

OFFICE OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION
State of Illinois
Grant Segment

PROJECT NUMBER: T-

PROJECT TITLE: Healthy Forests, Woodlands and Waters in the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Basins

PURPOSE: This cooperative effort among The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's) and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) is the first large scale attempt to implement the Forests Campaign of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Strategy (ICWCPS) (Illinois Department of Natural Resources, 2005). It is a multi-organizational effort to accomplish specific goals of the Campaign by identifying and utilizing the most relevant private land cost share programs currently available to create and manage forested habitats. This approach combines solid science with practical application and therefore, will maximize benefits to wildlife, water quality and landowners.

NEED: The ICWCPS identifies a number of issues impacting the quality of Illinois forests. These impacts affect Illinois' water quality and wildlife species dependent on a healthy forest ecosystem. Among these issues are a general decline in forest quality, lack of professional forestry assistance on private lands, invasion by non-native invasive plants, and forest fragmentation. The Forest Campaign of the ICWCPS (Section III. E. pages 66-70) identifies 7 key actions to combat these problems. Action 1 calls for maintaining and enhancing existing forest habitats using natural disturbances and sustainable forestry practices. Action 2 notes that increases in statewide forest acreage should emphasize restoring floodplains and riparian corridors. Action 3 identifies the importance of programs that assist private forest owners in managing forest resources and again notes the importance of riparian forests for their numerous environmental benefits. Action 4 focuses on the need for technical assistance and other educational resources. The ICWCPS Management Guidelines for forest, open woodland, savanna and barren in the Southern Till Plain Natural Division (Section IV. K. page 205) calls for restoration and management of riparian wetlands and bottomland forests to increase ecological connectivity and decrease fragmentation of patches larger than 500 acres. To meet wildlife objectives in this natural division, a net increase of 65,000 acres of forest and 75,000 acres of woodland/savanna/barrens is needed.

Several federal and state cost share programs are currently available to landowners to restore floodplain forests and riparian corridors, implement sustainable forestry practices, and receive professional forestry assistance. Specifically, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) presents a unique opportunity to restore and protect about 100,000 acres of floodplain corridors in the Illinois and Kaskaskia River watersheds over the next 3 years. The IDNR's Forestry Development Act (FDA) assists private landowners in managing their forests, both through technical assistance and cost share from the Forestry Fund. The program currently has 11,124 participants accounting for 592,386 acres of which about 35% are located in the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Watersheds. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) offers cost share for sustainable forestry practices to landowners with an approved forest management plan.

With agriculture being the predominant land use in the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Basins, the opportunity for restoring and managing forested habitats in these watersheds using USDA cost-share programs is excellent, especially in the wake of numerous flooding events the past three springs. However, the Upper Kaskaskia and

Lower Illinois River regions severely lack IDNR district forester staff. Without professional forestry assistance and a well-organized approach to servicing interested landowners, the opportunity to maximize conservation programs in these watersheds will be lost. By filling this void in technical assistance, promoting available programs on a local level and ensuring the best restoration and management practices are implemented in the appropriate places on the landscape, the proposed NWTF forester positions will be critical to achieving the objectives of the ICWCPS.

OBJECTIVES: 1) Re-forest floodplains and riparian corridors of the lower Illinois and upper Kaskaskia Rivers and their tributaries. IDNR has projected 10,708 acres of new tree plantings to be enrolled in each of the Kaskaskia and Illinois River watersheds. The 2 NWTF foresters will each meet with at least 50 landowners per year to develop plans for 1,000 acres of tree plantings in each watershed per year. Over 3 years, a total of 3,000 acres of new tree plantings will be planned in each forester's area of responsibility. In the Lower Illinois River Watershed, this includes Bureau, LaSalle, Lee, Marshall, Putnam, Woodford, Peoria and Tazewell Counties. In the Upper Kaskaskia River Watershed, this includes Christian, Shelby, Moultrie, Effingham, Fayette and Bond Counties(see attached map).

