



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New endowment to protect Illinois state parks for future generations**

SPRINGFIELD – As public lands nationally face threats to their existence, the Illinois Conservation Foundation (ICF), in partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), is launching a new endowment to protect, preserve and enhance Illinois state parks.

“From our wooded trails and caverns to our beaches and mighty rivers, our state parks are a great source of pride for Illinoisans – and these spaces must be protected,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Thanks to the support from our state partners, this endowment will fund critical infrastructure and conservation efforts to ensure future generations can enjoy the beauty and historical significance of our state parks.”

A new Illinois State Parks Endowment will provide long-term, independent funding for critical park infrastructure, accessibility projects, conservation, and programming. The fund will be housed by ICF, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the official charitable partner of IDNR. All contributions are permanently restricted to support Illinois state parks and cannot be redirected or swept at any time.

“We want to protect our parks with action and investment. We believe parks are for the people, not for profit,” said **ICF Executive Director Jenny Vaughn**. “Some of our most enduring institutions, from libraries to hospitals, have been shaped by the generosity of private citizens. This endowment gives every Illinoisan the chance to do the same for our parks and the natural spaces we love.”

“Access to nature is a right, not a privilege. Our parks are essential to the physical, emotional and economic health of our communities,” **said IDNR Director Natalie Finnie**. “This endowment reflects Illinois’ commitment to making public lands truly public, for everyone, now and in the future.”

The effort comes at a time when national parks are facing decreased funding, reduced staffing, and long-term uncertainty with proposals to sell off public land. In Illinois, state parks remain free to enter and continue to see investments in staffing, access and infrastructure, thanks to support from Governor Pritzker and state lawmakers. The endowment will help protect these commitments to access, equity, and long-term stewardship for generations to come.

ICF is welcoming contributions of all sizes to support this effort and is actively inviting visionary supporters to join its Founders Circle. Gifts from individuals, families, private businesses and foundations will help grow this permanent fund and protect Illinois parks for generations to come.

To learn more about the endowment, visit [ilconservation.org/stateparks](http://ilconservation.org/stateparks).

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**About the Illinois Conservation Foundation**

The Illinois Conservation Foundation is the official 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. For more than 25 years, ICF has built public–private partnerships to protect and enhance natural resources, expand outdoor access, and support sustainable conservation programs across the state.

**About IDNR**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is celebrating 100 years of conservation and service to the people of Illinois throughout 2025. The department was established July 1, 1925, as the Illinois Department of Conservation, bringing under one umbrella oversight of fish and game, forestry, public works, and lakes.

Today, IDNR’s work encompasses management of about 400 sites across Illinois, including state parks and historic sites; wildlife, fisheries, and natural heritage; Lake Michigan water allocation and coastal management; conservation police; mine and minerals; oil and gas; issuance of licenses, permits, and numerous grants; the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta; and the Illinois State Museum. Visit <https://dnr.illinois.gov> for more information.

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