



Inside Illinois DNR

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The Illinois Department of Natural Resources offers a wide array of professional careers in the conservation and natural resource arena. [Click here](#) to see what jobs openings are available.

A Message from Director Marc Miller



My fellow outdoor enthusiasts and conservationists,

Now that the holidays are over and we begin to focus on the New Year ahead, I want to take one last look back over the last six years. With the demands and urgent issues facing an agency with broad public responsibilities, scope, and hundreds of mandates, it can be easy to lose sight of all the good work that has been done.

When I first became Director in the February of 2009, there were a few things we had to correct immediately from the previous administration. We went to work reopening the seven state parks closed by our predecessors. We also restored over \$7 million in hunting and fishing license funds that were swept for ineligible purposes, a move that put federal matching funds and partnerships in jeopardy.

We also knew that the tradition of strong public participation in shaping the agency's focus, which had withered through neglect, needed to be restored. In the spring of 2009, we invited hundreds of constituents from all over Illinois to Springfield and convened the first Conservation Congress in six years.

During those meetings, it was obvious that you recognized how badly the IDNR had been cut financially over the previous decade. With general revenue just half of what it once was, we were struggling to meet the basic missions entrusted to us. That acknowledgement served as the springboard to a year-long lobbying campaign to stabilize agency finances by securing legislative support for the "DNR Sustainability Bill." That bill generated \$30 million in new annual revenues to support Illinois state parks and other important functions of the agency.

Another recurring theme we heard from constituents during the new Conservation Congress: increasing opportunities for hunters. So we worked hard to successfully lobby the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to create a fourth waterfowl hunting zone in Illinois, a huge win after nearly 25 years of unsuccessful efforts. We also created and expanded the Illinois Recreational Access Program that has opened up 13,000 acres of private land for recreation and provides significant opportunities for youth. Over the past six years, we have also continued efforts to protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp. Those efforts have paid off with expanded harvesting of Asian carp in the Illinois River system. IDNR has worked to reduce risk of fish passage by working cooperatively with neighboring states and our federal partners on rapid response efforts.

We secured federal approval and \$2 million in annual funding for a Coastal Management Program to protect Lake Michigan resources; re-opened a July perch fishing season in Lake Michigan, while implementing sustainable measures to protect spawning perch; and, we completed a decades-long project to clean up pollution problems at Waukegan Harbor.

We acquired more than 10,000 acres of high-quality land for hunting, fishing, bird-watching, hiking and other outdoor recreation opportunities, and oversaw the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission's addition of 25 Land and Water Reserves and 35 Nature Preserves that protected over 18,000 acres of high quality habitat. We've improved outreach in northeast Illinois by creating the Millennium Reserve; worked with local governments to cooperatively remove dangerous low-head dams to improve the health of rivers, while reducing hazards to boaters and anglers; and, jumpstarted the rebuild of the Illinois Conservation Police force by swearing in two classes of officers in the past two years, hiring many military veterans. A third class started training just a few days ago.

The past six years have had their share of challenges, but I couldn't be prouder of these accomplishments and many others that we have achieved together. I want to thank you for your efforts, and urge you to continue to be stewards of conservation and outdoor recreation, and to encourage the next generation of natural resources leaders and enthusiasts.

It has been my distinct honor to serve you. To paraphrase Teddy Roosevelt, life's best prize is to work hard at work worth doing. IDNR's important mission, encouraging the efforts of great people, and the goal of leaving a place better than you found it, has been work worth doing for me.

Yours in conservation,

[DNR in the news](#)

New Soccer Fields

Starved Rock Update

Saving Black Hawk

Mud to Parks Program

[Statewide Offices](#)

Springfield, IL
217-782-6302

Bartlett, IL
847-608-3100

Clinton, IL
217-935-6860

Alton, IL
618-462-1181

Benton, IL
618-435-8138

State Parks, Great Parks Initiative



The Illinois General Assembly passed a funding package for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources giving the agency much-needed new revenues after a decade of severe budget and staffing cuts.

The Illinois DNR is committed to protecting the integrity of these funds by using them for the purposes for which they were intended.

The 'State Parks, Great Parks' initiative has a clear and simple goal: Use these new revenues to improve the state park visitor's experience. A majority of the new funds will be used to hire critical staff at state parks, and to cut down on the hundreds of millions of dollars in backlogged maintenance at our state parks.

Here's how IDNR Sustainability dollars are being used in our state parks this month.

Description	Location
Debris removal & boat ramp rehabilitation	Fort Massac State Park

[Check out these amazing time-lapse videos of Illinois' Great State Parks](#)

Legislation and Government



OSLAD Grants Will Support Park & Recreation Projects in 28 Counties

Governor Pat Quinn announced \$26 million in investments for 75 local projects across Illinois that will help communities acquire land for parks and improve recreational opportunities.

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/news/Pages/GovernorQuinnAnnouncesMajorInvestmentsfor75ParkProjectsAcrossIllinois.aspx>



New Conservation Laws in 2015

There are several new Illinois conservation laws on the books in 2015. The link below provides a brief synopsis of each with an opportunity to learn even more no matter what your interest is!

http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/news/Documents/2015_Laws.pdf



Equine Therapy for Veterans

IDNR is launching a two-year pilot project with the Marion Veterans Affairs Medical Center to offer equine therapy for armed forces veterans at Giant City State Park in Makanda. The medical center will, as appropriate, refer veterans living with post-traumatic stress syndrome or other mental health issues

to Giant City State Park's Equine Therapy Program.

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/news/Pages/IDNRPartnersWithMarionVAMedicalCentertoProvideEquineTherapyforVeterans.aspx>

Illinois
Conservation
Foundation
1994 - 2015



Win the grand prize
of \$50,000

2015 Illinois
Sportsman's Raffle,
taking place from
now until January
29th. 2015

Only 2,000 tickets
will be sold to this
exclusive fundraiser
for the ICF's youth
programs.

A grand prize winner
receives \$50,000,
with \$5,000 to a first
place winner, \$2,500
to second place and
eight additional
\$1,000 winners.

Click here to
purchase your tickets
online!

www.ilcf.org



This Month's Highlights



2015 Illinois Licenses Available Jan. 19

Illinois fishing, hunting and sportsman's combination licenses and usage stamps for 2015 will be available starting Jan. 19 from DNR Direct license and permit vendors, online through the IDNR website at www.dnr.illinois.gov, or by calling 1-888-6PERMIT (1-888-673-7648). The automated license system is available 24 hours a day. The 2015 licenses and usage stamps purchased beginning Jan. 19 will be valid through Mar. 31, 2016 unless otherwise noted.



Winter Gathering at Dixon Mounds Museum

Enjoy a traditional Native American Winter Gathering at Dickson Mounds Museum, Lewistown, IL., on Sat., Jan. 24, 1-5 p.m. Visitors can participate in a variety of activities and demonstrations, including storytelling, music, group games and dances, doll making, and beading. The event is free. For more information, phone Dickson Mounds at 309-547-3721. <http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismsites/dickson/>



Eagle Watching

Every winter, Illinois presents visitors with the opportunity to see more than 5,000 bald eagles in their natural habitat - more wintering American bald eagles, in fact, than in any other state outside Alaska. The first eagles of the season are spotted in Illinois in December and remain in residence until they migrate back north in March, with January and February the optimal time for visitors to see eagles. Many DNR sites provide eagle watching programs. For more information <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/eagles/Pages/EagleWatching.aspx>

For more check out our [monthly calendar of events!](#)

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