2) Improve the quality of existing private forest land in the lower Illinois and upper Kaskaskia River watersheds. Each NWTF forester will meet with at least 25 forest landowners per year to provide technical assistance and write management plans that qualify for EQIP and/or FDA cost share assistance. A total of 75 forest landowners in each watershed will receive technical assistance, accounting for about 2,250 acres of planned forest improvement practices.

3) NWTF foresters, along with the Regional Biologist, will conduct 2 public information/habitat workshops per year to inform landowners of available programs and educate potential CREP and EQIP participants. The attendance goal is 40 participants per meeting.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND REPORTING: Progress in meeting objective 1 will be determined by the number of landowner CREP consultations, the number of tree planting plans written, and the number of reforestation acres planned in the designated CREP counties. Progress in meeting objective 2 will be determined by the number of forest management plans written and the number of acres affected by those plans. Progress in meeting objective 3 will be determined by the number of attendees at the informational meetings/workshops and the resulting number of new CREP applications. At the end of 3 years, the success of the project will be evaluated. Based on the project accomplishments, available CREP acres, demand for forestry technical assistance, and DNR forestry staffing levels; the need for continuation of the project will be determined.

Interim and final performance reports will include:

- Number of CREP site visits completed
- Number of CREP tree planting plans written
- Acres of CREP tree planting planned and acres implemented (reasonable delays between planning and implementation are likely due to planting season timing)
- Number of private forest landowners consultations
- Number of forest management plans written
- Acres of forest improvements planned
- Number of people attending CREP informational meetings and habitat workshops
- Number of CREP or EQIP applications resulting from informational meetings and workshops

EXPECTED RESULTS OR BENEFITS: Of the 4 statewide goals for forest habitat listed in Section III. C. page 46 of the ICWCPS, this project will contribute to accomplishing the first two. They are as follows: 1. Implement sustainable forestry practices, including timber stand improvement, prescribed fire, timber harvesting, and invasive species control to enhance oak-dominance and maintain understory diversity on 1 million acres of forest. 2. Increase statewide forest acreage by 350,000 acres, emphasizing restoration of floodplains and riparian corridors, increasing ecological connectivity among forests and other habitat patches, and reducing fragmentation of forests 500 acres and larger.

Wildlife associated with forest, woodland, shrubland and stream habitats in these regions are expected to benefit from the increase in forested acres, short term increase in early succession habitat, improved water quality, and improved quality of woodland and forest habitat. Long term benefits for neotropical migrant songbirds such as, Cerulean warbler, should occur due to less fragmented migration corridors. Short term benefits to early successional/shrubland species such as, Northern harrier, will be created by thousands of acres of new tree plantings. Upland forest improvements should provide long term benefits to shrub successional and woodland species such as red-headed woodpecker. Aquatic species, such as fresh water mussels, should also benefit as water quality improvements from reduced sedimentation and nutrient runoff are realized in the selected watersheds. Additional benefits to IFWAP emphasis game species such as wild turkey, American woodcock and Northern bobwhite should increase hunting opportunity and help promote interest from landowners. Finally, this project will deliver economic benefits to participating landowners, both through retiring marginal, frequently flooded cropland and through improving timber quality and production.

Following is a list of wildlife species in greatest need of conservation expected to benefit from this project.

Forest birds that will benefit from increased forest acres and reduced fragmentation: yellow-billed cuckoo, Pileated woodpecker, Acadian flycatcher, wood thrush, red-headed woodpecker, red-shouldered hawk, broad-winged hawk, Kentucky warbler, Chuck-will's widow, whip-poor-whill, brown creeper, black-billed cuckoo, Cerulean warbler, bald eagle, worm-eating warbler, Mississippi kite, prothonotary warbler and ovenbird.

