



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDNR awards nearly \$1 million in Natural Area Stewardship grants

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has awarded nearly \$1 million in grants to support 15 stewardship programs managed by land trusts on land protected by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC).

The grants are part of the [Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grant program](#), which aims to increase the delivery of much-needed land and water stewardship activities to natural areas permanently protected within the INPC system. Given the growing stewardship needs of natural areas throughout Illinois, this grant program funds projects that help land trusts expand staff and purchase equipment for these activities.

The following grants were awarded for fiscal year 2025:

Ballard Nature Center | Effingham County

\$65,458.50

Purchase supplies and equipment to expand volunteer stewardship including protective equipment for prescribed fire and a utility terrain vehicle.

Clifftop – Conserving Lands in Farm, Forest, Talus, or Prairie | Monroe County

\$72,472.35

Purchase a skid steer and attachments to support stewardship activities.

Conservation Foundation | La Salle and Kane counties

\$66,768

Enlist contractual services for invasive species removal and installation of fire breaks.

Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves | Cook County

\$47,233.22

Purchase tools and equipment to build capacity for the volunteer stewardship community and enlist a contractor for invasive species control.

Grand Prairie Friends | Coles County

\$99,885.02

Enlist staff and purchase equipment and supplies to support fire break installation, invasive species control, and overseeding.

Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation | Jo Daviess County

\$75,130

Purchase equipment to support invasive species control, mound stewardship, and prescribed fire.

Lake Forest OpenLands | Lake County

\$89,182.28

Enlist contractual support for invasive species control and prescribed fire, and purchase equipment to support prescribed fire.

Land Conservancy | McHenry County

\$65,409.80

Enlist staff and contractual support to remove invasive species and manage woody species.

Natural Land Institute | Winnebago County

\$20,000

Enlist personnel and purchase equipment to reduce woody vegetation cover.

ParkLands Foundation | McLean County

\$80,982

Enlist contractual services for invasive species control and prescribed fire, and purchase equipment to facilitate additional stewardship activities.

Prairie Hills Resource Conservation and Development | McDonough County

\$99,810.94

Enlist staff and contractual support for prescribed fire, woody species removal, and invasive species control.

The Nature Conservancy | Lee and Ogle counties

\$27,824.94

Purchase a tractor to maintain fire breaks and control invasive species.

The Nature Conservancy | Cook County

\$88,815

Purchase equipment to support prescribed fire.

The Nature Conservancy | Kankakee County

\$20,347

Purchase equipment to support prescribed fire.

The Nature Institute | Madison County

\$80,680.95

Enlist staff and contractual support for oak and hickory woodland restoration.

Eligible applicants under the Natural Areas Stewardship Grant program are conservation land trusts exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code and whose originating documents include in its purposes the restoration, stewardship, or conservation of land for the preservation of native plants or animals, biotic communities, geologic formations, or archaeological sites of significance.

More than \$2.7 million was awarded to the Conservation Land Trust from 2021 through 2024. Funding for this grant program is derived from a portion of the [Illinois Natural Areas Acquisition Fund](#). The fund must be used by IDNR for the acquisition and stewardship of natural areas, including habitats for endangered and threatened species.

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