

Illinois Recreational Access Program

Frequently Asked Questions



Thanks to grants received from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) created the Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP), a public access program that leases private land for outdoor recreational activities. IRAP leases private land from landowners to provide acres for turkey hunting, archery deer hunting, upland game and waterfowl hunting as well as fishing and boating, birding, outdoor photography, and other similar activities focusing on recruiting and retaining outdoor enthusiasts and their families.

What is the Illinois Recreational Access Program?

The goal of this program is to provide more places for outdoor recreation while promoting activities for youth and their families. With more than 97% of the land in Illinois privately owned and Illinois ranking 46th among states with public lands, there is a boundless need to provide additional acreage for public access. With IRAP, private landowners who own at least 40 acres of ground and/or a pond(s), and/or have river and stream access on public waterways can enroll in the program and receive a financial reimbursement from IDNR to allow the public to access. Landowners are not selling or giving up the rights to their land, but merely agreeing to allow the public access during specific dates/times for the sole purpose of hunting and/or fishing, birding, outdoor photography, and boating.

Who is eligible to enroll in this program?

Any landowner who owns at least 40 acres of qualifying land for the specific outdoor activity the landowner would like to lease their property for. Interested landowners only need to complete an enrollment form and send to IRAP. Once received, an IRAP coordinator will contact them about their property, answer questions and complete a site visit to verify eligibility. IRAP is available in all counties in Illinois.

How much financial incentive is there to enroll in the program?

IDNR will provide a financial reimbursement to landowners who lease their property in the IRAP. The amount is based upon how many acres enrolled as well as what outdoor activities the landowner is willing to allow on their land and what county. A 20% incentive payment is available in counties near Chicago and St. Louis. In addition, qualifying landowners will have a habitat management plan written or updated as well as assistance to implement recommended habitat management practices in the plan.

When does a landowner need to apply for enrollment into the program?

The landowner can apply at any time during the agreement year.

Is a participating landowner liable should the public hurt themselves while accessing their property?

No, the permitted IRAP user (hunter, fisherman, etc.) will have signed a liability waiver further removing liability from the landowner. In addition, IDNR has purchased liability insurance coverage.

How long can a landowner enroll in the program?

Lease agreements are for four years and payments are made annually at the end of each calendar year.

Can a landowner get out the IRAP lease agreement?

Yes, should a landowner decide not to continue their IRAP lease, they can “opt out”. It is very important IDNR/IRAP be notified by email/mail no less than 30 days of selling their IRAP leased property or “opting out” in order to notify IRAP participants. When cancelling the lease, the landowner will then be paid a pro-rated amount on the leased property.

Will there be any special restrictions for the participants on the landowner's property?

Yes, IRAP permitted outdoor recreationalist are not allowed to (1) use alcohol; (2) leave garbage; (3) have campfires; (4) swim; (5) camp; (6) use motorized boats and more.

Can a participating landowner temporarily close off access to their property?

Yes, under certain conditions the landowner may temporarily close off access to their property for weather, fire danger, or other circumstances that would put the public in danger or jeopardize the resource. The IDNR would need to be notified of any temporary closing at least 30 days prior or asap in case of an emergency.

Will the IDNR post signs on enrolled property?

Yes, IDNR will post signs informing the public about the access site and associated boundaries. Signs may include language concerning where to park vehicles, as well as, rules and regulations at the site. In addition, IDNR will mark the boundaries with purple paint, when necessary, according to law to show property boundaries.

How is access permit?

Participants must register prior to accessing the IRAP leased property. This is done either by mail in application/registration or via the internet registration and reservation system. All IRAP participants must be permitted and carry an IRAP permit and have one in their vehicle while accessing IRAP leased property.

The success of IRAP hinges upon the participation of qualified landowners and the cooperation of the public using these areas. Landowners will expect the public to have respect for their land and the public will expect ease of access to areas in the agreement. The Department is committed to this program by maintaining proper signage, keeping access areas clean, communicating with landowners, and informing and educating the public about these access sites.

Information, as well as commonly asked questions, about the program can be found at www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IRAP . For more information you may contact IRAP at (217) 782-0137 or via email at dnr.irap@illinois.gov