Early successional birds that will use newly reforested areas (temporary benefit): Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, short-eared owl, Swainson's hawk, Northern harrier, sedge wren, Northern bobwhite, bobolink, loggerhead shrike, Bewicks wren, dickcissel, brown thrasher, yellow-breasted chat, Bell's vireo, field sparrow, northern flicker, blue-winged warbler, American woodcock.

Marsh birds that will use newly reforested areas in or near ephemeral wetlands (temporary benefit): American bittern, great egret, least bittern, yellow-crowned night heron, black-crowned night heron, marsh wren and willow flycatcher.

Invertebrates that will benefit from improved water quality (Kaskaskia only): rock pocketbook, spike

Reptiles and Amphibians dependant on riparian forests and wetlands: Eastern narrowmouth toad (lower Kaskaskia watershed), crawfish frog, pickerel frog, wood frog, Blandings turtle, alligator snapping turtle, river cooter, ornate box turtle, smooth softshell, Kirtlands snake, timber rattlesnake, Northern copperbelly watersnake, smooth green snake, flathead snake, eastern massasauga.

Forest and woodland mammals: bobcat, least weasel, southeastern myotis, Indiana bat, golden mouse, marsh rice rat, gray fox.

APPROACH: NWTF will hire 2 professional foresters, one located in the Lower Illinois River watershed and one located in the Upper Kaskaskia River watershed. While forestry qualifications will be necessary, emphasis will also be placed on knowledge and experience dealing with wildlife habitat. The foresters will use the Illinois Forestry Best Management Practices (Illinois Department of Natural Resources et. al., 2007) as their standard for pursuing sustainable forest management. These positions will be full-time, term limited positions with benefits and will last until December 31, 2013. These individuals will potentially be housed in SWCD offices, centrally located in their respective regions. Working with the IDNR, NRCS, SWCD's and the NWTF regional biologist, these foresters will provide technical assistance to landowners, primarily through promoting and implementing CREP, EQIP and FDA cost share programs. Typical assistance will include conducting landowner consultations and eligibility evaluations, writing tree planting plans, writing FDA plans, and implementing FDA plans through sustainable forestry practices. Requested funding will pay 50% of the salary, benefits, travel, equipment and office supply expenses of these 2 full time foresters. The other 50% will be derived from state CREP funds. The foresters will report to the NWTF regional biologist, who will coordinate their duties assisting interested landowners and promoting the available conservation programs. Funding for the NWTF regional biologist will be derived from other sources, not related to this grant.

PROJECT SCHEDULE: October 1, 2010 through December 31, 2013

October 1, 2010: Upon approval of final grant agreement/work order NWTF will begin the hiring process. We will advertise the forester positions and complete the hiring process by late December. We will purchase equipment and make final office arrangements for foresters to begin work by January 1, 2011 (\$4,850.00 federal share for equipment costs).

Year 1 (2011): Two foresters will be employed full time with benefits, travel expenses, and work supplies (\$56,100.00 federal share). NWTF foresters and regional biologist will hold a series of public meetings to inform landowners of forest management opportunities through cost share programs. Additional meetings will be held throughout the life of the project as demand dictates. NWTF will hold monthly progress meetings with IDNR project manager. NWTF will provide quarterly reports to IDNR project manager and submit payment requests quarterly (\$6,650 federal share of indirect costs).

Year 2 (2012): Two foresters will be employed full time with benefits, travel expenses, and work supplies (\$56,100.00 federal share). NWTF will hold monthly progress meetings with IDNR project manager. NWTF will provide quarterly reports to IDNR project manager and submit payment requests quarterly (\$6,650 federal share of indirect costs).

Year 3 (2013): Two foresters will be employed full time with benefits, travel expenses, and work supplies (\$56,100.00 federal share). NWTF will hold monthly progress meetings with IDNR project manager. NWTF will provide quarterly reports to IDNR project manager and submit payment requests quarterly. Final project reports will be completed following completion of the project on December 31, 2013 (\$6,650 federal share of indirect costs).

