 1990 (Resolution # 1062). Since that time Libertyville Township has formally protected two nature preserve buffer additions to Liberty Prairie; the first addition receiving final approval for dedication at the Commission's 180th meeting in October 2003 (Resolution # 1743) and the second addition receiving final approval for dedication at the Commission's 212th meeting in October 2012 (Resolution # 2206). Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve (now totaling 75 acres) and the proposed Donnelley Nature Preserve buffer addition to Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve (109 acres) are centrally located within the 5,770-Liberty Prairie Reserve located in south-central Lake County, Illinois. Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve and the proposed Donnelley Nature Preserve Buffer addition are located in the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. The proposed Donnelley Nature Preserve Buffer addition consists of a cultural community (croplands) that will be restored to dry-mesic, mesic, and wet prairie. Efforts to begin conversion of the cropland to prairie began in 2014 when Libertyville Township adopted the Casey Road Land Use Plan that called for conversion of cropland into prairie. Since then, Libertyville Township has adopted a restoration plan and timeline for establishment of the prairie, a 5-year management plan, and has developed seeding mixes for the prairie restorations. One of the first elements of the 5-year management plan, removal of tree lines, was initiated by Libertyville Township in 2016. Protection of the proposed addition supports elements of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan; specifically action steps identified in the Farmland and Prairie Campaign to "...establish or restore grasslands...". The proposed Donnelley Nature Preserve Buffer addition will provide water quality benefits, will provide a large block of grasslands for a suite of grassland birds that have size requirements, and further buffer Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve from incompatible land uses. The proposed Donnelley Nature Preserve Buffer addition, the third such addition to Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve, will increase the size of Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve from 75 to 184 acres. The

Commission acknowledges the long-term interest and support of Libertyville Township in the protection and stewardship of Liberty Prairie Nature Preserve.

REPORT
Steve Byers
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 11:* Logan Co. – Addition to Elkhart Hill Grove Nature Preserve, Dedication

The 65.2-acre Elkhart Hill Grove Land and Water Reserve, permanently registered in 2002 and owned by Elizabeth Pasquasi and Catherine Carolin, is being proposed as a nature preserve addition to Elkhart Hill Grove Nature Preserve (65.2 acres), which was also dedicated in 2002. The existing dedicated nature preserve is owned by William McClellan Drake Jr, Victoria Evan-Cook, Valentine Snell, Mason Hammond Drake, and Ascha Kells Drake. All of the proposed preserve addition is grade A mesic upland forest that is included within the 210.2-acre Elkhart Hill Natural Area (INAI #0178). Elkhart Hill Natural Area is located in the Springfield Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division; it is the only prairie grove in Illinois located on a glacial kame (from the Illinoisan glacial period). Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), blue ash (*Fraxinus quadrangulata*), and bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) are important canopy species. Other common species in smaller diameter classes include slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*), American elm (*U. americana*) and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*). Wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) is a dominant herbaceous species. Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is a common understory tree that typically occurs in large patches. The forest supports a rich wildflower display which includes species such as dutchman's-breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia verna*), false rue anemone (*Isopyrum biternatum*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), broad-leaf waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum canadense*), white trillium (*Trillium flexipes*), toothwort (*Dentaria laciniata*), and spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*). Hiking and limited horseback riding, a reserved right with provisions to be outlined in the site's master plan for management, will be allowed with permission from the landowners and restricted to established trails. White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) hunting will be allowed with permission from the landowners as a population control method following INPC management guidelines (Volume 5, Number 1). Dedication of this site supports the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan in its Land and Water, Forest, and Invasive Species campaigns. The landowners are seeking dedication of their registered reserve for the higher level of protection.

REPORT
Thomas V. Lerczak
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Preliminary Approval for Dedication

Item 12:* Cook Co. – Harms Flatwoods Nature Preserve, Dedication

The Forest Preserves of Cook County seeks final approval for dedication of 101.9 acres of the 250-acre Harms Woods Forest Preserve as the Harms Flatwoods Nature Preserve. Harms Flatwoods includes 96.8 acres recommended for dedication as nature preserve and 5.1 acres as nature preserve buffer. The proposed nature preserve lies within the boundary of the Harms Woods Forest Preserve INAI site (INAI # 1573) and supports populations of two state-listed plant species; the brome hummock sedge (*Carex bromoides*) and dwarf raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*). Harms Flatwoods is located in the Chicago Lake Plain Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division in the northeast part of Cook County. Harms Flatwoods was presented at the 224th meeting of the Illinois