ESTIMATED COSTS:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Salaries and Wages	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
Fringe Benefits	\$ 17,000	\$ 17,000	\$ 17,000
Travel	\$ 13,200	\$ 13,200	\$ 13,200
Equipment	\$ 9,700	\$ 6,400	\$ 6,400
Supplies/Commodities	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
Total Direct Charges:	\$121,900	\$118,600	\$118,600
Indirect Costs:	\$ 13,300	\$ 13,300	\$ 13,300
Totals:	\$135,200	\$131,900	\$131,900

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Kent Adams
NWTF Regional Biologist
14560 N. Amber Lane
Effingham, IL 62401
(217) 690-4950
kadamsrb@nwtf.net

Tara Moon
NWTF Grant Coordinator
PO Box 530
Edgefield, SC 29824
(803) 637-3106
tmoon@nwtf.net

Michael Mason
IDNR Project Manager
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702
(217) 785-8762
Michael.mason@illinois.gov

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION: Salaries and Wages: Two foresters will be hired as full-time, term-limited positions. Minimum qualifications will require a B.S. in forestry, wildlife or related field. With a limited time frame to accomplish the goals of this project, entry level foresters that require substantial training will not be acceptable. Therefore, salary and wages must be commensurate with the level of experience we are seeking in qualified individuals.

Fringe Benefits: The NWTF offers employment benefits such as retirement, medical, dental and life insurance to all employees and their families. All full-time employees are eligible for benefits on the first of the month following 30 days of employment. This category represents the approximate 21% cost of providing these benefits to the two forester positions proposed for this project.

Travel: Considerable travel will be required of these positions as they meet with landowners, document habitat conditions, determine planting locations, assess forest quality and health, etc. Each forester will spend a majority of work time in the field, covering a 5 to 8 county area. Work outside the designated territories may occasionally be required as well.

Equipment: A laptop computer will be provided to each forester for GIS mapping, plan writing and normal computer needs such as email and internet. Because these foresters will be implementing USDA cost share programs, locating them in USDA/SWCD offices will be important. NWTF is required to pay an annual computer hook-up fee of \$3200 for the foresters to work from these offices. A soil probe and diameter tape for each forester will assist them in their habitat evaluations, assuring appropriate recommendations for management activities, conservation practices, and species to be planted.

Supplies/Commodities: Standard office supplies will be needed for both foresters.

Indirect Costs: This category represents a 10% administrative cost for work performed for this project. These duties will include grant administration and accounting. This rate is within the bounds of reasonable and customary for administrative costs.

COMPLIANCE: Please see attached NEPA documentation. We believe this proposal to be completely covered by categorical exclusion 1.4 B.8 in 516 DM 2 Appendix 1. We believe there are no extraordinary circumstances that would require an EA.

With no land disturbing activities planned in this proposal, IDNR determined that its Comprehensive Environmental Review Process (CERP) was not required.

LITERATURE CITED:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2005. Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan-Strategy (Illinois Wildlife Action Plan). Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 353 p.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Forestry Development Council, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, University of Illinois. 2000, Revised 2007. Forestry Best Management Practices. 73 p.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program CFDA 10.912. Authorization under the provisions of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 , Public Law 110-246; The Food Security Act of 1985, Executive Order , Public Law - , 16 U.S.C 3801, as amended by The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Public Law 104-127, as amended by The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 , Public Law 107-101.

Conservation Reserve Program CFDA 10.069. Authorization under the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended (1985 Act) (16 U.S.C. § 3830 *et seq.*), and the regulations at 7 CFR part 1410 to perform.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Illinois has the statutory authority to perform the activities for CREP pursuant to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act (5 ILCS 220), the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Act (70 ILCS 405), the Fish and Aquatic Life Code (515 ILCS 5), the Wildlife Code (520 ILCS 5), and the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois (Part 13.5) (20 ILCS 805).

Forestry Development Act, Illinois Compiled Statute - 525 ILCS 15/1