Nature Preserves Commission in September 2016 as consisting primarily of Grade B and Grade C northern flatwoods totaling 93.3 acres, 4.277 acres of Grade B mesic upland forest, and approximately 10 acres undergoing restoration; at this meeting, the Commission granted preliminary approval for dedication (Resolution # 2365). In December 2016, the nomination packet for Harms Flatwoods submitted to the IDNR – Natural Areas Evaluation Committee was revised to show the presence of 93.3 acres of sand flatwoods (as opposed to 93.3 acres of northern flatwoods). Of that total, 26.135 acres of sand flatwoods were considered Grade B. Sand flatwoods are restricted to sandy plains, or lakebeds, in the Chicago Lake Plain Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. Northern flatwoods, in contrast, are restricted to the Morainal Section of the Northeastern Morainal Natural Division. Only 21 acres of Grade B sand flatwoods was recognized in the initial INAI. Management, primarily control of invasive species, has been ongoing since the late 1970’s. Reserved rights include the continuation of an adaptive management strategy, monitoring and restoration of surface hydrology, and continued maintenance of the existing trail system. The proposal specifically provides the FPCC with the right to route and construct a multi-use trail along the northern boundary of the site. Dedication of Harms Flatwoods as an Illinois Nature Preserve supports recommendations of the “*Biodiversity Recovery Plan for the Chicago Wilderness Region*” and elements of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan; specifically action steps to restore and manage high-quality examples of all forest communities. Dedication of Harms Flatwoods as an Illinois Nature Preserve is consistent with the recommendations of the Forest Preserves of Cook County’s “*Next Century Conservation Plan*” and the “*Natural and Cultural Resource Plan for the Forest Preserves of Cook County*.” The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff and staff of the Forest Preserves of Cook County recommend dedication of Harms Flatwoods as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

REPORT

Steve Byers

Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Final Approval for Dedication

Item 13:* Randolph Co. – Rockcastle Creek Nature Preserve, Dedication

The proposed Rockcastle Creek Nature Preserve (NP) is an 79.1-acre site that is part of the Rockcastle Creek Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (INAI #828). The proposed preserve includes approximately 37 acres of the 71-acre INAI site. The proposed Rockcastle Creek NP contains several qualifying features, including 2.9 acres of Grade B dry-mesic barrens, 1 acre of Grade A mesic sandstone cliff, ¼ acre of Grade B dry sandstone cliff, two state-endangered plant species, and one state-threatened bird species. In addition to the qualifying features, the site contains 2 acres of Grade C dry-mesic barrens, 40 acres of Grade C dry-mesic upland forest, 8 acres of Grade C mesic woodland, and ¼ acre Grade C glacial drift hill prairie. The site also contains 25 acres of cultural community, including 18 acres of planted prairie with all local ecotype seed, and 7 acres of old field. The proposed preserve has populations of 14 documented species of Greatest Need of Conservation (SGNC) listed in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP). Besides protecting the natural communities and habitat for listed species, the proposed addition supports several campaigns identified in the IWAP, including the Forests Campaign, the Invasive Species Campaign, and the Land & Water Stewardship Campaign. The site is located in the Illinois Ozarks Resource Rich Area in the Central Section of the Ozark Natural Division. The proposed Rockcastle Creek Nature Preserve is owned by Priscilla Bollinger and Tony Hernandez. The couple has a long-standing commitment to conservation. During the 14 years they’ve owned the property they’ve conducted over 40 prescribed burns, done an immense amount of exotics control, and worked on restoration of the oak forest, barrens, and glacial drift hill prairie. They hand collected local seed for the prairie

plantings. And they kept excellent records of species and restoration work. Their contribution to the restoration and protection of this natural area is significant and greatly appreciated by INPC staff. The Commission granted preliminary approval for dedication of this site at its 224th meeting (Resolution # 2364)

REPORT
Debbie Newman
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED
Final Approval for Dedication

Item 14:* Winnebago Co. – Buffer Addition to Searls Park Prairie Nature Preserve, Dedication

The Rockford Park District (RPD) seeks final 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 Commission granted preliminary approval for dedication at its 223rd meeting, held on September 13, 2016 (Resolution # 2358). 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 Illinois Natural Areas Inventory in 1977. A population of the rare flora, 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 competition 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
Final Approval for Dedication

Item 15:* Cook Co. – Jurgensen Woods North Nature Preserve - Woodland Tree Thinning

Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) has 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. The FPCC received approval from INPC for large-scale restoration work at the four top-ranked units at the 222nd Meeting of the INPC in January 2016 (Resolution #2350). The District is now ready to begin similar restoration work at Jurgensen Woods North Nature Preserve (INAI #0501) as part of their five year management plan for the site. As with the four previous preserves, this site has also suffered from the effects of fire suppression and invasive plants. Most of the planned restoration work 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. This restoration includes thinning of over abundant native trees in two woodland units that have a heavy canopy of mature oaks and opportunistic trees. FPCC plans to thin canopy trees in these woodland units to <200/acre to achieve appropriate tree densities that should increase light levels and stimulate plant growth in the sub-canopy vegetation layers. FPCC has made a commitment to monitor the plant community response, treat re-sprouts and new invasive species and to continue maintenance as needed as part of its habitat enhancement program. The FPCC requests Commission approval to proceed with these plant community restoration efforts.

REPORT

Kelly Neal and Steve Byers
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Approval for Woodland Thinning

Item 16: 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

Tom Lerczak
Nature Preserves Commission

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED

Determination if closed minutes remain closed

Item 17: Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)

Item 18: Other Business

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

Item 19: Adjournment